

Discovering Your Own Holiness: The Saint in a Transcendental Perspective¹

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Abstract

Holiness is an attribute existing in all religions for people who are particularly open to the Divine. From the perspective of a transcendental psychology, not only the description of holiness, but also its practice and cultivation seem necessary, because in principle every person is called to holiness. Holiness as the realization or preliminary realization of the spiritual path can be achieved in various ways. In this essay, it is emphasized that holiness already exists in every person and the promotion of its awareness is presented according to the model of the Tibetan deity yoga.

Keywords: Holiness, inter-religious comparison, transcendental psychology

Introduction

This article is meant to be a continuation of a discussion stimulated by Bernhard Wegener with his article in *JSTP 1 (1)*, 2011. It shows forms and deformations of the veneration of the saints in the Christian Occident. Anyone who reads the history of European veneration of the saints, as traced by Wegener, anyone who takes into account the sociological, religious and political agents always being interested in the saint as an advertising platform and propaganda tool, cannot forbear to distinguish between the saint as a social construct, the saint as person and the saint as transcendental sign. The saint as a social construct is that phenomenon that can be described and analysed in terms of the economic benefits of relics dealers and local church leaders, in view of the emotional needs of the faithful for a tangible, human transcendence, in view of the historical and cultural-historical conditions that promote certain forms of piety. It can also be brought to an even more theoretical level in connection with theories such as symbolic interac-

¹ This is an translation of “Die Entdeckung der eigenen Heiligkeit” in the same issue of this journal. The article consists of two parts. For those who are only interested in the practical side of holiness, I suggest to read only the second half. The first part, however, is of theoretical nature and attempts to capture the essence of what constitutes holiness.

tionism, assuming that the veneration of the saints strengthens both the cohesion of a society by commonly shared symbols and – on the individual pole – the identity, the way of thinking, and emotional experience of an individual by incorporation of social symbols. In such interplay between the social communication about holy persons and the individual reactions, the holy then takes a role probably comparable to those of contemporary famous actors, musicians, or writers: as people they are real only in the form of legends, the real person behind it remains mostly a mystery.

Understood in this way, the veneration of the saints is the science of our leading paradigm easy and plausible explanation. But at the same time we miss the real heart of the veneration of the saints: the sanctity in the saint. It is beyond our sight, as if it was not existent at all. We do not even explain it away. Reductionism that converts the veneration of the saints into a purely mundane activity takes place in a much more subtle way than by reducing something explicitly, so denying or refuting it. We only need to ignore the deeper dimension of the veneration of the saints completely to forget that this dimension could even exist, given the intellectual dominance of the materialist agnosticism. What makes the Saints a cross-culturally legitimate object of worship is the transparency of the divine in him, the symbolism, in which transcendence is revealed. From the perspective of a psychology which presupposes the existence and relevance of transcendence (cf. Harnack, 2011), we would first ask what makes religious systems, being the cultural custodians of the spiritual dimension of humanity, define the sanctity of a person. Then we can advance to a generally valid essence of the saint and finally outline something like a transcendence-psychological practice manual: "How do I become a saint?".

Holiness in inter-religious comparison

"The saint is that human being, who has achieved the (in the Holy Scriptures and by the devotees of the religion) stated ultimate aim of a specific religion" says Martin Kämpchen (1983, 193; my translation). Like the ultimate aim and ideals of the religions can be distinguished, so can the principle of holiness, underlying the understanding of what is a saint in each religion, too. To anticipate the result of our following overview: The principle of the Christian holiness is virtue, the principle of Hindu holiness is the experience of the transcendent, the principle of holiness in Buddhism is the clarity of the ontological view, the principle of sanctity in Islam is the divine trance.

