International journal of World's Ancient Traditions and Cultural Heritage (IJWATCH)

January 2024, Biannual Journal

Preface

It is our great pleasure to present you and the community of 'Ancient Traditions and Cultures' a new journal dedicated to the world's ancient traditions and cultures. It will be a biannual journal with first Issue being launched on Makar Sankranti. Makar Sankranti, also referred to as beginning of Uttarayana, Makar, or simply Sankranti, is a Hindu observance and a festival. Usually falling on the date of January 14 annually, this occasion marks the transition of the sun from the zodiac of Sagittarius to Capricorn. The days become longer and sunrays stronger after Sankranti in Northern hemisphere. Makar Sankranti, is a festival that celebrates the movement of the Sun from Dhanu rashi to Makar rashi, dedicated to Surya Dev (the Sun God).

It is a way of all the ancient traditions and cultures to thank the Sun God- Expressing gratitude.

It is a Thanks giving Day of sorts because it inculcates a sense of gratitude towards the Sun, the most significant source of life on earth.

All over the world, there existed many traditions and cultures from ancient times. Those cultures existed thousands of years, and most of those were considering themselves to be Children of the Mother earth. All those traditions had reverence for God Sun whom many considered as father of their society. America alone had over 500 nations such as Hopi, Cherokee, Sioux and Africa had over 1000 cultures and traditions, there have been many pagan traditions in European countries such as Asatru, Druid and so on. This journal will make efforts to revive those and get their due place in the academic world.

The new journal is totally dedicated to publication of academic, peer reviewed research articles and reviews. Our editorial team will grow as we connect with many more ancient traditions and cultural societies around the world.

If you wish to be part of the editorial board and belong to any of the ancient traditions and cultures kindly contact yvpathak2017@gmail.com for further information.

We are excited to publish our first Volume first issue at the 8th International conference of ICCS (International Center for Cultural Studies). ICCS has been actively involved in celebrating the cultural heritage of those ancient traditions and we are sure it will provide a platform for all to educate the world about their great cultural heritage.

Looking forward to many more articles to share with the world the wisdom of our elders and our way of life (Dharma)

A detailed information about the editorial board will be shared in the journal's second issue scheduled on Sarvapitri Amavasya of 2024. Sarvapitri Amavasya is a day to remember the ancestors of a family and worship the supreme power of the universe with religious rituals to wash away the bad effects of the previous life of our ancestors. The ritual is known as 'Shraddh'. We request all our colleagues to declare this day as World's Ancestor worship day. (2nd October in 2024)

This New Journal is launched by ICCSUS a non-profit organization based in the United States of America and working with/for Ancient traditions and cultural heritage since 1993.

Index

Digital mapping and ancient traditions & cultures of the world

Yashwant V Pathak,
M Pharm, Executive MBA, MSCM, PhD, FAAAS
Professor and Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, USF Health Taneja College of Pharmacy,
University of South Florida, 12901 Bruce B Downs Blvd, MDC 030
Tampa FL 33612, USA Tel: 01-813-974-1026 E mail: ypathak1@usf.edu Personal e-mail: yvpathak2012@gmail.com

ABSTRATC:

Ancient traditions and cultures, which existed for more than 2000 years, prATCiced through oral literature are considered way of life rather than religions. These traditions and cultures have developed their own distinct languages, culture and epistemology. They transferred the knowledge through oral traditions and the elders were considered as the custodians of their knowledge and wisdom. Digital mapping is recently developed technique used for examining ancient traditions and cultures, their histories, locations, languages and other related information through digital mapping. This has helped to understand how the world is shaped because of these Ancient Traditions and Cultures (ATC). Digital mapping related to ATC does not constitute an ethics neutral transfer of data but rather a decision made on the part of those responsible for creating digital maps to respect ATC cultural values, purposes and worldview. This review covers various aspects of digital mapping and use of digital technology as well as recently introduced social media technology for the benefit of the ATC. They can help to build, revive and offer their ancient wisdom to resolve the contemporary challenges in front of global society.

Key words : Ancient traditions and cultures, Challenegs faced by ATC, digital mapping, Misinformation about ATC, Mukurtu, digital museum, digital learning about ATC,

Introduction:
Ancient Cultures and traditions (ATC) :

In this article, I refer to ancient traditions and cultures, which are existing for more than 2000 years and prATCiced through oral literature. All of those are considered way of life rather than religions. Those traditions and cultures have developed their own distinct languages, culture and epistemology. They transferred the knowledge through oral traditions and the elders were considered as the custodians of their knowledge and wisdom. There were 500 Nations in Americas when the invaders visited and they thought they were meeting Indians and hence they called them Red Indians. They were the owners of the land and they had very well developed cultures, languages and way of life. This has happened all over the world when European colonizers travelled around the world. That is why I would like to term all the cultures as ancient traditions and cultures rather than indigenous cultures and I believe that the readers will agree with this terminology.

Australian Aboriginals

These ancient traditions and cultures (ATC) people had very different worldview, way of life and social norms than the invaders (mostly Europeans, people consider them as Westerners but when they visited Americas it was even further west of Europe) perceived those.

Native American Cultures

Challenges faced by the Ancient traditions and cultures:

People belonging to ATC are facing challenges all over the world. In United States there are several legal challenges, which spring from the Government not following the treaties, which were signed by previous Governments. Many of the native Americans have their own nations within United states such as Hopi nation, Sioux nation and so on. In recent days, their Sovereignty is challenged and these Native Americans have to go to court, which is in a way controlled by the present Governments.

Many challenges faced by the ATC around the world are due to loss or exploitation of lands, which they owned once upon a time. This is not the case of only native Americans but also all the ATC around the world including Africans , Maoris, Australian Aboriginals and pagans in Europe and so on. Most of the ATC around the world face poverty and exploitation. The United

nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people (UNDRIP) addresses their challenges and prescribes minimum standards for survival, dignity and well being of the members of the ATC. In spite of that UN support, ATC people face forcible removal, loss of their protected land rights, decline in environmental and subsistence standards.

Negative Misrepresentation and no compensation:

In many countries, the ATC people are subjected to vagaries of an unjust legal regime such as in United States, Australia and many other countries. The history written by the invaders and many a time by missionaries catering to the greed of the invaders, have negative connotations from misrepresentations to non-compensated appropriation for violence, trauma and cultural destruction. ATC people around the world witness the destruction of their sacred landmarks, their cemeteries and their traditional beliefs. Most of the non-native (not belonging to ATC people)

have been biased and wrote distorted history about those people. In a beautiful book written by Linda Tuhiwai Smith entitled

"Decolonizing Methodologies: research and indigenous peoples", she says, "research is an institution of knowledge that is embedded in a global system of imperialism and power." (Published by Zed Books. London, 2012) Negative consequences of non-native researchers is historically evident in the realm of mapping.

Digital mapping (DM)

Digital mapping is recently developed technique used for examining ancient traditions and cultures, their histories, locations, languages and other related information through digital mapping. This has helped to understand how the world is shaped because of these Ancient Traditions and Cultures (ATC). Digital mapping related to ATC does not constitute an ethics neutral transfer of data but rather a decision made on the part of those responsible for creating digital maps to respect ATC cultural values, purposes and world view. I am intentionally avoiding word Tribal cultures as these were much more developed culturally and in many ways much better than the invaders. (JB Hess, Digital mapping and indigenous America, Published by Routledge Publishers, NY, 2021 Page 1-8).

Digital Mapping is a cross disciplinary methodology with strong relevance to anyone whose research includes a study of place and place-based data. Digital maps can be used as a research method to investigate data and to answer research questions or as a publication output, or both! Many of the software, tools and methods of digital mapping come from geography and related disciplines, but they are now used across many different disciplines in both HASS and STEM. Map making has been part of HASS research from well before the advent of computational methods. They have been pretty common as research and visualization tools in disciplines like archaeology, but in recent years new tools and software have made it easier for more researchers to try their hand at it. (https://metodhology.anu.edu.au/index.php/content/introduction-to-digital-mapping/)

Why use digital mapping:

There are three categories where digital mapping can be useful:

1. **To create a visualization of data connected to a place/s.**

    All maps are abstract data visualizations, whether they show locations, guides to road and street locations, natural features, points of interest for tourists, etc. Many of us know this just from the experience of using google maps on our phones. These every day maps also remind us how our perception of place is changed depending on what we are shown, or why we are using it. E.g., are we following a route or searching for a business nearby?

    Maps for research are useful visualizations as often patterns and relationships exist in research data but are difficult to identify from a written list, this might be because of the size (reading through a 10 000 line spreadsheet for example), or just because those connections are not readily obvious. This is especially true if you are combining several sets of different data.

2. **As a tool to analyze interdisciplinary place-based relationships**

    Place often plays an important role in understanding the types of questions we ask in HASS. An obviously example is the census, for historians and social scientists, recent and historic census data can be linked to place. If we combine it with other data, such as maps of the locations of services, schools, historic monuments, we can start to see patterns emerge. We might want to analyze the diversity of business types in a street or neighborhood, the different areas that people who belong to religious groups live in, or the relationship between heritage listings and average incomes in a suburb.

3. As a way of understanding change over time

Mapping can be used to track and visualize how places have changed over time. This could be looking at changes to the natural environment, changes to the use of land or shifts in social and cultural uses of a specific site or a collection of sites. Techniques exist to allow researchers to develop layers of historic maps and combine those with diverse data to see patterns and prompt new questions of research material.

Mapping, like many other digital methods, can actually reshape the direction of your research. The process of converting archival data, or finding complimentary sets of government place-based data, and creating a map from it can make you look at your research questions in very different ways. It is likely that you will come out of map-making not just answering your existing place-based questions, but also developing a completely new set of ideas and questions. The process or practice of the method encourages close-looking, helps us to spot patterns and prompts interdisciplinary investigation. Taken from (https://metodhology.anu.edu.au/index.php/content/introduction-to-digital-mapping/))

Digital mapping for Ancient traditions and cultures: people and their lands:

Digital mapping for the ancient traditions and cultures, their people and lands must be done. It can be used for their histories, cultural practices and resources. That should be considered within this methodological, legal and ethical contexts. Preferences should be given to ATC people who will do this mapping correctly and with pride of their own cultures to avoid distortion. of the facts.

ATC people can be trained to use these modern techniques for the digital mapping. Native American are widely using these techniques. ATC people of America are using Digital mapping for their natural resources, environment, transportation, cultural and historical preservation, economic development , health, education, public safety, and many other aspects of their daily life. They are using digital materials, in sophisticated and intersecting ways. Native American individuals, organizations and academic departments have created hundreds of digital resources that describe their cultural centers, collections and also address issues such as cultural geography, practices, oral history and digital storytelling, repatriation. They use this as a way to push back against imperialism and resource acquisition and enhance memory, healing, and reconciliation.

Mukurtu: an open resource platform for digital mapping:

Many digital projects developed by native Americans are using Mukurtu an open source platform. It is designed to meet the needs of diverse communities who wish to manage their digital cultural heritage in their own way. A central feature of the Mukurtu software is use of Cultural protocols. These protocols help the ATC people to determine fine grained levels of access to

their digital heritage, objects and collections from completely open to strictly closed resources.

Creating digital media for ATC which can be easily downloaded on your computer (https://corp.kaltura.com/blog/3-types-of-interATCive-videos-to-increase-engagement-and-conversion/)

Establishment of Digital Museums:

With the advent of digital communication technology, it is becoming much easier to build and establish digital museums with minimum resources. The social media is very useful for ATC people to build their appropriate resources depicting their original and authentic cultural heritage and traditions including the ceremonies and practices. There are several interactive digital ways to build the history for the ATC people and their way of life.

InterATCive Video education about the ATC (https://elearningindustry.com/interATCive-videos-for-corporate-training-5-killer-examples)

Benefits of digital museums : Those are creating customized digital strategy for ATC

1. Encourage interactions and inspirational
2. Appealing to all ages and catering to all ages
3. Explore different avenues to share the cultural wisdom and practices
4. Analyze the impact of such digital museums as compared to brick and mortar museums with artifacts displays
5. Use different audiovisual effects which can create long lasting impression
6. ATC people can adopt this digital learning for storytelling which is a great tradition in all the ancient traditions and cultures, create digital games, decision making through traditional wisdom, (adopted by the elders), use of new technology such as augmented reality and virtual reality and so on

Digital media:

Digital media is information shared through a digital device or screen. Essentially, it's any form of media that relies on an electronic device for its creation, distribution, viewing, and storage. Examples of digital media include software, digital images, digital video, video games, web pages and websites, social media, digital data and databases, digital audio such as MP3, electronic documents and electronic books.

Depending on the purpose and type of audience, virtual museums are divided into educational and gamification-based. Of course, the primary purpose of all museums is education, but the point is that information can be delivered in different ways. virtual museum, a collection of digitally recorded images, sound files, text documents, and other data of historical, scientific, or cultural interest that are accessed through electronic media.

Examples of Digital Museum:

First digital art museum in Tokyo (https://thespaces.com/teamlab-launches-the-worlds-first-digital-art-museum-in-tokyo/)

Benefits of digitizing exhibits

- Virtual museums can work 24/7, 365 days a year. Since online/virtual exhibits work as software or animated video, they don't require employees and have no business time limitations. Thus, anyone can visit such a museum anytime.

- It brings more visitors. This format doesn't have any physical place and is open at any time, regardless of time zone. People don't have to get to the exhibit from all over the world, so it allows anyone to visit a museum, extending its visitor base.

- Safety of exhibits and people. Besides fire, earthquake, or other force majeure situations capable of destroying exhibits, people can also get hurt. In addition, the worldwide pandemic made it impossible to visit museums, and this may happen again. That's why virtual tours are much safer for both exhibits and visitors.
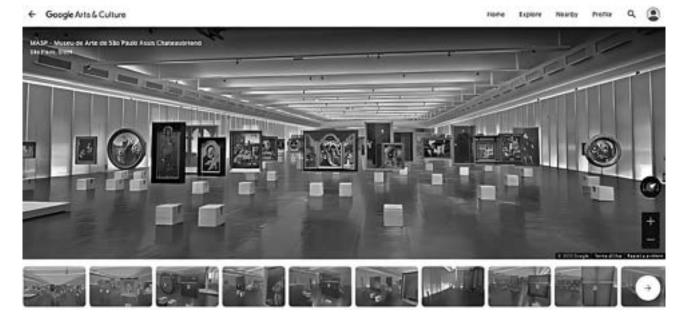
- Affordable education. There are numerous reasons why many kids and adults avoid visiting traditional museums, like expensive tickets and long-distance trips. But an average person can afford virtual museum tours through smartphones and inexpensive VR glasses like Google Cardboard.

- Unusual entertainment. Most people are used to spending their free time watching movies, playing games, or being busy with their hobbies. These are great things to do, but now they can add cultural entertainment that broadens their minds! People can enjoy the Louver or a wide range of other museums at home, and this is truly awesome.

- Proper environment for artifacts. Museums often have challenges showing up some ancient relics as they usually require specific conditions to keep the integrity and original shape. That's why specialists keep some

of those separate from others exhibited in museums. Fortunately, digitalizing artifacts allows keeping them in safe places but showing everything in virtual reality.

- More ways to interact with exhibits.

- A physical museum strictly forbids visitors to interact with historical relics and artifacts as well as pieces of art due to their fragility and tenderness. In contrast, virtual tours allow us to interact with exhibits differently, like rotating them or making them alive.

(taken from https://3d-ace.com/blog/virtual-museum/#:~:text=Depending%20on%20the%20purpose%20and,be%20delivered%20in%20different%20ways.)

Virtual museums are becoming mainstream (https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/mar/23/10-of-the-worlds-best-virtual-museum-and-art-gallery-tours)

Benefits of digital mapping and use of digital media:

- The ability to dynamically change the topography and location of various objects;
- quick terrain scaling;
- higher accuracy and absence of distortions;
- possibility of digital marking and instantaneous search for the necessary object;

Advantages of digital media:

- Digital media can be constantly updated.
- Physical copies are not necessary.
- Usability: You are not restricted to what is available in your local area.
- **Cost-effective :** Digital media is more cost-effective than traditional media.

Conclusions: It is very important for the ATC people around the world to use the modern technology for revival of their cultures and traditions. This will help them to build the positive image of their own cultural heritage. This is of utmost importance as the misinformation provided by the invaders and people with vested interest need to be corrected and presented authentically. The only way is to use digital mapping and using modern technology to share their ancient knowledge and wisdom with the world and remove the misinformation. Unless the members of the ATC work themselves and provide the information there will always be wrong impression about their traditions and cultures. Using modern technology and digital mapping ATC can bring their wisdom to the forefront of the world and also provide solutions to the contemporary challenges. There is also another advantage the digital mapping will show significant similarities between the ancient traditions and cultures as most of them consider themselves way of life than religions and hence

this will build a atmosphere of oneness between the ancient cultures and traditions.

References and Bibliography:

1. https://www.insightvacations.com/blog/5-ancient-traditions-witness-around-world/

2. https://www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-traditions

3. https://metodhology.anu.edu.au/index.php/content/introduction-to-digital-mapping/

4. https://upcolorado.com/university-press-of-colorado/item/1835-ancient-traditions

5. https://traditionsandcultures.com/10-oldest-traditions/#3-aboriginal-dreamtime-ancient-australian-wisdom

6. JB Hess, "Digital mapping and indigenous America", Published by Routledge Publishers, NY, 2021 Page 1-8

7. Duxberry, N, Garrett-Petts, WFand Mac melennan, D, "Cultural mapping as cultural enquiry: Introduction to an emerging field of practice", In 'Cultural mapping as Cultural enquiry', Published by Routledge, NY 2015

8. Barquess PP, Chamdler, D and Simon E, "Mapping and politics in digital age", Published by Routledge, NY 2018

9. Smith LT, "Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous people", Zed books, London 2012

10. Shanley K, "mapping indigenous presence: The declaration on the rights of indigenous people in rhetorical turns and tipping points", In 'mapping Indigenous presence', Arizona Universiry press, 2010, https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/mapping-indigenous-presence

11. https://ebrary.net/172087/geography/mapping_indigenous_american_cultures_living_histories_miac_gathering_place

12. Anuya S James, "Indigenous people in International law", Oxford University press, NY, 2004

13. Becker Amy, "Mapping the unmappable in induigenous digital cartographies", MA Thesis, Anthropology, University of Victoria, 2014

14. https://corp.kaltura.com/blog/3-types-of-interATCive-videos-to-increase-engagement-and-conversion/

15. https://corp.kaltura.com/blog/3-types-of-interATCive-videos-to-increase-engagement-and-conversion/

16. https://thespaces.com/teamlab-launches-the-worlds-first-digital-art-museum-in-tokyo/

17. https://3d-ace.com/blog/virtual-museum/#:~:text=Depending%20on%20the%20purpose%20and,be%20delivered%20in%20different%20ways

18. https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/mar/23/10-of-the-worlds-best-virtual-museum-and-art-gallery-tours

(The author recognizes that some borrowed figures and some information from web-sources, most of it is not copyrighted, By any chance, we missed the information, we apologize and will remove the matter used and apologize in advance)

❦

Pagan Traditions in Europe For Harmony and Sustainability

Digant Ranjan Dash

Role of Pagan Traditions in Civilizational Harmony and Sustainability
Pagan Tradition a Dharmic Tradition of Europe

YMS 402T Independent Study - Digant Ranjan Dash - Vivekananda Yoga University (VaYU)

Table of content

1. Introduction
2. Pagan Tradition and Belief System
3. Guiding Principles and Worldview
4. Celebrating stages of life
5. Calendar of Festivals
6. Shastras, Mythology and Symbolism
7. Response to challenging situations
8. A personal spiritual journey

9. Civilizational Harmony and Sustainability
10. Concept of God
11. Worldview
12. Relationship with nature
13. Sustainable principles of living
14. Dharmic Sustainability
15. Conclusion

1. Introduction

A Pagan is described as, "a practitioner of a polytheistic or pantheistic, worshiper of divinity and a nature-honoring" religion. According to Pagan Federation "Paganism is the ancestral religion of the whole of humanity." [1] This ancient outlook or belief system is still prevalent in most part of the world including may vibrant world religions and Dharmic traditions of India. One can find roots of the pagan traditions in ancient Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome. The Pagan tradition is a unique tradition and worldview in which they celebrate many festivals, most of which are based on seasons. These traditions and belief systems, which can broadly be considered as a Dharmic culture, can provide a key to civilizational harmony and a sustainable Universe.

2. Pagan Tradition and Belief System

The contemporary Pagan traditions that we see today, are living religious practices we see in the Europe and USA. Paganism can be broadly classified into Druidry, Wicca, Shamanism and the worship of Goddesses as well as some other European traditions. These traditions are very much inspired and adopted from various ancient European faiths and practices of ancient and indigenous traditions including Rome, Greece, Egypt and Celtic countries. Contemporary Paganism or 'Neo-Paganism', is a generic term/way of addressing most of those ancient traditions.

A typical Pagan honors the sacredness of nature; he would prefer to have their ceremonies among the trees, river, mountains rather than inside a house or a building. They could be polytheist, celebrating feminine and masculine nature of divine. They could even be pantheist but rarely monotheist in nature.

Paganism is more based on personal experience and worldview than on a set of beliefs or faith. Many believe that these traditions are revived by the practitioners rather than being a part of an unbroken continuity of the old religion.

Though there might not be a living lineage of the people practicing paganism, the belief among the practitioners is that such communities can come up over few generations. As an evolving tradition and with the advent of greater connectivity, the Pagan spiritual practices are adopting concepts and ideas making it more personal and undogmatic. The individual can pick and choose various ideas and concepts and make it their own, and put them into practice, for example 'karma' and 'reincarnation'. Someone could describe it as a personalized religious tradition, practiced in an interactive manner in group settings, influenced by information (YouTube and podcasts) and internet (websites), making it an 'i-religion'. Time will tell if it remains open like open source software or open source apps, personalized like iPhone data and evolve with additions and modifications.

Pagan worldview devotes a big component to environmental and ecological well-being. That comes naturally to them as they envision divinity in the nature. Specifically, the four basic elements Air, Fire, Water and Earth and four directions

are a big part of their celebrations. They see the whole nature, mother earth, the mountains, trees, rivers as Goddesses.

Talking about deities, Pagans often use many forms, and sometime referring to the ancient deities of Egypt, Rome or Wales. Like the Hindu traditions, some might speak of Gods and Goddesses. Like the Advaita (non-dual) tradition of Vedas, some might speak of the universal energy 'the supreme' and that universal energy being the force behind all beings including that of the deities. Similar to Dwaita (Dualist), some might disagree and insist the presence of all kinds of deities representing various aspects and facets of life.

The new traditions and belief system derives its roots, inspiration and methodology from the ancient lore, poems and writings. It then tries to put them into practice in the modern context. That's why we might find a wide spectrum of worldviews, belief systems and practices within different Pagan traditions. While some Pagans develop a deep devotion "Bhakti" towards the Gods and Goddesses and try to communicate with them and interpret the myths and search for the truth, ultimate reality, others might see them as stories, and a metaphorical way of expressing the messages.

One of the important concepts of Paganism is its approach to life and living beings. Pagans, like many Dharmic traditions, focus more on current life and living it fully, ethically and meaningfully rather than focusing on life after death. They see life as a continuity, thus there is more emphasis on doing good 'karma'. Many believe in reincarnation and death as a transition where the mortal body returns to its origin (the basic elements) after death. 'Summer lands', a concept similar to 'Swarga' (heavens) in Hindu tradition and 'Elysian Fields' in Greek mythology,

is also there in some Pagan traditions. Several beliefs of life after death and subsequent rebirth are also present in many Pagan traditions as that of the Hindu and other Dharmic traditions.

One of the other core beliefs is the reverence to the ancestors and seeking their blessings for our success and achievements. The idea that the great people of the past are going to be reborn again to further the cause of the community and humanity is also common in many ancient traditions.

The Pagans will be more comfortable with the word 'Eco Brotherly' than 'Eco Friendly' because they don't think humans are central to the universe, but rather consider the plants and animals as equal partners. That is probably the reason we see Pagans many a time become promoters of animal protection and ecological preservation.

3. Guiding Principles and Worldview

Pagan traditions are a spiritual tradition more based on practice, personal as well as shared experience and not based on faith, dogma, or doctrine. There is no single book, single preacher, or fixed set of rules, rather it provides a broad set of guiding principles. These principles are like 'Rita' in Vedic tradition, derived through observing nature, seasons, planetary motions, plants, animals, rivers and mountains; meditating and getting connected to the chosen deity. These principles and practices become the bedrock of the spiritual seekers and through their practice (Sadhana) they gain spiritual and material experiences. They eventually become the guides, authorities, or Gurus. They could be men or women, younger or older, and need not come from any specific clan or lineage. They would gain authority by their role and long experience in teaching; their work and words! Their writings also become references for others.

Table 1			
Worldview	**Pagan**	**Dharmic**	**Abrahamic**
World	World accepting	World accepting	World rejecting
Time	Cyclical	Cyclical	Linear
Foundation	Deeds	Karma	Belief
Nature of divine	Polytheistic	Pantheistic/ Polytheistic	Monotheistic
Creation	From chaos	From Brahman (Self)	Out of nothing
Events occur because	Causality	Causality/Karma Samskara	Will of creator
Humanity	Share the world with others	Equals - all have the same Atma (divinity)	Pinnacle of creation
Society	Family centric	Family centric	Individualistic

Guiding principles and Worldview of Pagan, Dharmic and Abrahamic traditions

There are no founders of the Hindu tradition, but over a period there have been seers and sages, who have explained, enhanced and made the complex Darshana (Philosophy) accessible to the public. There have been traditions of social reformers, Katha-kars and pravachan-kars (story tellers), musicians, and Bhakti sangeet (spiritual songs). Those people (seers/saints) have created newer and contemporary sects. Similarly, Paganism, originating from the observance of nature and feeling the sacredness in creation, does not have any single founder. But, over a period of time, there have been proponents and writers of various pagan traditions that have added depth to it. For example, in contemporary times Gerald Gardner (1884-1964) furthered the Wicca tradition, Doreen Valiente (1922-1999) furthered Witchcraft, and Ross Nichols (1902-1975) is promoted OBOD (Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids). Among many, Dr. Philip Carr-Gomm in Britain did great work for OBOD, Starhawks spearheaded the Wiccan tradition in the USA, and Merlin and Morgana promoted them in the Netherlands.

The Hindu tradition talks of four goals of life, two of which are material in nature - namely, earning wealth (Artha) and fulfilling one's desires (Kaama). Two of them are more spiritual in nature, Dharma (doing the right thing, that is sustainable), and Moksha (Independence, self-realization). Said in a sequence as Dharma, Artha, Kaama, and Moksha.

The Pagan tradition celebrates life. It does not shy away from talking about body, life, and sexuality. In fact, they are viewed positively as something not to be ashamed about. But there is a sense of restraint and frugality in lifestyle also. The reason behind such ideas being to not harm nature and use resources excessively which would harm the ecology. In Hindu tradition the same is termed as 'Santosa, and 'Aparigraha', to remain content and not accept things that one does not need. In both traditions, there is an emphasis to take hardship to achieve a greater good.

