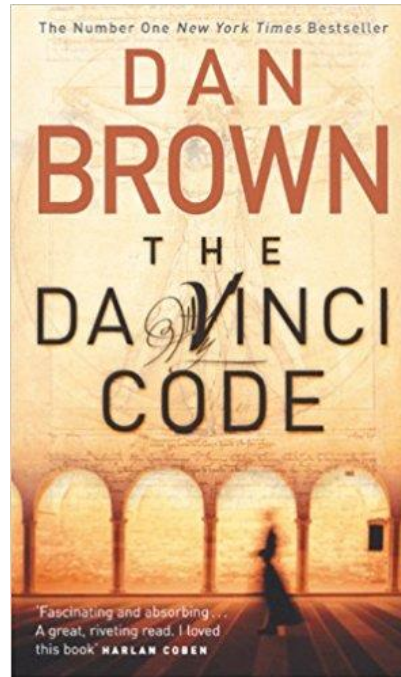


## Feminine Symbols in Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code*

V. Abhinaya and Dr. K. Muthuraman

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Courtesy:

[https://www.google.co.in/search?q=da+vinci+code+cover+images&rlz=1C1CHBF\\_enIN781IN781&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=ZIOZea07XgwPzM%253A%252CnLDxxwJ-JNRK3M%252C\\_&usg=\\_\\_LNk2FCdOtG39LC0c0a4ES0VpSpw%3D&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjN8tOB7praAhWIro8KHWCfBkIQ9QEIKjAB#imgrc=HnEa2dV\\_iXhZrM:](https://www.google.co.in/search?q=da+vinci+code+cover+images&rlz=1C1CHBF_enIN781IN781&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=ZIOZea07XgwPzM%253A%252CnLDxxwJ-JNRK3M%252C_&usg=__LNk2FCdOtG39LC0c0a4ES0VpSpw%3D&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjN8tOB7praAhWIro8KHWCfBkIQ9QEIKjAB#imgrc=HnEa2dV_iXhZrM:)

### “Symbols are very Adept at hiding the truth”- Dan Brown

Dan Brown is a famous American author of thriller fiction. Dan Brown used the name of the great artist Leonardo Da Vinci to his book as *The Da Vinci Code*, because Da Vinci's art and belief is the central to the story. *Da Vinci Code* is famous for its controversial theories. Dan Brown often sees *Da Vinci Code* as “Secret History”; it reveals untold truths behind the history. Robert Langton the protagonist of this novel helps Sophie Neveu to crack the clues which were left by her grandfather and leads to find out the secret behind the history. Clues are in the form of Symbols, Documents, Artwork, etc. Symbols which are used in this novel represent a holy woman Mary

Magdalene. It reveals the background story of Mary Magdalene through many secret symbols such as The Last Supper, Holy Grail, The Mona Lisa, Rosa Rugosa, Pentacle, and The Vitruvian Man. Semiotic approach is used to analyze the symbols which represent Sacred Feminine in Da Vinci Code:

### **Blinding ignorance does mislead us**

**O! Wretched mortals, open your eyes  
- Leonardo da Vinci**

Leonardo da Vinci (1452 – 1519) lived during the period of Renaissance. During Renaissance artists express hidden messages or clues through their artwork. This was purposefully done to safely express their ideas that were considered dangerous in those days, especially in matters of religion. Dan Brown the author of Da Vinci Code says that the great artist Leonardo da Vinci left hidden messages through his paintings. Even in Fact page, the author states:

**FACT:** All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents and secret Rituals in the novel are accurate.

### **The Last Supper**

In 1498, Leonardo Da Vinci completed the famous painting The Last Supper. It is generally recognised as a painting of thirteen men. According to the novel in the artwork, The Last Supper, the figure of the right hand of Jesus Christ is not John, the apostle; it is Mary Magdalene. Leonardo intentionally painted John as ambiguously a woman. For his own safety Leonardo expressed the secret through hidden messages through his artwork. The novel also states that the colour scheme of the garments of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene is inverted in the painting. Jesus wears a red tunic and royal blue cloak and Mary Magdalene wears the opposite. In The Last Supper painting, the gap between Jesus Christ and his beloved forms the letter “V”. It is a symbol of Chalice (ie) Holy Grail. The seating position of Jesus and Mary Magdalene looks like an alphabet “M” means Mary Magdalene and also it means Martial, marriage between Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. “... ‘V’ shape at the focal point of the painting. It was the same symbol Langdon had drawn earlier for the Grail, the chalice and the female womb. Teabing said, if you view Jesus and Magdalene as compositional elements rather than as people you will see another obvious shape ... Glaring in the centre of the painting was the unquestionable outline of an enormous, flawlessly formed letter ‘M’.” (Brown 326)

### **Holy Grail**

According to a particular society, Holy Grail is the cup which was used by Jesus Christ in The Last Supper. In the painting the Last Supper, at the table in front of everyone had a glass of wine including Jesus Christ. The cups were made of glass, stemless but there was no separate chalice in the painting and no Holy Grail. Historians considered Holy Grail as a ‘Chalice’, a cup but Chalices is an allegory to protect the literal meaning of Holy Grail. In old French the literal meaning of Holy Grail was ‘Sang Real’ which means Royal Blood. In the novel Leigh Teabing says that Leonardo knew that Mary Magdalene was the actual Holy Grail and she was the bearer of Jesus blood. Chalice is the ancient symbol of female. It resembles a cup or a vessel ‘V’; most

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importantly it is in the shape of a woman's Womb. This symbol is associated with fertility, femininity and womanhood.

