



SEPARATION OF THE SEXES A NAVAJO PHILOSOPHY

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DIYIN DINE'E

A good place to begin is with the Navajo concept diyin and /or diyin dine'e, or diyinii. The translation for these phrases is "Holy People." It signifies the natural phenomena because we as Navajo people are taught through our elders to respect nature as the wind, the rain, thunder, and the sun. Diyin dine'e (Gods and Men) contrast with the drama of Navajo Stories and ceremonies, most stories describe elemental human acts, breathing, giving birth, death, defecation, the raising and consumption of food, these an almost everything else that a human being thinks, says, or does, are, in a sense "sacred" acts.



MA'II / DOOL'DINII

This is the same with the Navajo stories which describes experience, if a person listens to the stories, thinks about them, and relates them to his/her own life, he/she will perceive that they are true, and having learned this he/she will experience more, he/she will understand the stories better. Most stories told are about the coyote, and are shared during the winter season. The coyote is sought to be a curios, undermining, trickster whom one can relate to when an individual speaks without first thinking of his/her words, or doing something prior to planning. The coyote is called Ma'ii or in the stories he is referred to as "Dool'dinii" translated meaning "challenger".



BI'AHDI(MALE)/BI'KAI(FEMALE)/NADLEE

Within the Navajo stories as well everything can be divided into male and female, even stories, ceremonies, jewels, rain, sky, and earth. Of any two that are nearly alike it is common among Navajos to speak of or symbolize that which is the courser, rougher or more violent as the male, and that which is finer, weaker, or gentler as the female.

Another aspect to this is the combination of both genders referred to as nadlee (hermaphrodite) who may not be as strong and able to control ritual knowledge yet on the other hand he possesses the female thoughts that are usually associated with the home, sheep, fields and family.

HOCHXO'

Sexuality was created by the primal couple according to First Man's plan. The emergence from the underworld story tells about the functions of sexual desires in keeping men and women together. The story also reflects upon the First woman being caught at, and causing a lot of trouble for herself and others through committing adultery. This brought "hochxo" meaning evil or ugliness, which references to the jealousy, worry, and negative affect in general that accompany sexual desire.



ILTSA'NIINAA(Separation of the sexes)

The wife of a chief causes the separation. First man's wife would feign sickness so that she will be carried to the riverbank where she meets her lover. One day First Man follows her and sees what is going on, at which he returns home to wait, where he pines and worries about it for several days, he then informs other chiefs about what has happened. When the wife returned home, he strikes her. The wife leaves to her mother. This in sense is the outcome of abuse initiated by First man. All of this brought together in this story of

the “Separation of the sexes”. The separation occurs immediately after, and as a direct result of, the creation of sexuality.

This is where First Man decided what to do. He stated that since we men are unnecessary to life, we might as well separate from the women and have each sex live by it. The males can live on one side of this river and the females on the other side. But, First Man knows what is going to happen, and so he arranges it so that nadlee will accompany the men. First Man calls nadlee to the meeting and asks what tasks he can perform. The nadlee respond by saying, “I can plant, make millstones, make baking stones, and make my own pots, earthen bowls, gourds, and water jugs. I can also make Liquid corn mush and still corn mush”. A person who is nadlee can do both male and female tasks (except bear children). The people now prepared to move apart, the women stayed on the land while the men moved across the river. Each side retained their belongings, but of course the men had nadlee with the female skills and tools he possessed.

So on the men’s side, they did their work, while nadlee cooked and raised the male children. The men appeared to be doing well, while the condition of the women gradually worsened. The women later taunt the men sexually by standing on the riverbanks and exposing their genitalia. Gradually, the women began to plead but, not the men. Some women even ran into the river and drowned.

Sexual desires also tormented them. With a so-called oblong stone they attempted intercourse. The even used feathered quills, leg muscles of animals, and hooked spine cactus. While the men attempted intercourse with mud, and other went out hunting does in the same manner for sexual intercourse. They would also heat the liver for intercourse. This separation took four years when finally as the coyote stated to the ugliness that goes with the beauty of sexual desires, he states this because of the Nayee (monsters) were born of these acts on the women’s side.

After living apart for four years, a hunter was visited by an owl who reminded him of the necessity for the sexes to continue together, despite the difficulties that are inherent in their relating. The owl states that when the men and females reunite they each will have to wait four days before resuming sexual relationships. This has been a ceremonial restriction as it is observed to this day.

The story of the separation of the sexes gives us a starting point for the understanding of Navajo ethics and of ethical instructions. Diyin does not punish “wrong doers” but simply understand the “right behavior” as it is bound in reality that through this story, sexuality is necessary for all the reasons given. And to understand what an individual encounters as bad can certainly reflect on others, thus having knowledge of this story we seek hoozh’jii which creates, reinforces, and celebrates the process of renewal. And saanaghai bikehozho which means understanding the whole, to arrive at and communicate the beginnings of such an understanding.

