

THE SEX WORSHIP AND SYMBOLISM OF PRIMITIVE RACES

(CONCLUSION)

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PLANT AND FLOWER SYMBOLISM

A number of plant and flower symbols have a different significance from that which is generally given to them. We are all quite familiar with the grape vine of Bacchus and the association of that deity with grapes. According to R. P. Knight, this too, symbolizes a sexual attribute. Speaking of Bacchus, he writes, "The vine was a favorite symbol of the deity, which seems to have been generally employed to signify the generative or preserving attribute; intoxicating liquors were stimulative, and therefore held to be aphrodisiac. The vase is often employed in its stead to express the same idea and is often accompanied by the same accessory symbol."

We have often seen in sculptures and paintings, heads of barley associated with the God of the Harvest. This symbol would appear to be self explanatory; yet we are told by more than one writer that it contains another symbolic meaning as well. H. M. Westropp, speaking of this says, "The kites or female organ, as the symbol of the passive or productive power of nature, generally occurs on ancient Roman Monuments as the Concha Veneris, a fig, barley corn, and the letter Delta." We are told that the grain of barley, because of its form, was a symbol of the vulva.

A great many other female symbols might be mentioned. The pomegranate is constantly seen in the hands of Proserpine. The fig-cone is carried by the Assyrian Baal, and the fig in numerous processions has a similar significance. When we add to these the various forms of tree worship

described above, we see to what an extent the products of nature were used as symbols in the worship of sex.

Among flower symbols there is one which recurs constantly throughout the art and mythology of India, Egypt, China, and many other Eastern countries. This is the lotus, of which the Easter lily is the modern representative. The lotus appears in a number of forms in the records of antiquity. We have symbolic pictures of the lion carrying the lotus in its mouth, doubtless a male and female symbol. The deities of India are depicted standing on the lotus, or are spoken of as being "born of the Lotus." "The Chinese,"* says the author of *Rites and Ceremonies*, "worship a Goddess whom they call Puzza, and of whom their priests give the following account;—they say that 'three nymphs came down from heaven to wash themselves in the river, but scarce had they gotten in the water before the herb lotus appeared on one of their garments, with its coral fruit upon it. They were surprised to think whence it could proceed; and the nymph upon whose garment it was could not resist the temptation of indulging herself in tasting it. But by thus eating some of it she became pregnant, and was delivered of a boy, whom she brought up, and then returned to heaven. He afterwards became a great man, a conqueror and legislator, and the nymph was afterwards worshipped under the name of Puzza.'" Puzza corresponds to the Indian Buddha.

In Egyptian architecture the lotus is a fundamental form, and indeed it is said to be the main motive of the architecture of that civilization. The capitals of the column are modelled after one form or other of this plant. That of the Doric column is the seed vessel pressed flat. Earlier capitals are simple copies of the bell or seed vessel. The columns consisted of stalks of the plant grouped together. In other cases the leaves are used as ornaments. These orders were copied by the Greeks, and subsequently by western countries.

We may ask ourselves, what is the meaning of this mystic lotus which was held in sufficient veneration to be incorporated in all the temples of religion, as well as in myths

*O'Brien: *The Round Towers of Ireland*.

of the deity. This, too, refers to the deification of sex. O'Brien, in the "Round Towers of Ireland" states; "The lotus was the most sacred plant of the Ancients, and typified the two principles of the earth fecundation,—the germ standing for the lingam; the filaments and petals for the yoni."

R. P. Knight states, "We find it (the lotus) employed in every part of the Northern Hemisphere where symbolical worship does or ever did prevail. The sacred images of the Tartars, Japanese or Indians, are all placed upon it and it is still sacred in Tibet and China. The upper part of the base of the lingam also consists of the flower of it blended with the most distinctive characteristics of the female sex; in which that of the male is placed, in order to complete this mystic symbol of the ancient religion of the Brahmans; who, in their sacred writings, speak of Brahma sitting upon his lotus throne."

Alexander Wilder,* states that the term "Nymphæ" and its derivations was used to designate young women, brides, the marriage chamber, the lotus flower, oracular temples and the labiae minores of the human female.

The lotus then, which is found throughout antiquity, in art as well as in religion, was a sexual symbol, representing to the ancients the combination of male and female sexual organs. It is another expression of the sex worship of that period.

