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Ed.

# The Sacred Times

(A Monograph)

*Devoted to promoting Research and Awareness of  
Religion and Culture among students*





# **The Sacred Times**

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# **Occupational and Socio-Cultural Transition of the Koli Community**

## **Abuzaid Peringalam Cheriya & Divya Vaity**

### **22nd March, 2022**

#### **Abstract**

The Kolis (Fishermen community) have been living in Maharashtra for over 5 centuries and are considered aboriginal residents of Mumbai. They are one of the popular ethnic groups found throughout western India. They are primarily associated with fishing and are mostly found along the coastal area of Maharashtra, along the North Konkan coast from Vasai, near the Mumbai city, Ratnagiri district in south Maharashtra. Son Koli, Macchimar Koli, Christian Koli, Vaity Koli, Mangela Koli, Dhor Koli and Mahadev Koli are fishermen by profession. Their customs and habits, as well as their social and religious lives, still set them apart from the rest of the population. They live in Koliwadass located in Worli, Colaba, Versova, Mahim, etc. Their livelihood used to completely depend upon fishing but, with education and better facilities the new generation parted its way from the old traditions. This research aims to highlight how the Koli community has evolved throughout the years in their practice of occupation, culture, tradition, rituals, etc. due to the development of Metropolitan cities such as Mumbai. In the past decades, traditional fishing has been taken over by commercial fishing and the problems Kolis are facing due to this which affected their livelihood. In addition, other groups have been absorbed into this profession who had never been part of it before. This research will look into the socio-cultural and occupational transition of the community.

#### **Introduction**

The Koli community is an ethnic community of fishermen found throughout Indian states especially Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, etc. This community is mostly settled along the western coast of India and is considered as the aboriginal residents of Bombay (Mumbai), even before the seven islands of Bombay namely Kolaba, Old Women's Island, Bombay, Mazgaon, Sion, Worli and Mahim were merged together. In his book "Origin of Mumbai", Dr. Greson da Cunha depicts old Bombay (Mumbai) as "the lonely islet of the Mumbai Koli fisherman". Majority of the Kolis are either farmers or fishermen. Traditionally Kolis of Maharashtra are grouped into Dongri Kolis (residents of hills) and fishermen Kolis (residents near the coastal area). The Dongri Kolis have sub-groups of Mahadev Koli, Malhar Koli, Dhor Koli, etc. There are approximately 27 communities of fisherman Kolis in Maharashtra, which are sub-divided into Son Kolis, Vaity Kolis and Mangela Kolis. Due to their occupation of fishing in both salt and sweet water bodies, the community lives together in 'Koliwadass' (colony of sea facing houses). This community has been facing many issues recently, whereas the members of the community are now looking at other livelihood options. The youth prefers taking up corporate jobs as they feel there is more scope for earning rather than joining the traditional fishing business. Due to the competition in the business, overfishing has been observed in the past few decades and fishing corporations have dominated this field as a result, Kolis do not get enough catch to sustain their living as they can't match the output of this advanced fishing with their traditional methods. Apart from this another major problem for this community in Mumbai is the Coastal Road Development Project. It poses a major threat to their land and there have been several instances of resistance against this. Thus, the community is facing the threat of being shifted from their inherited land. This research paper highlights the history, education, socio-economic and cultural aspects along with the transition of the community over the years.

#### **Origin & History**

Traditionally, it has been a challenge in identifying the people as Koli or Bhil. The word Koli was used as a description of lawless people. During British Rule, the meaning of the word changed and was later used as a noun to describe the Kolis as nothing but inferior to the Kunbis (term referring to traditionally non-elite farmers in western India). It is believed that Kolis were the first habitants of the Bombay city (Mumbai) and that they resided along the coast of the seven islands which were later combined to form the Bombay city. The name “Mumbai” traces its origin to the Koli goddess and patron deity of Mumbai “Mumbadevi”. It was Kolis who helped to develop the coastlines, harbors and islands like Kolbhat (Colaba), Palva Bunder (Apollo Bunder), Dongri Mazgaon, Naigaum and Worli, not only that they also named the above mentioned locations. During British patronage in the 18th century, the Koli community was relocated from Dongri to Cuffe Parade, this in turn marginalized and eliminated the community. It is here they started their ancient skill of deep-sea water fishing. Even today, the majority of their trade is done, as it has been since the latter part of the 19th century, at Sassoon dock, at sunrise. If this community would have not approached the court during the backbay reclamation of the 1960s, it would have resulted in further elimination and marginalization of this community. Their land is now protected by law.

## **Cultural Background**

Over the past 5 centuries, the Kolis have maintained their own set of cultural settings and festivals that gives them this unique identity in the culture of Mumbai. Everything from their attire to folk melodies will make you realize the relationship between the Kolis and the Sea within no time. Their traditional folk songs and dances include sea and fishing elements to which this community is accustomed. Their cultural background is divided into :

### **House Decorations**

Traditional Koli house was quite simple, neat and clean in contrast to today’s lavishly decorated houses. Punekar (1959: 246) has noted that the tokens of their occupation, such as a picture of a fisherwoman, flower vase shaped as a fish, are proudly displayed in many Koli houses. There is an increasing tendency of carving attractive fish sculptures on the exterior parts of the houses. The unusual use of fish symbols could be seen at different places. It is constructed on the front poles of the verandah, flanking the doors or on the rooftop, even the nameplates depict waves and fish. According to faith, these decorations dominate specific fish species which are considered auspicious since ages, e.g. dolphins, pomfret, ghol, seer fish, etc.

### **Food & Diet**

Koli identity and daily life are inextricably linked to fish. Fish is the staple food of Kolis and they include all kinds of fish in their diet. During monsoons, when fishing is at a pause, various types of fish which are salted, dried and stored throughout the year are consumed. These dried fishes used to be bartered for rice and spices with the farmers but this system is rapidly fading out. During the festive season, dishes made out of fish are offered to deities. Cooked fish, particularly crabs (Kolis classify crabs among fishes), are served to the Goddess Gauri. Some specific fishes like Ghol are considered very auspicious and are required for a wedding feast to be complete.

### **Clothing & Outfit**

Kolis have a striking appearance. A Koli woman wears two or three articles of clothing: a lugada (9-10 yard sari), a choli (blouse), and a padkhi (shoulder scarf). Surkas are a popular choice for men (loin cloth). It’s a square piece of cloth with a string tied around the waist thrown diagonally in front. To cover the divide, the bottom end of the cloth is tightly dragged through the legs and knotted at the rear, the outfit is

completed with a waistcoat and a close-fitting cap. [Men's fashion has evolved dramatically during the last few years. The Surkha is currently primarily worn by older Koli men, rather than young males. Kolis are very fond of ornaments. Jewels are a status symbol for Koli women and are referred to as "Stridhan". Women favorably wear ornaments that are bold in appearance with a lot of gold. Armlets, bangles, and earrings are worn by their men as well. Their traditional jewelry include Gathee, Kanthi (Pedant with a symbol of Goddess Laxmi), Kap, Vala and Dorla. Since they do laborious chores, they tend not to wear golden bangles rather they prefer necklaces and earrings. Gathee is a particular Koli earring designed in such a way that the mouth and tail of the two fishes come together and create a circle. Traditionally, these Gathee were gifted to the bride by her parents during the wedding. Kanthi is a popular and prestigious neck ornament of Koli women. It varies from three layers to five-six and eight layers with two asymmetrical pendants. These pendants depict figures of deities or crabs, prawns and shells. Traditional ornaments are disappearing with modernisation. Rather their forms are being changed. Imitation jewelry is trending nowadays. A notable thing is that even though the form is changed, the fish symbols remain the same. The new generation does not wear traditional ornaments but they tend to get delicate earrings with a starfish, pomfret or shell design. Some people make fish-shaped rings and even men use chains with fish pendants.

## **Festivals**

Kolis celebrate all Hindu festivals though Narali Pournima, Gauri (at the time of Ganesh Chaturthi and Shimga (Holi) are more important for them.

### **Narali Poornima**

Narali Poornima is celebrated during the month of July or August (full moon day of Hindu month Shravan). Every year, Koli's primary festival, 'Narali Poornima,' is held in magnificent style. It is thought that following this day, the wind and sea waves will favour deep-sea fishing. Like the farmers, the entire Koli community looks forward to the start of a new harvest season on this day. On the occasion of Narali Poornima the sea god Varuna is worshiped with offerings of sweet, rice, flowers and coconuts. The sea god is prayed to be calm and give them a good catch in the upcoming season along with protecting them from natural disasters.

### **Gaurya / Gauri**

The Gaurya/Gauri festival takes place along with the Ganapati festival. Even though the majority of the rituals are similar to those of the other Hindu communities, all the offerings are made of fish. Among all the offerings, crab dishes are considered as most worthy along with the fried modaks. Another festival that holds importance in the Koli community is 'Holi'. Celebration for the same starts right after Maha Shiv Ratri.

### **Shimga-Holi**

Shimga-Holi is also addressed as Shimaga. Kolis and Holi have a long history together. It is considered to be one of the most prominent festivals of Kolis. Vitwaa Kolis have a unique tradition of celebrating Shimga (Holi) all night long on Holi Poornima that is celebrated in March (Last Falgun month of Hindu Calendar). Women carry the Mangal Kalash made up of clay and consisting of coconut in it, which is later offered to Haylubai / Haylaya (sacred holi tree) as a sign of respect. The tree is decorated with sweets, colours and garlands made up of fishes and crabs which is believed to be auspicious on this occasion.

## **Folk Songs**

Kolis are famous for their lively songs and dance that is the life of all their festivals and marriages. Their dance moves depict a beautiful picture of men rowing a boat, spreading nets and the women walking with a fish basket on their heads. Koli dance is a very enjoyable and vibrant dance form that is really the true expression of love to the sea and their passion for life. Though they cover a variety of topics such as their deities, festivals, life in Mumbai, pranks between boys and girls; most of their songs are woven around sea, fish and boats. The detailed descriptions of sea and storms, fish markets and the beauty of Koli women can be observed through them.

## **Religion & Worship**

The Koli community in Mumbai practices Hinduism and adheres to its customs and rituals. Mahadev, Hanuman, and Khandoba are the gods they revere. The supreme god of the Son Kolis (Sub-division of fishermen Koli) is 'Khandoba.' They claim they earned the term "Son Koli" as a result of this. The family's oldest members, both male and female, are likewise revered. A small number of Christian Kolis venerate pictures of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. Every year, Kolis visit the shrine of Ekvira (the presiding deity).

## **Language & Literature**

Thane's Kolis, for the most part, speak Marathi. In addition, a handful of them speak dialects of Marathi such as Koli and Agri. However, due to their exposure to the commercial and service sectors, they are able to communicate in Hindi with reasonable fluency, and neo-educated Kolis can communicate in English. However, given that none of the respondents could locate any literary work in Koli, it appears that recording of Koli literary work is minimal.

## **Birth & Death Rituals**

Kolis adhere to strict observance of birth and death rituals. Previously, the child was delivered by a local midwife. After a 37-day period of ceremonial pollution (Sutak), the mother and newborn are subjected to a series of purification ceremonies. With the advent of modernity, delivery is now performed in hospitals, and Sutak is now observed for 12 days, with symbolic significance in the form of Puja restriction. On the 12th day, the name-giving ceremony used to take place (known as Barsa). It's a community get-together with prayers to the Almighty for the baby's well-being. A significant quantity of sweets are prepared and distributed on this occasion. In the event of death, the Koli community prays for the departed soul's serenity. The body is bathed after death. To detoxify the body, a sacred Tulsi (Basil) leaf and a small piece of gold is placed in the mouth. The final rites of Karj are done on the eleventh or thirteenth day following death. On this day, many offerings are presented to the Brahman (priest) in the hope that the departed soul will rest in peace via him. A magnificent feast for friends and relatives follows the burial procedures. The eldest son feeds a crow with special treats prepared for the occasion as crows are thought to be the only creature capable of entering the city of the dead.

## **Occupational Transition**

The state of Maharashtra is home to several fishing villages, with the Kolis having lived in Mumbai even before the seven islands of Bombay were merged. Fishing has been the livelihood for Kolis, earning them the nickname "Kings of the Sea". The majority of fishing in the city was done by the Kolis. They have a deep reverence for the sea, and as a result, they have been able to survive for so long. The Kolis used to believe that tidal waves were affected by the moon's location. The location of the moon during the day determines the high and low tides. The fish catch is lower when the wave direction is from west to east. After the Diwali festival (October / November), the catch decreases and increases after March till May. All the above fishing beliefs of the community were based on their forefather's lore which had a scientific base. The Fishing process is carried out throughout the year with one interval in the month of June to August i.e until 'Narali Poornima'. This has three reasons, one being the monsoon season where it is risky to be at the sea, other being the month of 'Shravan' according to the Hindu calendar and the third being the breeding period when the fish lay millions of eggs.

The transition in the way of fishing is seen with the methods used by the fishermen. Earlier 'Dol' (a hand-woven net) was used for fishing. It takes four months for a person to weave one net. Hand woven nets are stronger than machine made ones. Generally, these hand-woven nets are 420 feet in length. These nets are made of nylon filaments and are more expensive than the regular nets, ranging around Rs 25,000 to



Rs 30,000. Each boat carries around three nets to increase the chances of catching fish, due to decrease in fish production. These nets are placed 18 feet deep in water and are supported by wooden poles and two boats that adjust the distance of the net. The net has to be pulled an hour before the tidal waves begin. The new method for fishing is by the use of trawlers. Big fishing companies and foreign companies catch large amounts of fish with this improved technology. The net is pulled off every 3 to 4 hours, since it reaches the deep sea without much hassle. Trawlers catch both mature and developing fishes. Moreover they carry fishing in the monsoon season as well, violating all the prohibitory orders set by the government. This results in destroying all the eggs and will ultimately result in no fish in the sea in the near future.

Traditionally men catch fish and the women sell the yields in markets. Fishes have a huge demand in the city and comparatively deficit supply usually, which is why they have a high price too. To be precise, the Ghol fish is sold for around a lakh in the market. But over the years the catch is less which is resulting in poor economic condition of the Kolis. Sometimes the fisherman is not directly involved in the selling process and gets way less than the actual market rate.

#### Socio-Cultural Transition

The city has been growing and expanding constantly by catering the needs of residential, administrative, cultural, commercial, educational and recreational activities. In its course of development, one of its earliest settlers, the Kolis and their localities i.e., Koliwadass witnessed a big transformation. When it comes to cultural transition, it has to be the way of fishing by the Kolis. For them fishing is not just an activity, it's more like their life.

For the Koliwadass in Thane district, population growth and the development of Thane-Belapur Chemical Zone have squeezed the creeks with effluents and fish breeding has decreased. Hence traditional fisher folk found it economically not viable to continue fishing. In the Worli Koliwada, fishermen are facing problems after the construction of the Bandra-Worli sea link. Previously, it was easier to catch fish near the coast itself and the catch was in high quantities. Now it is very tough for the fishermen to even catch small fishes as the bridge is the biggest barrier for the fishes to travel to the coast. In addition to this, 'Coastal Road' a larger project has now started. It is already causing problems for the fisher folks, which may result in a complete halt at fishing activities near the Mumbai coastline and deep water fishing being the only viable option. The families that are completely dependent on fishing activities are already facing poverty. The younger generation has already started moving away from the traditional occupation and opted to work at MNC's and corporations which will provide them with an improved standard of living. As a result, this traditionally rich community will lose its glory and distinctive status it holds till this date.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, the Koli community is one of the most unique communities that describes the rich culture of India and needs to be protected before it disappears in the chaos of modern cities. As today's world finds westernisation synonymous with development, more and more members of this community are now trading their traditional occupation for stable jobs with fixed income. Moreover, the increasing demand for seafood has resulted in many multinational level companies indulging in the fishing business with their high technology machines and motorboats, effectively putting the Koli community's traditional fishing nets and boats out of competition. If this wasn't enough, construction of coastal roads and the sealink are making it further difficult for this community to survive. Additionally, high levels of water pollution has significantly affected the marine life population and if this situation persists, we could be approaching a day when all marine life, along with a whole community whose livelihood depends on it, might perish.

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# **Role of Ayurveda in Mental Health during Pandemic**

**Eshani Chemburkar.**

**22nd February 2022**

Keywords- Ayurveda, mental health, pandemic, stress, anxiety, remedies.

## **Abstract**

In Ayurveda, the perfect balance of mind, body and soul is considered as complete health. Ayurveda is known as “oldest medical system known to man and the oldest and most comprehensive spiritual teachings in the world”. (1) Ayurveda helps a person understand the relation between his body and mind..

Ayurvedic theory of mental health is based on a combination of The three gunas, tridosha (Psychobiological expression), and panchabhuta(five elements), The dynamic balance of these above elements creates a good mental health. Daiva vyaprashraya (chanting/meditation), Yuktivyapashrya (the use of medicines), Satvavajaya

cikitsa (Psychotherapy) , Aachara Rasayana(moral values and discipline), Dinacharya(beginning with daily habits) and Yoga therapy is described in Ayurveda for resolving these ailments. (2) Anurag When a proper focus is given to all of these elements through Ayurveda, the overall well-being of a person is said to be healthy.

