

Swastika Symbolism

You may come to find a swastika symbol on a Native American artifact. No need to be alarmed, as the word swastika in Sanskrit means “well being”.

Actually, the swastika is a motif found on textiles from all over the world! From Armenia to Iran, to the South Ural Mountains, in Ancient Rome, and certain African groups in Ghana. From the Byzantine Era, Bronze Age, and Iron Age; to Celtic and Slavic cultures, and in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and MUCH MORE!

The swastika is notably associated with Ganesha—which marks his palm—a Hindu deity that overcomes obstacles and opens the way to good fortune. And, Tibetans may use the swastika in many variations, such as on doors of their homes as protection against evil.

In Navajo, the swastika represents the Whirling Log, vehicle of Culture Hero. The hero sets out on a long journey down the San Juan River, in which he hollows out a log to help him in his attempt. During the journey, the hero encounters many misadventures but gains important celestial knowledge. When he reaches his destination, the gods take his log out of a whirlpool where the rivers meet and help him to shore.

Whirling logs are also used in Navajo sand paintings during a healing or other type of ceremony. A sand painting is usually a temporary piece of art, which is destroyed after the ceremony is over. However, sand painting designs are also used in prints and framed paintings, rugs and on jewelry. Since WWII, the use of the Whirling Logs in Native American artifacts has been confined mainly to rugs. Jewelry with the symbol is usually seen before 1940.

This is really all the information you'll need to give if the question arises from a visitor, but if you personally are interested in learning more, just visit the Wikipedia page: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swastika>