

Quotidian Tantra

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Introduction

Spirituality is that process in humans, which relieves them of the everyday world and directs them towards a reality, which they can cognize partially and potentially due their innate disposition. Generations of experimentally spiritual researchers – including such stars of the spiritual science as Gautama Siddharta, Jesus of Nazareth, Ramana Maharshi, Jalal ad-Din Rumi, to name just a few – have conveyed insights in those areas of reality that remain closed to most people during the whole time of their individual life. Their experiences describe spiritual areas that under consideration of contemporary neuro-constructivist theories of knowledge relate in exactly the same way to the term "reality" as this is likely with any other kind of reality construed in the human brain / mind. Their common characteristic is that they differ from everyday perspectives on reality in a specific way – depending on their spiritual basis. Whether the samadhi experience of Indian yogis can be distinguished from Christian mystical union during the experience or only afterwards (in their interpretation), seems an open question to me. It is clear, however, that they differ from everyday consciousness. The so-called "negative" experience of God (for example, in Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite), in which the Other is defined by that it can never be defined, refers to experiences and insights that extend beyond the everyday world. Thus, spiritual experience as fundamentally distinguished from our worldly sphere and ontological dualism like in the Indian *dvaita* philosophies (e.g., the Samkhya-Yoga) or in Christianity (where God exists apart from this world!) are consequences.

The opposite of this position, monism (in India: *a-dvaita* = not-twiceness; within monotheism more corresponding to the Islamic position)¹, does not come to terms with this fundamental separation between the spiritual and the secular, between the sacred and the profane. In spiritual schools that conceive no fundamental difference between spiritual and sensual world, the divinity of the entire world is emphasized. In Advaita Vedanta, as in the (from an ecclesiastic point of view “heretical”) Christian pantheism, for example of Meister Eckhart, the world is the visible side of the divine. Today, you can often find the notion that our world only exists in order to serve as a training ground for our spiritual progress, and that to this training ground everything belongs that appears to us sensually. I share this “theosophical” view and think that we were born in this precious human life in order to utilize the entire visible world with all our fellow beings carefully for our enlightenment. However, such a monism is not opposed to dualism, i.e., the distinction between ordinary and spiritual world, it is the synthesis abrogating thesis and antithesis. The thesis, there was just only one real and accessible world for us, namely this side of the curtain, as it is formulated by materialists and agnostics, and the antithesis, that there are two worlds that are separated from each other, as the dualistic position holds, is abrogated by monism (in the meaning of *advaita*): the whole of reality, the cosmos (Greek for: an orderly arranged world), is permeated by the Divine and is sacred. And yet, at the same time there is a gradual difference between a more or less sacred (spiritual) state of the human mind. Therefore, the spiritual experience may be found beyond and on this side of the veil, inside the mind (where access to the world beyond is searched primarily because of its immaterial character) and the exterior (where the usual sensory experience predominates), while in both directions, of course, non-spiritual states are possible as well. Like this monism constitutes the higher theoretical synthesis, so its realization in the individual being constitutes the realization of a higher spiritual consciousness that is able to abrogate the dualistic separation usually present in all of us.

In this context, the concept of Tantra plays a major role. Tantra is an expression of the insight that natural emotional energies are the best training ground for spiritual development. While Tantra exists in the Hindu and Jaina religion as well, Buddhist Tantra, however, has survived only in the Tibetan cultural area (i.e., today, for example, in Sikkim, Bhutan, Nepal). Tantra is far away from any-

¹ Not to be mistaken with Christian *monotheism* (not monism), i.e.: “There is only *one* Absolute, which is God”, which refuses the here meant ontological monism by accusing it of pantheism (“God is beyond this world, not identical with it, pantheism – asserting God and World are one thing – therefore is heresy”); and not to be mistaken with monism on the divine level (“The Absolute is just one, there are *no* two ultimate principles – *the Good and the Bad*”).

thing that a person imagines who knows the term only from newspaper advertisements in which "tantric massages" are offered. There are actually the tantric techniques "of the left hand" in which sexuality occurs as a specific meditation practice. But this is rather one of the crownings of the final states of the path – and not its objective, not the main component, and certainly not its spiritual content. Tantra is rather characterized by two features that I do not consider at this point with respect to a strictly meditative system, but regarding its application in everyday life: First, Tantra is characterized in that the basic root of our problems, which is seen in Buddhism in everyday desire (for life, for enjoyment, for well-being of all kinds), is not suppressed (as in the so-called Sutra system, which is opposed to Tantra), but is integrated into the spiritual path. Desire is the engine, not the brake of spiritual development. Second, Tantra is also the art not to progress slowly from stage to stage, but to provide (in imagination) a view from the top step of the spiritual ladder and looking down on the world from there.