The aim of the paper is to research the role of Ayurveda in mental health during the pandemic. Since the pandemic was unexpected and unplanned, many people underwent a lot of changes during this time emotionally and mentally. Due to this reason, various scientists and doctors suggested people to adapt to ayurvedic methods to cope up with the situation.

## **Introduction**

Ayurveda is one of the oldest forms of the natural healing system. It is often called the “Mother of All Healing’ . The literal meaning of Ayurveda is ‘the knowledge of life’ where in Ayu means life and veda means science or knowledge.

In Ayurveda, The one whose „doshas” are balanced, whose metabolism is balanced, whose tissues and eliminations are normal, and whose senses and mind are centred in the Self, is considered healthy and remains full of bliss. In its holistic approach, Ayurveda gives prime importance to positive mental health. The proper balance of mind-body is very important in Ayurveda. It gives prime importance to the mental health of a person. Physical imbalances can disturb mental state while mental illness leads to disruption of body functions. Ayurveda allows the individual to understand their body, mind and soul at its deepest level and experience the wisdom of this knowledge to appreciate the consciousness that is present in the entire universe.

During the Pandemic, many people lost their jobs, close ones, had to adapt to a completely different environment and one of the main aspects of socialising had to be abandoned. Due to an absolute change in their lifestyle, various doctors and institutes suggested people to try ayurvedic methods such as meditating, sattvic diet, natural healing and various different things. One of the main components in Ayurveda is positive affirmation. All over the world, people were asked to follow the positive affirmation theory.

Spirituality gained its popularity during the pandemic. Since everything took place digitally, people had

more time to themselves. Many people from all over the world tried acquiring more knowledge in the spiritual aspect by Turning their senses and consciences inwards. The spread of knowledge about Ayurveda and mental health was possible through the translated literature.

### **Concept of Body- Mind Constitution**

Tridosha - According to Ayurveda, Vata, Pitta and Kapha are the three main psychobiological expressions of Nature, individually and cosmically.

The vata dosha is considered to be subtle, dry, cold, minute changes and therefore the people whose vata dosha is higher than the other two doshas are associated with conditions such as attention deficit, bipolar disease, delusions, irrelevant talk, social anxiety, auditory hallucinations fears and phobia also. Vata governs all movement and nervous system functions.

The pitta dosha is considered to be hot, sharp and penetrating due to which the people with higher level of pitta dosha are considered responsible for comparison, anger, rage, violence, jealousy, frustration, and visual hallucinations. Pitta is more associated with digestive and hormonal functions hence regulates metabolism and brings about transformation in the body.

On the other hand, kapha dosha is more slow, cool, heavy, inert, smooth the people who fall under this category, are associated with sadness, melancholia, stubbornness, dark depression, hoarding, catatonia, overeating and kinesthetic hallucinations. Kapha mainly provides stability and is involved with building up of tissues.

Trigunas- According to Ayurveda, the three fundamental features of nature are known as trigunas. They are concerned with the mental faculties. The three gunas are Satva, Rajas and Tamas.

The Sattva has quality of intelligence, virtue and goodness and creates harmony, balance and stability. It is light and luminous in nature.

The Rajas have quality of change, activity and turbulence and introduces the disequilibrium that upsets an existing balance. Rajas are stimulating and provide pleasure, owing to its unbalanced nature it quickly results in pain and suffering.

Similarly the Tamas guna responsible for dullness, darkness, and inertia and heavy or obstructing in its action. It has depressed mood, lack of faith in God, lack of Good conducts, intellectual lacking, ignorance, not attending to duties and sleepiness.

The temperament of each individual is very different and mental personality is based on these universal attributes, along with the body humours, Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. Thus all these doshas have psychosomatic roles to play.

The Connect of Pandemic and Mental Health through Diet.

The reason behind mentioning these ayurvedic concepts is that a person's personality is dependent on his body type. To understand how a person can gain maximum benefits from Ayurveda, he has to know his type. When the tridosha and trigunas are balanced well through a proper diet, a person is said to be fit.

More than 'you are what you eat', the yoga institutes and spirituality believe in 'you are what you ate'. During the pandemic, many people got the opportunity to discipline themselves well. They had plenty of time to make a proper routine for their well-being. Since restaurants were shut down, people started cooking different cuisines at home. Some wanted to follow a strict diet so decided to stick to the Indian

diet and adopt a healthier lifestyle.

Ayurveda has a wide range of dos and don'ts when it comes to the food habits of the people. The food items that we consider to be healthy, are actually unhealthy according to Ayurveda. The ones who consume healthier diets and believe in quality over quantity are said to be wiser, healthier, more intellectual and mentally better than others.

Processed food undergoes a lot of stages. They are chemically injected and to enhance the flavours of the dish, various preservatives and harmful components are added. This ultimately affects the hormones in our body and leads to various psychiatric distress and disorders. There was a rise in the number of cases related to anxiety attacks, insomnia, digestive issues but researchers said that the ones who adapted proper food habits along with proper exercise were least affected.

Ayurveda has been one of the most ancient healing systems in the world. Ancestors always stressed on using turmeric, tulsi leaves, honey, and ground spices for a reason.

**Turmeric-** it contains bioactive compounds with medicinal properties, a substance with powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Curcumin boosts levels of the brain hormone BDNF, which increases the growth of new neurons and may help fight various degenerative processes in your brain.

**Tulsi leaves-** Tulsi is rich in Vitamin C and zinc. It thus acts as a natural immunity booster and keeps infections at bay. It has immense anti-bacterial, anti-viral and anti-fungal properties which protect us from a variety of infections. Tulsi leaves extract increases the T helper cells and natural killer cells activity, boosting the immune system.

In Ayurveda, consumption of non-vegetarian food is also said to be harmful for the well-being of a person. Since, you're able to consume non-vegetarian food by killing a species, it goes against the yamas of yoga. Mainly the yama of ahimsa. The first rule of yoga and spirituality is non killing. Thus Ayurveda believes in not consuming non- vegetarian food.

Thus, to find an escape from materialistic living, people started believing in 'eating to live' rather than 'living to eat'. This huge change in their fundamental needs brought about one of the biggest changes in their lives.

## **Mental Illness**

During the pandemic, Covid-19 presented an unexpected stressor to everyone. Since everyone knew the problem, but for a very long time, no one knew the solution. The entire healthcare system all around the world was eagerly searching for a solution but simultaneously the number of cases were rising and so were the death rates. This led to anxiety attacks amongst the people. They started panicking, there was restlessness, irritability, lack of assurance, constant fear for the future. Taken together, these factors lead to elevated infection rates and worsened the disorders in the people. For factors like suicide prevention, giving support to the depressed people, many psychologists and counsellors offered their support. They suggested meditation and various natural healing strategies which again fall under the ayurvedic methods.

One is said to be wise by properly holding his Mind under control. When the Mind is controlled, it leads the Body in a proper orderly manner. Or else an uncontrolled Mind may provoke temporary, lasting, and destructive activities. Hence Ayurveda preaches sound Mental Hygiene by adoring Truth and avoiding untruth in short.

In Ayurveda it is mentioned that an individual should control his senses and negative thoughts in mind like greed, anger, competition and attachment, when there is an imbalance in Tridos and trigunas of mind

it has a causative factor. Excess of sorrow, anger, unnecessary thinking, lust, anger, greed, jealousy, ego, and fear are some of the negative emotions which can contribute to mental imbalance.

Many of the bodily disorders can be cured through a higher level of consciousness and a healthy mental state. The mental ill health is brought about essentially as a result of unwholesome interaction between the individual and his environment

### **Remedies of Mental Illness**

Ayurveda has always done wonders in healing. Since the pandemic was a worldwide thing, to make more people aware of the natural healing process, many doctors and scientists used simple languages and explained the methods to the wider audience in a more acceptable manner. Since ayurvedic literature was written ages ago, the transcription was originally in Sanskrit language.

In Ayurveda the therapeutics for Mental Illness is divided into three, Daivavyapashraya, Yuktivyapashraya, and Sattvavajaya Chikitsa and it's a general principles of management for Mental Illness.

In Daivaya pashraya, Chanting is believed to be of a lot of importance. The healing through chanting of any hymn, spiritual mantra, religious mantra helps in making a person more focused and calms down the anxiety. Thus popularly known as mindfulness or meditation falls under this category.

In Yuktivyapashraya, there is an involvement of herbs and medicines which are chemical free or do not undergo any processed stages. Ayurveda has a wide range of pharmacological & non pharmacological options to treat illness. They reduce Rajasic and Tamasic gunas AND enhance Sattvic gunas. An increase in sattvic gunas takes an individual closer towards achieving life's goal of Samadhi or the Self-realisation.

Satwaavajaya:- (Psychotherapy) It aims to control of mind i.e. one should keep himself establish in his oneself after knowing real nature of soul and attaining height of spiritual wisdom. Its techniques are: Gyan - Spiritual Knowledge, Vignana - Educating the Patient, Dhairya - Moral Boosting, Smruti - Reviving the Knowledge, Samadhi - Abstaining from Over Indulgence in the Materialistic world.

Other management techniques are as follow-

Yoga therapy- yoga is a slow continuous flow of asanas which keeps a person physically fit. When yoga is practised in an orderly form, by taking the breathing pattern into consideration, the body-mind coordination powers increase. This leads to an overall self-development of the person.

Dinacharya – it means beginning the daily habits with awareness, rising with the sun, cleaning the body and beginning our personal practice of worship helps recognize our place in the family, community and cosmos. Choosing the right foods for our appetite and metabolic needs is a fundamental alignment to show respect for our body and life. Thus during lockdown, experts focused on self-hygiene more.

Aachara Rasayana –One who speaks truth, free from anger, abstains from alcohol and over indulgence. He maintains Hygiene, takes regular sleep and a wholesome Diet. Control over one's Sense organs etc for Physical, Mental and Spiritual Well Being.

### **Observations**

It can be observed that Ayurveda has been practised since ages. Various experts have always stated the importance of Ayurveda but during the pandemic, Ayurveda had been of the utmost importance to cope up with stress and adapt to a completely different environment, many people took this opportunity and decided to develop themselves. Many people have benefitted from this kind of lifestyle. Doctors and scientists themselves have stated that our body has the power of healing on its own. When we adapt to a healthy lifestyle, medications are the last resort.

It is also said that proper diet and various ayurvedic methods have helped any kind of genetic problems get delayed. It might not be completely avoided but can definitely get delayed.

Many ayurvedic companies and institutes spread a lot of awareness regarding the consumption of ayurvedic lifestyle and healthy well-being. They promoted factors like yoga, a proper sleeping schedule, meditation techniques, proper diet and many such aspects which could be controlled and changed by an individual.

Various yoga institutes and foundations like- Isha Foundation, The Yoga Institute, Art of Living started posting a lot of content online wherein they covered simple but essential aspects of life. From the timings of having your meals to detoxifying your body naturally and what not helped people to connect to Ayurveda better. These institutes also started online workshops and courses that would help them attain a natural living.

Apart from that all over the world there were various online meditation programmes and sessions being conducted for free this helped the people relieve stress and anxiety during the tough times.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion it can be seen that though the world has advanced a lot and has become extremely tech savvy, some answers lie in our traditional methods only. Promoting a healthy living and boosting their immunity was the need of the hour and adapting to ayurvedic methods helped them do it. Scientists and doctors kept innovating various kinds of medicines and vaccines to overcome the deadly disease until then Ayurveda played a very important role in helping coping with various mental health problems like depression, anxiety, stress.

This helped people in cleansing their mind, getting their thoughts clear.

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# **A comparative study of religious pilgrimages across India.**

**Atharva S. Mulye**

**4th September 2021**

## **Abstract**

Pilgrimages, often said to be a journey undertaken by many in order to pay their respects to the one they consider to be holy. Collectively speaking pilgrimages are simply milestones in one's spiritual path towards attaining their personal form of enlightenment, considered to provide it's undertakers with an embracing semblance of achievement, moral insight and a complex blend of loyalty and satisfaction. Quite frankly, pilgrimages are a symbolic representation of a revered deity's hardship and struggle in addition to their literal journey towards greatness which resulted in their rightful ascension. To the general populace and to the untrained eye many of these "to-be-discussed" pilgrimages may come off as a pseudo-pretentious cum religious 'trip'. But the beauty in these spiritual journeys across different religions prevalent in this nation is not in the destination but the journey itself.

## **Introduction**

Pilgrimages and retreats, both ancient practices, are being made new again as people try to merge the "getaway" with the effort to "go within." Pilgrimages, usually done on foot, have been key to many religions for centuries. The hajj to Mecca in Saudi Arabia each year during Ramadan is the biggest mass movement of people on the planet and is one of the five pillars of Islam. In Jerusalem, Christians walk in the footsteps of the Messiah alongside Jews and Muslims visiting one of the great holy cities of their faiths. The Amarnath Yatra in northern India traces the path to the mythic seat of the god Shiva and goddess Parvati. The annual event, taking place during July and August, is so popular that pilgrims must register in advance with the Indian government, which limits participation to 3,500 pilgrims daily. Tibetan Buddhists ascend into the mountains of Lhasa to visit the Jokhang cathedral, where they pray with the resident community of monks. Thousands still visit Our Lady of Lourdes in southern France to be cured of whatever ails them. (Pilgrimages, retreats abound: [Final Edition] McKenna, Saojini. Leader Post; Regina, Sask. [Regina, Sask]. 16 Apr 2004: F2.)

Pilgrimage travel to religious sites regardless of world or regional economic conditions (Singh,1998; Ward,2012). Many say that various pilgrims across cultures and religions tend to wander continuously with no fixed destination, quite often such pilgrims look for a specific place that has been sanctified with an association to a higher power i.e a form of god. It's considered to be rather significant to travel to a place of higher worship. And regardless of all the excessive religious connotations which many fanatics bring forth, the tradition of pilgrimage motivated by religious belief is still very much alive in the twenty-first century. Spiritual or material rewards tend to be the goal of individuals who partake in a pilgrimage but for most it serves as a completion of religious duty providing them a form of religious self validation. Pilgrimages are often tied to stories from various mythologies, as these stories are often passed down from generation to generation which are considered to promote morals and tradition. These morals are often related to topics such as sacrifice, reflection and deep symbolism within their given community/ Religion. Regardless of the religious spirit carried out by an individual on this spiritual journey, the concept of pilgrimage is so vast that given its presence in various cultural and historical contexts, there isn't a single meaning which can verify or define the act of a pilgrimage. When watched over a broad lens most of these pilgrimages fall under the same category regardless of the religion itself. In layman's terms it's quite impossible to find an epicentre to the origin or a place of birth for this ritual which as a people we have adopted over the years and across the nations. Even in India due to its vast population and diverse set of religious groups pilgrimage hasn't been restricted to one specific group nor has it originated from a



specific religio-cultural group. In addition to the previous statement we can understand that often religious pilgrimages are connected to one and other cross religions, for example Muslims walk seven times around the Ka'bah, or central cube-shaped shrine, at Mecca. Buddhists circumambulate dome-shaped reliquaries called stupas. Among Hindus in India, the ideal pilgrimage involves a journey around the dhammas, four most sacred sites in India. With the provision of building a sense of community amongst its followers the various sites associated to these spiritual journeys are a gateway towards building an environment which brings together people from all walks of life. Conceptually, however, these long processions and circumambulations seem to merge into this beautiful culmination of religion and journey ultimately boils down into providing satisfaction and enforcing faith in their own selves.

### **Differences And Impact On Modern Culture**

Notwithstanding the collective aspect, associated with organisation of pilgrimages, various studies of pilgrimages in Hindu, Buddhist or Christian cultures have revealed the individualistic aspect of pilgrimages. Hindu pilgrimage, more specifically, Kashi pilgrimage, is essentially a personal quest for salvation both in space and in time. All rituals are aimed at earning the merits which are not collectively shared. The merit of a pilgrimage is earned individually; and moksha, the ultimate aim of pilgrimage is salvation of the individual soul. "Pilgrimages are sacred journeys extraordinary" (Saraswati, 1985 : 103). True, pilgrimage as practised in India and elsewhere is guided by the highly diversified motives of the pilgrims.

The Hindu pilgrimage tradition recognises not merely the sacredness of specific spots but the holiness of vast regions or rather, the entire territory of India. The recognition of India as a sacred landscape woven together, north and south, east and west by the routes of pilgrims has created a powerful sense of India as Bharat Mata-Mother India (Eck 1981 : 336).

According to (Eck 1981 : 323-25) the Hindu tradition of tirtha has three principal sources.

- i)- the Vedic tradition of rituals and sacrifices
- ii) the Upanishadic wisdom and knowledge tradition; and
- iii) the "locative strand of piety of indigenous India.

Jains are "the pilgrims par excellence, ever on the move" (Madan, 1991: 18). Indeed, Jains hold the sramana or wandering ascetic to be the essential exemplar of the true path of renunciation. One important way to follow the ideal of the exemplars is found in pilgrimage. According to Diana L. Eck the Jain notion of tirth/tirtha has a close connection with the words of passage, tirtha (ford or crossing) and tareti (crosses) in the vedic and Upanishadic literature.

