

CONSIDERATIONS ON TANTRIK SPIRITUALITY

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There are three ways of considering the *Tantra*, each acceptable in its own degree: firstly, there is the relatively external way of scholarship, concerned largely with accumulating information and sifting source-material—here questions of influences and origins, and of historical affinities generally, will play a part; secondly, there is the essential and normal way of regarding *Tantra*, which can also be called the “traditional” way, under its twofold aspect of a wisdom (*prajna*) and a method (*upaya*) or, in other words, a metaphysical theory (lest we forget it, the primitive meaning of the Greek word *theoria* is “vision”=दर्शन,=ज्ञान) together with its appropriate means of concentration, its yogic expedients; thirdly there is what might be described as a generalised “tantrik sense”, whereby it is possible to recognise the existence, in places where the name of *Tantra* has been unknown, of analogous doctrines and methods, thus providing concurrent evidence in favour of the spiritual methods in question. Let us see how the *Tantra* will appear when viewed from each of these different angles.

Firstly, the scholarly approach: it should be pointed out, from the outset, that this manner of regarding the subject (or indeed any subject) can be given both a legitimate and an illegitimate form. The true value of scholarship is an ancillary one: it is obviously advantageous to the student, whether engaged in a strictly religious pursuit or otherwise, to be provided with reliable texts and references of various kind, a task which he himself, lacking the detailed knowledge and training, could hardly undertake for himself; likewise it may be helpful, in an indirect way, to form a picture of the historical background of one's religion; and again, a discussion by experts of the exact bearing of the various technical terms figuring in one's texts can be very useful, since in course of time people often lose sight of certain shades of meaning these terms will have borne for the authors who first used them and which more or less thoughtless repetition may afterwards have blurred—this applies especially to translated texts. All this pertains to the cardinal Buddhist

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virtue of "mindfulness" in varying proportions, from which it can be seen that the conscientious scholar is able to render a very genuine service in this field.

The abusive employment of scholarship, on the other hand, which has become well-nigh all-invading in recent times, consists in examining sacred writings and other religious phenomena in the light, or rather in the darkness, of an inbuilt profane prejudice, with the set purpose of reducing them, one and all, to the status of historical, anthropological or sociological accidents, by an explaining away of every transcendent element to be found there—revelation, inspiration, intellection—in purely humanistic terms. The latest and in many ways deadliest addition to this process of subversion is the psychological interpretation of religion, of which the Freudian and Jungian schools provide two representative forms, the one being avowedly materialistic and hostile, while the other affects a sympathetic attitude on the strength of a deftly nurtured system of equivocations, as between things of the spiritual and of the psychic order: the Tantrik doctrines have not escaped an attempted annexation to this point of view and the same applies to *Zen*. The fact is that nowadays even Oriental commentators, who might be expected to see further than their Western colleagues, often exhibit a most uncritical haste in adopting the latest exegetic aberrations and this trend has amounted, in many cases, to a regular intellectual stampede before the modern "scientism" or, in other words, to an urge towards religious and intellectual suicide. It is necessary to be warned of this danger, which is spreading far and wide on both sides of the globe today!

It is under the heading of scholarship, which here must be taken in a very broad sense, that a question is best discussed which has largely entered into the present symposium on the *Tantra*, namely the relationship (if any) between its Buddhist and Hindu forms: admittedly, to answer a question like this fully, more than conventional scholarship is required; any attempted comment must in fact be accompanied by a certain metaphysical insight, able to look beyond the letter of texts and formulations to the underlying spirit in both the cases under comparison.

