



**Yumaism, the Limboo
Way of Life**

A Philosophical Analysis

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Preface



The Limboo tribal society is an autonomous social conglomeration, followers of an ancient religion called Yumaism. It is a socially, culturally and religiously strong society reinforced by traditional wisdoms refined through consistent abidance since antiquity.

Yumaism or Yuma *Samyo* (*Samyo* = religion) is the approach to life of the aboriginal Limboo people, one of the Native Himalayans of the Eastern Himalayan region spread across the countries of Nepal, Bhutan, and West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam and other North Eastern states of India. The strengthening of Government institutions in the recent past (since merger of Sikkim into the Indian Union in 1975, and dawn of democracy in Nepal) in these areas, with multi-ethnic and multi-lingual infrastructure has weakened both, the social as well as religious institutions – “*Tumyanghang*” and “*Yehang*” village systems of the Limboo tribe. As a result, these Limboo institutions are not effectively functioning in the society because of their insignificant relevance to the administration of the multi-ethnic society on the one hand, and lack of knowledgeable members on the other.

In the absence of organized religious scripture for guidance, the *Phedangmas* (religious shaman priests) are now performing religious rituals unsupervised and guided only by their own limited knowledge and free will. There are no established institutions any more to guide, direct or control them. Similarly, in the absence of an effective *Tumyanghang* with knowledgeable members, the Limboo society has also started conducting itself rather erratically, not abiding by the religious and social customary rules in the strict sense. Hence, there is an urgent need to strengthen these social and religious institutions by effectively documenting the evolution and ideology of Yumaism.

This effort is arguably the first time that the Limboo faith, “Yumaism”, is being philosophically studied, based on oral tradition, so far recorded, collected, brought in print media and the religion – which prescribes the traditional way of life for the Limboos – being analyzed. The details of text-wise or myth-ritual-wise analysis is beyond the

scope of this study, and hence awaited. Yumaism myths and rituals should be understood as Eliade's 'Sacred Space' and its 'Sacred Time' of the first occurrence, that contains all 'reality', or 'value' and other things acquire 'reality' only to the extent that they participate in the 'Sacred' (Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal return*, p 5). As Eliade's understanding, Yumaism centers on his concept of hierophany (manifestation of Sacred) and not more restrictive concept of theophany (manifestation of a god).

A structured approach is attempted here to explore the conceptual beliefs – ethnic ideas, elementary ideas or folk ideas, including supernatural powers such as the Great Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma, other supernatural powers, and spirituality, the Eight Souls tradition (*Yetchham Thim*), the eighteen stages of life and other spiritual practices of Yumaism. It also explores the origin of matriarchy in Yumaism, indigenous knowledge of food and other livelihood bioresources management culture, and origin, pre-history and history of the Native Himalayans – the Limboo or Limbu or Yakthumba or Subba tribe.

It is hoped that this book will help in understanding Yumaism, as a Trinitarian Monotheism and the basic principles for the way of life of the Limboos. It is also hoped that this book will assist prospective members of the *Tumyanghang* and *Yehang* institutions, and assist in the strengthening of these institutions at the village level and through them, serve the Limboo society at large.

This book, as already mentioned, is the first attempt at studying Yumaism from a philosophical point of view and seeks to resolve some philosophical problems of incoherency which have confronted adherents, especially of late.

J. R. Subba

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Chapter - 1

Yumaism

What is Yumaism or Yuma Religion?

Yumaism or Yuma Samyo (Samyo = religion) or Yuma religion is a systematic approach of living of the autochthonous Native Himalayans - Limbu or Limboo or Yakthumba or Subba tribe of the Eastern Himalayan region (Nepal, Bhutan, and India - West Bengal, Sikkim and other North-Eastern states of India), and the diasporas scattered throughout the world (Myanmar, United Kingdom, United States of America, Singapur etc.), that involves beliefs about one's corporeal origin (*Mangjiri Manglondha Den* located on the mountain *Phoktanglungma Pembenglungma* - Mount Jannu or Kumbha Karna) from the spirial origin - as blessing of Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma who stays at *Sangram Pedang Den* and one returns to its origin at death through the center of universe *Hangsillang* (main pillar of our house), one's place (The Ancient Lumbuwan, now divided into Nepal, Sikkim and West Bengal States of India), or a responsibility to live and act in the world in a particular Limboo tribal way. Yumaism is a belief on a matriarchy or feminine Great Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma, cosmic consciousness, who is considered as transcendent, immanent and the eternal being, and who created the universe and all there is. She has the attributes of Supreme Motherhood Mind of Antiquity, purity and holiness, justice (fair, right, and true in all her judgments), sovereignty (unthwartable in his will), omnipotence (all-powerful), omniscience (all-knowing), omnibenevolence (all-loving), omnipresence (present everywhere at the same time or coming from any direction any time), infinite and immortality (eternal and everlasting) in a higher power or truth, but it is more commonly defined in religious studies as the patterns that express Yumaism faith and reinforce it amongst the Limboo tribe in their day-to-day living. One can share the philosophy of Yumaism, believing in its higher truth, matriarchy or feminine Great Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma with manifesting that faith religiously.^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9}