The annual pilgrimage of Muslims to Mecca, in West-Central Arabia, is known by the term hajj. The term hajj~ itself, like its Hebrew cognate hag, seems to reflect an ancient semitic notion of "going around" or "standing" in the presence of a deity, or sacred mountain or shrine, or the journey to it

Instead of the old-fashioned notion that pilgrimage is a simple matter of conforming to unchanging rituals and unquestionable rules, today's Muslims commonly see every person's Hajj as a unique experience that even the same pilgrim could not relive at a later time. In this view, the Hajj is a deeply personal encounter with mysteries and holy symbols, open to infinite interpretations that can rival or contradict conventional meanings endorsed by clerics, governments, and social scientists. In addition, Muslims increasingly see the pilgrimage in the contemporary contexts of earthly space and time rather than as a dream land or a suspended state divorced from the realities of this world.

(Bianchi, Robert R. Islamic Globalisation: Pilgrimage, Capitalism, Democracy, And Diplomacy)

Nevertheless when looked at from a rather profitable view one might even classify pilgrimages as a form of religious tourism. In fact As Timothy (2011) notes, religious motivations underlie some of the world's

largest tourist gatherings, such as the Muslim Hajj (2 million) and the Hindu Khumba Mela (20– 75 million), let alone the millions of people who visit religious sites every year (Bywater, 1994; Russell, 1999; Jackowski, 2000; McKelvie, 2005; Timothy, 2011). In other areas of the religious tourism niche market, missionary travel, faith-based volunteer tourism, retreats, and religious conventions and special events, are now making a stronger economic impact than in the past (Shackley, 2004; Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005; DeTemple, 2006; Wright, 2007, 2008; Vijayanand, 2012; Olsen, 2013).

Pilgrimages are usually undertaken to places of significance for the particular faith. Sometimes, it is to the birthplace of the faith. Other times, it is to where the faith once flourished. It could also be the home or the burial site of a leading figure in the particular faith community. The common denominator in all these possibilities is that the pilgrimage is a trip to the foundations of one's faith. Knowing where you come from, appreciating the seeds from which you branched out, is vital to more profoundly understanding who you are, why you are and where you are heading.

If the pilgrimage is done en masse, it has the further impact of forging a renewed sense of community. The pilgrimage, in a word, is a most potent faith reinforcer. Pilgrimage can have value where it serves as a spiritual vacation and allows an individual to take time away from everyday life and engage with the history of the faith and devote greater time to spirituality. There is a belief among some that bathing at particular pilgrimage spots results in the washing away of sins. An individual can indulge in vice and excesses but a yearly trip to a "sacred site" can result in all being forgiven. (The Ottawa Citizen; Ottawa, Ont. [Ottawa, Ont]. 01 Mar 2014: E.7.)

## **Pilgrimages Across Religions**

### **Islam**

The Muslim performs hajj as part of his religious beliefs, and not as an escape for leisure and entertainment. The fifth and last Pillar of Islam is hajj, and that is the reason people travel to the holy city of Makkah. Moreover, every physically and financially able Muslim should – as stated in the holy Qur'an – perform hajj once in his or her lifetime and every physically and financially able muslim should make the hajj. MacCannell (1976) states that pilgrimage used for secular activities provides the additional motivation of escape for leisure and entertainment. This secular viewpoint is not appropriate for hajj, which is an exclusively religious experience.

In his view: Traditional religious institutions are everywhere accommodating the movements of tourists. In 'The Holy Land', the tour has followed in the path of the religious pilgrimage and is replacing it. Throughout the world, churches, cathedrals, mosques, and temples are being converted from religious to touristic functions. (MacCannell, 1976, p. 43)

Hajj is an event that takes Muslims in the footsteps of Muhammad to the barren plain of Mina and the slopes of Mount Arafat; it is the biggest yearly mass movement of people on the planet. Hajj is not a tourist phenomenon for pilgrims – it is the journey of lifetime for the individual pilgrim to visit Makkah and perform hajj. In this respect, performing hajj is also an education, almost challenging convention. (Morpeh, N.D.. Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Management : An International Perspective, edited by Nigel D. Morpeh, CABI, 2007)

### **Hinduism**

Considering the amount of pilgrimages in Hinduism, there will be a specific focus on certain pilgrimages.

Vrindavan is a centre for two types of pilgrimages: (i) the long, circuitous journey and pilgrimage to specific sacred sites in Braj (Braj yatra); and (ii) the shorter, quicker trip to Braj. Shackley (2001) sees the

former journey along the pilgrimage route as a 'longer-term visit' and visit to a site or pilgrimage centre to participate in an event, conference or meeting as a 'short-term visit'.

Braj yatra (literally, journey through Braj) involves circumambulation of the entire Braj region following a route with a perimeter of about 84 kos (300 km), covering an area of about 2500 km<sup>2</sup> around Vrindavan. Braj yatra has received wide attention in Vaishnava literature and from academics alike (see Growse, 1883; Bajpai, 1954; Entwistle, 1987; Haberman, 1994). The contemporary version of the Braj yatra and the changes from its traditional form have been discussed at length by Shinde (2006). In a typical visit, the pilgrim undertakes a linear journey from home to a particular sacred centre and returns. Commonly known as pilgrimage, such visits have generally been the mainstay of any sacred centre and have helped the pilgrimage industry flourish (Vidyarthi, 1961; Morinis, 1984; Van Der Veer, 1988; Dubey, 1995). Generally, these are short-term and include two types of visit: (i) event-based visits where visitors come for a specific event, such as festival or fair; and (ii) frequent visits, where visitors repeatedly visit the sacred centre whenever they get an opportunity to do so and for different reasons, such as seeing the God and the religious gurus and seeking their blessings. Festivals are a rich resource for tourism (Nolan and Nolan, 1989) and, as such, are promoted as attractions for cultural tourism by the tourism ministry in India. Events such as festivals and fairs are by their nature, a mix of tourism and religious activities (Getz, 1991), and therefore do not demand separate attention. Rather, the frequent, linear, short-term visits constitute a major proportion of visits to the sacred centres of Mathura, Vrindavan and Govardhan in Braj, and are more or less evenly spread out throughout the calendar year.

## **Christianity**

Christians are India's third-largest religious group behind Hindus and Muslims. Yet at 24 million, they make up only 2.3 percent of the population and have only a finger hold in most parts of the country. It is here in India's far south where the country's Christian history runs the deepest - where holy days explode in a riot of color and devotees trace their tradition back to the earliest days after Christ. "Christianity is deeply ingrained into the people of the south," says Rev. Dominic Emmanuel of the Roman Catholic Church's Delhi Archdiocese.

In most parts of the country, he notes, the Nativity of St. Mary in September is a modest affair, whereas in the south, it is a "huge celebration." On Holy Thursday, southern Christians visit seven different churches, gather together as a family, and eat bitter bread to commemorate Jesus' Passover meal. On Good Friday, the sermons can take hours. "That's not so in the north," says Father Emmanuel. The distinctions arise from the passage of time. The south has percolated in Christian traditions since the establishment of the faith.

The Acts of Thomas, a third-century gnostic text, suggests that the disciple Thomas took his ministry to India after the ascension. According to the text, Thomas preached throughout southern India before being martyred for converting the wives and a relative of an Indian ruler, Misdæus. In Chennai, the cathedral of St. Thomas claims to be the resting place of the apostle. While the truth of the Acts of Thomas is debated, it is likely that Syrian merchants brought Christianity to the ports of southern India no later than the fourth century. The result has been a familiarity with Christianity here, in contrast to frequent misunderstandings in other parts of India.

## **Distinction between Pilgrimage and Religious Tourism: Implications**

The NCAER report (2003) identifies eight of the top ten ranking domestic tourist destinations as pilgrimage sites. The numbers of visitors indicate the magnitude: 23 million in Tirupati, 18.2 million in Puri, 17 million in Vaishno Devi, 11 million in Haridwar, 8.3 million in Mathura-Vrindavan and so on. Religious tourism also features prominently in the popular travel guidebook Lonely Planet India, where 47 of the

total 126 pictures have a religious theme (Kraft, 2007), and this is necessarily for the "others" who are curious to visit these places.

Spiritual destination management involves responsibility for satisfying the needs of pilgrims and religious tourists. Motivations for pilgrimage will differ from those of religious tourism, and it is these differences that can have a significant impact on the ability of destination managers to satisfy their 'customers'. We can see that, whilst it is the experience at their destination that has significance for the religious tourist, perceptions will be different for the pilgrim, since the destination constitutes only one part of the experience of pilgrimage. Experiences along the pilgrim route are an integral element, affecting the whole travel experience.

Visitors to sacred sites can be classified as:

- Pilgrims visiting sacred sites that have meaning for them.
- Religious tourists.
- Secular tourists.
- Pilgrims visiting sacred sites that have no religious meaning for them (tacked on to the end of pilgrimage).
- Religious festival and religious event participants.

Motives for visiting the sacred site have been found to affect behaviour, in that pilgrims are more likely than any other visitor to subscribe to overt and covert norms at sites that hold religious significance for them. Conflict over clothing conventions, in particular, are a frequent cause of conflict: it is not uncommon to see people wearing shorts and vests at religious sites where prominently placed signs ask visitors to cover their heads, shoulders and legs. Taking photographs of religious rites is forbidden in certain areas of the world, yet several incidents of violence have been reported where local custom has been flouted.

Ncaer Report 2015-2016

In addition to the aforementioned, according to a more recent report by the NCAER, it has put the Sikhs at the top of the heap when it comes to making the most number of trips by a person in a year, followed by the Jains.

The overall average number of overnight trips made by a person was estimated at 2.09. The averages differed among the religions. The average overnight trips by the Sikhs was (2.35), followed by Jains (2.19), Hindus (2.13), Christians (1.94), Muslims (1.82)," says the study conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) for the ministry.

As far as spending is concerned, Jains have the highest per trip expenditure (₹2,444 per trip) among all religions, followed by Christians (₹1,740), Hindus (₹965), Sikhs (₹906) and Muslims (₹879).

It is clearly imperative that, given the rise in pilgrimage and religious tourism, the management of religious destinations and pilgrimage routes is informed by an understanding of what motivates these categories of traveller and to what extent, if at all, their expectations can be satisfied. Even though the prime motivation is religious, motivations and expectations change over time: it is claimed, for example, that improved transport facilities and the greater wealth of prospective pilgrims have led to increasing commodification of sacred sites, thus raising expectations of quality. (Morpeth, N.D.. *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Management : An International Perspective*, edited by Nigel D. Morpeth, CABI, 2007)

Conclusion

In conclusion this research paper based on secondary information has looked into the differences across religions but keeping the primary motif in mind, and that was to understand how different pilgrimages across all these religions come to be. Primarily this paper focused on the three largest religions in India

while keeping in mind the other religions as well. In addition to it's focus this paper also distinguishes between the different forms of pilgrimage each religions interprets as . In addition to which this research paper also makes short note of the effect of pilgrimages on Tourism and travel affected by said religion.

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# **Covid 19 and Religious Gatherings**

## **Jasmine Prasad & Ashton Sequeira**

### **3rd March 2022**

#### **Hypothesis**

Faith groups/Religious gatherings as Super Spreader of Covid 19 pandemic.

#### **Introduction**

The world right now is being ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic. A principal preventive strategy in place is the practice of social distancing. gatherings of faithful at the local and transnational levels are strongly recommended by the world religious orders to obey social distancing, however, a gathering of large numbers in close proximity could be fertile ground for the spread of novel pathogens. The refusal to suspend such gatherings could lead to potential widespread dispersal of infections.

#### **Methodology**

This study was conducted on the recent Tablighi jamaat gathering, the Kumbh Mela and worldwide other religious gatherings held during the Covid 19 pandemic.

The information was gathered on the basis of articles, journals and internet research papers.

The research included the events of the Tablighi jamaat, the Kumbh Mela, and other gatherings and their effects and contribution to the increase in coronavirus cases.

The data collection was performed through convenient choices on the basis of research journals and news articles etc.

This qualitative research uses an exploratory design to discover these incidences.

The analysis and interpretation of the data are intended to verify the intensification of religious practices in relation to the threatening conditions produced by Covid-19.

#### **Literature Review**

ANIRUDDHA JENA, RAM AWTAR YADAV AND RAVITEJA RAMBARKI-

This article talks about the Covid19 situation in India during the year 2020 and 2021. The article states some actual data related to Covid-19 cases. India stands first in Asia and second worldwide, accounting for over 29 million Covid-19 cases, whereas the US was recorded with over 32 million cases. It also mentions that India is in third place in terms of number of fatalities with 0.37 million deaths. The article mentions that most of India's cases were recorded during the second wave. The highest number of Covid-19 cases recorded was 414,188 on the 4th of May, 2021. Similarly, on 10th June, the highest number of fatalities was recorded (6148 deaths). This was the highest number of deaths recorded by any country on a single day.

Amid this pandemic there were two major religions gatherings that were held, described in the article. One of them was the religious gathering of Tablighi Jamaat. In a highly populated city, Nizamuddin, New Delhi, the Tablighi Jamaat gathering was held by the leaders of the Jamaat. Many Muslims were called from different countries to the mosque in Nizamuddin amid this raging pandemic, becoming the hotspot for Covid-19 and thereby responsible for increasing the number of cases in India.

TANYA ALBERT HENRY- Five reasons why religious services pose high risk of Covid-19 spread- The article talks about finding five risk factors that determine whether an activity is one where an infectious person is more or less likely to spread Covid-19. It explained that religious services include every single one of these risk factors. According to the article these are the Five main reasons- Enclosed spaces- Events in indoor settings are majorly linked to huge clusters of Covid-19 infections. It is said that improved ventilation may reduce transmission of the virus but there is no scientific consensus on how to go about controlling spread of the virus in an indoor environment. Large groups- The article says that in larger groups, there is a higher chance of containing infected persons and more chances of people getting infected. Close proximity to others- The smallest SARS-CoV-2 droplets can remain airborne and travel farther than six feet. There is no exact “safe distance” that the scientific community has agreed upon, but it is commonly accepted that standing near an infectious person is riskier than standing farther away. Long duration of exposure and staying in one place- The amount of virus a person is exposed to can influence the chance of infection and the severity of the infection. Consequently, staying in only one place for a long period of time creates a high risk of infection too. Loud talking and singing- Loud speech and singing can expel significantly larger amounts of oral fluid droplets than normal talking. These droplets can remain in the air from anywhere between 8 to 14 minutes before evaporating.

Kumbh mela- IAN CHRISTOPHER N. ROCHA, MARY GRACE A. PELAYO, AND SUDHAN RACKIMUTHU (2021 Oct). The goal of this research was to see how the Kumbh Mela, a religious gathering, turned into a massive superspreading event. Possibility of being the cause of India’s exponential increase of COVID-19 cases. Complacency in following COVID-19 prevention methods has led to an underestimation of viral transmission. The instance of the Kumbh Mela demonstrates how societal and cultural underpinnings influence people’s actions. This article discusses how society may assist to prevent the virus from spreading further by following COVID-19 prevention guidelines.

#### Various Religious Gatherings Across the Globe During Covid 19 Pandemic

Public gatherings evidently increase transmission and dealing with such religious gatherings in times of pandemics could be challenging. Most global religions need their followers to gather in local, national, and worldwide congregations as part of their faith. The circumstances surrounding the COVID-19’s spread among religious assemblies appear to support this.

Certain Muslim groups and organisations also encouraged communal meetings among Muslims. In Mewat, India, the Tablighi Jamaat was founded in 1927. With millions of adherents throughout the world, it was the most influential religious reform movement of the twentieth century. Their followers travelled and shared the word about what they considered to be the final word on Islam, as well as urging their followers to adhere to a pure form of the faith.

Despite guidelines/orders made by different authorities in response to the outbreak of COVID-19, a large crowd gathered inside a confined premise for an extended length of time, without any semblance of social distancing or the supply of masks and sanitizers, according to Delhi Police.

Hundreds of people, both foreigners and locals, were found to be infected with the coronavirus after attending this religious event in Delhi’s Nizamuddin neighbourhood in March or had come in contact with the followers of the sect.

On March 29, Delhi Police removed 2,361 members of the Tablighi Jamaat, according to the Home Ministry. “The Delhi Police have detained 233 Jamaat members. However, a probe of Jamaat chairman Maulana Mohd. Saad is underway” Mr. Reddy explained.

Thirtha yatra, or pilgrimage to sacred locations, is an integral part of the Hindu faith. Hindu sacred locations in South Asia are visited for a variety of reasons, including material benefit from the Gods and spiritual consolation. Every day, tens of thousands of individuals might be visiting these locations. Every 10 years, the Kumbh Mela, a religious gathering of tens of millions of people, takes place on the banks of the Ganges River.

The Kumbh Mela, a rite in the north Indian city of Haridwar was held in 2021, a year earlier than usual, due to a quirk in the astrological calendar.

There were no masks, no social distancing, and the Covid-19 protocol was abandoned. This was the sight at the Haridwar Kumbh Mela, as approximately 31 lakh people flocked to Haridwar's Har Ki Pauri for a sacred dip in the Ganga.

Some pilgrims took the virus home with them as they returned to their homes across the country.

According to local officials, religious leaders, and media accounts, the gathering was one source of infection as cases escalated.

In an interview with an Indian news source, Ashish Jha, dean of Brown University's School of Public Health, predicted that the Kumbh Mela "may end up being the largest super spreader in the history of this pandemic." "It brought people from all over India together."

