


The Man, Woman and Islamic Mystical tradition

Sayed Ali Alamolhoda¹ & Akram Askarzadeh Mazraeh²

1 Professor of theology and Islamic philosophy, University of Tehran, Iran.

2 Associate Professor of Philosophy of Religion, University of Mohaghegh Ardabil. Iran.

Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received 22 November 2024 Received in revised from 04 December 2024 Accepted 30 December 2024 Published online 28 January 2025</p> <p>Keywords: Woman, Mysticism, Islam, femininity (Tanith)</p>	<p>Within the tradition of Islamic mysticism, the figure of woman embodies a complex metaphysical and epistemological significance that extends beyond gender differentiation. The exploration of woman's nature in this context reveals her as a manifestation of multiplicity, creativity, and divine self-disclosure. Ontologically, the feminine symbolizes the unfolding of unity into plurality—the dynamic through which divine reality becomes perceivable in the world. From an epistemological perspective, the feminine principle is associated with imaginative cognition and intuitive perception, serving as a source of inspiration, revelation, and visionary insight. Such modes of knowing, grounded in inner experience, connect the feminine dimension to wisdom understood as the integration of contemplation and divine action. Practically, women in the mystical tradition are portrayed as mediators of divine attributes, translating metaphysical realities into lived experience. Through inspiration and spiritual intuition, they engage with the hidden dimensions of knowledge and embody the capacity for guidance and transformation. In this sense, the feminine in Islamic mysticism represents not passivity or subordination, but an active locus of wisdom, creativity, and spiritual authority within the unfolding of divine knowledge.</p>
<p>Cite this article: Alamolhoda, A. & Askarzadeh Mazraeh, A. (2025). The Man, Woman and Islamic Mystical tradition. <i>Journal of Contemporary Studies on Religion and Science</i>, 1(1), 151-174.</p>	
<p> Publisher: Research Institute of Science and Strategic Evolution</p>	

¹ **Email:** Alamolhoda@ut.ac.ir

² **Email:** ak.askarzadeh@gmail.com

Introduction

The first wave of feminism began with individual and group activities of Western women in the late 18th century and continued until the early 20th century. During this wave, women sought to eliminate their differences with men in legal, political, social, and economic spheres.¹ Although this movement can be considered justified in its initial wave, it should not be overlooked that to some extent, first-wave feminism became an instrument in the hands of male politicians to democratize developing societies.²

The second wave began in the 1960s and emerged as significantly more radical than the first wave, incorporating socialist feminism and Marxist feminism. This movement attempted to negate traditional female roles in the family institution through international conferences and sought to promote complete equality between women and men in all areas. They even extended the discussion of gender equality to the realms of knowledge and worldview, arguing that we are confronted with fundamental masculine concepts in the field of epistemology. These concepts and theories, they believed, systematically subordinate women in society, leading them to demand feminist changes in the fundamental concepts of knowledge and worldview. Consequently, the second wave of feminism adopted a philosophical and epistemological theme.³

The third wave of feminism, which took shape in the 1990s, primarily pursued liberation from any restrictions on sexual relationships and the utilization of various sexual opportunities for women. It had a social aspect and established connections with other social movements such as homosexuality and similar issues⁴. This wave has become known as the postmodern feminist wave.

The common core element in all three waves of feminism in the modern world is the question of the extent and boundaries of distinction between women and men. How should this distinction be drawn, and what are its limits? Any response to this question is contingent upon addressing the issue of what the essence of womanhood is in opposition to manhood. The term "in opposition" is deliberately used because the authors wish to insist that we should seek a formal definition (rather than a limiting definition) of woman that explains woman in confrontation with man and man in confrontation with woman. The nature of the modern world's question about the essence of womanhood inherently and historically interrogates this confrontation and ultimately seeks to determine the outcome of this encounter. Therefore, if we want to compel our intellectual tradition to respond to the philosophical and epistemological question of the

¹ Ian MacKenzie et al., *Political Ideologies*, trans. M. Qaed (Tehran: Markaz Publications, 1996), p.383.

² Will Durant, *The Age of Napoleon*, trans. Ismail Dowlatshahi and Ali Asghar Bahram Bigi (Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi Publications, 2001). P. 6

³ Marilyn French, *The War Against Women*, trans. Tourandokht Tamaddon (Maleki) (Tehran: Elmi Publications, 1992), p. 405; John Lechte, *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 240–251.

⁴ Muhammad Legenhausen, *Islam in Confrontation with Feminism*, trans. Narges Javandel, *Banovan-e Shia Magazine*, no. 2 (2004), p. 8.

essence of womanhood (especially as shaped in the second wave), we must pay attention to the aforementioned opposition that exists at the foundation of this modern question. We must, so to speak, prepare a dialectical answer from within our own intellectual tradition for this question, one that abstractly defines woman in opposition to man and man in opposition to woman.

This research endeavors to reexamine the intellectual system of Muhyiddin ibn Arabi's mysticism in response to this issue, given that Ibn Arabi has provided a suitable framework for this response. (The text elaborates on how and why Ibn Arabi's thought, more than many other Muslim thinkers, provides the groundwork for answering the modern question of "What is the essence of womanhood?") The aim is to elucidate the nature of womanhood and the essence of femininity in theoretical mysticism, thereby establishing an appropriate foundation for explaining feminine distinctions from masculine ones and vice versa from the perspective of this intellectual tradition. In this way, it seeks to present an answer to a fundamental question in today's modern and postmodern world that is commensurate with the status of Islamic civilization.

In elucidating the nature of female gender in Ibn Arabi's thought, as this article employs a triadic approach, it first explains the position of the triad in terms of methodology in studying Ibn Arabi. Subsequently, it expounds on the triad and its place in the hierarchy of existence according to Ibn Arabi, focusing on the triad of "Oneness (Wahidiyyah), Mercifulness (Rahimiyyah), and Soul (Nafs)". Then, it explicates the components of female gender in the triad of creativity (ontological component), wisdom (epistemological component), and guidance (praxeological component). Finally, based on this framework, it summarizes the female gender in contrast to the male gender from the perspective of Muhyiddin's mysticism.¹

Regarding the literature review of this research, it is worth noting that in 2012, an article titled "The Manifestation of Woman in Ibn Arabi's Thought" was published in the *Women and Culture Quarterly*, authored by Abdolrahim Anagheh and Somayeh Sabzevari. This article primarily focuses on the point that, from Ibn Arabi's perspective, women, like men, can traverse the stages of perfection and attain elevated spiritual stations. In 2016, another article titled "Femininity and Femaleness in Ibn Arabi's Ontology" was published in the *Journal of Religions and Mysticism*, in the first issue of the forty-ninth year, written by Fatemeh Vafaei and Hassan Ebrahimi. This article bears the closest thematic similarity to our paper and can be said to delve much deeper than others into the discussion of defining the nature of femininity in Ibn Arabi's

¹ According to Ibn Arabi's philosophy, nothing is created solely by Allah as "One"; every creation results from duality and union. Allah is pure existence and cannot connect with anything other than existence. The duality of Allah with existence manifests through the names "The Merciful" (Rahman) and "The Compassionate" (Rahim). The combination of these two names gives rise to "The Self of the Merciful," which represents the individuality of the triad of existence: Allah, Rahman, and Rahim. Through the Self of the Merciful, Allah achieves a second duality, and from this duality, the universal intellect and the universal soul are created (Ibn Arabi, 2010: 22, 46, 252-254).

thought and its components. However, even in this article, the focus of discussion is on explaining the point that some of God's attributes have a feminine nature, though ultimately it reduces femininity to the concept of motherhood. This section provides a comprehensive literature review of recent academic works exploring Ibn Arabi's perspective on women and femininity. In 2017, Mahmoud Reza Esfandiari and Simin Molaei published an article titled "Woman and Beauty from Ibn Arabi's Perspective" in the Journal of Philosophy. This work focused on women in Ibn Arabi's thought as manifestations of God's beauty and grace in existence. However, it did not address the essential nature of women or the fundamental contrast between male and female essences.