The various aspects of Yumaism include narratives (Mundhums or oral traditions or oral myths or ethnic ideas or elementary ideas or folk ideas), symbolism (*Phangmuk-sam, Silamsakma, Tongsing, Yagrangsing, Chotlung, Magenna Lungdhung, Lasso* etc.), beliefs (existence of Tagera Ningwaphuma, *Yuma Sam, Thoba Pa-Sam* or *Hang-Sam*, a large number of *Sammangs* and *Sammang Chyangs, Sam-Sire, Phensam* or evil spirits etc.), and practices

that are supposed to give meaning to the practitioner's (Limboo tribe's) experiences of life. The meaning of Yumaism centers on a *Mang* (Deity) – Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma, an ultimate truth with Her numerous attributive personified gods and goddesses, and it is commonly identified by the practitioner's (Yuma adherent's) Mundhum, prayer (*Mang-Sewa*), rituals (*Mang Khoma* /reactualization of Sacred Place and Sacred Time), meditation (*Sambang Tokla Kepma/ Siddhi*), music (*Yemukla*) and art (*Yesama, Laasso, Thakchum-thakpey*), among other things, and is interwoven with society. It is focused on specific supernatural, metaphysical, and moral claims about reality (the cosmos and human nature) which may yield a set of Yuma religious laws (customary laws) and ethics and a particular Yumaism life-style. Yumaism also encompasses ancestral or cultural traditions (*Tongsing tookma, Nahangma, Him Sammang khoma, Tap Sammang Khoma, Thar Sammang Khoma* etc.), writings, history, and mythology, as well as personal faith and religious experience.

Yumaism refers both to the personal practices related to Yumaism faith and to rituals and communication stemming from Yumaism's shared conviction. It is sometimes used interchangeably with "faith" or "belief system," but it is more socially defined than personal convictions, and it entails specific behaviors, respectively. The roots of Yumaism as in the case of any religion is considered psychological by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), social by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), and philosophical by Ernesto De Martino (1908-1965) along with origin and historical development. Yuma Samyo is often described as a ethnic religion or communal system of the Limboo tribe for the coherence of belief focusing on a system of thought of Almighty Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma, unseen being, person, or object, that is considered to be supernatural, sacred, divine, or of the highest truth. Moral codes, practices, values, institutions, tradition, rituals, and scriptures are often traditionally associated with the core Mundhums (myths) of Yumaism belief, and these may have some overlap with concepts in secular philosophy. Yuma Samyo is also often described as a "Limboo way of life" or a life stance.¹

Yuma religious beliefs usually relates to the existence, nature, pray and worship of a Tagera Ningwaphuma popularly known as "*Yuma Mang*" (Cosmic Deity or Universal Goddess), through only Her *Yuma Sam* (second person of the Trinitarian Goddess or Her Matriarchal component or the Earthly Matriarch or Her Daughter in Mundhum), and Her Patriarchal component – *Thoba Pa-Sam* or *Hangsam* or Ancestor Divinity (Third person of the Trinitarian Goddess), and Her divine involvement in the universe and human life. It also relates to Yumaism values and practices transmitted by the spiritual

leaders known as *Phedangmas* (shaman priest system) and *Yahangs* (learned religious councils) since time immemorial. Unlike other belief systems, where religious belief tends to be codified in literate societies (e.g. contemporary Bible, Quran, Vedas etc.), Yuma religion is still passed on orally through the shamanist religious priests known as *Phedangmas* and *Yahangs*. Pascal Boyer stated in his "Basic Books" (2001) that religion in many primitive non-literate societies still existing in many isolated regions of the world today are still largely passed on orally or as oral traditions.¹⁰

