

BOOK REVIEW

PRIMAL RELIGION: AN INTRODUCTION, by Bendas. D. S. 2023. Mittal Publications. x+242 pp. ISBN 978-93-94569-74-4 (hbk). Price Rs. 900.

This book is on one of the categories of religion which the author call Primal religion. It is a thought-provoking exploration into the world of primal religion, beliefs and practices. By primal religion the author mainly means tribal or primitive society's religion. This book has eleven chapters. The first chapter, 'introduction', the author discusses the concept of 'primal religion' and the challenges associated with defining the term. He traces the roots of the word 'Primal religion' and some other related terms that have been used interchangeably. These terms include 'primitive,' 'tribal,' 'small-scale,' 'indigenous,' and 'native.' Each of these terms has its own limitations and challenges. He also argues that it is important to consider the nomenclature of primal religions to avoid negative stereotypes. The author's goal in this chapter is to provide a more nuanced and accurate understanding of primal religions.

Chapter two discusses the multifaceted nature of religion. It highlights how Western attempts to define 'religion' emphasize its distinctiveness from human life, while in primal religions, the concept is intertwined with everyday existence. Primal religions often blend rituals and magic to appease and connect with unseen powers. Sacredness is attached to natural objects, creating a holistic worldview. This chapter delves into various definitions of religion, and characteristics of religion, including dysfunctions of religion, such as dogmatism, exploitation, and violence, are discussed alongside their causes. In the third and fourth chapters, the author discusses the theories related to the origin of Religion and some of the fundamental postulates of Primal religion. Further in the fifth chapter, the author explores the distinctiveness of ancient religions as opposed to current major religions. Primitive communities share a common thread in belief in a supreme soul or God, regardless of their practices. This chapter delves into the intricacies of this complex belief system and reveals the subtle relationship between ancient communities and their conceptions of the Divine. In chapter six the author discusses the spirits and divinities within primal communities. Despite scientific scrutiny, hearts hold an undeniable reality for primal people. This belief extends beyond primal religions and underpins many modern faiths. Distinguishing between gods and spirits challenges primal followers, these types of beliefs offer explanations for cosmic mysteries. In the seventh chapter, the author focuses on the notion of sacred geography, the significance of sacred places in primal religions, and the phenomenological aspects of these spaces. It provides insights into how primal

communities perceive and interact with their environment in their quest for spiritual connection. Furthermore, the author also dealt with different classifications of sacred geography, such as temples, graves etc.

In the next two chapters, Bendas discusses the religious functionaries and their vital role in both religions and social lives. Moreover, he elaborates how rituals are the external side of religion and they exhibit the internal aspects of religion. In the tenth chapter, the author discusses the year-round festivals in primal religious communities. They encompass diverse celebrations like harvests, marriages, and spirit returns, often involving masks, feasting, and dancing. These festivals reflect the relationship of primal people with nature and gods. In the last chapter, the author explores the concept of worship in primal religions, highlighting its significance, meaning, and purpose. Worship is seen as a fundamental aspect of expressing faith in the divine and is present in various forms across different religions. In primal religion worship serves as a means of communication between humans and the spiritual realm, restoring harmony and a sense of security during challenging times. Overall, primal religions emphasize the closeness of God and the importance of worship for a fulfilling and meaningful life.

Overall, the book is a fascinating journey through the landscapes of primal beliefs and practices. The author through his skillful narration, invites readers to explore the essence of primal religions. He tries to illuminate the profound connection with the divine and their quest for a meaningful existence. This book is a must read for those seeking to unravel the rich tapestry of primal religions and their enduring impact on the spirituality of mankind.

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