

**A PROLEGOMENON  
TO A STUDY OF  
PSYCHOANALYSIS AND  
OCCULTISM:  
SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PSYCHOANALYSIS HINDUISM  
BUDDHISM AND TAOISM:  
PSYCHOANALYSIS A WESTERN FORM OF  
OCCULTISM**

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**COLIN LESLIE DEAN**

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There are a number of similarities between psychoanalysis and the occultisms of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism that in effect show that psychoanalysis is a form of occultism. These similarities centre around such things as: libido/prana/chi/lung; the notion of the repressed and the samskaras; the notions of psychoanalytic insight and prajna and jnana.; the successful result of psychoanalysis and the end result of the spiritual path; the way psychoanalysis sets up lineages of transmission much like the lineages of Buddhist schools and sects; the similarities between Lacan's notion of desire and the Buddhist notion of craving..

Libido in psychoanalytic theory is a hypothetical mental energy with which mental representations structures and processes are possessed.<sup>1</sup> The source of the libido is in the Id or the body and is related to erotogenic zones. Freud latter formulated the notions of the life and death instincts. In this formulation libido was the energy of the life instincts but Freud did not name the energy of the death instinct-some have coined the word Mortido for this energy Ego psychologists argue that the id uses sexual and aggressive energy whereas the ego uses energy borrowed from the id which has been desexualized and deaggressified . According to Freud quanta of energy is invested in the mental representation of objects. These quanta of energy can vary in their mobility. The id is characterized by mobile energy where as the ego is characterized by bound energy. Now a problem for psychoanalysis is whether different structures and instincts use different energy. As we saw above there appears to be two different energies for the life and death instincts. Similarly it is not sure if the ego uses libido energy Now a damming up of or blockage of energy such as libido results in mental illness.

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<sup>1</sup> See C, Rycroft, A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, Penguin, 1995, p.95, pp.47-49, for what follows

Freud argued that there were two types of repression: primary and secondary<sup>2</sup>. Ego development and adaptation to the environment requires primary repression. Without primary repression impulses are discharged via hallucinatory wish-fulfillments. In primary repression the instinctual impulse is prevented. Secondary repression are repressions that lead to defective ego development with a corresponding emergence of symptoms. In secondary repression disguised and derivative manifestations of the instinctual impulses are kept unconscious. In other words with secondary repression we get a blockage or damming up of the energy i.e. libido which results in symptoms. Repression can lead the energy to be fixated on certain objects which belong to certain stages in the evolution of the ego

The Hindu notion of prana is similar to the energy of the life instinct. Prana is the breath of life the cosmic energy that permeates and maintains the body. Prana plays an important role in Hatha yoga. The source or root of prana in the body is situated between the anus and the genitals in the Muladhara-chakra.<sup>3</sup> When activated in the form of the kundalini it rises up the spinal column through the other sex chakras. Chakras are centers of refined prana. Running into these chakras are nadis or channels along which the prana moves to all parts of the body. With certain yogic practices the prana can be made to flow into certain chakras resulting in altered states of consciousness and in certain advanced cases liberation or moshka

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.167.

<sup>3</sup> The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion, Shambhala, 1986, pp. 58-61..

Here we see that libido is similar to prana. They are both life energies. They are both situated in certain parts of the body i.e. erotogenic zones , chakras and nadies. They both flow in the body i.e. the mobile energy of the id and through the nadies. Similar to the libido and prana is the Taoist chi. The libido is similar to chi in that blockages of it result in illness.

The chi like the prana and life energy is the life force breath vital energy<sup>4</sup>. Chi is the spirit that pervades all things, The chi is accumulated in the human body near the navel. Chi circulates through out the body i.e. up and down the left and right sides of the spinal column as well as through different parts and organs of the body. Disruptions or blockages in the circulation of chi result cause illness. In the inner alchemy of Taoism meditative breathing exercises are used to purify and transmute the chi. In Taoist martial arts the adept by training his chi can acquire enhanced abilities. By knowing how to circulate chi an adept can preserve himself from illness.

In Tibetan Buddhism lung refers to the energy currents that regulate bodily functions.<sup>5</sup> Tibetan tantra like Hinduism has the notion of chakras or energy centers as well as the channels through which the energy flows. By collapsing the winds into the central channels and driving them into the chakras the adept can achieve certain advanced tantric states. As with chi and libido the energy can become blocked or dammed up resulting in illness. In Tibet the mastery of energy currents can result in many advanced

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.69.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.207.

psychic state as well as to use in covering long distances on foot effortlessly and in very short times.