Yumaism has answers to metaphysical and cosmological questions about the nature of being, of the universe, humanity, and the divine. Yuma's mysticism (to initiate) has the pursuit of communion with, or conscious awareness of ultimate reality, the divine, spiritual truth, or Deity through direct, personal inner experience of the multisensory perception specialists - *Phedangmas* or *Yehang* individuals (intuition or insight) rather than rational thought or outer sensory perception (knowledge obtained from outer five senses). The *Phedangmas* and *Yehangs* in Yumaism are multisensory or inner perception specialists and they speak of the existence of realities behind external perception or intellectual apprehension that are central to being and directly accessible through personal inner experience. They say that such inner experiences are genuine and important sources of knowledge. Esotericism of Yumaism Mundhums are often spiritual (thus religious) but can also be nonreligious or nonspiritual, and it uses intellectual understanding and reasoning, intuition and inspiration (higher noetic and spiritual reasoning,) but not necessarily faith (except often as a virtue) and it is philosophical in its emphasis on techniques of psychospiritual transformation (esoteric cosmology). Esotericism refers to "hidden" knowledge available only to the advanced, privileged, or initiated, multisensory or Inner perception system specialists, incarnate *Phedangmas* as opposed to exoteric knowledge, which is public. As in all religions, Yumaism is both esoteric and exoteric, but mainly esoteric like many ancient civilizations such as *Yoga* of Hinduism, and the mystery religions of Ancient Egypt, Israel (*Kabbalah*) and Greece are examples of ones that are also esoteric.¹¹

Like in other organized religions, the members of Yumaism may not see any significant difference between religion and spirituality. They may see a distinction between the mundane, earthly aspects of Yuma religion and its spiritual dimension. Some individuals draw a strong distinction between religion and spirituality. They may see spirituality as a belief in ideas of religious significance (such as Trinitarian Goddess, the soul system - *Yetcham thim*, *Sangram Pedang Den*, *Khema Yongsong Den* etc.), but not field bound

to the bureaucratic structure and creeds of a particular organized religion. They choose the term spirituality rather than religion to describe their form of belief, perhaps reflecting a disillusionment with organized religion, and a movement towards a more “modern” — more tolerant, and more intuitive - form of religion.

Yuma Samyo is essentially based on ancient oral tradition known as Mundhum (myths), and the word myth has several meanings:

1. Mundhums or myths or narratives are ethnic ideas, elementary ideas or folk ideas evolved by our forefathers and passed down to generations to generations orally.
2. A traditional story of ostensibly historical events that serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon;
3. A person or thing having only an imaginary or unverifiable existence; and,
4. A metaphor for the spiritual potentiality in the human being.

In the Limboo sociology, the term Mundhum (myth) has a non-pejorative meaning. There, Mundhum (myth) is defined as a story that is important for the Limboo tribe whether or not it is objectively or provably true. Mundhums are the spiritual instruction to us from our ancestors passed down to generations to generations orally through our *Phedangma* system and *Yehang* system in the society. For instance, death or mortal corporeal human life was essential for creation, and it was caused by the curse of the creator messenger god Siger a Yabhundin Mang Porokmi Yambhami Mang while creating human beings in the creation myth. But from a mythological outlook, whether or not the event actually occurred is not important. Instead, the symbolism of the death of an old “life” and the start of a new “life” is what is most significant. Religious believers may or may not accept such symbolic interpretations. In Yumaism, no event occurs without a cause.

2. Modern currents in religion

Clifford Geertz’s definition of religion as a “cultural system” was dominant for most of the 20th century and continues to be widely accepted today.¹ Sociologists and anthropologists tend to see religion as an abstract set of ideas, values, or experiences developed as part of a cultural matrix. For example, in Lindbeck’s *Nature of Doctrine*, religion does not refer to belief in “God” or “Goddess” or a transcendent Absolute. Instead, Lindbeck defines

possible the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings, and sentiments.”¹² According to this definition, religion refers to one’s primary or elementary or ethnic world view or folk worldview and how this dictates one’s thoughts and actions. Thus religion is considered by some sources to extend to causes, principles, or activities believed in with zeal or conscientious devotion concerning points or matters of ethics or conscience, and not necessarily including belief in the supernatural.

Although evolutionists had previously sought to understand and explain religion in terms of a cultural attribute which might conceivably confer biological advantages to its adherent. Richard Dawkins called for a reanalysis of religion in terms of the evolution of self-replicating ideas apart from any resulting biological advantages they might bestow. He argued that the role of key replicator in cultural evolution belongs not to genes, but to memes replicating thought from person to person by means of imitation. These replicators respond to selective pressures that may or may not affect biological reproduction or survival.¹³

3. Is Yumaism a Polytheistic Religion?

The answer is Yes or No. Almost all the ancient religions were polytheistic, and almost all the popular modern and post-modern religions have become monotheistic today; and all of them evolved from polytheistic religious roots. Further, all the ancient religions were matriarchy or feminine or believed on female Great Goddesses, but now almost all religions have evolved to patriarchy or believe on male Gods, except Yumaism, Ninnammism, Munism or some other religions of the world.