A 2019 article in the 46th issue of the Journal of Theology, titled "Femininity and Reincarnation in Ibn Arabi's Ontology," primarily discussed feminine identity as a factor in reincarnation, attributing this view to Ibn Arabi. The content of this article differs significantly from the current research. In 2021, Mohammad Javad Pashaei authored "Differences and Similarities between Men and Women from Ibn Arabi's Perspective" in the Journal of Women's Strategic Studies. While this article explored the commonalities and differences between men and women according to Ibn Arabi, it did not present a philosophical framework systematically explaining the nature of womanhood in contrast to manhood. The author's main concern was to demonstrate that Ibn Arabi did not consider men superior to women, focusing more on gender equality from Ibn Arabi's viewpoint.

Given this context, the current article claims to be the first to offer a systematic and methodical reading of Ibn Arabi's thought, attempting to reinterpret the ontological, epistemological, and praxeological distinctions between women and men from Ibn Arabi's perspective using a triadic model. Based on this interpretation, it aims to propose a comprehensive philosophical view in defining the components of femininity from the standpoint of Ibn Arabi's mysticism. This research thus positions itself as a novel contribution to the field, offering a more structured and holistic approach to understanding Ibn Arabi's conception of gender and femininity within his broader philosophical and mystical framework.

1. The Methodological Position of the Triadic Approach in Studying Ibn Arabi

This research employs a triadic model to elucidate two main aspects of Ibn Arabi's thought: "masculinity and femininity in existence" and "components of female gender". Ultimately, woman is synthesized based on a tripartite model of her components. This triadic conceptualization in explaining "woman" naturally raises the question: why does this study rely so heavily on a triadic model in terms of methodology when examining Ibn Arabi's intellectual system?

Ibn Arabi succinctly answers this question in the following verse from Tarjuman al-Ashwaq:

While My beloved is tree, but in fact He is one/
Just as The Father and the Son and the
Holy Spirit are in fact one thing.

كما صيّر و الاقنّام بالذات أفتما¹

تثليث محبوبى و قد كان واحدا

Ibn Arabi's attention to the trinity may have been influenced by his interaction with Christian thought in Andalusia. However, Ibn Arabi himself uses the term "kawn" (existence) to discuss how Allah manifests existentially, and he considers "kawn" to be triadic and threefold². He believes that Allah, who is singular, indeterminate, and formless, establishes a connection and conjugality with existence, and the product of this conjugality is the triplication of Allah at the level of attributes and names.³ In his view, the existential trinity of Allah is the product of a conjugality, and every conjugality is the product of a marriage in which one basis is the feminine element. Thus, femininity plays a crucial role in the permeation of Allah's existence into beings⁴. Even in the Muhammadan Bezels, he emphasizes the prominent role of femininity in the existential manifestation of Allah, considering two sides of the triangle he proposes to explain this manifestation as feminine⁵. Based on these observations, the triadic approach can be considered a methodological principle for research that explores the position of femininity in the levels of existence and in Ibn Arabi's intellectual system. According to this thinker's perspective, it explains the system of coming into being, the journey between "unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity," and the relationship between theory and practice.

2. Masculinity and Femininity in the Levels of Existence

Before delving into the explanation of female and male gender in Ibn Arabi's thought and their components, it is necessary to explore the concepts of masculinity (tadhkir) and femininity (ta'nith) as two modes of existence, or more precisely, two modes of existential manifestation. We must examine what significant characteristics masculine and feminine manifestations have in Ibn Arabi's thought and how masculinity and femininity can be defined in the various primary manifestations of existence proposed in his thinking. To this end, we must consider the following:

Allah is a unique and singular essence that desires to be known. For this purpose, He has revealed Himself, extending His existence to lower levels.⁶ This descent of existence in the form of Allah, Ahad (the One), and Wahid (the Unique) will be explained from Ibn Arabi's perspective, including how Ahad has a masculine identity and Wahid has a feminine identity.

¹ Muhammad ibn Ali Ibn Arabi, *Tarjuman al-Ashwaq*, with commentary by Reynold A. Nicholson, trans. Gol Baba Saidi (Tehran: Ruzaneh, 1999 AH), Twelfth Qasida

² Muhammad ibn Ali Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, trans. Muhammad Khajavi (Tehran: Mowla, 2010 AH), 170.

³ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 363-364

⁴ Ibid, p. 228.

⁵ Ibid, p. 425

⁶ Ibid, p. 283& Abu al-'Ala Afifi, *A Commentary on Fusus al-Hikam (Critique of Ibn Arabi's Thought)*, trans. Nasrollah Hekmat (Tehran: Elham, 2001), p. 386.

Then, the issue of Allah's pairing with mercy and the descent of mercy to Rahman (the All-Merciful) and Rahim (the Most Merciful) will be addressed, noting that Rahman is masculine and Rahim is feminine.

In the third stage, Intellect and Soul, as the first and second creations emanating from Allah, will be discussed, exploring the femininity of Soul and the masculinity of Intellect in this extension and manifestation.

Through this process, the overall position of masculinity and femininity in the process of Allah's appearance and manifestation in the levels of existence will be determined. Femininity and masculinity will regain their meaning as two modes of existential manifestation in the hierarchy of being.

2.1. Allah, Ahad, Wahid

According to Ibn Arabi's thought, the permeation of the Absolute Truth's existence cannot occur from Allah in a singular, purely unified form; it must be paired (shaf)¹. In Ibn Arabi's philosophy, any emanation or creation is solely the product of conjugality and pairing or coupling². However, the question arises: how does God become paired? Allah is pure existence, and there is nothing other than existence, so He cannot be paired with anything other than existence.

The flow of existence from Allah occurs in two ways: direct and indirect. In the direct flow, existence manifests in two levels: essence and name (dhati and asma)³. In the essential manifestation, God becomes determined as an essence without form, and what comes into appearance is the aggregate of all attributes of the Truth, serving as His perfect mirror⁴. Allah in this essential manifestation does not accept multiplicity, thus remaining uncountable, non-multiple, and simple, hence subject to a kind of ambiguity and veil. God in this manifestation is like a mirror-like place where the forms of the Beautiful Names can be manifested. Thus, the first manifestation of Allah's essence is the locus and place of His second manifestation⁵. God in the first manifestation, being the aggregate of all Beautiful Names and all-encompassing, is ambiguous and unknowable. This level is called Ahadiyyah (Absolute Oneness).

In the second level of direct manifestation, called Wahidiyyah (Unity), which is the same as the nominal manifestation, God reveals His various, multiple, and diverse names and attributes in the mirror of essence (the first manifestation) (Ibn Arabi, 2010: 37; Qaysari, 2008: 380). In this secondary manifestation, each name and attribute of God is revealed with a determined form, by which it is distinguished from other names⁶. At this stage, each name has a form, and

¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 228. & Dawud ibn Mahmud Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, trans. Muhammad Khajavi, vols. 1–2 (Tehran: Mowla, 2008). P. 381- 384.

² Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 109-110 & Fatemeh Vafaei and Hasan Ebrahimi, "Femininity and Feminization in Ibn Arabi's Ontology," *Adyan va Erfan* 49, no. 1 (2016). P. 123-143

³ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 28

⁴ Ibid, p. 37

⁵ Ibid, p. 45 & Afifi, *A Commentary on Fusus al-Hikam (Critique of Ibn Arabi's Thought)*, p. 164- 165.

⁶ Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, p. 279.

each form reveals a knowledge of the Divine Essence. Therefore, this stage is also called the "opening of the unseen" or the "opening of the secret". According to Ibn Arabi, what appeared as a secret in the stage of essential manifestation is unveiled in the second stage¹. In the nominal manifestation, the veil and ambiguity are removed, and the divine attributes and names become enumerated and specific in eternity, with attributes becoming countable and divided into ninety-nine names. These ninety-nine names are called the "mothers of names" or the "fixed entities"². Thus, the nominal manifestation is the station of multiplicity.

In the indirect manifestation, the basic and central names and fixed entities reveal themselves in the forms of possibilities, and in this manner, the existence of the Exalted Truth becomes manifest in creatures. From the enumerated eternal names, an uncountable number of forms appear, or in other words, the enumerated existence overflows into the world of possibilities.

Thus, the Lord accepts multiplicity in the station of Ahadiyyah (Absolute Oneness) at two levels: once in the fixed entities and the station of Wahidiyyah (Unity), and again in the contingent existents³. Therefore, God's knowledge is divided into eternal knowledge and contingent knowledge⁴. Hence, the referent of the form of contingent beings is the fixed entities, the referent of the fixed entities is the Lord's essence in the station of Ahadiyyah, and the referent of Ahadiyyah is Allah Himself. This means that every created thing has a share of Allah and is not other than Him⁵.

However, the reader naturally wonders how this explanation of the permeation of Allah's existence to Ahad and Wahid relates to the discussion of femininity and masculinity. How do Ahad and Wahid connect with the issue of gender? To answer this question, it is necessary to explain the flow from Allah to Rahman and Rahim, discuss the masculinity of Rahman and the femininity of Rahim, and equate Rahman with Ahad and Rahim with Wahid.

2-2. Allah, Rahman, Rahim

According to Ibn Masarra al-Andalusi, the supreme name "Allah" is the source of divine mercy and sublime attributes. The name Rahman is the manifestation of the divine essence at the level of attributes and names, while "Rahim" is the level of the emergence of these attributes in contingent beings and degrees of the world of existence (Khedri, 2022: 525). Ibn Arabi may have been influenced by his nearly contemporary fellow countryman in proposing the triad of Allah, Rahman, Rahim. However, Ibn Arabi's view differs from Ibn Masarra's in that Ibn Masarra considers the name Rahman as direct manifestation and Rahim as indirect manifestation, while Ibn Arabi considers both Rahman and Rahim as direct manifestations, with Rahman corresponding to Ahadiyyah and Rahim to Wahidiyyah.

¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 32

² Ibid, p. 14

³ Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, p. 42.

⁴ Afifi, *A Commentary on Fusus al-Hikam (Critique of Ibn Arabi's Thought)*, p. 374- 375.

⁵ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 80-82

In Tarjuman al-Ashwaq and in interpreting the verse "Say, 'Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Merciful. Whichever [name] you call - to Him belong the best names'"¹, Muhyiddin refers to the triad of Allah, Rahman, and the Beautiful Names. He considers Allah as the source of divine mercy, which is divided into two names: "Al-Rahman" and "the Beautiful Names"² Then, in Fusus al-Hikam, while explaining the types of mercy, he specifies that Rahim refers to the Beautiful Names: "So Solomon came with the two mercies... which are Rahman and Rahim... the attention to the two mercies that Solomon mentioned in the two names, which are interpreted in the Arabic language as Rahman and Rahim..."³. Thus, by comparing his expressions in Tarjuman al-Ashwaq and the Solomonic chapter of Fusus, it becomes clear that he means by Rahim the level of the Beautiful Names or the level of Wahidiyyah, and consequently, Rahman corresponds to the level of Ahadiyyah.

This passage further elucidates Ibn Arabi's conception of Rahman and Rahim in relation to Ahadiyyah and Wahidiyyah.

Another point that leads to understanding Rahman and Rahim in Sheikh's words as equivalent to Ahadiyyah and Wahidiyyah is that both Rahman and Rahim are derived from the root "rahima" and share the same derivation. Ibn Arabi believes that Allah has made mercy obligatory upon Himself⁴, and mercy is equivalent to existence and creation. Mercy is the primary characteristic of Allah, and thus every existent thing is subject to divine mercy⁵. Allah, through His mercy, brings everything from the realm of non-existence into the world of existence, and the names Rahman and Rahim are two methods for the descent of divine gifts⁶.

In the Solomonic chapter of Fusus al-Hikam, in explaining the distinction between Rahman and Rahim, he states: "So Solomon came with the two mercies: the mercy of grace and the mercy of obligation, which are Rahman and Rahim. He bestowed grace through Rahman and made it obligatory through Rahim, and this obligation is from grace. Thus, Rahim entered into Rahman as inclusion." From the Sheikh's perspective, mercy first manifests from the Divine Essence as infinite grace and benevolence without limits, and then a limited and finite mercy takes shape from within it⁷.

If we consider these points along with what has been said about God's essential manifestation in the level of Ahadiyyah, its indeterminate nature, its non-multiplicity and simplicity, and that it encompasses all the Beautiful Names, and also consider the multiplicity of God's manifestation at the level of Wahidiyyah into ninety-nine determinate names, each possessing infinite forms that are the source of the appearance and emergence of contingent beings, it

¹ Qur'an 17:110

² Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 46

³ Ibid, p. 250-254

⁴ Ibid, p. 252

⁵ Ibid, p. 328

⁶ William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (2022). P. 30

⁷ Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, p. 140.

becomes clearer that Rahman-ness corresponds to Ahadiyyah and Rahim-ness corresponds to Wahidiyyah.

Mercy, therefore, is the very existence that intercedes for the divine essence in the triad of Allah, ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim, just as existence interceded for God's essence in the triad of Allah, Ahad, Wahid. God is interceded by mercy and manifests in two forms: ar-Rahman and ar-Rahim. However, the question still lingers in the mind, as in the previous discussion: what is the relationship between Allah's manifestation in ar-Rahman and ar-Rahim and the issue of gender, masculinity, and femininity?

In response to this important question, it is worth noting that Ibn Arabi has associated the Merciful (ar-Rahman) with the masculine attribute "pure" and the Compassionate (ar-Rahim) with the feminine attribute "mixed": "Know that God Almighty grants His creation two kinds of mercy... It is either pure and clean mercy,... and this is given the name ar-Rahman. It is a merciful giving. Or it is mixed mercy... and this is divine giving, for divine giving cannot be absolute without being through the agency of one of the custodians of the Names"¹

Corbin, in his book "Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi," considers the form of the Names as a symbol of beauty² and thus assumes it to be feminine³. Therefore, the manifestation in the station of ar-Rahim, which is the manifestation of the Names and the source of the appearance of forms, will be feminine. Consequently, Wahidiyyah (Unity) and Rahimiyyah (Compassion), which are the levels of plurality and multiplicity of attributes and names, and where multiplicity begins, are feminine. On the other hand, Ahadiyyah (Oneness) and Rahmaniyyah (Mercifulness), which are the levels of non-determination, purity, and simplicity, are masculine.