Christian Saints

In the first centuries AD, it were exclusively martyrs, mostly executed by the Roman authorities for their faith, including crucified early Christians, who received worship because of their loyalty to Christ and because of the similarity of their deaths with his. Not until later emerged a type of saint, which - without being a martyr - was characterized by an aura of numinosity, a special transcendental force and proximity to the divine. Similar

to holy places and objects (such as relics of the Cross of Christ), his holiness was justified by participation in a divine power (cf. Mulder-Bakker 2002), which was found in the work of miracles. There were also saints who were regarded as patrons and intercessors to God in emergencies. Change came only in 1200/1234 (decrees by Pope Innocent III. and Gregory IX.) when the canonization process was tied to the Pope. Because of their exemplary function for the believers the essential criterion of holiness then became virtue (Woodward 1990). Although a typical phenomenon of the Catholic and Orthodox churches since the Reformation, Luther himself had no problem with this type of moral saints. The Lutheran (in contrast to the Reformed) churches even demanded explicitly in Luther's lifetime the veneration of the saints as role models in the Augsburg Confession, while their invocation as advocates instead of the prayer to Christ is condemned.

Finally, certain criteria for sainthood in the Catholic Church obtained even legal status. 1634/1735 (Urban VIII / Benedict XIV), and confirmed in the 1917 Code of Canon Law, the Catholic canonization process has been fixed as a judicial proceeding that goes beyond the dimension of each ordinary court process. Although there is an official canon of saints in other religions also (see for comparison the controversial *de*-canonization of Dorje Shugden by the Dalai Lama), however, nowhere else has its bureaucracy gone so far as in Rome. Finally, the new Canon Law of 1983 abolished the practice of the extensive trial and simplified the canonization, but confirmed the essential criteria for sainthood. These consist firstly in the early Christian martyrdom for the faith, or in the very fact that the person has lead a life with a "heroic degree of virtue" (cf. Code of Canon Law, 1917, Art 2104 and Apostolic constitution *Divinus perfectionis magister*, 1983). Whether the saint had shown special mystical gifts during his lifetime, however, was never relevant for the official canonization process. In contrast to his or her posthumous intercession (CIC 1917, Art 2116) wonders had to be effected (i.e., the believer must have experienced a miracle after praying to a dead saint). Implicitly, this was meant to prove the approval of the saint by God, who would have been motivated to work a wonder only by a particularly appreciated person. That this became valid only after the death of the saint is likely because of the theological understanding that people who are still in their earthly bodies are prevented to participate in the immediate presence of God (we will later find this reservation in parts of Buddhism and Hinduism, too). Moreover, the only legitimate reason for a canonization process is that the deceased has already the reputation of holiness and revered as sacred by the church folk, so that a private cult already exists. It is just the believers' need for a saint that is followed up by the church (cf. Woodward 1990).

It is because of the "unchangeable Catholic teaching (...) that Christian contemplation absolutely and definitely requires the purity of the soul and thus the possession of the moral virtues, combined in the theological virtue of charity (...)" (Balthasar, 1954, 440; my translation) that virtue, defined as the seven cardinal virtues, and not mystical gifts was and still is the central criterion of the church's canonisation. This, in an intercultural comparison, casts a strange light on the Christian faith. Through the eyes of the Far East,

Christianity thus appears as a theory very much concentrated on externality, a social order more than a religion. Even if Christianity does not teach ethics of pure action, but of conviction and the sanctity is not the outward conduct, but the inner measure of virtue is crucial to a determination of holiness in this way but remains superficial. The mystical dimension, understood as the inner closeness to transcendence, as the connection with the Divine in popular piety has always been a sign of holiness. For theology, however, (for dogmatic reasons – God as the unreachable for human beings – and soteriology – only the salvation through the grace of God in Christ for all baptised counts) this is totally insignificant. The fact that a religion emphasizing virtues and thus morality in this way at the same time (much more than Islam or any other religion) produced wars, torture, intolerance, destruction of nature and cultures, is certainly not due to its intention, but to its lack of inwardness, i.e., the long lasting neglect of psychological methods to promote inner holiness.

Veneration of the saints in Islam

While conservative Sunnis reject the religious devotion of human beings because they befit only to God, the veneration of the saints in Islam is primarily a matter of Shiites and Sufi-mystic influenced communities (cf. McGregor 2001). There the Holy is the ideal of human life itself, which attains its perfection by merging into the divine. "You must know that the principle and basis of Sufism and the knowledge of God are based on saintliness", says the Sufi scholar Hujwiri (quoted in Schimmel 1995, 284). The Islamic saint is the *wali Allah*, that is the friend of God, both in the passive sense of one protected by God as in the active sense of someone doing the works of God (as with al-Qushayri; cf. McGregor 2001, 60). A common form of holiness, which every believer can reach, is distinguished from an exceptional holiness, to which different attributes are ascribed: So for al-Kalabadhi (cf. McGregor 2001, 60), that the saint pays no attention to himself and has no longer any character flaws, so he can compensate all misdemeanours immediately. Others characterize the ordinary holiness (*wilaya 'amma*) by "sweet speech, delicate manners, submission, generosity", while the holiness of the mystics (*wilaya khassa*) is characterized by the fact that these "are transcended in God and persist through Him" (Schimmel 1995, 284f.; translated by me).