Hindu tradition talks about three Rinas (Debts) namely that of Pitri (Ancestors), Rishi (Great teachers, spiritual leaders or scientist), and Deva (Deities). According to the tradition, humanity is indebted to their parents, grandparents, ancestors, and their lineage, secondly, to the people who have contributed to society in general in terms of material or spiritual progress, and lastly to the Gods (deities). The deities could be personal Gods or Gram (Village), Devi (Goddesses), or Devata (God). A recent movie called 'Kantara' depicts the relationship of the people with the village deity. In one of the Hindu tradition of ancestral worship or remembrance, they offer water or water with sesame seeds to their ancestors on a daily basis

or at least on specific occasions, like death anniversaries or on Pitru Paksha (for a fortnight dedicated for parental ancestors).

The Pagan tradition similarly gives importance to and worships the ancestors, or community elders, spirits of the land (Land wights) and Gods. The ancestors could be genetic, community or even people who lived there before. All of them get offerings, and have separate sacred places, at home, specific places in the neighborhood or all around for Gods in nature, in the elements and in all four directions.

Like the Hindu tradition there is no insistence of having temples for all these rituals. In both the traditions rituals are prescribed for material and spiritual attainments, for example Yantra (a geometric spiritual pattern), Tantra (a spiritual practice) and Mantra (a hymn) in Hindu traditions. Rituals and ceremonies form a critical part to both the traditions. One must be qualified to conduct the rituals, some of them are done by qualified priests whereas there are several festivals that are performed by only women folks.

The Siddhis (supernatural powers) are outcomes of the rituals and ceremonies. They give personal experiences and vary from person to person. Some are material gain; some are mystical powers and others get spiritual experiences. The Magic (or 'magick') performed by the Pagans are different from the stage performances by magicians and is more similar with the Tantra tradition of Hindu or Buddhist practices. The changes and transformations they bring in are more at the consciousness level and many a time gives one access to higher powers and the highest level. In the Hindu tradition it is termed as 'Samadhi' a super-consciousness or Divine consciousness. At this level magic, spirituality and science can be seen as intertwined and are all forms of energy and can be transformed into different forms if one knows how to do it.

The use of circles, stars and various shapes are integral parts of Paganism like other Tantric traditions i.e. Hinduism and Buddhism. . Invocation of direction for blessings, protection and peace, offerings to the elements (Eather, Air, Fire, Water and Earth) and seeking their blessings are common practice in any ritual. Most of the cases there is sharing of food and socialization time after the festival. The Pagan traditions give the flexibility of creating newer ceremonies and rituals for specific purposes and vary from tradition to tradition. Some rituals are performed at a personal level whereas many are done as a group, some are indoors and many a time they are performed outdoors, among woods or inside the forest. Most of the time the Native American rituals are done around the fire. Most favorite places are forest, sea shore, around the stone circles or in labyrinths and patterns made on the ground. Some sites are specially designated for specific rituals and attract millions of people during specific seasons, like that of Goddesses temple of Kamakshya or Glastonbury.

4. Celebrating stages of life

Across the globe all traditions want to celebrate important stages of their life. Probably it is a very common human desire of all. The Pagan tradition is no exception. The major life changing events like birth of a new child, marriage and funeral are most common. Welcoming the new member and honoring the departed soul as beginning and end of life respectively, are similar in both the traditions. The 'handfasting' is a very common and essential practice of Pagan and Hindu tradition. In fact, the Hindu tradition has a very elaborate 16 stages, starting from inception, to blessing the mother during a certain month of pregnancy, to birth, naming, start of education, marriage, and cremation. There are special ceremonies to mark stages of a girl, like first menstruation, similarly if she/he wants to become a monk or Sanyasi there is a special ceremony to induct one to the order of monk.

5. Calendar of Festivals

The Wheel of the Year and the eight festivals associated with it is something all Pagan traditions follow. They represent the change of seasons, most importantly, two solstices and two equinoxes. Unlike the Hindu New Year that starts by the end of March (Lunar calendar) or on April 14th (Solar Calendar), the Celtic New Year starts on 31st October or 1st November. It is believed that around that time the veil between the humans and the ancestral worlds are very thin, thus is the best time to remember them. Interestingly, for Hindus, the Pitru (ancestral) Paksha (fortnight) falls around the same time Sept-Oct time frame, and Deepavali (the festival of lights) on Oct-Nov time is also the time to remember the ancestors and saints.

In the Northern hemisphere, The Winter solstice Yule (21st December) represents the warmth of life returning and rebirth of Sun. Imbolc, 1st February represents the beginning of spring, Ostara, 21st March, spring equinox, falls around Easter. Spring is the time to start cultivation, and some pagan tradition believes that it represents Eostre, who is the Anglo-Saxon Goddess of fertility. Beltane, 30th April/1st May is the beginning of summer, and Litha, 21st June marks summer solstice and Lughnasadh, 31st July/1st August is marked for beginning of harvest, the Autumn Equinox. Many of the Christian festivals coincide with that of the Pagan ones, and many believe that it could have been adopted from that of the Pagans. Many Christian festivals closely resemble the pagan traditions. Many pagans believe that their ancient traditions might have been adopted into the Christian practices over a period. We can find the details of the Pagan traditions and celebrations throughout the year in:

http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jul/29/paganism-part-3-wheel-year-dates

6. Shastras, Mythology and Symbolism

The authority in Hindu traditions is called as shastras and is classified into Shruti and Smruti. It has Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas and many mythological stories that shape the way of life and belief system of Hindus and many other Dharma traditions. Unfortunately, the Pagan traditions do not have too many scriptures that they can draw references to explain their roots. But they have adopted their living principles from stories like the Welsh Mabinogion, poems and legends around the world. Symbolism plays a significant role in both Pagan and Dharma tradition.

The use of Mandala in Buddhist tradition or the Yantra of tantra tradition or the Yagna Kunda (used in fire rituals) of the Vedic traditions are extremely important to their practices. Use of circle, the cardinal directions (East, West, North, South) and four natural elements (Air, Fire, Water and Earth) are very much common in all Pagan traditions, but more so in Wiccans. Use of candles and incense sticks are common in Pagan as well as Christian rituals. In Yoga and Ayurvedic tradition the use of five elements, with the addition of Akasha (Eather) and use of eight or ten directions (north-east, south-east, south-west, north-west, up and down in addition to 4 cardinal directions) are also invoked during the rituals.

Use of pentagram (five-pointed star) and pentacle are most commonly used symbols not just during the rituals but also in the rings, earrings, pendants, T-shirts and other ornaments. Can also be used as a protection symbol and is used in 'magic'. Also represents hand legs and head, the points represent earth, air, fire, water and spirit.

The art of storytelling is a big component of all ancient traditions. It includes dance, drama, philosophy, song and music. The Druids have a concept called Arwen which means inspiration. This they believe fuels their creative work. Gods

and Goddesses are also a part of the storytelling. The art, music, song, dance and drama are used to evoke emotion and inspiration to bring in a positive change in the person, community and humanity at large. Places of worship, pilgrimages to sacred places, including lakes, rivers, mountains are very much cherished.

7. Response to challenging situations

Most of the ancient traditions around the world faced existential challenges by the invading and colonizing forces. There was rampant economic exploitation, persecution to the verge of extinction. The religious conversions, cultural appropriation and systemic vilification of the tradition by the colonizers was a big pushback to most of those traditions. In response, the ancient traditions became more decentralized, individualized and kept the tradition alive by providing inspiration, passion and making it a more oral tradition, passed on from generation to generation.

Most of the ancient traditions have a generational trauma of persecution in the past, e.g., witch-hunt, anti-witchcraft law, forceful removal of children of Pagan parents by social services departments etc. Social stigma played a big role in deterring the practice of Pagan traditions. People used to think that the Pagans worship the devil or sacrifice humans or animals. Another internal weakness was lack of organization. Because the pagan practices were so diverse, getting all the different traditions to come together has been and continues to be a challenge.

To avoid the persecution and harassment, some people kept practice a secret, open to select group and freemasonic societies were formed. After repealing the Anti-Witchcraft law in 1951, gradually people opened, many scholars published papers, books, and eventually organizations like Druid Network and Pagan Federation got recognition and legitimacy in mainstream religious groups. Thankfully

international collaborations like the efforts of International Center of Cultural Studies (ICCS Global) are able to bring all ancient traditions of the world together through conferences. They can publish papers, books and create research institutions like Research Institute of World Ancient Culture and Heritage (REWATCH)

Dharmic traditions like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism took different turns in the face of persecution, destruction of temple and religious places, and burning down of religious scriptures by fighting back, practicing at home in smaller groups, practicing the traditions in night like that of Pagans in Europe. Spiritual masters, Bhajan singers, Kirtan-kars, poets, storytellers started moving from place to place, giving confidence to people to maintain their family tradition, spiritual traditions, and value systems. They also started organizing the society and developed a civilizational aspiration among the masses and created selfless leaders to achieve that dream.

8. A personal spiritual journey

Ancient traditions of the world like the Pagans of Europe and Dharmic traditions of India, like the Vedic tradition view the human body as a tool to experience the world and learn from it, life after life, until realizing the ultimate truth 'Satya' and oneness of the creation. They believe that the key to harmony is finding this oneness in individual consciousness and sustainable principles of living for Global Peace and Prosperity, also known as Vishwa (Universal) Dharma.

There are no commandments or directives of any god or their messengers who have exclusive access to almost everything imaginable. There is a concept of enlightened teacher, also known as Guru in the Dharmic traditions. 'Gu' represents darkness, or ignorance and 'Ru' is the remover. So, Guru is the one who removes the darkness of ignorance, and the truth (symbolized as light) prevails. The individuals are encouraged to do

their own spiritual practice to get that knowledge and get enlightened and may choose to keep doing good work silently or become a guide, or Guru if they want. Normally the enlightened ones don't declare that they are the one, but rather people come to them automatically and get benefited from their advice, rituals and ceremonies.

Many practices of the Pagan tradition of Dharmic path tend to follow the principle of Ahimsa (nonviolence) or not hurting others and causing minimum harm to the environment for their personal need. This principal forms one of the core values of the Pagan, Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions. That could be one of the primary reason many Pagans become vegetarians or vegan, live a minimalist life, and many become environmentalists and activists for stopping war and violence.

A practice of Dharmic Traditions and Pagan culture is to experience the interplay of creative forces of Feminine energy and Masculine energy within themselves and in the nature. A woman might feel her masculine energy and vice versa a man might find full of feminine energy. This personal experience plays a major role in ancient spiritual traditions, thus they become very welcoming to all culture, gender and sexual orientation and belief system. This balance of masculine and feminine energy is also one of the core principles in the yoga texts, it is also very prevalent in Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures and traditions.

Many Pagans believe that life goes on even after death of the physical body. The understanding is that the body disintegrates and the molecules merges/transforms into the basic five elements, and the soul gets reincarnated in a physical form again in another life. Souls carry their karma, good or bad, to their next life and experience the consequences of their karma in subsequent lives. The results of the concept of Karma probably mandates the individual to become responsible of their actions and there is no redemption by anyone else. Just believing

in something or in somebody does not help. A famous saying in Bhagavad Gita [Ch. Verse. Link] says "Uddharet atmanam…", meaning you are the creator of your own destiny and you become the cause of your own destruction.

In all the ancient traditions a lot of emphasis is there on regular individual Practice (Sadhana). The concept of Sadhana (practice), Abhyasa (regularity) and Vairagya (discernment) are strongly suggested by 'Patanjali Yoga Sutra' and 'Bhagavad Gita'.

One of the great teachings of the ancient traditions is to take the life as it comes. The good and bad, happy moments and sad times are considered as a part of life and need to be taken as is in a balanced way. Most Pagans and Hindus do not see the creation as work of some devil or curse of some kind, rather focus on personal purification - cleansing of the body, mind and psyche. Meditation helps in a great way in this deep personal transformation. The ups and downs of life many consider as an opportunity, for personal transformation, like the goldsmith's heat (fire) transforms the gold ore to pure gold.

Though most of the Pagans start their practices as an individual Sadhana, they eventually get benefitted by group practice with like-minded people, eventually forming a community. For example, in recent times, many virtual groups started during Covid and eventually got transformed into physical community.

Traditionally, as a group practice, many different 'covens' came up for the Wiccans and Druids and stayed in several 'groves' for the same purpose. The individual experience as well as the shared experience, group practices form the core of spirituality in all ancient traditions.

Eventually, this transition from an individual to family to community to the humanity to the entire creation is a spiral spiritual journey most of the ancient traditions are very comfortable with. In contrast to that is the concentric circle model where 'I' is in the center and is always in conflict

with others, which is a path of confrontation not collaboration.

The ancient saying "Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah, Sarve Santu Niramayah, Sarve Bhadrani Pasyantu, Ma Cachet Dukha Bhag Bhavet", meaning let everyone be happy, healthy, and prosperous and let no one suffer. An interdependent world can make this possible.

9. Civilizational Harmony and Sustainability

The ideas and ideals followed by the ancient traditions, particularly the Pagan culture and practices provide an insight to civilizational harmony and a sustainable world. A civilization becomes as great as their individual members are, it takes the shape as per the nature, character and aspirations of its people. The Dharmic traditions like Pagan tradition focuses on individual growth with support of the collective. It provides an environment where ordinary people are able to achieve extraordinary things. The growth of the individual, community and the civilization at large are seen in totality not in isolation. Total or integral development includes material possession and comfort along with social harmony and spiritual growth. The Dharmic principle becomes the bedrock or foundation of that integral development model. An interconnected and interdependent world is an eco-friendly, nay, eco brotherly/sisterly thought, where everyone is equal and has their own contribution for a sustainable universe. The Pagan spiritual tradition, belief system, and worldview provides a glimpse into the possibility of a harmonious society and a sustainable world.

10. Concept of God

The idea of God and spiritual pursuit to realize Divinity is an individual endeavor; the spiritual masters and religious scriptures and shastras and Temples or sacred sites are mere tools to achieve that. The idea of a deity or God could be both masculine and feminine or none (called Brahman in Vedic tradition). An individual can achieve self-realization and experience this oneness in nature and environment making it sacred. This oneness or equality, which is inherent and not an artificial construct, becomes the foundation of spirituality, which gives rise to equality, fraternity and universality not the other way around.

11. Worldview

The Pagan tradition sees the entire humanity in totality and thinks about the total humanity. The concept of God, and realization that oneness does not allow the practitioners of Pagan Dharmic traditions divide into me, mine, we, ours and the others. It is a tradition of seekers not believers.

For example, in Dharmic traditions, like Hindu, Buddhist or Jain parampara (practices) an honest seeker of truth 'Satya' and natural order 'Rita' will not be able to divide humanity into believers and non-believers or good and evil or dark forces. Because the dualities of good and bad is with everyone and everything. The goal of life is self-purification for self-realization, or God realization or becoming an ideal, compassionate, caring, enlightened human being a 'Buddha'.

12. Relationship with nature

Life is sacred, the plants, animals, rivers, mountains, trees, sky, moon and sun, all are sacred and need to be respected and honored. Parents and ancestors' burial/cremation ground is sacred. They keep the ashes and bones for blessings and guidance. These beliefs and traditions create a strong family and a sense of responsibility for each other and the environment. The family and community become the support system, and does not burden the government to take care of the child, sick or elderly. The family provides social security, emotional support, financial support and a safety net for all.

13. Sustainable principles of living

The belief in karma and reincarnation makes the individuals responsible for themselves (and not hold others). The concept of 'Santosha'

i.e. contentment, and 'Aparigraha' i.e. non accumulation are great tools for a happy and sustainable world. There is no concept of original sin, and people are free from the perpetual guilt of being a wrongdoer. Life is to be celebrated, enjoyed in moderation.

14. Dharmic Sustainability

The Dharmic tradition boldly declares everyone as potentially divine and the goal of life is to realize the divinity within, through knowledge, work, worship (devotion) or meditation, one or more of them and be free. Thus, Dharma provides a path for lasting personal, environmental, and civilizational growth and happiness for all.

15. Conclusion

The global culture and traditions of the world, particularly the ancient cultures and traditions have contributed a lot to humanity. Whether it is African traditions, Native American traditions, First Nations of Canada, Australian Aborigines, Māori of New Zealand, Pagans of Europe or Dharmic traditions of India/Asia, they have a lot in common and hold key to a holistic growth of a civilization. In this study we have focused on the Pagan and Dharmic traditions, such as Hindu culture and belief system. There is a great deal of similarities between the two, and in one sense we can consider Pagan tradition as a Dharmic tradition of Europe.

The Pagan traditions distinguishes itself from traditional faith based religions and is more experiential tradition by nature. It does not distinguish or discriminate between believer and non-believers. Pagan tradition thinks about the entire humanity and the human beings in totality. It does not consider humans having any special privilege over the other creations like plants and animals. The concept of God in most Dharmic traditions, and many Pagan traditions is an integrated concept, where the presence of divinity is felt in entire creation. God realization is possible in this life, and one need not die or wait for afterlife to experience that. It is an oral tradition, where the knowledge is passed on from generation to generation. Thus, the experience of each generation gets added and the tradition gets updated from time to time. There are no final authorities, and no one gets to say the final word, it is a work in progress and a search for ultimate truth. The knowledgeable persons or Gurus and elders of the family guide and every individual takes their own path. Everyone takes the responsibility of their own action and learn a lesson or two in every life until one reaches the ultimate. The goal of life of those Dharmic traditions is to reach that ultimate, know the absolute reality, and achieve freedom while acquiring wealth and fulfilling desires in a sustainable, balanced and Dharmic manner. The four-fold path of knowledge, devotion, action and meditation shows the way. Thereby they provide a path to civilizational harmony and sustainability.

Websites

The Pagan Federation www.paganfed.org

The British Druid Order http://www.druidry.co.uk/

The Druid Network https://druidnetwork.org/

The Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids http://www.druidry.org/

PaganAid https://www.paganaid.org

Children of Artemis http://witchcraft.org/

Pagan and Heathen symposium http://pagansymposium.org/paganism/subdivisions/heathenry_1.shtml

Pagan Symposium code of behavior http://pagansymposium.org/code.html

Pagan life-cycle rites: http://www.liferites.org.uk/ http://www.pagan-transitions.org.uk/

Philip Carr-Gomm https://philipcarr-gomm.com/the-one-tree-gathering-cultural-exchange-project/

References

Images: https://philipcarr-gomm.com/the-one-tree-gathering-cultural-exchange-project/

Concept of God and Spirituality: Commonalities in African and Hindu Ancient Traditions

Professor and Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, USF Health Taneja College of Pharmacy, University of South Florida, 12901 Bruce B Downs Blvd, MDC 030 Tampa FL 33612, USA Tel: 01-813-974-1026 E mail: ypathak1@usf.edu   Personal e mail: yvpathak2012@gmail.com

Spiritual and spirituality is perceived in many different ways. It is considered to be related to or affecting the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things. Other definition is spirituality is related to religion or religious beliefs especially those religions which do not recognize the existence of divinity in the creation of God. From African perspective, one can define the term 'spiritual' as the realm of existence beyond the physical, a realm that is intangible and unperceivable by the physical senses. The extent to which the African world is spiritual is evident in African Metaphysics, Epistemology and Religion (George K Barimah, July 2019)

A Hindu views the entire universe as God's and everything in the universe as God. Hindus believe that each person is intrinsically divine and the purpose of life is to seek and realize the divinity within all of us

वयम् अमृतस्य पुत्रा:

**"We are the children of Immortal, all pervading almighty divine"
(Shvetashvatara Upanishad)**

The Hindu belief is very much non-exclusive and accepts all other faiths and religious paths. According to Vedas the oldest Dharma scripture, the universe is the manifestation of the divine. Divinity is in everyone, it should be acknowledged and respected by everyone. Africans firmly believe that the divinity exists not only in human beings but also in plants, animals, and all creation, just as the Hindus believe. That is why in many scriptures of Hindu Dharma occurs one Mahavakya

''सर्वभूत हिते रता:''

In the welfare of all beings Bhagwatgeetha, Chapter 12, 3-4

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।
सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यश्च कूटस्थमचलन्ध्रुवम् ।। ३ ।।
सन्नियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धय: ।
ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रता: ।। ४ ।।

Meaning : But those who worship the formless aspect of the Absolute Truth — the imperishable, the indefinable, the all-pervading, the unthinkable, the unchanging, the eternal, and the immoveable—by restraining their senses and being even-minded everywhere, such persons, engaged in the welfare of all beings, also attain Me. Welfare of all beings who practice will attain the god.

Hinduism is more of a Dharma than religion, and many times the Westerners misrepresent it as religion. As they do not have a concept of Dharma (Way of life) . It is the oldest one and the third largest population follows it, after Christianity and Islam, with 900 million adherents. Hindu teaching and philosophy has had a profound impact on other major ancient traditions and cultures. Hinduism is a way of life, more than a faith. It has its own worldview and philosophy upholding the principles of virtuous and true living for the Indian diaspora throughout the world. The history of Hinduism is intricately entwined with, and has had a profound influence on, the history of the Indian diaspora in all continents. Due to existence of divinity in every creation of God, Africans and Hindus realize that spirituality is integrated within Dharma itself, no separation between spirituality or way of life.

Concept of God in African traditions

Concept of God in African traditions are reflected in many different ways. **The Akan** (/ˈækæn/) people are a Kwa group living primarily in present-day Ghana and in parts of Ivory Coast and Togo in West Africa. The Akan language (also known as Twi/Fante) are a group of dialects within the Central Tano branch of the Potou–Tano subfamily of the Niger–Congo family. For example "The Akan universe, essentially spiritually, is endowed or charged with varying degrees of force or power. This force or power is **"Sunsum"**, usually translated as "spirit", which, as noted, is commonly used to refer to the mystical and non-empirical, as in "Sunsum" yare (spiritual disease)". Further in Akan philosophy significant importance is given to **'Onyankopon' or the Supreme Being** as the cause of all other things. The traditional Akan is theistic by default, while growing up in the community the Akan is taught that 'Oboade'; the Creator created the river, the mountains and land. The belief in a Supreme Being is a major aspect of the spiritual world of the African. Existence of the spirit or super power in the creation of God is very well recognized. Again, many Western researchers explain the nature of the world / universe in purely physical terms, the traditional Akan African accounts for the universe by referring to an all-powerful Being with tremendous power as the cause of the universe. (Gyekye (1995:72))

In Akan conception, nobody teaches a child about God. For the traditional

Akan the concept of God is so real and evident that no one will have to teach a child about God.

Also, the Akan conception of a person as discussed by Kwame Gyekye demonstrates another salient aspect of the spiritual world of the African. According to Kwame Gyekye (1995) the human being is not just a physical entity but a spiritual entity as well. For Gyekye, the Akans believe that a person is made up of Honam (body) and Okra (soul). He argues that while the Honam is physical, the Okra and the Sunsum are non-material and non-physical.

According to Gyekye (1995:85) 'The Okra is the embodiment and transmitter of the individual's destiny (fate: nkrabea). It is explained as a spark of the Supreme Being (Onyame) in man. It is thus described as divine and as having an antemundane existence with the Supreme Being. The presence of this divine essence in a human being may have been the basis of the Akan proverb, "All men are the children of God; no one is a child of the earth' (nnipa nyinaa ye Onyame mma, obiara nnye asase ba)". Kwasi Wiredu on his part defines Okra as "that whose presence in the body means life and whose absence means death and which also receives the individual's destiny from God" (Gyekye, 1995: 86).

Thus in describing the composition of the human being the spiritual world of the African comes to play. Sunsum (spirit) is another component of a person which Gyekye describes as accounting for an individual's personality; the sunsum is also responsible for one's actions in dreams (Gyekye, 1995: 91). The traditional Akan, and African for that matter, believes that he or she is not just a bag of flesh and bones. The traditional African believes that since he or the Supreme Being who is entirely spiritual created her then it must follow that there is a spiritual aspect to his or her person. For the Akan this spiritual component of a person is the Okra, which will live on after death of body.

The Yoruba tribe is a distinct group of people who live in West Africa. Over 40 million Yoruba live in the world. The most concentrated populations of Yoruba are in Nigeria and Benin. The Yoruba have distinct languages, food ways, and music. At the same time, they are related to other ethnic groups in West Africa. These Yoruba people according to Olusegun Oladipo (2004: 242) believe in a Supreme Being (Olodumare). Oladipo writes "The major elements of the Yoruba conception of reality can be classified

under the following headings:

1. Belief in Olódùmarè (Supreme Being).
2. Belief in divinities and spirits and its existence in all the creation of God (or Olodumare)
3. Belief in ancestors.
4. Belief in other mystical powers, incantations, magic, and witchcraft.

"Olódùmarè is regarded as 'the origin and ground of all that is' (referring to the creation of the God /Olodumare) (Idowu 1962:18). This conception of him is reflected in the different qualities that are attributed to him. Olodumare is 'He', regarded as the creator (Elédà) and the maker (Asèdà) who is the origin and giver of life (Elèmì). Furthermore, he is regarded as the undying king (Oba àikú) whose habitation is the heaven above (Oba Órun) and who is over and above all divinities and men; a being whose work is done in perfection (A-sè-kan-mà-kù); a supreme judge who judges in silence (Adàkédàjó); and the controller of man's destiny (Idowu 1962:39–42).

Next to Olódùmarè are the divinities (Òrìsà). Those divinities fall into three different groups. In the first group are those that can be regarded as the primordial divinities, that is, those that are believed by the Yoruba to derive directly from Olódùmarè. Among these are Òrìsà-nlà (Obàtàlà), Orunmìlà, sù, Ógún, and Ódúdùwà. The second group consists of deified ancestors such as Sàngó and Òrìsà-Oko. And the third group consists of personified natural phenomena—the earth, rivers, lagoons, mountains, etc. As for the spirits (Ebora or Imolè), they are believed to be dreadful divinities whose habitations were the thick, dark groves and unusual places.

Those who walk the world of Humans at night and prowl the place during the noonday, the very thought of whom was hair-raising; to pass by whose groves was bloodcurdling; with whom man feels compelled to make terms for his own safety; more propitiated out of fear than worshipped in reverence (Idowu 1962:62)".

Gbadegisin (2004: 211) notes that 'Eniyan is made by the combined effort of Olodumare, the Supreme deity, and some subordinates. The body is constructed by Orisa-nla the arch divinity (In Hindus it is considered as Atman or Soul). The deity then supplies emi, which activates the lifeless body. Emi is thus construed as the active principle of life, the life giving element put in place by the deity. It is also construed as part of the divine breath".

The Ori is another component of the Eniyan, according to Gbadegesin (2004) "the Ori is recognized as the bearer of the person's destiny as well as the determinant of personality.

Gbadegesin mentions the deity Ajala as the potter of the Ori. He posits that after "emi has been put in place, the newly created human being proceeds to the next stage – the house of Ajala- for the choice of an ori".

Both the Akan and the Yoruba of Nigeria also perceive of a person as not just a bag of flesh and bones but has spiritual components, which are given by the Supreme deity.