The complicated Tantric practice can only be learned under guidance. On the other hand, the transfer of Tantric practices into every day life can be done by everyone under two aspects: First, by producing identification with the godhead, from which the transformation of the profane into the sacred, the core of Tantra, can be done. And secondly, the very subtle exercise to utilize non-enlightened views and emotions as means and medium for enlightenment. The first is the prerequisite for the second: the technique of identification with the divine guaranties the success of using affective energies as a divine service, as a Buddhist exercise for liberation. Thus, we have to keep in mind in all that is said here, that Tantra is a path of *transformation* of mental poisons, which according to Buddhism are the cause of all human suffering. The peacock is a symbol for this process because it is, according to Tibetan folk knowledge, able to digest the poison of a certain poisonous plant dangerous for humans and to transform it into a tonic. Tantra is – in contrast to its relative Dzogchen² ("Tibetan Zen") – no path of "letting-be" everything that comes. It is a spiritual method in which ap-

² The difference in a spiritual ontology [philosophy of what really is] between Tantra and Dzogchen is the before mentioned graduation between monism and dualism. Tantra overcomes dualism methodically, insofar as the unwholesome is transformed into wholesome, and ontologically in recognizing an *ultimately* spiritual nature of everything. However, the separation between two different human perspectives (spiritual and profane) is maintained. In Dzogchen, on the other hand, even this last dualism is surmounted in a total radicalism, omitting every theoretical and practical difference between spiritual and profane. Sometimes, Dzogchen is seen as part of Tantra (its crowning summit). Then it is quasi the perfection of the sentence discussed below that for Tantra the aim is the path, because Dzogchen in its radicalism contradicts itself if it can be taught as a method (since that implies a difference between the imperfect state of the student and the perfect one of the master).

petence (as the other mental poisons, anger, dullness, pride, and envy) is transformed into its own overcoming by going through appetite (or any other emotion), transformed by the instrument of consciousness of the sacredness of the whole world, one's own body and mind.

Identification with the Godhead, the Master

The first important aspect of Buddhist Tantra relates to the identification with the godhead or the Master. A godhead here means a so called meditation deity (Sanskrit *vidam*), which is a separate being only insofar as according to Buddhist understanding all beings are independent, namely insofar as they appear as such to a finite mind. In reality, however, a meditation deity – and this is quite clear to any serious adept – is just the incorporation of certain aspects of the Buddha. S/he is – to meet this historical misunderstanding of Christian missionaries at this point – no god that can be worshiped in a polytheistic sense, because s/he has no autonomous existence, let alone an absolute one, completely exceeding the relative human level. As an archetypical expression of some selected traits of a Buddha, of a fully enlightened being, it serves as a blueprint for the development of the meditator, who hopes to bring the corresponding traits to development in him/herself. Therefore, each meditation deity depicts only some aspects of the full spectrum of properties of a Buddha in order to being able to focus more clearly on these and to activate them in oneself. The principle is that not the path is the goal, as in Zen, but that *the goal is the path*. What is meant by this paradoxical principle?

Normally, we assume a fixed temporal sequence of our spiritual development, a slow, perhaps straight, perhaps more spiral or curved upward development of our connection to the divine / the Buddha nature within us.³ However, this development is based on a soul model that does Buddhism not share. Only if we are a unity, an entity that can indeed change gradually, but otherwise exists self-contained, a development process has to be in this form. However, if we do not have a fixed Self, but do only construct this as a unit on the basis of individual characteristics, as Buddhism assumes, then different rules apply. Then, we can try to change that construction ourselves so far that the result of our efforts, the goal of our spiritual process already is implied. When the destination becomes the path, it is practiced directly, without, however, already being achieved. It is trained without the detour to go through intermediary channels.