The second point indicating the femininity of the station of Wahidiyyah and Rahimiyyah is that from this level, where divine names manifest in multiple and diverse forms, the terms "central names" and "fixed essences" have been used. The words "umm" (mother/centre/core) and "ayn" (essence) are both feminine. Thus, this nomenclature can be considered as an indication that the level of Wahidiyyah has a feminine identity, while in contrast, the level of Ahadiyyah and Rahmaniyyah has a masculine identity.

Therefore, in Ibn Arabi's thought, masculinity is associated with purity, oneness, simplicity, ambiguity, and conciseness, and the foundation of masculinity is formed based on these concepts. In contrast, femininity is linked with multiplicity, plurality, and manifestation. These concepts form the basis of femininity in Ibn Arabi's thought.

¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 41-42

² Ibid, p. 328

³ Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, trans. Inshallah Rahmati (Tehran: Sofia, 2020).

2.3. Allah, Intellect, Soul

The Universal Intellect contains all the names and attributes of Allah in a concise and comprehensive manner. Therefore, like ar-Rahman, it is inward and lacks outward manifestation. However, the Universal Soul possesses all the fixed essences and each of the divine names within itself, manifesting as an essence that creates the world of possibilities. Thus, creation is the responsibility of the Universal Soul, while unification is the task of the Universal Intellect. The Soul intercedes for the Intellect, and from their union, the world of possibilities emerges¹. The Soul contains the forms of the world of possibilities within itself and, by interceding for the Intellect, actualizes these forms. Hence, it is called the Preserved Tablet². On the other hand, the Intellect is like an unpolished mirror that is cleansed by the Breath of the Merciful (Nafas al-Rahman), allowing the forms of the Soul to be manifested and actualized within it. For this reason, it is called the Supreme Pen, and it is the breath and exhalation of the Merciful that enables the manifestation of the Soul's forms in the Intellect.³

But what is the relationship between the triad of Allah, Intellect, and Soul and the issue of masculinity and femininity? In response to this important question, it should be noted that based on the following indicators, a feminine identity should be considered for the Soul, and consequently, the Intellect assumes a masculine identity. Firstly, according to Qaysari, the relationship between the Intellect and the Soul is like the relationship between Adam and Eve⁴. Secondly, as mentioned, the Soul is on par with Rahimiyyah (Compassion), which has a feminine identity, while the Intellect is on par with Rahmaniyyah (Mercifulness), which has a masculine identity. Thirdly, both Rahmaniyyah and the Intellect are stations of unity and ambiguity, which serve as the locus for the manifestation of the forms of Wahidiyyah (Unity) and the Soul, which are stations of detail. Thus, multiplicity, plurality, and detail, which constitute creation, are related to the Soul and Wahidiyyah. Therefore, the Soul corresponds to Wahidiyyah and Rahimiyyah, while the Intellect corresponds to Ahadiyyah (Oneness) and Rahmaniyyah. Since the Soul creates, and creation is a feminine act, the Soul also has a feminine identity⁵. Of course, the feminine nature of creation and the realization of multiplicity were previously mentioned in the explanation of Wahidiyyah and Rahimiyyah.

3. Femininity in Existence

From what has been discussed, one can associate masculinity with three manifestations of existence in Ahadiyyah (Oneness), Rahmaniyyah (Mercifulness), and Intellect, while femininity can be related to Wahidiyyah (Unity), Rahimiyyah (Compassion), and Soul. However, these associations raise an initial question: Ahad is of a higher order than Wahid, Rahman is higher

¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 2

² Ibid, p. 64

³ Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, p. 140

⁴ Ibid, p. 214.

⁵ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 2

than Rahim, and Intellect is higher than Soul. Does this imply that masculinity is superior to femininity? In response to this crucial question, one must consider Ibn Arabi's perspective on the relationship between Intellect and Soul. He believes that the Intellect is the locus and mirror for the manifestation of forms inherent in the Soul. The Intellect is merely a locus, and the world is merely a form, but the Soul is both locus and form¹. He asserts that if we consider the hierarchical system of existence, the Intellect has a positional superiority over the Soul, but this superiority is not essential, as only Allah is inherently exalted. Rather, it refers to positional elevation.

According to Muhyiddin, elevation occurs in two forms: positional and status.² Positional elevation is specific to the masculine, while status elevation pertains to the feminine. He considers the feminine to have status elevation over the masculine. He finds an example of positional elevation in the verse "The Most Merciful [who is] above the Throne established" (Taha/5), which refers to the Merciful (masculine), and an example of status elevation in the verses "Everything will perish except His Face" (Qasas/88) and "Is there a deity with Allah?" (Naml/90), where elevation is attributed to "ilah" (deity), which is feminine³. Therefore, just as the Intellect and Soul each possess their own specific elevation relative to the other, without either having essential superiority over the other, and their elevation implies their distinction from each other, masculine and feminine do not have superiority over one another. The fact that masculinity is associated with Ahad, Rahman, and Intellect does not imply its superiority over the feminine, which is linked to Wahid, Rahim, and Soul.

(In the discussion of femininity, as will be seen, the cognitive faculty of women is introduced as the faculty of imagination, while for men it is reason. Here too, reason and imagination do not have superiority or inferiority to each other in Ibn Arabi's thought. Rather, reason is responsible for transcendent knowledge of Allah, while imagination is responsible for immanent knowledge of God. This point should not lead one to think that Muhyiddin has posited any superiority of men over women.)

The second point regarding the nature of femininity and masculinity in Muhyiddin's thought is that the core essence in the three concepts of Ahad (One), Rahman (Merciful), and Intellect is that in these three cases, we are dealing with states of unity, comprehensiveness, and transcendence, respectively. In other words, the characteristic of Ahad in contrast to Wahid is that it has an integrated and unified state, while Wahid has a pluralistic and determined state, possessing ninety-nine names and fixed essences. Similarly, Rahman has a state of comprehensiveness, ambiguity, and purity, while Rahim is expansive, pluralistic, and manifest.

¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 127

² Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, p. 364

³ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 70-71

The Intellect lacks shape and form and is purely simple, while the Soul possesses various forms¹. It is the Soul that causes individuation in humans, distinguishing each person from others, and in the world, it causes the individuation and determination of contingent matters²

Thus, it can be observed that femininity represents existence experiencing multiplicity, determination, individuation, and manifestation, while masculinity represents unity, conciseness, and comprehensiveness. Therefore, femininity leads to multiplicity, creation, and manifestation, while masculinity results in integration, comprehensiveness, and ambiguity. To speak in terms more congruent with Ibn Arabi's mysticism, masculinity pertains to the arc of ascent, and femininity to the arc of descent. Masculinity symbolizes "multiplicity in unity," while femininity symbolizes "unity in multiplicity." For Ibn Arabi, humanity is the combination of masculinity and femininity³. With this definition of femininity and masculinity, the next step is to examine the human being and explore femininity in humans (womanhood) and masculinity in humans (manhood).

4. Components of Feminine Gender in Ibn Arabi's Thought

Ibn Arabi's encounters with three mystical women may have had a considerable influence on his thoughts about the feminine element (although this is not easily assessable in a philosophical investigation). He benefited from the teachings of two female mystics named Fatima Qurtubi and Yasmin Marshani, and he also wrote the book "Tarjuman al-Oshwaq" influenced by a woman named Nizam⁴. Additionally, in his works, he paid special attention to two female personalities: Mary, peace be upon her, and the mother of Moses, blessings be upon her. Ibn Arabi also speaks of an angelic woman who symbolizes wisdom, who guided him and taught him the science of realities⁵. Given this status of women in Ibn Arabi's perspective, it seems natural that in his works, unlike many Muslim thinkers, one can find serious implications regarding feminine identity and the philosophical status of women.