Concept of God in Hindu traditions and cultures (Dharma):

Throughout their history, Hindus have pondered deeply about the nature of God. From interpretations of scriptures such as the Vedas and Upanishads, observation and reflection, and meditation and spiritual experiences, different philosophies emerged in this quest to know God. Many Hindus understand God to be Brahman or the Infinite. Brahman is believed to be omnipresent, all-powerful, and beyond comprehension. Some Hindus believe that Brahman is formless and without attributes, but manifests in form. Other Hindus believe Brahman has a transcendent form and attributes. This supreme and transcendent form is Vishnu or Krishna for Vaishnavas and Shiva for Shaivites.

The world is also seen as a manifestation of Brahman and regarded in some traditions as the body of God. Hindu understandings of God

range from non-dualistic (the universe and the Absolute are not two) to qualified non-dualism (that the universe is different from but dependent on God and inseparable from God) to dualistic (that the universe is both dependent and different from God). These understandings also range from philosophies of pantheism (all of existence is the Absolute) to panentheism (all of existence is within the Absolute), to theism (the Absolute is external to all of existence). Hindu traditions emphasize that God is the cause of existence and God pervades everything. At the same time, God is beyond and not limited by the world. The Divine or its essential nature can be seen: • In oneself and all other human beings • In all other beings, including plants and animals • In the whole universe, including mountains, rivers, trees, and other planets

Brahman is an abstract concept, but is believed to become accessible in murtis. The word "murti" is typically translated into English as "image" or "idol," but these definitions are limited. To Hindus, a murti is a powerful visual tool used for contemplating the nature of, as well as communicating, with God. It is also believed to be charged with the presence of God, thus Hindus may offer their prayers and devotion to a murti. While Hindus understand God to be present in a murti, they do not consider God to be limited to the murti. Thus the term "embodiment" would be more apt. God is understood as both immanent and transcendent.

God in Hinduism is understood as beyond gender although capable of taking on both masculine and feminine qualities and forms. Some examples of different manifestations include Brahma, the Creator; Vishnu, the Preserver; and Shiva, the Destroyer. Female forms include Goddesses such as Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth; Saraswati, the Goddess of Knowledge; and Parvati, the Goddess of Strength. Each of these deities offers the Hindu worshipper

a different quality or aspect of the divine to focus on. Other forms of God include Ganesh, the Remover of Obstacles, and Hanuman, the Embodiment of Strength and Perfect Devotion. Because of Hinduism's fundamental reverence of the Divine or its essence in all things, animals are commonly depicted in representations of Brahman. For example, Ganesha is presented as having an elephant head, while Hanuman with some features of a monkey. Trees such as the Ashwattha (Ficus religiosa), plants such as tulsi (Ocimum tenuiflorum), and rivers such as the Ganges and Yamuna are also given Divine status in Hinduism. Hindus believe that God can incarnate in human form, as an 'avatar', with a specific objective. For example, God is understood to have taken human form on earth as Rama, the paragon of virtue, or as Krishna, a kingmaker, to eradicate evil from the world at different times in history and establish righteousness. Hindus may also pray to local deities, some of whom were once real people, both men and women, who are believed to have attained such a high level of enlightenment that they are seen as expressions of the divine. Consequently, they may also be seen to be manifestations of other major Gods and Goddesses. Hinduism promotes respect for other religions and acknowledges truths in their teachings. This philosophy leads to pluralism within and outside of Hinduism. Accordingly, most Hindus see the variety of religions and philosophies as different paths to God. A quote from the Vedas that summarizes the Hindu perspective on God is "Truth is one. The wise call It by various names." (taken from **https://www.hinduamerican. org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Hindu ConceptsAboutGod2.0_2.pdf** with permission)

Table 1 provides a list of Gods and Goddesses in African cultures and traditions comparing Hindu Gods and Goddesses with corresponding attributes

Table 1 : African and Hindu Gods and Goddesses with their roles and attributes			
Name of the God from African traditions and cultures	**Believer African tribe**	**Meaning or the attributes**	**Name of the God from Ancient Hindu traditions and cultures**
God of war and destruction			
Ogun	Yoruba	god of war who defends	**Kartikeya** is considered as God of war While Goddess kali is considered as Goddess of war
Kibuka	Buganda	god of war who secures victory in war by taking the form of a cloud, which hovers above his enemies and rains spears and arrows	**Kaali** (Black) is one among the ancient goddess who was worshipped as one among the Ezhu Kanni or Sapta kannis. She was represented and associated with Black Color, the color that represents ignorance and wildness. Kotravai is considered as Kaali (Black) is one among the ancient goddess who was worshipped as one among the Ezhu Kanni or Sapta kannis. She was represented and associated with Black Color , the color that represents ignorance and wildness. Kotravai is considered as goddess of Paalai land(Desert land). Goddess Kaali is also primary war goddess of Jews, black color dress code represents their Kaali worship. Other names of Kaali are Pidari Amman, Kotravai, Angala Parameswari
Menhit	Egyptian Goddess	The war goddess was believed to advance ahead of the Egyptian armies and cut down their enemies with fiery arrows.	**Durga** (Sanskrit: दुर्गा, IAST: Durgā) is a major Hindu goddess, worshipped as a principal aspect of the mother goddess Mahadevi. She is associated with protection, strength, motherhood, destruction, and wars.
Tano	Asahnti	the goddess of war and strife	**The Power of Goddess Durga** is the power to destroy evil, and to bring goodness into our lives. While we don't see any males helping Durga, she is sometimes shown to be able to use powers acquired from male Gods.
Takhar	Senegal's Serer	god of justice or vengeance, protect believers against injury, bad omens, and abuse	**Shani** is also a male Hindu deity in the Puranas, whose iconography consists of a black figure carrying a sword or danda (sceptre) and sitting on a crow. He is the god of karma, justice, and retribution, and delivers results depending upon one's thoughts, speech, and deeds.
Shango	Yoruba	god of war and thunder. Oral tradition describes him as powerful, with a voice like thunder and a mouth that spewed fire when he spoke.	**Lord Indra** was worshipped as the bravest of the gods and the bringer of rains. Wielding a thunderbolt, Indra was known for battling against monsters.

Oya	Yoruba	She is the goddess of wind, thunderbolt, and fire	**Vayu** is the Hindu god of air. The word Vayu means "wind" or "air" in Sanskrit. Vayu has many other names, such as Prana, which means "breath." Vayu is discussed in many texts, including the Rigveda, the Upanishads, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata
God of wealth			
Oshun	Yoruba	divine being associated with love and fertility, as well as financial fortune in the Yoruba religion.	**Kubera,** in Hindu traditions , the king of the yakshas (nature spirits) and the god of wealth. He is associated with the earth, mountains, all treasures such as minerals and jewels that lie underground, and riches in general.
Oko	Yoruba	god of agriculture and fertility. He came to Earth and lived on a small farm, growing some of the most beautiful and delicious fruits and vegetables	**Parvati** is the Hindu goddess of fertility, love and devotion as well as of divine strength and power. She is the gentle and nurturing aspect of the Hindu goddess Shakti and one of the central deities of the Goddess-oriented Shakta sect. She is the mother goddess in Hinduism and has many attributes and aspects.
Mami wata	Many tribes	The goddess has the power to bestow good fortune and status through monetary wealth.	**Goddess Lakshmi** Hindus believe that anybody who worships Lakshmi sincerely, and not in greed, will be blessed with fortune and success. It is said that Lakshmi resides in places of hard work, virtue and bravery, but leaves whenever these qualities are not apparent any more.
Anayaroli	Many tribes	God of wealth	• **Lakshmi :** Goddess of wealth, fortune and luck.
Ashiakle	West Africa tribes	She is a famous goddess of wealth and prosperity in West Africa	• **Rukmini :** Goddess of fortune.
Abena	Many tribes	She is known as the river goddess. Her name is associated with gold, brass, as well as with other wealth symbols	**Ma Ganga Goddess** A river goddess is a female deity or spirit associated with a particular river or body of water, often considered as a protector and a source of life-giving and purifying powers.
God of healing			
Agwu-nsi	Many tribes	god of health and divination	**Dhanvantari,** in Hindu traditions, the physician of the gods. According to legend, the gods and the demons sought the elixir amrita by churning the milky ocean, and Dhanvantari rose out of the waters bearing a cup filled with the elixir. The Ayurveda, a traditional system of medicine, is also attributed to him
Osanyin	Yoruba	Yoruba Orisha of herbalism, and he possesses the powers to cure all diseases.	**Dhanvantari is the Hindu god of healing and Ayurvedic medicine.** He is also an avatar of Vishnu and emerged during the churning of the milky ocean, holding the nectar of immortality, Amrita

Xu	Bushmen	Sky god invoked in illnesses	**Shitala Mother Goddess** (Hindi: "She Who Is Cool") Indian goddess of smallpox and of other infectious diseases. She is worshipped under this name throughout the regions of South Asia in which Indo-Aryan languages are spoken. In India she is widely worshipped in the rural areas of West Bengal state.
Babalu Aye	Yoruba	he is connected with disease and illness, he is also tied to its cures	**Shiva** is worshipped as Vaitheeswaran or the "God of healing" and it is believed that prayers to **Vaitheeswaran** can cure diseases. It is one of the nine **Navagraha** (nine planets) temples associated with the planet Mars (Angaraka)
Gods of Evils			
Amadioha	Igbo	He is the god of thunder & lightening. Amadioha is considered a gentleman among the deities and the cruelest when annoyed.	Their role changes only during and after the earth, sky and living beings have been created. The sky world becomes that of Devas, the underworld becomes that of **Asuras.** The god Indra is the embodiment of good and represents the Devas, while the dragon Vritra is the embodiment of evil and an **Asuras**
Adro	Many tribes	god of death with two characters: good and evil	**Yama** (Sanskrit : यम), also known as Kala, and Dharmaraja is the Hindu god of death and justice, responsible for the dispensation of law and punishment of sinners in his abode, Yamapuri. He is often identified with **Dharmadeva,** the personification of Dharma, though the two deities have different origins and myths
Gaunab	Xhosa and Khoikhoi	He is responsible for all misfortune, disease, and death.	Yama (Sanskrit: यम), is the Hindu god of Death and Justice, and is responsible for the dispensation of law and punishment of sinners in his abode, Yamaloka. Yama is also one of the oldest deities in the pantheon and some of his earliest appearances are found in the Rigveda.
Ogo	Dogon	Ogo is a horrifically awful trickster god, the embodiment of chaos, and a rebel of horribleness.	From one perspective, **Kali is a goddess of chaos;** a sacred being that embodies that which can't be controlled or contained. From another perspective, Kali is a dramatic expression of a mother's fierce, protective love for her children; the feminine power rising up to attack those who threaten her babies.

God of death			
Ogunabali	Many tribes	Literally meaning "the one that kills at night." He is known as the death deity. Ogbunabali is known to kill violently.	Yama (Sanskrit: यम), is the Hindu god of Death and Justice, and is responsible for the dispensation of law and punishment of sinners in his abode, Yamaloka. Yama is also one of the oldest deities in the pantheon and some of his earliest mentions are found in the Rigveda
Gamab	Many tribes	Gamab lives in the sky and directs the fate of mankind. When it's time for someone to die, Gamab gets out his bow and shoots them down with an arrow	Bhairava means "terribly fearsome form". It is also known as one who destroys fear or one who is beyond fear. One interpretation is that he protects his devotees from dreadful enemies, greed, lust, and anger. These enemies are dangerous as they never allow humans to seek God within.
Oya	Yoruba	Goddess of death	Kali is the Hindu goddess of death and rebirth, she expresses the dual nature of the destruction that must come before new beginnings, and of the strength of the female power which can sometimes do what the man cannot. She is also the goddess of time
Gods of creation			
Mbombo	Kuba people	It is believed that Mbombo was alone, darkness and primordial water covered all the earth. He felt an intense pain in his stomach and then vomited the sun, the moon, and stars.	In Hinduism, the Goddess (Shakti) enacts the cycle of creation as envisioned by the Gods Vishnu and Shiva. The Goddess is represented in various forms throughout the history of art in India, and in classical Sanskrit religious literature, like the Mahabharata and Ramayana.
Olorun	Yoruba	He is the ruler of the sky and the creator of the sun	Varuna, in the Vedic phase of Hindu traditions , the god-sovereign, the personification of divine authority. He is the ruler of the sky realm and the upholder of cosmic and moral law (rita), a duty shared with the group of gods known as the Adityas (see Aditi), of whom he was the chief
Obatala	Many tribes	He is the creator of humans, mountains, valleys, forests, and fields.	Varuna, in the Vedic phase of Hindu mythology, the god-sovereign, the personification of divine authority. He is the ruler of the sky realm and the upholder of cosmic and moral law (rita), a duty shared with the group of gods known as the Adityas (see Aditi), of whom he was the chief

Unkulunkulu	Many tribes	He grew from reeds and brought with him people and cattle. Upon his own creation, he created the earth and all of its creatures.	Brahma (Sanskrit: ब्रह्मा, romanized: Brahmā) is a Hindu god, referred to as "the Creator" within the Trimurti, the trinity of supreme divinity that includes Vishnu and Shiva. He is associated with creation, knowledge, and the Vedas.
Kaang	San people	He is the creator god of the universe	Brahma (Sanskrit: ब्रह्मा, romanized: Brahmā) is a Hindu god, referred to as "the Creator" within the Trimurti, the trinity of supreme divinity that includes Vishnu and Shiva. He is associated with creation, knowledge, and the Vedas.
Odomankoma	Akan People	to describe the eternal entity who deserves the credit for the work of creation, including creating the concept of trinity.	It is often said that there is a trinity of Hindu gods: Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer. But while Vishnu and Shiva have followers and temples all over India, Brahma is worshiped as a major deity in South Asia
Modajaji	South African Goddess	She is a South African goddess of rain whose spirits live in a young woman's body. The goddess is considered a key figure as she can start and stop the rain.	In Hinduism the Goddess (Shakti) enacts the cycle of creation as envisioned by the Gods Vishnu and Shiva. The Goddess is represented in various forms throughout the history of art in India, and in classical Sanskrit religious literature, like the Mahabharata and Ramayana
		God of fertility	
Ala	Igbo People	The goddess represents the earth, fertility, creativity, and morality.	Parvati in the Hindu tradition is goddess of the Himalayas, is the archetypal mother goddess and fertility image. She is the beloved wife of Shiva and the mother of Ganesha and Skanda. In this role, she benevolently mediates between the worshipper and the divine.
Oshun	Yoruba	She is associated with water, purity, fertility, love, and sensuality.	Ganga, the Goddess of the Ganges River. Yamuna, the Goddess of the Yamuna River. Saraswati, the divine Goddess of knowledge and wisdom who was personified as a river that dried up in ancient times. **Indus, also called Sindhu ??**
Asase Ya	Asahnti	Earth goddess of fertility of the Ashanti people of Ghana. She is the wife of Nyame, the Sky deity, who created the universe.	For the Hindus the Earth is sacred as the very manifestation of the Divine Mother. She is Bhumi Devi, the Earth Goddess. One of the reasons that Hindus honour cows is that the cow represents the energies and qualities of the Earth, selfless caring, sharing and the providing of nourishment to all.

Mbaba Mwana Waresa	Zulu	Goddess of fertility.		The worship of Shashthi is prescribed to occur on the sixth day of each lunar month of the Hindu calendar as well as on the sixth day after a child's birth. Barren women desiring to conceive and mothers seeking to ensure the protection of their children will worship Shashthi and request her blessings and aid.
Denka	Dinka	God to fertility		The worship of Shashthi is prescribed to occur on the sixth day of each lunar month of the Hindu calendar as well as on the sixth day after a child's birth. Barren women desiring to conceive and mothers seeking to ensure the protection of their children will worship Shashthi and request her blessings and aid.
Yemaya	Yoruba	She is the childbirth goddess in the Yoruba religion. She is considered the mother of all since she is the goddess of the living ocean.		Shashthi or Shashti (Sanskrit: षष्ठी, , Bengali: ষষ্ঠী, Ṣaṣṭhī, literally "sixth") is a Hindu goddess, venerated in Nepal and India as the benefactor and protector of children. She is also the deity of vegetation and reproduction and is believed to bestow children and assist during childbirth.

Read more : **https://www.tuko.co.ke/393217-50-african-gods-names-meanings.html**

Destiny and spirituality in African traditions:

The African belief in destiny also shows the extent to which the world of the African is spiritual. African philosophers like Segun Gbadegesin and Kwame Gyekye have argued that an individual has a predetermined mandate or purpose to fulfil on earth, which is given by the Supreme deity (Supreme God) . While Gyekye holds the view that an individual's destiny is always good since it proceeds from a good God, Gbadegesin believes that a person's destiny can be either good or bad. However, they both agree that individual destiny proceeds from the Supreme Being. Because of the traditional African's belief in destiny, a person often attributes the circumstances or challenges faces in life to destiny. For the traditional African what a person will become is determined before the person is born into this world. Contrary to most western scientists who believe that the human being is just a physical entity (physicalism) and as such ceases to exist after the death of the body, the traditional African believes in afterlife. In African traditions they say "you tread the path which has already been designed by the God" The modern Igbo of Nigeria, even when adhering to the Christian religion, have preserved many features of Igbo traditional religion. The belief in reincarnation seems to be particularly strong. The Igbo believe that reincarnation usually occurs within the same immediate or extend- ed family.

Destiny, reincarnation/rebirth and spirituality in Hinduism:

Let us understand destiny or fate as we call it. Fate means something that is destined to happen (pre written by gods). You cannot change it. In Hinduism, it is called as Niyati. By a cosmic force called niyati (Sanskrit: "rule" or "destiny") that determines all events, including

an individual's fate, to the last detail and that barred personal efforts to change or accelerate improvement toward one's spiritual destiny. It is considered that, each being is predestined to innumerable rebirths (saṃsāra), and one's aggregate moral balance sheet (karman) determines both – the length of each life and the specific form of each rebirth. As a result, the Hindu view accepts and believes in samsara or reincarnation: the cycle of life-death-rebirth until such time as the individual soul, on self-realization of its own essential divinity, emerges into the Absolute which is the attainment of moksha or liberation from the cycles of rebirth.

African traditions, rebirth, and reincarnation:

There is an another very important aspect of the spiritual world of the African, the concept of afterlife. According to Gyekye (1995:86) Most Akans believe that death is not a finality as such, they hold that death is a transition or a necessary step into another world; the world of spirits (asamando). It is believed that the kind of life one lives on earth will determine how he or she is received in the afterlife.

Akin to the belief in afterlife is the belief in re-incarnation in African thought. The belief in reincarnation as held by most traditional Africans goes to prove the spiritual nature of the African world. According to Kamalu (1998: 31) "Since the unborn are identified with the ancestors (the new-born is an ancestor returned), we discern a cyclical process of human becoming, through what are known as rites of passage. These states include birth, initiation into adulthood, marriage, procreation and ancestor status at death. But this is not "death" in a final sense, for the cycle begins again when the deceased person becomes reincarnated as a newborn child".

The traditional African believes that an ancestor may be reincarnated to this world by inhabiting the body of newborn child. This goes to prove the spiritual nature of the African world

where there is the belief that individuals who have passed on to the spirit world can once again become members of the physical world.

Most importantly, the hierarchy of being in African metaphysical thought reveals the spiritual world of the African. Gyekye (1995: 73) notes 'In this metaphysic all created things, that is, natural objects, have or contain sunsum; every deity (obosom) is a sunsum, but not vice versa. This sunsum derives ultimately from Onyame who, as the Supreme Bieng, is the Highest Spirit or Highest Power. Sunsum, then, appears, in my interpretation, to be a generic concept; it appears to be a universal spirit, manifesting itself differently in the various beings and objects in the natural world".

Similarly, Kamalu (1998: 18) observes that "prior to the emergence of institutionalised religion, non-institutionalised belief in the form of animism (the belief that an ultimate soul, life-force or consciousness permeates every created thing) existed globally. It would appear that animistic societies characteristically held the belief that the entire hierarchy of nature – from human beings to animals, plants and the soil – is endowed with a form of soul, consciousness or living force emanating from some singular Great Force/Energy/Spirit".

Existence of Soul in creation of God including Plants and animals:

In traditional African societies, there is a strong belief that plants and animals have souls. The belief that plants have souls for example prevents certain plants from being cut or urinated on, there is the belief that something evil might happen to an individual who urinates on or cuts certain plants in the forest.

According to Gyekye (1995:75) "the Akan universe is conceived as a hierarchy of beings with Onyame at the apex, then the deities, ancestors, humans, and the world of natural objects and phenomena, in that order". The traditional Akan's belief in a hierarchy of being

with spiritual entities above humans is evidence of the spiritual world of the Akan and African in general. The deities according to Gyekye inhere in natural objects such as stones, trees, and rivers and they are believed to possess supernatural powers and can destroy anything beneath it in the hierarchy. Thus, deities have the power to destroy ancestors, humans and the natural objects, while Onyame has the ultimate power to destroy every other being including deities. The belief in a hierarchy of beings often leads to practices such as libation, sacrifice and other rituals done to communicate with ancestors, placate the gods or please them or to even ask favours from them. In most traditional African homes, libation is often offered to the gods and ancestors during festivals, naming ceremonies, funerals etc. Some animals are also sacrificed to deities in order to gain different favors from them.

Some of those favors may include protection from harm, child birth, prosperity, good health, good yield (of crops) and the nullification of curses. Also food is sometimes offered to those deities as a sign of reverence and respect or to gain a favor from them. Often because of the ability of the Supreme Being and deities to affect the course of human life, mysterious events are attributed to them.

From the above it can be deduced that the traditional African's way of knowing something for sure is to engage in divination. Thus, epistemology in African society to a large extent is spiritual in nature. It rests on the omniscience of a deity who can tell us about the unknown and the hidden issues of our life. Religion which is more as a way of life, is another very important aspect of the life of the African which demonstrates the spiritual nature of the world of the African.

Olesugun Oladipo (2004b:355) remarks that John Mbiti makes this observation about the religious life of the African as follows: "Because traditional religions permeate all departments of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. Wherever the African is, there is his religion (Interpret as way of life), he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament".

Although philosophers like Kwasi Wiredu have disputed Mbiti's claim that the African is religious, it does not take away the fact that Africans believe in a variety of spiritual forces. Wiredu (2004: 27) remarks "As far at least as the Akans are concerned, it can be said that their attitude to those extra-human beings generally called minor gods in the literature is not really religious. On the contrary, it is utilitarian, for the most part. The powers in question are, as previously noted, a regular part of the resources of the world. If human beings understand how they function and are able to establish satisfactory relations with them, they can exploit their powers to their advantage".

Most Africans believe in the reality of the spiritual world, they do not think it is a figment of our imagination or a fictitious claim. For most Africans there is the belief that for anything to happen in the physical world of the senses it must first have happened in the spiritual world. As a result of this, most Africans believe that dreams are significant and if interpreted properly, can tell us a lot about what is about to happen in the future.

Hindu traditions some important beliefs comparable to African belief mentioned above:

Sanatana Dharma (also known as Hindu Dharma) encompasses a set of eternal and universal ethical and moral principles of virtuous

and true living, is acceptable by a Hindu. The Hindu ethical code attaches great importance to values such as truth, right conduct, love, peace and non-violence known as **Yama Niyamas.** There is the notion that our beliefs determine our thoughts and attitudes, which in turn direct out actions, which in turn creates our destiny Known as Karma Theory of Hindu traditions.

All Hindu ceremonies, rituals and worships end with a prayer for universal peace and harmony as follows.

ॐ द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः
पृथिवी शान्तिरापः शान्तिरोषधयः शान्तिः ।
वनस्पतयः शान्तिर्विश्वेदेवाः शान्तिर्ब्रह्म शान्तिः
सर्वं शान्तिः शान्तिरेव शान्तिः सा मा शान्तिरेधि ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Dyauh Shaantir-Antarikssam Shaantih
Prthivii Shaantir-Aapah Shaantir-Ossadhayah Shaantih |
Vanaspatayah Shaantir-Vishve-Devaah Shaantir-Brahma Shaantih
Sarvam Shaantih Shaantireva Shaantih Saa Maa Shaantir-Edhi |
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ||

Meaning : May peace radiate there in the whole sky as well as in the vast ethereal space everywhere! May peace reign all over this earth, in water and in all herbs, trees and creepers! May peace flow over the whole universe! May peace be in the Supreme Being Brahman. And may there always exist in all peace and peace alone.

Aum peace, peace and peace to us and all beings!

(Taken from https://www.templepurohit.com/ mantras-slokas-stotras/shanti-mantra/om-dyauha-shantirantariksham-shantihi/)

An important principle in the Hindu thought is the law of karma. It is the law of cause and effect in which each and every action has a reaction, generating conditions to be experienced within this lifetime or the next. Life is looked upon as a continuum in the sense that the pristine life energy is never destroyed. Death is accepted not as a denial of life but as a process of life based on the famous Bhagwatgeetha verse

**jatasya hi dhruvo mrtyur
dhruvam janma mrtasya ca
tasmad apariharye 'rthe
na tvam socitum arhasi**

SYNONYMS

jātasya—one who has taken his birth; hi—certainly; dhruvaù—a fact; måtyuù—death; dhruvam—it is also a fact; janma—birth; måtasya—of the dead; ca—also; tasmät—therefore; aparihärye—for that which is unavoidable; arthe—in the matter of; na—do not; tvam—you; çocitum—to lament; arhasi—deserve.

TRANSLATION

For one who has taken his birth, death is certain; and for one who is dead, birth is certain. Therefore, in the unavoidable discharge of your duty, you should not lament. (Taken from https://asitis.com/2/27.html)

As a result, the Hindu view accepts and believes in samsara, reincarnation, or rebirth: the cycle of life-death-rebirth until the individual soul, on self-realization of its own essential divinity, emerges into the Absolute which is the attainment of moksha or liberation from the cycles of rebirth. A Hindu accepts on scriptural authority that self-realization is possible and attainable within one's own lifetime and indeed, it is the goal and eventual destiny of all life.

The Hindu pantheon of Gods and Goddesses often confuses those outside the Hindu faith. Hindus do not see themselves as worshipping idols. They believe that God can be worshipped with or without form. The Hindu thought has developed a high degree of symbolism to convey the truth and to determine one's choice of path to attain self-realization.

Gods and Goddesses are symbols depicting various attributes, functions and manifestations of the one Supreme Divine Absolute.

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान् ।
एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्यग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः ॥

"They have styled (him, the Sun), Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and he is the celestial, well-winged Garutmat, for learned priests call one by many names as they speak of Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan." Rgveda, Mandala 1, Sukta 164, Mantra 46

यो नः पिता जनिता यो विधाता धामानि वेद भुवनानि विश्वा ।
यो देवानां नामधा एक एव तं सम्प्रश्नं भुवना यन्त्यन्या ॥

"He who is our preserver, our parent, the creator (of all), who knows our abodes (and knows) all beings, who is the **name-giver of the devas** — he is one; other beings come to him to inquire."