When the Tantrik writings first began to attract serious notice outside the Indian world, largely thanks to the outstanding studies of a late Chief Justice of Calcutta High

Court, Sir John Woodroffe (better known by his pen-name of Arthur Avalon), the fact that he himself, as a Sanskritist in close touch with Bengali *pandits*, devoted the greater part of his work to the Hindu *Shaktas* and their doctrines, led to a hasty assumption, by many, that the Buddhist *Tantras*, which Arthur Avalon had barely touched on, were but an extension of the Hindu Tantrik corpus : the existence in both cases of an "erotic" symbolism, that is to say a representation of reality as the inter-play of a pair of conjoint principles respectively pictured as male and female, seemed to lend colour to the above conclusion : it hardly needs saying that this seeming polarisation into two divinities, as *Shiva* and *Shakti* in the one case and as the various Buddhas with their female counterparts, in the other, implies no radical dualism; the Tantrik point of view is *advaitic* through and through, so that it is only at the point of indistinguishable union (*maithuna*) of the male and female principles thus depicted that the truth is effectively to be found. The male divinity and his partner essentially *are* one another and can never be regarded apart; the static *is* the creative or productive power and *vice versa* and indeed, it is the very fact that a numerical unity has been avoided in the symbolism, in favour of the more subtle idea of non-duality, that makes the Tantrik symbolical language so peculiarly eloquent and its corresponding methods so effective in unloosing the hold of dualistic habit on the human mind².

Prior to the publication of Arthur Avalon's series of volumes, the Tantrik practices and also their associated iconography had become a favourite target of vicious insinuation, firstly on the part of ignorant Western commentators, especially missionaries, obsessed with unclean suspicions wherever the word "sex" is even mentioned and, following their example, also on the part of Westernised Orientals; this prejudice has died hard and it is only in the last few years that the *Tantra* have begun to be regarded in the world at large as respectable, let alone as spiritually important, doctrines. It is largely thanks to observations carried out in the Tibetan field that this welcome, if belated change has come about. When one looks back to the end of last century and the early years of the present one, barring the lonely voice of Avalon, very few Western writers had a good word to say on the subject : typical examples of the then prevailing prejudice are Madame Blavatsky³ and Waddell⁴, to mention two well-known names. Even as late as 1936 an

excellent scholar like the Japanese professor Tajima, himself an adherent of a Tantrik school (*Saichō*), voiced the current prejudice, not against Tantra as a whole, but against the Tibetan form of it, by saying that wherever those Chinese and Japanese Tantrik doctrines he himself favoured had originated, historically speaking, from Nalanda the Tibetan ones, according to him, had mostly issued from Vikramashila which he wrote off as the home of relatively popular and superstitious beliefs and practices; his evidence for so thinking was, however, by no means clear. In any case, one is minded to ask, what about Naropa and his Six Doctrines, since he certainly belonged to Nalanda? And where would Marpa and Mila Repa and so much of Tibet's finest esoteric flowering have been without them? If a man as well informed as Professor Tajima could still echo, even slightly, these old prejudices, this but goes to show how thoroughly the various slanderers of *Tantra* had gone about their work of slinging mud. There is no doubt, however, that it is the "sexy" denigration of the erotic symbolism that has chiefly helped to fog the issue, over and above whatever genuine problems the question of origins might have presented for more informed minds.

If I may be allowed here to strike a personal note, I should like to explain that when I first became aware of the place of *Tantra* in Tibetan tradition and art, my first impulse was to strike a blow in its defence, in opposition to the prejudiced reports still current at the time, as described above; in the first flush of discovery that such a thing as a Tantrik Buddhism existed and that it was a treasury of beautiful and eminently significant symbols I was ready to give tongue to my enthusiasm, but certainly was not competent to go very far on the interpretative side—Avalon's treatises were then almost my only source of information, and very precious they were at the time. That is why I readily resorted to Hindu usage, by referring to the *Yum* divinities as "Consort-Energies" when writing my first book *Peaks and Lamas*; too much, however, should not be read into this allusion, which was largely accidental and certainly did not amount to a technical appraisal of a definitive kind.