Archaeology has unearthed abundant indications of the religious proclivities of prehistoric humans. In the Upper Paleolithic there were well-attested cases of burials with grave goods. In the Neolithic the evidence is much richer. There are, for example, spaces clearly set aside for religious activity; several of the units/houses at the Neolithic settlements of Catal Huyuk, in Near East (8,500 B.C.) have been identified from the contents as shrines. But the archaeology of preliterate peoples can never tell us what they actually believed. The invention of writing breaks this silence; for the first time we can be certain that we are dealing with gods, and better still, we can learn something of the myths associated with them. From the beginning this record shows that the people of the ancient Near East believed in many gods. This is hardly surprising. Anyone who thinks that the world is run by divine will has to take account of the fact that the results, though not chaotic,

look a bit disorganized; this suggests the involvement of more than one god, and that the gods are sometimes at cross-purposes. Moreover, the idea of a single god taking care of all aspects of the life of the universe seems rather impractical. For example, it is not obvious how the roles of a war god and a goddess of love could be combined felicitously. People living in a reasonably complex society would surely prefer to think in terms of a division of a divine labour. All this of course, sets out from an assumption; that the gods are rather like us. But who else would they be like?

The narrative of the Babylonian creation epic ends with a divine banquet attended by the fifty great gods and numerous others. They have gathered to celebrate, but there is also a political agenda: the gods swear an oath confirming that Marduk, the god of Babylon, is to exercise the kingship of the gods. They had in fact agreed to this rather burdensome arrangement at the previous banquet. On that occasion a generous supply of liquor had certainly helped to overcome any reservations they might have had. But there was a more pressing reason for their submission: they were in mortal danger, and Marduk was their only hope of deliverance. The problem was ugly divine civil war that had broken out after the persistent ruddiness of the younger gods had alienated their primeval forebears. In the course of the struggle these younger gods became thoroughly demoralized. It was Marduk's ruthless and successful prosecution of the war that cemented the new regime, to such an extent that the gods then spent a year shoveling and making bricks to build the city of Babylon for him. It was there that the celebrating banquet took place. This, at least, was how the Bibliomania told the story. When the Assyrians adopted the epic, they customized it by transferring the leading role to their own traditional god, Assur. Further, in the city of Ugarit in North Syria, clay tablets, here too, the gods assemble, eat, and drink. In the Ugaritic pantheon the king of the gods is El, but he does not rule with the same authority as Marduk. Thus, most of the polytheistic religions slowly transformed into monotheistic religions. However, many religions, both historical and contemporary, retained their ancient polytheistic character: and have a belief in polytheism even today, such as Shinto, Ancient Greek Polytheism, Roman Polytheism, Germanic Polytheism, Slavic Polytheism, Chinese folk religion, Neopagan faiths and Anglo-Saxon paganism. The Trinitarian Christianity, Trinitarian Yumaism, Trinity Hinduism etc. are also considered some form of polytheistic religion.¹⁴

Polytheism is the belief in or worship of multiple deities, called gods and/or goddesses. These are usually assembled into a pantheon, along with their own mythologies and rituals. Polytheists do not always worship all the

religion as, “a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought. It is similar to an idiom that makes gods equally, but can be **monolatrists** (specializing in the worship of one particular deity) or **kathenotheists** (worshiping different deities at different times or season). Polytheism (belief in one or more gods and goddesses), is a type of theism but contrasts with monotheism (belief in a singular god or goddess), which is the dominant belief in the world today. In certain religions, such as Wicca, the various deities are seen as emanations of a greater Godhead.

