

Tantra and Zen Buddhism

Part 4 of 6

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Continuation and probable conclusion of the tape on Tantra and Zen.

There is a statement made in *The Secret Doctrine* which may have an important bearing upon the problem of the different forms of yoga such as the tantric form and the non-tantric form. This is a statement to the effect that when evolution had carried life forms to a position just beyond the animal in certain nascent respects so that the most advanced creature was said to have been an ape-like creature, but not the same as an ape, when this happened there was a definite introduction of a new principle, that something came into the evolving human being that was not there indigenously, something that was in addition to the ingredients of the earlier forms of evolution. This something in addition was presented as a descent through certain bearers of a principle of mind, namely, those called the Manasaputra—entities pictured as very advanced in evolution who, for a certain reason, had to descend into the ape-like nascent human entities that had been prepared by the earlier phases of the evolutionary process. It is indicated that these entities were reluctant thus to enter these animalistic-like forms, but that they were under *karmic* obligation to do so, and that some responded, however reluctantly, by so entering these forms, others by projecting from themselves a principle into these forms, and still others by overshadowing these entities, but later all were under *karmic* obligation to enter into these human animal forms and that such was ultimately consummated.¹ It is as though a ray from the Root Source or the rays from the Root Source that formed the evolving entities had superimposed upon them certain other rays which were highly articulated and developed as compared to the former and that this introduced an additional principle in the structure of the consciousness of the evolving human being.

I cannot vouch for the ultimate validity of this statement, but I find it extremely helpful in explaining what has happened in the development of man. I am not here concerned with the physical entities, the structure of the entities as such, but with that portion which is connected with their consciousness and most particularly the cognitive aspect of that consciousness. The initial entity, which has been called ape-like form, carried the principle of sensuous cognition.

Now, this principle of sensuous cognition is something which we human beings hold in common with the animals, and this is a point that I consider of substantial importance. Our sensuality does not differentiate us from the animal order. On the contrary, we are differentiated from the animal order by our conceptuality. The principle of sensuous cognition is often better developed in the animal than with us. Many animals, or animal creatures, see more acutely than we can see, as in the case of

¹ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* (Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Press, 1888), 210.

the eagle. There are those that can hear more acutely than we hear. There are those that can smell more acutely than we can smell, as in the case of the canine animal. How far this applies to the whole mass of sensations including taste, tactile sensation, pain sensation, kinesthetic sensation, and so forth, I do not know. But there is something that the developed human being can do with sensation which the animal does not seem at all able to do, and that is to build art forms in terms of the different sensational functions. Thus, we have developed music, developed plastic art, architecture, and so forth. Yet all of these are objects that exist for us as sensational entities. What I would suggest here is that the development of sensational art is due to the marriage of sensational capacity with theoretic, logic, or noetic capacity; and to illustrate this I will suggest one art form, namely, that of music in the form of the fugue. Music is a sound, something that is heard, but it is not merely sound alone. Some forms of musical development, particularly found in the East, may be so completely aesthetic that it is only a tonal interest and affords little or nothing in the sense of form. But, however, if we consider the musical development starting with the Greeks and progressing up through the most sophisticated forms known, such as the fugue and the sonata, we find that there is something added to the sensuous element that is definitely conceptual in its nature. In fact, in his *Art of Fugue*, Bach treated this as a development of the logic of music, a very important notion. The form can be an object of study apart from the sound which is used to manifest it. We find that it has a structure that could be regarded as a kind of mathematic that could be studied apart from the sound element that renders it manifested to the ear. I would suggest that here we have a development of an art in terms of sound because there has been added to the purely aesthetic or sensuous element a principle which is formal and logical and therefore logic or noetic.

Now, what does appear here as one studies the difference between the aesthetic and the noetic is that they are entities of quite a different sort, that one is not an easily imagined development out of the other. It is much more conceivable that the noetic element was added onto the aesthetic element. Study of these two functions suggests a discontinuity between them, their law of development being so different. Yet, when the noetic element was added to the aesthetic, we have a development of something much transcending that which is purely aesthetic.

