

# Phenomenon of an Irrational in Eastern Direction in Thinking

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**Abstract:** Indian mythology and the Vedic image of the world built on its basis are of exceptional importance for understanding the entire Eastern culture. The mythological complex of Indian representations is the most ancient (researchers attribute its formation to the III millennium BC) and surprisingly persistent. The Vedic image of the world combines the features of proper mythology and religion and philosophy; it becomes the initial model for the formation of later religious and philosophical doctrines. Recall that it was the Vedic image of the world that formed the Brahmanism ideology prevailing in Ancient India and then formed the foundation of modern Hinduism through a modification of the Brahmin doctrine. Moreover, even religious-philosophical systems opposed to Brahmanism, such as Jainism, Bhagavatism, Buddhism, which questioned Rigveda and other Samhitas's sanctity, maintained a standard worldview continuity and solidarity with the fundamental images of the Vedic world model. Of course, Indian mythology, especially at the early stages of its formation, has much in common with mythological representations of other peoples of the world. At a particular stage in the development of mythic consciousness, we can everywhere find syncretic and anthropomorphic motifs, echoes of totemism or animism, the influence of matriarchy, and, of course, the tendency to overcome polytheistic traditions and the tendency to theistic monism. However, in the East, all these elements of mythological consciousness acquired an exceptional fundamental sound, making it possible to raise the question of the specifically Eastern way of world relations and the key importance of Vedic images in the general model of the world built by the East.

**Keywords:** East, subject, mythology, India, irrationality, Indian mythology.

## INTRODUCTION

Stories and vivid images in ancient Greece's mythology formed the basis of Greco-Roman artistic culture and were actively exploited throughout the history of Western Europe. Suffice it to recall that almost all of the artistic work of the Renaissance appeals to antique stories. Simultaneously, the mythological image of the ancient Greece world dominated Europeans' consciousness over a fairly narrow period of historical time (Harikrishnan, (2020). It is important to emphasize here that even though ancient philosophy actively uses forms of mythological consciousness, wrapping its narrative in all kinds of dialogues, parables, poems and creating images completely comparable to mythological ones, but starting from the Miletus school, the general philosophical picture of the world was built on other worldview principles, which had become more and more complex to join with the mythological representations of ancient Greeks. In the Renaissance and the New Age, the appeal of philosophy to ancient mythology and metaphysics was associated with the ultimate nullifying of their primordial spirit. In this regard, A.F. Losev (1993) was absolutely right when he asserted that "if Platonism was the most central for the ancient worldview, then for the West, especially in the Enlightenment, that Platonism has been characteristic, from which all its plastic and intuitive basis has dropped

out. Such Platonism is rationalism or, more specifically, Cartesianism. The educational worldview has Cartesian experience underneath, and the educational antiquity is French rationalism" (Losev, 1993; Judd, 2020).

The anthropomorphic and "mundane" nature of ancient mythology made it practically impossible to construct philosophical and scientific doctrines based on mythological images and views. The Greeks found it easier to carry out scientific and philosophical searches outside their rich mythological tradition. This gives rise to a certain paradox of ancient culture (Pradhan, Cocker, & Hogg, 2020). The philosophical research of scientists in the field of cosmology and cosmogony contradicts the traditional mythological concept, but do not lose their relevance and significance for the development of metaphysical knowledge. The search for a single substantial beginning of the universe already outlined in the poems of natural philosophers can be regarded as a desire for a monistic worldview. And this happens against the backdrop of pagan polytheism, which, in fact, is not subject to any reforms. All this suggests that the European worldview developed without a significant dependence on mythology already in the Hellenistic period. The mythological images themselves gradually ceased to function as elements of the current world model and went into the field of artistic creation (Kiev, 1996; Judd, 2020).

Indian mythology and art turned out to be more flexible and multifunctional. They quickly overcame

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anthropomorphic limitations and their content was filled with rich abstractions. One of the most prominent researchers of oriental art, K. Epstein, wrote: "Shiva dances creating the world and destroying it, the immense rhythm of his dance evokes the idea of huge world periods, and his movements are filled with the ruthless magic power of spells. A small sculptural group in the British Museum is the most tragic of all seen incarnations of death's idea in a love theme; it perpetuates the fatal element inherent in human passions like no other artwork. Our European artworks are banal and meaningless in comparison with these deep works, devoid of trinkets and symbolism, and focused on the main things and deeply plastic" (Epstein, 1942; Harikrishnan, 2020).