These true friends of God are answered by God in their prayers and have all sorts of miracle skills. They know cardiognosis, i.e., they can look into other persons' heart (a gift that is also reported by Christian mystics, cf. Woodward 1990). They master teleportation of their body (i.e., they can be simultaneously present in several places) and the materialization of food out of nothing and are capable of curing the sick (Schimmel 1995, 290ff). Animals, plants, and inanimate matter obey them. The saints are sometimes even seen as located in completely transcendent dimensions, as guardians and protectors of the universe invisible to the human (similar to the hidden masters from the Himalayas, which play a role in Hinduism, but especially in theosophy).

In contrast to this appreciation of the miraculous, shared by popular piety as well as by some mystics, the farther matured saints warn that the miraculous is one of the three veils (together with the purely external works of obedience and the expectation of heavenly reward) covering the heart of the chosen (Schimmel 1995, 300). In the great importance of the heart ("The heart is the dwelling of God," Schimmel 1995, 271) the role of the Sufi's love towards God becomes manifest. *Marifa*, knowledge of God, is not possible without *mahabba*, love of God. Both aspects are only preliminary states of the last great mystical experience, the Islamic mystical union called *fana* what Annemarie Schimmel (1995) translates in accordance with Meister Eckhart with the German term *entwerden* ("de-becoming" or transcending). Being captured by God where the dervish in the highest ecstasy experiences *fana*, seems to be the basic topos of Islamic holiness. This means that the Sufi saint is not "in himself", but with God all over. Islam emphasizes the presence of the one, indivisible God in the moment of "entwerden" to an extent that it is considered blasphemous to even talk about the existence of God and man then. "This narrow house does not include two selves", says Rumi (MI 3056-63, quoted in Schimmel 1995, 97; translated by me) about this state in which the human merges into the divine, like a moth burns in flames.

Saints in Buddhism

Buddhism in its present form has developed many regional variations. But essentially it can be divided into the school of the older traditions (Theravada, also called Hinayana) and Mahayana Buddhism, the reformed branch, which currently forms the major part of the Buddhist community. The precursors of both schools have developed approximately one to two hundred years after the physical death of the Buddha different conceptions of the ideal of the Buddhist teaching and thus the ideal of a Buddhist saint. For Theravadins namely the highest human state of Buddha is reached only once during a world age. All others must be satisfied with the state of a fully liberated, an *arhat*², to the perfect being, the Buddha, inferior in some respects. The arhat is the highest of four stages of holiness. All on one of these four stages are being referred to as *arya*³, so it appears to be justifiable to call the notion of the sacred in Theravada *arya* as the achievement equivalent to one of these four stages (as in Conze 1953 and 2007).

The progress on the four stages of holiness (path of the saints, *arya-marga*) depends crucially on overcoming the ten fetters of existence (*samyojana*). The first level of holiness will be called Stream-enterer (*shrota-apanna*). He has overcome the first three fetters: believing in a self as well as in the doubts about the teachings and clinging to rites

² All original terms in this section are given in Sanskrit (not in Pali). Arhat sometimes is translated as foe-destroyer, i.e., overcomer of passions, but this etymology is disputed.

³ Arya means „noble“, also in the sense of „aristocratic“. It was the self-designated name of indoeuropeans immigrating into India around 1,600 B.C.

and rules. In the second stage, called once-returner (*sakridagamin*), the saint has also mastered desire and hatred to a high degree, but not before the third stage of the non-returner (*agamin*) completely overcome. Only the arhat has finally overcome the remaining five fetters: desire for a subtle body, desire to immateriality, arrogance, ignorance, and excitement.