Synonymous with God, it is also the name used for the "the supreme oneness" in the holy book of the Ayyavazhi branch of Hinduism. Within a spiritual practice of yoga, yogis may wish to connect with Ekam through meditation, pranayama and asana.

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are manifestations of the one Divine Absolute operating in the three primordial functional activities in the universe - creation, sustenance and re-absorption respectively. Hindu images and practices have literal as well as symbolic meanings. A Hindu is enjoined to seek personal purification on the path to self-realization through one of four or any combination of the four paths, which are:

1. Ritualistic worship, chanting of prayers, devotional surrender to a higher ideal (the Deity representing the qualities).

2. Through service.

3. Through yoga and meditation.

4. Through inquiry [seeking true knowledge] or (know thyself).

To the purified, the Absolute reveals itself as one's own essential being (the self) and hence the term self-realization. Hindus are, therefore, encouraged to embrace all and live in the interest of, and in peace and harmony with, the larger self or the society and the environment as a whole. They are encouraged to be flexible and adjust to situations as they arise. As a tradition, Hinduism is not dogmatic and does not rigidly impose beliefs and practices on an individual or a family unit. ( )

REFERENCES

Shvetashvatara Upanishad,

Shvetashvatara Upanishad, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shvetashvatara_Upanishad

https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/12

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaivism

George K Barimah, July 2019, DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.14564.73600)

Gyekye, K. (1995). "An essay on African philosophical thought: The Akan conceptual scheme" Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Gyekye K. (1997). "Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience". Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gyekye K. (2013). "Philosophy, Culture and Vision: Accra" Sub-Saharan Publishers

Gbadegesin S. (2004) "Ènìyàn: The Yoruba concept of a person", in Coetzee, P.H., & Roux, A.P.J (Eds.), 'The African philosophy reader'. London: Routledge

Rgveda, Mandala 1, Sukta 164, Mantra 46

Kamalu, C. (1998). "Person, Divinity & Nature: A modern view of the person and the cosmos in African thought." London: Karnak House

https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/gravematters/2017/02/17/reincarnation-in-hinduism/

Menkiti A. (1984). "Person and Community in African Traditional Thought," in Richard A.Wright (ed.), 'African Philosophy: An

Introduction, 3rd edn'. New York: University of America Press.

Oladipo O. (2004) "An essay on the status of the belief in non-human agencies and powers in an African belief system", in Coetzee, P.H., & Roux, A.P.J (Eds.), 'The African philosophy reader'. London: Published by Routledge

https://asitis.com/2/27.html)

Oladipo O. (2004). "Religion in African Culture: Some Conceptual Issues", in Wiredu (ed.), 'A Companion to African Philosophy', Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd

https://www.templepurohit.com/mantras-slokas-stotras/shanti-mantra/om-dyauha-shantirantariksham-shantihi/

Oluwole S. (1995). 'On the Existence of Witches'. In "African Philosophy" New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 366

https://www.ekhartyoga.com/articles/philosophy/the-yamas-and-niyamas

Okolo C. (2004) "Self as a problem in African philosophy", in Coetzee, P.H., & Roux, A.P.J (Eds.), 'The African philosophy reader'. London: Routledge

Taiwo O. (2004). "Ifa: An Account of a Divination System and Some Concluding Epistemological Questions", in Wiredu (ed.), 'A Companion to African Philosophy', Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

https://www.hinduamerican.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/HinduConceptsAboutGod2.0_2.pdf

With permission Wiredu K. (2004) "On Decolonizing African Religions", in Coetzee, P.H., & Roux, A.P.J (Eds.), 'The African philosophy reader'. London: Routledge

https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/252221/nt-hinduism-fact-sheet.pdf

❧⚜☙

How Korean Native Deities Worshipped in Korean Shamanism (Mu)?

Hyungjin An
509-1705 Moah Miraedo Elgaa Apt, Cheongsong Village, Janggi-dong,
Gimpo city, Gyeonggi Province, South Korea

Korean shamanism (hereinafter referred to as Muism) occupies a very unique position in Korean culture. As German Korean scholar Werner Sasse says, Korean culture has historically been greatly influenced by China.[1] Before the introduction of Christianity in modern era, most Korean books related to Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism were written in classical Chinese characters. In this way, Chinese culture introduced to the Korean Peninsula gradually went through a process of indigenization. However, Muism is an exception. Of course, Chinese elements are partially observed in Muism, such as the Gods of Chinese Taoism and figures from Chinese history, who are also objects of worship. Nevertheless, the core of Muism was not influenced by Chinese elements.

Dangun Wanggeom, the national ancestor of Korea (Seoul, Dangun Shrine, June 2019)

Unfortunately, Muism has been the subject of persecution for a long time by the rulers of the Korean Peninsula. In fact, the meaning of the name 'Dangun Wanggeom', the national ancestor of the Korean people is 'Shaman King'. In ancient times, shamans of Muism (hereinafter referred to as mudang) were the ruling class of Korean society. From ancient Silla until the medieval Goryeo period, Korea's Muism coexisted with Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism and was widely believed from the royal family to the ordinary people. However, after the founding of the Joseon Dynasty in 1392, Muism became an object of disdain and oppression. The Joseon government, which promoted Neo-Confucianism as the country's only political ideology, promoted the rejection of Muism and Buddhism in order to realize its Confucian ideal society.

Mudang of Muism were defined as one of the lowest classes of Joseon society along with Buddhist monks, and they were not allowed to reside in the capital, Hanseong (old name of Seoul). In addition, the performance of goot, a core ritual of Muism, was prohibited. During the subsequent Japanese colonial period, they were persecuted, including forcing Japanese indigenous Shinto Gods to be worshiped over Korean native Gods.[2] And even today, shamanism is misunderstood as demon worship and uncivilized superstition by many Korean Christians.

Before getting into the main topic, there is one question I would like to raise. Is Muism a religion? According to the Korean government's religious statistics, about half of the Korean population considers themselves atheists, while the other half are evenly divided between

---

[1]Werner Sasse. *Korean with a Pretty Bare Face* (Seoul: Hakgojae, 2013). 124

[2]Heungyoon Cho. *Shamanism of Korea* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1999). 22~23

Buddhists and believers of various Christian denominations. In these statistics, Muism is considered a superstition rather than a religious phenomenon and is excluded from the statistics altogether. Those who oppose Muism are mostly Christians or atheists, who do not believe in the religious experiences of mudangs or those who seek them out, and claim that Muism is not a religion. Werner Sasse, a Koreanologist from Germany, likens these people to 'The blind who claim that color of sunset does not exist.'[3]

Through this article, I would like to take a look at the mudangs, the religious priests of Muism, the Gods and ancestors as objects of faith, and goot as a religious ritual. By examining these religious elements of Muism, I will examine why Muism can be considered as a religion and what meaning Muism has for Koreans across time.

II. Mudang, Priest of Musism : The Wounded Healer

There are two main types of mudang: gangshinmu and seseupmu. Gangsinmu is mainly distributed north of the Han River and is a mudang who becomes a mudang through a natural process of being chosen by a God. seseupmu is an artificial mudang in which priesthood is passed down from generation to generation through blood lineage. As such, Muism has very diverse aspects depending on the region. Regarding this regional distribution, some scholars argue that gangsinmu should be considered as a northern shamanist tradition, and seseupmu should be viewed as a southern sorcerer tradition. On the other hand, some scholars argue that Korean shamanism is unique to Korea, different from shamanism in other countries, and should be named Muism and asserted as a new theory in the world of religious studies.[4]

There is a saying in the ancient Greek oracle of Apollo: "The wounded heal the sick." This means that in order to cure an illness, the healer must first experience the illness. This can be interpreted as emphasizing the importance of practical experience over disease theory and knowledge. This is a very meaningful point, at least for mudangs who act as psychotherapists.[5] The culture of Muism is an oral culture, not a written culture, and has myths as a religious scripture. According to this, all mudangs are descendants of Princess Baridegi (hereinafter Princess Bari), the progenitor deity of mudangs. In other words, Princess Bari is the first mudang. The myth of Princess Bari, who was abandoned by her parents, overcame all kinds of hardships, and was finally reborn as a Goddess, can be said to be a model and example of the essential role of mudang, 'The wounded guide of souls.'

Princess Baridegi, the ancestor goddess of mudang.

Once upon a time, there lived a king and queen in one country. They had six daughters, and when the seventh, Princess Bari, was born as a daughter, and they became angry and abandoned

---

[3]Werner Sasse. *Korean with a Pretty Bare Face* (Seoul: Hakgojae, 2013). 133~134
[4] Taegon Kim. *Musok and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1991). 8
[5]Buyoung Lee. *Korean Shamanism and Analytic Psychology* (Paju: Hangilsa, 2012). 597

her. Princess Bari was taken in by an old couple and grew up healthy. Princess Bari hears that her parents, who abandoned her, are suffering from a fatal illness and are on the brink of death, so she goes to the otherworld to find the water of life in order to save them. In this process, she encounters numerous difficulties, including going through the seven hells. Afterwards, she met the guardian of the water of life, Mujangseung, served him for several years, married him, and had seven sons. It is said that Princess Bari, who saved the king and queen by feeding them the water of life, became the ancestor Goddess of mudang through her merits, her husband, Mujangseung, became the God of mountains(sanshin), and her children became the ten kings who preside over the otherworld.

This story of Princess Bari clearly shows the mudang's character as a 'wounded healer.' Princess Bari experienced the pain of being ostracized and abandoned by the existing order and values of patriarchal society. This means complete isolation and the death of the social self (persona). This is accompanied by extreme pain. However, all great creative agents had to first be abandoned by existing social groups in order to carry out their creative work. For the same reason, in Muism, we often see vengeful spirits such as General Choi Young and General Lim Gyeong-eop being revered as hero Gods.[6] The lesson of Muism is that in order to become a healer who cures someone, one must first experience the corresponding pain. Especially, the gangshinmu mudangs shows their character as the wounded healer. They can be reborn as mudangs only by experiencing a special disease or pain, called 'shinbyeong' in Korean, and going through the process of overcoming it.[7]

When God descends on a person who will become a mudang, symptoms of mental abnormality occur, symptoms of abnormal diseases also appear in the body, and the person suffers severe pain for a long period of time. However, these symptoms can never be cured with medicine or medical treatment, and can only be cured by accepting God into one's body, becoming a mudang, and serving that God. In Muism, all those who become gangshinmu go through the same process. These new diseases become an opportunity for gangshinmu to possess spiritual power, and become the source of ecstasy that causes the mudang to fall into a state of selflessness and be immersed in the spirit world. On the other hand, looking at the range of shinbyeong that appear with gender differences, the vast majority of shamans who suffer shinbyeong are female mudangs, and relatively extremely rare in the case of male mudangs.[8]

This shinbyeong can be seen as a kind of 'religious reincarnation'. After receiving God into one's body and studying Muist ritual about three years, the patient with shinbyeong is finally reborn as a mudang. Through this, the mudang confirms God's calling through his or her own intuitive experience, takes an oath to become a mudang and follow the God who has called oneself to the end, has one's spiritual abilities judged by the people, and receives recognition from the people as a public religious leader.[9] Afterwards, the shaman communicates with the spirit world in a state of ecstasy, relieves resentment between the dead and the living, and sometimes shows various magical powers, such as predicting the future, and helps people in suffering.

[6]Buyoung Lee. *Korean Shamanism and Analytic Psychology* (Paju: Hangilsa, 2012). 584~585
[7]Buyoung Lee. *Korean Shamanism and Analytic Psychology* (Paju: Hangilsa, 2012). 65
[8]Taegon Kim. *Musok and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1991). 24~26
[9]Taegon Kim. *Musok and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1991). 43

Mudangs dressed in ceremonial attire (SNU Museum, October 2020)

Meanwhile, regarding these mudangs, Werner Sasse defines their nature as anarchistic, saying that when centralized political power tried to impose national religion or philosophy, the mudang's anarchism always has caused a problem. This is because mudangs consider themselves to be people who have left society and are no longer governed by worldly power, but only by God.[10] In fact, Muism is a rare case around the world in that although it is religious, it has never formed a sect. Nevertheless, I cannot agree with Werner Sasse's view that mudangs are anarchistic and individualistic. As a 'wounded healer', the mudang sacrifices oneself and becomes a mediator between this world and the otherworld. It would be appropriate to undertand this as communalism for the entire universe and all living beings, rather than anarchism or individualism.

III. Gods of Muism : The Overlayered Ancestors

Next, let's learn about the Gods and ancestral spirits that are worshipped in in Muism. Despite the numerous persecutions inflicted on Muism throughout history, the various Gods of Muism are still objects of faith for many Koreans as a folk religion. In Muism, the problem of the view of God, which God is viewed and in what form, is directly related to the essential problem of Muism. And considering that Muism has established itself as a living religion among the people from ancient times to today, it can be seen that Muist view of God is deeply related to the traditional views of God and religion of the Korean people.[11]

Muism has two major characteristics. The first is overlayeredness. The various spirits of Muism exist intertwined in multiple dimensions. In Muism, many Gods are worshiped. Academically, these spirits are divided into six classes: the Heavenly God Realm, the Mountain God Realm, the Palace God Realm, the General God Realm, the House God Realm, and the Miscellaneous Ghost and God Realm. However, these six classes of Gods all share the same essence. Therefore, mudang never treats any Gods carelessly because they are low-class Gods. The second is the character as ancestors. Traditional mudangs consider all spirits who are the objects of their worship to be ancestors of Korean people in a broad sense.[12]

Sanshin, A representative nature god of Muism, (Seoul, Bohyeonsanshingak, October 2020)

[10]Werner Sasse. *Korean with a Pretty Bare Face* (Seoul: Hakgojae, 2013). 135
[11]Taegon Kim. *Musok and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1991). 54
[12]Heungyoon Cho. *Shamanism of Korea* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1999). 25

The God of the sun and moon (Seoul Shamanism Museum, July 2016)

According to folklorist Kim Tae-gon's classification according to name, there are a total of 73 types of Muist Gods. They can be roughly divided into three categories: nature Gods, hero Gods (human gods), and other Gods. In the case of the natural God system, the natural objects most closely related to human daily life, such as land, water, mountains, and sky, are deified. The Gods of the hero God category represent general Gods, king Gods, Buddhist Gods, Taoist Gods, and Muist ancestral Gods. Historical figures related to politics, such as kings and generals, are mainly objects of worship rather than religious figures. Statistically, among the objects of worship in Muism, natural Gods account for 63.6%, hero Gods account for 33.3%, and other Gods account for 3.1%.[13] Representative natural Gods include the Sanshin (Mountain God) who rules the mountains, the Dragon King, the ruler of the sea, the Seven Stars God (the deification of the Big Dipper) who manages human lifespan,

and the Lord Indra, who was accepted into Muism and Buddhism from Indian mythology. The most representative heroic Gods are General Choi Yeong, General Lim Gyeong-eop of Korean history, and Guan Yu of Chinese history.

What should be specially mentioned in this classification is Sanshin. Sanshin is a representative natural God, but at the same time, there are many tales in which real historical figures became mountain Gods. There is a story that Dangun Wanggeom, the founder of Gojoseon, became a mountain God, and legend that King Seoktalhae of Silla became a mountain God of Mt. Toham. In Korea, where there are many mountains, Sanshins have been objects of worship since ancient times. Sanshin is an absolute spirit that protects the mountains, and in agricultural societies, it controls water, rain, and wind to determine the good harvest of the year. In addition, Sanshin has been widely revered as an agent that give life to children and protects them from evil spirits, and presides over good or bad fortune.[14]

Famous Chinese general Guan Yu, Hero God of Muism (Seoul, Dongmyo, November 2022)

[13]Taegon Kim. *Musok and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1991). 56
[14]Yeolsoo Yoon. *Sanshindo* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1998). 7~8

Yi Sun-sin, the hero of Imjin War worshipped (Seoul, Shamanism Museum, July 2016)

In terms of form, the Muist view of Gods can be seen as a polytheistic and naturalistic. The objects of worship are mainly divided into two categories: natural Gods and heroic Gods, and these Gods generally appear with personalities, but in the case of natural Gods, there are cases where animistic thinking is at work. Rather than guiding and exercising their power through any rational revelation to humans, these Gods of Muism convey their intentions through punishment that inflicts terrible pain. Therefore, even though it is a good God who protects humans, has always been an object of fear.[15]

For this reason, in Muism, the fear of the terrible punishment that will come if one goes against the will of God always precedes the

divine heart of worshiping and obeying God.[16] The owner of the house performing goot suffered misfortune because he was impure, entered the sanctuary in an impure body and died suddenly, or suffered misfortune because he performed a ancestral rite incorrectly. These are examples of punishments given by God of Muism. This gives rise to a phenomenon called extreme religious fear. Muism believes that all human fate, including life and death, rise and fall, misfortune and illness, flows according to the will of God.[17]

The Korean people believed that the law of birth and death, long life without illness, and the basis of enjoying good or bad luck was the fate that God had foreshadowed. In addition, it was believed that abundant wealth and success in the world, as well as the wealth and glory that can be passed down from generation to generation, depended on heaven and were something that could not be helped by human power. At some point, Koreans began to believe and rely on the belief that humans can achieve their wishes and live happily only by relying on the power of God.[18]

This sensibility of religious fear of Muism has also caused Western scholars, who are immersed in Eurocentrism and ethnocentrism, to misinterpret Muism as demon worship. In her travelogue of Korea published in 1905, British writer Isabella Bishop separately discusses Muism in a chapter titled 'Korean Demonism or Shamanism.' Regarding the spirits of Muism, Bishop said, "The demons are a horde without gender, classification or organization, created from Korean superstitions while vulgarizing Buddhist and Chinese mythological legends." She intentionally and blatantly disparaged Muism. Meanwhile, Christian missionary C.A. Clark said of the Gods of Muism, "Only a very few gods are good, and most of them are very evil.". He declared that "Korean shamanism is a

---

[15]Taegon Kim. *Musok and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1991). 56
[16]Taegon Kim. *Musok and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1991). 56
[17]Taegon Kim. *Musok and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1991). 57
[18]Yeolsoo Yoon. *Sanshindo* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1998). 19

religion of fear" and prayed that Muism would disappear from Korea as soon as possible.[19]

Muism is a traditional religious belief and ancestor worship of Koreans. As mentioned above, all spirits of Mu have the character of being ancestors of Koreans. Therefore, a mudang, a priest of Muism, is a person who serves the spirits and mediates between humans and spirits, and dangols who are followers of Muism manage their family ancestors through the mudang.[20] A mudang is a communicator between this world and spiritual world, and a person who manages souls. This remains at the root of the Korean mind to this day and forms the prototype of the Korean spirit. Therefore, if we accept the deliberate criticism of Muism as is, it would be denying the unconscious mentality of Koreans themselves. As will be explained later, this original form of the Korean spirit can be obscured, but it can never be eliminated.

IV. Goot, Muist Ritual

Before learning about goot, a representative ritual of Muism, it is necessary to first look at its cosmological view. According to 'Chogamje' from Jeju Island and 'Changsega' from Hamgyeong Province, Muists song of the creation myth, it is said that in the beginning there was only chaos, but God split heaven and earth and brought order to the world. The transition from chaos to cosmos is the creation of the universe. The universe shown in Muism is divided into heaven, earth, and underground. Each of these three cosmic layers contains the sun, moon, and stars, so it is believed that there is a world in the heavens and underground just like the earth. Additionally, the afterlife where people go when they die is believed to be a very distant place located in horizontal space from the earth.[21]

Mudangs, who can be considered priests of Muism, meet Gods and perform rituals in the form of praying for human wishes. Since the place and time to meet God is not in the real world, special procedures according to the ritual are required. It must have a space and time outside of worldly reality. Therefore, during the ritual, forbidding strings are tied and yellow clay is spread to block the space where the ritual takes place from everyday reality. The space of ritual refers to the world outside of this world, that is, the universe in a state of chaos before the beginning. In this sense, the time when the ritual takes place is at night, not during the day. This also means the time outside of everyday worldly time, the time of chaos.[22]

The places where rituals take place are broadly classified into three categories: the mudang's personal shrine, the communal shrine that protects the entire village, and private houses of the believers. Among these, the mudang's personal shrine and the communal shrine of the village become a place for ritual as a fixed sanctuary, while the shrine in a private house becomes a place for temporary sanctum rites that are installed only when necessary during goot.[23] The ritual site of goot is built around the axis of the universe, such as a model of a divine tree connecting the earth and sky, and the ritual site where this axis of the universe is built is the center of the universe where heaven and earth meet, and is the most sacred place where Gods descend. In the sanctuary, which is symbolized as the central axis of the universe, mudangs perform rituals according to a certain format to meet and communicate with Gods.[24]

Folk painting from the Joseon era depicting a blind shaman performing a goot (Seoul, National Folk Museum of Korea, November 2020)

[19]Heungyoon Cho. *Shamanism of Korea* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1999). 22
[20]Heungyoon Cho. *Shamanism of Korea* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1999). 67
[21]Taegon Kim. *Musok and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1991). 70~71
[22]Taegon Kim. *Musok and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1991). 91~92
[23]Taegon Kim. *Musok and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1991). 95
[24]Taegon Kim. *Musok and Shamanism* (Seoul: Daewonsa, 1991). 102

The ritual of Muism is an exciting playground. Its meaning is quite different from the solemn and pious rituals of established religions. Therefore, the ritual of Muism is a feast of traditional Korean art. This applies to music played through traditional musical instruments, dance moves, clothing, shamanic songs, and even food table for the God. As a result, it has become an established theory in the academic world that Muism has been the foundational religion and traditional religion of Koreans since ancient Gojoseon, the first kingdom recorded in Korean history.[25] Goot, a representative form of Muist ritual is not only a religious ritual, but also an exciting feast accompanied by harmony between families, drinking, and singing and dancing.

Rice and utensils served on Muist rituals (Seoul, Shamanism Museum, July 2016)

A bell used by mudangs to perform goot. (Seoul, National Folk Museum, November 2020)

The types of goot differ depending on the region. Among them, goots in Seoul and Gyeonggi regions, which have been the social and cultural centers of the Korean Peninsula since the Goryeo Dynasty, have developed while maintaining their traditions and having many believers. Therefore, compared to the goots of other regions, goots in this region is more structured, extravagant, and solemn in terms of the composition, costumes, music, and dance. Among these, the most representative and basic goot is cheonshingoot. Other types of goots are organized based on cheonshingoot and adding the characteristic rituals of that particular goot. Mudangs sing songs to the Gods, from high-class Gods to lower-class Gods, through their songs and oral scriptures called muga. Meanwhile, saenamgoot is a goot for transferring the dead to the heaven, usually performed for the upper wealthy class family. The Korean mudangs' view of the afterlife and the soul are clearly revealed in this ritual of praying for the dead.[26]

There is a consistent universal and fundamental spirit in many shamanic traditions, including Muism, and above all, it is a 'strong impulse to become one.' In other words, it is an orientation toward universal wholeness. At its center is the experience of ecstasy. The experience is the same, but the interpretation of it is expressed differently depending on the culture. In Siberia and Central Asia, it is expressed as a 'journey to the heaven', and in Korea, it is expressed as a 'descent of God.' Nevertheless, there is no doubt that 'to become one' is the ultimate common goal.[27] Shamans pursue unity and communication between this world and the afterlife through the experience of losing one's ego, and this is realized by receiving God into the body through the descent of God.

Meanwhile, one of the characteristics of Muism is that it always uses the principle of counterpoint. If we look at the divine world of Muism, male and female Gods are always enshrined together. Muism preserves the concept of a partner, the holistic concept of gender equality and unity between men and women, showing that Muism sought to reject and modify

[25]Heungyoon Cho. *Shamanism of Korea* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1999). 1
[26]Heungyoon Cho. *Shamanism of Korea* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1999). 6~7
[27]Buyoung Lee. Korean *Shamanism and Analytic Psychology* (Paju: Hangilsa, 2012). 577~578

the one-sidedness of the Joseon era. It shows that the autonomous compensatory action of the collective unconscious is taking place.[28]

Currently, many K-pop artists such as BTS and Blackpink are active in the global music market. Koreans are a people who love drinking, singing and dancing. In other words, a people of ecstasy. It is a daily routine for Koreans to give themselves over to music and dance at company dinners or at karaoke bars after a hard work of the day. In fact, few Koreans themselves think of themselves as an intelligent people. Most evaluations of Koreans are that they are an emotional and passionate people. In K-pop, which makes the world dance together, and in the cheering enthusiasm of the Red Devils, supporters of the Korean national football team, who fill up the vast Seoul square, I see Muism as the archetype of the Korean spirit that still lives and breathes in the collective unconsciousness of every Koreans. It is a return to the entire oneness through ecstasy.

A modern art painting by the artist Park Saeng-kwang based on Muism (Seoul, Kyobo Bookstore Gwanghwamun branch, May 2021)

Unfortunately, today's Muism is at risk of being reduced to a means of commercialized entertainment, a performing art, or an old cultural property that must be preserved only in museums. In addition, various fields of art and study seek to take part of Muism and use it as nourishment for further growth in their fields. However, in studying Muism, we must study it as a living experience that connects this world and the afterlife and enters a state where everything becomes one through the ecstasy in which the ego is lost. Muism is not a means for learning and art, much less a relic of the past on display in a museum. It is the foundation of the Korean spirit, and it still lives and breathes in the unconsciousness of all Koreans.

Although it has been despised and oppressed for a long time, Muism can be said to be a spiritual and cultural heritage of Korea that has steadily survived. Some modernists and Christian scholars say that Muism is nothing more than a traditional folk culture and cannot be considered a religion. However, in Muism, there are Gods and ancestors as objects of worship, mudangs who play the role of religious priests, dangol families as believers, shrines and gootdangs that are ritual places and sanctuaries. And it has a very rich ritual. In addition, in order to explore the original form of the Korean spirit that is still alive and breathing in our unconsciousness, it would be appropriate for Korean Muism to be studied as a traditional Korean religion.

● **References**
1. Buyoung Lee. *"Korean Shamanism and Analytic Psychology"*. Seoul: Hangilsa, 2012.
2. Heungyoon Cho. *"Shamanism of Korea."* Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1999.
3. Taegon Kim. *"Musok and Shamanism"*. Seoul: Dae-wonsa, 1991.
4. Werner Sasse. *"Korean with a Pretty Bare Face"*. Seoul: Hakgojae, 2013.
5. Yeolsoo Yoon. *"Sanshindo"*. Seoul: Daewonsa, 1998

[28]Buyoung Lee. Korean *Shamanism and Analytic Psychology* (Paju: Hangilsa, 2012). 581

Hikoi in Chaos Lesson for Global Resilience and Unity

Dr Lorna Dyall Aotearoa's
Consultant Manukau City New Zealand
Email: lorna@toa.org.nz

Contributing to global peace, harmony; connection with the environment and all of life that we share space with as humans is a challenge for the vibrations that we make affect all. Indigenous peoples worldwide have faced challenges in recent years as our lives have been threatened as well as the environments that we live share with others and actively protect for current and future generations.

This paper will discuss the journey of the people of the "Whanau Ora Community Clinic", living and practicing public health and protection of others in time of chaos and abandonment and what did we learn.