Our present conventional symbols of art are very easily traced to ancient symbols of religion. We may expect these to be phallic in their meaning, to just the extent that phallicism was fundamental in the religions where these symbols originated. From the designs of some of the ornamental friezes of Nineveh, we find these principles illustrated. On those bas-reliefs is found the earliest form of art, really the dawn of art upon early civilization. Here is the beginning of certain designs which were destined to be carried to the later civilizations of Greece, Rome and probably of Egypt. These friezes show the pine cone alternating with a modified form of the lotus; the significance of which symbols we have explained. There are also shown

*The Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology.

animal representations before the sacred tree or grove, a phallic symbol. From these forms and others were designed a number of conventional symbols which were used throughout a much later civilization. (See "Nineveh and Its Remains." A. Layard.)

ANIMAL SYMBOLISM

One sees in the religions of antiquity, especially those of India, Assyria, Greece and Egypt, a great number of sacred animal representations. The Bull was sacred to Osiris in Egypt, and one special animal was attended with all the pomp of a god. At one time in Assyria the god was always associated with a sacred animal, often the goat, which was supposed to possess the qualities for which the god was worshipped. Out of this developed the ideal animal creations, of which the animal body and the human head and the winged bulls of Nineveh are examples. The mystic centaurs and satyrs originated from this source. At a later time the whole was humanized, merely the horns, ears or hoofs remaining as relics of the animal form.

We learn that in these religions the animal was not merely worshipped as such. It was a certain quality which was deified. The Assyrian goat attendant upon the deity, was in some bas-reliefs, not only represented in priapic attitudes, but a female sexual symbol was so placed as to signify sexual union. We shall show later that certain male and female symbolic animals were so placed on coins as to symbolically indicate sexual union.

An animal symbol which has probably been of universal use is that of the snake or serpent. Serpent worship has been described in almost every country of which we have records or legends. In Egypt, we find the serpent on the headdress of many of the Gods. In Africa the snake is still sacred with many tribes. The worship of the hooded snake was probably carried from India to Egypt. The dragon on the flag and porcelain of China is also a serpent symbol. In Central America were found enormous stone serpents carved in various forms. In Scandinavia divine honors were paid to serpents, and the druids of Britain carried on a similar worship.

Serpent worship has been shown by many writers to be a form of sex worship. It is often phallic, and we are told by Hargrave Jennings that the serpent possibly was added to the male and female symbols to represent desire. Thus, the Hindu women carried the lingam in procession between two serpents; and in the sacred procession of Bacchus the Greeks carried in a sacred casket the phallus, the egg, and a serpent.

The Greeks also had a composite or ideal figure. Rays were added to the head of a serpent thereby bringing it into relation with the sun god Apollo; or the crest or comb of a cock was added with similar meaning.

Many reasons have been offered to explain why the serpent has been used to represent the male generative attribute. Some have called attention to its tenacity of life; others have spoken of its supposed mystic power of regeneration by casting its skin. Again, it seems probable that the form is of symbolic significance. However this may be, we find that this universal serpent worship of primitive man was a form of phallicism so prevalent in former times.

Many other animals may be mentioned. The sacred bull, so frequently met with in Egypt, Assyria and Greece, was a form under which Bacchus was worshipped. R. P. Knight speaks as follows; "The mystic Bacchus, or generative power was represented under this form, not only upon coins but upon the temples of the Greeks; sometimes simply as a bull; at other times as a human face; and at others entirely human except the horns and ears."

We would probably be in error to interpret all these animal symbols as exclusively phallic although many were definitely so. Thus, while Hermes was a priapic deity, he was also a deity of the fields and the harvests; so the bull may have been chosen for its strength as well as its sexual attributes.

There are many animals which were symbolic of the female generative power. The cow is frequently so employed. The Hindus have the image of a cow in nearly every temple, the deity corresponding to the Grecian Venus. In the temple of Philae in Egypt, Isis is represented with the

horns and ears of a cow joined to a beautiful woman. The cow is still sacred in many parts of Africa. The fish symbol was a very frequent representative of woman, the goddess of the Phoenicians being represented by the head and body of a woman terminating below in a fish. The head of Proserpine is frequently surrounded by dolphins. Indeed, the female principle is regularly shown by some representative of water; fire and water respectively being regarded as male and female principles.

Male and female attributes are often combined on coins for purposes of sexual symbolism. R. P. Knight explains these symbols as follows; "It appears therefore that the asterisk, bull, or minotaur, in the centre of a square or labyrinth equally mean the same as the Indian lingam,—that is the male personification of the productive attribute placed in the female, or heat acting upon humidity. Sometimes the bull is placed between two dolphins, and sometimes upon a dolphin or another fish; and in other instances the goat or the ram occupy the same situation. Which are all different modes of expressing different modifications of the same meaning in symbolical or mystical writings. The female personifications frequently occupy the same place; in which case the male personification is always upon the reverse of the coin, of which numerous instances occur in those of Syracuse, Naples, Tarentum, and other cities." By the asterisk above mentioned the writer refers to a circle surrounded by rays, a sun symbol of male significance. The square or labyrinth is the lozenge shaped symbol or yoni of India.

