

The Supramental Yoga and Other Spiritual Paths

Indian Systems and the Cabbala

I do not think exact correlations can always be traced between one system of spiritual and occult knowledge and another. All deal with the same material, but there are differences of standpoint, differences of view-range, a divergence in the mental idea of what is seen and experienced, disparate pragmatic purposes and therefore a difference in the paths surveyed, cut out or followed; the systems vary, each constructs its own schema and technique. I have looked at the diagrams you sent me; I do not know whether I have grasped them rightly and many of the details are not clear to me. I suppose however that the three supernals are at the top, that the two below them (led to by Justice and Prudence from the psychic centre) are mind-planes or mind-centres, that Tiphareth in the middle is the psychic, the three between it and the earth are vital planes. In the absence of precise information I cannot carry the correlation farther.

Now as to the three Supernals. I do not quite understand L.O.E.'s sentence about them — for she speaks of two only, the real and higher man and the separated man. Should I understand that these are the two on either side and that at the top is the Divine? If not, which are they and what is the third? In the ancient Indian system there is only one triune supernal, Sachchidananda. Or if you speak of the upper hemisphere as the supernal, there are three, Sat plane, Chit plane and Ananda plane. The Supermind could be added as a fourth, as it draws upon the other three and belongs to the upper hemisphere. The Indian systems did not distinguish between the Overmind and the Supermind, which is the reason why they got confused about Maya (Overmind-Force), took it for the supreme creative power and lost the secret of the transformation — although the Vaishnava and Tantra Yogas groped to find it again and were

sometimes on the verge of success. For the rest, this, I think, has been the stumbling-block of all attempts at the discovery of the dynamic divine Truth; I know of none that has not imagined, as soon as it felt the Overmind lustres descending, that this was the true illumination, the gnosis — with the result that they either stopped short there and could get no farther, or else concluded that this too was only Maya or Lila and that the one thing to do was to get beyond it into the Supreme.

Again, what may be meant is rather the three fundamentals of the present manifestation. In the Indian system, these are Ishwara, Shakti and Jiva, or else Sachchidananda, Maya and Jiva. But in our system which seeks to go beyond the present manifestation, these could very well be taken for granted and, looked at from the point of view of the planes of consciousness, the three highest — Ananda (with Sat and Chit resting upon it), Supermind and Overmind might be called the three Supernals. My difficulty in correlating them with the three Cabbalistic supernals is twofold. First, white may very well be the symbolic hue of Sachchidananda, but black and grey have no suitability for the two others; the symbol hue of Supermind is gold, and Overmind, which is in contact with Supermind, has an iridescent brilliance which is anything but grey. Unless we are to understand it like the Christian mystics of the negative path (see the Christa Seva Sangha journal) to whom the Divine is a supreme Darkness and the plane of consciousness through which he is reached a supreme Ignorance! Then again, here the Supermind and Overmind would be parallel worlds (?), but in fact these two are one above, one below the other, and you have to pass through and beyond Overmind, if you would reach Supermind, while still above and beyond Supermind are the worlds of Sachchidananda.

Tiphareth is certainly the psychic, not the emotional only. It is central, (in our system the psychic stands behind the others, supporting them from behind the heart-centre); it is also in direct connection with all except the earth-centre (in ours it is not quite so, but still in the earth consciousness the psychic is so covered with the darkened vital that to get to it from the outer physical consciousness you have usually to make your way through the

covering vital). All this makes it pretty clear that Tiphareth is either the psychic or else the psychic + the emotional plane or centre.

You speak of the flaming sword and the gulf below the Overmind. But is there a gulf—or any other gulf than human unconsciousness? In all the series of the planes or grades of consciousness there is nowhere any real gulf, always there are connecting gradations and one can ascend from step to step. Between the Overmind and the human mind there are a number of more and more luminous gradations; but, as these are super-conscious to human mind (except one or two of the lowest of which it gets some direct touches) it is apt to regard them as a superior Inconscience. So one of the Upanishads speaks of the Ishwara consciousness as *susupta*, deep Sleep, because it is only in Samadhi that man usually enters into it, so long as he does not try to turn his waking consciousness into a higher state.

