

PURIFICATION OF SOUL IN KALASH COMMUNITY BEFORE AND AFTER DEATH

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Abstract: Human soul is immaterial and non-physical eternal entity separate from physical matter and purified by performing different kinds of rituals. The purpose of this study was to explore the concept of soul in *Kalash* before and after death. Further to document how they purify their souls performing different rituals and festivals. For this purpose the data was collected from a convenience based sample, through structured interviews and focus group discussion. The study was qualitative and hence the recommendations and conclusions are based on the perceptions of the respondents which are presented in the study.

Key Words: Dualism, Spirituality, Ceremony, Performance, Purity

INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking, the human soul is the nonphysical entity of the human being, separate from the physical matter (Cleversley n.d.). The word "soul" in modern English usage was represented by various words in Hebrew and Greek languages in which the Bible originally was written. Secondly those Hebrew and Greek words can have a number of different meanings in their original context. Biblical teaching regarding man that he/she is composed of two distinct parts, physical and spiritual (Thomson 2000).

Human soul is an immaterial human image and non-physical, thus the topic is controversial and defined through different perspectives. Everyone defines soul with their own specific point of view, as an immeasurable entity, something like steam and air or shadow by its nature hence it is impossible to prove whether the soul actually exists. Plato also held that at death soul and body are separated; the body decays while the soul departs to live in another life. Aristotle, by contradiction, thought of the soul simply as, form that is as a way of behaving and thinking; a human having a soul is just like a human behaving (by moving parts of the body) and thinking in certain characteristic human way (Bruun and Kalland 1995).

Man is superior to most creatures. In human body there is a combination of two main components "matter" and "Soul". Both of the terms are amalgamated, matter the physical appearance in a body and soul the interpretation of the inner self. In different religions and cultures there is a concept of soul purification. It is the process of cleansing a person's soul by removing sins through performance of rituals. Ritual is any social action that creates a symbolic meaning beyond its appearance. Different religions and cultures perform different kind of rituals in order to express that they have a common ideology.

The concept of soul, purification and ritual performance exists in every religion but the way they interpret and the function varies. Human soul is the universal concept that has been accepted for a long period of time and has existed even in Stone Age and preliterate societies. As like the Ka'l's'a "Kalash or Kalasha" are a small religious community in the Hindu Kush Region living near the western borders of the Chitral District. Majority of the writers and anthropologist testify the Kalash as the descendants of the armies of Alexander the Great. In Kalash, religion is the main divine force that binds people together, and studies have focused cultural traditions, faith, oral history,

mythology and owe to idea of (onjesta) purity and (pragata) impurity.

People have strong belief on the concept of soul and also believe on (duality) separation of body and soul. They do not give much importance to the body and only focus on preparing the soul for the next (eternal) life. that we must understand the separation of body and soul, of matter and spirit, exists only in the temporal world of appearance. In the eternal (Divine Mind) this duality, this separation, does not exist. In the Divine Mind, they are indistinguishable. Like water and ice in a glass, they are separable in appearance though they are in one in essence (Abhayanaanda 2012). Human body is an image of the soul, has neither physical appearance nor it has any structure (concept of duality). It is just an abstract belief from the time of Adam that there is a soul in human body which is immaterial just like dreams and imagination. A human soul is not just a way of behaving publicly, but also a way of thinking. The concept of the soul can be traced back as early as 9 or 8 BCE during the time of Homer and only living beings that possessed a soul were humans and they did not realize they had a soul until the moment of death (Richard 1998).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present qualitative study has been designed to understand the purification concept of soul in Kalash community before and after death, that how they purify their soul performing different rituals. The study was conducted in Islamabad, based Kalashi members. The sample size included 35 sampling units, selected through the non-probability snowball sampling. The tools included open ended interview guides, and focus group discussions that helped reveal the importance of purification in the community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research concentrated on the belief system of the pagan community. Their concept of soul was explored and found to be as follows.

- Considered soul as intangible and ever-lasting.
- They thought soul as the purified part of human body.

