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African Faiths Shaped By Hinduism

Little is factually known of ancient Africa, Earth's second largest continent patched like a tribal quilt with shifting deserts, snow-glinting mountains, teeming jungles, pastel savannahs and the planet's largest canyon. We know much more of it geographically than historically; with the exception of dynastic Egypt in North Africa.

Studying the spiritual dimension of Africa, we are in dimmer light than its history. Even the profound religion of Egypt is more a mystery to us than say the European, pagan Wicca, "nature goddess" religion that survived as the witch faith and is now thriving. With the exception of a few glimmerings that may have shone into African shamanism and Mediterranean mystery schools, Egyptian mysticism and theism shriveled into neglect when the Egyptian empire died. Today, Egypt is Muslim, and Africa is the largest growing theater for Islamic and Christian converts, a sad statistic because the African faiths are vitally rich in true mystic knowledge and power. These conversions don't reflect the African heart and spirit, but are engineered by economic and social inducement. Ironically, there is a strong revival in the West of the African faith, which seeks attunement with and assistance from a multitude of terrestrial and cosmic Gods and Goddesses. It is high spiritualism and animism in consonance with the Hindu Veda perception that nature is more being than matter.

There are many affinities between Egypt's religion and Hinduism-future Hinduism Today articles will explore these parallels. Now, research and evidence are interweaving ancient Hinduism into deep, tribal African religion. The African faiths have lived for thousands of years, like Hinduism, in unbroken continuity. They reflect today to a large degree the knowledge and practices of ancient times.

Using linguistics, anthropology and archaeology. Dr. C. Hromnick, an adventuresome cultural researcher, has directly linked Hindu worship patterns to the culture of the

60 million-strong Bantu-speaking tribes of Central, Eastern and Southern Africa and the Hottentots of South Africa. He found striking similarities between Indian and African languages and religious practices - so close that he theorized the African religious culture was not totally indigenous as is commonly thought, but was influenced by Hinduism, perhaps as long ago as two thousand years.

Puzzling over how the Bantu dialects are so similar - Western Africans speak many entirely different languages - and contain an unusual abundance of terms for God, Dr. Hromnick began a scholastic study in the gold-producing regions of Mozambique. Here he linked the Bantu languages to Hindi, observing that the Africans of the area are called Mashona. The Hindi word for gold is shona. At this point, he came to Africa for further personal investigation and ended up splicing together so many connections that he wrote a book called Indo-Africa. In it he concluded the agriculturalist Hottentot tribe ceremonially worshiped the heavenly deities Chandra (moon) and Surya (sun) in Hindu fashion. The Hottentots called them Chand and Suree-nearly, identical to the Sanskrit.

Intrigued by his African discoveries, he went to South India to study temple structure and iconography. There he associated the white, black and metallic stones of Siva, Vishnu and Shakti worship with similar colored and shaped stones in Africa. His most recent discovery has been an African temple site styled along Hindu lines on the Komati River of South Africa. It is dated to the 2nd century A.D. Dr. Hromnick is seeking to have the ruins protected as an African heritage site.