

QUESTIONS AS TO FESTIVALS, TRADITIONS, AND IDEAS OF OUR INDIAN ASTRONOMICAL IDEAS OF OUR INDIAN

Among savage tribes in America and other parts of the world there is a common stock of traditions, which can be more or less vaguely traced all over the world.

CALENDARS AND ASTRONOMICAL IDEAS

The existence in various parts of the world of vestiges of a primitive (or it might be called a pre-Adamite) calendar regulated by a cluster of stars in the neck of the constellation Taurus (the Bull) and regulated by "the seven stars," the Pleiades, was for the first time discovered in 1862. Its past existence is now accepted by all those astronomers who have enquired into it, viz: the Astronomer Royal for Scotland, Norman Lockyer, F. R. S., Professor Everett, F. R. S., R. A. Proctor, Secretary of Royal Astronomical Society, and others.

These stars, everywhere in America as well as in other countries, though only apparently six in number, seem in remote ages to have regulated by their position in the heavens, the festivals and agricultural labors of the year, in some countries dividing the year into two equal divisions, sometimes into four, and occasionally into three.

The great annual festival among some savages takes place in November for three days, our All Hallowe, All Saints and All souls being fossil memorials of it on our calendar. The Pleiades (Seven are visible all night long i. e. they rise at sunset, culminate or cross the Meridian (called "sitting," as they are then due South,) at midnight, and set at sunrise. In some places this festival takes place a little earlier, when these stars are first seen in the evening i. e. October. They continue visible at that time, rising however earlier and earlier until in February they culminate at sunset, and set at midnight; and about the first May they set at sunset and therefore become invisible. For 40 days their "occultation" takes place, they then appear above the eastern horizon at early dawn. Hence in Polynesia the year is divided very generally into two seasons, "the Pleiades above," and "the Pleiades below;" the first is from May to November, when these stars are invisible in the twilight; and the second is from November to May when these stars continue visible at that time. Among some races these two divisions are transferred to February and August, when these stars culminate at sunset and sunrise respectively. There are two other times during which some races hold festivals, viz: when these stars reappear; and also in July, when the stars in the Belt of Orion and perhaps Sirius, almost in the same line, are all visible above the horizon at early morning.

Hence these dates are, 1st. in the middle of November, (or in October occasionally); 2nd. towards the end of February; 3rd. about May 1st or early in June. 4th. about the end of August or beginning of September (occasionally also in July.)

Qu. 1.—Do the tribes with which you are acquainted know and observe the Pleiades, or do they regulate any festival by those stars.

2.—Do any of their festivals take place at the times named by me, and what are these festivals, and their rites and mode of observance.

3.—What is the name of the Pleiades in the Indian dialect and what does it mean?

4.—What is the name of the festival, (if any), regulated by them, its name in Indian, and its meaning or origin?

5.—Also the name of Sirius, the three stars in the belt of Orion, the five stars in the head of Taurus, (the Hyades)?

FESTIVALS

B.—A Feast of the Dead in commemoration of ancestors and deceased relatives, very generally takes place at the time of new year festival. It lasts three days and is generally held at night, beginning at sunset. It is sometimes also a sort of thanksgiving or harvest home; and the new fire is then kindled. Among some American races there is such a festival held every 8 or 9 years, and regulated by the Pleiades. The dead are removed then to the tribal burial place, and those already buried there are taken up and wrapped in fresh furs.

These feasts are accompanied by bon fires, games and sham fights.

Qu.—Have you found any traces of this annual feast of the dead; if so what is its name, and what does it signify; when does the feast begin, how long does it last, how is it observed and how is its time of observance regulated?

7.—Does the festival of the dead also take place among these Indians at longer intervals than a year? If so, is it regulated by the Pleiades and how. Give also its Indian name and if possible its meaning. Is their festival strictly tribal, and confined to kindred races?

WOMAN'S FESTIVAL

It is said that there is a peculiar festival, traceable among some tribes, called "the Woman's Festival." The warriors assemble in two converging lines forming a V. At the angle of the V a woman, whose face is without blemish, passes over a pile of presents. Each warrior that is without a mark against her, passes up the line and receives a present.

No woman who has been guilty of an indiscretion dare approach, as any warrior who knows of it, is bound to shoot her.

There is also a festival (perhaps the same as foregoing) at which women, on meeting men, kiss them, and compel them to give a present as a forfeit.

8.—Do you know of either of these, and when they are observed and what are their names and origin.

PERIODS OR AGES.

Among the Blackfeet (and probably among other tribes,) are traces of a belief of the Toltecs of Mexico, and of Asiatic Nations, that the world has passed through three ages or Neps, called *Natōc*. These lasted of course thousand of years, a great prophet, called a *Nep*, having lived through each. The third *Nep* was buried in the Blackfeet country. We are now in the fourth *Nep*.

Qu.—Have you found any traces of this. If so, give particulars as fully as possible, and if possible, the meaning of what names you supply.