During data collection most of the respondents believed soul as an abstract idea which is everlasting and immortal imagination. A respondent sharing his point of view about soul stated that it is an individualistic phenomenon rather than a social entity. They believed that when a person is born the soul is in its purest form. With the passage of time when human beings grow up physically and mingle with the world, the soul becomes impure. They also hold the concept of heaven and hell and connect it with the soul.

Purification plays a key role in Kalash community before and after death and based upon two fundamental principles of soul, purity (onjesta) and impurity (pragata) (Mohyuddin, et al. 2015). (Mdayik) is the ritual which is performed on 15th December for the whole night to purify the soul. There is a festival performed every year in December for purification including both physical and spiritual from (18 to 19 called (Cawmos). During these days a restriction is observed on drinking of wine, eating of chicken and egg, which are considered impure. These restrictions are to be followed by all the members in the community. There is a ladder of purification rituals, which cleanses the soul, different for each situation. If a person makes a little mistake he/she has to perform a ritual in a simple way, or if a person makes a crime or murder, has to sacrifice the animals many times. At that time the person has also to do sacrifice animals in the graveyard invite the whole community. After performing this ritual the person goes to the temple with some gifts (nazrana), for the God to become fully pure and allowed to come home. According to Kalash religion a person who is pure considered messenger to God. Once there was a brave man called Nagadiayar whom they considered as a messenger because he was pure and he predicts before events were occurred. The soul is the element that gives the Body, life process; breathe warmth, growth, feelings and the ability to think and speak. The body would die in the certain period of time while the soul would continue its existence after somewhere else (Pentikainen 1996). Kalash also believe on the eternal concept of soul and have been practicing a lot the concept of purity from centuries ago.

In the Kalasha belief system women are considered impure especially during menstruation and childbirth and nobody talks to them. There is a separate house called "Bashalani". At the time of delivery or menstruation process they are separated from their homes for several days and kept in the (Bashalani), and it is prohibited for men to enter the area. When the female had recovers from the menstruation cycle the senior man in the community goes in the open air, the female brings water, junipers and grapes to makes herself pure by the elder man. The senior man sprinkle water and grapes on the face of the female and thus the female gets purified.

After that they go up to the mountains with some mulberries and walnuts accompanied by another male (Qazi) who takes goat milk with him, to purify the mother and baby by sprinkling the milk one the faces of both by using juniper. This ritual is called "Gul Parik". After purifying them both mother and child are allowed to come home. She divides all the mulberries and walnuts to the whole village.

Kalash also believe the continued existence of soul after death and also have the concept of supernatural things. As the famous Anthropologist E.B. Tylor coined the concept of animism which has been divided into two dogmas, one concerning souls of the individual creatures, capable of continued existence after death; and the other, concerning other spirits, ascending to the upwards to the rank of powerful deities (Onwurah 1988).

According to the respondents Kalash people believe in a single creator; in a local language called (Dezau), is used for God, however they also use Khudai (Persian term for God) alternatively as well. For example, different Kalasha alters; and temples (Sajigor, Indrain and Warin) were incorrectly understood to be places of worship for separate and distinct Kalasha deities these alters are all ultimately a place to offer sacrifice to (Dezau) in different times and festivals. Kalasha peoples do not have any routine daily prayers, nor there any restriction to pray, like the Muslim communities have in the valleys. They do pray whenever they initiate any activities like harvesting, ploughing, construction and

whenever the favour and honour of Dezau is needed and people of Kalash mostly prefer to pray at the time of festivals.

The concept of soul in Kalash is that after a person's death after all the rituals are performed in the first night of his/her death and when he/she buried, a traditional dish (Golmandi) is kept on his /her grave each day for a week and the dish is distributed among the innocents for the purification of departed soul. After burying the body all the people of village come together and illuminate for the whole night (Dov Chakek), during this ritual no one is allowed to talk to each other all become calm and wait for and talk to the departed soul. In Kalash there is no concept of rebirth after death.

CONCLUSION

The basic concept of the study was to understand the concept of purity and impurity, and the significance of their rituals, traditions and how they perform certain rituals to purify themselves both physically and spiritually and explore the prime tool for the establishing identity through their traditions and belief system for centuries ago.

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