The authors of this research have reviewed the components of feminine gender in three axes - ontological, epistemological, and praxeological - in Muhyiddin's thought, in order to achieve a philosophical image of feminine identity in his thinking.

¹ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*. P.86

² Ibrahim Rezaei and Qasem Kakaei, "Imagination from the Perspective of Ibn Arabi and Rumi," *Erfan Quarterly* 6, no. 12 (2015). p. 119

³ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p.

⁴ Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*. P.121-126

⁵ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 220

4.1. Ontological Component: Shith as a Symbol of Creativity

Shith is a sign of God's manifestation in the station of Wahidiyyah (Unity) and Rahimiyyah (Compassion)¹. Shith is a unifier of opposites² as he is both abstract and material. ³Shith is of the nature of spirit, and his characteristic, like the spirit, is that he gives life⁴. His necessary action is creation and giving existence.⁵ It should be noted that for Ibn Arabi, creation is not bringing into existence from non-existence, but rather manifestation and revelation. Ibn Arabi uses the word "nafkh" (blowing) to convey the meaning of transferring existence, relating it to the word "nafath," from which he also derives "Shith"⁶. Therefore, Shith becomes the manifestation of breathing life into beings and giving existence, and his action is creation⁷. Thus, Shith, representing Wahidiyyah and Rahimiyyah and acting like them, is feminine, which is the first aspect of his femininity.

The second aspect of Shith's femininity is his similarity to the Soul, as he is both abstract and material, just like the Soul. The Soul's primary identity is that it is the form of the Breath of the Merciful, having the identity of breathing and giving existence, thus creating (manifesting) the world of possibilities⁸. Therefore, Shith, like the Soul, unifies the opposites of abstraction and materiality and is life-giving and creative, thus having a feminine identity.

On this basis, Ibn Arabi believes that Shith opens the "cores of names" that are manifested in him in a general form, creating them as multiple and diverse individuals and persons. Each person is entirely distinct from others, and nothing or no one is ever repeated⁹. Afifi argues that this explains why, from the Sufi perspective, Shith possesses the station of the "keys to the unseen," as knowledge of the manifestations of divine names, the manifestations of the mothers of names, and fixed essences is solely dependent on Shith¹⁰. According to Corbin, the Soul is passive in that it receives forms and divine names, and active in that it creates possibilities. Thus, the Truth is hidden in the Soul, and on the other hand, the Soul reveals the Truth, so it is the "secret of its father." As Shith also symbolizes this characteristic of the Soul, he is also called the "secret of his father"¹¹. Therefore, Shith both possesses a feminine identity and symbolizes creativity.

¹ Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, p. 244 & Afifi, *A Commentary on Fusus al-Hikam (Critique of Ibn Arabi's Thought)*, p. 76.

² Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, p. 285

³ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 44-45

⁴ Ibid, p. 221

⁵ Ibid, p. 64

⁶ Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, p. 228

⁷ Afifi, *A Commentary on Fusus al-Hikam (Critique of Ibn Arabi's Thought)*, p. 69.

⁸ Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, p. 285

⁹ Ibid, p. 280

¹⁰ Afifi, *A Commentary on Fusus al-Hikam (Critique of Ibn Arabi's Thought)*, p. 76.

¹¹ Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, p. 279

It's important to note that from Ibn Arabi's perspective, woman is a symbol of creation. Firstly, creation in his view means what has been realized in fixed essences in a hidden form and becomes manifest in the sensory and material world. Woman is the cause and reason in the sensory and material world¹, and what is the cause of existence in the sensory and material world plays the same role in the higher world of abstractions. For if a force is creative and life-giving in the lower world, it will have the same role in the higher world². This is why the cause is feminine and womanly.

On the other hand, the term "ummahat al-asma" (cores of names) indicates the femininity of the soul and the cause of existence in the world of possibilities. Additionally, the connection between the words "umm" (mother/core/center) and "ma" (water), which are symbols and agents of life³, as well as the relationship between the words "rahim" (womb) and "rahim" (compassionate), and the understanding that a woman's womb is the source of multiplicity and existence in humans, while the name "rahim" is the source of multiplicity and creation of possibilities⁴, further confirm that woman is the life-giving cause and the source of life, and Shith is a symbol of creativity and life-giving with a feminine identity. Therefore, Shith can be considered as a symbol of the creative component of woman.

4-2. Epistemological Component: Khidr as a Symbol of Wisdom

According to Ibn Arabi, sciences are divided into two categories: (a) fallible and (b) infallible. Fallible sciences are knowledge obtained through thinking, while infallible sciences are acquired through unveiling and taste, which God shines upon the hearts of the people of God like a light⁵. Ibn Arabi uses the term "hukm" for fallible sciences and "hikmah" (wisdom) for intuitive and unveiling sciences, with the former being masculine and the latter feminine, indicating that he considers the identity of wisdom to be feminine.

Ibn Arabi posits three processes for wisdom: true dreams, inspiration, and revelation, and he considers the cognitive faculty that acquires it through these processes to be the faculty of imagination. The dimensions of this discourse will be explained in more detail below.

4-2-1. The Femininity of Wisdom

One of the most important events in mystical wayfaring and attaining the intuitive knowledge of wisdom is the seeker's encounter with one of the spiritual guides or guiding angels. For Ibn Arabi, this occurred through his encounter with Nizam and facing a guiding woman while circumambulating the Kaaba. Ibn Arabi considers that woman to be the visible manifestation of wisdom⁶. He also introduces Nizam in "Tarjuman al-Ashwaq" as the concrete and sensory form

¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 424

² Afifi, *A Commentary on Fusus al-Hikam (Critique of Ibn Arabi's Thought)*, p. 7

³ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 127

⁴ Ibid, p. 136

⁵ Ibid, p. 15-16

⁶ Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, p. 230

of divine knowledge¹ Therefore, the tangible symbol of wisdom in his view is a woman, which indicates the feminine identity of wisdom.

Corbin makes a notable comparison between Greek Sophia and Ibn Arabi's wisdom. He considers the guiding woman during the circumambulation of the Kaaba and Nizam as the supreme example of Greek Sophia². Sophia is derived from the word "sophos"³. Plato considers Thales as a prime example of sophos and mentions characteristics for him and six other ancient sages, through which one can discern the similarity between wisdom and Sophia⁴⁵.

Firstly, Sophia is knowledge related to the higher world. Thales, while observing the stars and heavens, falls into a pit and is mocked by a young girl from Thrace (which is a metaphor for the femininity of Sophia). However, the loftiness and transcendence of Sophia is not of the type of positional superiority compared to other forms of knowledge. Therefore, it must refer to status superiority, and status is a feminine matter. Thus, its status superiority points to the feminine identity of Sophia, and its symbolization in the Thracian maid reinforces this implication.

Secondly, Sophia can transform its celestial wisdom into sensible forms and practical skills⁶. This is why Plato distinguishes sophos in the Republic from pure theoretical contemplation and in Gorgias from complete practical skill or *empeiria*⁷. He links sophos with *techné*.

Thirdly, sophos plays the role of a guide and savior from crises, and merely having theoretical contemplation or practical skill does not make one worthy of being called sophos⁸.