Experts have cautioned that convening such a massive gathering in the middle of a raging pandemic might be disastrous and seriously delay India's fight against the deadly viral disease that has claimed millions of lives throughout the world.

After returning from Italy and Germany, a 70-year-old Sikh priest in Punjab, India's northwest, refused to be self-quarantined. He then went on to attend a number of religious gatherings, including a Sikh festival in another city that draws 300,000 people every day. He died with COVID-19 infection, and many of his close friends eventually tested positive.

Following the coronavirus pandemic connected to this single Sikh priest, authorities in the Indian state of Punjab quarantined at least 40,000 people. A public relations official in the Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district informed NBC News that Baldev Singh, 70, had transferred in an Italian airport before coming home from a visit to Germany.

Singh ignored suggestions to self-isolate after returning to his native village of Pathwala, where he was a priest at the gurdwara, or temple, and attended various religious events. Then he also went to the Hola Mohalla event in the neighbouring city of Anandpur Sahib with two friends. Every day, over 300,000 people attend the festival, which runs from March 10 to March 12. They set up camp and participate in mock battles, music, and poetry, as well as use enormous community kitchens. Singh died on March 18 shortly after attending the festival, and testing confirmed that he died of coronavirus. Several of his relatives also tested positive for the virus.

Authorities identified 650 persons in touch with Singh, according to Vinay Bublani, the district magistrate of Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar, where Singh's village was located. And they all were tested. To prevent the further spread of virus, authorities quarantined roughly 20 communities in the region, totalling about 40,000 people.

However many of the world's faithful religious practices contributed in spreading new coronavirus. These religious gatherings have proven to be hot beds for outbreaks.

Half of South Korea's cases were traced back to a meeting of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, a secretive doomsday group which many Korean Christians consider to be a cult.

In Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, several hundred Muslims who attended a mosque service contracted the virus.

Also in Washington, DC, a rector was tested positive for the virus after performing communion at an Episcopalian church where more than five hundred congregants, who attended were asked to self-quarantine for two weeks.

## Results

Reviewing the above data, studying all the research matter available, we found that such mass gatherings



hugely contribute to the increase in the number of cases during the pandemic.

Above mentioned religious gatherings that neglected all the Covid-19 norms such as social distancing and wearing protective gear, in the name of faith and only contributed in worsening the situation during the pandemic.

The attendees that fled away after the gathering, to various different parts of the country contributed enormously to the spread of this dreadful Covid-19 virus in our country.

Jacob John, an epidemiologist and community health physician in the southern state of Tamil Nadu said, “There is no doubt in my mind that these social gatherings where people are in close proximity has increased the spread.”

## **Limitations**

The Tablighi Jamaat, Kumbh Mela, and other events being recent, it was difficult to collect too much data on the topic.

The country and state wise record of cases which increased due to this religious gathering, were difficult to find.

## **Conclusion**

In this pandemic time of Covid-19 it is clear that such religious gatherings were no doubt hotspots for Covid 19 breakout. Beyond being super-spreader, the Tablighi Jamaat gatherings proved to be very dreadful for the world’s third largest Muslim population. Similarly, with reports of Kumbh returnees testing positive and possibly spreading the infection, the fear of it turning out to be the super spreader event is coming true. Communalism, coronavirus and fear make a lethal combination.

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# Spiritual Renaissance in Modern India

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## Abstract

Human beings have this innate desire to belong somewhere, to be a part of something bigger than themselves. This desire for connectedness has been fulfilled through various means for different people be it mysticism, religious practises or spirituality or other activities. But in recent times there has been a great interest in spirituality as a means to give a greater meaning to their lives and perhaps find their purpose in life. This paper examines the different understanding of spirituality and how in the past decade spirituality has impacted various aspects of life.

Key Words: Spirituality, transcendence, religion, spirit, consciousness

## Introduction

India is a melting pot of several diverse cultures with their own unique rituals and traditions some of which have even continued way beyond generations. What makes it even more exciting is that all of these practices have one thing in common, they uphold the idea of togetherness and finding peace by being one with the universe. This connection has been made through various mediums by worshiping nature and its elements or even just the practice of offering prayers in one's worship place be it a temple, a church or a mosque, people have been going there to seek respite from their daily lives and to calm their minds. We have seen many great thinkers emerge from the land of India who have proposed several schools of thoughts such as Vedanta, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaisheshika. Back then the abstractness of the concept of spirituality led to the intermingling of the concepts of religion, philosophy and spirituality; they attributed it all to faith, which has unfortunately permeated to the thoughts of lay men in today's world too. For better or worse with the onset of industrialisation and globalisation the increasing importance of scientific temperament lead to skepticism and a lot of people questioning their faith, looking for scientific proof which lead to a breakdown of the value system. There was also a time of oppression where people were struggling to get by, their basic needs were not being met. Moreover, people had forgotten their roots. It is important to remember this because when we overcame this challenge and had fulfilled those basic needs, people then felt the need to search for something deeper within the universe. Some found it through religion, some through spirituality and still others who explored other avenues but what is notable is that this is where the distinction between religion, spirituality and perhaps philosophy became clearer. spirituality is the theoretical approach to the truth or divine power, religion is the practical approach to it and both run on a loosely similar philosophy. While the concept of spirituality is no longer considered unscientific it definitely presents challenges when attempted to classify. Let us look at what the term spirituality actually means.

## What is spirituality?

Spirituality is such a subjective term, over the years people have associated a number of things with spirituality from having an experience with the divine to feeling alive in the truest sense. Let's break down what spirituality actually is. The word spirituality is derived from the Old French word 'spirituel' meaning 'concerning the spirit' which is derived from Latin word spiritus referring to a 'person of the spirit' which then traces to the Latin word spiritus meaning 'breathe' or 'life'. One element that is consistent in all the various interpretations of spirituality is that they all acknowledge the belief of there being something bigger than a single human consciousness. Let us look at the various attempts of scholars at defining

spirituality.

Puchalski, Vitillo, Hull, and Relle (2014) defined it as follows:

Spirituality is a dynamic and intrinsic aspect of humanity through which persons seek ultimate meaning, purpose, and transcendence, and experience relationship to self, family, others, community, society, nature, and the significant or sacred. Spirituality is expressed through beliefs, values, traditions, and practices.

According to Larson, Sawyers and McCullough (1997)

Spirituality has a sacred core that consist of “feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviours” that arise from a search for the sacred that involves attempts to identify, to articulate, to maintain or to transform. Since it is challenging to operationalize the definition of spirituality due to its subjective orientation, Hill and Pargament (2003) delineated the criterion for defining spirituality: Spirituality constitutes the feelings, thoughts and experiences and behaviour that arise from the search of the sacred (A).

OR

Constitute the search for non sacred goals (such as identity, belongingness, meaning, health or wellness) in a context that has a primary goal of the facilitation of (A)

This definition seems apt as it does not delineate a path to attain said goals of spirituality unlike religion this definition captures the essence of spirituality as it gives room for each persons’ description of a spiritual experience. Now considering the fact that spirituality in itself has varied definitions it is safe to say that it was perceived in different ways in the West and the East. Let us understand these two different interpretations of spirituality.

Understanding spirituality: a western interpretation

In the west spirituality when it came about, was very much intertwined with religion. It is considered to have its roots in Jewish and Christian traditions. The word spirituality admittedly has Christian origins but is now widely used in association with various religions and by non religious people alike. This in itself goes to show how the idea of spirituality was deeply embedded in the ideals of Christianity. Christian spirituality calls for two duties; first is to undergo a personal transformation and the second is to continue the mission of Jesus to transform the world and to build the kingdom of a God of love. These directives depict one of the two ways in which spirituality manifests itself according to Love n.d. , which is, that religion is the bigger circle a part of which is spirituality and the second view is that spirituality is the bigger circle which includes religion. He has further explained religion as an external phenomenon and spirituality as an internal one. This was an important distinction which was brought about by prominent psychologist Carl Jung. Since then interest in spirituality has only grown but they have largely been looking at it through scientific lenses rather than tracing the roots of these spiritual practices. Hence, there has been a considerable interest in adopting eastern spiritual practices.

Ancient Indian view on Spirituality

Unlike the western spirituality which traces its roots to the religion of Christianity and Judaism Indian spirituality derives its understanding of spirituality from eight different schools of thoughts, each having their own interpretation of spirituality and their own teachings. With that said Indian spirituality is believed to be much older than its western counterpart. According to Indian epistemology the Sanskrit word ‘darsana’ refers to “super-sensuous transcendental,” which means witnessing the absolute truth i.e. experiencing Brahman transcending time, space and causation. This essence of spirituality is also captured in the explanation of spirituality given by the greatly revered Saint Sadhguru, he says, “Spiritual process is just this, seeing things the way they truly are rather than imagining it some other way and seeing things the way they are is the biggest empowerment.” Therefore, experiencing spirituality means the experience of spirit (ātman) or spiritual consciousness permeating into the all of cosmos along with encompassing every human pursuit.

Vedas. Among the eight schools of thought that were present in India the oldest understanding of

spirituality comes from the Vedas. It is one of the greatest sources of our knowledge of ancient India and its teachings and traditions that had a scientific base which was extremely advanced for their time period. The Sanskrit root word of Veda is 'Ved' which translates to knowledge. The Vedas are believed to date back to 2000 B.C. and passed down through oral tradition. They were later written down in about 5-6 B.C. They say that the Vedas were revealed to the Rishis who were seen as the seers of truth therefore it is believed to be a non-human creation. Vedic literature showed us the path to attain spirituality and to see and experience the world for what it truly is. It talks about life and death and all the materialistic illusions of life and how to overcome them by turning to the light and fighting the darkness. They also elaborated on concepts such as giving 'inner meaning' to your life and finding the supreme truth leading to transcendence. It is with the help of many such inspirational and valuable spiritual teachings that our forefathers were able to build a prosperous civilization in ancient India.

Upanishads. Upanishads are essentially considered to be the conclusion of the Vedas, it is why they are called Vedanta (end of the Vedas) it is also interpreted as reaching the final goal which in this case is transcendence. They also talk about the attainment of the ultimate truth which in all sense lies within us. Upanishads were the guide for common people to understand and learn about the concepts of religion, philosophy and spirituality and to connect with God since idol worship hadn't begun in the Indian subcontinent then. The Vedas, although leading to a spiritual path had a lot of ritualistic and sacrificial practices which the Upanishads don't prescribe to. They have however retained the scientific basis of the Vedas and have explored mind boggling concepts which scientists are still trying to understand today, these include concepts of consciousness, the science of dreams and the concept of god particle and many more such concepts. This goes to show how relevant these texts are even in today's increasingly advancing world.

### **Rebirth of spirituality i.e. modern spirituality**

A journey from religiosity to spirituality. Today the average Indian is rather averse to the idea of religion, it is considered to be rigid and confining unlike spirituality on the other hand which is subjective and as Koenig describes it a personal quest for understanding answers about life, meaning and relationships to the sacred. Spirituality is not something that is bound by institutional rules and regulations unlike religion which has its own set of norms and traditions which are expected to be followed by the followers of a particular religion. The people living in metropolitan cities are increasingly disillusioned by the promises that a particular religion claims to deliver, this is clearly due to the enhanced scientific temperament and the growing ability to rationalise. Religion has now become a practise that is looked down upon because of its association with fanaticism, terrorism and regressive cult practises, while in reality religion in its truest form does not encourage any of these practises but that is a separate conversation. Another reason for a shift to spirituality might be seemingly the lack of time in peoples' lives to perform elaborate rituals on a daily basis in the fast paced life of today's growing cities. In the light of these conditions spirituality come forward as a favourable option. There is a growing consensus among people regarding themselves as spiritual but not religious, moreover since the 20th century the middle class and the upper class Indians have regarded themselves as more spiritual than religious than their ancestors which evidently shows the shift from religiosity to spirituality in today's population.

Spirituality and mental health. If we break-down the word psychology it translates to study of the mind or soul, but in the traditional study of psychology only the study of mind has been explored and not the aspect of the soul. This is where spirituality bridges the gap. Psychology and spirituality for whatever reason have been pitted against each other for ages but in today's world there is a new understanding of the correlation between psychology and spirituality which can be best described as "feet on the ground, head in the sky" in which psychology represents the grounding phenomenon and spirituality represents the idea of going beyond rational thought and into another plane of consciousness. There is a growing awareness among people about how spirituality can not only help you lead a better life but also help improve your mental health. Mental health practitioners are also encouraging patients to talk about their

spiritual beliefs in therapy as empirical studies have proven that spirituality is immensely helpful in the journey of healing and recovery. Which makes sense because if a person feels connected with their beliefs, whatever they may be, they are bound to feel secure and mentally healthy. New concepts such as spiritual wellness have emerged which can essentially be termed as a modern understanding of spirituality which is defined as an understanding of one's purpose, meaning and relationships with other people. A person is said to have spiritual health when their spirit is at peace. Apart from helping in the management of symptoms in patients with mental illnesses in a professional setting it is also beneficial in coping with the stresses of everyday life. Another concept that stems from spirituality and has made firm grounds in the world of psychology is the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present and aware of our surroundings and our actions without any judgement, it is in many ways similar to the path of spirituality that asks you to seek out the absolute truth. Mindfulness can be practised in various ways like meditation and yoga which are now an integrated component of various rehabilitation treatments.

**Spirituality and Technology.** For ages technology and spirituality have been pitted against each other saying that the development of one of these thwarts the growth of the other, but nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, spirituality and religion have always been influencing the invention and the dissemination of technology in various parts of the world. Michael Bauwens puts forward a very interesting point, he goes on to say that the quest for transcendence is wired into the human mind and even if a person is not inclined to spirituality they can't help but wonder about the totality of existence and the need to find meaning beyond one's self. Supporting such theories we also see that this need to strive for something beyond one's self has been added to the Maslow's hierarchy of needs of human motivation and achieving self actualisation is no longer at the pinnacle. Michael goes on to explain that this quest for transcendence which seemed unattainable to the common man but now using technology and science we are trying to achieve it, which essentially means that we never stopped our quest for spiritual enlightenment we just started using different means to achieve it. Technology could very well be called the fourth industrial revolution as it is changing the fundamental ways of life, the way we work, our definition of fun, the way we relate to each other, technology touches practically every part of our life, especially in a country like India where about 300 million people have access to the internet which is only expected to increase in the coming decades. As Nichola Bradford stated "Our technological journey toward self-transcendence is the singularity, an event in which human biology and computers become one" This implies that both technological development and spiritual awareness go hand in hand and to move forward technologically we need to integrate spiritual transhumanism which is exactly what the pioneering Tech companies of today's world are trying to achieve.

## **Results**

### **Outcome 1**

In the process of writing this paper I have learnt and unlearned so much about spirituality, it is one simple ideology yet there are so many beautiful ways in which the message of spirituality is conveyed.

### **Outcome 2**

I have come to realize that aspects of spirituality can be found in almost all parts of our life whether it's the day to day menial tasks or the big global phenomena occurring like globalisation and the very contemporary example of the pandemic.

## **Discussion**

It is fascinating how a concept that was developed thousands of years ago can still be so relevant and play such a big role in our lives. Spirituality is in fact a grounding force, it makes you realise that you are a part of something that is much bigger yet so connected with every soul. I believe that it is the driving force for development be it in the field of science, technology, psychology. By integrating spirituality in the study of these leading fields humanity would collectively be turning a new leaf over. This paper has already illustrated countless ways through which spirituality adds richness to our lives and yet there are more.

This pandemic has taught us the vital role spirituality can play in the coping and healing process not only during a public health crisis such as this but also in our everyday lives.

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# **Deool Band- Movie Analysis**

## **Gaurav Tiwari & Jasmine Prasad**

### **28th February 2022**

#### **Abstract**

Atheism is defined as a lack of belief in the existence of God. It is specifically the strong belief that there are no deities. This research paper is produced in response to the film Deool Band, directed by Pravin Tarde and Pranit Kulkarni, which depicts atheism, theism, science, and spirituality. The focus of this study is on Dr Raghav Shastri, a scientist and atheist who does not believe in god, and Swami Samarth in particular. The journey of an atheist converting to a theist is the central theme of this movie. It also demonstrates the interplay between science and spirituality. Science, according to Raghav, is founded on facts and practicalities, whereas spirituality or theism is founded on blind faith and superstitions. Swami Samarth, on the other hand, presents spirituality in scientific terms, convincing Raghav that spirituality is more than just blind faith; it has a scientific foundation.

#### **Introduction**

Movies are a form of entertainment that allows us to see the lives and worlds of people from all over the world. While some films teach us about a certain way of life, others depict the lives of people from many social strata and cultures. Some depict real-life challenges, while others stir our interest with fictional “what if” scenarios. Some make us laugh and cry, while others persuade us to think about matters about which we are normally oblivious or choose to ignore. While some are futuristic, demonstrating future technologies and human capacity, others transport us back in time, allowing us to relive and experience history firsthand. Some may demonstrate how the world can function without a supreme figure, while others demonstrate the need for one.