³ The non-mystical, exoteric traditions of religions do, of course, not know this principle. Who is just thinking out of them, will find such a thought a priori incomprehensible or at least strange.

We instead simulate what we want to be in ourselves, in order to become it thereby more and more. This is done first by imagining the *yidam* until you know him well and its traits. After that you start to imagine the same traits within you, you transfer the image of the *yidam* into yourself. This may proceed when meditating on a mandala also further in a way that the outside world is imagined in the form in which a Buddha would see it. The well-known colourful mandalas of Tibet are maps of Buddha-cities in which the meditator moves in order to transmit identification with the *yidam* also into the outward, into his/her perspective on the world.

In addition to the identification with the *yidam* it is possible to build a model for the greatest possible identification not on a visualized image but a living or historical person. If it is a living spiritual master, it is important to skip unimportant details here as well, a partial distortion of the complete image: Of course, only the identification with its positive qualities shall be used, not with his or her obsession with sex, vanity or what else s/he may be rumoured to be. Unlike in the western hemisphere, dominated by a psychoanalytical model of pathological idealization and a view critical to authorities (which, of course, is not futile) – the idealization of the guru is here certainly wanted: idealization in the sense that only the positive side of the guru is perceived, the teacher as a meditation template. In everyday life, the whole picture may then come to the fore (what wise teachers avoid by becoming unattainable to their students privately, remaining thus always a pure projection of positive qualities). For historical or seemingly historical personalities, as the Tibetan National Buddha Padmasambhava, this necessary idealization succeeds naturally much easier. Padmasambhava or a western saint (like St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa of Avila...) are therefore very suitable identification templates – provided you have enough time dealing with them in order to really know their positive traits.

The identification with the deity produces, however, a tension between the historically more original forms of Buddhist meditation, Vipassana, Satipatana (mindfulness), Chan / Zen and Tibetan Zen (Dzogchen). There, the world is to be regarded as it is, the principle is, then, to add nothing, but to subtract something, namely the erroneous assumptions that our mind by its structural mechanism adds to it. The principle of Tantra, on the other hand, actually adds something to the world, namely, to the illusion, which we as ordinary people already have about us and the world around us, the apparent illusion that we are a divine being. On these allegations, Tantra can reply that this is only a technique, a temporary transformation of the impure illusions into pure illusions, as well as the impure emotions are transformed into pure emotions and are not suppressed and not eliminated. Their purity consists of the fact that they clone the view and

sensations of the holy being and thus become means for our own transformation. If I can produce artificially an awareness, which is modelled on the consciousness of a holy one, I will – because a solid personality anyway does not exist – at some point actually become, what I have practiced a lifetime. The actor, who plays the police inspector a lifetime, at some point begins to be this character even in his private life. The spiritually practicing person who is trained to take over the role, perspective, and energy of the Buddha, of the holy person is increasingly becoming the Buddha (something similar is true for the Christian method of imitation of Christ, which in the early modern period was booming).

This is even true for the mere psychotherapeutic liberation from neurotic patterns. Do we not all fancy ourselves and what we "really" are based on our memories of past experiences, which we had with us and others? Acquired and learned patterns of interpretation, which in turn have something to do with our innate temperament and our life's quest, make a firm personality out of us. But this is, according to the Buddhist point of view, only a solidification of something that is actually much more flexible, much freer if you just let go of it, then it can be movably again. This flexibility is our true being. By identifying with a particular person, we usually do us no favour, at least as long as that person is much too small and too narrow to capture the vastness of the cosmos and all spectral colours of the human potential. This is possible by identifying with something as great as Buddha / Christ alone. And we can test it, if we take a deep look at a single moment and see very clearly and consciously that we *are* the Buddha / Christ, that we carry them already deeply within us as a seed, as a soul spark and only need to bring it to fruition. To utter "I am Buddha / Christ!" consciously and emphatically – despite all prohibitions of church and society – can be enough to sense how something inside is opening up and is freed from the constriction to be an Ego defined by social structures and captured in psychological patterns.

