A comparison of dynamics in Navajo ceremonial
and the Bahá’í World Faith [[1]](#footnote-1)

It is a fairly common tendency among the peoples of the western (white) world to discredit any religious practices that do not have the outward appearance that is associated with Christianity, in fact to go so far as to discredit the varying practices among themselves. Little thought is given to the underlying truths that are constant, and that widely varying surface practices of the beliefs are but cloaks woven of the symbolisms that give body to the spiritual truths and enable man to be better aware of them by having them materially present as a constant reminder of their spiritual meaning.

Western man, having more and more replaced spirituality with “materiality”, reached the point of attributing all the values of existence to outward forms of religious ceremony to the extent of losing the very part that it stood for or symbolized, that is, spirituality. Since man now only has these outward meaningless forms, he tends to judge others by this form alone. Anything that is different from it is judged foreign, heathen and of the devil.

However this may be, upon clear examination we find a different picture unfolding to the discerning eye if we but look underneath the ceremonial shell. Like the fires and energies of this earth are hidden under the mantle of the soil in its many variations, which are dictated by locations with varying climates and other characteristics, so the mantles of religion differ, but the fires and energies, i.e. their dynamics, are one truth no matter what are the outward appearances.

The southwestern India peoples have a long and intricate system of ceremonials, known chiefly as SINGS, WAYS or CHANTS among the Navajo and the dances of the Pueblo. The Navajo SINGS are mainly used in the art of healing, of achieving this in part in bringing the patient back into tune with the universe, i.e., with himself and through that with all things spiritually and materially in the world in which he lives. The dynamics employed by the SINGER, or MEDICINE MAN, are directly related to the Tablets written by Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. (see *Some Answered Questions* *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era,* p. 133) In the Bahá’í Writings it is explicitly stated that spiritual means must go hand in hand with material means for full and lasting effectiveness. The prayers to help achieve this, are sung, or chanted, much like the Persian or Arabic manner of chanting prayers to the One Almighty Being. The purging done through physical stimulants, the anointing and application of herb medications, all have a dual meaning, the materially soothing and healing effect of their own as well as the spiritual adjustment implicated by their varying symbols. The potency of healing, spiritually, character uplifting, forces evoked by near absolute faith to the extent of carrying the faith into daily living attests to the power and oneness of all religion that is practiced to the Glory of the One True God, be He called [the] Great Spirit, Mazda, Alláh, God, Creator, or Divine Being! The powers of nature given man for his utilization (*Some Answered Questions,* ch. 1) are invoked through the rhythm in prayer inducing harmonious energies to come to his aid. This is almost a lost knowledge and can only begin to be tapped by western man through returning to the living of a spiritual basis of existence in this world.

Thus, the spiritual invocation of the natural energies for the wel-

fare of man is the basic premise of Indian ceremonial. However, there are ever increasing number of aspects within ceremonials that are being perverted through misuse, lost original meaning and “over the ages misinterpretation” which is bringing about superstition, fear and strong signs of disintegration, especially among the Navajo. Also the so-called “adaptability” of this people is greatly contributing to this disintegration by adapting too much of the bad and very little of the little good of the white man. Quite the reverse with the same result may be attributed to the Pueblo where, in many cases, he has become so inflexible in his protective armour against the influence of white men, than to ever-increasing vibrations of change, and this is now spiritually as well materially disintegrating their influence. He has ceased to be able to end with the new wind and acknowledge its influence.

Still, it is no good for us to accentuate the negative aspects of any one faith but only to concentrate on the positive side, its strengthening thereof and the progressive steps that must needs harmoniously follow will help us achieve our goal.

1. This document is from the Emma Maxie Jones Collection, https://bahai-library.com/emma\_maxwell\_jones\_collection , prepared by E. Jones, M. Thomas, and J. Winters (2021-2022). An attempt has been made to convert the original into reasonable English. —M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)