Yumaism was once thought to be a Polytheistic religion worshipping a number of gods and goddesses till recent times. However, when we philosophically analyzed, it was found that the attributes of Great Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma, and Her messengers (*sijoingmisa* / *duts*) were treated as different Deities. Because of this reason they were not prayed and worshipped them separately. Since, the Limboo language is a verb based language (pronominalized language) unlike noun based languages like Hindi, Nepali or English, the attributes or effects of the Deity (Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma) and Goddess’s messengers (*sijoingmisa*) were misunderstood as different gods and goddesses (Deities), which does not qualify Yumaism as a polytheistic religion. Hence, on detail analysis it was found that Yumaism is not a polytheistic religion. Contrary to this, Yumaism believes and practices were found **Trinitarian Monotheism**, which are as follows:

- (i) It believes on the idea of a Cosmic Consciousness or Universal Goddess (in matriarchy or feminine Great Goddess) – known only through Her attributes and effects of Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma. In Limboo language *Tagera* means antiquity or omnipresent (appearing from any direction anywhere), *Ningwa* means mind / *Buddhi*, *Phu* means earliest or Supreme, or antiquity, *ma* = suffix for female gender or motherhood; which collectively means the Omnipresent Supreme Motherhood Mind of Antiquity (God in female gender) or it means “Dawn of Spiritual or Cosmic Consciousness”. It believes on triune Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma; and/or prayed and worshipped Her through the other two components of the triune “*Yuma Sam*” (matriarchal component or the Earthly component or second person or daughter in Mundhum) and “*Thoba Pa-Sam*” or clan or sub-clan “*Hang-Sam*” (Patriarchal component or Ancestor Divinity or third person). Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma is the eternal being who created the universe and all there is. She has the attributes of Almighty, Supreme purity, justice (fair, right, and true in all his judgments), sovereignty (unthwartable in

his will), omnipotence (all-powerful), omniscience (all-knowing), omnibenevolence (all-loving), omnipresence (present everywhere at the same time or coming from any direction any time), and immortality (eternal and everlasting). She is also believed to be transcendent, meaning that She is outside space and outside time, and therefore eternal and unable to be changed by earthly forces or anything else within Her creation. In Yumaism, the Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma is understood to be a personal feminine Great Goddess, with a will and personality, immanence, transcendence and Ultimate Unity and Supremacy.

- (ii) She is known only through Her attributes or manifestations or effects and these attributes have been personified and known in *Mundhum* through their attributive names as *Sijoinami Sa* or *duts* or messenger gods and goddesses. They are not incarnations of Tagera Ningwaphuma but are Her attributes or manifestations or effects and are indefinable absolutes, formless, beyond human sensory perception and are prayed in the context of praying Tagera Ningwaphuma or “*Yuma Mang*” only, to discharge specific responsibilities in specific time. They are not different deities. Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma is imagined as Supreme Power, Ultimate Sources of existence as well as extinction of celestial, formless and beyond imagination but often imagined in any form suitable to Her specific roles in specific time. She is beyond five sensory perceptions and is indefinable absolute. The attributive or *Sijoinami Sa* or manifestative or messenger gods and goddesses are only prayed in the context of Tagera Ningwaphuma and never worshipped or prayed with any type of sacrifices or offerings separately. Several attributive names of *Yuma Mang* (Deity) believed to be the personified messenger gods and goddesses are mentioned in the course of the myth recitation of *Mundhum* which has been described in the preceding chapters. Each of Her manifestation appears in each situation and because of Her presence certain things or creation happens. All these messenger gods and goddesses are believed to be the manifestations or messengers or personified attributes or effects of Tagera Ningwaphuma and prayed only while praying the Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma. Thus, Yumaism believes only in One Great Goddess.
- (iii) Yumaism believes on existence of a plethora of other earthly spirits or energy or divine beings or earthly transcendence energy consciousness known as *Sammangs* (divinities), *Sammang-chyangs*

(retinues of *Sammangs* and descendants of *Sammangs*), and *Sam Sire* (human or nonhuman spirit guides or nonphysical guides and teachers). *Sammangs* (divinities) are different from *Mang* (Deity). They are originated on earth as spirit or earthly energies or earthly transcendence energy consciousness. They are also 'physical consciousness' like us but have powers to affect worldly events on earth more than humans; as humans can affect the world more than animals. According to oral traditions or Mundhum of Yumaism, a number of *Sammangs* were originated during the period of biosphere creation on the Earth (about 3.5 billion years ago), and also during the early period of human evolution due to unnatural deaths, emotions, anger, envy and jealousy, incest, delusion, sorrow, ignorance while using the natural resources of the world by mankind. During the course of evolution of human being on earth, evil spirits of unnatural death (*Idhuk Samsogha*, *Sugut*, *Sasik Yongdong*), curse (*Manghup mangde*), incest (*Lungdhung kai phekma*), fire divinity (*Mukkum Semi*), devils and ghosts (*Sangdok Aplek Pokma*) and other such *Sammangs* (divinities) originated on the earth. Yumaism believes that the *Sammangs* (divinities) are having the power to affect worldly events in much the same way as humans and animals have the power to do so. Just as humans can affect the world more than animals, *Sammangs* can affect the world more than humans. Yumaism believes that the *Sammangs* are more powerful than human being and thus affect human being in *Samsara*. Thus, in preliterate society or even in remote areas now, *Sammangs* are prayed and worshipped for their blessing, cure, protection, good health, wealth and prosperity as gods and goddesses. Pray and worship with offerings, blood sacrifices of *Sammangs* (divinities) and *Sammang Chyangs* (retinue of divinities and progenies of *Sammangs*) are simply for individual and household protection, health care and prosperity. They are not *Mangs* or Deities or Gods and Goddess.

