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A STUDY ON THE CONCH AND ASHTAYONI WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VASTHUSASTHRA

It is customary to blow a CONCH at the commencement of traditional, ritualistic music. The prolonged soulful sound emanating from a conch is considered auspicious too. In ancient India the sound of the conch served as warcry as well as war music. The conch here took the place of the western trumpet. 'Samku' is a Sanskrit word for Conch. 'Sam' stands for prosperity and 'Kham' can be taken to mean the sky which is the source of a variety of cosmic sounds and movements. The sound of the conch is also believed to expel the spirit of melancholy from a flow of music. Regarding the use of conch in war music, the Gods and heroes in Hindu mythology are associated each with a musical instrument. Lord Krishna's conch is called panjajanya, so called as it was bestowed upon Him by a demon called Panjajanya. Moreover, the 15th and 16th sloka of Chapter 1 in Bhagavat Gita says,

Sloka - 15

*Panjajanyam rishikeso devadatham
Dhananjaya paundram dhathmou
Mahasamkham bhimakaram vyakothara*

Sloka - 16

*Ananda vijayam rajakunthee
Puthroyudhishtira nakula sahadevas-cha
Sukhoshamani pushpakau*

According to the sloka Lord Krishna had panjajanya, Arjuna had devadhatham, Bheema had proundam, Yudhishtira had anandavijayam and Nakula had sukhosham which they all used in times of war. In temples, conch is filled with water and 'abhisheka' is conducted on the deity and it is called 'sankhabhishekam'.

Let us now examine why conch is used on auspicious occasions and its significance as 'omkara' in the light of vasthusasthra. Deciding whether a house or plot is acceptable as per vasthusastra is done by applying, Aayaadhi shadharga niyamam, that is to follow the rules laid down by acharyas or scholars in the field. Varahamihira has dealt with vasthu vidya in his 'Bruhath Samhitha'. Aayaadhishadhargam includes (1) Aayavyam (2) rishikam, (3) Yoni (4) Thithi (5) Vayassu or chuttu (6) Varam. When a house is to be constructed the likes and preferences of the master of the house and the design of the house will be subjected to the above mentioned aayaadhisha dharga rules and the circle of vastu (vastu mandala).

When it comes to the house to be built, its area and circumference are very important. As a result yoni also gains significance along with circumference. Of this yoni can be considered as the very breath or essence of vasthu.

Prana evadhamnam yathasamadh graahyas thathadh yogyayoni prathetha According to this law, a house has to be constructed according to the measurement of yoni. The names assigned to yoni of vastusastra are the same as in astrology. Yoni is calculated by fixing the circumference of a plot or room and dividing it by eight and the balance is taken as yoni ($P \times 3/8$) P is the circumference.

The names of eight yonis, the direction each yoni faces and its impact on the occupant of the house are as follows :

No.	yonidhvajam	direction of yoni	result of yoni
1	dhvajam	east	fulfillment of desires
2	dhumam	south east	fear
3	simham	south	progress/prosperity
4	kukkuram	south west	dispute
5	vrishabham	west	financial progress
6	kharam (ass)	north west	fear
7	gajam	north	spirituality/prosperity
8	vayasam (cow)	north east	extinction of progeny

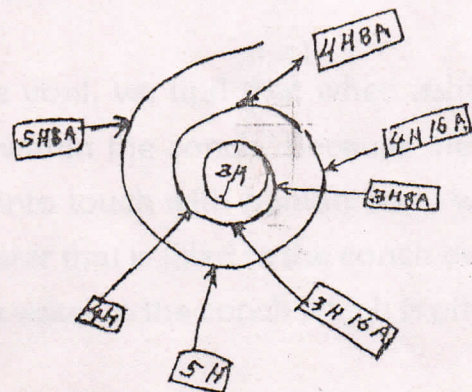
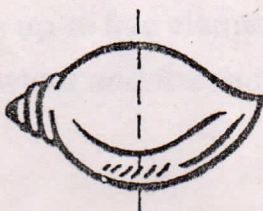
Of this 1, 3, 5 & 7, are auspicious or favourable to the master of the house and 2, 4, 6 & 8 are inauspicious.