Good leadership based upon authentic values and principles are the key to navigating your way through social, economic, cultural, and environmental change.

There are no signposts, you must live and walk your authentic values to negotiate a pathway forward, you must learn to live in chaos, be adaptive, reflective, kind, caring and spiritual for the path which is unknown.

Māori have experienced this journey and from our experience want to share our journey, lessons learnt, our adaptability and our continuation to self-determination and connection with other peoples across the globe.

"Haere taka mua, taka muri; kaua e whai"
meaning
'Be a leader not a follower'.

Timatanga

It is a privilege to come to this whenua (land) and recognize the indigenous peoples who live in this part of India and likely, they have shared similar experiences as our people in Aotearoa, (New Zealand) who have lived and survived, so far from the effects of many diverse peoples who have come to our land to oppress and marginalize us. This is especially so for our women and children. The invaders take control of our resources and appropriate them for their own use for their own people and their future generations.

Aotearoa is not different from other countries who have indigenous peoples who struggle with their lives daily to practice and live our values and beliefs, constantly adapting and readapting to changes that are regularly occurring daily in their environments where they live, work, socialize, play, and practice our own sense of spirituality in different environments. We are fortunate in Aotearoa to be relatively isolated, surrounded by water, and our country is made up of several islands Te Ika a Maui, (North Island) Te Waipounamu (South Island) and Rakiura (Stewart Island). Further, we are also a blessed country, that we have not recently experienced war, severe famine or military control .

Westminster System of Government – Is it Sustainable ?

"I orea te tuatara ka puta ki waho"
meaning
'A problem is solved by continuing to find solutions'.

We live in a country where every New Zealander citizen over 18 years of age living in New Zealand or overseas has the right to cast two votes, one to a political party and the other to a local candidate standing for a registered political party. Māori have the right to have their own seats in Parliament and vote on the

Māori roll. The number of Māori who can be elected to Parliament depends, on the number of people registered on the Māori roll and who they vote for (both as a member of Parliament as a local candidate and also which political party a person chooses). We have a Mixed Member Parliamentary system, giving small political parties as Te Pati Māori to have their own seats in Parliament to participate in legislation, taxation, in setting priorities for Government expenditure for different Crown agencies and involved in reviewing their performance.

Our Māori seats in Parliament is compensation to tangata whenua (people of the land) for a Westminster system of Government, which came from England to be established in New Zealand. We have now remodeled it to fit our unique situation which is always being contested by Māori, since we did not cede our sovereignty but agreed to share Kawantanga or governance of our country. The model developed at a national level is attempting to be replicated at a local government level, with some local councils, agreeing to establish Māori seats, where Māori on the Māori electoral roll can nominate their own representatives to ensure a Māori worldview and priorities are incorporated in decisions made at a local council board level, ensuring that we are involved in the governance and accountable at the ballot box every three years.

We have a sustainable political system in New Zealand, however, with different generations and different perspective of the world and priorities, we are seeing that the current systems have created and increasingly support structural discrimination, such as racism, health, social, economic, and cultural inequalities. We now have three different political parties in place who will have the challenge to work together to achieve agreed upon areas for social, economic, and cultural change in New Zealand

Those realities are part of the environment in which the Whanau Ora Community Clinic works with different communities and requires our organization to be resilient and open to regular audit, monitoring, and challenges by different interest groups of the services that we provide or strategize to deliver.

Māori View of Sustainability

"Tē tōia, tē haumati"
meaning
'Nothing can be achieved without a plan, workforce, and way of doing things'.

For Māori sustainability is about the development and implementation of systems and processes which care and protect the natural and spiritual environment and provide a safe place for all life forms, including people to live in. This includes protection and care of forests, fisheries, water ways, 'moana' (seas) and other 'taonga', that Māori through different tribal groups consider important for their development, such as the nurturing and development of 'te reo Māori' (Māori language) creation of Māori institutions as 'kura kaupapa' and 'wananga' institutions which provide opportunities for learning and development. The concept of sustainability is embedded in Māori rights and responsibilities in our living constitutional document 'Te Tiriti o Waitangi', which is constantly evolving and developing as we as people develop and exercise our rights and responsibilities as 'tangata whenua' (people of the land) in Aotearoa.

To advance the development and maintenance of systems of sustainability in New Zealand requires the development of integrative systems which are connected, they are transparent in the way they operate, are open to change. Further, those involved in decisions are responsible and accountable and able and willing to work with different stakeholders. Leaders with different styles of leadership are recognized and valued . Authentic leadership is important as people expect you to reflect, walk and talk the values that are linked or part of your organization. Increasingly in New Zealand organizations are asked as to what their values are and how are they reflected in the way their organization operates, employment of staff, use of resources,

and overall, what is the 'Kaupapa' or purpose of your organization. Branding, marketing, and website design of your organization is now increasingly expected to be linked to your values and principles of your organization and the development of systems of sustainability.

Right to Vote

"Whāia te mātauranga hei oranga mō koutou"
meaning
'Seek after learning for the sake of your wellbeing'.

The right to vote occurs every three years. New Zealand has just recently had an election and a new government has been formed with citizens requesting new changes which will rebuild our social, economic and environmental infrastructure. An elected government is supported by a public service, which is made up of different government agencies. These agencies employ staff, subcontract out services and those employed directly or indirectly are required to operate within required legislative and regulation requirements. This includes developing and administering policies and programs which have been endorsed by the Government and delivered within approved allocated spending which are directed under the authority of one or more Ministers of Parliament.

The 'Whanau Ora Community Clinic' is one of the arms of delivery of Government services. Often we contract to deliver services on behalf of different Government agencies. We also have the flexibility as a limited liability company to establish our own social and economic enterprises to support our sustainability and achieve the 'Kaupapa' or purpose of our organization which include, to provide free or minimal cost primary medical health and related services for Māori and high needs communities where access and cost are issues. Our organization has recently become involved in owning different franchises to provide support to our 'whanau' who need support with access to financial information and support, help with accommodation, food and access to information and communication. We

experience with the operation and management of our own services, we have more flexibility and can be proactive as to how we engage and respond to issues, such as recent climate change events in New Zealand, where Māori and vulnerable communities needed help quickly and we could respond as we had a system in place, flexible and adaptable to respond. Sustainability requires organizations and those working in them to be flexible, adaptable, and innovative and we often use 'karakia' to connect with a wider universe for support or guidance as to what steps do we need to take. Increasingly in New Zealand many organizations are adopting Māori processes for connection a,.nd support to staff, by way of use of 'whakawhanungatanga' (establishing connection with each other), 'karakia' (pray and to focus on purpose), 'waiata' (song to lighten the load and provide support), 'whakakata' (humor) as means of stress release and uplifting of each other. All these processes were utilized during Covid - both face to face and online - by way of use of digital communication and tele health, so that staff could continue with their work and overcome many of daily challenges they faced and could actively address to.

'Solution focus' is important for systems to be sustainable, otherwise, they collapse with inertia leading to social, economic, and environmental disasters. We are seeing this in New Zealand as Crown agencies now attempt to address and redress issues which should have been dealt with when first recognized, to reduce individual, 'whanau' or community harm, such as addressing the underlying conditions that create local crime, growth of gangs, family harm, mental illness and addictions, child, and elder abuse, pollution of public water supplies and lack of investment in national and local public funded infrastructure.

Client and 'Whanau' Focused Services
"E tupu atu kūmara, e ohu e te anuhe"
meaning
'As a person's importance increases so do those who seek his or her favor'

We are able to tailor our services to be

client and 'whanau' focused and recognize the importance of cultural, ethnic and gender identities of those who chose to use our services to meet their needs and to support their aspirations for their own future. We support clients and their 'whanau' to develop and grow using Māori models of health and cultural practices, recognition of 'Te Tiriti o Waitangi'. By acting in this way we can support clients and their 'whanau', who come from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. With increasing ethnic migration to New Zealand - and this will likely increase significantly in the short and medium term future - as individuals and 'whanau' are displaced from their communities and country due to war, famine, climate and environmental changes, political oppression and injustice. Developments in other countries affect all indigenous peoples, because migrants, old and new, often want our lifestyles, access and control of our resources, including control and domination of our own people to become their workers whom they can direct and determine for their future.

We are seeing significant changes occurring in New Zealand as many Crown agencies face reduction in annual and forecasted budgets, which will then affect which services are developed and who will be employed directly or indirectly by way of contracting out of services. Covid, social, economic, environmental, and cultural changes occurring in our country are creating a new social, economic and political infrastructure.

Our organization is proactive and recognizes that skills and knowledge learnt in one area of delivering services are transferable and can be applied in other settings, giving our organization the confidence that it can develop , grow and can respond to tenders to deliver new services, which fits the 'kaupapa' (purpose) of our organization. We see that we increasingly need to develop and provide services which are first responder focused, moveable (pop up services), connect and link with other community based services, provide services in different places since the provision of health and wider social services need to be delivered in different ways and meet people where they are, and not where we are, which in the past would be from a fixed health centre where clients and 'whanau' came to us, at designated times generally in normal business working hours.

With the creation of new digital and communication technology, we recognize that to be sustainable we need to work with different organizations, such as local businesses and in various settings such as schools, workplaces, local 'marae' and community settings. Covid has raised awareness in all organizations of their health and safety requirements to protect the health and wellbeing of the public, including their own staff. Māori health and safety and healing practices are increasingly being recognized by different organizations, such as 'rahui', designating specific places as being unsafe, require protection or is a taboo or sacred.

In the development of our Covid community testing and vaccination sites - from both fixed and mobile sites - we recognized the importance of the process of 'powhiri', the need to engage with people in such a way to find out whether they were infected and had any of the symptoms of Covid. Through a process of 'triage', with the staff which we have mentored and upskilled from different communities. They all worked from different stations to obtain information from people seeking testing or vaccination for Covid and delivering a service that met all the clinical health and safety requirements of management of a pandemic and cold chain requirements in operating a vaccination centre. The development of these services, was a challenge to both - our health professionals and community-based staff - as we had little information regarding Covid and we had to use first principles of proactively managing a global public health pandemic. Our focus on the protection and care of people was at the forefront of our organization supported by our knowledge as Māori that 'the most important resource that any population or community has is its people' and that was the focus of our organization and other Māori communities.

ARMENIAN ANCIENT BELIEFS AND GODS

By: Naira Mkrtchyan
Independent researcher from Armenia Orientalist, writer, diplomat

Armenia stands as an ancient Aryan civilization situated in Asia Minor, having cultivated a unique culture, pioneered advancements in science and education over millennia. Armenian language belongs to the Indo-European family of languages. Armenia notably achieved numerous milestones, being the first in the region to domesticate horses, establish a calendar, and construct an observatory as early as 5500 BC[1]. The region also witnessed the early casting of metals, including gold, silver, copper, and iron. Unveiling the roots of its advanced culture, the oldest settlement, known as Portasar (in Armenian - Navel Hill) or Göbekli Tepe, dates back at least 12,000 years and is located in present-day Turkey[2]. In the 1st century BC, the Armenian Empire thrived under the rule of King Tigran the Great, encompassing a vast territory that extended to the Mediterranean, Black, and Caspian Seas.

The forefather of Armenians, the heroic and semigodly figure archer Hayk, is renowned for his striking handsomeness, as captured by the term "haykanman" in Armenian, meaning 'like Hayk.' Credited as the creator of the calendar and an astrologer akin to the Greek Orion, Hayk's legacy endures in the Armenian identity, with Armenians referring to themselves as "hay" and their homeland as "Hayastan."

Hayk – forefather of Armenians

In order to know well the political and spiritual life of any nation, it is necessary to know about its beliefs and faith which are the foundational elements that influence both political and spiritual life. This pertains to the religious and cultural aspects that shape the identity and values of a nation. Spiritual life encompasses beliefs, practices, rituals, and the role of religion or spirituality in the lives of the people. Understanding the beliefs and faith of a nation involves delving into its religious doctrines, philosophical perspectives, cultural values, and the principles that guide its people.

The worship of the Sun and the Moon was a common practice in various ancient civilizations around the world. These celestial bodies, with their evident influence on the daily and seasonal

[1]Herouni Paris, Armenians and Old Armenia. Yerevan, Armenia: Tigran Mets, 2004.
[2]An immense mystery older than Stonehenge, https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20210815-an-immense-mystery-older-than-stonehenge

cycles, held significant symbolic and spiritual importance for many cultures. In Armenia they also worshiped the Sun and Moon where these celestial bodies were not just physical entities but also sources of inspiration, spirituality, and cultural identity.

As Aryans, Armenians revered the Sun (in Armenian – arev) as their primary paternal figure, and its earthly embodiment, fire. Even in contemporary daily life, remnants of this ancient worship persist in blessings for love and long life, expressed through phrases like "loving your Sun" or "I will die for your Sun." Moreover, in solemn commitments, individuals would invoke the Sun, swearing oaths with phrases such as "this is in front of my Sun" or "in front of my father's (mother's) Sun." These oaths are considered the most binding, with an inherent understanding that they are unbreakable.

Armenia adopted Christianity in 301 AD however some part of the population did not accept the new religion and continued to adhere to their old beliefs. 11th century Armenian scholar, philosopher Grigor Magistros wrote about sun-worshippers who called themselves Sons of the Sun. 12th century Armenian theologist, historian Nerses Shnorhali writes about these people that they are "a generation of Armenians who did not want to be enlightened by the divine light" [i.e. Christianity – N.M.], and ordered the priests to turn their faces to the west and spit three times in the face of the devil when receiving converts from them. In the middle of the 14th century, Catholicos[3] Mkhitar wrote to the Pope of Rome that at that time there were sun-worshippers in Manazkert[4]. We find another evidence of this period about existence of sons of the sun when Turko-Mongolian conqueror Tamerlane attacked Armenia. He found sun-worshippers in four villages on the sides of Mertin province[5], tried to convert them to Islam, but failing, he destroyed

all the settlements, but after that sun-worshippers multiplied again, as informs us 15th century historian Tovma Metsopetsi[6].

The Moon was also worshipped by the ancient Armenians. It was considered as the sister of the Sun. Those moon science, moon worship and moon magic rituals were practised.

In ancient Armenia cult of fire and water was practiced. The veneration of fire among Armenians predates the Zoroastrian religion, reflecting an enduring tradition. They worshipped not only the flame, but also its anthropomorphic image, which was female and was called the sister of water, although they are opposite elements. Armenians saw the hidden beauty and winning power in the fire. Water and fire, brother and sister are inseparable in life and death, because if the sister died because of her brother's embrace, even what was left of her was adorable, because the ashes were not given to the wind, but to the water. Armenia supplied water to the main countries of ancient Asia with its many rivers, especially Tigris and Euphrates. Inhabitants of a land characterized by aridity, Armenians sanctified springs and river sources, offering the ashes of their symbolic sister, fire, to these vital waterways.

Baku with its oil wells was a great center of fire worship. There was a time when Baku was a separate province of the Paytakaran region of Greater Armenia and was called the Seven Bagins - sacrificial altars. There were probably seven main pits and bagins for oil burning and worship.

Ancient Armenians worshiped animals and birds, because in their opinion, after the death of a person, his soul becomes not only the soul of a human being but also the soul of an animal. Mythical animals such as dragons, flying dogs were also worshipped.

---

[3]The Patriarch of the Armenian Christians.
[4]In Turuberan province of Greater Armenia, near Lake Van.
[5]South-west of Lake Van.
[6]Ղևոնդ Ալիշան, Հայոց հին հավատքը կամ հեթանոսական կրոնը, Երևան, 2002 [Ghevond Alishan, Armenian ancient faith or pagan religion, Yerevan, 2002 (in Armenian)].

A dragon was depicted on the royal flag of the Haikazuni dynasty (25 BC - 5 BC). The Indians[7] living in the Taron province since the 2nd century BC named their city Vishap (dragon in Armenian) after Vishnu, which the Armenians called Odz (snake). It is now ruined and submerged, and the location is unknown. In ancient times, it was customary to dip weapons in the blood of dragons to make wounds incurable. Such was the spear of Arshak I (1st century AD), which he rammed into the stone statue.

We conclude from the writings of Armenian historians that even before the 13th century there were dragons in the Armenian land. 5th century philosopher Yeznik Koghbtsi writes that "the monster dragon was adorable, which sometimes appeared in anthropomorphic form, sometimes in the form of a snake, sometimes appeared on the ground, and sometimes rose into the sky with wings. He caused a lot of damage on the land as well, stealing the crops and harvests of the field." 13th century Reverend Vahram wrote to King Hetum that dragons used to cling to cows and suck their milk. He says that people have seen how the dragon flies into the sky.

Aralezs were dog-shaped spirits that live in the sky or on the slopes of Mount Ararat. Armenians believed that the Aralezs come down from the sky to lick the wounds of heroes who died on the battlefield and revive them. There is a mention of Aralezs in the story about Armenian King Ara the Beautiful and Assyrian Queen Shamiram (Semiramis, 9th century BC). She harbored deep affection for King Ara, but when he declined her proposal of marriage, she retaliated by waging war on Armenia. Despite Queen Shamiram's explicit orders to her commanders to capture Ara alive, he, serving as the army commander and being on the front line, met his demise on the battlefield. Shamiram, overcome with desperation, placed Ara's lifeless body atop a mountain, summoning Aralezs in the hope that they would come and revive the fallen king licking his wounds.

Pariks or payers (in Persian: pariq or pari), looked like satyrs, who lived in forests or mountains. There were also hushkapariks, daughters of the sea. Qajq were jinns who stood up for humans, somewhat like guardian angels, mostly impartial or punishing, though not evil. The eternal brides, nymphs, lived in meadows, groves, riverbanks, they were learned like the muses. Special care was taken of the girls, from their wedding to the birth of a child, as well as during their bath. Twice a year, in the spring and in the fall, women performed a joyous performance in the bathhouse, calling the eternal brides.

GODS OF ANCIENT ARMENIA

In the pantheon of gods of ancient Armenia, the superiority of three gods – Holy Trinity stood out: father god Ara-Aramazd, mother-goddess Anahit and god of fire Vahagn.

ARA-ARAMAZD

The supreme god of the ancient Armenians was Ara-Aramazd, the creator of heaven and earth, the father of all gods. The original name of this god is Ara. This name was common in the proto-Armenian era and comes from the name of the Iranian Ahura-Mazda (Ohrmazd). With the advent of Greek culture and Persian beliefs, Ara became Aramazd. Aramazd embodied the good beginning of the universe. He led all the gods in heaven and people on earth. His attributes of power and might were lightning, thunder and a rainbow belt. A mighty Armenian eagle was

[7]In the 7th-century book "History of Taron" by Armenian historian Hovhan Mamikonyan, derived from the accounts of 4th-century Assyrian writer Zenob Glak, there is a notable reference to an Indian colony in Armenia. According to these sources, in the 2nd century BC, two Hindu princes arrived in Armenia. King Valarsaces granted them land in the Taron province, where they established settlements, constructed temples, and erected statues of their gods.

Christian army entered Armenia with the intent of imposing Christianity, a combined force of Indian and Armenian troops resisted. Despite their joint efforts, they were ultimately defeated due to the overwhelming numbers of the Christian army.

sitting on Aramazd's hand. God was merciful, peaceful and wise[8]. He was never considered militant, but always fought for justice. According to legend, Ara was the son of endless time. Jupiter was considered its symbolizing star.

He had a son - Miher, and two daughters - Anahit and Naneh. He was called "great and brave Aramazd", "great and omnipotent", "giver of generous abundance" whose main shrine was located in one of the worship centers of ancient Armenia, Ani Kamakh.

In ancient Armenia there was a locality Bagavan (literally - town of the gods, situated on a tributary of the Euphrates at the foothills of Mount Npat, to the north of Lake Van) which held one of the major temples of pre-Christian Armenia – temple of Ara. In the very first years of the adoption of Christianity as the state religion, Bagavan was burned, and the flames consumed a colossal collection of manuscripts. Parthian Gregory the Illuminator[9] crushed it and erected a cross on the spot, and the land became the property of the church by royal decree.

Ara-Aramazd, god-creator, father of gods

[8]Մովսես Խորենացի, Հայոց պատմություն, Երևան, 1969 [Movses Khorenatsi, History of Armenia, Yerevan, 1969 (in Armenian)].
[9]The founder and first official head of the Armenian Apostolic Church. He converted Armenia to Christianity in the early fourth century (traditionally dated to 301) with fire and sword destroying Armenian ancient culture, making Armenia the first state to adopt Christianity as its official religion.

Soviet-Armenian orientalist and academician Joseph Orbeli insisted that part of the library was preserved thanks to secret underground chambers in the temple of Aramazd. Alas, in the middle of the 20th century, the Turks blew up the 7th century Christian church built in its place, and the manuscripts were finally buried under the ruins.

ANAHIT

The cult of mother-goddess Anahit was widely loved and spread in ancient Armenia. She was the daughter of father-god Ara-Aramazd, the most beloved and adored goddess of Armenians who was born from his head. In mystical understanding, the head of the supreme deity is a symbol of the upper layers of the ether, and such a birth symbolizes the exit to the higher cosmic worlds through the dome of the sky.

Some medieval sources also call her the wife of Ara. She was a mother goddess, the sacred embodiment of motherhood, fertility, depicted with a child in her arms, with a special headdress for Armenian women, with a headscarf down to the shoulders. She was called "Great Lady Anahit", mother of all kinds of prudence and decency, benefactor of people, supporter and glorifier of the Armenian people. She was the patroness of sciences, arts and crafts, as well as agriculture, horticulture and cattle breeding. They believed that thanks to her, the Armenian land always existed, is and will exist. When undertaking any activity, the Armenian kings sought patronage and health from the Great Lady Anahit. The healing springs, which were credited with the ability to influence childbirth, bore the name Anahityan.

Mother-goddess Anahit

On coins, Anahit was depicted wearing a helmet, being considered a warrior. Kings and generals asked her for victory, and they thanked her for military successes. In addition, Anahit patronized metallurgists and jewelers, according to whose ideas she wore a tiara with seven diamonds.

Anahit's temples were everywhere in historical Armenia. The most notable was the Anahit temple in Yeriza town of Yekeghyats province[10], to which servants and maids were donated. Rich and prominent families dedicated their adult daughters to that temple, where after serving for some time only they had the right to marry. To Anahit's temples heifers (with a white mark on the forehead and scarred with a torch-shaped mark) were donated and later sacrificed. Twice a year, in spring and autumn, big festivals were held. One was on the 15th of Navasard month (on August 11), day of fertility and harvest ripening. On that day, the head priest, dressed like a king, led the priests and many pilgrims and, taking the statue of Anahit, circled around the temple chanting prayers. After that procession secular ceremonies and dances were held.

Armenian historian of 5th century Agathangueghos in his book "Hisotry of Armenia" cites the following words about goddess Anahit which belong King Tiridates III: "She is the glory and life giver of our nation, whom all kings worship, especially the Greek king. She is the mother of vigilance, the benefactor of all human natures". The king confirms that in case of worshipping and glorifying the gods, "all kinds of abundance and good things reach" the country and the people of the country, they are "granted prosperity, fullness and peace". Also, on the contrary, when people deny and despise the gods due to their "ignorance, selflessness" or "disturbing, sloppy" temperament, such people are greatly harmed by the wrath of the gods.

The golden statue of Mother Anahit stood within the temple in the town of Yeriza, earning her epithets like "Golden Armed," "Golden Mother," and "Golden Haired." Adorned with crowns woven from fresh tree branches, this impressive statue surpassed 5 meters in height. However, in 34 BC, during the Parthian invasion led by Roman army commander Mark Antonius, the revered golden statue met a tragic fate. Antonius's soldiers, upon entering Yeriza, shattered the statue into fragments, sharing the pieces among themselves and transporting them to Rome.

Legend has it that the goddess exacted a vengeful toll on those who laid hands on her sacred image. The first person to touch Anahit's statue suffered blindness, paralysis, and a swift demise. Notably, a Roman soldier involved in this plunder orchestrated a lavish dinner in honor of Emperor Augustus. When the emperor inquired about the source of his newfound wealth, the soldier revealed that he financed the extravagant feast with a piece of gold from the shin of the shattered statue of Anahit.

In 1873, during excavations in the Gümüşhane province of present-day Turkey, a bronze bust and hand of the Goddess Anahit were discovered. A year later, they were acquired by the British Museum and have been exhibited there ever since.

In ancient times, the 19th day of the months of the Armenian calendar was named after Anahit. After the establishment of Christianity, the cult of Anahit turned into the cult of Virgin Mary and is now celebrated on April 7 as the Day of Motherhood and Beauty in the Republic of Armenia.

The personal name "Anahit" is very popular among Armenian girls and women. Anahit-shaped salt bowls are also very popular, symbolizing fertility and prosperity.

[10]It was located over the western Euphrates valley.

VAHAGEN

God Vahagen (alike the Greek Heracles) was one of the seven main gods of the Armenian pantheon: a dashing youth with fiery hair, a flaming beard, and sunny eyes. The rock paintings of Vahagen in Armenia date back to the 7th-2nd millennia BC. From the ancient hymn[11] dedicated to him, we learn that he is born during the fervent travail of the universe, when its three constituent parts - the sky, the earth and the sea, are gripped by the pains of travail. And from the trumpet emitting smoke and flames of bright apricot colour from the sea comes running Vahagen.

The birth was marked by a powerful cosmic explosion, and the goddess Anahit tied a Military Cross composed of stars to her son's hand so that its power would be indestructible. Anahit sent her son to earth to bring fire to people, but the dragon-vishap attacked him to take away the goddess's gift. Vahagen defeated the dragon and since then appeared to people in the guise of light and flame. At dawn, Vahagen-vishapakah ("dragon slayer") leaves his abode - Mount Karke near the village of Vishap and, surrounded by twelve golden mace-bearers, climbs to the top of the mountain to survey and protect his world.

Vahagen, god of fire and conqueror of dragons

[11]Among the hymns dedicated to the ancient Armenian gods, it is the only one that has reached us from the depths of the centuries. thanks to the historian Movses Khorenatsi of 5th century AD.

In the early stages of Christianity, myths surrounding Vahagen underwent modification: the vishap, came to symbolize Satan. Vahagen, along with his mace-bearers, was gradually replaced by the Archangel Michael and his angels, who assumed similar functions. These celestial beings engaged in a cosmic battle with the devil, who sought to devour the sun. The narrative unfolds as the angels lift the vishap toward the sun, resulting in the monster's incineration and eventual collapse to the ground. The name of Vahagen - the god of thunder, lightning and war, carrying fire, is similar to the name of Indian deva Agni. The Indo-European root "agn" (fire) received the form "agni" in Sanskrit, "ignis" in Latin, and "agnos" in Greek.

The myth about the origin of the Milky Way, preserved by the great cosmographer, philosopher of 7th century Anania Shirakatsi. is associated with Vahagen. It tells how Vahagen stole a cart of straw from the Assyrian king Barsham in the cold winter in order to save the people of Armenia from the cold. To bring the straw he had to rush through Paradise, and along the way he dropped straws. Small straws falling from the haystack formed a star cluster, which people call the "straw thief's road" or Milky way.