Even at that early date, however, I did perceive one thing, which others have since pointed out from a position of greater information, namely that the sexual symbolism, common to the Buddhist and Hindu *Tantra*, nevertheless exhibits a divergence, as between the two schools, touching

the way in which the sexual attributions are respectively applied: that is to say, in Hindu Tantrism, *Shiva* (or any other male form of divinity), represents the static aspect while the corresponding female form represents the dynamic or creative aspect; hence her quality of *Shakti*, female-energy² which in Hindu parlance, has become the generic term for all heavenly Consorts. In Buddhism, on the other hand, the symbolical pairing takes on an impersonal form (which agrees with the Buddhist "spiritual economy" in general) and it also works the other way round inasmuch as here it is *prajna*, the female partner, who seems to indicate the more static aspect of the symbolism—"wisdom" is essentially a state or quality of being—while the male element in the syzygy is referred to as method (*upaya*) which, on the face of it, carries dynamic implications, since it is thanks to a deploying of the right means, with their accompanying effort, that *prajna* is able to be realised in the heart of the *Sadhana*. Moreover, the traditional assimilating of *upaya* to *compassion* (itself a dynamic conception) lends additional weight to the view that the Buddhist Tantrik symbolism works the opposite way to the Hindu: from which some polemically-minded writers, filled with pro-Buddhist patriotism, have gladly drawn the conclusion that Buddhist Tantrism is something entirely alien to the Hindu Tantrism; to which they add, as a rider, supported by rather tendentiously selected and interpreted evidence, that it is anterior in origin and that it was the Hindus who borrowed these methods from the Buddhists (as well as other things) and then imposed on them, *a posteriori*, the specifically Hindu notion of power, *shakti*.

Without claiming to be a scholar myself, I do not consider an explanation of this kind necessary in order to account for the available evidence and the same applies in regard to criteria of a more profound kind; the truth would rather seem to be that what can, without abuse of language, be called the "Tantrik Revelation" belongs to both the great Indian traditions which it embraced, as it were in answer to a "cyclic need", in one providential overflowing of the Spirit in a manner that implies no derogation respecting the originality of either traditional form—rather let us see herein an example of that universal and divine Compassion which, in apparent disregard of all rationally delimited frontiers, provides what is needed for the salvation of suffering beings at a given time and place. It is not without reason that the Tantrik *Sadhanas*, wherever these are followed, are regarded as a way most appropriate to the conditions of

the present phase of the world cycle, where more primordial and, in a sense, more inflexible ways no longer fully match the need.

To sum up the above view : the representation of non-duality in the guise of a merging of male and female conjugal love, as well as the variously characteristic yogic practices connected therewith, is enough to prove the fundamental kinship between the Hindu and Buddhist *Tantra* and that despite some important divergencies as to detail. Granted this basic identity it is going too far, however, to try and establish a point to point correspondence in the respective symbolisms : *shakti* and *prajna* are not simply interchangeable ideas, and each of the two Tantrik currents has evidently given rise to some original features, consonantly with its own peculiar genius, so that the impersonal *prajna-upaya* relationship that has characterized *Mahayana* Buddhism on the one hand and the personified presentation characteristic of Hindu theism, *Shiva-Shakti*, on the other, have been able to grow out of the same erotic symbolism without risk of confusion in either direction. I doubt if one will get much nearer the truth of the matter than this.⁶

By way of illustrating what might be described as a "metaphysical subterfuge", typical in its way, whereby an underlying identity is able to be discerned across an apparent expression of inter-religious rivalry, I would like to relate a rather amusing explanation given me by a Lama when I was staying near Shigatse in 1947 : we were speaking about the Kailas and its pilgrimage and I had just made the observation that the divinity dwelling on the sacred summit, *Demchhog* (འདེ་མཚོ་གླང་མ་ = महासुख/सम्बर) for the Tibetans and Lord *Shiva*, for the Hindus, appeared to have much the same attributes : might one not infer from this, I asked, that *Demchhog* and *Shiva* are one and the same divinity and that each is, in effect, the other under a different name ? "Oh no" said the Lama "you are mistaken in thinking thus. *Shiva* is the name of a Hindu god whom *Demchhog*, in the name of Buddhism, challenged and overcame, after which he appropriated his mountain and all his major and minor attributes, his *Yum* included"—a truly delightful way of by-passing traditional differences while seeming to make no concession to the other side. Nor must we overlook the fact that, according to this explanation, the Lady *Parvati* exchanged her former quality of *Shakti* for that of her new husband's *prajna* without turning

a hair, which in a way sums up the whole position, but without trying to rationalise it in an unnecessary degree.