In the case of rooms or builtup area dhwaya yoni is suitable for eastern buildings, dhwajasimha yoni would be suitable for rooms on the southern side, building situated on the west would take vrushabhasimha yoni and for building on the north gajavrushabha yoni would be suitable. But care should be taken to avoid simh and gaja ayoni for a Building. As they are negative yonis, those who occupy these rooms are likely to quarrel and lose their peace of mind.

When the formula $P \times 3$ is used to fix yoni we find that the minimum measurement of circumference (72 cm x 3) hashta. A hashta is equal to 72 cms. Hence yoni = $3 \times 3/8 = 9/8$ balance - 1.

Minimum circumference	Method	balance	yonis
3 H	$\frac{3 \times 3}{8}$	1	dhvajam
3 H 8 A	$\frac{3H \ 8 \ A \times 3}{8}$	2	dhumam
3 H 16 A	$\frac{3H \ 16 \ A \times 3}{8}$	3	simham
4 H	$\frac{4H \times 3}{8}$	4	kukkooram
4 H 8 A	$\frac{4H \ 8A \times 3}{8}$	5	vrushabham
4 H 16 A	$\frac{4H \ 16A \times 3}{8}$	6	kharam
5 H	$\frac{5H \times 3}{8}$	7	gajam
5 H 8 A	$\frac{5H \ 8 \ A \times 3}{8}$	8	vaayasam

We will see what we get when these circumferences are put in a graph.



HELICAL CIRCLE

Helical shape will be made clear if the cross section of a conch is taken.

What we understand from the above calculation is that when the eight yonis (ashtayoni) come together they would represent the eight directions of the universe. The invisible and minute bodies of the universe are also made visible. This is made possible as air, one of the five elements forcefully passes through the helical shaped conch, its musical sound is heard. The musical sound of the conch as we know, symbolizes omkara which means pranava mantra or brahmam. Hence the music emanating from a conch signifies the divine force or divine grace. Thus, the conch held by Lord Vishnu teaches that it is He who is the divine energy of the cosmos, that it is within Him that all living things big and small are merged and all these are not beyond His control.

In this context, it would be relevant to quote what Madhavji says about the conch in his book 'Secret behind the Devine grace of Temples'. The conch is the shell of a sea creature. 'Samkham' (conch) is the combination of two words sam and kham. Kham as mentioned earlier stands for the sky. On minute, detailed analysis samkham would, in Indian numerical science also refer to a demonination far beyond thousands, lakhs and crores and hence the conch or samkham would also represent the cosmos beyond the physical world. At the same time the conch which is a shell, when filled with water denotes the skull of the yogi who holds it. The conch also signifies the body of the priest who holds it chanting the holy pranavamantra and the water within the conch thereby turns pure and holy and this holy water is used for the pooja.

If this is seen in the light of the yoni, we find that when ashtayonis gather together devine grace is born within the conch. Because the conch brings out omkaradhvani by coming into touch with human body which is made up of five elements. Thus the water that is filled in the conch becomes holy water and the same applies to the water in the conch which is offered to

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the devotees after 'samkhabhisheka'. And the priest who performs this 'abhisheka' also stands bodily purified.

As already mentioned, of the ashtayonis four are favourable and auspicious to man and four are inauspicious. Yet the favourable as well as the unfavourable are necessary for the sustenance of the universe, as destruction is as much part of the universe as creation and preservation. This law of the universe entials us to take maximum advantage of the favourable yonis and building our habitat only on the favourable yonis. As yoni is the life and breath of vasthu, building a house on unfavourable yoni would adversely affect man's productivity, longevity and fulfilment of desires and the occupants of such a house will eventually grow weak and diseased. So, just as the water poured into the conch becomes holy water may God bless us to gain ultimate prosperity by building our houses on the favourable yonis by combinating with it the aayaadhishadharga and other rules of vasthu.