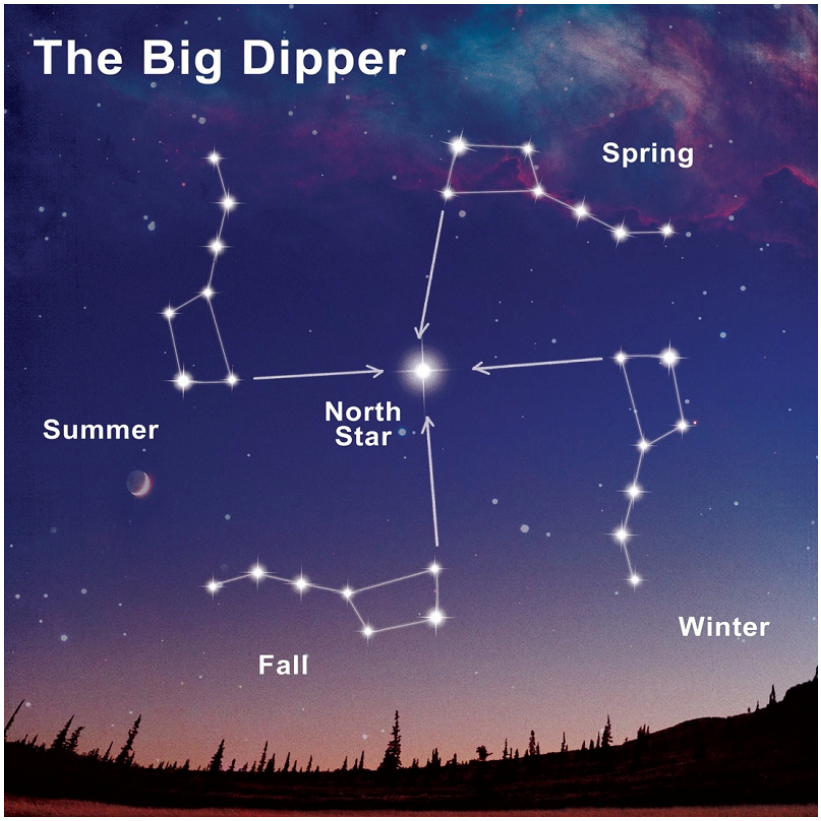
THE MOST ANCIENT SYMBOL OF REVERENCE FOR EXISTENCE

I found this religious decoration on the outer wall of an old mosque in the three-thousand year-old Silk Road oasis city of Bukhara. I've seen it in many places throughout the world, such as ancient ruins of India and Rome. Yet this is far older – it was carved onto mammoth ivory by Ice Age hunters in Ukraine 12,000 years ago.

From time immemorial has it represented eternity, prosperity, the centeredness of all that is. Why? Look up into the sky on a clear dark night. All people have studied the heavens for eons. You could always know where you were by finding North, for the two front stars of what we call the Big Dipper point to it – always.

The Greeks called it *Mega Arktikos*, the Great Bear – why we call Far North the *Arctic* today. The ancients saw the Bear every year rotating around Celestial North – now occupied by Polaris, the North Star – through all four seasons, while all the stars in the sky circled around it every night. What do you see in this depiction of that seasonal rotation?



Yes, a Swastika -- Sanskrit for “the goodness of existence.” The most heinous perversion of symbolic art in world history was to take the symbol for the goodness of existence used by people for a dozen millennia – and still revered by Buddhists, Hindus, Moslems and many others to this day – and twist it into a symbol of horrific evil. It’s an informative lesson of history. (*Glimpses of Our Breathtaking World #225* photo ©Jack Wheeler)