Finally, I may observe that the Cabbala system seems to look at and describe the whole from a certain spiritual-mental or spiritual-psychic view from below the supernals. This is quite natural so long as we live in the human centres. There are two systems, one concentric with the psychic at the centre; another vertical, an ascension and descent, like a flight of steps, a series of superimposed planes with the Supermind + Overmind as the crucial nodus of the transition beyond the human into the Divine. In our system there are not multiple paths of inter-connection, or rather there are, but these are a subsidiary and not the central knowledge. For us there is one way, one path; first, a conversion inwards, a going within to find the inmost psychic being and bring it out to the front, disclosing at the same time the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical parts of the nature; next, an ascension, a series of conversions upwards and a turning down to convert the lower parts. When one has made the inward conversion, one psychicises the whole lower nature so as to make it ready for the divine change. Going upwards, one passes beyond the human mind and at each stage of the ascent there is a conversion into a new consciousness and an infusion of this new consciousness into the whole of the nature.

Thus rising beyond intellect through illuminated higher mind to the intuitive consciousness, we begin to look at everything not from the intellect range or through intellect as an instrument, but from a greater intuitive height and through an intuitivised will, feeling, emotion, sensation and physical contact. So, proceeding from intuition to a greater overmind height, there is a new conversion and we look at and experience everything from the overmind consciousness and through a mind, heart, vital and body surcharged with the overmind thought, sight, will, feeling, sensation, play of force and contact. And the last conversion is the supramental, for once there, once the nature is supramentalised, we are beyond the Ignorance and conversion of consciousness is no longer needed, though a farther divine progression is still possible.

15 April 1931

The Path of the Vedic Rishis

In an article written by a Swami on your book *The Riddle of This World*, he remarks that you have the boldness to say that you have done what the Vedic Rishis could not do.

It is not I only who have done what the Vedic Rishis did not do. Chaitanya and others developed an intensity of Bhakti which is absent in the Veda and many other instances can be given. Why should the past be the limit of spiritual experience?

19 December 1934

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Is it a fact that some ancient sages and Rishis have taken birth here in order to help your work?

If so, it is not a fact of much importance.

27 October 1935

Vedanta and Other Paths of Self-Realisation

The following doubt came to me: "Is not the realisation of the Self sufficient? Hearing about your yoga, a Vedantin who sought the Self might say that it was only because you had

not reached the highest that you wanted to do something on earth by means of the divine power, but that this aim had to be rejected before one could reach the highest.”

These doubts come from the mind — for which action is inferior to thought and thought itself something that comes out from the Silence. It cannot understand the supramental view of things in which there is no division or opposition between the Supreme Existence and the supreme Power that sees, thinks, acts and creates.

7 December 1933

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I was reading in Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India* about certain yogis that he met. I don't find anything new in them. They just repeat the old yogas, and the old yogas stopped short at self-realisation, which is not a very difficult stage.

Wonderful! The realisation of the Self which includes the liberation from ego, the consciousness of the One in all, the established and consummated transcendence out of the universal Ignorance, the fixity of the consciousness in the union with the Highest, the Infinite and Eternal is not anything worth doing or recommending to anybody — is “not a very difficult stage”!

Nothing new? Why should there be anything new? The object of spiritual seeking is to find out what is eternally true, not what is new in Time.

From where did you get this singular attitude towards the old Yogas and Yogis? Is the wisdom of the Vedanta and Tantra a small and trifling thing? Have then the sadhaks of this Asram attained to self-realisation and are they liberated Jivan-muktas free from ego and ignorance? If not, why then do you say “it is not a very difficult stage” “their goal is not high” “Is it such a long process?”