- (iv) It believes on a number of Mundhums (myths) which tells us the significance of the need for man to be subject to a moral law in accordance to the will of Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma;
- (v) All Yumaism Mundhums (myths) are **theological** which use no bodily form as the Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma and Her matriarchal component – *Yuma Sam* and Her Patriarchal component - *Thoba Pa-Sam*, known only by their effects and attributes but contemplate the very essence of Goddess. Since Deity and divinities are intellectuals,

and all intellect return into itself, the myths express in allegory the essence of Deity and divinity.

- (vi) What we worship seasonally as *Him Sammangs* (household divinities), *Tap Sammangs* (nature divinities), *Thar Sammangs* (clan divinities) are not different *Mangs* or Gods and Goddesses (Deities) but different *Sammangs* (divinities) and *Sammang Chyangs* (retinues of divinities) of this earth realm. They are just like us wondering in *Samsara* – Earthbound spirits or natural energies or earthly transcendence energy consciousness but have more power to affect us in various ways; and hence we pray and worship them to please or avoiding their negative influence to us. Hence, Yumaism in its ancient form may look like Polytheistic religion but it does not fall under the category.

4. Is Yumaism a Animistic Religion?

Yes and No. Almost all ancient religions were animistic. However, with the advancement of scientific knowledge the human relation to nature has changed to harmony, cooperation, sharing, reverence for life or interdependence. Yumaism is no exception. It is still thought to be animistic in the sense we are interconnected to nature for all purpose. On the other hand, now most of the adherents of Yumaism view it is not an animistic religion as it was thought once. It does not pray or worship inanimate objects. It worships the divinities dwelling on these inanimate objects such as trees, rocks, stones, mountains, rivers, forests, the Moon, the Sun, the Stars etc. The adherents of Yumaism worship the divinities such as *Lamangla Mang* or *Kamala Mang* of the Moon, and *Nammangla Mang* or *Mamandin Mang* of the Sun, the creators of the Moon and the Sun, dwelling on the Moon and the Sun respectively, not the Moon and the Sun as such. Similarly, the adherents worship *Naga-so-yobedang Mang* at the spring-water; *Singbung Mang* or *Tahangbung Mang* on the trees and rocks, not the spring-water or the trees and rocks respectively. The dictionary meaning of the word “Animism” refers to the worship of nature and natural phenomena, such as rocks, mountains, rivers, streams, thunder and lightening, to ascribing inanimate things as having a soul (Taylor, E. B. 1832-1917). The Yumaism belief systems, however, do not outrightly worship these phenomena. They respect their natural surroundings but do not ascribe souls to them. They think that these places are where the spirits dwell. The spirits as such are not identified with the rocks or trees or any inanimate objects themselves, but are seen as separate from them. Yumaism believes on worshipping those divinities dwelling on the inanimate objects, not the inanimate objects; and thus it is not an animistic religion.

5. Is Yumaism a Monotheistic religion?

Yes, it is. *Yumaism* is a monotheistic religion. Monotheistic religion is the belief in theism that only one God or Goddess exists. The concept of “monotheism” tends to be dominated by the concept of God in the Abrahamic religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, as well as the Advaita, Dvaita and Vishishtadvaita philosophies of Hinduism, although the latter philosophies admit the existence of a plethora of divine beings. These Hindu philosophies, similar to Judeo-Christian traditions believe in angels, also believe in less powerful entities, such as *devas*.¹⁵ *Yumaism* believes in one Goddess – Tagera Ningwaphuma (Deity/ *Mang*), and numerous earthbound gods and goddess known as *Sammangs* (divinities / *devas* / spirits) and *Sammang chyangs* (retinue of divinities).