Deool Band, a work of Marathi cinema, qualifies in many of the above-mentioned circumstances, much like any other multi-genre contemporary film. Deool Band is a 2015 drama/mystery film with an IMDB rating of 7.2 out of 10. The plot revolves around a young NASA scientist who returns to India to work on a project for the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). He despises the land in which he was born, as well as the theists who blindly worship entities known as Gods. When Dr Raghav Shastri, the lead, shuts the temple for personal and professional reasons, he begins to notice a mystery figure following him who introduces himself as Swami Samarth, the god whose temple was sealed.

Dr Shastri sets out on a journey with his family and the deity he sees but does not believe in to locate the password to his completed work that his daughter unintentionally sets on his laptop. The lead finally gathers all the evidence and discovers the password to his project after several face-offs and discussions with the man. The movie also includes terrorists hunting him to stop his project and ISRO labelling him a traitor for fleeing with the project and selling it to an enemy country, in addition to his god vs. atheist argument with Swami. Overall, the film depicts how an atheist becomes a believer after three hours of debates, confrontations, and miracles.

#### **Literature Review**

OMG-Oh My God! Is a 2012 comedy-drama film produced by B K Modi and Vikram Malhotra under Graze Goat Pictures, Wave Cinemas and Spice Studios. The film is directed by Umesh Shukla and written



by Soumya Joshi, Bhavesh Mandalia and the director Umesh Shukla. The film starred Akshay Kumar, Paresh Rawal and Mithun Chakraborty in the major roles.

The story revolves around Kanji Lalji Mehta, a Gujarati atheist who runs a shop selling the things he doesn't believe in, Hindu God idols. One day due to an earthquake, his shop was destroyed and because he was the only victim, people blamed it on his atheism. He filed for an insurance claim which was rejected classifying the incident as an 'Act of God'. Frustrated Kanji filed a lawsuit against God and dragged religious priests in the case as representatives of God. He is hunted by armed men and is rescued by Krishna Vasudev Yadav, a real estate agent from Gokul who performs abnormal deeds. The story continues with Krishna helping Kanji in the case in indirect ways and Kanji winning the case. Kanji gets a stroke in the court and discovers in the hospital that Krishna himself is a God and did all this to punish Kanji for instilling fear in people in the name of God for earning money and to punish the so-called Godmen who act for their profit in the name of god.

The movie's core plot was based on a 2001 Australian movie "The Man Who Sued God" produced by Ben Gannon, Brian Abel, Mark Joffe and Irene Dobson and directed by Mark Joffe. The movie starred Billy Connolly, Judy Davis and Emily Browning in major roles. The movie is about a lawyer Steve Myers who quits his job due to increased corruption in the system and buys a fishing boat to live a normal life. But his boat is struck by lightning and when he claims for insurance, the request is declined calling it an 'Act of God'. He then files a lawsuit against Gods and Church officials as God's respondents. He faces heavy criticism from religious groups and people when this matter comes into the media. But soon the matter starts involving his family when the media starts exploiting his ex-wife who was already in debt as a guarantor of the boat. Steve decides to withdraw from the case for their safety and considers this a victory. The court on the other hand is now convinced that the term 'Act of God' was used misleadingly by insurance companies.'

Marisa R Donnelly (2015). The purpose of this study is to explain the key beliefs and concepts that surround Atheism, such as faith in the human mind and self-reliance, or faith in science. The paper argues for Atheism as a belief system, but it also considers the possibility that Atheism is just the lack of confidence in a higher force, rather than a belief system or religion. Atheists do not believe in a god or divinity in general. Atheism is not always seen as a religion, nor is it always regarded as a belief by its adherents; nonetheless, it is regarded as such in its own right.

## **The Characters**

The movie was produced by Mrs Jayashree Kailas Wani and Juili Kailas Wani under Vatavruksha Production and co-directed by Pranit Kulkarni with director and writer of the Movie Pravin Tarde. The major characters in the movie were:

Gashmeer Mahajani as Dr Raghav Shastri

Raghav Shastri is a conceited young guy with an arrogant superiority complex. He is an atheist who has lost his belief in God as a result of a past incident. He despises both God and theists. He is skilled in his job, but he loses his cool at the smallest of things. We see his violent side as he finds himself in a bind after his daughter mistakenly sets a password for his project. He rejects anything drawn from spiritual thinking and refuses to believe in God.

Mohan Joshi as Swami Samarth

After sealing the temple gate, Shree Swami Samarth appeared, a mysterious figure that only Raghav Shastri can see. He was a spiritual master of the Dattatreya tradition who lived in the Maharashtra town of Akkalkot. The character is described in the film as a forgiving and level-headed individual who enjoys making jokes. Swami has dressed up and entered the modern world, speaking about scientists, physicists,

and modern scientific investigations. He's an all-knowing being who orchestrated events to allow Raghav Shastri to figure out the password on his own while simultaneously triggering other goals, just like a side quest in a video game.

**Nivedita Joshi- Saraf as Raghav Shastri's Mother**

Raghav Shastri's mother is the polar opposite of the protagonist when it comes to the film's central theme of faith. She is a firm believer and devotee of Swami Samarth. Raghav Shastri has told everyone that his parents are dead, although his mother is alive and well. She tries to persuade her son to complete his father's unfinished pilgrimage. She didn't abandon her faith even after experiencing the same catastrophe as the protagonist.

**Mohan Agashe as Dr Vyas (ISRO Head)**

The character of the ISRO chief, despite playing a tiny role, is highly crucial. He hands Raghav Shastri the project ropes, but when Shastri reports that his project is password-protected, he promptly labels him a traitor.

Many other minor but important characters appear in the film, including Dr Satyajee, the garage owner, the South Indian woman, the strange elderly man, the fakir, the car parking attendant, and the foreigner, who were all involved in Swami Samarth's plan.

## **The Storyline**

Dr Raghav Shastri is NASA's youngest scientist and is of Indian descent. When he returns to his homeland, he discovers that it is filled with God worshippers. Raghav, on the other hand, is not one of them. The Prime Minister has invited him to work on a radio frequency project that would improve the country's coastline security. The individuals in charge of his protection receive word from their sources that a terrorist gang commanded by Rashida and Hafiz has come to Pune intending to murder Raghav. As a result, they refuse to put him up in a hotel and instead relocate him to an affluent community in Pune.

He becomes concerned when he discovers a temple dedicated to Swami Samarth, a God in whom his parents had great faith, within his society's grounds. Raghav has an alienated connection with his mother, whom he has told his wife Radha and daughter Popo is dead. He has blamed her for being responsible for the death of his father, Damodar Shastri, for many years. As a result, he intends to finish his assignment as soon as possible and depart. Dr Vyas, his boss at ISRO, greets him warmly. Dr Ballar, on the other hand, is irritated by his participation in the group, as he had previously failed in this endeavour. Meanwhile, Hafiz tries to murder Raghav by bombing the mall during a family vacation.

However, he overlooks the device in the rickshaw, which is subsequently seized by the Anti-Terrorism Squad, who launches a search for Hafiz and his companions. Raghav is irritated the night before his project is to be submitted to ISRO when he learns that the society is celebrating a celebration devoted to Swami Samarth. He storms into the event, causing a ruckus. As a result, he is beaten and manhandled by the locals. In revenge, he blackmails Dr Vyas into permanently closing down the temple in return for the frequency project. Dr Vyas is forced to call the police, who shut down the temple.

The huge shock comes when God Swami Samarth personally visits Raghav to put his atheism to the test. The next day, Raghav informs ISRO of his dilemma, who gives him three days to submit it or risk losing his contract. Dr Deshpande, Raghav's colleague, refers him to Dr Satyajit, a world-class hacker. He asks him to travel to Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, to unlock his project. Meanwhile, Raghav's mother appears and introduces herself to her granddaughter and daughter-in-law. Raghav unwillingly departs for Sriharikota with his family, without alerting his security staff.

## **The Film's Content**

### **Atheism**

Atheism is the rejection of belief in a supreme figure called God or it is a belief that there exists no God. The main character Raghav Shastri is an atheist by choice who not only rejects but hates God and his followers. Though the lead rejects all Gods, he specifically 'hates' Swami Samarth. The evidence of this can be seen when he accepts the offerings to eat asking which God's blessing it is but spits it out after knowing it's from Swami. He also returns the portrait of Swami gifted by the society members. Even if we accept that the regular prayers were disturbing him in his work, there's no doubt that one of the reasons for sealing the temple door was his grudges with Swami. There were many instances when he even debated with God himself about his existence. To categorise him into a type of atheist, he can be called a positive explicit atheist who outright rejects the existence of God.

### **Faith**

To have faith refers to believing or having utmost trust in someone or something. In this movie's context, we are discussing faith or belief in god. Everyone except the lead seems to be a believer. Although we don't see his wife and daughter talking much about this topic, they don't oppose it either and are influenced by the lead's mother about religion and god in the second half. Even the scientists in ISRO claim to be firm believers. We see multiple places of worship and pilgrimages in the movie with a crowd of devotees eager to take God's blessings. And the greatest example of faith in the movie is the lead's deceased father Damodar Shastri and the auto driver, Shiva. Raghav Shastri's father was by far the biggest devotee in the movie. He died saving people in an accident at one of the pilgrimages, after which the lead stopped believing in God and even started hating Swami. But his mother never gave up her faith and still believed in Swami and his holiness.

### **God Vs Atheist**

The movie shows a face-off between an atheist who doesn't believe in a supreme entity and a God who himself is a supreme entity. It's not that Raghav Shastri doesn't believe in God but that he does not want to believe in him. He didn't even think of a possibility that he was hallucinating and talked to an invisible man casually which probably a common man won't do. When Swami first appeared in front of him and asked him why he sealed the temples, he nonchalantly asked him, "Why, did you get lonely?". Which means that he knew who he was talking to but didn't acknowledge him. From the moment Swami appeared in front of Raghav Shastri to the moment of acceptance of God, there were countless discussions, debates and confrontations about the existence of a supreme entity, all of which ended without a conclusion, one side being stubborn and outright rejecting the proposal and the other side being an almighty just smiling, cracking jokes and probably plotting something ahead of time since we hear him say, "You don't know what's stored in your future".

### **Science and Spirituality**

The movie ends with a very interesting quote, 'If science is a vehicle, then spirituality drives it'. The whole movie is based on how a God himself made an explicit atheist believe in the existence of supreme entities, an existence greater than humans called Gods. And this quote connects the only two possibilities for the existence of everything, science and spirituality. Another such instance happens when Swami follows Shastri to his workplace and quotes Edison. He says that Edison once said, "If electricity is creativity

then there should be one creator but I'm not", he then further explains that it means that if electricity is produced, Edison didn't produce it, the producer or creator was the entity Shastri was rejecting, God. Shastri and Swami also discuss how the Higgs Boson is also called the God Particle and Swami compares the electron, proton and neutron to Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh, the three Supreme Gods of Hindu Religion.

### **Critical Analysis**

The plot centres around a young atheist who, as a result of his status and accomplishments, is rather arrogant and egoistic. There isn't much in the film that the average viewer won't see coming. The storyline is plain and predictable. Deool Band, to be honest, has nothing working for it. It appears that the filmmakers were so eager to propagate Swami Samartha's worship that they completely overlooked the importance of a good storyline and a convincing narration. It's not enough to just sing Swami Samartha's songs and praise him.

That's not the entire story. Swami Samartha is a significant figure in the plot. As a result, one would expect him to propagate his wisdom and message. But he almost always uses one-liners and PJs to poke fun at the protagonist. In some ways, though, this is the one aspect of the picture that makes it watchable, as it causes both purposeful and inadvertent laughs.

Gashmeer Mahajani is the biggest bonus. He succeeds in demonstrating that, aside from his good looks, he also has some significant acting talent. Swami Samartha, played by Mohan Joshi, is a source of amusement. In the character of a typical wife of an ambitious husband, Girija Joshi is mediocre. Nivedita Saraf appears excessively religious. But not quite as much as Pravin Tarde, who turns out to be a religious fanatic. We can't blame the filmmakers for being a little ambitious, even if a few things in the film are a touch dramatised.

### **Conclusion**

Apart from Swami Samarth devotees, this film does not have anything to offer to the general public. The discussion revolves around science and its relationship to spirituality. Various references are utilised to persuade scientists of the existence of god. You are not obligated to be a theist, despite the fact that there are many great messages, as well as numerous problems.

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# The Bene Israel Community

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## Abstract

The Bene Israel community is a community whose exact origins are still a mystery till date. The “Sons of Israel” spark much interest and curiosity. Doubtful to even be Jews in the first place, somehow they managed to hold on to, if not all, at least some of their Jewish traditions. This paper examines their origins, practices, culture and the difficulties they have faced as a Jewish community. Two significant people responsible for their revival, David Ezekiel Rahabi and Samuel Divekar will be looked upon as well as the various people from this community who have contributed to India.

## Introduction

The Bene Israel community, the topic I have chosen to write about, is one of great intrigue. The reason being how this community came to be in India. Moreover, the Bene Israel community is one of the largest Jewish communities in India. Truth be told, I did not even know that such a community existed until recently when my professor mentioned it in class. One of the known facts when it comes to the Jewish community on the whole, is it's a minority religion in India as well as the world.

## Body

Bene Israel, when translated into English means “Sons of Israel”. The story of their origin arouses much curiosity. Some claim that they are from the “Ten Lost Tribes of Israel”, who were lost from history after Israel was attacked by the Assyrians. Another says that they fled by sea to escape the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes (the Mad), King of the Seleucid Empire.

However, the most common story that has been passed down through oral tradition is - they descended from seven couples who were shipwrecked on the coast of Cochin (Kochi). It is seen that they arrived in India approximately in the 7th - 8th BCE.

The Jewish philosopher, Maimonides, in a letter written 800 years ago (circa 1200 CE), briefly mentioned a Jewish community living in India. It is possible that he referred to the Bene Israel community.

Without having many options, they settled on the Konkan coast. They adopted the various customs and traditions of the locals. They learnt the language, Marathi, as well. They adopted the dress habits of the Hindus, the locals. Nav-vari sarees, anklets, nose rings were worn by the women.

The cuisine also resembled that of the locals: rice, fish, meat, but strictly following the kosher laws. Some of their popular dishes include: Bene Israel fish curry with fresh ginger, tamarind and cilantro, coconut bread pudding, coconut kadi and alberas and green mango salad, a staple seen at all their meals.

They changed their names to fit in too. For example, Samuel became Samaji. They even added the suffix of “kar”, to their surnames and it also represented which village they were from. Examples are: Nagaokar from Nagaon, Penkar from Pen, Wakrulkar from Wakrul, Cheulkar from Cheul, and so on.

As for their occupation, some worked in agriculture, but most were oil pressers. This is the reason why the locals called them “Shaniwar teli” (Saturday oil pressers) or “Shanwar Tells” (The Sabbath observing oil men).

At the time, they lost most of their traditions and parts of their culture. Moreover, they were isolated from

the rest of the Jewish communities. However, they did maintain some practices: circumcision of the male child eight days after he was born, the Sabbath, the dietary restrictions (Kosher) and a few prayers like the Shema Yisrael. They mainly inhabited the Konkan villages and today there are pockets of them found in Maharashtra and even Gujarat.

They did not necessarily adopt the strict caste system at that time, but they did adhere to it. Hence, it is seen that as per the caste system, marriage occurred within their own community.

Since they adopted most of what the locals did, they merged with the local community and it was difficult to distinguish them from the locals.

In the 18th century, we see a large number of Bene Israelis coming to the city of Mumbai. There were several reasons for this -The development of the transport facilities by the British  
Religious tolerance of Governor Gerald Aungier

Growth of employment opportunities, especially in the Army, where they excelled in

In Mumbai, their previous jobs were already taken up by existing communities. So, they took up jobs in construction, at shipyards, in carpentry, etc.

Many joined the Army where they were immediately recognised as excellent soldiers. Various distinctions were given in battles like the Anglo-Mysore War, the Anglo- Afghan War and the Anglo- Burmese War. They were known for their bravery and valour. The first document which mentioned the Bene Israelis is dated Aug 17, 1786 CE. It spoke about the British recruiting people into the Army from the native castes. In the Revolt of 1857, it is noted that they were loyal to the British.

As mentioned before, they were essentially isolated from other Jewish communities. So, this brings about questions of how did people come to know of them? How were they discovered?

People came to know of this community through the Baghdadi Jews. They were probably the first Jewish community that the Bene Israel came into contact with. It is also said that when they came to know there was a Jewish community which possessed no written texts or proper knowledge of Judaism, a letter was written to the mainland to ask for someone to come and investigate. In the 19th century, the Cochin Jews served as teachers and cantors of the Bene Israel community as they never had any rabbis or priests (cohanim) among themselves. They helped to perform various rituals. The Christian missionaries set up schools and the children would attend them. Here at school, they taught them Hebrew by translating the Hebrew prayer books into Marathi, unintentionally, reinforcing their Jewish identity. The Bene Israel community witnessed two religious' revivals by -

David Ezekiel Rahabi Samuel Divekar David Rahabi was the chief merchant and agent of the Dutch East India Company. He was not only a Cochin Jew, but also the leader of the Jewish community. He built a synagogue in Cranagore for the ten families who lived there. He was instrumental in helping the Bene Israelis recover their culture by teaching them the tenets of Judaism. To find out if they were really Jewish, he tested them. When he visited, he asked them to prepare a meal for him. Choosing to prepare a meal of the seafood cuisine, he observed that they were selecting very particular parts of the fish. Observing that they were following the Kosher laws, he was satisfied that they were Jews and agreed to help them.