Therefore, Sophia is celestial and guiding knowledge with a feminine symbol. Because it aims to guide, it must have concrete and sensory manifestations and possess a tangible symbol in nature. However, this does not mean that Sophia is preoccupied with worldly matters; rather, the world is insignificant in Sophia's view, as Thales well demonstrates in the story of renting olive presses, as recounted by Aristotle.⁹

¹ Ibid, p. 253

² Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, p. 197

³ W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greek Philosophers from Thales to Aristotle* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 27

⁴ According to Ibn Arabi's philosophy, nothing is created solely by Allah as "One"; every creation results from duality and union. Allah is pure existence and cannot connect with anything other than existence. The duality of Allah with existence manifests through the names "The Merciful" (Rahman) and "The Compassionate" (Rahim). The combination of these two names gives rise to "The Self of the Merciful," which represents the individuality of the triad of existence: Allah, Rahman, and Rahim. Through the Self of the Merciful, Allah achieves a second duality, and from this duality, the universal intellect and the universal soul are created (Ibn Arabi, 2010: 22, 46, 252-254)

⁵ Seyyed Nematollah Abdolrahimzadeh, "Theory and Practice at the Beginning of Philosophy," *Gharb-shenasi-e Bonyadi* 8, no. 2 (2017). p. 2-3.

⁶ Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2005), 600a, 3-5.

⁷ Ibid, 600a, 3-5.

⁸ Abdolrahimzadeh, "Theory and Practice at the Beginning of Philosophy," p. 10.

⁹ In his book "Politics," Aristotle recounts a story about Thales: Thales was criticized for his poverty. However, during winter, he predicted a bountiful olive harvest in summer due to his knowledge of astronomy. He then

Sophia has knowledge of transcendent truths and the superior roots of the material world, and it applies this knowledge in nature. This is why Plato, in the Republic, defines Sophia as the knowledge of Forms (fixed essences)¹. Thus, Sophia is the sensible form of ideal meanings that have come from heaven to nature and actualize those transcendent perspectives in nature².

Here is an academic English translation of the provided text on Islamic philosophy and mysticism:

Wisdom (hikmat) also possesses characteristics akin to sophia: Firstly, it has a feminine symbol (the guiding woman during circumambulation), and secondly, it encompasses three processes: veridical dreams, inspiration, and revelation. The central axis in intuitive perception within these three processes is the faculty of imagination. In other words, wisdom manifests from the celestial realm through the processes of revelation, inspiration, and veridical dreams, taking form in sensory and natural images within the faculty of imagination. Consequently, the sage (hakim) does not merely engage in theoretical contemplation but endeavors to employ transcendent knowledge in sensory and natural forms to facilitate the guidance of others. Thus, in both sophia and hikmat, we encounter analogical cognition³.

The cognition of God is achievable through two methods: via negativa (tanzih) and via positiva (tashbih). The faculty of imagination, as the primary cognitive faculty in intuitive knowledge and wisdom, possesses the capacity to render Allah manifest and perceivable in sensible forms. God is infinite and transcendent above all things, resembling none, yet simultaneously resembling all, as He manifests Himself in the forms of all things.⁴

The essential cognition of Allah is an ambiguous knowledge devoid of form, undertaken by the "intellect," and is apophatic in nature. However, the nominal cognition of God is mediated through forms and is thus cataphatic, being the work of the "imagination." In this cognition, God's essence manifests in the matrices of divine names and immutable archetypes, with each name and attribute of Allah assuming a distinct form from other names. The imagination, utilizing the processes of inspiration, revelation, and veridical dreams, receives these forms and casts them into particular sensory and natural forms. Through the manifestation of the matrices of divine names in particular sensory and natural forms, it attains a cataphatic cognition of Allah⁵. Therefore, firstly, imagination is the primary cognitive faculty in wisdom and sophia. Secondly, both sophia and hikmat possess an intuitive perceptual process and are not acquirable through conventional teaching and learning methods. The third similarity between the two is

rented all the oil presses in Miletus and Chios for a small sum. When the harvest season arrived and the demand for oil presses surged, he rented them out at a high price, demonstrating that engaging with the material world and accumulating wealth was easy for him, but he chose not to occupy himself with such trivial matters (Politics, 1259a 6-18).

¹ Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2005), 476.

² Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, p. 250-260

³ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*. P.128

⁴ Ibid, P.116-118. & Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, p. 383.

⁵ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*. P.39

that the symbol of wisdom, both in Ibn Arabi's thought and in ancient Greece, is a woman. The fourth similarity lies in the fact that the terms for both forms of knowledge (hikmat as opposed to hukm, and sophia) are feminine words.

Thus, wisdom, like sophia, has a feminine identity, and the primary perceptual faculty in this type of knowledge is the faculty of imagination. However, what needs to be considered next is whether imagination also has a feminine identity. If the answer to this question is affirmative, one can claim that wisdom is knowledge crystallized in the female gender, and imagination is also the cognitive faculty specific to this gender.

4.2.2. The Feminine Nature of Imagination

As explained, imagination is the primary perceptual faculty in wisdom and sophia. The function of imagination is to embody divine names and attributes in sensory and natural forms through cataphatic cognition by connecting to the level of Unity (wahdiyyah)¹. Through this process, it gains the ability to apply this divine knowledge in solving problems and crises. Hence, the wise person does not merely engage in theoretical contemplations but assumes a guiding position and cognitive action. Imagination, considering its function and operation, can be argued to have a feminine identity from two perspectives: firstly, the correspondence it establishes with the level of Unity and Mercifulness, and secondly, its similarity to the soul.

Humans are the microcosm, and existence is the macrocosm². Therefore, the levels and faculties of the soul have a serious correspondence with the levels of existence in Ibn Arabi's thought. Ibn Arabi uses the realm of imagination to refer to two domains: disjoined imagination and conjoined imagination³. In his view, the realm of disjoined imagination is the same as the immutable archetypes and matrices of divine names. The realm of conjoined imagination, which is the faculty of imagination itself, is like a mirror in which the forms of the realm of disjoined imagination are reflected. Thus, receiving the ideal forms of the realm of disjoined imagination is one of the actions of the human soul's faculty of imagination, and the ideal forms of disjoined imagination manifest in sensible and natural forms in the realm of conjoined imagination⁴.

Therefore, imaginal forms originate from immutable archetypes in the realm of Unity and Mercifulness but are perceived in sensory and imaginal forms⁵. Imaginal forms are embedded in the realm of disjoined imagination, and disjoined imagination, which is the same as the level of Unity and Mercifulness, is actually the form of the Truth. Consequently, imaginal forms also become, indirectly, the form of the Truth⁶. Hence, it can be claimed that the soul's faculty of

¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 49-51.

² Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, p. 157-158

³ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*. P.143-144.

⁴ Abd al-Rahman, Jami, *Naqd al-Nusus fi Sharh Fusus al-Hikam*. (Tehran: Anjuman-e Hikmat va Falsafeh, 1977).

⁵ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*. P.89.

⁶ Afifi, *A Commentary on Fusus al-Hikam (Critique of Ibn Arabi's Thought)*, p. 128

imagination has the ability to make God manifest and perceptible in sensory forms, and the knowledge resulting from the faculty of imagination becomes a cataphatic cognition that the mind comprehends through likening God to creation¹.

Thus, imagination both derives its forms from the realm of Mercifulness and the level of Unity, and like Mercifulness, which causes the multiplicity of the Essence of the Truth (may He be exalted), it multiplies the essence in the forms of the matrices of divine names and immutable archetypes. Through immutable archetypes, it creates the world of possibilities and particulars. Similarly, the faculty of imagination reflects the forms of divine names and then manifests them in sensible and natural forms². Therefore, both in terms of origin and function, the faculty of imagination bears a striking resemblance to the station of Unity and Mercifulness, and thus it can be argued that, like them, it has a feminine and womanly nature.