In the "great vehicle", the Mahayana, the ideal of personal liberation opens up to the altruistic pursuit of the good of all sentient beings. This is due to the different interpretation of the Buddha as the highest ideal of all Buddhists. While in Theravada the Buddha remains unattainable in his level of perfection, but is considered as a purely human being, for Mahayana the state of a Buddha, thought as a former human, but since his last rebirth transcendent being, is paradoxically reachable for everyone (everyone carries the Buddha-seed, the *tathagata garba* inside). The Buddha is full of compassion for the world. Why else would he have endeavoured after his full enlightenment to release others by his ceaseless teachings from the cycle of suffering? Just as Buddha is feasible as an ideal, the arhat is replaced by the Bodhisattva, who has now become the truly holy one. The Bodhisattva is the practitioner who vowed to delay the entry into Nirvana for the benefit of all beings and thus continues to care for them either in a human or a transcendent body. Accordingly, all serious Mahayanists can be considered as aspiring bodhisattvas. Holy Bodhisattvas (*arya bodhisattvas* or *mahasattvas*), however, put not only their own enlightenment in the service of all beings, but already attained a level of holiness.

The holy Bodhisattva is characterized by a set of virtues and skills that increase from stage to stage. Mahayana distinguishes ten Bodhisattva stages (*bhumis*) with the corresponding virtues of generosity (*dana*), ethical conduct (*shila*), patience (*kshanti*), energy (*virya*), mental concentration (*dhyana*), spiritual wisdom (*prajna*), skillful means of compassion (*upaya*), spiritual force (*pranidhana*), strength in all personal qualities (*bala*) and transcendental knowledge (*jnana*) (cf. Fischer-Schreiber 1986). Traditional views seem inconsistent on the question of whether the condition of the Buddha begins beyond the tenth level or whether it already represents the Buddha state. In each case, perfect Buddhas, who continue to act for the good of all, can be described as transcendent bodhisattvas and may be assigned to the tenth Bhumi (such as the Bodhisattva of Compassion, Avalokiteshvara, the patron of Tibet). Buddhist scholars, classifying everything and anything, will not miss assuming that the special properties of the highest saint, the Buddha, are classifiable. These eighteen - also by Theravada accepted - properties can be summed up thus that the Buddha's actions, speech and thought derive entirely from a high level of spiritual wisdom, so that it is flawless in every respect.

It is important to know that also in Mahayana, belonging to one of the ten Bodhisattva stages, depends on the degree of spiritual purity, which relates to the direct knowledge of the true mode of existence, and that those virtues are made possible through the inner process of spiritual purification before. In this way, Buddhist holiness is constituted by the degree of liberation from spiritual obstacles, binding to the world in the form of passions and in the form of a false view and thus obstructing the realization of the true nature of the world. This is because Theravada and Mahayana, in principle, agree that

the ordinary practitioner passes in the state of a saint when having attained a secure and immutable knowledge about the real, transcendental mode of being. One difference, however, is the timing of reaching the goal of all the saints, the full liberation: For Theravada Buddhists, the liberation is not available in this world, Nirvana is conceivable only as Parinirvana, as utter annihilation with death when the saint has discharged also the last remains of earthly existence in the form of his physical body. For Mahayana Buddhists, however, Nirvana is not annihilation, but transformation of the entire state of being in a condition free of deception and thus possible at any time.

Saints in Hinduism

The same question on the date of possible liberation we find in Hinduism, where the schools of Samkhya-Yoga, Advaita Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism consider the complete liberation (*moksha*) during life possible (*jivanmukti*), while others point out that only after the dropping of the physical body full liberation (*videhamukti*) and unity with the divine is attainable. "Holiness in Hinduism is either to understand as the condition of the *jivanmukti* or the state, which immediately precedes *videhamukti* (Kämpchen 1983, 196; my translation). What status the practitioner has already reached on the way to the ultimate objective of liberation is measurable by his state of consciousness. This is called *anubhava* (skrt. for "consequence" and "experience") because, as a consequence of practical exercise, spiritual experience is the key feature of progress on the spiritual path. "Without *anubhava* no one would be called holy. This shows that holiness in Hinduism is always mystical holiness." (Kämpchen 1983, 198; my translation).