### Hypotheses

- I. The phenomenon of an irrational is an essential component of spiritual culture and worldview, serving as the basis for forming religious and mythological systems, artistic perception and creativity, and the development of organic value systems.
- II. The phenomenon of an irrational can be interpreted not only as a subjective experience of objective processes taking place in the world, but also as a factor with an independent epistemological, ontological and axiological meaning.
- III. It is advisable to consider rationalism and irrationalism as fundamental archetypal paradigms that make up the binary framework within the context of the oppositions "civilization - culture", "scientific-scientific and religious-aesthetic models of the world", "western and eastern cultural-historical types of worldview."
- IV. The Eastern cultural and historical type of worldview is based mainly on the irrationally-mystical way of understanding the world, which is characterized by syncretism, leveling of the subject-object paradigm, a tendency to suppress subjectivity, comprehension of reality in its contradictory and whole, principles of non-serializability and anti-discursiveness, the transcendental eidetic intention of consciousness.

### METHODS

Our study relied on those works in which both the typology of various models of the world is directly

addressed, and a number of problems related to our topic are analyzed. First of all, we tried, of course, to rely on the primary sources: for example, analyzing the basic principles of the irrational-mystical world relation, we tried to interpret the most ancient religious and philosophical texts.

### RESULTS

Due to their grandiose worldview charge, the Vedic images received the necessary versatility for the effective conversion into other areas of spiritual practice. This, in turn, served as an additional incentive to preserve Eastern culture's syncretic nature: mythological images turned out to be quite flexible and, therefore, quite acceptable for use both in theology itself and in the field of artistic creation, metaphysics, and even scientific knowledge. Moreover, Hinduism has acquired the features of both a universal picture of the world and an everyday practical lifestyle that regulates political and socio-legal relations, defining behavior psychology and ideology in the broadest sense of the word (Mackenzie, 2020).

The practical coloristic pattern of the sacred texts is clearly visible in the famous monument of Indian literature "Kama Sutra". This text gives instructions on many issues of everyday life, regulating the procedures for weddings, funerals, giving instructions in the field of family life and gender relations (Harikrishnan, (2020)). At the same time, the Kama Sutra fills each practical human action with a deep metaphysical meaning, reveals the spiritual background of everyday life. Everyday life of a person acquires a sacred meaning, is permeated by the idea of involvement in eternity, and the Cosmos itself. And even the erotic line of the Kama Sutra becomes an integral part of the general worldview, being inspired by a feeling of holy love for a person, God, and the Universe. The fate of the Kama Sutra in the countries of Western Europe is very indicative: in the process of its adaptation to the Western European mentality, this wonderful, artistic, figurative work was barbarously dissected. Europeans threw off everything "superfluous" from the Kama Sutra: philosophy, mythology, artistry, thus turning it into a kind of reference book on the technique of sexual relationship.

In order to illustrate the inextricable connection of philosophy and life, worldview and practice, it is enough to give only one eloquent example. In the 50s of this century, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, being the greatest philosopher of modern India (1888-1975)

became a vice president and then President of India. This precedent is absolutely impossible for Western Europe, which could only dream of a philosopher-ruler. A sage on the throne is an image that in the West was never realized, but existed only in ideal theoretical constructions. However, one day, Plato made several attempts to realize this image in practical life, naively believing that he, with his philosophical ideas, should be useful in improving Sicily's socio-political structure. But these attempts invariably ended in failure. The first time when Plato offered his services, the insulted rulers of Syracuse, instead of putting the great philosopher on the throne, sold him into slavery. For the last time, Plato's "election campaign" almost cost him his life.

One of the central Vedic world image principles was the ban on the hierarchy of the elements of being. This was achieved by considering the Cosmos as a single, undifferentiated whole. This premise implies a vast complex of provisions essential for the eastern worldview, which will remain in the future unshakable in almost all Indian religious and philosophical systems. The pantheon of gods (which ranges in number from more than three thousand in the Rig Veda to zero in some schools of Buddhism and Jainism) takes on a conditional character since these are not primarily anthropomorphic gods, but, so to speak, imaginary gods, substance gods, gods-elements (hymns of the tenth mandala of the Rig Veda are most characteristic in this regard: the gods are described here outside their physical attributes). In addition, it must be remembered that the enormous number of names of gods that we find in samhitas does not yet indicate the presence of the same number of gods themselves. The fact is that these names often record only various functions and qualities of a single mystical power. For example, one of the main deities of the Vedic (and then Brahmin and Hindu) tradition, Vishnu, has many names in which its functions and qualities are fixed and specified. So, the very name "Vishnu" means something like "penetrating everything", "all-encompassing." But "penetrate everything" is not its only function; therefore, Vishnu is supplied with other epithet names: he is also Hari ("deliverer"), and Keshava ("benevolent hair"), and Purushottama ("higher spirit"), and Murari ("enemy of the demon Mura"), and so on. In addition, the main Indian gods often appear before people in various "guises", taking the features of mortal beings, as necessary. Such a reincarnation of the god received the name "avatar" in the Brahmin doctrine (literally, "descent") (Judd, 2020). In order to fulfil his earthly missions, the same Vishnu is forced to perform them in