Having dwelt so long on this much canvassed question of affinities, it will only be possible to touch briefly on the second of our three aspects of *Tantra*, on what was described at the outset as its normal or traditional aspect. In this connection it may well be asked, in view of the worldwide religious crisis going on today, whether any of the Tantrik *Sadhanas* still remain viable for men of the present generation and if so, what are the conditions allowing a man to opt for this way. The answer is that wherever the traditional structure has withstood the pressure of the times sufficiently to allow a would-be *Sadhaka* to find a *guru* qualified to initiate and give instruction there is no reason for him to hold off from following this line; let him profit from any discoverable opportunity while the going is good. If a door that is open today becomes closed tomorrow it will then be time to think again; but there is no reason to anticipate on this worser eventuality. Admittedly, the sacrilegious over-running of Tibet, the chosen home of *Tantra*, has left the adjoining countries sadly unsupported: it is as if a bountiful fountain of spiritual influence has suddenly dried up. It would be going too far, however, to say that all opportunities of this kind have disappeared in the neighbouring region; in Japan also, the Tantrik initiations of *Shingon* and *Tendai* still carry on, which is marvellous in a country where profane forms of education together with industrialism have been developed to an extreme degree, as has happened there. It is these developments, fruits of the conjunction of an asuric substitute for *prajna* with a no less asuric *upaya* which everywhere constitute the greatest threat to religious life. Contemporary man, helpless slave of his own mechanical creations, remains as if suspended between two karmically interconnected explosions, the nuclear one and the "population explosion". Lacking all discernment, he diverts to the purveyors of rockets to the moon that admiration that once was offered to the Buddhas and the Saints. This fascination exerted on the human mind by trivialities inflated to monstrous proportions is in fact one of the characteristic notes of the fearful era foretold by Tsong Khapa (and also by the Scriptures of all peoples) "when impurity grows greater and greater" (ཉེན་མེད་འགྲོ་བའི་དུས་). This era is now upon us as part of our *karma*, which we cannot hope to by-pass but have to face: what then is the attitude required of us under these unavoidably distressing circumstances?

Surely the answer every true *Sadhaka* will give is this, namely that "the world is always the world even when times seem fair; so also *Bodhi* is *Bodhi* even in an accursed hour. Therefore I myself, be I even left as the sole follower of the Way in a world grown hopelessly inattentive, shall continue to pursue the Way and not look back"—surely this is the only practical attitude for anyone to take up, under whatever circumstances: the essential message of the *Sutras* and *Tantras* does not differ from this.

Though it was natural to refer first, when broaching the above question, to the parent lands of *Tantra*, in Asia, it might also be asked whether, under the exceptional conditions now prevailing, some exporting of Tantrik methods might not take place in other directions, leading to a fresh local flowering; those who put this question are usually thinking of the dispersion of Tibetan Lamas in various alien lands, whereby some are hoping that a new impetus may be given to slumbering spiritual forces in the West. To such a question one can only answer that exceptional adaptations are always theoretically possible; they cannot be ruled out in principle. Humanly speaking, however, and on a more obvious showing, the kind of spiritual *upayas* that will be feasible under conditions where the environment is no longer traditionally receptive are likely to differ in various respects from those to which recourse can be had under circumstances of greater human normality; less complex spiritual instruments would seem to lend themselves best to so critical a situation.

