



## TREMENDOUS BONDING BETWEEN SHIVA AND PARVATI THE MALE HALF-LIFE AND FEMALE HALF-LIFE LEADING TO CONSTANT ETERNAL LOVE

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<p><b>Article Info</b></p> <p><b>Article Received:</b> 21 May 2026, <b>Article Revised:</b> 11 June 2026, <b>Article Accepted:</b> 01 July 2026.</p>	<p><b>ABSTRACT</b></p> <p>Ardhanarishvara (the Lord who is half-woman) is a Hindu metaphysical concept uniting Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati into one inseparable form. It teaches that the ultimate reality transcends dualities like male and female, symbolizing the balance of cosmic energy and the vital interdependence of all existence. The concept breaks down into specific philosophical and symbolic truths:</p> <p><i>Purusha &amp; Prakriti:</i> The right half is Shiva, representing pure consciousness (<i>Purusha</i>), while the left half is Parvati, representing cosmic energy and nature (<i>Prakriti</i>).</p> <p><i>Essential Equality:</i> The form explicitly illustrates that the masculine and feminine principles are perfectly equal and inherently inseparable. Neither can act nor create without the other.</p> <p><i>Transcending Duality:</i> It signifies that the absolute truth or ultimate reality is whole, meaning that all dualities dissolve into a unified cosmic state.</p> <p><i>Inner Balance:</i> Devotees explore this reality in daily life by meditating on the balance of strength and compassion, or logic and emotion, within themselves. The deity is depicted as an androgynous figure, with a single body divided down the middle into two halves, one half male and the other half female. According to Hindu mythology, Ardhanarishvara was created when the gods requested that Shiva produce a male heir.</p> <p><b>KEYWORDS:</b> purush, prakriti, Shiva, parvati, deity.</p>
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**Overview:** Ardhanarishwar is a composite androgynous Hindu deity comprising Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati (*Shakti*). This sacred symbol represents the inseparable, harmonious union of the male and female principles of the universe.

### Key Symbolism & Representation

**Division of the Body:** The right half of the deity is Lord Shiva, representing pure consciousness (*Purusha*). The left half is Goddess Parvati, representing cosmic energy and nature (*Prakriti*).

**The Union of Opposites:** It illustrates that the universe is sustained only through the balance of seemingly opposing forces: creation and destruction, dynamic energy and static meditation.

**Gender Equality:** The symbol signifies that both masculine and feminine principles are perfectly equal and inherently interdependent; neither is complete without the other.



Figure-1: Ardhanarishwar.

### Visual Iconography

**Shiva's side (right):** Often adorned with a crescent moon, matted hair (*jata*), a snake, and holds a trident or drum.

**Parvati's side (left):** Often decorated with intricate jewelry, a sari, and holds a lotus, mirror, or parrot.

Ardhanarishvara is a composite androgynous form of the Hindu deity Shiva and his consort Parvati, depicted as half-male and half-female, split down the middle. Originating conceptually in the *Kushan* era (1<sup>st</sup> century CE) and perfected during the Gupta period, it symbolizes the fundamental unity of the masculine and feminine energies in the universe.

### Philosophical and Mythological Roots

- **Upanishadic Roots:** The philosophical seed of Ardhanarishvara lies in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, which describes the primordial cosmic being, *Purusha*, splitting into male and female halves to produce all life.
- **Shiva Purana:** According to this text, Lord Brahma was struggling with the process of creation. Lord Shiva appeared as Ardhanarishvara, demonstrating that creation requires the union of both *Purusha* (divine consciousness) and *Prakriti* (nature/energy).

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**The Sage Bhringi Legend:** The *Skanda Purana* recounts a tale where a devoted sage named *Bhringi* insisted on worshipping only Shiva. To exclude Parvati, he transformed into an insect to circle only Shiva's half. To teach the sage that male and female energies are inseparable, Shiva and Parvati merged into the Ardhanarishvara form.

### Symbolism

**Right Side:** The male half represents Shiva, symbolizing pure consciousness, stability, and the ascetic aspects of the universe.