Mahamudra similarly talks about energy i.e. lung or psycho-neurotic energy. Takpo Tashi Namgyal (1512-1587) in his standard meditation work *Mahamudra* talks about lung as that energy that stirs the mind tossing it around like waves on the ocean- similar to psychoanalysis claiming that the consciousness floats on the unconscious like a cork.

“The activation of karma and delusion are affected through the movement of the psycho-neurotic energy (lung) within the body as the collector of karma Mental currents are gathered together. And are stirred violently by waves of energy and emerging senses. So that [the mind] turns in a vicious state.....For example, just as an inanimate object like a log is tossed around by the waves of the ocean, so is the source of consciousness stirred through the support of the body as if by a wave of air.”<sup>6</sup>

In psychoanalysis the unconscious is, apart from other things, the place where the repressions reside. The task of psychoanalysis is to make conscious the unconscious i.e. to bring to consciousness that which has been repressed. The notion of the unconscious as being the storehouse of repressed impulses finds a similarity in some ideas of yoga. In Hinduism the samskaras ie impressions possibilities or tendencies that arise due to ones actions or thoughts including from past lives.<sup>7</sup> The samskaras constitute a persons character .In other words all the activities of the mind leave behind impressions etc which

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<sup>6</sup> Takpo Tashi Namgyal Mahamudra, Shambhala, 1986, p.204.

<sup>7</sup> S, Chennakesavan, Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy, Motilal, 1991, pp. 79-85.

are called the samskaras. Now though Hinduism does not appear to have a term for the personal unconscious the samskaras can be said to be unconscious. The samskaras form the unconscious and are always in a state of agitation to become expressed but are nevertheless are forced down by mental activity. The samskaras are the potencies for a persons actions they cause a persons actions and thoughts. The samskaras manifest themselves in thought and action, .In some schools of Hinduism Memory comes about when mind comes into contact with these samskara. Now all memory of pain and worry it is claimed can be erased by the substitution of less harmful memories In yoga the realization of the samskara or subliminal impressions helps in counteracting them. In this realization new benign samskara are generated which replace the original harmful ones. This process is similar to that in psychoanalysis where by process of associational recall through free association and transference brings to light the repressions which are then eradicated by being made conscious.

Now the process of bring the unconscious to consciousness in psychoanalysis can take two forms : an intellectual and an emotional insight.<sup>8</sup> .In intellectual insight the person has a conceptual understanding of his repressions. Nevertheless this intellectual insight is considered as an obsessional defence where by the person only tries and control and understands himself intellectually-but still remains alienated from himself. With the emotional insight the person achieves wholeness and is in touch with his unconscious. Now these two forms of insight are similar to the Buddhist terms prajna and jnana. In prajna the adept has an intuitive realization of the ultimate which brings about his liberation from the false ideas about himself. With jnana the adept on the other hand only

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<sup>8</sup> Rycroft, op.cit, p.81.

has an intellectual conceptual realization With jnana the adept is not fully developed and still remains cut off or alienated from the realization of his true nature.

With the culmination of emotive insight the person undergoing psychoanalysis achieves a state of perfection which though not like is similar to the perfected spiritual states of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, in that it is the end result of a long path of self exploration and endeavor In Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism the adept progresses through various stages until they reach a perfected spiritual state. In Buddhism this might be a Buddha, or Bodhisattva , in Hinduism a siddha or a Taoist or Zen master. In psychoanalysis there is also a perfected state though it might not be called a perfected spiritual state. This state is called “The Genital character”

The Genital character is the end result of successful psychoanalysis<sup>9</sup>. A person fully analysed . A person who has resolved his Oedipus complex who has successfully worked through his pre-genital ambivalences who has reached the post-ambivalent genital level of his psychosexual development and who is thus free of infantile dependence whereby unlike, and distinguished from, the phallic character the person attaches equal importance to his objects of satisfaction and himself. This perfected being is what is The Genital character. Though not enlightened like a Buddha or Zen or Taoist master The Genital character has reached a high level of emotional insight into his character and mind much like the Buddha who has via prajna achieved insight into his self and character.

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<sup>9</sup> Rycroft , *ibid.*, p.64.