Among *upayas* of this nature, requiring very little in the way of set conditions for their methodic utilisation, the various forms of "invocation" (*japa*) centred round the presence of a holy Name, focus of mantric power, are the first to come to mind. One characteristic example is the *Nembutsu*, the *mantra* belonging to *Shin* Buddhism in Japan and enshrining the name of *Amitabha Buddha* as its operative theme; it is moreover evident that the similar use of the *mantra* of *Chenrezig*, in Tibet, which could also be called the "quintessential invocation", is closely akin to the *Nembutsu* in intention, if only by reason of the principal relationship of the *Bodhisattva Chenrezig* and the *Buddha Opagmed* (*Amitabha*), as proved "mythologically" by the origination of the former from the head of the latter. Similarly, in Eastern Christianity, we have the "Jesus Prayer", an invocatory formula the use of which by the contemplatives of Mount Athos is extremely reminiscent of certain Tantrik methods;

Again, in the Islamic world, we find the invocation (*dhikr*) of the Supreme Name, which is the central *upaya* of the Sufic initiations and of the spiritual confraternities (*uruq*) attached to them. The important thing to note in every such case is that the formula invoked as *mantra* will always point to three possible levels of realisation : when used as a means of gaining merit, good *karma*, it has a relatively external applicability; it can also be used as a means of deepening piety, when it comes under the heading of a *bhaktic* support; lastly, the same formula can be the basis of a properly *jnanic* realisation (this implies a methodic invocation under guidance by a qualified Spiritual Master), whereby this *upaya* rejoins the methods of the *Tantras*, inasmuch as it is able to take one to the gate of Deliverance itself.

It is evident that, by comparison with the ways described above, the Tantrik meditations, which by the nature of things demand long periods free from interruption for their normal accomplishment, remain relatively unadaptable; what is suitable in a spiritual summer may not be so in the wintry days of profane degeneration. To speculate on what is or is not any longer possible hardly falls within the scope of the present discussion; all one can do is to watch for signs and, where these appear, to respond in the most appropriate way.

What, however, does deserve attention, not only within the Hindu-cum-Buddhist world but also in the lands beyond, is what may fittingly be called "the Spirit of *Tantra*", our third category in the preamble to this essay. What then are the criteria wherewith to recognise that spirit, wherever it may occur? In its way, this question is important under all circumstances and every man of spiritual intent stands to gain from its answering, even if his own way of realisation does not assume one of the forms coming under the Tantrik label. A short discussion of this question will therefore provide a natural conclusion to the present considerations on Tantrik spirituality.

Essentially one can speak of a "Tantrik sense" or a "Tantrik spirit" (the former being the faculty wherewith to recognise the presence of the latter) in connection with any doctrine or method of which the conscious aim is a *transmutation* of the human soul in such a way as to enable the true Intelligence, the "mind of *Bodhi*" to emerge and take command. This process is properly an *alchemical* one, inasmuch as no element in the soul is actually to be destroyed or cut out;

the Tantrik technique consists in putting to use whatever exists there, without exception; which in its turn implies the possibility of converting whatever is base or polluted into something pure and noble.

In medieval Europe, as also in the Islamic world, the alchemical sciences were founded on this idea: according to the mineral symbolism they used, *lead*, the basest metal, was to be transmuted, quickly or by stages, into the solar metal, *gold*; in Hindu terms, this is a question of redressing the balance of the *gunas*, lead being the metal in which *tamas* predominates while gold is the most *sattvic* metal of all. In the course of this process certain other symbolical substances, notably *sulphur* and *mercury*, were called into play at various stages of the alchemical operation. If even in the Middle Ages the ignorant sometimes credited the alchemists with a literal intention of getting rich by manufacturing gold from lead, historians of modern science have displayed a similar ignorance in believing that Alchemy was simply a primitive attempt to do what the present-day chemist does and that the various materials referred to were what their names indicate and no more; it is thanks to a few investigators who have taken the trouble to study the alchemical writings with proper care and an open mind that this hitherto misunderstood science, so close to the *Tantra* in intention, has at last been cleared of the crude misconceptions that had gathered round it especially in modern times⁷.

