

Sacred Feminine in Contemporary Hinduism: An Islamic Appraisal**Dr. Zenab Khurram****Research scholar****Department of Comparative Religions****Faculty of Islamic Studies (Usuluddin)****Islamic International University Islamabad Pakistan****Contact: 0345-5345094****Email: Zenab.khurram@gmail.com****ABSTRACT**

The research article discusses the phenomenon of Sacred Feminine in contemporary Hinduism in general by bringing an Islamic viewpoint alongside. The study is basically analytical in nature as the researcher makes an analysis of the idea of Sacred Feminine in contemporary Hinduism by giving views of Islam with it. This can also be taken as the aim of study for this research article that is to analyze the phenomena of Sacred Feminism in contemporary Hinduism with an Islamic viewpoint. In the beginning, there is an introduction and definition to the phenomenon of Sacred Feminine in general and then a discussion comprising Hindu concept and Islamic Appraisal accordingly. How religious ideas are interpreted according to the contemporary Hindu ideology and Islamic view regarding this interpretation, is also studied in this article. In the end, there is a conclusion of the results what researcher has derived through this study. The findings of the researcher are that the supporters of the movement of Sacred Feminine in Contemporary Hinduism have made new developments in contemporary Hinduism while studying and describing it with concepts present in Islam. In this way they have contributed to the development of Hindu religion in contemporary times.

Key Words: Sacred Feminine, Status of women, Contemporary Hinduism, Islamic Appraisal

INTRODUCTION

Status of women has always been a critical issue in Hinduism. Traditional Hindu culture presents women as second-class citizens of the society. As the role of every person became important in the development of a certain society, woman's contribution was also discussed in every aspect of social life including religion. Those who supported this role in the light of religious texts presented her through highlighting the attribute of femininity as a part of the Being of the Divine. Hence giving her a sacred place authenticated by religion.

The article also introduces the issue of ‘Sacred Feminine’ in general as a contemporary phenomenon that appeared in the West. The issue is then studied in relation to contemporary Hinduism where various notable examples are already there to revive this phenomenon in contemporary times. The names of some prominent female religious and spiritual leaders are also mentioned in this article. It also gives Islamic appraisal regarding concept of Sacred Feminine in contemporary Hinduism. The viewpoint of Islam towards religious and spiritual status of woman is also given here. These representatives of Sacred Feminine appeared with the slogan of bringing change in society’s attitude towards women. Their ideas are analyzed in the light of Islamic viewpoint in this study. The researcher assumes that they are closer to Islam in some of their women related reforms as mentioned in results as well.

Literature Review

The core issue discussed in this article is the phenomena of Feminine as sacred in contemporary Hinduism with an Islamic appraisal. The issue is quite new and that is why the available written material is mostly about New Female lead religious movements but not in relation to Islam. That is why studies which have been produced mostly in recent times about women and religion, Hindu female religious leaders and contemporary developments in Hinduism regarding women’s role as religious leaders are mentioned here as part of this Literature Review. The book, “*Hindu goddesses: Vision of The Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*” by Kinsley David¹ is of much importance in this respect. The publication was revised after its first edition in 1997. It provides information about leading Hindu Goddesses of Hindu religion. In this respect it gives good understanding regarding femininity as a part of Divine in Hinduism². David Smith’s book, “*Hinduism and Modernity*” is also one of the latest writings, produced in recent times regarding developments and reforms introduced in Hinduism as a developing religion. The author also discusses Hindu Islamic inter-action in the process of development of Hindu religious culture in contemporary times³. Among these writings is the book, “*The Graceful Guru: Hindu Female Gurus in India and the United States*” by Karen Pechilis⁴. It consists of ten famous female Hindu gurus of contemporary times. It talks about similarities and dissimilarities among these female Hindu saints, the objectives behind their spiritual ideology and their views while experiencing the Divine. The writer also tells that some of them attained this status through their personal efforts such as intense meditation, while some are known as embodiments of the Divine.