Stepping aside for the moment from this line of consideration, I shall now introduce another factor that seems to have a pertinence here, although this consideration grows out of a contact both through reading and personal relationship with the Eskimo peoples. The pertinence of this grows out of the fact, well attested by our anthropologists, that the Eskimo and all, or nearly all, of the pre-Columbian peoples in the New World are viewed as Mongoloids, and therefore what is true of these peoples has a bearing upon something that may be true concerning all the Mongoloid races. To introduce this, I shall make a quotation from a book written by Sally Carrighar called *Moonlight at Midday*, and it is a chapter on p. 185 entitled "Even Though [and then there is a word I shall not attempt to pronounce, but shall spell it out] Ukfakeritarpitsia," and it means, "You do not believe me." This happens to be a discussion one time between Sally Carrighar and a very intelligent older Eskimo. And the quotation is in connection with language:

Responding to something unimportant I'd said, David had commented in a wondering tone,

“You use the words ‘the rest’ and ‘the others’ as if they meant the same thing.”

I put down my cup carefully. Words were my fetish, but, “David,” I said, “I don’t know the difference between ‘the rest’ and ‘the others.’”

He explained:

“‘The rest’ means ‘the remainder.’ If we were unloading the barge and had brought most of the cartons up to the warehouse, the trader might say, ‘Go down and get the rest.’ If he said, ‘Put all the broken cartons in the store but put the others in the warehouse,’ then ‘the others’ would have the meaning of ‘not the same,’ a contrast. Last night we were talking about how we’d vote, if we could. I said I would vote for Dewey, but *the others* said they would vote for Truman.”

My first feelings of embarrassment, that I had been caught using words carelessly by this Eskimo, soon gave way to [a] doubt: was that distinction between ‘the rest’ and ‘the others’ really made in the English language? Among the books I had brought to Unalakleet was a Webster dictionary. Under “other” David and I found, “A different or additional one”—no distinction in meaning. In Webster’s *Dictionary of Synonyms* was an illustration of the use of “rest”: “Two stories in this book are interesting but the rest are uniformly dull.” According to David, the sentence should have read, “but the others are uniformly dull,” since the thought of contrast was obvious. *The American Oxford Dictionary* defined “rest” as “the remainder” but also as “the others.” There could be only one conclusion—that the Eskimos gave these English words finer meanings than even we found in them.²

Meditating upon this point made here along with other material in the volume, I came to a very interesting conclusion. The Eskimos have several words where we have one. As he states later:

‘If you wanted to know the Eskimo word for ‘snow,’ I would have to ask, ‘What kind of snow do you mean?’ We have several words for various kinds of snow. You have one word for ‘walrus.’ We have nine, referring to walrus of the two sexes at different ages.³

Now, what do we have here: obviously, differentiation in terms of increasing particularity. Elsewhere it is pointed out how a particular tree, say a pine tree, will not be designated simply by the general Eskimo word for pine, but also by additional modifying words defining the particularities of the that specific tree. To make a long story short, what seems to be emerging here is differentiation in concrete particularity, which if carried to the limit would reach the absolutely unique. The experience of this use of

² Sally Carrighar, *Moonlight at Midday* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 191-192.

³ *Ibid.*, 192.

language on the part of the Eskimo, I found rather startling. Here was a maturity of a kind in a race which we would regard as primitive. And, in the technological sense, when the white man touched this race, it was indeed primitive; but it has proven since a capacity for mechanical and technological adaptation which is hardly less than startling. There is something of a maturity here, but the maturity is in the opposite direction from that which is characteristic of us. Our language and our orientation through our science, philosophy, and mathematics is toward the more and more universal. We might say we orient to the ultimate as the absolute universal, the Mongoloid Eskimo, to the ultimate absolute, unique, and particular. Clearly, then, here are two directions of development which can be highly refined. In as much as our particular concepts are the proper names of entities, we may say that the absolute particular is the completely personal, whereas the absolute universal would be the completely impersonal—two radical differences in orientation. And this may indeed have a very strong bearing upon yogic methodology. If the orientation is strongly to the aesthetic or sensuous component, it is characteristic of the sensation in its purity to give a unique particular. On the hand, the development towards the universal is characteristic of the conceptual element that presumptively was introduced into the human entity by the descent of the Manasaputra, if we accept the story as given in *The Secret Doctrine*.