We all follow rules that are called role expectations by sociology and which limit ourselves in any way. If we are able to store these requirements partially by defining an indefinitely large role for us, we may very well grow into this new role. However, the biggest hurdle is convincing ourselves of it, although others are not convinced of it, because we do not bear the insignia of Buddhahood / Christhood with us (if we are not a high Buddhist teacher or a cardinal) and therefore are always perceived in different identifications by our environment (in our small, limited role as an office worker, policewoman, or physician). This teaches us humility at the same time: We can practice tantric identification with the master successfully only if we are humble enough not to insist that others see us as such. On the other hand, we build ourselves a hurdle for our growth

into the master role by ourselves: Whenever the all too human qualities take over in us, we feel catapulted out of our identification with the divine into the smallness of human abysses, fears, and imperfections. Here also humility and not fighting or ignoring is the method of choice. Instead of pretending that there are no fears and all the other human catastrophes in us or that they may not be there, we must in a way divide us and look at us with the love of the holy one, the already perfect part of us (even if we can just imagine it) look at that part that has not achieved as much. We must be the Buddha, Christ for ourselves. We must accept that there are two parts in us and that the higher trails the lower one (and if possible not vice versa).

It may be no incident that in times like ours, being so richly awarded with Buddhist thinking, psychology provided a corresponding model, already being accepted widely, in order to formulate this process in western terminology also: According to the methodology of Ego-State-Therapy, which is itself a part of the systemic-hypnotherapist tradition, we are not a homogenous something called “personality”, but we are composed from personality-parts, which should cooperate but often oppose each other. It is the aim of Ego-State-Therapy to bring these parts into a productive dialogue. If we appreciate the fearful, depressive, devaluating, or devaluated parts of us by caring about them with our very adult ones, we become complete again.

What about cases in which the identification is preformatted in a pathological way because someone tends towards delusions of grandeur? This possible exists, of course, and although I have never seen it in practitioners that have a good teacher at their side, but which teacher nowadays is close enough to his students to recognize a student tending to delusions of grandeur? And which spiritual teachers are psychologically educated enough for being able to react on it adequately?⁴ In the first instance then we must consider what a delusion of grandeur should be if we assume that a firm Ego-construction, being a human and only fancying oneself as a Buddha, does not exist at all – if we in the contrary are Buddhas fancying themselves as humans. What then is that delusion of grandeur? Well, the answer is easier than it seems: If I find the traits of a Buddha / holy person inside myself and these are really present for a moment, I am a tantric practitioner. If I construe them inside myself, but do realize that they are not always really there, I am tantric practitioner. If, however, these are not there, but I am convinced they be there, I got a little big for my boots for a moment or for a longer period of time. To illustrate it with an example: People that identify

⁴ For a counselling transpersonal psychology, this shortcoming, being observable every single day, would be great field of activity if everybody would face up to this loophole in the system of modern spiritual institutions.

with the divine inside in a megalomaniac manner say things like: "I do not need to discuss my personality with you because I am on a level where I have overcome all personal things." For everybody else, however, they seem to be full of personality. Or they claim to possess secret wisdom that can be shown to be false by closer or looser examination, what they have to ignore in order to maintain their view of themselves. They seem to lack of what I have called modesty before, to accept the small human parts of the ego-experience lovingly with the Buddha / Christ part. They have lost the "As-If" of the tantric: "I feel, *as if* I was enlightened" becomes, "I *am* enlightened".

Someone practicing in a correct manner thus will also have to bear the difficult balancing act between the small reality and the big truth of his sacred part (when it has been searched consciously or manifests itself spontaneously). Perhaps it is the most important exercise when identifying with the sacred within to bear both sides at the same time. Not only some of the master gurus of New Age but of course many representatives of the established religions as well are suffering from this incapacity: either they present themselves as images of saints that they are not really; or they stay in the lowlands of the "all too human", because they do not dare to accept and to live their own inner sacredness. They become false gurus or church managers, which have lost all true connection with the divine. It is a strange secret that a Quotidian Tantra rightly understood does not produce a false guru but exactly the middle between the two extremes. By firstly watching, imitating, and simulating the outer guru, by secondly watching, accepting, and admitting the guru inside, I am on the way for authentic realization, as long as I do not suppress reality as it is. Therefore, ultimately Tantra is no contradiction to mindfulness or to Zen / Dzogchen. No teaching of the Buddha contradicts another one in the ultimate sense (that is actually true and has to stay undisputed unless proven otherwise). Tantra sees one aspect of a reality that mindfulness cannot see. But without mindfulness regarding the part of reality that is ignored otherwise, Tantra may lead to self-deception.