"Mary Magdalene was the Holy Vessel. She was the chalice that bore the royal bloodline of Jesus Christ. She was the womb that bore the lineage and the vine from which the sacred fruit sprang forth". (Brown 333)

### **The Monalisa**

The Monalisa is a masterpiece of Leonardo Da Vinci. It is famous for its mysterious smile. Everyone has a doubt whether Monalisa is a picture of man or woman. Da Vinci made Monalisa look larger from the left side than the right side because historically the concepts of male and female have assigned left is for female and right is for male, even in Hinduism we followed the same concept. Even the name Monalisa is an anagram of an Egyptian god and goddess, 'Amon and Isis'. They are the god and goddess of fertility. It symbolises the unification of both male and female and refers to the holy union of Jesus and Mary Magdalene.

"It was Isis, 'Langdon told them, grapping a grease down. 'so we have the male god' Amon'. He wrote it down. 'And the female goddess. Isis, whose ancient pictogram was called L'ISA'. (Brown 165)

### **Rosa Rugosa**

Rosa Rugosa is one of the older species of rose which has five petals. Five petals refer to the five stages of womanhood they are; birth, menstruation, motherhood, menopause and death. Rose represents the symbol of Holy grail as well as womanhood, secrecy, and guiding which leads to the secret truth. In Roman period if they hang rose on the door over a meeting it indicated that the meeting was secret. It was called sub rosa, i.e., everything under the rose had to remain secret. 'Sub rosa', Langdon said, 'The Romans hung a rose over meetings to indicate the meeting was confidential. Attendees understood that whatever was said under the rose- or sub rosa-remain secret'' (Brown 271) In addition Langdon explained, Rose had a close concept to the true direction . The Compass Rose denotes east, west, north and south. It originated from wind rose that denotes thirty-two winds. It actually starts from the direction east because in relation to the west Europe Jerusalem is located in the east direction. So, east was considered as the primary direction.

### **Pentacle**

The Pentacle is a pre-Christian symbol which refers to the worship of nature. In the novel Da Vinci Code Saunier's had drawn a symbol of Pentacle on his body to give a clue to his granddaughter Sophie Neveu and Langdon. Pentacle is a five-pointed star that formed from five straight lines that intersected each other. It is also the symbol of Venus, the goddess of sexual love and beauty. This symbolizes the harmony between male and female. Blade, the ancient symbol for male, and Chalice the ancient symbol for female are fused together and form the symbol of pentacle. It represents the unification of male and female. It is the symbol of Venus because of its graphic origin. In every eight years the transit of Venus in relation to the earth makes a shape of Pentagram in the elliptic sky. "This pentacle is representative of the female half of all things- a concept religious historians call the 'Sacred feminine' or the 'divine goddess' ...that Venus and her

pentacle became symbols of perfection, beauty and the cyclic qualities of sexual love...”(Brown 57)

### **The Vitruvian Man**

In the novel *Da Vinci Code*, Sauniere, before dying, drew a symbol of pentacle on his stomach and he died in the position of the Vitruvian man to give a clue to Sophie. The Vitruvian Man is one of Da Vinci’s paintings. It is an image of a naked man in widespread eagle position inside the circle. The circle around the man is the symbol of feminine, it is considered for protection. The naked man and the circle give the message that they unite to create harmony in the world. “In his final movements of life, the curator had stripped off his clothing and arranged his body in a clear image of Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man”. (Brown 68). Langdon explained The Vitruvian Man is the brilliant example of Roman architect. He was the one who showed that our body is made of building blocks and the proportional ratio is equal to PHI. PHI value (1.618) is considered as the golden number or divine proportion. Da Vinci employed this golden ration in his work The Vitruvian Man. If we measure,

- The distance from tip on one’s head to the floor divided by the distance from one’s belly button to the floor.
- The distance from one’s shoulder to fingertips divided by the distance from one elbow to fingertips.
- Hip to floor divided by knee to floor, finger joints; spinal division, etc.

Dan Brown reveals the hidden messages in the artwork and symbols which mostly symbolise feminine. The works of Leonardo da Vinci like The Last Supper, The Monalisa The Vitruvian man and symbols like Holy Grail, Rosa Rugosa, and Pentacle relate to feminine and all symbolise Mary Magdalene. All of them interrelated and reveal the secret of a sacred feminine MaryMagdalene.

**“Two Thousand years ago, we lived in a world of Gods and Goddesses.  
Today, we live in a world solely of Gods. Women in most cultures have been  
stripped of their spiritual power”**

**-Dan Brown**

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