Our thought now turns to a consideration of the written language of the Chinese and Japanese races as contrasted to the languages of the Indo-European racial group. In the latter case, we have alphabets consisting of a limited number of entities representing sounds. In our language these sounds are designated by 26 letters, and in the Sanskrit, for instance, by something like 49 letters. These are words for sounds, and with these we build up our verbal conceptions. On the other hand, in the Chinese written language, there are a vast number of ideographs which are stylized pictures of concrete entities. In other words, a reference to concrete particulars; and since there are many such, the result is a potentially infinite number of symbols, contrasting with the languages based upon the principle of sound in that the latter have only a few such entities which are compounded to express our ideas.

Now, Lin Yutang, in a discussion of Chinese language, said that it would be impossible for a development of advanced mathematics to take place upon this basis—a statement which I find very suggestive. Again, it would appear that in the ideographic language we have orientation to refinement of perception in terms of the concrete particular, whereas in the more abstract kind of language belonging to the Indo-European races, we have the facility for development in the direction of the universal, which achieves its highest order of refinement in that specific discipline known as mathematics. This is a continuation and confirmation of the idea introduced as a result of the Eskimo use of language.

Now, here we have something that could bear very well upon the development of yogic method. There could be a yoga, and undoubtedly is a yoga, oriented to the aesthetic component, as in the case of Zen and in the case of the Tantra. But if the yoga were grounded upon the basis of that which we call the theoretic component, or the logico component, or the noetic component, the yoga would take a different form. The first form could very well move in the direction of an *ultimate* conceived as personal, since it is the absolutely unique, and it does appear that in the earlier stages of the

development of the religious sense, the orientation is to *entity* with its ultimate refinement in the form of a single divine being, which would be a representation of the ultimately unique. In contrast, a yogic development oriented to the conceptual principle as contrasted to the aesthetic, would tend in the direction of the absolutely universal. And I will suggest here that in the very notion of Consciousnesses-without-a-subject-and-without-an-object, we have a representation of such a universal. It is something common to all, and is not unique, but universal.

A question now arises to the foreground of consciousness, namely, are the states of Realization or Enlightenment attained by these different yogic forms exactly the same? The answer to this question could be given in authentically reliable form only by an individual who had employed both methods either successively or simultaneously and realized the results of such a breakthrough, for the reason that the core of Realization or Enlightenment is ineffable and only something of it can be formulated and thus communicated. However, there is that which can be communicated, such as the implications for consciousness and life that grow out of the enlightening imperience.⁴ And then again, there are theoretical reasons why one should expect that the two Realizations would have important differences as well as elements in common. We invariably find, for instance, the report of an experience of delight of an extraordinarily high degree. We have the report of an experience of profound assurance that the ultimate root of all, whatever it may be, is a friend and that one has an extremely happy relationship to it. He has a sense that the ultimate problems that badger us here are resolved and that it is the one satisfactory attainment compared to which all the achievements in the world field have no more value than the play activity of very young children. These features we have in common in the reports, but there are certain differences. This is to be noted in the emphasis of *person* in certain types of Realization. This is characteristic of most Christian mystical experience, as in the case of St. John of the Cross. And the principle of the Divine Person, namely, the ultimately unique, occupies an important part of the yogic goal as formulated by Sri Aurobindo; but in his case there is an integration of the two elements known as the personal and the impersonal. But with him, unlike that which is the case with primary Buddhism, the emphasis is more on the personal rather than upon the impersonal.