Another one is *Woman and goddess in Hinduism* edited by Tracy Pintchman and Rita D. Sharma, which focuses mainly about femininity as an attribute of Divine in Hinduism. The author gives a collection of what has been produced previously about Hindu goddesses and status of women as a spiritual figure in Hinduism. It gives fruitful information about leading Hindu goddesses such as Kali and Shakti. The book also gives an account of Gandhi's views about religious status of women in contemporary times⁵. Thus, a good source of information about religious status of women in the sight of contemporary Hindu religious/ political leaders.

The research article by Ann R. David, "*Gendering the Divine: New Forms of Feminine Hindu Worship*", is important in this regard. The author has studied that how Hindu worshippers have adopted new religious traditions when shifted to Britain and other parts of Europe from India and Sri Lanka. Another article, "*The Sacred Feminine in Hinduism*" by Dr. Madan Lal⁶ is also important to be mentioned here. In this article the author negates the point that gods are always male. A female can also be a leading figure according to the religion. He believes that God as Mother is more appropriate as compared to God as Father. He proves that the belief in a mother goddess is in man's nature since ancient times in the light of Bhagvad Gita. He even presents proofs for this in Abrahamic faiths⁷. The article "*Women and Social Reform movements in modern India*" by Prashar Pooja⁸ is also important in this regard. It provides an account of socio-religious conditions of Hindu India of the time when women reformation movements started appearing in the name of religion. The compilation also talks about traditional Hindu customs which leave a negative effect on the lives of Hindu women. As a result, many contemporary social and religious reformers tried to justify these religious traditions in the light of new interpretations of religious texts.⁹ "*The Contemporary Hindu Women of India*", By Dr. Tahira Basharat¹⁰ is focused upon the struggles and efforts of contemporary women of India for a better social status. The author promotes the narrative that Hindu woman does not have a respectable place in the society. They are not treated in a good manner even in the big cities of India. What is important here is that all this is committed in the name of Religion.¹¹ These books and articles are a good source to study the status of women and importance of goddess worship in Hinduism. A lot of other compilations are also available but the reason for mentioning only these is that they carry the concept of Sacred Feminine in contemporary Hinduism to some extent. Islamic Appraisal is a part of this researcher as it gives Islamic viewpoint towards the idea of sacred feminine along with what is told by

contemporary Hindu scholars regarding the religious status of women. The significance of the study is also highlighted through this as none of the above-mentioned writings bring the viewpoint of Islam towards Sacred Feminine.

Research Methodology

This is an analytical study of the phenomenon of Sacred Feminine in contemporary Hinduism. The researcher analyzes Sacred Feminine in the light of Islamic viewpoint by studying through multiple perspectives of contemporary researchers and a comprehensive historical perspective of female worship in ancient till contemporary Hindu religious traditions. This research studies feminine as sacred and is not limited to the study of one movement, rather focuses on the phenomenon. The analysis of contemporary Hindu movements considers the updated information as available on relevant webpages and websites.

Discussion

Theme of study in this research article is ‘Sacred Feminine in contemporary Hinduism’ but it is important to have a historical background to the phenomenon of ‘Sacred Feminine’ before studying it in contemporary Hinduism specifically. The records of human history prove its existence even in earliest human societies. There are the archeological findings regarding Mother goddesses even in pre-historic period. She was considered as the head of all Gods. Many Religions from ancient civilizations have the examples of Mother Goddesses in their history. Such as *Athena* of Romans, *Pele* among the Aborigines of Hawaii and Goddess *Isis* and *Hathors* of Egyptians¹². *Venus* of Willendorf belongs to the pre-historic era, that is the stone age. In a grave, discovered in France, all corpses are buried facing towards the Sunset while woman’s corpse is in rising Sun’s direction.¹³ Egyptian mythology tells the story of a Mother Goddess with all creative powers.¹⁴ The ancient civilization of Mesopotamia also had religious belief of a mother goddess. The archeological site in Crete tells about a cult that worshipped a powerful Mother Goddess. The Red Indians of America, also reflect the concept of ‘Sacred Feminine’ through their belief in Mother Earth which shows its existence in many human civilization.