A particularly important point to note in connection with Alchemy, is the recognition, across all apparent differences, of a common essence linking together the two substances to be found at the beginning and end of the transmutative process. If the Alchemist in course of his investigations happens to find lead mixed in with other metals, he does not hastily throw it on the scrap heap since, to his discerning eye, its leaden dullness already masks the potential radiance of pure gold. Therefore he treasures it like the rest while considering the proper means for converting it into what by rights it should be; his attitude is typically "advaitic" and so is his technique. In fact, certain Alchemists have declared that lead, or any "base" metal, is essentially gold fallen sick; gold is lead free from all illness. One might well parallel his statement, from the Tantrik side, by saying that a worldly man is nothing but a sick Buddha; a Buddha is a man who has been wholly healed of his existential sickness.

Together with the idea of transmutation, on which all alchemical processes depend, has gone a certain attitude towards the ethical prescriptions of religion which, in the case of the *Tantra*, is among those features that have on occasion provoked accusations of moral laxity of the kind alluded to earlier in this essay. This attitude consists in regarding even a person's vices as a source of latent power, as a virtue misapplied but still utilisable if one knows the proper way to handle it; simply to suppress the outward expression of a vicious tendency, by a single-handed effort of the will carried out when in a state of relative unawareness, may not be the most effective way to rid the soul of the tendency in question—not to mention the danger of letting in another and worse evil in order to fill a vacuum created in a psychic substance not yet conditioned to attract a compensating element from a purely spiritual direction : Christ's story of the seven devils rushing in to occupy the house left empty after the expulsion of the single previous devilish occupant provides a vivid illustration of this particular danger. The Tantrik or Alchemical healer bases certain of his practices on an awareness that, by comparison with the characteristic slipperiness of human thought, a passion often displays a relatively simple and graspable character, such as allows of its being made to serve as the "raw material" of an alchemical operation in its early stages; to handle a passional element provisionally as an *upaya* for an avowedly spiritual purpose does not in the least imply a condoning of passion as such and, still less, any writing down of the virtue whereof that passion is the negative reflexion or shadow. All such a healer does is to view any particular passion in relation to the process of purification considered as a whole, which may sometimes require that it be tolerated provisionally for reasons of psychic equilibrium, though certainly not excused in itself. The true Tantrik practitioner is interested in an integral regeneration, nothing less; that is why, for him, every property of body and mind will have its proper place there, the art being to know how to put each thing in its place, without omission or suppression of any utilisable factor, be appearances as they will. Individual abuses apart, it is in the light of this general principle that those Tantrik practices must be judged which have been the occasion of "scandal" to the conventional moralists; anyone who approaches the question in this way will need no further convincing that the Tantrik tradition is as much concerned as exoteric religion with the promotion and practice of the virtues; only its manner of pursuing this purpose goes deeper than symptoms, than the mere form of acts, being in fact most

concerned with the medium in which these acts are able to arise, which it tries to transmute so that only virtue is able to survive there.

A virtue, for one engaged on any esoteric path, is primarily a mode of knowing or, to be more accurate, a factor dispositive to Enlightenment. Similarly, a vice will be rated as a factor of ignorance, or as a cause of thickening the existential veil between the human subject and the light; this way of regarding good and evil is a properly "intellectual" (*jñanic*) one, the usual perspective of merit and demerit being, by comparison, relatively external and dualistic, but not wholly untrue for that—indeed far from it. To practice a virtue is then like clearing a window in the soul, to indulge a vice is like smearing that same window with dirt; that is why the practice of the virtues is not less important for one pursuing the *jñanic* way than for the *karma yogin* or the *bhakta* (for the latter it is pleasing or offending the Beloved that counts); more or less enigmatic references in the Tantrik writings to the man for whom the distinction between good and evil has ceased to matter need not deceive anyone on that score.

No better description of *Tantra*, in a European language, can be found than to call it an "alchemical science of the soul!" whereby the lead of samsaric existence becomes transmuted into what it already is in principle, namely the *Bodhic* gold, eternally gleaming.