Nowhere else the spiritual experience is focused more clearly than in yoga, where levels of spiritual experience are distinguished, being most of all degrees of meditative union (*samadhi*) with the Atman-Brahman (as in Patanjali *dharana*, concentration, *dhyana*, awareness of observer and object to *samadhi*, oneness with the consciousness itself). But as soon as the meditative stage of *samadhi* is reached, the experience affects the whole human being and changes the practitioner into a yogic saint: from short-term merging with the absolute (*savikalpa samadhi*) to complete merging with God (*nirvikalpa samadhi*). And some schools still add the rare state of *sahaja samadhi*, the state of permanent oneness with God and simultaneous unimpeded functioning in the world.⁴

But it can be seen by the worship of any ascetic renouncing the world (*sannyasin*), that in the eyes of many Indians, however, holiness is present in everyone who is facing the transcendent, and it does not begin at the stage of yogic *samadhi*. There is nothing that inspires the Indian more to believe in the sanctity of a guru or *saddhus* (wandering

⁴ That would mean consequently that *nirvikalpa samadhi* either would not remain permanently or that it results in a state where the respective does not function totally in our world. Irina Tweedie's (*The Chasm of Fire, Tisbury 1979*) report about her guru - although being an Indian sufi - can be read like this in some passages.

monk), than his *siddhis*, his ability to work wonders. Nevertheless, not there lies the reason for the qualities of holiness, not the *siddhis* are the intended level: for the yogic masters only the state of consciousness is crucial, in which the practitioner resides. The authorities of Hinduism in the Swami-order founded by Shankara and the Vedantic monasteries emphasize that the extent of mystical knowledge and its implementation in the various practices of yogic tradition makes the saints.

Closeness to the Divine as inter-religious core of sanctity

Of all religions, Christianity creates the deepest chasm between God and God's creation, between God and man. A real participation in the holiness of God during the lifetime of a person thus is impeded by the conservative theology. Quite different from this is the Islam, where in the sacred state of *fana* nothing than God can exist, as well as in Hinduism, where the human consciousness in the highest state of *samadhi* irreversibly detects, that it really is completely divine consciousness. Also quite different in Buddhism, where the saint temporarily and the Buddha permanently experience the world as what it really is: an ordered cosmos, where everything depends on everything. That even applies to Judaism, where the just of the Tanach, the patriarchs and prophets, are the model of holiness, emulated by the Jewish saint of modern times, the Hasidic *tzaddik*, in compliance with the law and in contemplation. Here again, the saints as intermediaries between God and man stand in their lifetime in direct contact with the divine (cf. Scholem 2000). Only when we take into account the early and folk beliefs (see the figure of Christ carrier, the Christophoros), then also in Christianity we find the idea, that the living saints enjoy a special closeness to God.

So let us agree, that we want to refer to sanctity as the fulfilment of special transcendent qualities of a human being, the special extension of the human into the transcendent realm. But this extension should in no way be fixed at some miraculous mystic gifts (skrt. *siddhis*). All discussed traditions consider paranormal talents as a possible indicator of holiness, but not as its core. Who holds on to them, even departs from the path of holiness, goes astray into the abysses of magic and high-handedness instead of reaching the highest goal, merging into the Divine. This is true in Islam, where not the miraculous gifts, but God in the heart, the transcendence of the soul in God constitute sanctity. The same applies to the Bodhisattva of Buddhism, who is increasingly endowed with supernatural forces and knowledge on his path, but is not distinguished by them, and it applies even more to the arhat. Likewise, *anubhava*, the spiritual experience of the Hindu saint, only in the form of *samadhi* forms fully valid holiness.

Holiness in the mystical traditions is rather based on states of consciousness, in which the Divine is experienced directly. These states (*samadhi*, *fana*) lead to direct knowledge of the transcendent world view and are not to be confused with other meditative stages or results and are not the same as paranormal signs. However, these states of consciousness are only one goal but not the whole of holiness. For the higher states of

consciousness are initially present in the meditative states only, but do not exist outside until they persist in the highest state of holiness. To get there, it is necessary first to align the entire human being to the numinous source. A development of the meditative states alone does not lead to the sanctification of the whole person. Only if the meditative experience effects everyday life and this reacts upon meditation, continuity is given that leads to holiness.