Sacred Feminine & Contemporary researchers

Definitions given by some contemporary scholars are also given here to show how phenomenon is being studied in contemporary period. According to Mere Cromwell it is perhaps impossible to define it in human wordings. She describes it following the saying of Andrew Harvey in his book,

'*The Return of the Mother*'. He defines 'Sacred Feminine' by explaining some attributes and qualities like: "Subtlety and flexibility, extraordinary ruthless, radical powers of dissolving all structures and dogmas, all prisons in which we have sought so passionately to imprison ourselves."¹⁵ Amy Peck writes in '*Voices of The Sacred Feminine*' with reference to Rev. Karen Tate: "Sacred Feminine is a concept that recognizes that God ultimately is neither anthropomorphically male or female but a Divine Essence (Goddessence) beyond form and duality—an essence that is in balance and unification of masculine and feminine principles—a While answering to the question "What is Sacred Feminine"? She says: "The Sacred Feminine is a paradigm of universal motherhood. It is a principle that embraces concepts of the Holy Mother, the goddesses of ancient mythologies, the Divine self within, mother earth doctrines and lore of indigenous peoples. It is a spiritual model that weaves concepts of wisdom, compassion and unconditional love, plus other metaphysical, shamanic, and magical practices. The *Sacred Feminine* ideology does not seek to supplant patriarchal belief systems but to augment and reinstate equality, wholeness, and equilibrium." Some have described it in context to its relation to the Western movement of Sacred Feminine, while some others are concerned about relationship between female attributes and the nature. This group believes in balancing between the masculine and feminine powers. All are equal in the sight of Divine. Women and men both can be powerful, courageous, beautiful, polite and strong.¹⁶

But another group of scholars believe that Sacred Feminine stands for religious superiority of female over male as this is the real way of the nature. Those supporting this notion believe that all creatures carry a feminine essence along with masculine. Many attributes related to nature are used in feminine terms such as the words creation, universe, world, nature, soil, wind, and earth. It shows that female essence was always superior since the creation began. Women are the symbols of this essence of the Divine. Thus, they are the representatives of God in the world and closer to Him because of completing the process of creation by providing nourishment and care to a new creation. The novel of Dan Brown 'Da Vinci Code', published in 2003 is notable in this respect. It presented the character of Mary Magdalene and revived the concept of Sacred Feminine. The novel got much popularity but was banned because of immoral story about Jesus's life. The character of Mary Magdalene is representing 'Sacred Feminine' in Christianity. But the phenomenon can be studied in relation to contemporary Hinduism as well as it has many examples

of female religious and spiritual personalities who can be taken as the revivalists of Sacred Feminine in contemporary times.

Sacred Feminine in Contemporary Hinduism

Historical records show that Sacred Feminine is not something new in Hinduism. Several examples are there according to the archeological findings in different parts of Sub-Continent. Prominent among these are the myths associated to *Poleramma* or *Polemma*. She is worshipped with different names in different areas such as *Zavar mata*, *Avadi mata* and *Hinglaz mata*.¹⁷ The priests devoted to these goddesses are also mostly females. The *Chinchu* tribes of *Andhra Pardesh* also have the belief in god's sister. *Poleramma* transferred into *Adi Shakti* in Aryan period. *Parwati*, *Kali*, *Durga* and other goddesses of Aryan period are also different forms of *Polemma* or *Shakti* in this age. The *Shakti* cult also emerged because of these developments which became *Shiva Shakti Cult*¹⁸ in later Hinduism.¹⁹ *Madiga*²⁰ community believes in the existence of *Poleramma* even before the birth of *Brahma*. *Sarswati*, *Parwati* and *Lakshmi* were also created from this great goddess. It seems that Feminine essence was dominating in *Darvidian* period, but this domination was lost in Aryan period, and it turned into a male dominating Faith. Arthur Basham²¹ writes that matriarchal religion was already there in India before Aryan's establishment of a male dominated religion²². According to another scholar: "It is quite common, furthermore, to identify Shakti with a female being, a goddess, and to identify the other pole with her male consort. The two poles are usually understood to be interdependent and to have relatively equal status in terms of the divine economy."²³