The expression Sana nagi and Bike hozoni appear in many songs and prayers and means “long life and happiness” and Bike hozoni means beautiful, happy and good.



NAVAJO PRAYER

Sa'a naaghia bike hozhoon nasisdlii'go, adishni

Sa'a naaghai bik'e hozhoon,

Dootidilneehii

Dii nasisdlii (repeat four times)

Hozho nahasdlii (repeat four times)

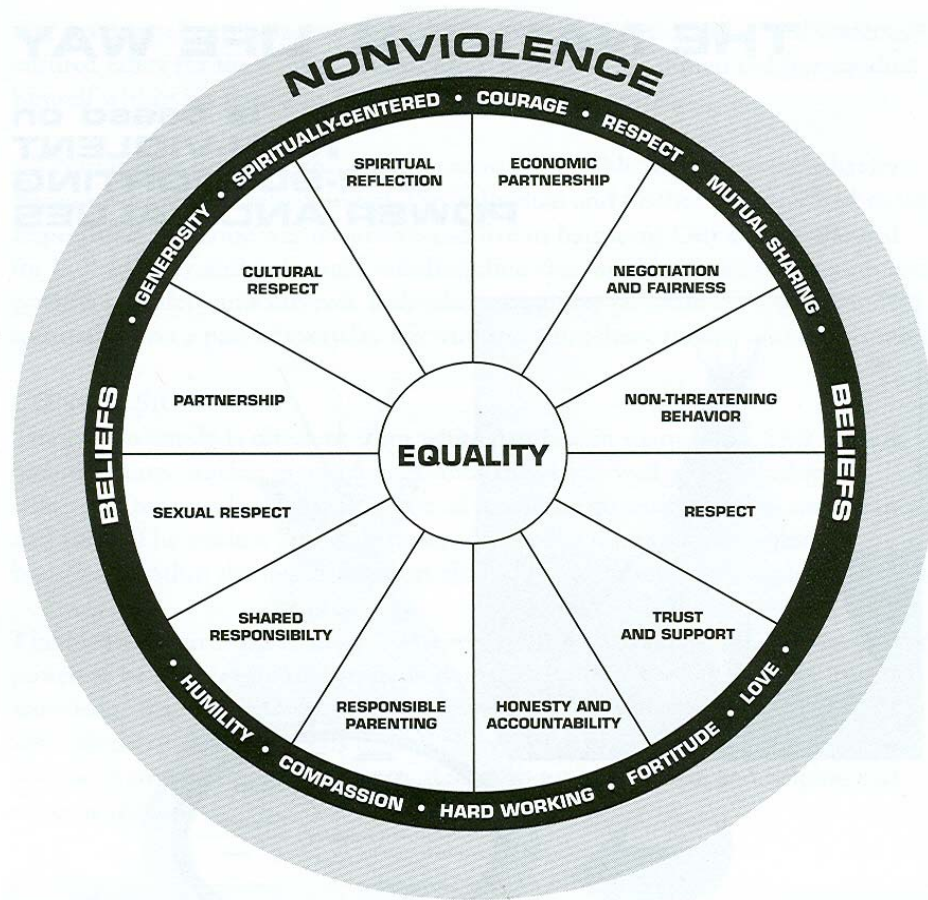
ENGLISH

I have become perfect, with the long life of happiness.

I have become again as I have

Things around me, environment are "beautiful"

Everything surrounding me is beautiful.



The Circle of Life teaches us that all things in Creation are equal in importance. The **Equality Wheel** shows us how this looks in human relationships of all kinds, as partners, parents, relatives, and friends.

Being Respectful

Listen to her non-judgmentally. Be emotionally affirming and understanding. Value her thoughts, feelings and opinions.

Sexual Respect

Understanding the difference between love, sex, and intimacy. Respect her feelings and her right to choose her relationships and control her body.

Cultural Respect

Understand your relationship to others and all things in Creation. Respect and accept that people have their own path.

Spiritual Reflection

Meditate about walking your own path. Reflect on your relationship with the Creator. Recognize and express thanks for your blessings. Focus on the inner balance of your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual self.

CONCLUSION

In order to show respect and protect our traditional culture, we need to share our stories and ways of life, as we have been taught through years of generations by our elders and/or medicine-men. This journey that we walk can be difficult, however this journey can also be rewarding and necessary.

Women were once valued and honored in many native cultures. Many stories surround the First woman, Spider Woman and Changing Woman within the Dine stories, Native spiritual concepts teach how to live every day life with this balance and the feminine principle is honored and recognized for its power. Our connection to Mother Earth demonstrates this honoring of the female.

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Some information for this article was obtained from the following book.

Farella, J.F. (1990). *The Main Stalk: A Synthesis of Navajo Philosophy*.
University of Arizona Press, Tucson Az