When the saint thus is distinguished by her virtues, it is because her humanity has been transformed in holiness, and not because she behaves saintly. This seems to constitute the essential difference between holiness and hypocrisy, but perhaps also between the perfect and the still aspired holiness, i.e. that the saint is really in her essence, what she shows in her behaviour. The practitioner on the way to holiness, in contrast, sometimes shows more holiness than he carries within him and sometimes less. So the designation of the saints' virtues by tradition is much more than a moral restriction. It is a complete transformation of ones being, a transformation of the personality toward a penetration of the transcendent, where ultimately nothing stands outside of true spirituality. This state of complete transformation probably only the highest saints have ever achieved. On the way to this goal integration, not exclusion of unwanted elements seems significant.

So we learn that holiness is a process, and only in the highest stage a permanent state, it is a path full of ones own effort, not just a gift of grace, and it is a process of various stages and degrees of holiness and is therefore not a matter of either/or. Levels and degrees, however, are only arbitrarily definable, and each tradition uses other criteria. We must suppose that here, as everywhere in humanity it is rather a continuum that is divisible into stages only by distinct meditative states, and that this continuum is dynamic, that is one development affecting the others. Holiness therefore is not a flip-flop switch, which can take only the states 1 and 0, but it is rather a continuously distributed trait found in the same person at different times and between individuals more or less strong. People are more or less holy as well as they are more or less good or bad. Likewise, Christian theology teaches that everybody is sanctified by the grace of God - through the sacramental act of baptism. The saints are thus just particular expressions of a gradually outstanding holiness.

The Christian concept of grace particularly contradicts the devotee's efforts demanded in other mystical traditions. It seems that for the majority of Christian theologians a God expecting a dynamic, self-responsible development of its creatures is hard to imagine. The idea behind it seems to be a principle such as the basis of Creationism, i.e., that a *creatio continua*, a permanent dynamic creation either seems too difficult to understand or it cannot be expected of God as a static being. Similarly, theologians, focusing completely on grace, seem to see God as a father holding his children in immaturity hindering their self-development up onto his level.

Contrary to this are the ongoing efforts of real saints, who in all cultures around the world report their own difficulty integrating the human in the path for holiness. Being

holy means to set out for discovering and developing holiness in the inner soul, where the divine lives already and is waiting for its expansion, not reduction, but unfolding of the real being. From the fact that holiness means stages on a path, it results that everybody must start somewhere, no matter how far away they are from the highest aim, to discover the holy in themselves. However, it has become so unusual to speak of holiness, that we cannot imagine our own holiness any more. It probably will take a long time until children respond to the question "What you gonna be when you grow up?" with "A saint". If we are then brought up yet with doctrines like predestination of man by God, then we can indeed (as some Calvinist and Pietist would like to do) pretend to be holy, but really believe we cannot. This is often due to the erroneous assumption that holiness demands a moral discipline, ascetic life, and even oppression to live according to the high moral standards of sanctity. However, virtue is not a moral concern, but the result, and the natural outflow of spiritual practice and only as such genuine. Therefore, we should strive to build a psychology of holiness, which is also a psychology of our own way to become a saint.

The path to the saint within

Many people resist the idea of practising holiness because they are afraid to be forced to give up their human needs. They remain faithful to a popular notion of holiness that feels to them like an artificial moral corset. But the opposite is true: true holiness always means the unfolding of our true spiritual potential, but not the suppression of anything. This becomes particularly clear in Tantra, a spiritual school in India and Tibet, which, by the way, has nothing to do with erotic massage. Tantra in Tibet is Buddhist, in India Hindu or Jain, but the basic idea is the same. For the Tibetan Tantra, which I am referring here, two principles are equally characteristic: First, the exercise of identifying with a deity, and second, the exercise not to suppress your own personality, but to transform everything into spiritual energy. How do these two principles fit together?

Identification with the deity means to regard oneself not as an ordinary person any more, but to act out of the characteristics of the deity and the spiritual ground behind. The characteristics of the Divine are a guide for beginners, while the transcendent behind it is the target of identification, i.e. that sphere, which shall actually be reached with the duration of training. Tantra reverses the Zen bon mot to some extent: The path is not the goal but the goal is the path. The beginner identifying with the deity in an as-if-exercise, although he is still unaware of his own sacredness, finally achieves this transcendent form of being.