Sri Sawami Chidananda quoted Swami Sivananda, regarding Mother worship: "Since the dawn of civilization, when the primitive man lived in a matriarchal society, the worship of the Divine Mother came into practice. Later on, as civilization progressed, the matriarchal pattern gradually faded out, and the father became the head of family unit, where he was treated as the man in authority and to whom everyone looked for guidance and approval. Consequently, there was a change in the concept of God as such; the fatherhood of God was established. But mother worship persisted simultaneously, since this concept was psychologically more appealing to the devotee, the mother being nearest in filial affection to the child. Subsequently, a synthetic harmony between

the Motherhood and Fatherhood of the God was developed by the Hindu Religion; the people worshipped Sita and Rama or Radha and Karishna together.”²⁴

Hinduism usually associates the attributes of creation, beginner, nourishment, prosperity, sustainer, and beauty to female gods. The popular female Hindu goddesses: *Shakti*, *Sarsvati*, *Lakshmi*, *Parvati*, *Kali* and *Durga* are the symbols of ‘Sacred Feminine’ in religion today. These are the leading goddesses of Hinduism. Along with these, *Shaktism*²⁵ is also there where goddess is the Supreme. Hindu religious literature also has several examples of it e.g., hymns in *Rigveda*²⁶ and *Puranas*²⁷ and texts of *Devi Purana*²⁸. Goddess worship is found in *Vaisnavism*²⁹ and *Saivism*³⁰ as well. Different *avatars* of *Vishnu* have female characters with them. Although they act mere supporters but still *Sri Devi* is always there with *Vishnu*, *Rama* with *Sita*, and *Krishna* with *Radha*. *Ardhanari avatar* in *Shiva Shakti* myth is also worth mentioning in this context.³¹

It becomes clear from the discussion above that female essence of Divinity has always been a part of Hindu belief of God. Independent goddesses, consorts and female helpers of male gods are there in the earliest records of Hindu Sacred texts. But along with gods and goddesses, Hindu religious history also presents several female avatars, devotees and spiritual personalities who are considered as sacred. Those appearing in contemporary period are playing the role as the representatives of Sacred Feminine in Hindu Faith of contemporary period. Many of these women claim to be the avatars or religious and spiritual leaders who appeared to provide guidance according to the requirements of contemporary times. Some of them spent their lives alone but many others are working by forming their own religious/spiritual groups, organizations or movements.

In fact, the whole environment that was created since the beginning of contemporary period marked the revival of Sacred Feminine in contemporary Hinduism. Not only the religious/spiritual personalities but reformers, politicians and even literary works reflected the decisive role of women supported in the name of religion. *Swadeshi* movement³², *Satyagraha* movement, *Devi* movement³³ the novel; ‘Home and the World’ by *Rabindranath Tagore* and ‘Difficult daughters’ by *Manju Kipur* presented leading female characters with the names of *Devis* like *Swarnalata*, *Virmati*, *Kasturi*, *Janaki*, *Ganga*, and *Shakuntala*³⁴. This is a clear picture of presenting Feminine as Sacred in the light of religion.

Religious/Spiritual status of women and Islamic Appraisal

The rights and responsibilities of every community are discussed in an Islamic society. The status and role of women is also clear through Qur'ānic teachings and Hadith literature. Special commandments are revealed in Qur'an and Sunnah regarding treating women in a respectable way. These teachings have always been a part of Islamic culture and civilization. Muslims carried these practices with them and introduced them in the new societies as well. Women participated in every walk of life actively in Islamic societies including religion. Islamic history is full of many such examples when women served their nations as teachers and healers at the times of war. It is because religion has never been limited to one group of the society. Men and women participate equally in the religious activities of the society. This has been made clear in Qur'ān when it says:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ
وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٧١﴾

'The believers, men and women are protectors, one of another, they enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them Allah will pour His mercy. For Allah is exalted in power; Wise'³⁵

The equality in the field of religion is also clear through another verse when Qur'ān mentions feminine and masculine nouns in a parallel way. It is said:

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِئِينَ
وَالْقَانِئَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ
وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّابِغِينَ وَالصَّابِغَاتِ
وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا
وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٣٥﴾

‘Indeed the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so-for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.’³⁶