In psychoanalysis we meet with a similar phenomenon as in occultism. This phenomenon is that of the lineage. A lineage is a line of transmission of knowledge from master to master. In say Zen and Ch'an Buddhism the line of transmission or lineage runs from Bodhidharma to Hui-ko to ... to Hui-neng to ... the masters of Soto Zen and Rinzi Zen to etc. In psychoanalysis we get similar lineages appearing. For example we get the lineage of Freud to Klein to Bion, or Freud to Jones to Riviere to Winnicott, or Freud to Abraham to Glover to Stephen. In the psychoanalytic lineage each master is analysed and certified by to be a psychoanalysis by his teaching master. Just like in Zen Buddhism where a person is certified to be a master by his teaching master..

Another similarity between psychoanalysis is Lacan's notion of desire and the Buddhist notion of craving. In Buddhism craving brings about human suffering. Craving is at the root of mans nature and must be eradicated in order to reach liberation. In Lacan's psychoanalysis desire is the essence of man. Just like craving for Buddhism desire is the central concern of psychoanalysis because it is at the heart of human existence. Needs can never be satisfied there is something always left over or unfulfilled that left over is called desire. Desire takes shape in that space where demand becomes separated from need.. In this regard desire is not a relation to and object but a lack. Desire is due to lack an unfulfillable unattainable lack a gap a hole left empty this is desire. Desire is always desire for the Other for something else. The human lacks being lacks an essence- the Buddhist say the same thing. The human is empty at his core like an onion it has no centre he is void. To fill this void is the task of desire a task which is impossible thus humans are always insatiable always unfulfilled all ways in search of being or an essence

via desire but which will never attain. The task psychoanalysis is to lead the person to the truth of his desire not eradicate it as in Buddhism. In Lacanian psychoanalysis it is the task of the person to tragically face his desire not give up on it to embrace it at all costs, to pay the pound of flesh for the facing up of ones desire. Lacan's exposition of desire is a very sophisticated account of how and why humans suffer; an account which can give added depth to the Buddhist notion of craving and suffering. In the 2500 year evolution of Buddhism the Buddhist have not given such a detailed account of craving its metaphysics and psychology as that of Lacan's. I feel the Buddhists' would have been proud to have formulated such a detailed Lacanian account. As it stands Lacan's formulation of desire would slot perfectly into a future Buddhist exposition of craving. In many ways desire and craving are very similar if not equivalent. The difference in approaches is that for the Buddhist craving and thus suffering can be eradicated but for Lacan they cannot they must be put up with in a tragic stand by not giving up on ones desire.

Thus we have seen the parallels and similarities between psychoanalysis and eastern occultisms like Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. These correspondences show that psychoanalysis is nothing but a Western form of occultism. Psychoanalysis believes in energy or life force called libido just like the Hindus believe in prana, the Buddhists lung and the Taoists Chi.. Just like the chakras being sources of prana erotogenic zones are sources of libido. The prana is situated in the base chakra the chi at the navel and the libido in the id etc thus we see again similarities between psychoanalysis and occultism.. Psychoanalysis talks about repressed impulses being stored in the unconscious just like Hinduism talks about the samskaras ie impressions possibilities or tendencies being

unconscious. These samskaras ie impressions possibilities or tendencies direct thoughts and actions just as do the repressed impulses of psychoanalysis. Just as in psychoanalysis it is the bringing of the repressed impulses to consciousness which eradicates them the same is true of the samskaras ie impressions possibilities or tendencies. Similarly has Buddhism believes in an intellectual insight into ones condition so does psychoanalysis. Just as with Buddhism the intellectual insight of psychoanalysis does not lead to an alleviation of ones condition. The alleviation of ones conditions is in both psychoanalysis and Buddhism achieved by and emotional insight. This emotional insight can lead to a perfected being. Just as Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism have their completed or perfected beings of the siddha, Buddha or master psychoanalysis has its perfected being of the Genital character. Each perfected being is the result of insight into the nature of ones being and in all occultisms takes place over a period of time through stages of development and master student instruction. The notion of master student instruction results in Buddhism Taoism and Hinduism a line of transmission called a lineage whereby the masters knowledge and insights are passed on. In psychoanalysis we likewise have lineages of instruction whereby a psychoanalysis is trained by a master who then may train others etc . Finally we saw how Lacan's notion of desire is very similar to the Buddhist notion of craving i.e. both bring about suffering and both are core aspects of humans. All in all with these listed correspondences we see that psychoanalysis is nothing but a Western form of occultism. This has been a very superficial survey much has been left out and many nuances amongst and within schools and traditions not pointed out. Nevertheless some enterprising student could use this survey as a prolegomenon for a future PhD or some opus magnum

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