The logical result of which is that every motion the practitioner feels in himself, is a motion of the deity with which he is identical. Every pain, every aggressive impulse, every unethical intention, every desire, and every noble idea spring from the same divine source, as the deity and he are the same. That does not mean that these impulses should be lived, since the pursuit of virtuous actions is part of the nature of the deity, which is

practised by the beginner at first artificially, like an actor rehearses the characteristics of his role - not the text. The result is a certain tension, which must be withstood: Negative intentions belong to the divine, represented by the deity, but becoming a part of the deity, they are automatically converted into positive ones, because the deity possesses only apparently negative elements. Tantric deities may be angry, but they do so only to educate the being for their own good. While the Greek gods acted out their desires unbridled, the Tantric deities desire in all desire only the outflow of their own divinity. They desire the world as a mirror of beauty of the Buddha mind, the sexual energy as an expression of their own energetic force (in Hinduistic terms: the shakti). In the moment when the practitioner is really identified with the deity, out of both psychological and metaphysical reasons, he will transmute all of his destructive or self-destructive impulses into something higher.

Sometimes in the beginning he will be dishonest to himself and think he lets the deity be angry, when in reality only the man is angry. In the course of practice, however, he will feel if the energy of anger is created by the activity of his own ego and then results in harmful thinking, feeling and negative acting, or whether he can use the same energy for a higher goal. This requires, primarily, a continuous awareness, a concentrated attention to the emerging of emotional energy. Therefore, in addition to identification with the deity the other spiritual practices of this spiritual school, like concentrative or undirected (mindfulness) meditation, are crucial. The practice of identification with the deity is primarily a very precisely ritually required meditative practice, and no practice on the side. Because this practice is difficult and brings high energy up to paranormal phenomena and may lead to biased identifications, its exact sequence (*sadhana*) is passed only under secrecy by a teacher directly to his students.

In simplified form, however, as described here, identification with the deity can be recommended also to those who are not initiated into Tantra or do not feel as Buddhists or Hindus. In this case we should not call it "identification with the deity", but define it as identification with the saint in me. If we do not focus on an externally existent deity, but on our own holiness, the various precautions of tantric techniques are not as necessary to prevent two things: on the metaphysical level, that a "false god" takes possession of adepts, and on the psychological level that the adept gets all worked up in a narcissistic charge in which he reaches delusions of grandeur instead of liberation from the Ego. The Tibetan Tantra presents two main supporting practices in order to protect against such wrong tracks: the practice of the mind of awakening (*bodhicitta*), expressed in an interested or active compassion, and the practice of *lamrim*, the philosophical and contemplative penetration of the Buddhist doctrine. Discovering one's own holiness can also be saddled with these two problems, but they do not occur to the same extent as in the Tantric deity yoga. In particular, if we concentrate on discovering the saint in ourselves instead of playing the saint in front of others, narcissistic gratifications are rare. Moreover, the process into the inside usually leads to a decrease of insecurity, mortification and compensatory self-aggrandizement, i.e., the mechanism producing the narcissistic charge.

In Tibetan Tantra divine pride of a holy being is clearly distinguished from usual pride, being a cut above the rest. The latter is a serious mistake, a mental poison that blocks the path to salvation. The former is, however, the path to salvation itself, because in the divine pride we recognize our true dignity as a creature that, as it is, is of divine nature at the same time. Thus, we change - psychologically speaking - our negative self-referential cognitions and transform them into a positive self-image that helps us to see not only us, but also others positive. How we see ourselves, we see the world and how we see the world, so we deal with it. As we experience ourselves as holy instead of bad, we open a space for the good in us, which it does not possess, as long as we act out of guilt and self-denial, supposing that we are a despicable, incompetent person. We abandon the conditioned pattern dictating us certain modes of response, because we experience ourselves in a certain way. It is our identifications that make us addicted or anxious, making us choosing the wrong partners or employers again and again, letting us respond in a depressed or aggressive way. But it is our identification with the positive that can lead us to experience us to be strong, connected to the world, as valuable and lovable, creatively and spiritually.

