

UDC 291.11

**TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL
PARADIGMS IN SOCIETY: INSIGHTS FROM “DUNE” BY F. HERBERT****Maria Ryzhik**

PhD Student

ORCID: 0009-0008-0077-5312

Odesa I.I.Mechnikov National University, Odesa, Dvorianska Street, 2, 65082

Abstract. Religious and philosophical motifs are pervasive in literature of the 20th and 21st centuries. We analyze the religious and philosophical paradigms depicted in the Dune Chronicles by Frank Herbert to discern potential catalysts for religious synthesis and find out if similar religious transformations are present in contemporary society, influenced by factors such as multiculturalism and westernization.

Key words: philosophical cognition, interpretation, transformation, spirituality, religious movements, society, multiculturalism, westernization, Duniverse.

Introduction

Throughout the literature of the 20th and 21st centuries, the presence of religious and philosophical motives is observed. They may manifest in the form of allegorical representations and symbols, as well as vibrant elements that are seen from the first chapter to the last page. Notable examples of such works include Clive Staples Lewis's “The Chronicles of Narnia,” Dan Brown's “Angels and Demons,” as well as books by modern Indian authors such as Amish Tripathi, Kavita Kane, and Devdutt Pattanaik.

In this study, our primary focus will be on the novels by Frank Herbert, known as the Dune Chronicles. We will examine the religious and philosophical underpinnings of the “Duniverse,” ascertain the presence or absence of analogous religious transformations in contemporary society, as well as determine the potential reasons for religious synthesis.

Main part

“Dune” is a science fiction novel written by American writer Frank Herbert. It was published as a book in 1965. This novel became the first part of the multi-volume Dune Chronicles. “Dune” is considered a cornerstone of the science fiction genre. The novels from the series have been filmed several times. Among the well-known adaptations are the film “Dune” by David Lynch (1984), the mini-series “Dune” (2000) and “Children of Dune” (2003), as well as the films of Denis Villeneuve “Dune: Part One” (2021) and “Dune: Part Two” (2024).

The narrative landscape of “Dune” takes place in the distant future, in a Universe where human civilization has settled on different planets. The planet Arrakis, commonly referred to as Dune, occupies a pivotal position thanks to the possession of a singularly valuable resource named spice. Spice is an indispensable element for interstellar navigation, it also can provide a person with a longer life span, heightened awareness, and prescience.

In the first book of the series, readers are immersed in the tumultuous journey of Paul Atreides. A member of a noble house faces the machinations of political intrigue and betrayal and is forced to fight for survival on Arrakis. Paul unlocks hidden

abilities and uses them to defeat his enemies and shape the fate of the inhabitants of Dune and all galactic civilization.

Religious and Philosophical Views in “Dune”

The Dune Chronicles is filled with deep philosophical and religious aspects. Religion permeates every aspect of the Duniverse society, encompassing politics, culture, and economics. Let us delve into the key aspects of this phenomenon.

“Dune” features the messianic motif, reminiscent of Abrahamic religions. Here, the prophecy surrounding the advent of Muad'Dib, leads to the cult centered around Paul Atreides. However, unlike traditional messianic stories, “Dune” raises questions about the consequences of such a cult of personality, highlighting the potential dangers it poses for both Muad'Dib and his adherents. Paul Atreides grapples with the formidable task of managing the expectations of his devotees and navigating the unforeseen consequences of his actions, which lead to changes throughout the universe. Thus, the messianic motif in the novel not only develops the plot but also reflects on the nature of power, faith, and responsibility.

We wish to direct our focus to a notable quote from the novel, which is known even by those unacquainted with the book. This is the Litany Against Fear: “I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past me I will turn to see fear’s path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain” [1, p. 12].

This litany reflects a deep psychological and philosophical message regarding the importance of confronting and surmounting one's fears. Let us look at this perfect example of cognition in the context of Indian philosophy, particularly with regard to the acquisition of knowledge of Atman. From this point of view, it can be interpreted as a metaphor for self-awareness and unity with the Universe and the Absolute, known as Paramatman. Within Hinduism, Atman signifies the Self [2, p. 135]. The litany resembles the process of realizing the Atman as a part of the Paramatman. In this process, the individual Self faces and overcomes illusory fears (Maya) to get a profound comprehension of its true nature and interconnectedness with the universe. In this context, the phrase “permit it [fear] to pass over me” signifies the destruction of illusions and egocentric attachments that interfere with the awareness of one’s true essence. When fear goes away and “Only I will remain,” a moment of liberation from the false ego and a realization of one's authentic identity (Atman) can take place. Thus, viewed through the lens of these concepts, the Litany Against Fear in “Dune” serves as a symbol of spiritual awakening.