Integration of Emotions into the Path

Based on identification with the sacred, in the Tantric view emotions can be transformed into the path of spiritual maturation. The Tantric attitude does not suppress emotions, it does not even deflect them in desired areas, it uses their energy as a way to promote higher spiritual processes. *What* you do does not matter, one could formulate in a tantric way, only *how* you do it, the alignment of your consciousness is crucial here. If the Tantric is aware that *everything* is divine (in the sense of monism), then everything that happens to him and what

he does, is sacred. This is not a mere logical consequence, but a statement of fact: *If the mind of the practitioner is fully aware of the Sacred in every action and every experience, then every action and every experience is sacred, the divine can manifest itself in it and will shine through.*

What does this mean, translated into everyday lives of ordinary spiritual seekers never having received the higher Tantric initiations (and personal initiations are probably required in classical Tantra)? It means to dive into the beauty of the structure of the cosmos, which serves no other purpose than ME attaining enlightenment. ME, that's you, the reader, that's me, the writer, that's everyone you know or do not know. For the mystery of this cosmos consists precisely in the fact that it seems to be constructed in a complexity not attainable by any computer program of the world so that at any moment everything happens as if every living being was in the centre of a structure, which pursues only their personal spiritual progress. The world revolves around ME – i.e., the writer, the reader and any other ME – but around all these ME's at the same time. Thus, we can see the spiritual quality of any given situation, if we are vigilant. Alertness, attentiveness, presence is the key to understanding of what Tantra can be in daily life: As a soldier standing on guard in a crisis area, so we have to be vigilant at every moment of our lives in order not to miss the wonderful spiritual message of any situation.

If we go into this state of mindfulness completely and without reservations, then it eventually fills us out so far that the permanent activity of our mind subsides or even temporarily stops. This babbling, all commenting mind, with which we are fully identified, disturbs our spiritual progress tremendously because it imprisons us and closes down our opening to another dimension of reality. If critical Christians assail this as an idea of New Age or yoga, they are wrong: John of the Cross, the “cloud of unknowing” and other Christian teachers of contemplation all know about the necessity of inner silence. As we embark into the here and now entirely, we turn our attention from the permanent inner monologue. In connection with the Tantric orientation, however, that is not enough. We add in a Tantric perspective – within Tibetan Tantra at least – another component to pure mindfulness, which will remind us of the character of sacredness in the world. We become aware of the fact that the whole world is the palace of the deity. We try to change our perspective so that we are aware of the true, profound, divine reality behind the sensual reality. And as long as we can not see this directly, we simply make it up ourselves. This trick is legitimized by the testimony of many great masters that the world is not as it appears to us, and that surface reality is actually the residence of deities, expression of the divine, of the true Buddha.

The same is true for our actions: We acquiesce that our actions are born spontaneously out of the presence, and let the divine express itself. If we mindfully become aware of our own impulses and sacrifice its energy to the godhead than are all our actions activities of the divine. But does that not open the way for abuse of the spiritual to justify the most mundane or even unethical acts? The danger of bogus spirituality is nowhere bigger than where the tantric doctrine of inseparability between spiritual and sensual world is misused – and that happens easily.⁵ Is not our ego always interested in new reasons why it needs this or that, why it must be angry and treat others badly, why it needs to put its interests above those of others? These are no actions of the Godhead, and if we catch ourselves acting just of our ego's sake, we seem far away from letting It work through us.

But after what we have said above about the structure of the cosmos for our own spiritual progress, is it not clear that we can utilize each situation and act for grinding our ego rather than to nurture it? If we have this idea very consciously, it reveals its enormous force: ANY situation that befalls us and EVERY action are capable to gain from it spiritual knowledge and liberation from the shackles of the ego? How can this be done? By acting at random and afterwards justify everything as a spiritual practice? By acting out our emotions and feel like gods? “Love and do what you want” says Augustine: If we spontaneously dwell in the consciousness of the Sacred, we cannot do any wrong. Until that is the case, should we produce an awareness of the Sacred, but then act freely and non-artificially from within and express our emotions. In Tantra, we will continue to distinguish spiritual from non-spiritual actions, but we should not build the criterion for that on our behaviour, but on our state of mind.