The above interpretations throw much light on the obscurity of the animal worship of antiquity. This explains the partly humanized types, and the final appearance of a human deity with only animal horns remaining, as representing the form under which the deity was once worshipped. The satyrs, centaurs, and other animal forms are all part of these same representations and are similarly explained.

Our main object in giving the above account of these various symbols has been to illustrate the wide prevalence

of sex worship among primitive races. Another end as well has been served; our study gives us a certain insight into the type of mind which evolves symbolism, and so a few remarks on the use of symbolism as here illustrated are not inappropriate.

We feel that while this symbolism may indicate a high degree of mechanical skill in execution, it does not follow that it expresses either deep or complicated intellectual processes. In fact, we are inclined to regard such symbolism as the indication of a comparatively simple intellect. It appears obscure and involved to us, because we do not understand the symbols. From those which we do understand, the meaning is graphically but simply expressed.

On coins, bas-reliefs and monuments, we find the majority of these simple emblems. If the desire is to express the union of male and female principles, a male symbolic animal is simply placed upon the corresponding female symbol. Thus, a goat or bull may be placed upon the back of a dolphin or other fish. This is a graphic presentation but certainly one of a most simple nature. Sometimes the male symbol is on one side of the coin and then the female is always on the reverse. Unions are made which do not occur in nature, and the representation is not a subtle one.

In India, if there was a desire to express a number of attributes of the deity, another head or face is added or additional arms are added to hold up additional symbols. In Greece, when the desire was to express the androgyne qualities of the deity, a beard was added to the female face, or one half of the statuette represented the male form, the other the female. Such representations do not indicate great ingenuity, however skillfully they may be executed.

SUN WORSHIP AND SUN MYTHS

As is generally known, traces of sun worship are found in almost every country of which we have a record. In Egypt Ra was the supreme sun god where there was very elaborate worship conducted in his honor. In Greece, Apollo was attended with similar festivities. In the Norse

mythology, many of the myths deal with the worship of the sun in one form or another. In England, Stonehenge and the entire system of the Druids had to do with solar worship. In Central America and Peru, temples to the sun were of amazing splendor, furnished as they were with wonderful displays of gold and silver. The North American Indians have many legends relating to sun worship and sacrifices to the sun, and China and Japan give numerous instances of the same religion. Sun worship is so readily shown to be fundamental with primitive races that we will not discuss it in detail at this time, but rather will give the conclusions of certain writers who have explained its meaning.

At the present day, the sun is regularly regarded as a male being, the earth a female. We speak of Mother Earth, etc.; in former times, the ancients depicted the maternal characteristics of the earth in a much more material way. Likewise the sun was a male deity, being often the war god, vigorous and all powerful. We readily see to what an extent the male sun god was portrayed in mythology as a human being. In many myths, the god dies during the winter, reappears in the Spring, is lamented in the Fall, etc., all in keeping with the changes in the activity of the sun during the different seasons.

The moon was associated with the female deity of the ancients. Isis is accompanied by the moon on most coins and emblems. Venus has the same symbols. Indeed, the star and crescent of our modern times, of the Turkish flag and elsewhere, are in reality the sun and crescent of antiquity, male and female symbols in conjunction. Lunar ornaments of pre-historic times have been found throughout England and Ireland, and doubtless explain the superstitions about the moon in those countries. The same prehistoric ornaments are found in Italy. In the legends of the North American Indians, Moon is Sun's wife.

The full extent of these beliefs is pointed out by Mr. John Newton in "Assyrian Grove Worship." Here we see that the ancient Hindus gave a much more literary relationship between the sun and earth than we are accustomed to express in modern times. He states, "This representative of the union of the sexes typifies the divine Sakti, or produc-

tive energy, in union with the pro-creative or generative power as seen throughout nature. The earth was the primitive pudendum or yoni which is fecundated by the solar heat, the sun, the primitive linga, to whose vivifying rays man and animals, plants and the fruits of the earth, owe their being and continued existence."