In ancient Armenian culture, Barshamin acts as an evil spirit, the enemy of Vahagen and Aramazd. In historical myths he appears as the enemy ruler of Assyria. According to legend, he was defeated by Aramazd. The main sanctuary of Vahagen was located in the Taron region, on the slope of Mount Karke, under which Aratsani river flows. Vahagen's temple was very rich, full of gold and silver. Gregory the Illuminator destroyed the idols here and made the place of the first church and instead of the festival of Vahagen on the 7th of the month of Sahmi (Sahmi, the third month of the Armenian calendar, had 30 days, it started on October 10 and ended on November 8) defined the festivals of St. Karapet and St. Atenogines, the bishop, of which he placed part of their relics in the foundation of the church. Vahagen day was the 27th day of the month. Later, Armenians humanized Vahagen and made him the third son of their beloved and honored King Tigran the Great.

ASTGHIK : Astghik, the Armenian goddess revered for love and water, and cherished as the beloved of Vahagen, found special favor among the Armenian people. Associated with the planet Arusyak (Venus), her statue or image adorned Mount Pashat, situated in close proximity to the statue of Aramazd. In Ashtishat, her temple was known as "Vahagen's room," a sacred space where Astghik would meet her beloved. The union of Astghik and Vahagen held profound significance, deemed as sacred. This divine matrimony was believed to bring forth rain, nurturing the earth, fostering abundant crops, and bestowing prosperity upon the people. In honor of this goddess, identified with the Egyptian Isis, the Assyrian-Babylonian Ishtar, the Greek Aphrodite and the Roman Venus, there were temples in many cities, where people with serious illnesses came for healing. Why did Astghik-Venus patronize pregnant women? Let's consider the astronomical factor: the period of morning and evening visibility of the planet Venus lasts approximately 263 days, that is, close to the average period of pregnancy for a woman[12]. Astghik was depicted as a naked, celestial beauty, often while bathing. He bathed in the Euphrates river every night. The young men who fell in love with her used to light bonfires at night on the Daghonats mountain of Taron, to see the goddess floating in the river, admire her ravishing beauty. But Astghik covered the field of Taron with fog every night so that no stranger eyes could see her.

Goddess of love Astghik

[12]Արթուր Արմին, Հին աստվածներ. Խորենացու հաղորդած դիցապատումների աստղագիտական հիմքերը, Երևան, 2023 [Arthur Armin, Ancient gods: the astrological basis of the legends reported by Khorenatsi, Yerevan, 2023 (in Armenian)]

The goddess was named "golden-handed" and "rose-fingered." Giving roses and pouring rose water, the goddess Astghik sowed love throughout the country, and Vahagen, who fought against evil, guarded this love. Astghik personified female devotion and virtue. One day, having learned that her lover was wounded, Astghik hurried to him barefoot. On the way, not noticing anything around her, she injured her legs on the rose bushes, and the flowers turned red from her blood. Hence, the red rose became a symbol of love[13].
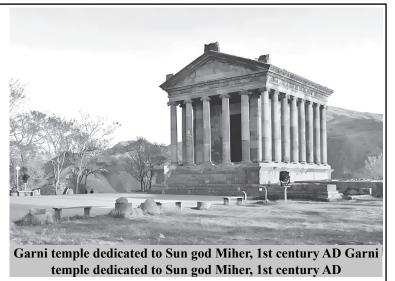
Researchers suggest that the Vardavar festival, which has survived to this day, is associated precisely with the veneration of Astghik. In ancient times, during the holiday, the statue of the goddess was watered, doves were released and roses were presented as gifts. In modern Armenia, Vardavar is a traditional festival that coincides with the day of the Transfiguration of the Lord, celebrated 14 weeks after Easter, in July. Nowadays the custom has changed and has grown into a noisy game in which people pour water on each other.

NANEH

The next goddess of ancient Armenians is Naneh, the daughter of Aramazd, the goddess of war and revenge, whose worship was closely related to the worship of her mother goddess, Anahit. And it was not by chance that the rich temple of Naneh was located in Til town of Yekeghyats province, near the temple of Anahit. Gregory the Iilluminator destroyed it and made the place with its treasures the property of the church to be built. Among the people, the great mother, that is, the grandmother, is still called Naneh, something that testifies to the connection of Queen goddess Naneh with the mother deity and the wide spread of her name and worship among the people. She is paired with the Greek goddess Athena-Pallas and was depicted as a young girl with a spear and shield in her hands.

MIHER : The god of justice, heavenly light and the Sun was Miher, the light-bearer, the other son of Aramazd, the brother of Anahit and Naneh. He was depicted with a sun halo and swastikas on his thighs. The main temple of Sun-god Miher was located in Bagaharich village of Derjan province[14]. There is another temple, dating back to the 1st century and designed in the Hellenistic architectural style, located in Garni, dedicated to Miher. Remarkably, it stands as the sole surviving pagan

Garni temple dedicated to Sun god Miher, 1st century AD Garni temple dedicated to Sun god Miher, 1st century AD

temple in Armenia from ancient times. Situated in proximity to Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, this structure serves as a significant symbol of pre-Christian Armenia and has evolved into one of the primary tourist attractions in the country. The cult of Miher was widespread in ancient Armenia. His influence is evident in the ancient Armenian calendar, where the 8th day of each month was dedicated to him. Additionally, the 7th month, equivalent to the modern February, was named Mehekan in his honor.

---

[13]Максим Ерохин, Боги Великой Армении: кому поклонялись армяне до принятия христианства, 6.10.2021, https://www.arm-museum.ru/news-blog/pantheon-of-armenian-gods-and-goddess [Maxim Yerokhin, Gods of Great Armenia: who did the Armenians worship before the adoption of Christianity? (in Russian)].

[14]North-west of Van Lake.

Armenian mythology recounts various exploits of Miher, also known as Mher. These tales depict him as a heroic figure who confronts a lion that posed a threat to civilians, saves the city of Jezira from flooding by casting a rock into the river, and combats injustice in the world.

In the Armenian folk epic "Sasna Tsrer" (Daredevils of Sassoun), Mher the Junior, the grandson of Mher the Senior, is portrayed as both heirless and immortal. Due to the earth's weakened state caused by injustice, he is unable to tread upon it - his feet sink into the ground. Following God's command, the Agravaqar rock opens, allowing Mher to enter it on horseback, and he seals himself within. It is prophesied that Mher will emerge from the rock when the old world is dismantled, giving way to a new one characterized by the absence of injustice and an abundance of prosperity. This transformation is foretold to occur when barley reaches the size of walnuts, wheat attains the dimensions of rose hips, and the earth regains its fairness, providing a stable foundation for Mher to walk upon.

Mher's Door

According to one narrative, each year on the nights of Ascension (is celebrated exactly forty days after Easter) and Vardavar (is celebrated 14 weeks or 98 days after Easter), when the sky and the earth come together, Mher embarks on his fiery steed, traversing the realms of sky and earth. However, upon realizing that "the earth cannot bear his weight," he retraces his steps to his abode. The belief holds that in the future, Mher will emerge once more, destined to liberate the "Armenian land" from malevolent forces and establish a realm of happiness. The tradition preserves the concept of the god Miher's second coming, wherein he will deliver the world from the clutches of evil spirits.

The Agravaqar rock, situated in the vicinity of Van Fort, is known as Mheri dur (Mher's door)[15] or God's Gate. This rock bears cuneiform inscriptions, and within the cuneiform text, the names of 79 gods and goddesses from the

---

[15]Արթուր Արմին, Մհերի դուռ. հնագույն թվային համակարգը որպես տիեզերքի կառուցք և աստեղային լրացույց, ԱՄՆ, 2008 [Arthur Armin, Mher's doo: the ancient number system as a structure of the universe and a star complement, USA, 2008 (in Armenian)].

Armenian pantheon are recorded. The inscriptions, attributed to the kings Menua and Ishpuin from the late 9th century BC of the Araratyan Kingdom, also detail the number of sacrificed animals dedicated to each deity[16].

TIR

Winged Tir, whose name is occasionally interpreted as "quick," held the esteemed position of a learned god. He held a revered role as the guardian and source of inspiration for wisdom, learning, science, and education among the ancient Armenians, akin to the role of Hermes in Greek mythology. Recognizing his wisdom, Aramazd appointed him as his personal scribe and messenger. Additionally, Tir was entrusted with the patronage of writing, rhetoric, science, and art. An embodiment of this reverence was manifested in the form of a gilded copper statue situated near ancient Artashat[17], known as the Temple of Learning the Sciences, where worship and homage were devoted to this divine figure.

This location served as a center for the study of sciences, where the officiating priests of the pagan religion delved into the realms of science and wisdom. Within the religious sciences, divination, particularly the interpretation of dreams, held a significant place. Tir, the god associated with this sanctuary, was believed to bring dreams to people, offering glimpses into the future. It is plausible that he also served as a guide to the underground kingdom. Hence, Tir earned the epithets of a dream teller and dream analyst. The priests acquired the art of divination from him, and the ancient Armenians referred to Tir's place of worship as "Yerazmoyn teghiq," meaning a place filled with dreams.

The endeavors of Tir held particular significance for King Artashes I (2nd century BC). In tribute to the enlightened god, the king erected a new sanctuary at the very location where the pinnacle of Armenian architecture, the Zvartnots Temple[18], would later emerge in the 7th century.

Supreme god Aramazd took great pride in his son Tir, to whom he attributed the rainbow by naming it "the belt of Tir." Originally, the zodiac sign of Sagittarius was represented as a bowstring-rainbow, eventually transforming into an anthropomorphic archer in later depictions. According to legend, individuals passing under the arch of Tir underwent a remarkable transformation—girls turned into young men, and young men into girls. In this intriguing reflection of Aryan elemental perception, a transition unfolds between spheres, where the god Tir embodies the element of air. Above, the masculine principle prevails, and below, the feminine principle takes precedence[19].

Tir is equated with the spirit Grogh, whose name translates to "writing," "recording," or "writer." Grogh aptly lived up to his name as a meticulous scribe: the moment a person was born, Grogh recorded the newborn in the book of life and marked the forehead with the predetermined fate, outlining the span of the allotted life. He attentively observed everyone, meticulously noting all sins and virtuous deeds in a special tome for recital during the ultimate trial.

In instances where the struggle for life prolonged and the soul clung to the body, the pillow was removed from under the dying person's head, windows and doors were opened wide to allow Grogh's unrestricted entry into the house. Grogh would then retrieve the soul, cradling it in his bosom. Similar to the Russian expression for condemnation "Go to Satan", Armenians would say, "Grogh qez tani!" ("Let the Scribe take

---

[16]Among the Trinity of gods Shivini name is also mentioned which, now doubt, is similar to Indian Shiva. But this is a topic of another research.

[17]A town located 30 km southeast of Yerevan.

[18]Near the Yerevan International Airport "Zvartnots".

[19]Армен Меружанян, Пантеон армянских богов, 7.07.2017, https://vstrokax.net/interesnoe/panteon-armyanskih-bogov/ [Armen Meruzhanyan, Pantheon of Armenian gods (in Russian)].

you!") and "Groghi tsots!" ("Go into the arms of the Scribe"), indicating an association with this spirit at the end of life.

Presumably, the name of the fourth month of the ancient Armenian calendar, Tre, comes from the name Tir.

AMANOR AND VANATUR

Amanor and Vanatur were gods revered and beloved by the Armenians, and some perspectives suggest they might be manifestations of a single deity. In ancient Armenian, Amanor means new year, often referred to as the "bringer of new fruits." Celebrations in his honor occurred during Navasard, the Armenian new year, falling in late July and early August according to the old Armenian calendar, coinciding with the ripening of new fruits.

The festivities of Navasard, particularly vibrant in the spiritual center of Bagavan, were marked by grandeur and joy. In this village, a place of worship for the gods of the new year, Amanor, and the hospitable Vanatur, could be found. Amanor, symbolizing the new year and its bountiful harvest, contrasts with Vanatur, meaning "host," who embodies the act of hosting and providing lodging for the myriad guests and pilgrims that flocked to Bagavan on Navasard and other occasions.

SPANDARAMET

The ancient Armenians revered Spandaramet as the god presiding over the subterranean realm, often associated with the underworld, the kingdom of the dead, or simply referred to as hell. It is noteworthy, however, that the ancient Armenians did not conceive of this realm as a place of punishment; rather, they believed in a life-giving force residing underground, devoid of fear. Consequently, Spandaramet was initially venerated as the benevolent god of flora and fauna, embodying kindness and generosity. In earlier times, Spandaramet was equated with the Greek deities Dionysius or Bacchus, patrons of gardens and wine. Additionally, parallels were drawn with the Greek god Hades, although Spandaramet, unlike Hades, assumed the role of a deity with punitive functions.

In reflecting on the narratives discussed above, it becomes evident that Armenia's rich cultural tapestry is interwoven with a diverse pantheon of gods and ancient traditions. Despite the passage of 17 centuries since the adoption of Christianity in Armenia, remnants of pagan rites endure, serving as a testament to the profound resilience of the country's cultural heritage. The coexistence of pagan and Christian elements is particularly striking, with many holidays seamlessly integrated into the Christian calendar. Armenia's remarkably tolerant approach towards paganism has played a pivotal role in safeguarding the ancestral customs and national identity of its people. This harmonious blend of ancient traditions and Christianity underscores the cultural depth and enduring spirit of Armenia.

Harmony and Goodness in Slavic Cultures

Mikołaj Jarmakowski

Jan Pocek, Polish folk village poet.

"From the earth I will receive an award

Na ziemi czarnej (On the black earth)

Pod niebem gwiazdami ogromnym (Under the sky huge in stars)

Rosłem jak sosna strzelista (I was growing like tall pine tree)

W której (In which)

W dzieciństwie miałem kołyskę (As a child I had a cradle)

Dziś mam chatę (Today I have a house)

A kiedyś będę miał trumnę (And one day I will have a coffin)

I od tej ziemi (And from this earth)

Której śpiewałem jak skowronek (To whom I was singing like a lark)

Otrzymam (I will receive)

Żywy szumiący – na grób – pomnik (A living humming - for the grave – monument)

Białą brzozę" (A white birch tree)"

(Pocek 1984: 265).

Mikołaj Jarmakowski

University of Gdansk

Institute of Anthropology

A wife like the Sun, a husband like the Moon, and beautiful daughters like the shining stars. Mythological patterns of life in the context of the folk world of values. The example of Slavic traditions.

1. Introduction.

The concept of "well-being", which is the subject of the conference, directs us to look at the notion of culture from certain specific points of view. The "well-being" concept can be considered from at least two perspectives. The first concerns the subjective reconstruction of culture, i.e. the reflection on the perspective of the individual human–subject in a specific tradition, human who is "created" by his society and tradition due to the universal dilemmas "who is human" or "what does it mean to be human". The second perspective is of a supra-individual and intersubjective nature. It concerns the social convention that establishes a specific system of values and, at the same time, the way of its practising. Heading towards the thought of the cultural anthropologist Roy Wagner, we can say that culture constitutes "how the cultural reality should be done". The subject - individual - has a certain intuition about who he or she is and what he or she should be within his or her role and function in society. Society, on the other hand, is guided by something fundamental to it, but at the same time something that cannot be expressed explicitly – namely by a tradition. This reservoir contains the ways of establishing in "world such as it should be" due to order that is considered as a proper one; one that allows the world to exist "as it should be" (Wagner 1981). This intuition of "how it should be" is often seen and felt as something inherited from ancestors. The introduction outlined here thus speak, among other things, of what is referred to in the language of philosophy and psychology as "ontological security".

Wishing to enable the reader to gain an insight into the given scope of the culture we will first turn to its most universal aspect, namely language. For, in addition to its superficially

recognisable communicative functions, it has a basic worldview function, or, more precisely, it is what co-creates the worldview inherent in each culture (Sapir 1970; Bartmiński 2012).

Having analysed the Slavic lexemes that are reasonably close to the English concept of "well-being", we will turn to the sphere of oral folklore - ritual songs - in which we will find some references to, as Claude Lévi-Strauss used to say, the "unconscious" plane of ideas generated in societies by their native language; ideas which are "practised", among others, in the form of rituals. Thus, we can consider the following question as fundamental for this article: how is the concept of human happiness and well-being represented in the languages and cultures of Slavs? Or, due to thought of Roy Wagner, "what should be done" to establish or sustain a state of "well-being", order, goodness, or harmony in both - the individual and social - spheres?

2. Slavs: their languages and ethnogenesis

Slavs inhabit most of present-day Europe and constitute one of the continent's most numerous ethnolinguistic groups. They belong to the Indo-European language family, more specifically to the satemic language branch. In ancient times, as the so-called Proto-Slavs, they probably resided at the area of today's central and northern Ukraine, where they engaged in cattle breeding and agriculture. Sticking to archaic forms of tribal organisation, centred around great families, they did not organise themselves into state organisations until the early medieval period. They are closely related to the Balts, with whom in the distant past they formed one dialectal group, the Balto-Slavic group. The Proto-Slavs separated from the Proto-Balts and over time became quite influenced by Iranian peoples, especially the Scythians and Sarmatians. About 2000-2500 years ago, the Iranians influenced the development of the religious beliefs of the Proto-Slavs; from the Iranian language of the Scythians comes, among other things, the Slavic term for god, namely *bogъ. In the oral folklore

of the Slavs and some mythological motifs we see this Iranian influence, in connection with which some researches write about an "Iranian inversion" among the Proto-Slavs (Gołąb 1975, 1992; Jarmakowski 2023).

With the collapse of the Roman Empire, Europe became the scene of great migrations of peoples. At that time, also the Prot-Slavs undertook migrations that had an astonishing effect; within about 200 years they settled in large areas of central, eastern, and southern Europe. The borders of their expansion were the walls of Byzantium, the area around the river Elbe (the territory of present-day Germany) and the territory of present-day western Russia and south-eastern Ukraine (the basin of the Volkhov, Tsna and lower Dnieper rivers). The Slavs assimilated and absorbed numerous local tribes, mainly Germanic, Baltic and Thracian. The expansion was of a varied nature, both warlike and peaceful. The great migration of the Slavs and the dispersion of the tribes initiated a process of dialectal differentiation of the Proto-Slavic language. Despite more than 1,000 years of linguistic diversification, most Slavic peoples can nevertheless still communicate with each other at a basic level.

The early medieval period was associated with the establishment of the first Slavic states and the Christianisation of their nobility. The original tribal religions then often underwent a process of reforms. Priests (*žьrcь in Proto-Slavic language, word related with old Indian gr̥ṇā́ti „to call a deity") were trying - as for example in region of Polabia and Pomerania - to adapt the tribal faith to the needs of early-medieval statehood. However, this ended in failure. But despite of the strong christianization of the elites and the start of church missions, the new religion spread slowly among the largely rural population. The conservative countryside over time, after some 500 years, developed a specific syncretic culture based on old traditions

that assimilated the "folklorised" elements of Christianity (Słupecki 1994; Bartmiński 1988[1]).

3. From the history of research

Scientific interest in Slavic mythology - or, more broadly, in the spiritual culture of the Slavs - emerged in the 19th century, during the Romantic period, when the national identity of the Slavs was awakening. One of the precursors of this research was a Pole named Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski, author of the work *On Slavdom before Christianity*, which was published in 1818 and became a manifesto for the study of the cultural past and identity of Slavic peoples.

Both, the culture of the old Slavs - the culture of the pre-Christian period - and the later traditional rural culture, were based on the oral transmission of traditions; those were therefore illiterate cultures. Thus, knowledge of Slavic cultures had to rely on ethnographic documentation of traditions still alive in the nineteenth century and on the research into medieval records written down mainly in church settings. Archaeological research also plays an important role, thanks to which we know traces of the oldest ritual practices (the spatial specific of sacred places of worship on mountain tops, corpse burial rites, sacrificial practices, ancient art, etc.). Linguists reconstruct Proto-Slavic culture through deep studies of the Slavic languages; for through their comparative studies, it is possible to go into the most basic linguistic categories that dates to the period before the great migration (Gołąb 1992; SP I-VIII; ESSJ I- XLIII; Derksen 2006). Research made on the spiritual culture is particularly rich. Let us mention only one example, namely, a list created by ethnologist from Kharkiv which includes 10,000 works, articles, and ethnographic collections of Ukrainian tradition (SKNK).

Reaching back into the Proto-Slavic past, we see a quite common image inherited in later folk traditions. The gods were perceived as "those with many powers of luck and wealth", with "luck" (ps. *sъčęstьje[2]) being used to describe general prosperity (*bogatьstvo), good fortune and success. The state of this luck or happiness depended on the exchange of sacrificial gifts, for the word *sъčęstьje means "that which is good from the sacrificed part of the gift" (SP I: 296; Kowalski 2014: 219-231). The world was perceived as a great tree, an animate and holistic organism in which man was a part of it somehow similar to bees, birds or plants (Bartmiński 1988). The earth was taken out of the bottom of the great ocean. At the beginning of time, this was done by two gods, also often depicted in bird form (e.g. ducks): the god of lightning (ps. *Perunъ) and the god guardian of wealth and ancestors (ps. *Velesъ). Proto-Slavs worshipped a personified Heaven-Sky god who was a father figure to humans and was called *Bogъ or *Svętъ Bogъ. Earth (ps. *Zemja[3]) was worshipped as a fertile mother; its special attribute was moisture. The heavenly bodies were worshipped as a model of the human family: the Sun (*Slnъce, *Slnъko) as the mother, the Moon (*Měsęcь) as the father, and the Stars (*gvēzdỳ) as their children. The sky (*nebo, *nebese) that this family inhabits was imagined in the likeness of a house and a field. The cult of the Ancestors (*dědi) was omnipresent, as for them ritual feasts were dedicated, as for them fires were burned, as for them food was offered in sacrifice. Sacrifices to the gods were mostly burnt; linked to this was the cult of the god *Svarožitjь, god of fire and the Sun at the same time, son of *Sъvarogъ, the divine blacksmith, possibly Sky-Father. The syncretic folk culture has preserved the structures of the old cosmology and many elements of rituals, but Christian influences are evident; thus, *Perunъ is "replaced" by St. George or St. Elijah, and

---

[1]Many English-language research papers can be found in the journal *Studia Mythologica Slavica*: https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/sms
[2]Letters ъ and ь which are used for the Proto-Slavic lexis are read as short u and short i (ŭ and ĭ).
[3]„J" in Slavonic languages have a phonetic value of the English "y".

*Velesъ by St. Nicholas (Ivanov, Toporov 1974; Uspienski 1985).

4. Harmony and goodness. In search of essence of the human being.

We will begin our article by drawing a linguistic picture of the concepts of goodness, harmony, order – i.e., concepts that are the closest equivalents of the broad term "well-being". In the following section of the paper, we refer to the above-mentioned long-standing tradition of research on the languages of the Slavs, more specifically to the linguistic project of reconstructing the Proto-Slavic language.

Every culture, while constructing its linguistic and pragmatic (e.g. ritualistic) cosmology, also constructs a specific axiological image, which is a set of specific "idealistic" images of reality. This language and practical images constitute, on the one hand, a sphere of the cosmologically based axioms of telling about world phenomena, while, on the other, they are an expression of the social values and conventions towards which the human individual is placed.

The Proto-Slavic synonym of the English word "good" is the word *dobrъ, which, according to linguist Wiesław Boryś, is derived from the Proto-Indo-European lexeme *dhabh-ro-s < *dhabh- "to match, matched". Semantic equivalents are, for example, gr. Ἁρμονία (harmonia) and etymologically related got. gadaban "to happen, be suitable".

A rich vocabulary was describing various aspects of "goodness" as a value and state of being: *dobrěti "to act for good, to be good, to do good by doing", *dobrina "good", *dobriti "doing good", "be good and generous", *dobrodějь "someone who is doing good", *dobrostь, *dobrota – "goodness" (ESSJ 5: 40-47; Boryś 2006: 115). What is interesting, is the linking of goodness (as a moral value, as a "good state of affairs and being, "good behaviour") with notions of "proper fit and adjustment", "usefulness", but also "beauty" (SP III: 301; Derksen 2008: 110),

described by linguists as a specific for Slavic languages (and some other Indo-European languages). This "right adjustment, right fit, right matching" as a positive ethical or ontological (magical, ritual) feature or property is also present in the word *godъ "something convenient for someone; suitable time; certain time, good time" (ESSJ 6: 191-192; Boryś 2006: 169; Derksen 2008: 172). It is derived from the verb *goditi "to wait for the right time and opportunity, to aim for something; to be suitable, convenient" (ESSJ 6: 188-190). What is very important, words related to the above are, in Slavic languages, terms for ceremonies and rituals, e.g. weddings or the rite of the winter solstice (pol. gody, pol. dial. Godnie Święta). The state of being ritually practised and referred to be as *godъ also relates to: pl. godziwy "fair, suitable, proper, reliable, honest", pl. godny "worthy, capable, suitable", pl. pogodny "good weather, good emotional state" with many equivalents in other Slavic languages (Boryś 2006: 169-170). Julius Pokorny derives the above vocabulary from the Proto-Indo-European *ghedh / *ghodh- "to join, to make a bond, to match, to be tightly joined", which makes it possible to link the Slavic vocabulary with Old Indian words: gádhya-ḥ "to hold on, to hug", , ā́-gadhita-ḥ "clingy, emotionally attached", pári-gadhita-ḥ "to embrace someone in sexual connotations" (IEW: 423-424).

Arising from pie. *ghedh / *ghodh- the Proto-Slavic vocabulary thus speaks of a "conjunction", but one that is subject to some order and results in a positively valorised effect. It is therefore worth looking at the vocabulary associated with ps. *ladъ "harmonious arrangement, order"; "order, work, moment of weeding"; "order, custom" which comes from ps. *laditi – "to put in order" > opol. ładzić "to make good, to prepare for something, for use, for fulfilment, for order, which is the possibility of proper use", also "to live in peace, to calm down" (Boryś 2006: 293). These lexemes are based on

the Proto-Indo-European roots *(o)lō- + *dho- in which semantic base is a form of pie. *dhē- "to put on" (IEW: 235-239). Aspects of phenomena described as *ladъ are, among others, ps. *lada "girl in a wedding dress; a handsome young man; husband/wife, someone who is loved and liked (wife, child)" and *ladьnъ "arranged in a harmonious, orderly way" < "decent, giving a good impression" which was a base for proto-aesthetic vocabulary defining beauty (cf. pl. ładny) (ESSJ 16: 9-12). The fact that the lexeme describing the state of "order" derives from an archaic ritual vocabulary which tells us, among other things, the formula associated with the naming ritual, i.e. the passing of this mythical-ritual "order" into a person: ps. *jьmę děti "to give a name" < pie. *nomon dheh1- "t.s.". The related vocabulary was studied by the French linguist Émile Benveniste. As he wrote: "It should be noted that the strict sense of *dhē is "to place something (in a creative way), to establish in existence", and not simply to leave an object on the ground. The derivative [Sanskrit - M.J.] dhāman therefore means "establishment", both that which is placed and created, and the place of "placing" or "establishing"; in other words, it means a domain, a place, and a thing placed or created in the world. Given this basic meaning, we can see how the meaning of "law" is also defined by [Sanskrit – M.J.] dhāman: law is first and foremost an "establishment", an institution that is founded and thus begins to exist" (Benveniste 2016: 387). Since at the roots of the Proto-Slavic expressions of "order, harmony, goodness" is the idea of proper - ritual fit - for assignment, let us turn our attention to the vocabulary relating to the ritual itself.