As far as the issue of leadership is there, Islam gives an upper hand to male Muslims in this respect, and it is encouraged that only men should lead an organization or group instead of women. It is only because the working sphere of a male Muslim is broader than female members. The difference lies in the tasks assigned, not because of gender. It is clearly told that:

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا
 أَكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبْنَ وَسَأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
 كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

‘Men shall have the benefit of what they earn, and women shall have the benefit of what they earn.’³⁷

Sacred Feminine and Islamic Appraisal

The Islamic stance regarding Feminine as Sacred is also clear. There is no concept of gender for God in Islam. Qur’ānic verses and traditions of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) clearly mentions that Allah (S.W.T) is beyond gender. The chapter Al-Ikhlaṣ presents this notion clearly and is an answer to those who raise such questions in religion:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۗ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ۗ لَمْ يَلِدْ ۗ وَ لَمْ
 يُولَدْ ۗ وَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ۗ

‘Say that Allah is the one. Allah is the eternal and the best. He begets not, not He was begotten. And there is none comparable to Him.’³⁸

Ayat-ul-Kursi also talks about the Being and attributes of Allah thus tells clearly about the concept of God in Islam in the light of Qur'an.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٢٥٥﴾

These verses give a clear concept of belief in Allah according to the teachings of Islam.

It is the quality of creations that they have been created by Allah into males and females. Allah Almighty is free of this division of gender.

فَاطِرُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا يَذُرُّكُمْ فِيهِ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

After getting these wordings from Qur'an ليس كمثلِه (there is nothing like Him) all Qur'anic interpreters, jurists, philosophers, and theologians are agreed that there is no gender of God in Islam. Thus, women and men both can be religious but the term Sacred Feminine has no place in Islamic concept of God in Islam.

At this point it is important to know that the very first encounter between Islamic and sacred feminine concept occurred in the beginning of the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). Pagans of Arab believed about angels to be the daughters of God and Allah (S.W.T) refuted this belief in clear words in Qur'an. Several verses are there negating this belief such as verse: 117 of *Surah Al-Nisa*, verses: 57-58 of *Surah Al-Nahl*, verse: 40 of *Surah Bani Isra'eel*, verses: 16-19 of *Surah Al-Zukhruf*, verses: 21-27 of *Surah Al-Najam*. These verses clearly explain the viewpoint of Islam towards feminine as sacred in the light of Qur'an.

Conclusion

It is concluded from the above discussion that the concept of Sacred Feminine has always been a part of Hindu Faith since the ancient times. The phenomenon appeared in contemporary period in the form of female lead Hindu religious movements and spiritual organizations. The reformists who belong to contemporary times also reflected the phenomenon while presenting their reformist ideologies in the light of religion. Women who are appearing as religious guides claim to be the *avatars* and interpret different religious texts in support of their view. Islam gives a totally different viewpoint if the phenomenon is studied with an Islamic appraisal. Islam gives an equal religious and spiritual status to its followers whether they are males or females. The respectable position of women is presented in this article in the light of Qur'ānic verses. They can get an elevated status in every department of life including religion. It is concluded that Islam and Hinduism differ regarding the Sacred status of females. Hinduism considers them as the supporters of gods, goddesses, *avatars*, and spiritual leaders in contemporary period but there is no concept of gender of God and *avatars* in Islam. Men and women both can be religious and spiritual and get an equal reward from Allah Almighty according to their deeds and relation to God.

Recommendations

The research also recommends further other studies in the area which, according to the opinion of the researcher can be studied at academic level such as:

- Islam and Religious status of women is something very important in this respect. Although a lot has been written by Muslim scholars about women and Religion and role of woman according to Islam but status of women in other religions with a viewpoint of Islam is an area which still has a lot of room to be searched into.
- Islam and woman of the Sub-Continent is also an area which is recommended for further studies here. Islam has influenced every department of life of the inhabitants of the Sub-Continent since its appearance as a powerful cultural influential force in this part of the world. How it has effected the lives of women, is informative and interesting to study.
- Status of women in Islam and Hinduism as religious and spiritual leaders is also recommended for further research here.
- Study of Sacred Feminine is also an area which has been studied by Western scholars only till now. Muslims scholars/researchers also need to contribute to this area.