The second aspect of the feminine nature of the faculty of imagination is its similarity to the soul. The soul exists between pure abstraction and pure materiality, and imagination is likewise between intellect and sense, having an intermediary identity like the soul. Imagination is the domain of spiritualization, embodiment, and representation (Rezaei et al., 2015: 34). The world of the soul is also the locus of the determination of divine names, which becomes the origin of the world of possibilities, and the forms of the matrices of divine names are manifested in it. Through imagination, divine matters are embodied, and through the soul, immutable archetypes gain natural and material determination and individuation³. The affinity of the soul with the level of Unity and Mercifulness, and the affinity of these three with the world of disjoined imagination, as mentioned, leads to considering the soul and disjoined imagination as congeneric in Ibn Arabi's thought⁴.

Therefore, in the perceptual process of the faculty of imagination, first, the forms existing in the world of disjoined imagination are cast upon the human soul, and the soul's faculty of imagination clothes these forms in sensory garb. An imaginal perception of those divine names and forms occurs, and then those names become sensibly and naturally perceptible forms. Thus, what makes divine meanings and names realizable in the sensory vessel of the mind is the faculty of imagination. In other words, just as the soul makes immutable archetypes and their forms possess objective realization in the world of nature and matter, imagination also crystallizes and realizes these forms and meanings of divine names in the sensory vessel of the mind. Hence, in terms of function, imagination and soul are completely similar. Moreover, in terms of identity, the world of the soul is the same as the world of disjoined imagination and the world of conjoined imagination. Therefore, the feminine gender of the soul also extends to imagination, and imagination should also be considered a feminine and womanly matter. Imagination is the

¹ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*. P.39 &89.

² Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 260- 263.

³ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*. P.118.

⁴ Ibid, P.117.

same as the human and the human soul (the soul in its unity is all faculties), and naturally, if the human soul has a feminine identity, it will become a woman, so imagination possesses a feminine gender.

4.2.3. The Relationship Between Wisdom and Imagination

Wisdom, as an intuitive awareness and knowledge that encompasses three processes - veridical dreams, inspiration, and revelation¹ - is not merely theoretical contemplation. Rather, it has a cognitive-practical aspect and a guiding nature. Contrary to common belief, it is not based on the faculty of intellect but on the faculty of imagination. The intellect possesses an apophatic understanding of God and comprehends God's otherness from His creation. However, wisdom is a cataphatic perception of God that is formed on the basis of imagination and provides God's similarity to His creation. Imagination, through veridical dreams, inspirations, or revelation, receives divine names and forms of immutable archetypes, clothes them in sensible and natural garb, and makes them sensibly comprehensible. Since disjoined imagination is congeneric with divine forms and names on one hand, and with the conjoined imagination of the soul on the other, the faculty of imagination can transform those meanings of names and forms into sensible matters and provide the basis for a cataphatic cognition of God. "From the tree of his soul, he harvests the fruit of his knowledge"².

Thus, imagination has the function of giving form and sensory determination to divine names in the vessel of the mind, just as the soul has the function of giving material and natural determination to divine forms and names in the external vessel. Therefore, wisdom, as an awareness that seeks to know divine names, attributes, and their meanings in a functional, pragmatic, and guiding manner, is only attainable through the cognitive faculty of imagination. Both have a feminine identity and are among the levels of the human soul. In other words, both have a feminine gender and both refer to the epistemic dimension of the female sex.

4.2.4. Khidr as a Symbol of Wisdom

Moses meets Khidr and requests to accompany him. At the end of this companionship, Khidr tells Moses, "That of which you have no knowledge" (Kahf/68). Kashani (the commentator of *Fusus*) believes that Khidr is on par with the spirit and has knowledge of unseen secrets³. Thus, Khidr possesses an intuitive knowledge that Moses has no access to. On the other hand, based on this intuitive knowledge, Khidr is concerned with action and engages in guidance, not merely theoretical contemplations. Therefore, Khidr is a symbol of wisdom.

On the other hand, Khidr is essentially a "form" and a "symbol." He is both the form of wisdom himself⁴ that Moses encountered, and his actions are forms that possess inner meanings. The fact that Khidr and his actions are forms, is indicative of his feminine identity. This is because

¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 92, 126-127, 208-209, 268, 380-383.

² Ibid, p. 46.

³ Afifi, *A Commentary on Fusus al-Hikam (Critique of Ibn Arabi's Thought)*, p. 365, 366/

⁴ Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, p. 102-105.

giving form, or forming, essentially means manifesting, and in mystical literature, it means creating. Creation, as discussed in relation to Seth, is a feminine matter. Therefore, Khidr's identity possesses a feminine nature. Thus, both Khidr's congruence with wisdom as a feminine matter and Khidr and his actions being forms as a feminine matter indicate Khidr's feminine identity.

Another point is that Khidr gives tangible objectivity to the unseen meanings he was aware of in his actions, and his behavior is the embodiment of those divine and unseen meanings, similar to the faculty of imagination which had exactly the same interaction with celestial concepts. Therefore, Khidr is connected to both wisdom and imagination, and thus Khidr can be considered a symbol of wisdom and, consequently, a symbol of "imagination."

4.3. The Practical Component: Elijah as a Symbol of Guidance

Ibn Arabi presents Elijah in contrast to Idris. Idris, in terms of location, is in an elevated position (having spatial elevation, which is related to the masculine). Idris is the sun that God has placed in a high place¹. However, after Idris settles as the sun in the center of the celestial spheres, he is sent to the city of "Baalbek" (Baal is the name of an idol, and bek means king), and that idol is specific to the king². The city of Baalbek is a metaphor for the form that is sent from Idris to the city, which is the natural world, and this "Baalbek" is Elijah. So, Elijah is the "form" of Idris. Baal also means "god." Thus, Idris and bek are the comprehensive light from which Baal or God or Idris separates and descends towards nature, and Elijah is actually the form of Idris, while Idris is a symbol of God's station of comprehensiveness and unity. So, Elijah is in contrast with Idris, who has spatial elevation. Also, Idris in Ibn Arabi's works comes with the word "quddus," which means transcendence³. Idris is an allusion to the station of formlessness and is the same as the station of unity and comprehensiveness⁴. But Elijah is the form that has separated from Idris and come towards nature. So, if Idris is from the station of unity and formlessness and is a matter of transcendence, then Elijah is related to the station of oneness, form, and immanence, and thus becomes a feminine matter. This is because unity, formlessness, and all-mercifulness were the masculine dimension of existence, while oneness, having form and names and attributes, and special mercifulness are the feminine dimension of existence. Therefore, Idris is a metaphor for the masculine aspect, and Elijah is a metaphor for the feminine aspect.

The second point regarding the feminine nature of Elijah is that, according to Ibn Arabi, Elijah is derived from "inas"⁵, and inas is a feminine name meaning intimacy and familiarity. Thus, even lexically, Elijah has a feminine and womanly root.

¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 33 & Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*, p. 364.

² Ibid. p. 327.

³ Ibid, p. 68.

⁴ Afifi, *A Commentary on Fusus al-Hikam (Critique of Ibn Arabi's Thought)*, p.97

⁵ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 327.

However, the connection between Elijah and guidance is implicit in the fact that Elijah is a divine form (God) sent to nature (the city) to guide the people of the city (nature) towards Allah. So, Elijah is feminine and a guide. But the feminine nature of guidance needs to be further explained.