Samuel Divekar (Samaji Hasaji Divekar) was a soldier in the Army. He played an important role in the Bene Israel community. He even built the Shaar Harahamim, the first synagogue in Mumbai.

How did a soldier get involved in propagating this religion? In the Second Anglo- Mysore War, he was captured by Tipu Sultan. He vowed that if released he would devote his life to the Bene Israel community and build them a synagogue, and he did just that.

The Shaar Harahamim synagogue was built by him in 1796. It was conceived in thanksgiving to God. Shaar Harahamim when translated into English means, "Gate of Mercy ". It is the first synagogue to be built in Mumbai.

Later, it was rebuilt at Mandvi, its present location. It still functions and carries out daily service to a

hundred members and the Shabat High Holiday Services too. It is featured on heritage and religious tours of the city. Before this synagogue or other synagogues were built, people would carry out their worship in their homes or their friends' homes. Their arrival to Mumbai is also seen by some as a religious revival.

Before noting the various festivals they celebrate, here are some of their core beliefs and traditions. Like many other Jewish communities, they believe that there is only one God. There is no particular head of this community, no one particular leader as such. However, people may pick a particular synagogue and regard it as theirs. They will even go there regularly to perform rituals, ceremonies and services. Each community will have their own traditions too.

The services are held by the prayer leader, the cantor, who is usually in his 60s. There is no official rabbi of India. Sometimes, a rabbi from Israel might be called if needed.

They celebrate many of the same festivals as other Jews. They are: Pesach, the Passover, which commemorates the Biblical story of Exodus, when the Hebrew slaves were released by God from bondage in Egypt; Pentecost celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples of Judaism; Rosh Hashanah celebrates the Jewish New Year; Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is the holiest day of all Jews. Every Jew celebrates this day; Hannukah, the Festival of Lights, coincides with Christmas; Purim commemorates the saving of the Jewish people from Haman, a Persian Empire official who was planning to kill all of the Jews. Special foods are also made for these festivals. One makes Latkes, which is essentially a pancake, made with grated potato and is fried. Other dishes include Malida, a sweet dish made with dried nuts, figs, and fruits like pomegranate, and Sufganiyot. Sufganiyot is a round jelly doughnut deep-fried in oil and filled with jam or custard, and then topped with powdered sugar.

All of these festivals are celebrated by them but each community has their own traditions. According to the communities they belong to, the foods also have their own twist. For example, instead of the traditional Latke, one can have vada pav, dahi wada, samosas, jalebi, gulab jamun or anything as long as it is fried. They also celebrate and perform the Bar Mitzvah (for boys) and the Bat Mitzvah (for girls). This ceremony is similar to the confirmation ceremony that Catholics have. Both receive it at the age of thirteen. It is done so that they can observe religious precepts and become eligible to take part in the public worship.

Many eminent personalities from the Bene Israel community have made their mark and contributed to India. They are: Nissim Ezekiel, the well-known poet of India who needs no introduction; Reuben David, founder of the Kankaria Zoo in Gujarat; Esther David, Indian Jewish author, artist and sculptor. She is best known for the, "Book of Rachel" and so happens to be the daughter of Reuben David; Vice Admiral Benjamin Abraham 'Chippy' Samson, he was the Indian Navy Admiral and the first Naval officer to serve as the Commander of the Nation; Leela Samson, she is a well known Bharatanatyam dancer, choreographer, instructor and writer who is also the daughter of Vice Admiral Benjamin Abraham 'Chippy' Samson; Firoza Begum, a famous Jewish Indian actress; Jerusha Jhirad, an Indian physician, the first woman to be granted a scholarship by the Indian Government to study abroad; Ezra Mir, an international personality, a famous film director, editor and producer; Fleur Ezekiel, she is the first Indian to participate in Ms. World; Eban Hyams, he played professionally in the Australian National Basketball League (NBL), the first Indian national to play in the Union of European Leagues of Basketball (ULEB).

The Bene Israel community may very well be the only Jewish community to escape the Anti-Semitism experienced by other fellow Jewish members. But this does not mean that it was easy for them. Post-Independence, many Bene Israelis left India for Israel. There were many reasons for this. Some of them were not sure what would become of them once India gained its independence and others wanted to be with more people of their Jewish community. However, most of them came back. Why? They were discriminated against by the other Jewish communities. They were not considered true Jews. Their origins and proof that they were Jewish was constantly questioned. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel in the early

1960s instructed investigations to be carried out to see if they were really Jewish. Only in 1964, after protests, were they considered “full Jews” and were accepted as Jews. Many Jews then attempted to emigrate to Israel. They were also allowed to inter marry with the other Jewish communities.

Today the world population of Bene Israel is estimated at 90,000, the majority of whom (70,000) live in Israel. Approximately 5,000 still live in India, mostly in Mumbai, with another 15,000 in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States.

At one time, the Bene Israel operated 31 of the 43 synagogues in India, but as a result of the massive emigration, only 20 still are functioning today. On the other hand, the Bene Israel have established approximately 50 synagogues in Israel, all of them named after synagogues in India.

## CONCLUSION

Among the many things I have learnt is that India truly is home to many cultures and religions. Seeing how this Jewish community might be the only one to escape Anti-Semitism, it only reinforces the idea of how accepting India is. We also learn how essential it is to have a religion. We see that even long after they lost everything, they still maintained their traditions, whatever they could. Religion is a major part of identity for some. We can only imagine how it must have felt when they were not accepted as Jews in Israel, how they felt. But, through hard work and determination, they finally achieved recognition. One thing that we can all see and learn is, no matter how many times one thinks they know all that there is to know, something new pops up. Learning never stops. You learn something new every day, be it about a person, a monument or even a community.

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# **Mumbai: A Kaleidoscope of Religion and Architecture**

## **Annanya Jain & Stency Samson**

### **23rd February 2022**

#### **Abstract**

Our ancestors always added a religious touch to their buildings in terms of its architecture. Architecture was indeed a reflection of the religious practices and its variations of different empires and dynasties. But if observed in recent times, the importance of religious architecture seems to be in decline. Many culturally influenced structures can be seen in our own city, Mumbai. These structures are an existing proof of Mumbai's rich and glorious history. In this busy life in this busy city, we not only fail to see the relevance of these structural wonders but completely ignore them. In this paper, we'll check out some of the most prominent religious structures and ancient architectural blends of Mumbai influenced from different parts of the world.

#### **Introduction**

The ever-changing and evolving city of Mumbai, formerly called Bombay until 1995, has had over 20 names since its inception. The varied architecture is rooted in its history, culture and religion. It started off as an archipelago of seven islands situated on the west coast of the Indian peninsula, perfectly suitable to grow as a port city except that it resembled a swamp. However, things changed towards the end of the 1600s, when the Portuguese gave away the seven islands to the British as part of Catherine of Braganza's dowry in her marriage to Charles II. Much of the city's growth is credited to Gerald Aungier, Bombay's second governor, owing to his vision for the city. The British left behind some great architectural works that played an important role in the development of the city as a whole.

#### **Architectural Blends**

Beginning with the neoclassical style of architecture, next followed the Victorian Gothic style (also known as Gothic revival) in dominating the city, a classic example being the Asiatic Society of Mumbai. Founded by Sir James Mackintosh, it was formed with the intention of "promoting useful knowledge, particularly as it is now immediately connected with India". Being a colonial structure built in 1883, it represents one of the last architectural remnants of Victorian Bombay. Inspired by Greek and Roman styles of architecture, the entrance is adorned with 8 impressive Doric style pillars. The entire construction was done with stones brought from England. Lots of ancient wealth like the collection of thousand ancient coins and the exceptional gold 'mohur' that once belonged to one of the greatest Mughal Emperors, Akbar as well as Dante's one of the two first issues of 'Divine Comedy' are one of the most precious treasures found here.

Another spectacle in the style of Victorian Italianate Gothic Revival with a fusion of Indian classical architecture is the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus which was designed by British architectural engineer, Frederick William Stevens. Its construction began in 1878 and was completed in 1887, marking 50 years of Queen Victoria's rule. Thus, it was named Victoria Terminus. The station's name was changed to Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) in March 1996 to honour Shivaji but was later renamed to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT), in 2017. The terminus is the headquarters of India's Central Railway. It is one of the busiest railway stations in India, serving as a terminal for both long-distance and suburban trains but more importantly, it is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Mumbai.

Further on, in the age of multiplexes and dome theaters, still standing tall in all its grandeur and art deco style is the Regal Cinema. Art Deco is one of Mumbai's least noticed architectural styles, though Mumbai

and its suburbs have the largest number of Art Deco buildings in the world. Evolving into a unique style came the Deco-Saracenic style, which was a combination of Islamic and Hindu architectural styles with features like domes, arches, spires and minarets. Designed by Charles Stevens and built by Framji Sidhwa, the Regal Cinema was chosen as the third venue to host the prestigious Filmfare Awards. The main auditorium looks stately yet humble, it was designed using the motif of sun rays in pale orange and jade green. Operated by 1933, the first film to be aired at the Regal was the Laurel and Hardy work 'The Devil's Brother'. It won the Urban Heritage Award in 1991.

## **Religious Structures**

The development of such historic, archaic structures across the city steadily increased job opportunities causing people to migrate from all parts of the country until the city was hosting people of varying castes, religions and backgrounds, all of whom needed a place to practice their religion. This led to the construction of some of the city's most iconic places of worship, gradually building Mumbai as the kaleidoscope of cultures and religions that we see today.

Starting with one of the oldest temples of the city, the Mumbadevi Temple was built at Zaveri Bazaar, in 1737 after being destroyed previously in 1675. It is dedicated to Goddess Mumba, a personification of Mother Earth and the patron goddess of the Dravidians and the Kolis, the fishermen community native to Mumbai. Adding further significance, it is from here that the city derives its very name - "Mumbai". Besides the migrating Indian population, the British residents of the city too needed a place of worship. With this in mind, the St. Thomas Cathedral was built in the 17th Century and the foundation for this was laid by the Governor, Gerald Aungier himself. Almost 300 years old, it is one of the oldest churches in Mumbai and it gave 'Churchgate' its name. Epitaphs for soldiers who fought in wars and a memorial for the first Bishop of Bombay can be found here. A magnificent structure now, the cathedral was restored in 2004 after its selection for a heritage conservation award by UNESCO.

Moving further along the neighborhood of South Bombay, in Byculla, sits the majestic Magen David Synagogue, an Orthodox Sephardic synagogue constructed in 1864 for the growing population of Baghdadi Jews in Mumbai. Sephardic refers to Jews of Hispanic origin while Baghdadi Jews are primarily merchants that have been trading with the Indian subcontinent since the era of Mughals. Standing out with its bright blue facade, enormous frontal columns and stained-glass windows, besides Israel, this synagogue is the largest one for Baghdadi Jews in all of Asia. Even today, the synagogue conducts Sabbath morning prayers followed by the Shulchan breakfast and remains open to all religions.

During the Arab conquest of Persia, Zoroastrians fled to India's western regions in an attempt to save their community, making Mumbai the religious center for Parsis. Thus, with only 27 fire temples outside India, Mumbai has the highest concentration with 50 fire temples which makes it uniquely responsible for preserving this dwindling culture. The oldest fire temples are located in Fort, one of these being the Seth Banaji Limji Agiary. As per historical records, fire from a lightning strike was maintained for 2 years with Mehrwanji Limji, in Kolkata and the same was used to initiate the fire temple and its sacred fire in Mumbai. The architecture of the fire temple resembles a fortress, however, only the external walls are accessible to non-parsis. Presently, Parsis are petitioning the government to preserve the major fire temples in the city as heritage sites to protect their shrinking community.

Another site for sore eyes in the city is the Indo-Islamic architectural marvel, evident from its white marble pillars, domes and minarets - the Haji Ali Dargah sits perched on an isle amidst the waters of Arabian sea. A fact unknown to many, the 600-year old dargah is dedicated to Sayyed Pir Haji Ali Shah Bukhari, a 14th century merchant from Bukhara (today, Uzbekistan). After his pilgrimage to Mecca, he became a saint propagating Sufism and settled in one of the islands that today make up Mumbai. He did not wish to have a burial, hence, as per his instructions, his followers left the shroud in the sea and the

dargah we see today is built on the location where the shroud came to rest. It serves as a constant reminder of the city's rich multi-cultural history.

Reaching the last destination, nestled serenely amidst the busy streets of Worli Naka lies the almost forgotten Nipponzan Myohoji, city's oldest Buddhist temple. Established in 1956, its origins are linked to an over 700-year-old prophecy by a Buddhist monk, Nichiren. Centuries later, Nichidatsu Fujii, a Japanese monk with the intention of fulfilling this prophecy came to India and during his stay, he built this small temple. B.R Ambedkar who later turned to Buddhism is also known to have visited this temple and even today, it serves as a place for people of all ethnicities to retreat and reflect.

## Conclusion

Given the city's rich cultural heritage, organizations like the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) and the Heritage Committee in Mumbai work towards unifying architects, historians and citizens to preserve this architectural legacy.

At present, this metropolitan city accommodates 20.6 million people and from the slow-paced construction of religious places to having the largest number of skyscrapers in India, we have come a long way. Yet, it continues to remain one of the most tolerant and religiously diverse cities. Every community may worship their deities in temples, mosques, churches, fire temples or synagogues respectively but the same people also gladly share the same compartment on a local train so much more often in this resilient city that never sleeps. It beautifully depicts how Mumbai has matured into a city that today hosts and welcomes the myriad of religions that exist here.

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# **GEOMETRIC GODDESSES: DEPICTION OF GODDESSES (AND GODS) IN WARLI ART**

## **NITYA NARASIMHAN**

### **ABSTRACT**

The Warli paintings are done by the Warli tribe living on the borders of Gujarat and Maharashtra. The unique aspect of these paintings are that these paintings are usually monochrome paintings done on mud walls showcasing simple geometric figures to depict various aspects of the simple life of the Warli tribe. Since religion forms an important part of the Warli Tribe, various Gods and Goddesses and even worship is seen in a lot of paintings of the Warli tribe. The Gods and Goddesses of the Warli tribe also appear to be stick figures painted using basic geometric figures, mainly triangles and even circles and squares. In this dissertation, I have qualitatively analysed the depiction of the various Gods and Goddesses worshipped by the Warli tribe as depicted in their Warli paintings which includes the mythical figures of the Gods as well as nature worship which forms an important part of the Warli religion, all of which are depicted using basic geometric figures mainly triangles, circles and squares.

**KEYWORDS:** Warli painting, Warli Gods and Goddesses, nature worship, geometric shapes, festivals.

### **INTRODUCTION**

India, over centuries has produced very unique and distinct genres and styles of paintings, emerging from the local population from different parts of the country. The Kalamkari paintings emerged from Andhra Pradesh, the Kalighat from West Bengal, the Pattachitra from Odisha, and the Warli paintings from Maharashtra to name a few carry the rich visual culture present in India with each one of them having a very distinct style and form of painting.

Warli paintings to an untrained and inexperienced eye would look like a jumble of triangles, circles and squares. It is a unique form of art where the elements of nature, Gods, humans and even animals are portrayed through rudimentary geometry shapes primarily, squares, triangles and circles. The Warli paintings were started by the Warli tribe, living in the Sahyadri mountains bordering Gujarat and Maharashtra, staying mainly in parts of Dahanu, Talasari, Jawhar, Palghar, Mokhada, and Vikramgad in Palghar district which is one of the largest tribes in India. Thought to have dated back as early as the 10th century A.D. the Warli painting describes the daily activities of the people of the Warli tribe like fishing, hunting, farming, dancing or festival scenes, portraying their culture and lifestyle.

The main part of the Warli paintings are always done by married women. It is mainly painted on the walls of the houses using rice powder, which gives the painting the white and brown combination. Water and gum are used to bind the rice powder. Traditionally, it is always painted only white but in very few cases a few dots of red and yellow can also be seen. To paint, they use bamboo sticks chewed at one end to make it as supple as a paintbrush (Nakshi: 2016). The paintings not only portray each work of the Warlis in detail but it is also a medium to express their emotions.

The human beings and animals in the Warli paintings are portrayed using two inverse triangles. The precise equilibrium between the triangles symbolises the balance of the universe. The circle symbolizes the sun and the moon while other triangles denote pointed trees and mountains. In contrast, the square portrays human inventions or possessions like a piece of land (Vayeda: 2017). It is due to this peculiar way

of portraying insignificant, yet common things that has earned the Warli paintings so much fame around the world. In contrast to the widespread belief that paintings should always be complex and intricate, these simple, rudimentary paintings are woven around a lot of symbolisms, rituals and customs of the Warli paintings. Known to be very reserved and quiet tribe the Warlis tell their stories and folklores through their paintings.

Warli paintings, unlike many other tribal paintings in India like the Madhubani or the Tanjavore paintings do not revolve around mythology or mystic figures. However, since religion forms a significant aspect of most primitive cultures, religion and mythology are entwined in the daily rituals of the rustic Warli tribe. Warli paintings being a depiction of their daily activities would have been incomplete without the depiction of Gods, Goddesses and mythological figures in their paintings. Interestingly, the Warlis have also rendered Gods to basic geometric shapes which is nowhere close the anthropomorphic figures portrayed by the mainstream society or even for that matter by many other arts that have emerged from India which are entail minute details and have an air of glory around them to distinguish themselves from the mere, inferior human beings. The Warli art is embedded in symbolism in every shape that is drawn which is deeply linked to their culture and their way of life.