The Proto-Slavic word for "rite, ritual" is *obrędъ, which is derived from the verb *ręditi "making order" related with *rędъ "a row, an order" > "a place in a row, order, succession of events; tidiness, order" (Derksen 2006: 436) and *raditi "to take care of". Also related here is the word *porêdъkъ "order", which is

quite synonymous with the word *ladъ, and syntactically means "that which follows an ordinance". These words are of Indo-European origin and are related to the morpheme group *ar-,*(a)rĭ-, *rēi- "to move, add, adjust; put together" or, in laryngeal reconstruction,*h2rei̯H- "to put in order". Note the Indo-Iranian related words: skt. r̥tá "truth, Being, holy order", av. arəta- "sacred true, sacred order of gods", av. arədra- "faithful, dependable", (IEW: 55-61). Particularly important is the etymological connection with the Sanskrit r̥tá, which in the Vedas means "dynamic structure in which every object and action have its proper place, in which all components support and strengthen each other in symbiosis. R̥tá expresses a harmonized universe which laws share, a creation of power for those who understand its structure and know how to use it" (MSKMI: 31).

We see in the above vocabulary two important elements relevant to the Proto-Slavic image of reality. The first is that goodness and order (*dobrъ, *ladъ) are aspects of "right attribution", "right fit", "right match". There is, therefore, an ontologically real and causal point of reference in the world: some power and force that is towards man and towards which man must - if he wants to be good and harmonious - adapt himself. One way of doing this is through ritual (*obrędъ), which sustains the divine, Myth-bound, order of the world; it sustains what the world is in its ontological essence and is at the same time a point of reference for the human being posing the question "what should be done". The above reconstruction is, of course, hermeneutic: it does not reflect how the Proto-Slavs would have thought about the above but is an attempt to translate their categories into contemporary language. Let us return here to the thoughts of anthropologist Roy Wagner. To understand the Slavic categories of "order" and "goodness", we can ask the following question in relation to the researched linguistic material: "about what, in the terms of what should be

done by the person-human subject, do the lexis analysed above speak of"? What task or dilemma do they pose for the human being who wants to maintain "order", "harmony" and "goodness" in himself and his environment? We will look for the answer to this question in ethnographic materials, more specifically in ritual songs.

5. People, plants, gods and the circle of life.

Researchers of Slavic folklore have already pointed out many times that traditional oral literature, especially ritual songs, is quite closely related with the image of the world founded in the Proto-Slavic language. In other words, one can say that folklore is an "self description" of what linguists (semioticians) reconstruct as the linguistic image of the world. To illustrate our research, we will present below ritual songs in which pragmatic realisations of the cosmology created by linguistic concepts can be found. The songs come from 19th- and 20th-century ethnographic collections; these are wedding songs and songs related to the winter solstice, written in the territories of present-day Poland, Kashubia, Ukraine, and Belarus. The ethnographic commentary is contributory, brief, and intended only to signal certain connections; a full account of the complex contexts of the following songs and their associated rituals is beyond the capacity of the text.

***

One of the best-preserved Slavic folk rituals is the wedding. Its key element was the ritual ("symbolic") death of the girl-bride and her rebirth in her new home, namely the groom's house. The state of "transition" from one world to another, from the home of the parents to the home of the in-laws (or husband) was the moment when the "force" necessary for the subsequent birth of a child was transferred to the girl. This is referred to the songs in which the girl meets God Himself, who, by touching her, transmits to her the dola, something that is fate and the force to create life at the same time:

"Pośrataj Boże goście nasze (Give luck-force, God, to our guests)

Łado! Łado!

I pośratawszy rzywnie zapłakał, (And when He gave luck-force, he cried bitterly)

Łado! Łado!

Tatusio wyszedł i pośratał, (And father has come and gave luck-force)

Łado! Łado!

Jedź z Bogiem córuś, niech cię Bóg śrata (Go with God, dear daughter, may God give you luck-force)

Łado! Łado!

Niech cię Bóg śrata, dolę dobrą da, (May God give you luck-force, give you good dola)

Łado! Łado!" (Kolberg 1962: 188)

The wedding ritual had to correspond to the cosmic order: it was often held on a full moon, in accordance with the movement of the Sun across the Sky, with numerous taboos designed to "fit in" with good time and space. "Fitting in" resulted in receiving good force of luck and prosperity. An element of "fitting in" was the ritual chanting about the bride and groom as plants or heavenly beings. The wedding takes place simultaneously in two worlds: among humans and "out there", a world that modern man will call "nature", and which for the Slavs may have been a "powerfully strong" extension and fundament of the social world (Descolla 2013). The songs were built on a principle that Jerzy Bartmiński describes as parallelism:

"Parallelism is a semantic variety of repetition conveying the existence of similarity (in its original form, perhaps even identity) with the appearance of otherness. Its philosophical foundation is animism, i.e., the belief in the unity of life in the Cosmos and the feeling of the mystical bond between man and the entire natural world surrounding him. The basis of comparison is action, in nature on the one hand,

in the human world on the other: the hazel tree rustles - the girl cries; the sun is rising in the sky - the bride is getting married, but there is also a certain situation: the linden tree and the sycamore tree are burning - the girl and the boy are burning with love (Bartmiński 2011a: 35)".

Here are examples. Emotionally, the separation from her mother was special for the girl. The reality of the old countryside meant that moving away, even several kilometres away, resulted that contact was lost. Hence, for the mother, the bride was "dying". Songs speak of this:

"A u chmełki na góreńce (Oh, in mountain, dear mountain)

Oj kąpało się tam Słońce (Oh, the Sun was bathing there)

Oj kąpało się kąpało (Oh, was bathing, was bathing)

Dwa dołeńki wody miało (Two holes with water it had)

Wichtusia ich napłakała...". (Wichtusia cried them) (Bartmiński ed. 1996: 136).

The bathing of the Sun on top of a mountain - in the middle of the world or in the ancestral world - is an old mythological motif. The girl, wishing to "pass" from one world to another, from her parents' home to her husband's, must become the Sun; she must experience what the Sun deity experiences in myth. This seems to be one of the elements of the above-mentioned "adjustment" or "fitting" associated with "goodness" (*dobrъ) and "order" (*ladъ). The girl's cry - the emotion of separation - is thus "good" insofar as it conforms to the pattern of cosmic reality set by the Sun.

"W niedziele raniusiejko (On Sunday early morning)

W niedziele raniusiejko (On Sunday early morning)

kąpało się słonejko (The Sun was bathing)

Marysia go łapała (Marysia was catching it)

sama w morzejko wpadła (And she fell into dear sea herself)

prosiła ratunejku (She was asking for rescue)

ratuj mie, tatusieńku (Rescue me, dear father)

Już ja cie nie zratuje (I won't rescue you)

bo morza nie zgrontuje (Beacuse I won't plow the sea)

bo morze szeroczeńkie (Beacuse the sea is wide)

do tego głęboczeńkie" ("And moreover deep") (Bartmiński ed. 2011: 344-345).

We find a similar motif in the song above. In it we see a conversation between father and daughter. The daughter "sinks" just as the Sun is setting in the world of the dead (the sea), while the father is powerless in the face of this. The wheel of life goes round - there is a separation and potentiality of something new. The girl bids farewell to her youth and dies (drowns) as a child. This happens during a ritual (*obrędъ) as an expression of something - though for some sad - inevitable "order", "goodness" and "harmony".

However, the wedding and other rituals associated with it were not just centred around this trauma of a girl saying goodbye to her parents and leaving for another home. Many love and wedding songs speak of love, but also by "fitting" it into a mythical pattern:

"Kalina s jaworem rozstacj sję nje może (Viburnum tree with sycamore tree cannot part)

Tak i ja s kochankiem, bronjze tego, Boze! (As me with my loved one, protect it God!)".

(Ceynowa 1878: 51).

The love of people as the love of plants, especially trees, is a well-known motif in European folklore. It refers to many mythological

motifs. The ancient peoples of Europe saw the forest and trees both as a depiction of ancestors and as something identical to the society of humans (Manhardt 1875, 1877). Humans "grow" like plants and trees, as evidenced not only by Indo-European linguistic data, but also by numerous rituals in which the beauty of the girl is the beauty of the tree (Benveniste 2016: 263)[4]. Here is a song from Ukrainian tradition. During the ritual, the girl is "dressed up" as a tree, while the tree is dressed in the girl's clothes. The ritual was intended both to bring rain and to make sure that the disguised and beautiful girl does not marry "just anyone", so that she would not be kidnapped like the "fertile wind" kidnapped the poplar tree:

"Stoyala topolya (Stood a poplar tree)
Kray chystoho polya (On the edge of the clean field)
Stiy, topolon'ko! (Stay, dear poplar tree)
Stiy, ne razvyvays' (Stay, do not grow)
Buynomu vitron'ku (To the fertile wind)
Ne piddavays' (Do not give yourself)"
(Razauskas-Daukintas 2020: 48-56).

It is interesting, then, that the "match" is an "identity" between the girl and the tree. Identification - the opening of a "connection" between humans and trees - has both individual (the girl's love, her beauty, but also prudence in choosing partners) and cosmic (rain) effects.

Let us conclude the above considerations with the mythological image of "order" and "goodness" in the family, which is the title of this article. Many of the songs sung as magical wishes during the winter solstice speak of this ideal image, in which the order and well-being of the family (*ladъ, *dobrъ), is its "identity" or "fit" with the pattern set by the divine family of the Celestials:

"Stać sviatlica nova zrubliena. (Enlighten house, new built, stands)

U toj sviatlicy čatyry akiency: (In this enlighten house four corners are)

U pieršym akiency - da jasnaje sonca, (In the first window – a bright Sun)

U druhim akiency - da jasny miesiac, (In the second window – bright Moon)

U trecim akiency - da drobnyja zorki, (In the third window – small stars)

U čacviortym akiency - da ciomnaja chmarka. (In the fourth window – the black cloud)

Jasnaje sonca - to žonka jaho, (Bright Sun – it is his wife)

Jasny miesiac - to sam haspadar, (Bright Moon – it is host himself)

Što drobnyja zorki - to dzietki jaho, (Small stars – these are his children)

Što ciomnaja chmarka - to žyta jaho (The black cloud – it is his rye)"

(San'ko ed. 2004: 318)

Wedding rituals are also familiar with this motif. Here is an example from Belarusian tradition:

"Iz-za morya sinyago, (From across the blue-white sea)

Iz-za lyasa tsemnago, (From across the dark forest)

Iz-za polya chistago (From across the clean field)

Vykhadziu yasen Myesyats, (Bright Moon has arrived)

Po zautra' raneshen'ka (And on tomorrow morning)

Vykhodilo krasno Solnyshko, (Beautiful Sun has come)

Yasen Mysyats - to Ivanushka (Bright Moon – it is *Ivanusha*)

---

[4]Proto-Slavic word for „humanity, people" - *ljudъ – is based on the Proto-Indo-European *leudh- "to grow, to develop (like plants"). Compare with relation between Proto-Slavic *rodъ "family" and Sanskrit rudh- "grow".

Krasno Sontse - to Alenushka (Beautiful Sun – it is *Alenushka*)"

(Dounar-Zapol'ski 1909: 350)

6. Summary.

The above article provides a Slavic ethnolinguistic commentary on the English language concept of "well-being", which is the title for the conference. Thus, the article attempts a cross-cultural translation of the mentioned concept.

We have considered above the etymology and semantics of certain lexemes relevant to the Proto-Slavic ritual vocabulary. Their analysis indicates that the concepts of harmony, goodness and order as a "proper fit", "proper match" or "adjustment", a proper course of affairs, which is the same as the mythical pattern, were important for the Proto-Slavs. The detailed (spatial, temporal, relating to different forms of rituals, etc.) aspects of the idea of "matching" or "fitting" would require further comment and deeper research. However, we can see that the analysed concepts were more ontological than axiological in their nature; they related not so much to discourse as to the collectively practised way of life - a conduct and way of being-in-the-world that the community considers, from the perspective of tradition, to be appropriate. *Ladъ, *dobrъ, *godъ being thus properties of being are also of a nature that modern man would describe as "magical", "religious" or "mystical". The way of their sustaining and establishing was a ritual (*obrędъ).

With reference to Roy Wagner's anthropology, we can say that visible in the folk tradition of the Slavs is a specific life attitude that relates the being-in-the-world of man, his emotional states and interpersonal relations, to the "mythological" plane of phenomena in the reality, which is nowadays called "nature". The "poetics of parallelisms" described by Jerzy Bartmiński is thus an answer to the existential-mystical questions "how it should be", "what should be

done to become a wife, good human etc.". The ritual songs we have analysed show examples of "well-being", examples of harmonious and good (according to the linguistic categories of the Slavs) being-in-the-world. This applies both to traumatic situations of "transition" (wedding) and to the fixed order of life (family mythology, pattern of family life).

7. Bibliography.

Bartmiński, J. (1988). *'Niebo się wstydzi'. Wokół ludowego pojmowania ładu świata, [in:] Kultura, literatura, folklor,* ed. M. Graszewska, J. Kolbuszewski, Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, pp. 96-107.

Bartmiński, J. (1996) (ed.). Słownik stereotypów i symboli ludowych. Vol I: Kosmos, p. I, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS.

Bartmiński, J. (2011a). *„Pieśń ujdzie cało". O ludowym języku poetyckim,* [in:] *Polska pieśń i muzyka ludowa. Źródła i materiały,* Vol. 4. *Lubelskie, p. I. Pieśni i obrzędy doroczne,* ed. Jerzy Bartmiński, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Muzyczne „Polihymnia", pp. 33–38.

Bartmiński, J. (2012). *Językowe podstawy obrazu świata.* Lublin: UMCS.

Bartmiński, J. (ed), (2011). *Polska pieśń i muzyka ludowa. Źródła i materiały,* Vol. 4. *Lubelskie, p. I. Pieśni i obrzędy doroczne,* Lublin: Wydawnictwo Muzyczne „Polihymnia".

Benveniste, É. (2016). *Dictionary of Indo-European Concepts and Society.* Chicago: Hau Books.

Boryś, W. (2006). *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego.* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.

Ceynowa, F. (1878). *Sbjór pjesnj svjatovih, które lud słovjanskj v królestvje pruskjm spjevacj lubj (...). Seſit trzecj. Frantóvkj, ſętopórkj, Prosjbi na vesele i t. d.,* Świecie: Czarnoxęnjk Juliuſ Hauffe.

Derksen, R. (2008). *Etymological Dictionary of the Slavic Inherited Lexicon.* Leiden-Boston: Brill.

Descolla, Ph. (2013). *Beyond Nature and Culture.* Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.

Dounar-Zapol'ski, M.V. (1909). *Issledovaniya i stat'i. T. 1: Etnografiya i sotsiologiya, obychnoye pravo, statistika, belorusskaya pis'mennost'.* Kiev: A. Sapunov.

ESSJ I- XLIII (1974-2022). *Etimologicheskiy slovar' slavyanskikh yazykov. Praslavyanskiy leksicheskiy fond,* ed. O. Trubachov, O. Zhuravlyev. Moskva: Nauka.

Gołab, Z. (1992). *The Origins of the Slavs: A Linguist's View.* California: Slavica Publishers.

Gołąb, Z. (1975). Linguistic traces of primitive religious dualism in Slavic, [w:] For Wiktor Weintraub: essays in Polish literature, language, and history, Erlich, V. red. Paris: Mouton, s. 151-159.

IEW (1959). Pokorny, *J. Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch.* Bern: Francke.

Ivanov, V. Toporov, V. (1974). *Issledovaniye v oblasti slavyanskikh drevnostey: Leksicheskiye i frazeologicheskiye voprosy rekonstruktsii tekstov.* Mosvka: Nauka.

Jarmakowski, M. (2023). *The semantics and etymology of Proto-Slavic lexemes of sacredness and their continuation in Polish folk rituals,* in: „Przegląd Religioznawczy. The Religious Studies Review", nr 2 (288), pp. 41-54.

Kolberg, O. (1962). *Dzieła wszystkie, t. 16, cz. I: Lubelskie. Wrocław-Warszawa:* PTL.

Kowalski, A.P. (2014). *Antropologia zamierzchłych znaczeń. Toruń:* Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne.

Manhardt, W. (1875-1877). *Wald- und Feldkulte. Berlin:* Borntraeger.

MSKMI (1992). *Mały słownik klasycznej myśli indyjskiej, Hermann, T. red. Warszawa:* Samper.

Pocek, J. (1984). *Poezje.* Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie.

Razauskas-Daukintas, D. (2020). *Blindė. Medis - moteris mitologijoje.* Vilnius: Lietuvių Literatūros ir Tautosakos Institutas.

San'ko, S. (ed.). (2004). *Bielaruskaja mifalohija.* Minsk: Belarus.

Sapir, E. (1970). *Culture, Language and Personality.* California: University of California Press.

SKNK (2008). *Symbolichni kody narodnoyi kul'tury (mifolohiya, fol'klor ta etnolohiya). Bibliohrafichni materialy z bilorus'koyi, rosiys'koyi ta ukrayins'koyi mifolohiyi, fol'kloru ta etnolohiyi,* ed. N. V. Aks'onova, Y. Polyakova, M. I. Filon, O. Khomik. Kharkiv: ХНУ ім. В. Н. Каразіна.

Słupecki, L.P. (1994). *Slavonic Pagan Sanctuaries.* Warszawa: Instytut Archeologii i Etnologii PAN.

SP I-VIII (1974-2001). *Słownik prasłowiański,* ed. F. Sławski. Warszawa: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.

Uspienski, B. (1985). *Kult św. Mikołaja na Rusi.* Lublin: KUL.

Wagner, R. (1981). *The Invention of Culture.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

8. Author.

Mikołaj Jarmakowski: cultural anthropologist and Slavic philologist from the University of Gdańsk. He is preparing a doctoral dissertation on the mythological foundations of the figure of the bride in the ritual folklore of the Slavs and Balts. Scientific interests: theoretical foundations of anthropology of prehistoric societies, Indo-European linguistics, research on the original nature of semantics in archaic symbolical systems, mythology and folklore of the Slavs and Balts; references to the Slavic tradition in Slavic romantic literature.

Slavics from Eastern Europe

<div align="right">Major Surendra Narayan Mathur</div>

हमने अध्ययन किया कि संपूर्ण यूरोप में सनातन संस्कृति का प्रभाव रहा है। कुछ यूरोपीय समुदायों के बारे में हमने अनेक लेखों में उल्लेख भी किया, जिनमें Celts एवं Baltic विशेष हैं। Celtic समुदाय संपूर्ण यूरोप में है लेकिन विशेष कर वे Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, Portugal, North Italy, Galicia, Balkans आदि क्षेत्रों में अधिकांश बसे हुए हैं। अनेक Continents में भी बसे हुए हैं जैसे अमेरिका में इनकी आबादी तक़रीबन 20% मानी गई है। यह समुदाय भगवान परशुराम जी के समय के गयेलोग हैं जिन्हें वे Dagda के नाम से पूजते हैं। वैसा ही दूसरा यूरोप में Baltic समुदाय है जो वर्तमान में Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Belorussia आदि देशों में अधिकांश बसे हुए हैं। इनकी संस्कृति वैदिक है और भाषा भी संस्कृत से मेल खाती है। इंद्र, सूर्य, लक्ष्मी जी, काली माँ आदि प्रमुख देवी देवता हैं।

इस लेख में जिस समुदाय की चर्चा करने जा रहे हैं वे यूरोप में Slavic के नाम से जाने जाते हैं। ये लोग यूरोप में Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukrain, Russia, Croatia आदि देशों में बसे हुए हैं। इनके बारे में तथा इनकी संस्कृति को समझना है तो आपको विष्णु पुराण का ज़रा अध्ययन है तो बहुत ही आनंद आएगा। मैं कुछ विषय रखूँगा, आपको आनंद ज़रूर आएगा। वे जम्बू द्वीप को बूलान द्रीप कहते हैं I

Slavic समुदाय की ब्रह्मांडीय वृक्ष की कल्पना सनातन संस्कृति से मेल खाती है। वे Oak वृक्ष को इंद्र का वृक्ष मानते हैं। जहां शीर्ष पर इंद्र सहित चार देवताओं की कल्पना है। इंद्र को Perun के नाम से जाना जाता है। इस वृक्ष की जड़ों में असुरों का वास है जो सर्प रुप में दर्शाए गए हैं। उनका नाम वल (Vele) एवं वृत्र (Vrat) है और वे इन्हीं नामों से विष्णु पुराण में भी जाने जाते है। वेदों में वृत्र एक ऐसा अझद्रहा है जो नदियों का मार्ग रोककर सूखा पैदा कर देता है और जिसका वध इन्द्र करते हैं। यही दंतकथा Slavic में भी प्रचलित हैं। उनकी और एक कल्पना है कि वृक्ष के पास एक शिवलिंग नीमा सफ़ेद पत्थर है और उसके समीप एक कुआँ है जिसमें सफ़ेद द्रव्य है जहाँ से पवित्र सफ़ेद पत्थर पर पवित्र द्रव्य से अभिषेक कर पूजा अर्चना की जाती है। इस वृक्ष की सुरक्षा हेतु दो देवता भी हैं। पहले एक पक्षी रुप में जिन्हें यूरोप में Griffin के नाम से जाना जाता है और वे सनातन

संस्कृति में सर्वेश्वर स्वरूप शिवजी हैं। दूसरे देवता नीले पक्षी के रुप में है जो आकाश है और उन्हें वे पक्षी रुप में गगन कहते हैं। भारत में भी आकाश को गगन कहते हैं। वृक्ष के दोनों तरफ़ दो घुड़सवारों की कल्पना है जिसमें एक सफ़ेद वस्त्र में सफ़ेद घोड़े पर सवार है और वह इंद्र का स्वरूप है और दूसरा असुर जो काले वस्त्र में काले घोड़े पर सवार है। उन दोनों का निरंतर युद्ध होता रहता है। इसको नीचे चित्र में दर्शाया गया है।

उनका यह मानना है कि सुर एवं असुरों में निरंतर युद्ध होता रहता है और बीच में धरती माता है जिसे कभी सुर और कभी असुर जीत कर ले जाते हैं। यह जीवन चक्र है जिसे विष्णु पुराण में बख़ूबी दर्शाया गया है जिस में स्वर्ग पर कभी इंद्र और कभी असुरों का आधिपत्य होता रहता है और यही जीवन चक्र को दर्शाता है। धरती माता को वे मोक्ष (Mokosh) कहते हैं। हम भी मृतक जनों को मोक्ष (Mokosh) धाम लेकर जाते हैं और धरती माता में विलीन होने की ही कल्पना है। उनकी यह भी कल्पना है कि इस ब्रह्मांडीय वृक्ष की रक्षा करता पक्षी एक पवित्र नदी के रुप में अवतरित होता है। जैसे सनातन संस्कृति की मान्यताओं में गंगा जी का अवतरित होना हैं। इस समुदाय में दो सफ़ेद कबूतरों की भी दंतकथा है जैसे भारत में अमरनाथ धाम से जुड़ी हुई हैं। यह भी मान्यता है कि इन दो कबूतरों में एक के आँख से आँसू के रुप में तीन जलधाराएं बहते हुए तीन पवित्र नदियों का स्वरूप लेकर पृथ्वी पर अवतरित होती हैं। यह समुदाय होली भी मनाते हैं। ये घास के दो पुतले बनाते हैं जिनमें एक पुरुष और दूसरा स्त्री का होता है। उन्हें लेकर गाँववासी संपूर्ण गाँव में उत्साह से घूमते हैं। तत्पश्चात् स्त्री वाले पुतले को आग लगा कर नदी नालों में प्रवाहित कर देते हैं। पुरुष पुतले को सुरक्षित रखते हैंख

नवरात्रों में अष्टमी के दिन हम लोग कुँवारी कन्याओं को पूजा अर्चना कर भोजन कराते हैं। वैसे ही इनके यहाँ पर कुँवारी कन्याएँ एवं बालक एक विशेष पेड़ की टहनी हाथ में लेकर घर घर जाकर भेंट स्वीकार करते हैं।

मैं ने आपके सामने कुछ दंतकथाएं प्रस्तुत करने की कोशिश की है जिससे आपका ध्यान एक ऐसे यूरोपीय समुदाय की तरफ़ आकर्षित हो जिनकी संस्कृति सनातन संस्कृति से जुड़ी हुई है।

Slavic का एक सांस्कृतिक दल भारत दर्शनार्थ आ रहा है। जिनमें कुछ कलाकार भी हैं। आपकी सुविधा अनुसार उनका कार्यक्रम ले सकते हैं। हमने इन्हें बहुत प्रयासों से जोड़ा है और आपसे सहयोग अपेक्षित है। धन्यवाद एवं आभार

मेजर सुरेंद्र नारायण माथुर, एस.एम.(से.नि.)
अखिल भारतीय वनवासी कल्याण आश्रम
surendramatgmail.com 7742635223

Investigating the concept of Poverty Alleviation and economic thought in Hindu Culture and mapping it with current policy frameworks

Dr. Yashodhan Agalgaonkar

Abstract

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal addresses the imperative of "No Poverty." The examination of wealth and poverty is a pervasive subject across diverse cultures. This research concentrates on the ancient Hindu culture, contextualizing it within the realm of economic thought. The philosophies articulated in Sanskrit Shlokas are systematically investigated and classified. The foundational principles extracted from these Shlokas are methodically categorized and then correlated with the policy formulations of contemporary Indian regimes. The research article endeavors to scrutinize and trace prevailing policies in the context of the enduring Hindu culture, its values, and moral foundations. By doing so, it seeks to establish a connection between age-old wisdom and present-day strategies for addressing poverty, providing valuable insights into how ancient cultural perspectives can inform and influence contemporary approaches to socioeconomic challenges.

1. Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals established by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These goals aim to address various social, economic, and environmental challenges facing the world, with the overarching objective of promoting sustainable development. Poverty reduction is a central theme within the broader framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The primary goal related to poverty is captured in SDG 1: "No Poverty." SDG 1 aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. The targets associated with SDG 1 include eradicating extreme poverty, ensuring equal rights to resources, reducing vulnerabilities to economic, social, and environmental shocks, and implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems. Each goal is accompanied by specific targets and indicators that provide a framework for monitoring progress. Achieving these goals requires collaboration and commitment from governments, businesses, civil society, and individuals worldwide. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the interconnectedness of various challenges and the need for integrated and inclusive approaches to address them.