I have said that this Yoga was “new” because it aims at a change in this world and not only beyond it and at a supramental realisation. But how does that justify a superior contempt for the spiritual realisation which is as much the aim of this Yoga as of any other?

What I fail to comprehend is how they spend their whole lives in the pursuit of self-realisation. Is it such a long process?

It is not a long process? The whole life and several lives more are often not enough to achieve it. Ramakrishna's guru took 30 years to arrive and even then he was not satisfied that he had realised it.

I also read that some yogis like "the sage who never speaks" remain in samadhi day and night, coming out of it only occasionally for food. What do they do in such a long samadhi, since their goal is not so high?

Do? why should he want to do anything if he was in the eternal peace or Ananda or union with the Divine? If a man is spiritual and has gone beyond the vital and mind, he does not need to be always "doing" something. The self or spirit has the joy of its own existence. It is free to do nothing and free to do everything — but not because it is bound to action and unable to exist without it.

Still harder is it to understand how a self-realised yogi can help others. For self-realisation does not grant such powers.

Do you think that self-realisation is a tamasic state — a complete incapacity and inertia?

13 April 1936

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Do you think then that Yogis can attain a full self-realisation without the help of the supramental planes?

Certainly they can realise the self. It is not at all necessary to go to the supramental planes for that.

I see now that I had some fundamentally wrong ideas about the old Yogas and Yogins. They were actually not my own but borrowed from some sadhaks. Still I am not quite clear about the old Yogas.

I have heard that people from outside often find the sadhaks

here full of an insufferable pride and arrogance, looking on all others outside as far below them! If it is so, it is a most foolish and comically ridiculous attitude.

As for the depreciation of all the old Yogas as something quite easy, unimportant and worthless, and the consequent depreciation of Buddha and Yajnavalkya and other great spiritual figures of the past, is it not evidently absurd on the face of it?

When I asked, “What do they do?”, I did not mean physical or mental action. Rather I wanted to know if by merely remaining in a samadhi of eternal Peace and Ananda, it is possible to liberate oneself completely from the ego. Would that bring about other necessary changes like purification and transformation?

Without purification it is not possible to live always in the Brahman consciousness. While living in that Brahman consciousness one is free from the sense of a separative ego. As for the transformation of the nature, that is not their object.

My question was this: How can one bring down the higher force and apply it to one’s nature if one remains in the impersonal Peace or Ananda?

All that is not necessary for those who seek only liberation.

14 April 1936

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When you write, “Certainly they can realise the self. It is not at all necessary to go to the supramental planes for that” [*p.* 303], I suppose what you mean is that in such cases it is the mind that realises the self; it is not an integral realisation. But when the mind alone realises the self, the vital and physical will constantly disturb it. A separation will become necessary. But can they be separated without the help of the supramental planes?

There are many planes above man’s mind — the supramental is not the only one, and on all of them the self can be realised, — for they are all spiritual planes.

Mind, vital and physical are inextricably mixed together only in the surface consciousness — the inner mind, inner vital, inner physical are separate from each other. Those who seek the self by the old Yogas separate themselves from mind, life and body and realise the self apart from these things. It is perfectly easy to separate mind, vital and physical from each other without the need of supermind. It is done by the ordinary Yogas.

The difference between this and the old Yogas is not that they are incompetent and cannot do these things — they can do them perfectly well — but that they proceed from realisation of self to Nirvana or some Heaven and abandon life, while this does not abandon life. The supramental is necessary for the transformation of terrestrial life and being, not for reaching the self. One must realise self first — only afterwards can one realise the supermind.

If any Yogi can bring about this separation without the supramental, that is really something. For here we are helped by the supramental planes, sometimes there is even a direct action, but still we find it difficult to detach our mind from the life and body.

Who here has a direct action from the Supermind? It is the first news I have of it. Even indirect action from the supramental is rare. Whatever comes to most comes from the intermediate planes.

16 April 1936

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With your help I have been able to make this progress: whatever my state, I can rise into the higher consciousness and, so long as I am inactive, remain there undisturbed by revolt, resistance, impulses or desire.