How can the Almighty be simply portrayed through squares triangles and circles? Is their symbolism attached to the shapes used to draw Gods and Goddesses? Is the God/Goddesses important enough in the daily lives of the people that they depict them in paintings with their other routine activities like fishing and farming? What is the relationship they share with their Gods and Goddesses? These are few of the questions that are of importance if one wants to study the depiction of Gods in Warli paintings and the importance of God in the Warli culture which is what many of the paintings portray.

## **RATIONALE**

The Warli paintings of Maharashtra intrigued me as the paintings are composed of mere triangles, circles and squares and predominated by only these three rudimentary shapes the simple tribal people of Wali manage to depict their life, religion and daily events very beautifully. These simple yet very intricate designs manage to tell a story to the viewers embedded in the simple lives of Warli. Though this project I wanted to see how the Warli portray their Gods and Goddesses who they are in awe with and who play an important part of their lives. Usually paintings have a very sophisticated method of portraying Gods so I wanted to see if the Gods among Warli paintings also have a special standing apart from the simple shapes that the Warli are always used to drawing.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

How much is the religion of the Warli tribe important to them?

Do the Warli depict their religion in their Warli paintings?

How do they depict their religion and Gods in their paintings?

Are the different Gods and Goddesses depicted differently in the Warli paintings?

What is the attitude of the Warlis towards their Gods and Goddesses?

## **OBJECTIVES**

### **MAIN OBJECTIVE:**

To find out how the Warli tribe depicts their Gods, Goddesses and their religion in their paintings.

### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:**

To analyse paintings based on religion done by the Warli Tribe

To find out the Warli Tribe's attitudes and philosophies towards religion



To understand the meaning and importance of religion among the Warlis.

To analyse how different Gods and Goddess are portrayed differently in the Warli paintings.

## **CONCEPTS AND OPERATIONALIZATION**

**WARLI:** An indigenous tribe living in the border of Maharashtra and Gujarat in places like Palghar, Sahyadri and Dahanu on the mountains and coastal areas, especially known for their unique paintings primarily composed of simple shapes.

In my project I have focused on the religion of the Warli tribe and how they portray their Gods and Goddesses in their Warli paintings.

**WARLI RELIGION:** The Warlis have their own religion where they are in awe of life and fear death so they worship anything animate or inanimate that possess a threat to their existence like the nature. Nature worship forms a major part of the Warli religion and religion has a place in the daily life of the Warlis.

In my project, I have focused on how the Warli paintings portray the different Warli Gods and Goddesses and the various paintings that show religion and worship of the Warlis.

**WARLI PAINTINGS:** The Warli paintings are paintings done by the Warli tribe using rudimentary shapes to describe various events of their daily lives done mainly on the walls of their mud houses using mostly only rice powder giving the painting a white and brown look.

In my project I have focused on how the Warlis paint various Gods and Goddesses in their religion using simple shapes and only using rice powder.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this dissertation, I have used the descriptive method to qualitatively analyse various Warli paintings based on religion using secondary data. My study is divided into 5 sub themes of a) Warli Paintings, b) Lagnachauk c) Devachauk, d) Nature Worship e) Case Study – ‘Dance Of The Gods’ by Balu Ladkya Duada. I have also used a case study within my dissertation which forms the last of my sub – themes where I have taken a Warli painting called the ‘Dance Of The Gods’ by Balu Ladkya Duada and described the painting and its significance in detail. After analysing each sub – theme in detail, conclusions about this study has been drawn.

## **SAMPLING**

I have used secondary data to qualitatively analyse my data with most of my articles that I have referred to, taken from the internet with the exception of the two books mentioned in my review of literature, that talk of religion among the Warlis, their paintings and the depiction of Gods and Goddesses in their paintings. My main focus has been on the articles on the internet that talk of the depiction of Gods and Goddesses in Warli paintings. I primarily used the Google search engine to do my research. I have also used a case study which is a Warli painting called ‘The Dance of the Gods’ by Balu Ladkya Duada and described the painting and its symbolism in detail.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **MYTHOS AND LOGOS OF THE WARLIS: A TRIBAL WORLD VIEW BY AJAY DANDEKAR**

This book is a description of how the Warli tribe functions and how actually studying the Warli and various such tribes can help us solve a lot of problems of our own so called civilized society. This book describes various legends and myths believed by the Warli both in English and Devanagari script for the better understanding if the reader. This book gives an insight into the various beliefs, religion and

practices of the Warli in detail.

## **WARLI PAINTINGS: TRADITIONAL FOLK ART FROM INDIA BY K. PRAKASH**

This book is a compilation of various Warli paintings done by various tribal artists. It shows different paintings of different scenarios by different artists. It is a good insight into the actual portrayal of the Warli paintings for people who cannot physically access the Warli paintings in person forming a medium for the masses to see these paintings done by the Warli tribe.

## **WARLI ART: DIVERSIFICATION OF TRADITIONAL PAINTING CREATING FUTURE, HOPE & HAPPINESS BY DR. KAVITA PATIL**

In this article published in the International Journal of Home Science in 2017, the author, Dr. Kavita Patil talks of the history of the Warli tribes and describes in detail how the Warli painting is done and how it depicts various people, animals and other things in the paintings. This article has mainly collected data through personal interviews of the people from the Warli tribe. This article also focuses on the present state of the Warli Tribe and how their paintings have spread to the mainstream urban areas when everyday objects are being painted in the style of Warli painting.

## **WARLI ART AND ARTISANS OF MAHARASHTRA – AN INDICATION IN CONTEMPORARY TRIBAL CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BY ADITI DEKA & DR. BALWANT SINGH BHADORIA**

This article published in the International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies, talks of the Warli painters as well as the Warli paintings in a contemporary setting and their socioeconomic development. It describe the Warli art as being important to the development of the tribe and how the folk art is central to culture and life of the tribals. It is a descriptive study that also compares the Warli art to the other folk art in India and the various significant aspects of the Warli paintings.

## **QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

### **WARLI PAINTINGS**

Warli paintings are a very old art form but only recently have they become famous in the mainstream society for their different ways of portrayal of different scenes belonging to their everyday life in their Tribe.

The Warli art is predominantly divided into four major themes of the Gods, the people, the animals and the Warli's rights and rituals. Out of these four themes Warli art about its people is seen to be the most popular among the tribe. In a Warli painting revolving around its people, one can see the people of the tribe doing various routine activities like harvesting, hunting, fishing, etc. In the theme concerning Gods they describe their mythology and myths about their local deities (Kapoor: 2012). Though it is not as popular as the former theme a considerable amount of paintings can be seen with Gods depicted in them. In Warli paintings, the universe is seen as a microcosm seen through God's own eyes. In an article titled, 'Warli Art - Speaking Volumes About India's Tribal Heritage Using Just Two Colours' by Zeina Mehal, she claims that Warli art was initially done only during religious and ceremonial functions to invoke the power of the Gods.

As religion forms an important part of the Warli paintings, there is a symbolic pattern in which the different Gods are portrayed. The Warli tribe has its own plethora of Gods and in very few male Gods in the Warli tribe. The tribe has its own religion which also gives importance to the elements of nature, often portrayed in the paintings, to the extent that some paintings are said to be drawn to supposedly invoke the powers of the Gods and Goddesses (AYUSH: 2010).

### **LAGNACHAUK**

The paintings are mostly ritualistic, and the centre piece of the paintings revolving around the theme of

God, mostly forms a square, called a 'Chauk' or 'Shaukat', which is of two types. The 'Lagnachauk' (Wedding Square) (Figure1) is painted by a suvasini<sup>1</sup> (as times are changing, these days even men draw the paintings) whenever there is a marriage in the family (Bhattacharya: 2013) It is painted on the wall of the bridegrooms house (usually in the kitchen walls as they are said to be the most sacred place where Gods should reside.) to welcome the Goddess Palaghata and invite her to the wedding (Warrier: 2017). Palaghata is the mother Goddess of fertility and hence her name represents an overflowing pot of plants. The Warlis believe that the eternal process of birth and death is held within the womb of a women and the pot – the boundless container of life represents it. She is also known as the marriage God, very important to the Warlis and hence features in a lot of paintings. She is said to ensure that the marriage goes off well and after that the couple lives a happy and peaceful life with no problems and reproduce children, continuing their tribe. She looks after the overall well-being of the family. The intricately drawn decorative square which creates a boundry around Palaghata (or any other Goddess) is called a Chaukat. Sometimes people are shown to be preparing for the weeding around the Chauk. This also represents the central figure that Palaghata has in the Wali's daily life as people's everyday activities revolve around her with Palaghata forming a central figure in most of the paintings.

1 In Marathi - Suvasini means a married women whose husband is alive.

Lagnachauk is painted to bring good luck and harmony for the newlywed couple. The three basic elements of a Lagnachauk is the Goddess Palaghata, a comb to bring harmony to the family and a ladder for achieving success in their lives. Sometimes beside the Goddess a horse is also drawn in the Lagnachauk which is supposed to be the horse used by the bride and groom who are to be married. In some paintings the Goddess is also seen riding the horse. It is considered very auspicious. Often trees are drawn around the chauk to give shade to the Goddess. The Warlis also worship the sun and the moon which they call Dis and Chand respectively and they also feature in the Lagnachauk paintings which means that the bride will enjoy marital bliss till they shine on the Earth. The sun and moon are portrayed in the painting by merely drawing circles and no complex pattern is used.

While the painting is being done a 'Dhavlerya' (married priestess) sings songs. A wedding cannot take place without a Lagnachauk. The Warlis believe that with marriage everything belonging to the couple and all living things are reenergized and fertilized into creativity, and this is why drawing Palaghata, the Goddess of fertility is so important during weddings. Various scenes like farming, hunting, festivals or dancing surround the main square in the four corners.

A very prominent feature in the Warli paintings is the circle that is formed usually when many stick figures (representation of human beings) hold hands to form a circle. This is symbolic to the Warlis strong belief in the circle of life and death. They believe that death is not the end of a person but a person who dies is born again. (Remedios : 1998) So death is celebrated among the Warlis as elaborately as marriage. The circle is also akin to a womb which is capable of endless births. So the circle also becomes a symbol of The Mother Goddess of fertility, Palaghata. This is why the circle forms an important part of the Warli painings as most of their paintings will showcase either simple or intricate circles to show reverence and pay homage to their Mother Goddess and underline their basic philosophy of life. The substantial amount of paintings that showcase circles give us an impression that the Warlis are deeply rooted in religion and Palaghata is deemed to be their main deity of worship.

Figure 1: Lagnachauk (Online Source indiaart)

## **DEVACHAUK**

The second type of painting is that of the 'Devchauk', which is smaller than the main 'Lagnachauk', where the goddess 'Pancairiya' resides, who is said to be looking after the family after the marriage (NFSC: 2000). Even this painting is indispensable during marriages. These paintings are also drawn during Holi and the birth of a child with the paintings drawn by Suvasinis and singing of songs by the Dhavlerya. In the painting the Goddess is drawn just like humans but forms the centre piece of the painting enclosed within a square which represents a temple just like Palaghata, but this painting is smaller.

Figure 1: Devachauk (Online source NRIOL)

The Warlis worship nature. They are in awe with life which makes them worship all the things around them – both animate and inanimate objects. As they are conscious of the phenomena of death they are in wonder with even the smallest aspect of their lives. This can be seen in their portrayal of their daily tasks in paintings and in many of the paintings elements of nature like the wind, rain, sun and even thunder and lightning can be seen to be worshipped by the Warlis. To dispel the intangibility of the Gods and Goddess, they are given both human and superhuman qualities. They depict the Gods to be in a playful interaction with humans because for them all lives are interconnected and the lives and actions of human beings affect the cosmic order and vice versa.

The Warlis worship Gods according to seasons (Sakorkar: 2015). When the first rice of the season comes they worship the God of rain and the festival is called Naranadeva (Patil: 2017). They worship the God by performing a dance called kamadi dance (Figure 3). Then they worship the household Gods in festivals called as Hirva, Himai or Jhoting, when the crops ripen. The God Hirva is worshiped as the God who sustains all lives. (Tribal Research and Training Institute). Jhoting is the spirit which dwells in burial grounds, ruins and trees. Since this worship during that particular time of season form an important part of their lives, the festivals and worship are also portrayed in their paintings. (Biren: 1920) Since both Gods and humans are depicted as stick figures these Gods may be distinguished either by sitting on a chariot or a throne (Sarkhel: 2015) (Figure 4). During

2 In Marathi – Hirva literally means green

this time they also worship Palaghata, and usually draw paintings of the Goddess in their houses as this is the season of marriage and nuptial bliss. This follows the festival of the Tiger God (Vaghai) (Menon:2012) Interestingly, a tiger which is supposed to be the God is portrayed as having an elongated, tubular body, a circular face, and stick legs and a long tail in a Warli painting (Figure 5). A tiger is one of the rare figures which is not depicted using the basic geometric shapes. The Warli religion is based on awe and fear (Trisha: 2013). They worship Gods to avoid their wrath. They consider the tiger to be a symbol of life and regeneration, which is the strength of the forest, the power and protection the supernatural forces can give (Riverside: 2011).

Figure 3: Kamadi dance painting by Hihani Gautam

Figure 4: Gods depicted on chariots (Online Source braingroom)

Figure 5: Tigers are worshipped as Gods (Online Source passion connect)

## **NATURE WORSHIP**

The Warlis either gather forest produce or cultivate crops especially paddy so they even worship their crops and the Goddess of plants is known as Hariali<sup>3</sup> Deva. The God Hariali is usually portrayed in the Warli

paintings by drawing plants especially pointed trees represented through triangles (Figure 6). They also worship Mother Earth and the Goddess is called Dharitri Ma. Till today the Warlis, in most places do not plough the land as they believe that it would hurt Mother Goddess. The Dharitri Ma, though rare in Warli paintings are usually portrayed as a Goddess (who is drawn in the same way the Warlis draw humans), from whose head a root of the tree is growing out which gives rise to a huge tree (Figure7). The Goddess is usually depicted to be under the ground. During the harvest, the women perform Muthi, where they create fist- like patterns on the walls of granaries and kitchens representing abundance of food at home and yield in the fields, which is very similar to the drawing of the feet of the Hindu Goddess Lakshmi to bring wealth and success. They cut their harvest only after they have prayed to the field Goddess Saavari thanking her for her generosity. Cutting the harvests accompanied by dancing, singing and merry making. Though harvest scenes are common in Warli paintings, one can rarely see Saavari in the picture. She is always portrays similar to the other humans and is usually recognized by the importance given to her by placing her in between the picture and showing humans dancing around her or keeping her inside a square which resembles a temple. During the harvest people paint harvest scenes on the wall all around the house and the picture where Saavari is seen is divided into two halves in which one scene show the people enjoying the harvest and in the other scene they show themselves worshipping Saavari. They also worship the Goddess of grains or corn called Kansaari. The Warlis, while making Bhakris<sup>5</sup> roast the grains only slightly as they believe that over roasting or over cooking the grains will burn the back of Kansaari (Singh). Kansaari is usually not depicted as a figure in the paintings but a painting may show respect to her by depicting a harvest scene where the Warlis are plucking the grains or corn. It is more through the whole scene than through a particular Goddess or figure that we come to know that Kansaari and Saavari are depicted as both have the harvest scene in common (Figure 8a and b).

Figure 6: Goddess Hariali depicted through pointed trees

Figure 7: Dharitri Ma (Online Source Great Indian Basket)

Figure 8a

Figure 8b

Figure 8a and b – Kaasaari and Saavri portrayed through harvest scenes

Keeping in mind that most of the Gods discussed here are female Goddesses, it is interesting to know that male Gods are unusual among Warli people and paintings and are depicted merely as spirits that have taken a human form. They are depicted exactly like other human beings and do not have any distinct characteristics. This is interesting, keeping in mind that most of the major World Religions are patriarchal which give more importance to the male Gods and the female Goddesses are depicted as only supplementing the male Gods.

## **CASE STUDY – ‘DANCE OF THE GODS’ BY BALU LADKYA DUADA**

For the Warlis, worship and festivals mean a lot of fun, drinking, dancing, enjoyment and no work at all. This aspect of their life is very significant in the paintings where most of the paintings display the people dancing around in circles, sometimes around a deity or a person playing an instrument like Tarpa (a wind instrument), Ghangli (a string instrument) or drums (Seth:2013). The form of dance where there is a person playing an instrument is called Tarpa dance. So their religion is far from any kind of abstinence

and penance. To the extent that, in some paintings the Gods and Goddess themselves are shown to be dancing, singing and having fun. One such famous painting is by Balu Ladkya Duada is called Dance of the Gods (Figure 9), where he shows Gods and Goddess dancing and enjoying on a mountain in Ashargad. The chief Goddess is also dancing and all the other divine figures from Ghambirgad which is below the mountain are looking at her. The Gods of Ghambirgad are Ghambir<sup>4</sup> as they are embarrassed by the dance of the Goddess which is threatening their divine dignity. The Goddess nose ring falls and out of modesty and embarrassment from the other deities watch she stops and starts searching for her nose ring. In the process of searching she does not see that she has approached the end of the mountain and falls down. The moral of the story is that one should never stop doing something good out of embarrassment (Fine Art Gallery: 2014).