Ostensibly monotheistic religions may still include concepts of a plurality of the divine. For example, the Trinity in which God is one being in three personal dimensions (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in Christianity). Additionally, most Christian churches teach Jesus to be two natures (divine and human), each possessing the full attributes of that nature, without mixture or intermingling of those attributes. This view is not shared by all Christians, notably the Oriental Orthodox (miaphysite) churches. *Yumaism* also believes in Trinitarian with second person *Yum Sam* as matriarchal component or earthly component or Great Goddess’s daughter (in Mundhum) and *Thoba Pa-Sam* or *Hangsam* or Ancestor Divinity as patriarchal component of the Trinity Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma –the absolute reality; both second and third persons having two natures – divine and humanity.

There are various forms of monotheism in practice in the world, including:

- (i) **Henotheism** involves devotion to a single god while accepting the existence of other gods. Similarly, **monolatry** is the worship of a single deity independent of the ontological claims regarding that deity. Henotheism is based on the belief that a god may take any form at any time and still have the same essential nature. The central idea is that one name for a god may be used in a circumstance where a particular aspect of this god is being represented or worshiped while a different name may be given to or used to describe or worship a different aspect of the god in a different circumstance. This example does not imply the superiority of one over another, but simply that a god can exist in many forms at once and offering worship or praise

using different names does not have to imply polytheism. Henotheism is sometimes considered a sophisticated version of monotheism in that it allows the worshiper to believe in essentially one Supreme Being and still appreciate and not limit the names, expressions, or manifestations used to describe it. Yumaism does not fall under this group as it does not accept the existence of other Gods and Goddesses. Earlier, Yumaism was categorized under this group with a view that the attributes or effects or manifestations of Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma were personified as existence of different Gods and Goddesses. Detail analysis of these personified attributive names of the Goddesses of Tagera Ningwaphuma revealed that it was wrongly grouped under this group.

- (ii) **Deism** posits the existence of a single god, or the Designer of the designs in Nature. Some Deists believe in an impersonal god that does not intervene in the world while other Deists believe in intervention through Providence.
- (iii) **Monistic Theism** is the type of monotheism found in Hinduism, encompassing pantheistic and panentheistic monism, and at the same time the concept of a personal god.
- (iv) **Pantheism** holds that the universe itself is God. The existence of a transcendent supreme extraneous to nature is denied.
- (v) **Panentheism**, is a form of monistic monotheism which holds that God is all of existence, containing, but not identical to the Universe. The 'one God' is omnipotent and all-pervading, the universe is part of God, and God is both immanent and transcendent. Yumaism is Panentheistic religion.
- (vi) **Substance monotheism**, found in some indigenous African religions, holds that the many gods are different forms of a single underlying substance.
- (vii) **Trinitarian monotheism** is the belief in one God who is three distinct persons; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Universal cosmic Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma, Her matriachal component *Yuma Sam* (second person) and Her Patriarchal component *Thoba Pa-Sam* (or *Hang-Sam*) (third person). Non-Trinitarian Yumaism may be categorized as **Inclusive Monotheism** but philosophically contradictory.

On the surface, monotheism is in contrast with **polytheism**, which is the belief in several deities. Polytheism is however reconcilable with **Inclusive monotheism**, which claims that all deities are just different names or forms of a single God. This approach is common in Hinduism, e.g. in **Smartism**. **Exclusive monotheism**, on the other hand, actively opposes polytheism. Monotheism is often contrasted with theistic **dualism** (ditheism).

From the various forms of monotheism described above, Yumaism is undoubtedly categorized as **Trinitarian monotheistic religion**. Yumaism is based on the belief that Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma is the only one Great Goddess. Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma is known only through Her attributes and effects. Similarly, Yumaism believes that all other *Mangs* (gods and goddesses) known in Yumaism are nothing but personifications of Her attributive names (*sijoingmisa*) or manifestations or effects of Tagera Ningwaphuma, and are not separate existence of *Mangs* (Deities).

Yumaism is best fitted in the philosophical concept of Trinitarian Monotheism rather than Non-Trinitarian Monotheism or Inclusive Monotheism. It believes in one Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma who is three distinct persons; Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma (First Person), “*Yuma Sam*” Her daughter or the small goddess or the Earthly motherhood-manifestation of the Goddess, or matriarchal component of the Goddess (Second Person) and “*Thoba Pa-Sam*” or clan or sub-clan “*Hang-Sam*” or “Ancestor Divinity” or patriarchal component of the Goddess (Third Person). It is somewhat like that of the Christian Trinitarian or Hindu Trinity but with considerable difference in the components and their divine and humanity wills. However, some Yuma adherents (Non-Trinitarians) do not believe in Trinitarian monotheism; and pray and worship these three persons separately, which is philosophically incoherent.