The boundary between the positive certainty truly to be a sacred being and the overturning of this feeling in the arrogance to be a cut above the rest is narrower for most people as the border towards megalomania, which is the delusional disregard of one's own humanity. Nevertheless, this border must be maintained always consciously, too. A spiritual teacher, psychotherapist or confidant are the best guarantee to separate one from another. Complete confidence in the attender is needed on this way. Those who do not have such a confidant, should always keep clearly in mind that according to the ancients there is nothing, not even the ability to work wonders, that makes a person special. Holiness is only truly achieved when the commitment to the "I am" stops. Only this is the secure attribute of a holy person that they do not think a great deal about themselves. The critics still around should be told that: Who is prone to such pathological self-overestimation would tend to it in the same way if he were not practising the identification with the inner saint. Those who practice this in an inward directed manner, are ultimately less rather than more prone to pathological pride because they must deal honestly with themselves in order to find their own holiness.

In contemporary psychology is much talk of ego-states. Behind this new discovery lies the ancient knowledge that we are not a single personality, but have many small sub-personalities. Thus, sometimes one, sometimes the other dominates. What has become psychologically acceptable was obviously inconceivable until a few decades ago, although the fact that we are not the same individual in every moment, actually seems trivial. The reason for this may be a historic change, beginning to dissolve the Christian concept of the soul as a static entity in the view of the majority in favour of the Buddhist concept of the psyche as a sequence of different states, connected only through mutual interdependence.

If we are not permanently determined in our personality and different Ego states alternate spontaneously in us, then we may as well choose who we want to be. However,

this presupposes that we are aware and conscious enough for ourselves to realize who we just are. Then we can decide ourselves theoretically, to live our holy part today. What at first sounds artificial is nothing else than what we do every day unconsciously: We identify with one of our sub-personalities and believe firmly and completely to be it, until a different sub-personality becomes dominant, making us thinking again: This is me! "We are lions in sheep's clothing of habit. We are hypnotized into weakness by our surroundings. And the province of Vedanta⁵ is the self-dehypnotization" says Vivekananda (1986, 49). When we identify ourselves not with our sheep-nature, but our lion-nature, we realize that we really are lions.

When we carry through this process consciously and not unconsciously and we realize that we find as much sacred as human in us, we lose for a moment the sense of our own identity, and since the loss of our identity is most unpleasant for our Ego, we usually come right back to the usual level. We therefore need to strengthen our identification with inner sanctity in meditation. Anyhow, we should not commit the blunder to listen thoroughly in ourselves, "Am I really that sacred", because then we will inevitably get a negative answer (and if not, we are either a megalomaniac or in fact already a saint, which also occurs after all). Instead, we should – like the Tantric practice of identifying with the deity – visualize ourselves as a holy person. For this, we imagine us as a holy person we know and revere and try to make aware their properties. For Christians, this may be Jesus of Nazareth himself, whose essence they seek to realize in themselves, what we can call an imitation-of-Christ meditation. Not the knowledge that you are not holy is important, but to identify with the presented image of his saints in full, visualize yourself in the place about the saints.

By combining a meditative practice in which we learn to keep the attention on our internal affairs in everyday life and to maintain control over our emotional energy, we can bring out the visualization in everyday life. Thus, we transform desire and hatred into pure energy, wanting the best and destroying the spiritual hindrances, instead of looking for the obstacle on the outside. The deepening of this practice is the discovery of contact with the divine. Only by cultivating this contact, we will ultimately really come to the point where our hindering characteristics and ideas turn into the positive because of our personal transformation and by the help of the transcendent. This contact with the divine we should establish regular through spiritual practice, which should depend on the nature of the individual and here - unlike in Tantra - needs no special definition. The really important thing is that this practice in turn feeds into everyday life and that it leads to that we begin to connect to our intuition, looking to the work of divinity in everyday life, to

⁵ Vedanta, the teachings of the Upanishads and their later interpreters, for Vivekananda is the teachings of Hinduism par excellence (cf. Vivekananda 1986).

silence in us more often. That we begin, as Tibetan Buddhism says, to visualize the world as a mandala⁶ of the deity who we are.

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Proofreading of the English version by Manuel Blank

⁶ Mandala is not only the circle, sometimes painted, sometimes drawn with coloured sand, but this is just the real mandala's image, which is a three dimensional divine city, the circle being its city map.