various guises: he takes the avatar of a turtle Kurma when he needs to sink to the bottom of the ocean, the avatar of a horse Kalki when there would be a ground fight, and also the avatars of Rama, Krishna, Varaha (Nehru, 1987).

The specific character of Vedic pantheism not only overcomes a polytheistic understanding of the world essentially, but also erases the clear boundary between the "world of the earth" and the "world of heaven", which is so characteristic of ancient mythology, and of all Western European Christianity. It is also worth paying attention to the fact that, in contrast to the binary model of the universe that is very widespread in non-eastern regions of the world ("this world" - "another world"), Indian mythology proclaims a three-term model (three lokas of cosmic existence), adding an intermediate "air space world", which turns out to be the most important and valuable, since it serves as a necessary guarantor of the integrity and interdependence of the Cosmos. At the same time, the three-term model of the universe remains conditional since all worlds are subject to a single law, Rita, which provides, at the same time, both cosmic and moral order. Thus, the eastern tradition did not initially separate ontology and ethics, the laws of the material and spiritual worlds (Sahai, 2007). One of the most prominent modern Indologists Kalpana Sahai writes the following on this occasion: "For a European, soul and body, material and spiritual, are opposed, often in conflict, and one complements the other. In the European tradition, everything is built on a person's conflict with the environment, on his internal conflict. We look at man as part of nature, part of the macrocosm. This macrocosm also exists inside him. Therefore, there can be neither a struggle with nature, nor its winners. All this determines the difference in views on man, art, and literature" (Chattopadhyaya, 1973; Mackenzie, 2020).

This all-pervasive unity comes to its peak when it comes to Brahman, which is the impersonal cosmic principle described in some mandalas of the Rigveda, and then developed in later sacred and philosophical texts, especially in aranyakas and upanishads. The identity of the eastern world image becomes especially apparent when we come across a very confusing and complex interpretation of Brahman in the traditional concepts of European science. Some scholars see atheistic tendencies reaching "superteism" in the triumph of the impersonal cosmic principle (Blavatskaya, 1995; Pradhan, *et al.*, 2020). The authors of this work are still inclined to define "Brahman" as an

unlimited spiritual basis of the Cosmos in its pantheistic sense, moreover, in Indian literature this concept is often compared with the Atman, the individual spiritual basis of a living being, but in such a way that absolute identity is affirmed between the Atman and Brahman (the most striking example of such an interpretation is Chandilla-vidya).

Another significant point of the Vedic-Brahmanic image of the world, which formed the basis of the Far Eastern worldview as a whole, lies in the idea of samsara - the eternal cycle of rebirth. In essence, samsara implies the essential unity of all living things: there is no fundamental difference between man, plant and animal in the sense that they all have an immortal soul and mortal body. Such a model of world relations excludes the very possibility of any anthropocentrism and makes an absurd statement of the question concerning the relationship between man and nature. Man is no more and no less than a part of nature, of the Cosmos itself. His body shell is the last barrier to merging with the Absolute mind of the Cosmos. It is important to emphasize that the principle of samsara in no way means the triumph of eternal life in the flesh. The cycle of rebirth is given to a living being for the sake of the opportunity to fully develop their abilities and achieve perfection. E. P. Blavatsky says that "...In order to really exhaust all the experience that is given by earthly existence... a man needs not one, but many lives. According to the teachings of the ancient Sages, a man lives many times, incarnating in different eras, under the most diverse conditions, until earthly experience makes him or her wise ..." (The Upanishads). The real reward for this is moksha, or complete liberation from samsara, from the physical, bodily shell and actual merging with the universal spirit. "As rivers flow and disappear into the sea, losing their name and image, so the knowing man freed from his or her name and form, goes back to the divine Purusha" (Tagore, 1987; Pradhan, *et al.*, 2020).