**Left Side:** The female half represents Parvati (or Shakti), symbolizing energy, dynamism, and the manifested world.

**Cosmic Balance:** Together, the form establishes the philosophical truth that Shiva and Shakti are one and the same; consciousness cannot act without energy, and energy has no foundation without consciousness.

### Key Locations & Heritage

**Ancient Art:** The earliest known artistic representations of Ardhanarishvara originate from the *Kushan* period, with a prominent stele located at the Government Museum, Mathura.

**Active Shrines:** Very few temples are exclusively dedicated to this form, but one of the most famous living shrines is the Arthanareeswarar Temple located in Tiruchengode, Tamil Nadu. Ardhanarishwar (a combination of *Ardha* meaning "half", *Nari* meaning "woman", and *Ishwar* meaning "lord") is the

androgynous form of the Hindu deity Lord Shiva, depicted as half-man and half-woman. This iconic manifestation is deeply symbolic, highlighting the inseparable, equal, and complementary nature of masculine and feminine energies in the universe. Ardhanarishvara is a sacred, composite form of the Hindu deity Shiva combined with his consort, Parvati. Literally translating to "the Lord who is half-woman," this androgynous manifestation depicts a single body divided perfectly down the middle—the right side as Shiva and the left as Parvati.

**Key Symbolism: The Union of Opposites:** The form represents the balance between masculine (*Purusha*) and feminine (*Prakriti*) energies. It teaches that the universe requires both to function and that neither can exist without the other.

**Cosmic Balance:** As highlighted by a consensus of users in online discussions, this form is a powerful metaphor for the balance of all opposing forces in existence.

**Equality:** It visually illustrates that male and female energies are equal, completely interdependent, and share equal halves of the divine whole.

**Historical Significance:** The concept of the divine feminine and masculine being inseparable goes deep into the roots of Hindu philosophy. The earliest physical representations and sculptures of Ardhanarishvara date back to the Kushan period, around the first century CE.

**Stotra:** चाम्पेयगौरार्धशरीरकायै कर्पूरगौरार्धशरीरकाय ।  
धम्मिल्लकायै च जटाधराय नमः शिवायै च नमः शिवाय ॥ १ ॥

1. Salutations to Her (Parvati) whose half-body shines like the golden-yellow Champa flower, and to Him (Shiva) whose half-body shines bright like camphor. Salutations to Her who wears Her hair in a beautiful braided bun, and to Him who wears matted locks (Jata). Salutations to the feminine aspect (Shivaa) and salutations to the masculine aspect (Shiva).

कस्तूरिकाकुङ्कुमचर्चितायै चितारजःपुञ्जविचर्चिताय ।  
कृतस्मरायै विकृतस्मराय नमः शिवायै च नमः शिवाय ॥ २ ॥

2. My salutations to both Goddess Shiva (Parvati) and Lord Shiva. The left half of Her body is adorned with musk and kumkum, while the right half of His body is smeared with a mass of ashes from a funeral pyre. She is the one who awakens love, and He is the one who destroyed or conquered the god of love (Kamadeva). Salutations to Goddess Shiva and salutations to Lord Shiva.

झणत्कणत्कङ्कणनूपुरायै पादाब्जराजत्कणिनूपुराय ।  
हेमाङ्गदायै भुजगाङ्गदाय नमः शिवायै च नमः शिवाय ॥ ३ ॥

3. "Salutations to Her whose anklets and bracelets make a jingling, tinkling sound, and to Him whose lotus-feet are adorned with a snake as an anklet; to Her who wears golden armlets, and to Him who wears serpents as armlets. Salutations to the Goddess (Shivaa) and the God (Shiva)."

विशालनीलोत्पललोचनायै विकासिपङ्केरुहलोचनाय ।  
समेक्षणायै विषमेक्षणाय नमः शिवायै च नमः शिवाय ॥ ४ ॥

4. "Salutations to Her who has large eyes like the blooming blue lotus, and to Him who has eyes like the fully blossomed lotus. Salutations to Her who has balanced eyes, and to Him who has three eyes. Salutations to Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva."