References

¹ Kinsley David was born in 1939 in USA and died in the year 2000 in Canada. He served as the professor of religious studies in Mc Master university Canada. He is known for his studies in Hinduism specially his writings about Hindu goddesses gained much popularity among the researchers and students of religious studies.

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⁴ Karen Pechilis is the professor of Comparative Religions and convener of Arts and letters in the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies. She chaired the department from 2010-2013. Now she is the professor of Comparative Religions at the university of Drew USA.

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⁶ Dr. Madan Lal Goel is the Professor of Political Science at the University of West Florida USA. He has made valuable researches in religion as well.

⁷ Goel, Madan Lal. Dr., *“The Sacred Feminine in Hinduism”*. University of West Florida. www.uwf.edu/Igoel. Accessed on 9-9-2019

⁸ Prashar Pooja is the Assistant professor and Head of the Department of History at Dev Samaj College for women Ferozpur India. She is also known as a social scientist.

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¹⁰ Dr. Tahira Basharat is the Head of the Department of Islamic Studies and chairperson of the Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization at University of the Punjab, Lahore Pakistan. She is the first one among the ladies to get PhD degree in Islamic Studies in Pakistan. She is known for her valuable research work in Hindu philosophy and women related issues in the Sub-Continent.

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¹⁷ Indus Religion., https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292144531_Indus_Religion.

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¹⁸ A syncretic form of Shaivism and Shaktism

¹⁹ Indus Religion., https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292144531_Indus_Religion.

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²⁰ A cast of Dallats in India mostly found in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orisa, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

²¹ A noted English historian and Indologist and a professor at the school of Oriental and African studies.

²² Basham, Arthur.L., *wonder that was India*. 1967, London: Sidgwick and Jackson. p: 313. Asiasociety.org/education/Shakti-power-feminine. Retrieved on August 10, 2017

²³ Kinsley, David. R., *Hindu Goddesses: Vision of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*. 1986. Berkeley: University of California Press. p: 133.

Asiasociety.org/education/Shakti-power-feminine; Retrieved on August 10, 2017

²⁴ Chidananda, Sri Swami: *God as Mother*. 1991, Uttar Pradesh India. The Divine Life Trust Society. World Wide Web edition: 1999. WWW site: <http://www.SivanandaDishq.org>, ISBN 81-7052-090-8

²⁵ A major tradition of Hinduism where the metaphysical reality is considered metaphorically feminine and Adi-Prashakti is supreme

²⁶ An ancient Hindu collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns

²⁷ Hindu religious texts that are part of the Vedas

²⁸ A Hindu religious Sanskrit text that belongs to the Purana genre of Hindu literature

²⁹ The direct descendant of the Vedic religion also known as Brahmanism

³⁰ Organized worship of Hindu God Shiva

³¹ An avatar with a body of half male and half female

³² Swadeshi movement appeared as a reaction to the partition of Bengal by British in 1905 and continued till the decision was taken back.

³³ This movement appeared in Southern Gujrat. Its followers were known as *Adivasis*. As appears from its name, the movement believed in *Devi* or goddess worship. This goddess and related religious rituals appeared as a reaction of a certain circumstances this community was facing along with the slogan of bringing reforms in social behavior towards women and the oppressed class of the society overall. The goddess worshipped was *Sitala* who could appear in its physical form in any woman of the community. She preached the prohibition of liquor business and drinking it. The male members of every family were encouraged to drink tea instead of liquor and to earn through some other sources. Many of them also rebelled against the Hindu belief of Cow Veneration. With the passage of time, the movement merged into the reform movement of *Gandhiji*.

³⁴ Shrivastava, Nidhi., *The Progress of Indian women from 1900s to Present*. 2009: Honors scholar theses. Paper 76. http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/srhonors_theses/76. P. 14-23

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/27404713_The_progreee_of_Indian_women_from_1900s_to_present. Retrieved on March 27, 2019.

³⁵ Al-Qur'ān 9:71

³⁶ Al-Qur'ān 33: 35

³⁷ Al-Qur'ān 4: 32

³⁸ Al-Qur'ān 112: 4