The men who live in the Self are always there at all times. Nothing in the outer nature can affect that.

You write, “Those who seek the self by the old Yogas separate themselves from mind, life and body and realise the self

apart from these things.” How do they manage to separate themselves from mind, life and body so easily? Will not these things interfere with their realisation? In allowing them to do this, will not the mind, vital and physical have to withdraw from their ordinary movements of *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa*?

Of course they will — it can only be prevented by the lower movements if you assent to the lower movements; one who refuses to accept them as his real being, can always withdraw from them to the self. The movements of Nature become for them an outer thing not belonging to their true being and having no power to pull them down from it.

Is there any difference between our way of seeking the self and that of the old Yogas?

Only that they often sought it by one line alone, the line varying in different Yogas, while in ours it may come in several ways.

I suppose that one who wants to realise the self can only do it by separating himself from mind, life and body.

Naturally.

You write, “It is perfectly easy to separate mind, vital and physical from each other without the need of supermind” [*p.* 305]. But you should have seen that by “supramental planes” I did not mean supermind, but any of the spiritual planes above the mind. Is there no need of the higher spiritual planes for separating the mind, vital and physical from one another?

Spiritual and supramental are not the same thing. The spiritual planes from higher mind to Overmind are accessible to the old *sadhanas* so there is no difficulty about that. If they were not accessible there would have been no Yoga at all and no Yogis in the past in India.

17 April 1936

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It is not always discreet to speak of all these things to the visitors who come here from abroad. X is a man with a trained

intellect; he must be left to see for himself and judge. He has a great respect for the Ramakrishna Mission as the creation of Vivekananda and the continuer of the work of Ramakrishna and for Europeans like him these metaphysical differences of opinion — for so he would regard them — are of no importance, — it is the opportunity for a spiritual approach to the Divine Reality that they are looking for and all that opens the way commands their respect. So, to lay emphasis on a difference with regard to the doctrine or the exact course of the Path followed might in his idea be a sign of a sectarian spirit. All ways lead to the Divine; the importance for us of not subscribing to the Shankara idea is that we need freedom to move towards the dynamic realisation of the Divine in the world and the idea of the Great Illusion bars the road to that. But for them the important thing is to reach the Divine. It was therefore not at all useful to point the difference before him at this time.

18 January 1937

Traditional Paths of Yoga

How is it that Patanjali has given such an unusual definition of Yoga: *yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ* [*Yoga Sutra* 1.2]? Was “divine union” not the aim of Yoga in those days?

Divine union, yes — but for the ascetic schools it was union with the featureless Brahman, the Unknowable beyond existence or, if with the Ishwara, still it was the Ishwara in a supracosmic consciousness. From that point of view Patanjali’s aphorism is sound enough. When he says Yoga, he means the process of Yoga, the object which has to be kept in view in the process — for by the cessation of *cittavṛtti* one gets into *samādhi* and *samādhi* is the only way of uniting solely and completely with the Brahman beyond existence.

3 May 1933

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There is a Sutra in Patanjali, *prātibhādvā sarvam* [*Yoga Sutra* 3.34], on which Vivekananda comments: “Everything comes to him [to a man with Pratibha] naturally without making

Samyama.”¹ Is it that he brings the highest knowledge down into the outer consciousness rather than being compelled to go into Samadhi? But in that case he is probably aware of the supermind.

It has nothing to do with the supermind, for nobody can be aware of the supermind without opening the higher reaches in him first—the supermind is superconscious to the human consciousness. The man in question is in touch with the higher consciousness, so he has not to put any kind of inner pressure on himself to oblige the mind and other parts to admit the higher state or movements—it needs only a turning of himself upward or a slight movement of opening to set the higher consciousness in motion and get results. This statement is of course true only up to a certain point and within limits. If the same man wanted to reach the supermind or transform his body it would not be possible for that to come to him naturally. 4 June 1933

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In the Sutra *bhuvanajñānaṁ sūrye saṁyamāt* [*Yoga Sutra* 3.27], where does the knowledge of the worlds by Samyama come from, and what has Surya to do with it?