2. Contextualizing the "No Poverty" goal in terms of the Hindu Cultural paradigm

While multilateral forums and governments worldwide are actively formulating policies to achieve the objective of zero poverty, it is essential to delve into ancient cultural wisdom concerning poverty and wealth. Examining ancient economic and social systems, understanding how poverty was addressed in traditional societies, and incorporating relevant practices into modern strategies for poverty reduction are crucial. Additionally, this research has an overarching theme of fostering learning and appreciation for ancient traditions and cultures. This can contribute to the achievement of the SDGs through the appreciation of the uniqueness of various cultures while leveraging indigenous

knowledge and creating a more inclusive and sustainable global society[1][2].

This article specifically concentrates on the ancient Hindu cultural vision and outlook towards poverty alleviation. The intent is to explore and understand how ancient Hindu perspectives, teachings, and practices provide insights into addressing poverty and promoting prosperity. By examining the cultural and philosophical foundations, the article aims to contribute to the contemporary discourse on poverty reduction, offering valuable lessons and perspectives drawn from historical and cultural contexts.

The article investigates the following themes:

[1] How can insights from Hindu culture and Indian traditions contribute to innovative solutions for contemporary challenges related to poverty?

[2] In what ways can the revitalization of ancient traditions enhance the effectiveness of "No Poverty" initiatives in India?

[3] How can learning from ancient cultures promote a sense of identity, community, and interconnectedness, contributing to the goals of reduced poverty?

[4] What role can partnerships between communities, and the Indian government, play in integrating ancient wisdom into contemporary poverty alleviation strategies?

By addressing these questions, this research provides valuable insights into how the revitalization of ancient Hindu traditions can contribute to the achievement of the "No Poverty" goals.

3. Hindu philosophical foundation

A literature search for the Hindu Philosophical Foundation is done by investigating various Sanskrit Shlokas. A Sanskrit "śhloka" broadly refers to "any verse or stanza; a proverb,

saying." However, it particularly denotes a 32-syllable verse derived from the Vedic anuṣṭubh. These shlokas are a treasure trove of ancient Indic / Hindu wisdom. The significance of the shloka extends to being the foundation of Indian epic poetry, representing an unparalleled verse form in classical Sanskrit literature. Widely employed in revered Hindu texts like the Mahabharata, Ramayana, Puranas, and Smritis, and scientific treatises such as the Sushruta Samhita and Charaka Samhita, the shloka serves as the predominant verse form. This section examines some of the forms of shlokas utilized in the various classical Sanskrit works which focus on the matters of wealth and poverty alleviation. The attempt in this work is to classify several of these Sanskrit slokas based on their message and philosophical positions which they propagate [3][4][5].

3.1 Wealth and Charity

The concept of renouncing wealth for altruistic reasons is a recurrent and profound theme embedded within numerous Sanskrit scriptures and shlokas. This philosophical principle reflects a spiritual perspective that advocates detachment from material possessions in favor of selfless service and the greater well-being of others.

धनेन त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः। Some attain immortality by renouncing wealth [7]

In the rich tapestry of Sanskrit literature, one encounters various scriptures such as the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, and Puranas, which expound the virtues of relinquishing material wealth as a means to attain spiritual enlightenment. Shlokas, or verses, within these sacred texts often emphasize the transient and ephemeral nature of material riches, urging individuals to shift their focus towards cultivating a compassionate and altruistic mindset.

आदानां दोषेण भवेद्दारिद्रम। दारिद्रय दोषेण करोति पापं ॥
पापदावस्यां नरकं प्रयान्ति। पुनर दरिद्रो पुनरेव: पापी ॥

Great individuals believe that poverty is a consequence of one's past miserly actions. According to the scriptures, a person should generously donate a portion of their earnings to the less fortunate and cultivate a habit of charitable deeds. Failing to do so may lead to being born in poverty in the next life, compelling one to engage in sinful actions. As a result, the individual might end up in Hell and, after undergoing punishment, be reborn once again into poverty.

The idea of renunciation for altruistic purposes underscores the belief that true wealth lies not in the accumulation of material possessions but in the richness of one's character, kindness, and service to humanity. This concept aligns with the broader spiritual philosophy of dharma (righteous duty) and karma (selfless action), encouraging individuals to act for the well-being of others without attachment to the outcomes.

दारिद्रय:कुतं दानं। शून्य: लिंगस्च पूजनं॥
अक्षमेध: समं विदुहु॥

Providing financial assistance to the underprivileged and engaging in act of worship, such as 'Archana' or 'Pooja,' directed towards the deteriorated Shiva Lingam in an overlooked temple, are regarded as actions of great merit, comparable to the noble endeavor of undertaking the Aswamedha Yagam. This perspective underscores the belief that acts of compassion, philanthropy, and spiritual devotion carry significant weight, symbolizing profound sacrifices and rituals that contribute positively to one's spiritual journey and the welfare of the community.

त्यागो गुणो वित्तवतां वितं त्यागवतां गुण:।
परस्परवियुक्तौ तु वित्तत्यागौ विडम्बना॥ [9]

If the wealthy are inclined to donate money, it is indeed a commendable virtue. Similarly, for those generous individuals who possess sufficient wealth, it is also a virtue, as they choose to contribute rather than hoard for themselves. It is an ironic truth that wealth and generosity often do not coexist.

The philosophy of renouncing wealth for altruism is intricately woven into the fabric of Hindu philosophy, illustrating the importance of balancing material pursuits with spiritual values. By embracing selflessness and relinquishing attachment to material gains, individuals are believed to elevate their consciousness and contribute to the greater good of society. In summary, the recurring theme of renouncing wealth for altruistic reasons in Sanskrit scriptures reflects a profound spiritual philosophy that encourages individuals to transcend the allure of material possessions, emphasizing the pursuit of selfless service and the enrichment of the human spirit. This timeless wisdom continues to inspire seekers on their spiritual journeys, transcending cultural and temporal boundaries.

3.2 On the Importance/Acquisition of Wealth

The concept of acquiring wealth through righteous means and for righteous causes stands as another profound and recurrent theme within Sanskrit literature. This philosophical principle underscores the ethical dimension of wealth accumulation, emphasizing the importance of aligning one's pursuits with virtuous and moral considerations [3][4][5].

विद्या ददाति विनयं विनयाद्याति पात्रताम् ।
पात्रत्वाद्धनमाप्नोति धनाद्धर्म तत: सुखम् ॥ [8]

Acquiring knowledge leads to the development of humility, and from this humility, one cultivates a sense of worthiness. Through the cultivation of worthiness, an individual is empowered to attain wealth.

Subsequently, with wealth in hand, one is poised to fulfil their duties and responsibilities. The fulfilment of these duties, in turn, becomes a pathway to the ultimate goal of attaining happiness and contentment in life. This progression underscores the interconnected nature of knowledge, humility, worthiness, wealth, duty, and happiness in the journey of personal and societal well-being.

The theme of overcoming adversity and defying all odds to achieve wealth accumulation underscores the indomitable spirit of individuals who navigate challenges with determination and resilience. This narrative serves as an inspirational motif, resonating across various cultural and philosophical contexts, and reinforcing the belief that, through hard work and perseverance, individuals can shape their financial destinies despite facing formidable obstacles.

सूतोवा सूतपुत्रो वा योवा कोवा भवाम्यहम् ।
दैवायतं कुले जन्म मदायत्तां तु पौरुषम् ॥ [10]

I might be born as a slave or into poverty. My place of birth and the circumstances of my birth are beyond my control. However, these factors rarely have the power to dictate my future or restrict the potential of my accomplishments.

These scriptures provide guidance on the appropriate ways to generate wealth, stressing the significance of honesty, integrity, and adherence to moral principles in all financial endeavors. The essence of this theme lies in the belief that wealth amassed through righteous means not only brings material prosperity but also contributes to the overall well-being of society. Such wealth, acquired with a sense of ethical responsibility, is seen as a tool for fostering positive social change and supporting noble causes. In this context, the pursuit of wealth is not viewed as inherently detrimental, but rather as an opportunity to manifest one's dharma (righteous duty) and contribute to the welfare of the community.

धनेन धनमाप्नोति यो धर्मे चार्थसाधने।

One who uses wealth for righteous purposes attains both wealth and righteousness.

In summary, the theme of acquiring wealth through righteous means and for righteous causes in Sanskrit literature reflects a profound ethical framework that guides individuals towards a harmonious integration of material success and moral values. This perspective serves as a timeless reminder that prosperity, when pursued with integrity and a sense of responsibility, has the potential to become a force for positive transformation in both individual lives and the broader societal context.

नहि बुद्धिगुणैनैव सुह्रदामर्थदर्शनम्।
कार्यसिद्धिः पथः सूक्ष्मः स्नेहाङ्प्युपलभ्यते।।

Wealth cannot be attained solely through intelligence and virtue, as the path to acquiring wealth is consistently narrow and challenging. However, it can be achieved through benevolence and unwavering determination.

3.3 On Contentment and Wealth

The virtue of contentment during the acquisition of wealth holds enduring value in various philosophical and spiritual traditions. It signifies a perspective that transcends mere accumulation, advocating for a balanced approach where the ultimate goal is not the amassing of material riches but the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment, liberation, or contentment, often expressed through concepts like moksha or nirvana. This profound theme underscores the importance of finding fulfillment and satisfaction irrespective of one's material circumstances. It suggests

that genuine prosperity lies not solely in the accumulation of wealth but in cultivating a contented and serene state of mind. In many ancient texts, including the Bhagavad Gita and Buddhist teachings, the notion of contentment is woven into the fabric of ethical and spiritual guidance. [2][3]

सन्तुष्टस्सर्वकालेषु सर्वदान्यपरीक्षणः।
एकदेशेऽपि तृप्तोऽस्ति नात्र कार्यं न कर्हिचित्।

The virtue of contentment holds enduring value. Even with modest possessions, an individual who embodies contentment finds satisfaction in their circumstances. This state of contentment signifies a profound sense of fulfilment, where one recognizes that there is no need for further pursuits or accomplishments. In embracing contentment, individuals discover a richness in the simplicity of their present situation, realizing that genuine happiness can be found in appreciating and being grateful for what they have, irrespective of external measures of success or abundance.

Furthermore, the caution against intemperance extends beyond material wealth to include the pursuit of power, status, and sensory pleasures. The scriptures advocate for a balanced and virtuous life, cautioning against the potential erosion of moral values when one becomes consumed by excessive desires. In essence, the scriptures serve as a moral guide, urging individuals to cultivate contentment, ethical conduct, and a sense of responsibility in their pursuit of prosperity. The cautionary tone underscores the timeless relevance of these teachings, transcending cultural and temporal boundaries. They continue to offer valuable insights into the pitfalls of unchecked greed, encouraging individuals to tread the path of moderation and righteousness for the greater welfare of both themselves and society [3][4][5].

द्राविमौ कण्टकौ तीक्ष्णौ शरीरपरिशोषिणौ ।
यश्चाधनः कामयते यश्च कुप्यत्यनीश्वरः ।

There are two sharp thorns, greed, and anger, that suck the life out of the body. The one who desires wealth, and the one who is always discontented, are never satisfied. This verse emphasizes the detrimental impact of greed and anger, comparing them to sharp thorns that drain the vitality of the body. It further states that those who constantly desire wealth or harbor unending discontentment are unlikely to find satisfaction.

These shlokas reflect the traditional wisdom in Hindu scriptures regarding the nature of wealth, its purpose, and the importance of using it wisely. The objective, in this context, extends beyond the acquisition of wealth for its own sake. Instead, it encourages individuals to engage in mindful and ethical endeavors, acknowledging that material possessions alone do not guarantee lasting happiness. Contentment is portrayed as a state of inner richness that remains undisturbed by external fluctuations in wealth or circumstances. Furthermore, the concept aligns with the idea that an excessive attachment to wealth can lead to spiritual entanglements and hinder the journey towards higher states of consciousness. The pursuit of moksha or nirvana represents a desire for liberation from the cycles of craving and dissatisfaction, emphasizing the importance of detachment and a harmonious relationship with material aspects of life. In summary, the virtue of contentment amid the acquisition of wealth stands as a timeless and universal principle. It suggests that genuine prosperity involves not only material abundance but also a profound inner satisfaction. Whether framed in the context of moksha, nirvana, or contentment, this perspective serves as a guiding light, encouraging individuals to navigate the pursuit of wealth with

a mindfulness that transcends the transient nature of material possessions[3][4][5].

अस्थिरं जीवितं लोके यौवनं धनमस्थिरं।

अस्थिरं पुत्रदारापि धर्मः कीर्तिर्द्वयं स्थिरं।।

In this world, the lifespan, youth, and wealth of individuals, as well as their relationships with spouses and children, are all subject to instability. However, adherence to austerity and the consequent acquisition of name and fame remain steadfast and stable.

3.4 Government's Role

Individuals are not the sole recipients of advice regarding temperance in wealth; the scriptures also offer guidance to the governmental machinery on financial management. A crucial theme in these teachings revolves around the moderation in taxation, taking into account the per capita consumption ability of the citizens. The scriptures recognize the role of the government in maintaining economic balance and social harmony. They caution against excessive taxation, emphasizing the importance of a judicious approach that considers the financial capacities of individuals within society. This advice reflects a nuanced understanding of economic justice and responsible governance. The theme of temperance in taxation aligns with the broader ethical framework of the scriptures, which emphasize the well-being of all citizens. It acknowledges that an equitable distribution of financial burdens contributes to a just and stable society. By considering per capita consumption ability, the scriptures advocate for a taxation system that does not unduly burden individuals and allows for the fulfillment of their basic needs.

To fund government administration and public goods, the king had to generate revenue through taxes. However, there was a clear awareness that excessive taxation could serve as a disincentive for labour. In the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata, Hymn 88-89 reveals an inherent understanding of optimal taxation. While lying on the bed of arrows, Bhishma counsels Yudhishthira that a king should tax his people akin to how a bee extracts nectar from flowers. The bee collects nectar without adversely affecting the blossoming of the flower; instead, it aids in pollination and the fertilization of new crops for the next year. The essence of the analogy is that a king should refrain from imposing excessive taxes that could diminish the motivation to work. Furthermore, the revenue collected should be utilized to provide future public goods for the well-being of the citizens [3][4][5].

मधु दहं दुहेद राष्ट्रं भरमरान न विपातयेत ।

वत्सापेक्षी दुहेच चैव सतनांश च न विकुट्टयेत ।। ||

A ruler should extract taxes from the kingdom like a bee collects honey from flowers, without causing harm to the subjects, just as a cow yields milk without harming its calf and a calf does not suck its mother's udder too much to avoid any discomfort.

This metaphorical expression suggests a ruler should govern and collect resources from the kingdom with care and consideration, avoiding excessive extraction that could adversely affect the well-being of the subjects. The imagery of bees, cows, and calves emphasizes the idea of governance that is balanced, nurturing, and considerate of the welfare of the populace.

Depiction of the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi

This guidance to the governmental machinery underscores the interconnectedness of individual well-being and societal harmony. It reflects an awareness that economic policies, including taxation, play a pivotal role in shaping the overall prosperity and contentment of the community. The scriptures encourage leaders to adopt policies that foster economic stability without exacerbating disparities or causing undue hardship to the citizens.

अनुत्थाने ध्रुवो नाशः प्राप्तस्यानागतस्य च ।
प्राप्यते फलमुत्थानाल्लभते चार्थसम्पदम् ॥

If the king is not industrious and conscious about development works, then the destruction of both the wealth and capital that he already has and whatever is likely to be acquired in the future (anagata) is inevitable. Only by continuous effort, hard work and continuous engagement in enterprise, pleasant results and desired wealth and prosperity are achieved.

''दानं भोगो नाशस्तिस्रो गतयः भवन्ति वित्तस्य।यो न ददाति न भुङ्क्ते तस्य तृतीया गतिर्भवति।।''

There are the consequences of wealth - donation, enjoyment, and destruction. For one who neither gives nor enjoys, there is a third destiny.

This verse conveys a philosophical insight into the nature of wealth and its consequences. It suggests that wealth has three possible outcomes: donation, enjoyment, and destruction. The verse implies that wealth, when acquired, can be used for benevolent purposes through acts of giving or donation, for personal enjoyment, or it can lead to its own destruction through misuse or neglect. The concluding part of the verse introduces a moral dimension, stating that for someone who neither engages in giving nor enjoys the wealth, there is a third destiny. This third destiny is often interpreted as a warning against hoarding wealth without utilizing it for the benefit of others or oneself. Overall, the verse encourages

a thoughtful and responsible approach towards wealth, emphasizing the significance of using it wisely through acts of charity and responsible enjoyment. It underscores the idea that wealth, when managed conscientiously, can lead to positive outcomes, but neglect or misuse can result in detrimental consequences[3][4][5].

In essence, the scriptures offer a comprehensive ethical framework that extends beyond individual conduct to encompass the responsibilities of governance. The theme of temperance in taxation serves as a reminder to policymakers about the importance of adopting a balanced and compassionate approach to financial management, ensuring that the burdens placed on individuals are just and equitable. This holistic perspective continues to resonate as a timeless guide for responsible governance and economic stewardship.

4.0 Contemporary policy adoption by India

This research seeks to investigate whether these philosophical frameworks serve as guiding principles for the current Indian administration. The primary objective, however, is not to conduct a comprehensive review of specific policies; rather, it aims to explore the philosophical underpinnings that may influence decision-making within the administrative context. The inquiry delves into the question of whether the ancient philosophical tenets found in Indian scriptures, particularly those related to concepts like wealth, temperance, and governance, play a role in shaping the principles and approaches of the contemporary Indian administration. The focus is on discerning the resonance or divergence between these timeless philosophical foundations and the prevailing ethos guiding administrative actions. It is crucial to note that the research does not intend to undertake an exhaustive analysis of specific scenes or policies enacted by the administration. Instead,

it concentrates on investigating the broader philosophical underpinnings, aiming to uncover the subtle ways in which ancient wisdom may be influencing or shaping the overarching principles and ideologies guiding administrative decisions.

4.1 Mission Antyodaya

Mission Antyodaya is a government initiative in India aimed at promoting rural development and poverty alleviation. The term "Antyodaya" is derived from Sanskrit, where "Antya" means the last and "Udaya" means rise or upliftment. Therefore, the mission's primary objective is to uplift the weakest sections of society and ensure inclusive development, with a specific focus on rural areas. Launched by the Ministry of Rural Development, Mission Antyodaya has a multi-dimensional approach that integrates various government programs to achieve sustainable and comprehensive rural development. The mission focuses on addressing key indicators related to poverty, livelihoods, infrastructure, health, education, and overall well-being in rural communities.

Key features and components of Mission Antyodaya include :

1. Convergence of Schemes: Mission Antyodaya encourages the convergence of various existing government schemes and programs related to rural development. By coordinating efforts and resources, it aims to maximize the impact of these initiatives on the ground.

2. Identification of Deprived Villages: The mission involves the identification of the most deprived and backward villages in terms of socio-economic indicators. These villages become the primary focus for targeted interventions to uplift the standard of living and well-being of their residents.

3. Participatory Planning: Mission

Antyodaya emphasizes the importance of community participation and involvement in the planning and implementation of development projects. The aim is to ensure that the initiatives align with the actual needs and priorities of the local population.

4. Livelihood Promotion: The mission focuses on generating sustainable livelihoods for rural communities. This involves the promotion of various income-generating activities, skill development programs, and the creation of employment opportunities.

5. Basic Infrastructure Development: Access to basic amenities is crucial for rural development. Mission Antyodaya aims to improve infrastructure facilities such as roads, electricity, sanitation, and drinking water in the identified villages.

6. Health and Education Initiatives: The mission addresses health and education disparities in rural areas by implementing programs that focus on improving healthcare services, promoting sanitation, and enhancing educational facilities.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation: There is a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism in place to assess the progress and impact of the mission. Regular assessments help in refining strategies and ensuring that the intended objectives are met.By adopting a comprehensive and integrated approach, Mission Antyodaya strives to uplift the most vulnerable and marginalized sections of society, ultimately contributing to the overall development and well-being of rural communities in India. The annual survey in Gram Panchayats (Village councils) across the country is an integral aspect of the Mission Antyodaya framework. It is conducted concurrently with the People's Plan Campaign (PPC) of the Ministry of Panchayat Raj, and its purpose is to provide support to the process of participatory planning for the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP). As of my last knowledge update in January 2022, here is a list of some prominent Union Government schemes in India targeted towards supporting the socio-economic development of poor individuals. Keep in mind that new schemes may have been introduced, and existing ones may have undergone changes since then. It's advisable to check the official government sources for the latest information. Here are some key schemes:

1. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY): Financial inclusion scheme providing access to various financial services like savings accounts, insurance, and pensions for the unbanked population.

2. Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY): Life insurance scheme offering a renewable one-year life cover of Rs. 2 lakhs at a nominal premium.

3. Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY): Accident insurance scheme providing coverage against accidental death and disability at an affordable premium.

4. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY): A scheme facilitating loans for micro and small enterprises to support entrepreneurship and job creation.

5. Atal Pension Yojana (APY): A pension scheme aimed at providing a stable income source for the unorganized sector during their old age.

6. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY): Housing for All scheme providing affordable housing to urban and rural poor.

7. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY): Skill

development program for rural youth to enhance employability.

8. National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM): Aims to reduce poverty by promoting diversified and gainful self-employment and wage employment opportunities for rural poor families.

9. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA): Universalization of elementary education for all children aged 6-14 years.

10. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA): Provides 100 days of guaranteed wage employment per year to every rural household.

11. National Social Assistance Program (NSAP): A welfare program providing financial assistance to the elderly, widows, and disabled individuals.

12. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY): Provides free LPG connections to Below Poverty Line households to promote clean cooking fuel.

13. National Health Mission (NHM): Aims to provide accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare services to rural and urban populations.

15. Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY):** Health insurance scheme providing coverage for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.

These are just a few examples, and there are many other state-specific and sector-specific schemes as well. The Indian government has a plethora of welfare schemes.

5. Conclusion

1. A comprehensive overview of the Hindu cultural framework indicates that the concept of wealth creation is intricately tied to ethical considerations. In Hindu philosophy, the pursuit of prosperity is not seen in isolation but is interwoven with the principles of righteousness and moral conduct.

2. Hindu culture counsels prudence in dealing with the desire for wealth, cautioning against the pitfalls of greed and emphasizing the importance of finding contentment. The philosophy encourages individuals to strike a balance between material pursuits and inner satisfaction, fostering a holistic approach to well-being.

3. The theme of altruism and charity emerges as a recurring motif in Sanskrit shlokas, the sacred verses of ancient Indian texts. These verses underscore the significance of selfless service and the act of giving, portraying them as virtuous paths toward spiritual growth and communal harmony.

4. Governmental mechanisms are strongly advised to prioritize public welfare and facilitate the upliftment of the downtrodden. This guidance underscores the responsibility of governance in ensuring equitable development and creating policies that address the needs of the marginalized sections of society.

5. A random sample survey of Indian governmental schemes indicates that the Indian government has implemented several programs rooted in Hindu cultural foundations. These schemes often incorporate principles of social welfare, community service, and ethical governance, reflecting the enduring influence of cultural values on the country's policy initiatives.

6.0 Future Work

This research paper also hints at several possible future research directions:

1. The Arthashastra (Economics) is an ancient Indian Sanskrit treatise on statecraft, political science, and economic policy. Further detailed investigation into the economic policies suggested for the government in this historical text should be undertaken. This could involve a more granular analysis of specific recommendations and their applicability in contemporary governance.

2. Another research direction involves a deeper investigation into contemporary policy programs, their implementation, and their alignment with ancient Hindu cultural and philosophical principles. This would require an examination of how current policies resonate with the ethical and cultural foundations outlined in Hindu scriptures, potentially shedding light on the continuity or evolution of these principles in governance.

3. While this research focuses on the Hindu cultural foundation, there is a need for the study of other ancient world cultures and their policies regarding "No Poverty." A comparative analysis could offer insights into diverse approaches to addressing poverty in different cultural contexts, contributing to a broader understanding of historical perspectives on economic and social welfare.

4. A further research direction involves conducting a comparative analytics of various ancient world cultures and contextualizing their objectives related to "No Poverty." By examining how different societies conceptualized and addressed poverty in ancient times, this research could provide a comprehensive understanding of the cultural, philosophical, and practical dimensions of efforts to alleviate poverty across civilizations.

In summary, the potential future research directions outlined in this paper suggest a holistic exploration into the economic policies of ancient Indian texts, the alignment of contemporary policies with cultural and philosophical principles, and a comparative study of diverse ancient world cultures in relation to poverty eradication objectives. These avenues promise to contribute valuable insights to the fields of economic history, policy analysis, and cultural studies.

References

[1] Nadkarni, M., 2012. 'Hindu economic philosophy' in *"The Oxford handbook of Hindu economics and business."*

[2] Chakraborty, S.K. and Chakraborty, D., 2007. 'The economic function in the Hindu worldview: its perennial social relevance' in *"International Journal of Social Economics", 34(10), pp.714-734.*

[3] Deodhar, S.Y., 2019. *"IIMA-Economic Sutra: Ancient Indian Antecedents to Economic Thought".* Penguin Random House India Private Limited.

[4] Deodhar, S. and Balasubramanian, S., 2020. *"The Pre-kautilyan Period: a sustainable model through ancient economic ideas and practices"* (No. 199). EHES Working Paper.

[5] *"Mahabharata"* Book by Vyasa

[6] Jo, N.K., 2011. 'Between the cultural foundations of welfare and welfare attitudes: The possibility of an in-between level conception of culture for the cultural analysis of welfare' in *"Journal of European Social Policy"*, 21(1), pp.5-19.

[7] Chinmayananda, S., 2018. *"KAIVALYA UPANISHAD".* Central Chinmaya Mission Trust.[8] Hitopadesha Verse 6.

[9] Samskrutam. (2024) Digital Library Shloka

/ Stanzas - Subhasittam, Sanskrit Webpage, Available at: http://sanskrit.samskrutam. com/ (Accessed: 02 January 2024)

[10] Prabhu, M. (2024) 'Yoga & the Vedic Perspective on Poverty & Prosperity', Vedic Management, Available at: https://www.vedic-management.com/ (Accessed: 02 January 2024)

[11] Sahastrabuddhe, V. (2016) *"Antyodaya Justice and Welfare to the Deprived: Value Addition Made by Modi Government"*, Research Monograph.

[12] Wanden-Berghe, J.G., 2022. 'Mahatma Gandhi's Sarvodaya (Welfare for All) as a Way to End Violence and Achieve Happy, Sustainable Societies' in *"Linking Sustainability and Happiness: Theoretical and Applied Perspectives"*, pp.65-81.

[13] Nakray, K., 2022. 'India's tryst with Modi-fare 2014–19: towards a universalistic welfare regime' in *"International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy"*, 42(1/2), pp.106-123.

[14] Sarangi, P., 2023. 'Welfare discourses in India' in *"India Review"*, 22(1), pp.78-105.

Dear Editor
IJWATCH

I would like to contribute as Editorial board member of IJWATCH

I will contribute and encourage others to contribute on our ancient traditions and cultural heritage

Sincerely Yours

Name --

Tradition / Culture name ---

Country ---

Address ---

E mail --

What's app number --

Any comments --

Signature --

Please send this to Yashodhan.a@gmail.com