In the appendices to the first novel of the Dune Chronicles, Frank Herbert delves into an exploration of the Duniverse. He highlights that the prevailing beliefs within the Empire at the time of Muad'Dib's emergence were shaped by various influences, including: “The so-called Ancient Teachings—including those preserved by the Zensunni Wanderers from the first, second, and third Islamic movements; the Navachristianity of Chusuk, the Buddislamic Variants of the types dominant at Lankiveil and Sikun, the Blend Books of the Mahayana Lankavatara, <...>” [1, p. 812]. Names of the teachings in the Duniverse suggest a synthesis of religions known to modern humanity. Moreover, the Orange Catholic Bible, which contains the

wisdom of various beliefs and religions, is also mentioned in the book. Unfortunately, the scope of this article does not allow us to dwell in more detail on the various religious movements from Frank Herbert's *Duniverse*.

Causes of Religious Transformations and Synthesis

How can we explain such modernization and transformation of religions? Could this lead to the creation of new teachings? The development of multiculturalism and globalization processes holds the potential to engender the creation of novel religious expressions in the modern world. Such processes lead to increased contact and interaction between different cultures and religious traditions, facilitating the exchange of ideas, practices, and beliefs. As a result, people begin to integrate elements from various religions and spiritual traditions into their practices and spiritual dimensions of existence.

The advocacy for transcendental practices, such as yoga, meditation, and other spiritual modalities, serves as a catalyst for the advancement of religious synthesis. These practices frequently originate from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds but acquire universal accessibility and appeal across various cultures and faiths. Modern people turn to a variety of sources to achieve spiritual enlightenment and harmony, including elements from diverse religions.

Secularization, alongside the emergence of novel forms of spirituality, constitutes additional factors influencing religious synthesis. Secularization results in the loss of influence of traditional religious institutions and practices, yet creates opportunities for the exploration and assimilation of innovative spiritual practices. Individuals may turn to syncretic or alternative forms of spirituality, which combine components from various religious traditions, to fulfill their spiritual aspirations.

All these factors contribute to the evolution of religious synthesis in contemporary society, illustrating people's inclination to seek resonance across a spectrum of spiritual traditions and practices.

Modernization and Transformation of Religions in Contemporary Society

Given the futuristic setting of *Dune*, the question arises: can similar modernization and transformation of religions occur in the present-day world? Throughout history, instances of religious synthesis have indeed emerged, exemplified by movements such as Bahá'í Faith, Caodaism, Falun Gong, and various New Age movements.

It is noteworthy to consider the contributions of representatives of “new Indian myth-making,” by this term we denote contemporary Indian authors who craft both fictional and non-fictional works drawing upon Indian mythology and philosophy. Renowned writers such as Amish Tripathi, Kavita Kane, and Devdutt Pattanaik frequently delve into Hindu mythology to reinterpret traditional religious and philosophical concepts within the framework of modern society. Employing allegories, symbols, and motifs from Indian mythology, these authors express modern interpretations of faith, morality, human relationships, and spiritual growth. While the first two authors specialize in presenting fresh interpretations of well-known narratives, Devdutt Pattanaik extends his focus beyond Hinduism to encompass Jainism, Islam, and Christianity, while also exploring the intersection of religion with domains such as business and management.

Conclusions

Frank Herbert's series of novels illustrates of religious synthesis. While belonging to the fantasy genre, echoes from the Duniverse resonate within modern society, offering insights into the complexities of religious transformation and adaptation.

Key reasons for religious synthesis include the development of multiculturalism and globalization, the rise of transcendental practices, secularization, and the emergence of new spiritual forms enabling self-awareness.

Religious movements that have been created through religious synthesis include Bahá'í Faith, Caodaism, Falun Gong, and various New Age movements. Also, the synthesis and transformation of religions can be seen in modern Indian literature. Indian authors create works based on ancient myths, reinterpreting ancient myths from a contemporary perspective, indicative of the influences of globalization and westernization.

References:

1. Herbert, F. (2023). *Dune*. New York: Ace Books.
2. Monier-Williams, M. (1899) A Sanskrit–English Dictionary. Oxford: Clarendon Press.