

Tantra

by R. T. Crowley (December 1980)

From one of our readers we have received the following letter, which is a reaction to the article "Guruism - A Hindu Counter-mission" published in Up-date IV 1/2:

Dear Sirs,

Tantrism is a phenomena which is little understood by Western scholars. because tantrism is largely a "lost science", only a few rudiments of which are left to inspect. Modern tantrism is only a degenerate remnant of what was once a vast body of knowledge, of which only a small portion of books are now known and read (and very poorly understood). Different tantras are employed in different yugas and about 64 are applicable at all times. 108 main tantras are said to have emanated from Shiva. and mostly consist of philosophy and ritual meant to elevate living beings from the tama-guna. or mode of ignorance. In the tantras Shiva discusses 5 topics with Durga: 1) the creation of the world, 2) destruction of the world. 3) worship of devas, 4) mystic powers, 5) five kinds of liberation. There are only a few tantras which are applicable to vaisnava philosophy (e.g. Brhad-vaisnava tantra, brahma yamala. vishnu yamala, etc.), but none of these can be said to have anything to do with the sexeo-religious practices described on page 13 of Up-date.

Modern so-called tantrism as put forward by "gurus" like Rajneesh is simply good old-fashioned hedonism in the guise of spirituality. Hedonists like Hugh Hefner made illicit sex socially acceptable, and now Rajneesh is making it spiritually acceptable. But ochre robe or not, it all boils down to the same genital-consciousness. Yogis and swamis who teach this tantrism have not attained true rasa. or divine pleasure. from their disciplines. This is a ma-lady which plagues the spiritual development of all members of the imperso-nalist schools of so-called Hinduism. Because they ignore the spiritualization of the senses in bhakti-yoga, or service to Hrishiksha (Krsna - the Lord of the Senses), and strive instead to merge into the brahman effulgence, their uncontrolled senses get the better of them in the end. They are impelled by nature to move from tyaga (renunciation) to bhaga (material enjoyment). To cover up their fall-down from the real path of advancement. they make a religion out of sex. and claim that their ordinary biological drives are somehow spiritual. A perfect faith for the

sex-addicted Western world! No wonder Rajneesh has so many followers.

This modern tantrism is the necessary conclusion of mayavadi philosophy, made popular in India by Sankaracharya. The assertion on page 11 of the Up-Date editorial that tantrism has "penetrated into Hinduism at large under the cover of orthodox religion" is true, insofar as the mayavada (impersonalist) teachings have almost totally subverted Hinduism since Sankaracharya's time. It is maintained by Chaitanya that one of the results of Sankara's teachings is the gradual destruction of the family system, due to the increase of illicit sex. Ramkrishna, Aurobindo and others who declared themselves as God enjoyed the pleasures of maitunya with selected "Divine Mothers". The issue here is enjoyment, not procreation - the Divine Mother is not a vehicle for conception, but an object of enjoyment. Mayavadi philosophy, by denying a higher God than the self, denies the possibility of pleasure other than material pleasure. This pleasure becomes the goal of the Godless spiritualist, and to find it, he must take shelter of sexual enjoyment. But God's plan for sex includes reproduction of Godly children, as determined by the Vedic samskaras. Krsna conscious householders, therefore, are enjoined to preserve their sexual energies only for specific times of procreation in accordance with sastric injunction. This sort of sex can be seen as service to Krsna - dharma-virrudho bhutesu kamo'smi, "I am sex which is not contrary to religious principles" (Bhagavad-gita VII-11).

So, in Krsna consciousness, sex life is allowed when it does not deviate from the Vedic conclusion, meaning that both partners must be married in the eyes of God and understand that they are but servants of God, and that sex is a facility given by God for natural procreation, and therefore should be engaged in as a service to Him. The tantrists owe no allegiance to God or God's laws of procreation - their mission is to deny God and supplant the natural spiritual pleasures of serving Him lawfully with unrestricted sense gratification. There is no question of "liberation" from maya on this path. The tantrists are surrendering to maya.

I hope the next issue of Up-Date, in which the article by Achyatananda swami is to be published, will clearly distinguish these two points of view on sexuality. As any self-respecting student of Hinduism knows, the personalists have a different point of view on everything from the impersonalists.

A point overlooked on page 5-6: I would venture that practically every sect of Hinduism considers Christianity to be a Western adaptation of the Vedic religion, and Christ to be a guru in the jnana-bhakti-mishra tradition (school of devotion to God mixed with mystic knowledge). The so-called Hindu missionaries are not thinking themselves as driving out a heathen pseudo-religion by supplanting Christianity with their own, but as fulfilling Christ's teachings which have been neglected by the Westerners themselves. Many Hindus firmly believe that in Christ's "lost years" from age 12 to 33 - which are not recounted in the Bible, He journeyed from the Holy Land to India and Himself accepted a guru. Also, many Hindus believe, along with the Moslems and early Gnostics, that Christ did not die on the cross, but that rather His crucifixion was a mystic illusion meant to bewilder the envious. Christ is said to have later left Jerusalem and returned to India. There is a shrine in present-day Pakistan which is visited by thousands of pilgrims yearly which (s professed by seers to be the actual samadhi, or tomb, of Jesus Christ.