We develop a consciousness of the sacred of this world by adding a focus on the higher consciousness or a supreme being to total presence in the here and now. Also in Tantra, this is an act of devotion to the Divine, a form of prayer, affectionate, grateful and humble submission to this higher being, which we can imagine as the Godhead, a loving teacher, a supernatural, personalized power. Only in the adoring devotion to this being (a dualistic act so), the identification with sacred embodied in it can be prepared (so a second, monistic act). In this opening, just staying present, them mind becomes a thoughtless, purely conscious field in which the higher sphere, that has been invited, may extend. In everyday life this happens sometimes by an incident, a spontaneous impulse to act or a spontaneously occurring emotion.

⁵ In my opinion, however, one of the most famous Tantrics of the 20th Century, the man who was called Osho at last, *consciously* verged on the border between spirituality and pseudo-spirituality, also in order to demonstrate the spiritual character of the not apparently spiritual.

Particularly important are these considerations, when we feel prompted to commit acts that in some way contradict our conception of a spiritual life. Often a little psychology suffices to examine, whether the action serves to entangle the ego in this world or solves it. A possible test consists in the addictive nature of an act. Impulses that push towards their realization repeatedly are patterns – and patterns always are ego-attachments. Contradictory, innovative ways of acting dissolve old patterns and are thus psychologically useful for the solution of the ego. It may even be that we have to dispense an actually spiritual activity for the sake of others, such as when a father goes to a funfair with his children instead of meditating. By interchanging a need of our ego with the need of another ego, we act selfless in the sense of the great Buddhist teacher Shantideva. The spiritual benefits would be even greater, however, if the father could discover the potential that would make this fair visit usable for his spiritual progress and that of his children. Because every situation is potentially useful for spiritual advancement, if it is possible to develop a mindset, that views the world as the dwelling of the Godhead.

So the fair visit could awaken the childish side of his father and bring him closer to his child, and for the child his father's spirituality could be easier to experience. For this purpose, an emotional presence of the father, getting totally into the situation, however, would be a prerequisite. In a difference to mindfulness, the quotidian Tantric does not approach a situation with a distanced contemplating vision, but merges in it completely in the state of conscious presence, in order to enjoy it emotionally, live through it and accept it as a spiritual gift. The motto could be: I want to perceive, to welcome and to express (moderated by social and ethical boundaries) as consciously and forcefully as possible all the emotions that arise in this situation. Just that the emotional energy it contains is activated, not suppressed, makes a situation a Tantric one. For the emotionally inhibited person it can be liberating and be difficult to conceive emerging emotions mindfully and to dive into the flow of one's own feelings and its spontaneous expression. If the previously mentioned steps (thoughtless presence, orientation towards the divine, identification with it or opening for his influence, preserving the identification / presence / orientation in action, getting involved emotionally) are practiced regularly, utterly self-surrendering to a situation can become a true meditation practice. In the foreground then is not the impression of a personal entity of action, but the awareness that the Godhead plays a human being who must make a certain experience; experiencing and doing in and of itself takes the place of intentionally acting out of a personal centre, as if you are just a player, through which the Divine expresses itself (as it is expressed by the

other person and everything else, in order to play the Big Game for the purpose of our liberation and enlightenment).

But is it justified to commit acts that are seen outside the tantric schools as unethical (e.g., for the Buddhist, drinking alcohol) when the previous steps have been followed? For the real tantric it is indeed so that his/her actions are to be considered according to his state of mind, not the outer content. For the quotidian Tantrics everything that does not follow egotist motives and helps to abrade the ego is justified. To give in to a strong desire, to follow a strong emotional impulse can grind our ego if we in that act sacrifice ourself to the Godhead, to bow to it, in order to savour it, not the world. Sometimes we have to "act out" a particular part of us and emotionally "let off steam" before we can overcome it and let it go. That means that every action can serve our spiritual progress: if we have to commit it to overcome our attachment to this world, it is justified. So if we sometimes have to go unusual ways to heal and release old wounds, these ways can be spiritual in nature, but we should in this case try to invite the transpersonal power of the Divine as much as possible to govern our actions.

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