As mentioned earlier, the primary cognitive faculty in wisdom is the faculty of imagination, which has the ability to make Allah appear and perceivable in a sensible and natural form. Hence, wisdom is not merely theoretical contemplation but seeks to cast divine knowledge into natural and sensible forms to prepare the ground for guiding individuals¹. Therefore, sophia and wisdom are cataphatic cognitions of Allah. They aim to solve crises and guide humans by transforming theoretical divine knowledge into sensory and natural forms, utilizing the processes of veridical dreams, inspiration, and revelation.

Thus, what distinguishes wisdom as cataphatic and feminine knowledge from theoretical sciences is its guiding identity, and the fact that conjoined imagination is the axis of cognition in this type of awareness also indicates the guiding function of wisdom-based knowledge. So, guidance is the distinguishing feature of wisdom, and wisdom is a feminine matter (as discussed in detail earlier). But guidance is one of Elijah's functions, and Elijah also had a feminine identity. Therefore, Elijah's guidance and femininity are interconnected, and the practical dimension of feminine identity can be sought in the guiding role of this gender. Thus, Elijah is a symbol of the cognitive-practical aspect of woman, namely guidance.

Conclusion

The feminine aspect of existence is manifested in oneness (wahdiyyah), special mercifulness (rahimiyyah), and the soul as direct manifestations of the Divine Essence. The core element in these three manifestations is the aspect of creativity, creation, and the production of multiplicity. Thus, the arc of descent, or unity in multiplicity, represents the feminine identity of existence. This feminine identity manifests itself in humans in the form of woman, who possesses the component of creativity in terms of ontology, the component of wisdom in terms of epistemology, and the component of guidance in terms of practical cognition.

Therefore, femininity in Ibn Arabi's thought is a human identity that is the source of production, creation, and multiplication. The faculty of imagination has a greater manifestation in it, and hence, the acquisition of intuitive wisdom and knowledge through veridical dreams, inspiration, and revelation finds a more suitable ground in it. Consequently, it has greater power to understand the signs of transcendent matters in sensory and natural phenomena, and its ability to understand natural phenomena as signs to attain understanding of divine matters is greater.

¹ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*. P.116-120.

Thus, given the superiority of a woman's imaginative faculty, she has a greater capacity for metaphorical and allegorical understanding.

Woman is the symbol of the perfect human in the arc of descent, observing the level of multiplicity and responsible for understanding the transcendent divine unity in multiplicities. She is tasked with guiding humans lost among sensible and natural multiplicities and showing them the singular reality of existence amidst diverse material matters. This is why, in Ibn Arabi's view, Moses' mother is the source of wisdom presentation to Moses through the symbol of breastfeeding him, and the task of breastfeeding Moses is determined by God solely through her, and other women cannot breastfeed him¹. Thus, from an epistemological perspective, woman is a symbol of cataphatic knowledge of the Divine Essence, and from a practical cognitive perspective, she is a symbol of guidance and nurturing. she is who can elevate a child with merely natural and material understanding to the level of perceiving and recognizing divinity among sensible and natural multiplicities.

However, if we define femininity and female gender in this way, how would masculinity and male gender be conceptualized in Ibn Arabi's thought? In response to this question, the authors' findings suggest that masculinity, from an ontological perspective, is associated with the station of absolute unity and the characteristic of being comprehensive in existence, symbolized by Adam. From an epistemological perspective, male gender is linked with "intellect" and the faculty of "intellect," symbolized by Moses. From a practical perspective, it is responsible for creating and harmonizing multiple affairs, unifying multiplicities, and in essence, managing and administrating, symbolized by Idris, who is actually a symbol of the Lord's aspect of sustenance (rububiyyah). Therefore, the authors hope to be able to elaborate on masculinity, male gender, and its components from Ibn Arabi's perspective in another study.

¹ Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*, vol.1, p. 387.

References

- Aristotle. *Politics*. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950.
- Chittick, William C. *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*. 2022.
- Corbin, Henry. *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*. Translated by Inshallah Rahmati. Tehran: Sofia, 2020.
- Durant, Will. *The Age of Napoleon*. Translated by Ismail Dowlatshahi and Ali Asghar Bahram Bigi. Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi Publications, 2001.
- French, Marilyn. *The War Against Women*. Translated by Tourandokht Tamaddon (Maleki). Tehran: Elmi Publications, 1992.
- Guthrie, William Keith Chambers. *The Greek Philosophers From Tales To Aristotle*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960.
- Ibn Arabi, Muhammad ibn Ali. *Fusus al-Hikam (The Bezels of Wisdom)*. Translated by Muhammad Khajavi. Tehran: Mowla, 2010 AH.
- Ibn Arabi, Muhammad ibn Ali. *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya (The Meccan Revelations)*. Vols. 1–9. Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Arabiyyah, 2010 CE.
- Ibn Arabi, Muhammad ibn Ali. *Tarjuman al-Ashwaq*. With commentary by Reynold A. Nicholson. Translated by Gol Baba Saidi. Tehran: Ruzaneh, 1999 AH.
- Ibn Arabi, Muhammad ibn Ali. *Uqlat al-Mustawfiz*. Leiden edition (software version), 1957.
- Jami, Abd al-Rahman. *Naqd al-Nusus fi Sharh Fusus al-Hikam*. Tehran: Anjuman-e Hikmat va Falsafeh, 1977.
- Leaman, Oliver. *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009.
- Legenhausen, Muhammad. *Islam in Confrontation with Feminism*. Translated by Narges Javandel. *Banovan-e Shia Magazine*, no. 2, 2004.
- Khaderi, Gholamhossein. "An Analysis of the Treatise 'Khawass al-Huruf' by Ibn Masarraḥ al-Andalusi, the Founder of the Almería School." *Biannual Journal of Metaphysical Studies*, Year 3, no. 5, 2022.
- MacKenzie, Ian, et al. *Political Ideologies*. Translated by M. Qaed. Tehran: Markaz Publications, 1996.
- Rezaei, Ibrahim, and Qasem Kakaei. "Imagination from the Perspective of Ibn Arabi and Rumi." *Erfan Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 12, 2015.
- Rouhani, Foad. *Plato's Republic*. Translated by Foad Rouhani. Tehran: Shirin, 2005.
- Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, Muhammad ibn Ishaq. *Al-Fukuk or the Key to the Secrets of Fusus al-Hikam*. Introduction, edition, translation, and commentary by Muhammad Khajavi. Tehran: Mowla, 2006.
- Abdolrahimzadeh, Seyyed Nematollah. "Theory and Practice at the Beginning of Philosophy." *Gharb-shenasi-e Bonyadi*, Year 8, no. 2, 2017.

- Afifi, Abu al-Ala. *A Commentary on Fusus al-Hikam (Critique of Ibn Arabi's Thought)*. Translated by Nasrollah Hekmat. Tehran: Elham, 2001.
- Plato. *Republic*. Translated by P. Shorey. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953.
- Qaysari, Dawud ibn Mahmud. *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam by Ibn Arabi*. Translated by Muhammad Khajavi. Vols. 1–2. Tehran: Mowla, 2008.
- Qaysari, Dawud ibn Mahmud. *Matla' al-Khusus fi Ma'ani Fusus al-Hikam*. Vols. 1–2. Anwar al-Huda, 1995.
- Qaysari, Dawud ibn Mahmud. *Rasa'il: Kitab al-Tawhid wa al-Nubuwwah wa al-Wilayah*. Edited and researched by Seyyed Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani. Mashhad: Mashhad University, 1979.
- Vafaei, Fatemeh, and Hasan Ebrahimi. "Femininity and Feminization in Ibn Arabi's Ontology." *Adyan va Erfan*, Year 49, no. 1, 2016.