We have now reached the position where we can come to some understanding of the significance of the difference of method in the two contrasting forms of yoga, namely, that which is oriented heavily to the aesthetic component and that which is oriented heavily to the noetic component. In both Zen Buddhism and in the Tantra, we have a relative depreciation or denigration of the noetic component—not a complete rejection, but a relegation of it to a subordinate position. What is emphasized methodologically is a great use of factors such as sensible art; the use of ceremony, ritual, and so forth; the use of the body in connection with technical practices involving postures; the use breath control; and the use of *mantras* in the tonal sense. Here we are using agencies that are sensuous preeminently. Some of it is in the sense of active senses rather than the

⁴ For the definition of ‘imperience’, see audio recordings “General Discourse on the Subject of My Philosophy,” part 10, and “On My Philosophy: Extemporaneous Statement.” In speaking of introceptual knowledge, Wolff says, “The third function therefore gives you imperience, not experience. It is akin to sense perception in the sense of being immediate, but is not sensuous.”

cognitive senses, for in Indian thought the senses are not exclusively the senses of cognition, as with us, and which are there called the *jnanendriya*, but includes also the active senses known as the *karmendriya*, which would involve all that employs action of the body or performance in terms of the physical organism. These are designed, very largely, to effect a silencing of the mind, the mind being viewed as the monkey mind, something which jumps from place to place and has no fixity of concentration. That there is such a mind is quite evident if one studies the action of the animals and of oneself. There is something which is attracted to objects and may move from one object to another. We can identify this with the conception of *kama-manas*, namely, desire mind—mind as acting under the leadership of desire. And when we are not concentrated in our thought, but moving simply lackadaisically, or in our ordinary states, we do find this aspect of mind jumping from point to point. But this is not characteristic of the conceptual power which makes progress in subjects such as science, mathematics, and philosophy, where an intense concentration and protracted attention in given directions is the only means by which progress is effected. The mind of the scientist, mathematician, and philosopher is not a monkey mind; the mind as we see it manifesting in a kitten is a monkey mind. There is an important difference here. And no doubt, this jumping about that we find in the kitten or the monkey himself, and also within ourselves, must be controlled, but it is totally wrong to equate all of mind with such a monkey mind.

Now, no doubt that where the center of focus in the individual is in the aesthetic being, that means that part of our nature which we hold in common with the animals, there must be a discipline imposed upon this side which may involve the agencies of ritual, ceremony, rite, and body controls of various sorts. On the other hand, if there is already existent the discipline of concentrated thought which is capable of protracted persistence, there is no fundamental need for the control of this jumping about of the lesser mind. Other discipline comes into the picture. And for this, I shall take up the case of that form of non-tantric yoga listed in the book of *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* edited by Evans-Wentz which is called the *Prajna-Paramita*. I shall read this into the tape at this time.⁵

This *sutra* is to be found on p. 355 of the text. It is entitled:

[THE PATH OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL WISDOM:
THE *YOGA* OF THE VOIDNESS]

[THE OBEISANCE]

(1) OBEISANCE TO THE CONQUERESS, THE
TRANSCENDENTAL WISDOM!

[THE SANSKRIT AND TIBETAN TITLE]

⁵ This *sutra* was also read with commentary in the audio recording, “Reading of The Prajñā-Pāramitā-Hridaya-Sūtra,” dated April 9, 1970.

(2) In the language of India [‘The Conqueress, the Essence of the Transcendental Wisdom’, is written], *Bhagavati Prajna-Paramita Hridaya*: in the language of Tibet, [that I shall not attempt] *Bchom-ldan-hdas-ma Shes-rab kyi Pha-rol-tu Phyin-pahi Snying-po*.

(3) [It is] one section.

[THE QUESTION OF SHARI-PUTRA]

(4) Thus have I heard: Once upon a time the Conqueror, amidst the great congregation of the *Sangha*, composed of *Bhikshus* and *Bodhisattvas*, on the Vulture’s Peak in Raj-Griha, was sitting immersed in that *Samadhi* called the Profound Illumination.