The point of all this is that, if Hinduism became prominent in the Western culture, then Christianity would not necessarily disappear, but would become "Hinduized", much as other Indian religions have been altered by borrowings and adaptations from the Vedic tradition. Just look at Christianity itself in modern India! And is not modern Christianity a compromise between the teachings of the apostles and Germanic paganism? (It is, at least in a ritualistic sense). Some theological historians argue that Gnosticism as delineated in the fragments of the Lucian Bible may be the "pure" teachings of Christ, and that Roman Christianity is corrupted with Paganism, but is successful because by brute force it stamped out "heretical" forms of Christianity (including Lucian Gnosticism). Lucian Gnosticism is almost identical to the picture of Christianity we have gotten from Srila Prabhupada. Wouldn't the "Hinduization" of Christianity mean that we've come full circle at last?

P.S.

"Finding the thread" which links the various sects of Hinduism together can be fun, like piecing together an intricate puzzle, but in the interests of scholarly objectivity. I would warn Dr. Aagaard not to go too far in his assertion that "the many gurus are parts of one major countermission, connected with the 'order of the ochre robe' and with tantra as its major sub-stance." The various sects of Hinduism are similar to one another largely because their teachings spring as different viewpoints of the mysteries of the Veda, and therefore

terminology and ritual is sometimes interchangeable among them. But this is not to say, as insinuated by the merry portrayal of the Kumbh-mela gatherings and the World Congress on Hinduism, that all these sects are consciously co-conspiring to somehow or other derail Christianity from the track of Western spiritual thinking and values.

For instance, as a senior member of ISKCON I can firmly attest that we have no bloody agreement with TM or Rajneesh to work in concordance. In our opinion, Maharishi is a charlatan and Rajneesh is something akin to an Indian version of Dr. Timothy Leary, (perhaps) without the drugs. Guru Maharaji's "Divine Light Mission" is a joke, and your own Swami Narayananda is sadly misguided, though perhaps well-intentioned.

Interpretation is one thing. but essence is clearly another. The essence of the Vedas is not tantra. Tantra is a specific system with specific intents and purposes for specific classes of men, which is included in the overall body of Vedic literatures. To argue that tantra and Veda are synonymous, or that yoga and tantra are synonymous, or guru and tantra are necessarily interrelated, is unscientific. As I have tried to show, so-called gurus like Rajneesh are charismatic opportunists who are dabbling in realms which they themselves cannot even explain properly, much less fully understand. Why do the disciples become mindless? Because they only reflect the consciousness of their master, who is too expert in foolishness that he has succeeded in making a living from it.

We vociferously deny that the Vedic teachings are meant to lead man to nothingness, or the ALL, or any other of the common impersonalistic void-istic expressions of their so-called truth. Maharishi's use of rituals and prayers is simply a charade to induce some sort of psychological dependence in his disciples. but they have no spiritual significance whatsoever. Who are these prayers addressing, pray tell? Certainly not any concrete conception of God. God is you. God is me, God is everything, God is Love, runs their childish prattle. This does not qualify as religion.

Yes, most of these sects do have one thing in common - they deny a Supreme Being, and elevate the self (yourself) to the status of God. The guru, they say, has realized that he is God, and if you follow him, you'll become God too. And. as Dr. Aagaard has noted, the Hindu sects resemble Buddhism - but for precisely the same reason. The padma purana also points out this similarity - mayavadam asat shastram prapannam baudham ucyate - Mayavadi philosophy is covered

Buddhism, and is therefore asat-sastra. or against scriptural codes, because like Buddhism, it denies the existence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When I become God, then there is no need to follow the rules of religion. I am free to "use sex to conquer sex". Excuse me, but as I've pointed out, one should only use sex to have children. If one wants to conquer sex, then according to the Vedic sage Yajnavalkya, he must give up sex - sarva maitunya tyago brahmacaryam pracaksate.

Please keep in mind one thing - Chaitanya denounced the Sankarites, the Buddhists and the sahajiyas for their absorption in sexuality of different sorts. The so-called spiritualists of these orders are condemned to fascination with bodily pleasures because they disregard the adi-rasa, their original spiritual relationship with Krsna, which is the end-point of all Vedic teachings. alodyasarva sastani vicarya ca punah punah idam ekam sunispannam dhyayo narayanah sada - "After reviewing the sastras and judging them again and again it must be concluded that Narayana is the Supreme Absolute Truth and He alone should be worshipped", padma, linga and skanda puranas.