मन्दारमालाकलितालकायै कपालमालाङ्कितकन्धराय ।  
दिव्याम्बरायै च दिगम्बराय नमः शिवायै च नमः शिवाय ॥ ५ ॥

5. "Her (Parvati's) hair is adorned with beautiful Mandara flower garlands, and His (Shiva's) neck is adorned with a garland of skulls." "Salutations to Her who is clothed in divine garments, and to Him who is clothed in the directions (space). Salutations to Devi (Shiva) and Salutations to Lord Shiva."

अम्भोधरश्यामलकुन्तलायै तडित्प्रभाताम्रजटाधराय ।  
निरीश्वरायै निखिलेश्वराय नमः शिवायै च नमः शिवाय ॥ ६ ॥

6. The verse is a beautiful Sanskrit hymn dedicated to the unified divine consciousness, representing the ultimate reality where both the masculine (Shiva) and feminine (Shakti) principles are worshipped as one.

प्रपञ्चसृष्ट्युन्मुखलास्यकायै समस्तसंहारकताण्डवाय ।  
जगज्जनन्यै जगदेकपित्रे नमः शिवायै च नमः शिवाय ॥ ७ ॥

7. Salutations to Her (the Goddess) whose graceful, joyful dance (*Lasya*) initiates the creation of the universe. Salutations to Him (the Lord) who performs the fierce, cosmic dance of destruction (*Tandava*) to dissolve the universe. Salutations to the Mother of the universe and the sole Father of the universe. Salutations to the Goddess (Shivai) and salutations to the Lord (Shiva).

प्रदीपतरत्नोज्ज्वलकुण्डलायै स्फुरन्महापन्नगभूषणाय ।  
शिवाञ्चितायै च शिवाञ्चिताय नमः शिवायै च नमः शिवाय ॥ ८ ॥

Salutations to Her who wears glittering, gem-studded earrings, and to Him who wears large, hissing, radiant serpents as ornaments. Salutations to the one who is united with Shiva, and to Shiva who is united with Her. Salutations to the auspicious Goddess (Shivaa) and to the auspicious Lord (Shiva)

एतत्पठेदष्टकमिष्टदं यो भक्त्या स मान्यो भुवि दीर्घजीवी ।  
प्राप्नोति सौभाग्यमनन्तकालं भूयात्सदा तस्य समस्तसिद्धिः ॥ ९ ॥

He who reads this eight-stanza hymn with devotion will be honored in this world and live a long life. They will attain eternal good fortune, and may all perfections and accomplishments always be theirs.

इति श्रीमत्परमहंसपरिव्राजकाचार्यस्य  
श्रीगोविन्दभगवत्पूज्यपादशिष्यस्य  
श्रीमच्छंकरभगवतः कृतौ अर्धनारीश्वरस्तोत्रम् संपूर्णम् ॥

Thus concludes the Ardhanarishvara Stotram, composed by the supreme ascetic Adi Shankaracharya, who was a disciple of Sri Govinda Bhagavatpada. Ardhanarishvara is a profound Hindu concept representing the synthesis of masculine and feminine energies in the universe. Depicted as a deity that is half-male (Shiva) and half-female (Parvati) split down the center, it illustrates that consciousness and energy are fundamentally inseparable, and that creation requires both.

The concept explores several deep philosophical dimensions:

#### 1. The Duality of Shiva and Shakti

Shiva (The Male Half): Represents pure consciousness, stillness, awareness, and transcendence.

Shakti/Parvati (The Female Half): Represents energy, action, dynamic creativity, and the physical manifestation of the cosmos.

The Meaning: The two are one and the same reality, inseparable just like fire and its heat. Without energy, consciousness is inert; without consciousness, energy is chaotic.

#### 2. Inner Psychological Balance

On an individual level, Ardhanarishvara serves as a model for a complete human being. It teaches that both masculine and feminine qualities—such as strength and compassion, or action and reflection—must be integrated within the mind for true harmony.