It is not possible to discuss Sun worship at any length without at the same time discussing phallicism and serpent worship. Hargrave Jennings, who has made careful study of these worships, points out their general identity in the following paragraph. He states: "The three most celebrated emblems carried in the Greek mysteries were the phallus, the egg, and the serpent; or otherwise the phallus, the yoni or umbilicus, and the serpent. The first in each case is the emblem of the sun or of fire, as the male or active generative power. The second denotes the passive nature or female principle or the emblem of water. The third symbol indicates the destroyer, the reformer or the renewer, (the uniter of the two) and thus the preserver or perpetuator eternally renewing itself. The universality of serpentine worship (or Phallic adoration) is attested by emblematic sculptures or architecture all the world over."

The author of the "Round Towers of Ireland" in discussing the symbols of sun worship, serpent worship and phallicism, found on the same tablet, practically reiterates these statements. He says: "I have before me the sameness of design which belonged indifferently to solar worship and to phallic. I shall, ere long, prove that the same characteristic extends equally to ophiolatrea; and if they all three be identical, as it thus necessarily follows, where is the occasion for surprise at our meeting the sun, phallus and serpent, the constituent symbols of each, embossed upon the same table and grouped under the same architrave?"

By a number of references, we could readily show the identity of all these worships. The preceding paragraphs give, in summary form, the conclusions of those writers who have made such religions their special study. We shall not exemplify this further, but will now point out the general relationship of sun worship to the religious festivals and mythology of the Ancients. This relationship becomes

important when it is appreciated that the sun worship expressed in the mysteries is also a part of phallicism. On some of these festive occasions the phallus was carried in the front of the procession and at other times the egg, the phallus and the serpent were carried in the secret casket.

ANCIENT FESTIVALS AND MYSTERIES

The Ancients expressed their religious beliefs in a dramatic way on a number of occasions throughout the year. The festivities were held in the Spring, Autumn, or Winter. These were to commemorate the activities of the sun, his renewed activity in the Spring calling forth rejoicing and his decline in the Fall being the cause of sorrow and lamentation. As well as the festivities, there were the various mysteries, such as the Eleusinia, the Dionysia and the Bacchanalia. These were conducted by the priests who moulded religious beliefs and guarded their secrets. The mysteries were of the utmost importance and the most sacred of religious conceptions were here dramatized.

Mythology also gave expression to the religious ideas of the time and we find that the most important myths, dramatically produced at the religious festivals, were sun myths.

The annual festivities and mysteries will be discussed together because both were intended to dramatize the same beliefs. Both were under priestly control and so were national institutions. The festivals were for the common people but the mysteries were fully understood only to the initiated.

While no very clear account of the mysteries has been given, a certain theme seems to run through them all, and this is found in the myths as well. A drama is enacted, in which the god is lost, is lamented, and is found or returns amid great rejoicing.* This was enacted in Egypt where the mourning was for Osiris; and in Greece for Adonis, and later for Bacchus. All these are, of course, sun gods, and the whole dramatization or myth is in keeping with the activities of the sun.

*The Enactment and Rebirth.

On these occasions, the main object seems to have been to restore the lost god, or to insure his reappearance. The women took the leading part and mourned for Osiris, Adonis or Bacchus. They wandered about the country at night in the most frenzied fashion, avoided all men and sought the god. At times, during the winter festival, the quest would be fruitless. In the Spring, when they indulged themselves in all sorts of orgies and extravagances, Adonis was found.

The underlying motive appears to have been to enact a drama in which the deity was supposed to exercise his procreative function by sexual union with the women. This was an ideal which they wished to express dramatically. In order to realize this ideal obstacles were introduced that they might be overcome; in the old myth, Adonis was emasculated under a pine tree, and in Egypt Osiris was similarly mutilated, his sex organs being lost. But at the festivals it was portrayed that Adonis was found, and in the myth, Osiris was restored to Isis in the form of Horus (the morning sun). In a number of myths, the god is said to have visited the earth to cohabit with the women, an occurrence which was doubtless desired, in order that the deistic attributes might be continued in the race. Thus, judging from what we have been able to learn of this subject, the worship expressed in the mysteries revolved about sexual union, the desire being to dramatize the continued activity of deistic qualities.

This character of many of the festivals and mysteries is very evident. In the Eleusinian mysteries the rape of Persephone by Pluto, the winter god, is portrayed. The mother, Demeter, mourns for her daughter. Her mourning is dramatically carried out by a large procession, and this enactment requires several days. Finally Persephone is restored. The earlier part of the festival was for dramatic interest, and the real object was the union of Persephone with Bacchus. "The union of Persephone with Bacchus, i.e., with the sun god, whose work is to promote fruitfulness, is an idea special to the mysteries and means the union of humanity with the godhead, the consummation aimed at in the mystic rites. Hence, in all probability the

central teaching of the mysteries was Personal Immortality, analogue of the return of the bloom to plants in Spring.”*

The mysteries of Samothrace were probably simpler. Here the phallus was carried in procession as the emblem of Hermes. In the Dionysian mysteries which were held in mid-winter, the quest of the women was unsuccessful and the festival was repeated in the Spring. The Roman mysteries of Bacchus were of much later development, and consequently became very debased. Men as well as women eventually came to take part in the ceremony, and the whole affair degenerated into the grossest of sexual excesses and perversions.