Surya is the symbol of the Divine Light, the Divine Truth, ultimately of the Supermind. Samyama is a process of pressure on the consciousness by which the secret Truth, the involved intuition is released—so by a constant pressure on the consciousness by which the Divine Truth is liberated the Knowledge of the worlds can come. 4 June 1933

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I suppose if some yogis outside the Asram heard about the Supermind and the higher realms they would think that they had passed these worlds or left them behind as a side-issue. They might regard the idea of a divine manifestation as a desire for Karma. Do you think there are any who have

¹ *Swami Vivekananda, Raja-Yoga, in The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, vol. 1 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), p. 280.*

enough plasticity to be prepared, at least theoretically, to accept Supermind and the possibility of its manifestation on earth?

I doubt if there are many — they would give the answers you suggest. As for Overmind and Intuition, there are some who are in contact with these planes, I suppose. Those who live in them must be very rare.

20 March 1934

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There appears to be so much self-concentration in the people of the world that hardly a few would think of doing this yoga. Perhaps a larger number would go (and are going) for the old Hathayoga and Rajayoga, which may bring some small immediately satisfying result. Even of those who are sincere truth-seekers, not many would be able to see the truth of our yoga of transformation.

I suppose they are not intended to take it up — only an opening can be given for those who want to rise into a somewhat higher consciousness than they have now.

5 April 1934

Buddhism and Other Religions

I find it difficult to emerge from the peace I found in meditation. How difficult it must be to come out of the peace of Nirvana or Samadhi! I think that is why Yoga could not be made dynamic up till now.

It is only because they make the peace an end, not, as we aim at doing, a basis for the divine consciousness and all its dynamisms.

25 May 1933

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It seems to me that there would hardly be any difference between the consciousness of peace, light, bliss and wideness in Nirvana and in the transformed supramental status, except perhaps in detail.

There is a great difference in consciousness, because Nirvana means absorption into a static Brahman on the level of spiritual

mind — the other would mean identification with the integral Divine in the much higher Truth of Supermind.

It seems to me that the number of people in the world accepting our Yoga of transformation would not be as large as those who accepted Buddhism, Vedanta or Christianity.

Nothing depends on the numbers. The numbers of Buddhism and Christianity were so great because the majority professed it as a creed without its making the least difference to their external life. If the new consciousness were satisfied with that, it could also and much more easily command homage and acceptance by the whole earth. It is because it is a greater consciousness, the Truth-consciousness, that it will insist on a real change.

Since the spread of the Yoga throughout the world will proceed slowly, its creations in art, literature, architecture, etc., may be inferior to those of Buddhist, Christian and Muslim creators.

Your argument assumes that the greater consciousness will be in its creations inferior to the inferior consciousness.

Ordinary people may obtain more immediate results from the traditional systems than from our Yoga. Many may feel they have benefited from the “miracles” these systems offer. In our Yoga they would find the way closed for that. Naturally they would shrink from it.

It would on the contrary be impossible for them not to feel that a greater Light and Power had come on the earth.

Thus on the whole there would seem to be scope for very few people in our Yoga, and the world would hardly interest itself in it.

How do you know that it will have no effect on the ordinary people? It will inevitably increase their possibilities and even though all cannot rise to the highest, that will mean a great change for the earth.

29 April 1934

Tibetan Yoga

The other day I read the book *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* by W. Y. Evans-Wentz. . . . The following is an interesting statement of his — not a text, but probably his own understanding of the Mahayana: “So long as there is one being, even the lowliest, immersed in suffering and sorrow, or in Ignorance, there remains one note of disharmony which cannot but affect all beings, since all beings are the One; and until all are Liberated there cannot possibly be true Bliss for any.”² The ideal is excellent, but I find it hard to swallow the whole of this altruism. It looks like an exaggeration to me because (1) it would not be possible to eliminate suffering from, say, animals or men who have just begun their human evolution and (2) true bliss cannot depend on the suffering or liberation of others. . . .