Figure 9: The Dance of the Gods by Balu Ladkya Duada

Warlis know the importance of water being heavily dependent on the crops they grow. This is the reason why the Warlis worship Sarovar<sup>6</sup> Deva, the God of lakes. Their devotion can be seen in their paintings as many of the paintings will show a lake filled with water. Similarly, their respect and reverence for the God of hill, called Durung Deva can be seen in their rampant portrayal of hills, showed through painted triangles in Warli paintings (Figure 10). Every Warli painting will have some portrayal of nature in it. They respect nature and worship it. So trees, birds, streams, rocks, insects, and even thunder and lightning are revered by the Warlis so one will see a significant amount of the elements of nature in their paintings. One can see many animals in a Warli painting, apart from tigers, such as snakes and ants and various birds. These are predominantly the animals and birds that are found in fields and forests. Like many tribals the Warlis fear such animals for life and destruction of their field so they worship them too and pay homage to them through their paintings.

<sup>5</sup> A type of Indian bread

<sup>6</sup> In Hindi - Sarovar means a lake

Figure 10: Durung Deva

The Warli tribe has its own religion where they respect and are in awe with life and very small and significant animate and inanimate aspect of their lives, so we find them praying a host of Gods with mythical Gods like Palaghata as well as the things significant to them in their daily lives like Mother Earth (Dharitri Ma) and even the fields (Saavari) which form a very important part of their lives. Since worship forms a very important part of their, one can also see worship, Gods and Goddesses frequently portrayed in Warli paintings which depict the daily lives of the Warli Tribe.

## CONCLUSION

Warli art apart from majorly depicting the lives of the Warlis also depict various Gods and significantly coloured with various aspects of their tribal religion, rites and rituals. Religion and worshipping Gods are deeply rooted in the lives of the Warlis with the form of God they worship and thereafter paint changing with seasons. They are God fearing people and are scared of the wrath of Gods. Their depiction of Gods, often in anthropomorphic forms, showcases their strong links with God. Living around nature, they worship many elements of nature, again showcasing their belief that if they do not appease nature, then

nature may cause destruction. Warli paintings are simple renderings of the daily life, activities and culture of the Warlis. Since religion also finds a significant place in their daily lives, it is not surprising for them to depict God and religion in their painting which is close to their heart.

The Gods of the Warlis are portrayed very differently from most of the other Gods in mainstream society. Usually paintings of Gods in mainstream society are very intricate and complex with immense attention given to the small details of the Gods and Goddesses, while the Gods and Goddesses in Warli art are simple (simple stick figures only composed of two basic triangles) yet very symbolic. Each Warli painting says a story about its local folklore. These simple stick figures in monochrome come together to form a very complex symbolical painting which can only be decoded if a person has some knowledge related to their local culture, mythology and traditions.

Warli paintings are very symmetrical and at the same time tell a story about the tribe's rich culture. The combination of the simple stick figure with the intricate symbolism attached to the paintings may be one of the reasons why this art is so famous. Their depictions of simple aspects of everyday life like harvesting the corn portrays their simple lifestyles as well as it shows that the Warli also respect and worship simple everyday life objects significant to them like the fields or even the trees or mountains. Warli paintings have become a medium through which the Warlis speak to the outside world. Warli paintings have become one of the most famous traditional paintings from India and have even reached the international markets. The Warli paintings carry their own uniqueness and distinct identity like any other art form in the world. This uniqueness may be attributed to their simple depiction of human beings, nature and even Gods and Goddesses which have been traditionally believed to be very complex to draw and portray. It is surprising how such simple drawings can hold such deeply fitted meanings, and insights into their cultures. The Warli are in fear of nature as they live among nature so nature worship forms a very important part of the lives of the Warlis as well as of their Warli paintings. They have given the world a new style of drawing and an exclusive way of revealing hidden stories among their culture and Gods and Goddesses of the warli do form a very important part of the Warli paintings.

## LIMITATIONS

Due to geographical limitations I could not get first-hand information through observation or personal interviews of the paintings or the interviewers and had to rely on secondary data.

It was difficult to access paintings of the various Gods and Goddesses painted by the Warli.

Descriptions of the various rituals performed by the Warli tribe were not easily available .

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# **Death Rituals In Ancient Egypt**

## **Stency Elizabeth Samson**

### **22nd February 2022**

#### **Abstract**

Death is a common, inescapable fact of our lives. But the way it is handled and processed is different in different cultures and many of them believe that death is not the end but a beginning of something beautiful. As times change, few religions and communities have changed with it. Ancient people conceived death as a phase and the measures taken to pass this phase is rather astounding. Historians have found evidence of funeral arts and literature, excavated burial chambers and spots, tombs of legendary rulers depicting the importance of certain rites and belief in consequences. This paper will solely be focusing on Egyptian culture and customs and beliefs they perceived relating to death and afterlife in the ancient world. This will give us an insight into the ancient mindsets and how we have completely buried those customs and traditions in this modern world.

#### **Keywords**

Death, Ancient, Egypt, Customs, Afterlife, Offerings, Burial, Judgement

#### **Introduction**

Death is inevitable. It is a permanent, irreversible process that eventually occurs to all organisms. It is a common process which is viewed differently around the globe. The conceptualization of death differs widely in different cultures. In most, it is a sad farewell but in some, it is a celebration of the colourful life that the individual lived in one's lifetime and wishing for the deceased's journey to the afterlife.

The lack of scientific understanding in the ancient times led to the birth of many rituals and traditions for dealing with death. Despite the fact that the world has progressed and changed in many ways scientifically, there are still those time-honoured traditional practices that still prevail and may never extinguish. The ceremonies for showing respect to the dead date back to the time period of the Neanderthal man.

In this paper, we'll see the different rituals and practices of ancient Egypt that till date stands out from all. As Algernon Blackwood states, "Ritual is the passageway of the soul into the infinite", so did the early Egyptians believe. The deep belief of eternal life in paradise with scriptures mentioning mythical Gods and avatars and folklores and the practices that catches the eye makes this study of ancient Egypt worth the time. Let's see how the ancient Egyptians perceived and handled something as common as death as we see it today, unique.

#### **Perception Of Death In Ancient Times**

In the early years, death was mainly at a very young age due to living conditions and lack of defences against predators. But these early societies did believe in metaphysics and that death was not the end. Archaeologists have found that about 2.5 million to 3 million years ago, beliefs like life beyond death, transmission of soul to another realm were held.

According to the reports, the first burial may have taken place about 50,000 years ago. The oldest known deliberate burial site is 10,000 years back in Qafzeh, Israel. They were buried in caves with garments, artifacts, food, etc. These practices are exhibited in the archaeological records and literature.

#### **Ancient Egypt**

Egyptians in the ancient period looked upon death as a route to a greater life. They carried out a bunch of intricate funerary rituals all leading a way to the afterlife. The afterlife in Egyptian culture is basically a reflection of one's life on earth. If one lives a virtuous life, then they are welcomed into the paradise by Gods but if not, then, it will be eternal damnation. Similar to now, there were social classes, importance being given to the ones in higher positions and this difference can be seen in the handling of the rituals as well.

## History

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The funerary rituals trace back to the Predynastic period. In the Badarian period, the bodies were buried in shallow, elliptical pits with grave goods such as food, jewellery, weapons, etc. In the Naqada II period, there were developments in the tombs, they were large and spacious but only the wealthy could afford this. Tombs from this period contained painted vessels and jars which depicted the funeral processions and other rituals. In the Pharaonic Period, the Pharaohs were believed to enter the afterlife as they thought being a ruler in the human realm would serve a purpose in the spirit realm. Pharaohs were considered God-like and had power in all states of affairs. During this time, human sacrifices, usually termed as Ancient Egyptian Retainer sacrifices, of the servants were conducted right after the death of their respective pharaoh, so they could still be in service of their master in the afterlife as well.

In Early Dynastic Egypt, the royals conducted their burial in mud brick tombs called mastabas. Even though the elite were buried in wooden coffins in tombs, the poor still continued to bury the deceased in shallow pits. During this period, the grave goods continued to increase and it included objects of daily use like weapons, furniture, food, games, etc. These objects were considered to be used by the deceased in their afterlife.

During the Old Kingdom, also called the 'Age of Pyramids', mummification of human bodies began. Bodies of the elite were wrapped in a linen bandage after mummification and placed in a stone coffin with inscriptions and paintings, known as sarcophagus. Canopic jars were used to preserve the internal organs for the afterlife. False doors were introduced in this period as a gateway between the two realms and it often served as a place for offerings.

In the First Intermediate Period, there were not many changes or developments in the rituals and structures, except the deposition of items in the grave were based on gender- men's grave had weapons and women's grave had grindstones, cosmetic palettes, mirrors, etc and these were kept for their roles in the afterlife. During the Middle Kingdom period, several developments took place in the structures and decorations of tombs. In the early 11th dynasty, the Theban kings built the rock cut tombs and it was constructed to take in miscellaneous people in a single one. The objects found in the tomb during this period were faience figurines, heart scarabs, shabti(ushabti) and they were kept for the assistance of the deceased in the afterlife. Cartonnage mummy masks were also introduced in the Middle Kingdom and these were used until the Roman Period. These cartonnage were used as full body mummy cases by the beginning of the New Kingdom Period. In the late Middle Kingdom, anthropomorphic coffins were being used and these had an attached outer and inner coffin.

There was a structural upgrade in the New Kingdom including spacious rock-cut chambers. The possessions kept in the tomb in this period by the elite population included beds, furniture, chairs, wooden, etc. but the poor could only afford to keep weapons and few other cheap daily use objects. As time went by, the number of objects kept near the deceased in the tomb reduced significantly. Amulets, figures of God Osiris, were very popular during the Late Period and in the subsequent years. With the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty and the emergence of the Roman Empire, there was a blend of Egyptian and Roman styles in the practices of burial. The blended-styled objects found by Egyptologists were plaster mummy masks, painted mummy portraits, etc.

## Mythology

The ancient Egyptian people believed in the whole idea of afterlife and rebirth of the soul. The Egyptian mythologies showcase an important role of their religion and culture and these are displayed in ancient literature, art and folklores, etc. Soul was considered to be composed of 9 parts.

Khet- physical form

Ib- heart (seat of thought)

Ka- vital essence (life force)

Sah- spiritual body

Shut- shadow

Sekhem- energy of the soul

Ren- name

Akh- intellect

Ba- spirituality

It was believed that the support of the living was necessary for the dead to get into the afterlife. But if an individual who died was considered unworthy by the king and the people, then he/she would be beheaded and this would be observed as the “second death” ceasing the deceased’s chance to eternal life.

In ancient Egypt, boats were seen as funerary craft for transporting the deceased to the underworld but this was constricted and privileged to the Pharaohs. These boats built were huge ones which displayed their devotion to their chief. The Khufu ship, now preserved at Giza solar boat museum, which is expected to be built for Khufu, the second pharaoh of the fourth dynasty, is a solar barge(vessel) used by the sun god Ra to transport Khufu over the paradise. Another practical and easy to afford craft were the coffins. Coffins were often considered a doorway to the underworld and the deceased were guided by the Sky goddess, Nut.

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Ancient Egyptians worshiped Osiris as the god of the underworld, fertility, afterlife, life, etc. According to the mythological stories, Osiris, who was granted the throne, was murdered by his envious brother, Set, who took over the throne. After restoring Osiris’s scattered body, his wife, Isis, conceived a son with him, posthumously, and named him Horus. Isis resurrected Osiris with her magical powers and he was reintroduced as the King/God of the underworld. He was the first mummy as portrayed in Egyptian folklore.

The Judgement was the procedure in which the morality and virtue of the soul was judged by the Gods. At first the deceased arrived at the Hall of Maat in Duat which was the realm of the dead for the testing of one’s purity and this test would ensure if he/she were allowed to or denied from the Kingdom of Osiris. Maat was the goddess who was the embodiment of law, harmony, balance, truth, etc. The first task was to recite the text - Negative Confession and name the Assessors of Maat who were 42 minor deities and each deity was appointed a sin that they were in charge of punishing. To prove one’s innocence, one had to declare not guilty of the listed 42 sins and after this trial, the deceased’s heart was kept in balance with the Feather of Maat, and it was performed by Anubis, the god of death. If it balanced, Osiris would admit them to their desired destination but if the heart weighed more than the feather depicting the weight of the deceased’s sins, the soul would be annihilated by the goddess and demoness, Ammit, who eats it up. On passing these tests, the soul would be granted the final desired destination, Aaru, also known as ‘The Field of Reeds’, where they acquired immortality. The ancient Egyptians pictured Aaru as a landscape with a beautiful luring appeal.

## **Texts**

The funerary texts, known as, 'Pyramid Texts' in the Old Kingdom, were written on the inner walls of the tombs. It is the earliest collection of spells emphasizing on the whole idea of and guide to eternal life and they were previously restricted to the royals. These texts are found engraved on the tombs at the famous burial site, Saqqara. It was mainly inscribed inside the coffins, also known as a 'Coffin Texts' in the Middle Kingdom, of the pharaohs to help and protect them in their afterlife. During the New Kingdom, these texts were included in a new spell book known as 'Book of the Dead', which were kept in the burial chambers of the dead. It consisted of mortuary texts, hymns, prayers, rite, myths, etc. and people prepared for their journey to the afterlife with the help of this book.

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## **Mummification**

Preservation of the body by the embalming process was practiced all around ancient Egypt as early as the 2nd Dynasty to avoid the decomposition of the dead body in the belief that the body had to be in perfect shape to be granted permission into the afterlife. As stated in the mythological texts, the vital essence of the body, ka, leaves the person's body once he/she dies and for it to return to the body, the embalming process should be performed with no error in a specific manner, only then will rebirth take place. It was a very expensive process and many couldn't afford it, so they buried the body in pits in deserts and due to the dry and hot climate, the body wouldn't decay for a long, long time.

This process took up to seventy days and it was the priests who served as embalmers. At first, the body was drained of all liquids and the internal organs were removed to halt the decaying. The heart was the only organ to not be removed as they believed it to be a source of thought and would be required to think and feel in the afterlife. The brain was removed by inserting a tool called a brain hook through the nose. Then, the rest of the organs- lungs, liver, stomach and intestines were removed and divided and kept in four canopic jars. The deceased was buried with these 4 jars. Some sources suggest that they washed the body with wine and spices to kill the bacteria and applied oil to prevent the bones from breaking and disintegrating. After all this, the body was wrapped in linen cloth that were cut into stripes within which they kept amulets which were believed to keep the evil away. The mummy was then placed in the coffin and sealed forever with grave goods kept aside. Few years after Christianity came to Egypt, mummification was stopped.

Mummification was practiced in other ancient cultures around the globe as well. This Egyptian belief in preservation of the body and afterlife came to be known in different parts of the world through cultural transmission especially, by trade through the Silk Road. The famous 3,300 years old mummy of King Tutankhamun, also known as, King Tut, the 13th pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty of the New Kingdom was discovered in 1925 and is now kept on display in his tomb in the Valleys of the Kings and is a big tourist attraction.

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## **Rituals**

After mummifying the body, the priests would return the body to the family and they would arrange for a procession where the body would be carried to the tomb. During the procession, there would be professional mourners, known as the Kites of Nephthys, encouraging others to join in and express themselves and the priests would pour milk before the body.

On reaching the tomb, the Opening of the Mouth ceremony would be conducted by the priests or by the son of the dead, as described in the texts. This ceremony was meant to help the deceased consume food and water in the afterlife and also to help them defend themselves during the judgement of Osiris. Then,

the body would be placed in the coffin or sarcophagus with the inner organs inside 4 canopic jars.

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When a king died, he was considered equal to God and was worshipped in temples and showered with offerings and his pyramid would be closed, never to be opened again. And they believed that any inaccuracy while performing the rituals could hinder the deceased's entry to the afterlife. (observation/discussion)

### Contemporary Egyptian Funerals

As Egypt came under the rule of Arabs after the conquest of the Romans, majority people started following Islam as their religion and this led to the change in rituals and rites which were practiced for a long time in history. According to the Islamic faith, they buried their loved ones as quickly as possible in a simple grave, probably within a day with the body wrapped in a white linen cloth, avoiding the age-old practice of mummification and preservation of the body and organs as it is forbidden in Islamic law. Everything changed drastically. Egyptian culture and rituals associated with death have come a long way since the Predynastic Period.

### Observations/Comments

Some traditions and rituals fade away while some are here to stay forever. When it comes to mummification and afterlife folklore, it might seem bizarre to many but if looked closely, one might realize that many of those beliefs and some-what similar ideologies are still practiced in many communities. Except few methods such as mummification, processes such as burial, getting priests involved to perform certain rituals are similar to many of the present-day practices.

And it doesn't end with this, there are many ancient cultures which continue to stupefy us and there are researchers coming up with different theories and conspiracies of their own, some might be subjective and some, objective. When we talk about death related customs, there are many hypotheses brought up to understand the working and thought process of the rituals and people of those times respectively.

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