#### 3. Unity and Creation

The name derives from three Sanskrit words: Ardha (half), Nari (woman), and Ishwara (lord). The iconic form symbolizes that the universe is generated through the union of male and female principles (Purusha and Prakriti respectively). According to the Britannica explanation of this Shaivite concept, it also signifies the fundamental interdependence of husband and wife, showing that neither is complete without the other. According to Hindu mythology, Ardhanarishvara was created when the gods requested that Shiva produce a male heir. Shiva merged with his consort Parvati, creating a form that was half-man and half-woman.



Figure-2: Adi Shankaracharya.

**Mythology:** Ardhanarishvara (literally "the Lord whose half is a woman") is a profound composite form of the Hindu deity Shiva and his consort Parvati, depicted as half-male and half-female, split vertically down the middle. The mythology and philosophy behind this divine form go much deeper than a simple merger of bodies, embodying a beautiful and complex concept of creation. Ardhanarishvara represents the sacred Hindu synthesis of Lord Shiva (consciousness) and Goddess Parvati/Shakti (nature and creative energy), symbolizing that the universe's creation requires the perfect, inseparable balance of masculine and feminine principles.

#### CONCLUSION

**Significance in Hindu Philosophy:** Within Hindu philosophy, this symbol goes beyond anatomy. It communicates the fundamental truth of Advaita (*non-duality*)—the idea that the ultimate reality is undivided, despite its manifestation into dual forms. Ardhanarishvara is a composite form of the Hindu deities Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati (Shakti), depicted as half-male and half-female. It symbolizes the inseparable unity of divine consciousness and energy, teaching that neither can exist nor function without the other. The significance of this powerful form spans several philosophical, psychological, and practical dimensions:

1. The Union of Consciousness and Energy: Purusha and Prakriti: The right half represents Shiva (Purusha—the

passive, formless, and eternal consciousness). The left half represents Parvati (Prakriti—the active, creative, and dynamic energy of the universe). Cosmic Balance: The form demonstrates that pure consciousness without energy is still but inactive, while energy without consciousness becomes chaotic. Creation requires the harmony of both. Psychological Balance: Integrating Opposites: At an individual level, Ardhanarishvara represents the balance of inner energies within every human mind. It encourages individuals to integrate clear judgment (traditionally associated with the masculine) with compassion and creativity (traditionally associated with the feminine). 3. Spiritual and Sectarian Harmony: Shaivism and Shaktism: Historically, this form served to unify two major Hindu sects. By fusing Shiva and Shakti into a single body, it asserts that they are not competing forces, but rather two expressions of the exact same ultimate reality. Equality and Non-Duality: Beyond Gender: Ardhanarishvara transcends physical limitations, asserting that God is beyond gender. It conveys that the masculine and feminine are not hierarchically separated, but are equal and mutually dependent dimensions of the divine. 5. Synthesis of Life Paths: Ascetic and Householder: The iconography reconciles two seemingly opposed ways of life: the ascetic, meditative path (represented by Shiva) and the worldly, materialistic life of the householder (represented by Parvati). It teaches seekers to embrace both spiritual awareness and active, worldly duties. The Ardhanarishvara theme depicts the composite androgynous form of the Hindu deities Shiva (masculine right half) and Parvati (feminine left half). It symbolizes cosmic unity, the inseparability of masculine and feminine energies, and the balance of spiritual renunciation and material creation. Explore the profound meaning and artistic significance of this concept through its core themes: Unity of Opposites: Represents the perfect synthesis of dualities. Shiva embodies asceticism and transcendental consciousness, while Parvati embodies fertility, compassion, and worldly engagement. Creation and Balance: Symbolizes that creation requires both male and female principles. In Hindu philosophy, it conveys that Shiva without Shakti (the feminine energy of creation) is merely shava (a corpse). Beyond Gender: Challenges rigid gender constructs by illustrating that ultimate reality and the human soul transcend conventional distinctions, combining both energies. Syncretism: The concept attempts to synthesize the two major Hindu sects—Shaivism and Shaktism—into one revered form of worship.

## REFERENCE

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ardhanarishvara>