Chapter - 2

Goddess in Yumaism

The earliest oral tradition records about the Goddess are found in Yumaism Mundhum (myths), where Tagera Ningwaphuma also known as *Yuma Mang* adheres to the idea of a transcendental feminine Goddess, and follows a set of moral principles enshrined in the Mundhums of Tagera Ningwaphuma. *Yuma* religion also known as *Yuma Samyo* in Limboo Language would thus be in line with:

- (a) The idea of personification of our own 'Transcendence Energy Cosmic Consciousness' or Universal Goddess (Deity) or *Yuma Mang* - Tagera Ningwaphuma, who is known only through Her attributes and effects. In Limboo language *Tagera* means antiquity or omnipresent or coming from any direction any time, *Ningwa* means mind/*Buddhi*, *Phu* means earliest or Supreme, *ma* = suffix for female gender or motherhood; which means Yumaism conceives the Great Goddess as 'the Supreme motherhood mind of antiquity' or 'Dawn of Spiritual or Cosmic Consciousness'.
- (b) The need for man to be subject to a moral law in accordance to the will of the Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma; and
- (c) The claim of the *Yuma* religion to be the heir of the original ethnic idea, elementary idea or folk idea or folk faith of the Limboo, Limbu, Yakthumba, or Subba Tribe.

1. Who is Great Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma?

In *Yuma* religion, Tagera Ningwaphuma is the unchanging, infinite, immanent, and transcendent reality which is the Divine Creator (Deity) of all matter, energy, time, space, being, and everything beyond in this Universe. The nature of Tagera Ningwaphuma is described as transpersonal (extending across the personal), personal and impersonal (without personal reference) in Mundhum. It is believed *to be eternal*, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and ultimately indescribable in human language. The Mundhum had fully realized Tagera Ningwaphuma as the reality behind their own being and of everything else in this universe. In Mundhum (oral tradition), She has been described as infinite Being, infinite Consciousness, and infinite Bliss. She is regarded as the source and essence of the material universe but not the

Universe itself, that is Panentheism. The Mundhum says that by the desire of the Supreme Goddess, the material universe was created in the void out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). Tagera Ningwaphuma is the Absolute Godhead – “*Yuma Mang*” or “*Yuma*”: Absolute Reality or Universal Essence and not to be confused with Her daughter or Her Earthly manifestation or second person, Her matriarchal component - “*Yuma Sam*”.

Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma is the eternal being who created the universe and all there is. She has the attributes of Almighty Supreme *Ningwa* (Mind / Intelligence) of antiquity, sovereignty (unthwartable in his will), omnipotence (all-powerful), omniscience (all-knowing), omni-benevolence (all-loving), omnipresence (present everywhere at the same time), Infinite, Immortality (eternal and everlasting). She is also believed to be transcendent, meaning that She is outside space and outside time, and therefore eternal and unable to be changed by earthly forces or anything else within his creation. The Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma is understood to be a personal, matriarchy or feminine Great Goddess, with a will and personality, immanence, transcendence and ultimate unity and supremacy.

Yumaism believes that the Goddess is enshrined in the doctrine of Trinitarianism some what similar to Christian Trinitarian or Hindu Trinity but with some difference, which holds that the three persons of the Goddess together form a single Great Goddess – Absolute Goddesshead. However, the components of three personations of Trinitarianism Yumaism varies to that of Christianity and Hinduism. The Yumaism Trinitarian views emphasizes that the Univesal Great Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma is a *Mang* (Deity – Cosmic or Spiritual consciousness / Supreme Motherhood Mind/*Buddhi* of Antiquity), popularly known as “*Yuma Mang*” or simply “*Yuma*” and has a Will – the Divine Will (Divine Nature).

The second personation is Her Earthly manifestation or Her daughter or Her matriarchal component known as “*Yuma Sam*”. She is believed to has two Wills united in one – Divine will and humanity will. We pray and worship the Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma through the divine will of “*Yuma Sam*”. The Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma is known through Her attributes and effects through Her divine will. The humanity will of “*Yuma Sam*” connects us to the Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma. The humanity, the physical consciousness of *Yuma Sam*, whom we pray and worship in every household, and thus connects us to the Great Goddess Tagera Ningwaphuma. The second person “*Yuma Sam*” – the matriarchal component (small goddess in philosophy) thus forms matriarchal bridge between the Great Goddess Tagera



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