The religious, philosophical, and mythological system described in Samhites largely determined the course of development of the further oriental worldview. First of all, this affected the method of philosophizing and the place of metaphysics in the general picture of the world. The constant sensation of the direct connection of man and the cosmos, the microcosm and the macrocosm has led to the fact that even after millennia, a syncretic and organic approach to the problems of being has made a distinctive feature of all Indian culture. The West has taken a different path in this sense: along the path of differentiation of

knowledge and practical activity. And this path turned out to be extremely productive for solving most utilitarian and pragmatic tasks. The rapid development of particular scientific disciplines has turned Western society into an undeniable leader in terms of specialization. Hence the primacy in the natural sciences, which is so characteristic of the West, and hence the tragic consequences found in the 20th century and associated with the loss of a holistic understanding of being. Indian literature, by contrast, is characterized by a constant and surprisingly keen sense of the unity of spiritual processes, a sense of "involvement" in the Cosmos, the universe, the One. Each concept is a reflection on the meaning of life and a search for absolute truth; any mythological image itself is a model of the universe; every piece of art, whatever we take, is a conversation with God about the fate of mankind. "A personality is a limit of the infinite," Tagore argues, "The personal awakens in God when he creates. He limits himself to the limits of his own law; the game, which is this world, whose reality lies in its relation to the individual, continues. Objects differ not in their essence, but in their appearance, in other words, depending on who is looking at them. This is art, the truth of which is manifested not in essence or logic, but in expression. Abstract truth may belong to science and philosophy, but the real world belongs to art. The world as art is a game of the Supreme Being, who gorgeously creates images." (Mackenzie, 2020).

A special look at man, society, nature, the universe established to a large extent the very problematic field of Indian philosophy. In none of the fundamental worldviews of India we can find a division not only into "metaphysics" and "theology", but also into ontology, epistemology, logic, ethics and aesthetics. Western science is still not able to establish correspondence between the laws of being and the laws of thought. In the East, there is a single ontological-epistemological complex of questions, which, in addition to everything, covers the whole range of logical, ethical and aesthetic issues. The problem of good and evil which is so characteristic of Western European ethics acquires a conditional "colour" pattern in Eastern literature, because good and evil mutually determine each other: there can be no creation without destruction, life without death, day without night. The Indian god has three faces of trimurti symbolizing the creator god Brahma, the guardian god Vishnu and the destroyer god Shiva. And all of them are one; all of them are the guna (attributes, or qualities) of a single universe. Hence the unusual encyclopedic nature of Indian

religious and philosophical systems: before defending his own point of view, a sage must figure out and understand what was said before him by other thinkers, and only then proceed with the presentation of his own teachings. Therefore, each religious-philosophical system, be it Vedantism, Buddhism, Jainism or any of the darshanas, is at the same time an encyclopedia that analyses all previous cultural and philosophical experience and which contains all possible points of view on a man and being.

Another feature of the Indian philosophical and religious systems (almost all of them without exception) lies in the initial dissatisfaction with the existing state of things. The East is often criticized for this, blaming its excessive pessimism and "gloom" in relation to the extrasensory manifestations of life. It seems to us that such criticism arises from a misunderstanding of the thinking essence of eastern style. Eastern pessimism in relation to the phenomenal world has nothing to do with eschatological ideas. On the contrary, constant dissatisfaction and inner concern for the destinies of the world and humanity serves as a powerful intention in the Indian consciousness, stimulating both the work of consciousness and the subject-practical activity of man. Therefore, any Indian religious and philosophical concept does not stop at a simple statement of a certain picture of the world. We always find a deeply aesthetic thought in them: the thought of the need to overcome the subject-empirical being, the thought of the need to recognize the visibility and transitory nature of the fetishes surrounding us. This is the true moral and aesthetic pathos of the philosophical culture of India: a way from the material to the eternal, from the illusory to the true, from the existing to the due.

Already on the basis of the Upanishads alone, a fairly clear idea of the mysticism of Eastern culture can be made. Moreover, this mysticism proceeds from the reality of being understood as the One, which is not comprehended by the forces of the human mind. Therefore, European science, which has a Gnostic ideal of Enlightenment, does not favour mysticism too, and, as a rule, implies something abnormal, "invented", supernatural, or even devilry at all. Such an attitude towards mysticism is quite natural for a strict scientific mind that does not want and cannot know how to believe in its limitations. Only what can be felt, smelled, or seen has an unconditional reality for the Western European consciousness. Only that can be proved in a rational-logical way has a conditional reality. Everything else is surreal, "mystical." Meanwhile, the existence of the mystical is a fact of real life, a fact that remains a

fact regardless of whether it is cultivated (as is done in the East) or, on the contrary, they try not to notice it (how it is done in the West).