NOTES

1. In this connection, attention can fittingly be drawn to a very important article published in the quarterly review *Tomorrow*, from the pen of Mr. Titus Burckhardt, in which, among other things, the theories of Jung are critically examined: the article is entitled *Cosmology and Modern Science* and appeared in the summer and autumn numbers 1964 and in the winter number 1965 of the journal in question; part iii deals with the psychological theories concerning religion. Another work containing similar criticism is *Western Psychology and Hindu Sadhana* by Dr. Hans Jacob (published by Allen and Unwin, London); the author is himself an eminent psychiatrist who at one time studied under Jung but later came to discover both the fallacies underlying so much of Western psychological teaching and also the vast superiority of the Hindu and Buddhist handling of the human *psyche*.

2. The Chinese symbolism of *Yin-Yang* conveys a similar message : here *Yin*, the female principle portrayed as dark in hue and representing the passive and potential side of things (*Shakti* might well be rendered as "potency") and *Yang* the male, light in hue and representing their active or essential side, are combined in a circular diagram (in its way a kind of *mandala*) the interlocked halves of which evidently correspond to the state of *maithuna*; each half moreover displays one tiny spot of the opposing colour whereby is indicated the non-dualistic interpenetration of the principles thus depicted.
3. See *The Voice of the Silence*, where the Tantrik methods are repeatedly stigmatised as dark and unsavoury : it is evident that the lady founder of the Theosophical Society accepted the current libels without the least suspicion that they were tainted. Incidentally, this attitude of hers shows up the absurdity of the claim that *The Voice of the Silence* was a translation, or shall we say a free adaptation, of an ancient Tibetan scripture. Anti-Tantrik sentiments in a supposedly Tibetan context take a lot of swallowing, to say nothing of the obviously European flavour of the whole text.
4. See his *Lamaism* (Heffer) which despite its much factual material is a regular tissue of misleading statements prompted by sectarian dislike. Waddell's persistent rendering of the female Wrathful Deities as "fiendesses" is but one example of the lengths to which his own prejudices carried that writer.
5. It might be mentioned, in passing, as an instructive example of "spiritual coincidence", that in the Christian Church under its Orthodox (Eastern) form the doctrine of the "Divine Energies", first fully expounded by the great 14th century doctor St. Gregory Palamas, is distinctly reminiscent of the Hindu idea of *Shakti* which the word "energy" admirably renders. According to the Palamite theology God creates the world, not by His Essence, but by His Energies.
6. Similar views have been expressed by Dr. S. B. Dasgupta in his abundantly documented *Introduction to Tantric Buddhism* published by the University of Calcutta in 1950; second edition in 1958. This distinguished scholar, while readily admitting the greater extent and variety of the Buddhist Tantrik literature as compared with the Hindu, nevertheless maintains and, as it seems to me, substantiates the thesis that "Tantricism, whether Hindu or Buddhistic.....are fundamentally the same". He certainly does not overlook any of the differences of expression and practice that distinguish the two traditions. His appraisal of the basic theology behind the symbolism is clear and concise, while the wealth of illustration and commentary is of the most satisfying proportions. It is noteworthy that here and there in this book the author refers to one or other Buddhist goddess as the *shakti* of her corresponding male divinity : the content shows, in every case, that here he is making a purely conventional use of the term, as is but natural in one Indian-born; had he been speaking of the Hellenic gods, he would doubtless have referred to Hera as the *shakti* of Zeus : nothing further is to be read into this

proceeding on his part, which explains itself at a glance. All that one can usefully add is to say that, given the slight verbal inaccuracy in introducing the term *shakti* into a Buddhist context, the word "Consort" (which exactly renders the Tibetan *Yum*) is to be preferred as precluding all possible terminological confusions.

7. One of the most authoritative, as well as intelligible, works on the subject now available is *Alchimie*, by Titus Burckhardt, the same author whose name figured in note 1; the publisher is Walter-Verlag, of Olten and Freiburg in Breisgau. This book, which is copiously documented, exists at present in German and Italian; an English translation is much to be desired.