

Left and Right Side Concepts in Hinduism

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Introduction

The concepts underlying the left and right sides in Hindu view is based on the Vedic literature. The left and right concepts are also referred in a person. This brief article presents some of the concepts related to the left and right sides and their role in our lives.

Concepts of Left and Right sides

The Vedic view of the left and right side can be referred to a verse from Manusmriti

Dvidhaa Kritvaatmaano deham ardhena purushobhavat
Ardhena naari tasyaam sa viraajamasrijat prabhuhu

This means that “Supreme Being (as Energy, Principle) divided itself into two halves as man and woman, and in woman, Its (self) expansion ability was kept.”

The left half is identified with woman and the right half is identified with man, it is to be noted that woman is referred as Prakriti (expanding and active nature) and man is referred as Purusha (reference and invariant source). The Prakriti and Purusha are always in harmony and together refer to One. It is to be noted that both feminine and masculine principles complement each other fully because they both came out of One principle.

When the Supreme Being is in the form of Lord ArdhaNareeshwara (i.e. Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati together as one) in one person, then Goddess Parvati is the left half and Lord Shiva is the right half. It is also noted in Ram Parivar Goddess Sita is on the left of Lord Rama. Also it is seen that Goddess Lakshmi is to the left of Lord Vishnu.

It is well known that in the general rituals and pooja, the Kankan (yellow sacred thread) is tied to the left hand for the woman and is tied to the right hand for a man.

In the philosophical view, the nature with its expanding energy and capability is referred as woman principle, whereas, the reference invariant source is referred as man principle. In the words of yogi-seer Sriranga Sadguru, “Women are equally potential and capable of learning and education, as in human body, the left side and right side must be in harmony for health and happiness. It is for that reason we seek the energies from universal parents (God and Goddess).”

In the yoga view, there are three main energy carrying channels (referred as naadis) in the backside of a person. The central one (in the spinal cord) is called as Sushumna, the naadi to the left of sushumna is called as Ida naadi and the naadi to the right of sushumna is called as Pingala naadi. The Ida naadi refers to the activities and thoughts of worldly domain and the Pingala naadi refers to the activities and thoughts of spiritual domain.

It is very important to note that both worldly and spiritual domains are equally important for any person. In general when the above concepts of left and right are applied to a person (man or woman), the right side (right hand) is generally used for religious activities (doing pooja, offering flowers, eating Prasad, etc) and the left side (left hand) is generally used for bodily activities and supporting the right hand. However, it is important to note that there are exceptions (such as the left-handed ones) to the general practice.

Concluding Remarks

The concepts of left and right sides have philosophical and yoga basis. It is to be noted that both left and right sides (hands, legs) are equally important for a person. The generally known use of left and right sides (by person) is based on the religious, philosophical and yoga basis. Although at the body level, there is a general practice in the use of left and right sides, there would be exceptions (to the general practice) also at the body level.

Reference

Amaravani (Volume 2: Jeevana-Samaja-ashtra) – Lectures by Sriranga Sadguru, published Ashtanga Yoga Vijnana Mandiram, Mysore, India (1983)