The Upanishads do not substantiate or prove the need for mystical perception. The mysticism of reality and the reality of mysticism for these literary monuments are so obvious that they do not need proof (especially since substantiation, in the scientific sense of the word, cannot serve as any criterion in this case). According to the Upanishads, a man rises to a higher, mystical level of cognition when he or her are freed from the dictates of reason. In order to understand the life of the spirit and the spirit of life, it is necessary to comply with them. And what kind of correspondence can we talk about when we try to come closer to extra-conceptual and extra-logical using concepts and logic?

Indian philosophy proceeds from a very simple thesis, the proof of which we may not find explicitly in Vedic sources, but which is rooted in the most eastern way of thinking. Reality is all-being and only all-being is real. True reality is life itself, and all life, which in itself does not have a division into matter and spirit, into concepts and images, into evil and good, carnal and divine. We cannot know the whole reality with the help of the sensory organs, but only that part of it, which we perceive as objective and material. And even in this case, we are already mistaken and protecting ourselves from the truth, for we learn something in isolation from the One, the Whole, in isolation from that does not have a division into material and spiritual. We know again not all reality with the help of concepts and logic, but that part of it that we call the "idea". But we are mistaken again, for an idea is a fragment of reality, and not reality itself; an idea is a fragment of the spirit, but not the spirit itself. Truth is absolute and complete; it is not truth outside its wholeness and absoluteness.

## DISCUSSION

Meanwhile, the category of irrational (so firmly established in the East) was subjected to severe discrimination throughout Western European cultural development. Already in Ancient Greece, philosophers were inclined toward a rationalist understanding of the world, reaching to the extreme. If ideas about the world contradict reality, it is so much the worse for the reality (Parmenides, Zeno). Even in the middle Ages, when ethnocentrism dominated Europe, the world's rational-logical picture did not cease to exist. This was expressed in numerous disputes about the "reconciliation" of faith and knowledge, and

subsequently in the scholastic teachings about God (Thomas Aquinas).

Starting with Rene Descartes in the New Age era, rationalism was established not only as a scientific worldview, but also as a universal way of life for Europeans. It runs like a golden thread through the whole German classical philosophy and reaches its climax in psychoanalysis (Sigmund Freud). In the twentieth century, any manifestations of the irrational in Europe and the USA are interpreted as a destructive, painful, pathological state of consciousness.

## CONCLUSION

As a result, we came to the conclusions confirming our hypotheses stated earlier.

The mysticism of cognition in oriental culture is fully achieved by overcoming rational-logical barriers and by freeing consciousness from categorical limitations. It is possible to touch the primordial reality only on this path. We talk about the world's objects with the help of statements that we evaluate as "true" or "false". But the reality is neither true nor false, it just is! We are building a chain of relations between phenomena. But reality has no relations!

The reality described in the Upanishads is somewhat reminiscent of the Kantian thing-in-itself, which turned out to be absolutely transcendental to pure reason. As scientists rightly point out, Kant took an agnostic position on this issue. Hegel also tried to solve this problem but very unsuccessfully, incorrectly endowing logical thinking with objective reality attributes, i.e., inconsistency, movement, infinity. If we evaluate Hegel's fads from the point of view of Indian philosophy, then we conclude that he made at least two serious mistakes. First, insisting on a logical way of cognition, he could not overcome the boundaries of mind and enter the realm of the spirit; thus, the knowledge and the knowable were not adequate to each other. Secondly, Hegel did not quite correctly interpret the nature of reality, which, being the One, is beyond contradictions and antinomies. The comprehension of reality is accomplished not in contradictions, and not even in their unity or struggle,

but beyond them. Moreover, comprehension of reality takes place beyond the limits of thinking itself.

Only when we find ourselves in a position to rise above thought, word, logic, the inaudible becomes audible, the unperceivable becomes perceptible, and the unknown becomes known. This is possible only on the path of mystical intuition, embracing reality in its integrity and indivisibility. This kind of intuition no longer implies cognition of an object by a subject of "research"; it does not imply any subject-objectivity at all but means the actual identity of the own "I" and the One. As long as we revolve within the conventions of abstract categories, we only glide along the reality's surface but do not penetrate into it. According to Radhakrishnan, "... the matter which has been broken up into relationships will never be able to restore its unity through pure logic. <...> The very first contact with logic leads to the transformation of the One into a system" (Radhakrishnan, 1993). It is impossible to build a scientific system on the path of mystical intuition, but it is possible to comprehend the absolute. Transcendence is impossible on the path of rational logic, but scientific progress is possible. The East went along the first path, the West along the second.

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