(5) And at the same time the *Bodhisattva*, the Great Being, Arya Avalokiteshvara sat meditating upon the deep doctrine of the *Prajna-Paramita*, that the Five Aggregates are of the nature of the Voidness.

(6) Thereupon, inspired by the power of the Buddha, the venerable Shari-Putra addressed the *Bodhisattva*, the Great Being, Arya Avalokiteshvara, thus: ‘How may any nobly-born one, desirous of practicing the profound teachings of the *Prajna-Paramita* comprehend them?’

[THE REPLY BY AVALOKITESHVARA]

(7) Upon this being asked, the *Bodhisattva*, the Great Being, Arya Avalokiteshvara, made reply and spake thus to the son of Shari-Dvati:

(8) ‘Shari-Putra, any nobly-born one, [spiritual] son or daughter, desirous of practicing the profound teachings of the *Prajna-Paramita* should comprehend them in the following manner:

(9) ‘The Five Aggregates are to be comprehended as being naturally and wholly Voidness.

(10) ‘Forms are Voidness and Voidness is Forms; nor are Forms and Voidness separable, or Forms other than Voidness.

(11) ‘In the same way, Perception, Feeling, Volition, and Consciousness are Voidness.

(12) ‘Thus, Shari-Putra, are all things Voidness, without characteristics, Unborn, Unimpeded, Unsullied, Unsulliable, Unsubtracted, Unfilled.

(13) ‘Shari-Putra, such being so, Voidness hath no form, no perception, no feeling, no volition, no consciousness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind, no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no quality.

(14) ‘Where there is no eye, there is no desire’, and so on to, ‘there is no consciousness of desire.

(15) ‘There is no Ignorance; there is no overcoming of Ignorance’; and so on to, ‘there is no decay and no death’, and to, ‘there is no overcoming of decay and death.

(16) ‘In the same way, there is no sorrow, there is no evil, there is no taking away, there is no Path, there is no Wisdom nor any attaining nor not-attaining.

(17) ‘Shari-Putra, such being so—for even the *Bodhisattvas* have nothing which is to be attained—by relying upon the *Prajna-Paramita*, and abiding in it, there is no mental obscuration [of the Truth] and, therefore, no fear; and, passing far beyond erroneous paths [or doctrines], one successfully attaineth *Nirvana*.

(18) ‘All the Buddhas, too, Who abide in the Three Times, have attained the highest, the purest, and the most perfect Buddhahood by depending upon this *Prajna-Paramita*.

[THE MANTRA OF THE *PRAJNA-PARAMITA*]

(19) Such being so, *Mantra* of the *Prajna-Paramita*, the *Mantra* of the Great Logic, the Highest *Mantra*, the *Mantra* which maketh one to equal That which cannot be equalled, the *Mantra* which assuageth all sorrow, and which not being false is known to be true, the *Mantra* of the *Prajna-Paramita*, is now uttered:

TADYATHA GATE GATE PARA-GATE
PARA-SAM-GATE BODHI SVA-HA

(20) ‘Shari-Putra, a *Bodhisattva*, a Great Being, should comprehend the *Prajna-Paramita* in that manner.’

[THE BUDDHA’S APPROVAL]

(21) Then the Conqueror arose out of the *Samadhi*, and, to the *Bodhisattva*, the Great Being, Arya Avalokiteshvara said, ‘Well done. Well done. Well done.’

(22) And having thus expressed approval, [He added], ‘That is so, O Nobly-born One; that is so. Even as thou hast shown, the profound *Prajna-Paramita* should be comprehended. The *Tathagatas*, too, are satisfied [therewith].’

(23) The Conqueror thus having given utterance to His command, the venerable Shari-Dvati’s son, and the *Bodhisattva*, the Great Being, Arya Avalokiteshvara, and all beings there assembled—*devas*, men, *asuras*, *ghandharvas*, and the whole world—were gladdened, and praised the words of the Conqueror.

[This completeth *The Essence of the Wondrous Transcendental Wisdom*.]⁶

⁶ W. Y. Evans-Wentz, ed., *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1935), 355-359.