We have stated what appears to us to have been the underlying motives of the religious festivals and mysteries; namely, the enactment of a drama in which the reproductive qualities of the deity were portrayed. The phallus was carried in procession for this purpose and the women dramatized the motive as searching for the god. Our account can be regarded as little more than an outline, but it is sufficient for our present purposes. It indicates that the mysteries give an expression of phallic worship, just as do the various monuments of art and religion to which we have referred. It may also be said that this same worship is represented in what may be termed early literature, for much of the early mythology deals with the same subject. The study of origins in mythology, however, cannot be dealt with adequately in our present communication.

CONCLUSION

We have now traced the worship of sex, as recorded by the monuments of antiquity, through its various phases. In its simplest form, the generative organs are worshipped without disguise; the sexual act also forms a part of religious ceremonies. Later, a rude symbolism develops. As the race becomes more advanced, this becomes more elaborate, until finally a considerable degree of ingenuity and skill are evidenced. The worship of sex is not only expressed in religious usages, but comes to dominate early art as well;

*Dr. Otto Rhyh, *Mysteria*.

it is also expressed in mythology, and so we find the same symbolical and allegorical expressions in early literature. In fact, the deepest thoughts of primitive races, as expressed in their religion, eventually dominate most of the customs and usages of every day life.

We may appropriately ask, why did primitive people deify the sexual organs? This question may be answered when we understand the religious ceremonies of primitive tribes. The earliest objects worshipped were those which were of known benefit to man. The Aborigines of Australia have very elaborate ceremonies which superficially seem meaningless but when understood have a very definite meaning. This aim is to ensure some certain product of the earth. If it is a Yam* ceremony, an elaborate procedure is carried out which is supposed to make yams grow. There is a secret ceremonial object which is a symbol of the yam and which bears to it more or less resemblance. Other ceremonies are carried out for similar purposes. The meaning of all these semi-religious performances, as clearly shown by Spencer Baldwin, is to ensure the benefits which nature gives. This, in brief, explains nature worship, and were it our object at present, it would be most interesting to show the peculiar resemblance of these ceremonies to those carried on in sex worship.

As the early races advanced in knowledge, they came to know that the perpetuation of the race depended upon generative attributes. For this reason human generative attributes were deified and appropriate ceremonies were held, just as in the case of nature worship. These are not "lewd practices," as they are not infrequently called. It is indeed regrettable that the subject of sex worship has been disregarded by many historians, as thereby erroneous impressions are given. The facts of nature worship have always been much better understood and its importance has been realized; those of sex worship have been less carefully recorded.

The literature and philosophy which we are accustomed to associate with Greek thought are of a later date. Once such abstract reasoning is possible, sex worship is no longer

*A kind of sweet potato.

seriously entertained. The symbolism remains, but is associated now, not so much with religion as with art. Likewise in India, the early Buddhism, which was sex worship, has changed to the present day Buddhistic Philosophy, the symbols alone remaining.

From all this we are inclined to believe that in sex worship we are dealing with important motives in the development of the race. We make no pretence of having exhausted the subject in this communication. The decadence of this religion, as observed in the early Christian period, and in fact well through the middle ages, forms a very interesting history. It is not our purpose, however, to deal with it at present. Likewise, it should be understood that the motives which we have been discussing are not necessarily the earliest manifested in racial development; we have a record of a time in the history of man when the worship of sex had not yet made its appearance; but this period also is not a part of our present topic.

The influence of early racial motives upon present day civilization is a topic of great interest. Its importance is, in fact, the main object of studies of this kind. However, we wish our account to be mainly an historical one, and so will not at present make reference to a number of applications which arise. We have also refrained from making use of the modern writings on matters of sex, as we thereby avoid criticism to the effect that our findings have been drawn from biased sources. We feel that while the reader may disagree in certain details as here set forth, the universal appearance of sex worship at a certain stage of racial development is scarcely to be denied. The writers whom we have cited are all of a former generation, and they were searching for origins in religion, not in sexual life; inadvertently they found the latter, in fact could not avoid it, and so their conclusions are all the more valuable to us.

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*For a number of additional references consult New York Library under Phallicism.