Your objections are sound. It is the usual overstatement by which the human mind tries to give an added and superlative force and value to its ideas and tenets, but only succeeds in making them vulnerable.

What the compassionate Bodhisattwa ought to do is to become a superscientist and find some way of releasing atoms in such style that the whole earth would be blown to smithereens — this would release all beings on it from their sufferings. But unfortunately the force of karma would, I suppose, create a new earth and bring them all back there to suffer. So no release that way either. Still it would give a respite during which he might go to Nirvana and come back again when needed to repeat his compassionate action.

“Until all are Liberated” implies that not a worm will remain unliberated and then only will there be bliss. A grave difficulty presents itself here — or rather a new idea never conceived of by all the Upanishads — liberation for animals before they reach a human incarnation. Would that liberation be the same

² W. Y. Evans-Wentz, ed., *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, or Seven Books of Wisdom of the Great Path*, according to the Late Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup’s English Rendering (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 11.

as for humans or have a different set of codes? Will they get liberation gratis by a free distribution from the Bodhisattwa?

Next, “since all beings are the One”. Is there any “the One” in Buddhism? Do they admit any such thing? The author seems to have got his information from authoritative sources and texts, but he does not make it clear whether this “One” is to be understood in the sense of a Cosmic Divine or a Supracosmic.

Of course the animal difficulty is insuperable, because animals must enter the human stage first before liberation — unless of course either animals become humanised and begin talking and thinking in philosophical terms (perhaps it will not be necessary for them to write poetry and paint pictures or make music), or else animals disappear altogether being no longer necessary to the evolution.

About the One there are different versions. I just read somewhere that the Buddhist One is a Superbuddha from whom all Buddhas come — but it seemed to me a rehash of Buddhism in Vedantic terms born of a modern mind. The Permanent of Buddhism has always been supposed to be Supracosmic and Ineffable — that is why Buddha never tried to explain what it was; for, logically, how can one talk about the Ineffable? It has really nothing to do with the Cosmos which is a thing of sanskaras and Karma.

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Evans-Wentz writes: “According to the Buddha, the belief that the soul (Skt. *ātmā*), as an eternally individualized, unchanging, and indissoluble spiritual essence, is immortal, even though its preexistence logically be admitted, mentally fetters man and keeps him enslaved to the incessant round of births and deaths. Not until man transcends this belief, in virtue of Right Knowledge, can there come Liberation” [p. 4]. If belief in the soul fetters man, what about the idea that the world is full of misery and that *karma bandhana* keeps man bound to the idea of misery and pain?

According to both Buddha and Shankara liberation means *laya* of the individual in some transcendent Permanence that is not

individualised — so logically a belief in the individual soul must prevent liberation while the sense of misery in the world leads to the attempt to escape.

This implies that those who believed in “Soul” never achieved liberation. Was there no liberation before Buddha?

Buddha said he was repeating an ancient knowledge that had existed before him and restoring its true form, so he evades this objection.

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At the same time, despite Buddha’s idea that belief in soul fetters man, Buddhists are in some way compelled to believe something like it. Evans-Wentz writes: “But the impersonal consciousness-principle is not to be in any way identified with the personality represented by a name, a bodily form, or a *sangsāric* mind; these are but its illusory creations. It is in itself non-*sangsāric*, being uncreated, unborn, unshaped, beyond human concept or definition; and, therefore, transcending time and space, which have only relative and not absolute existence, it is beginningless and endless” [*p.* 5]. Whether by pressure of arguments against the non-acceptance of soul, or through modernisation, they have to accept some such principle. The last sentence quoted above hardly differs from the description of “soul”.

There is no difference between such a description and what is meant by soul, except that it is called “impersonal” — but evidently here impersonal is used as opposed to the thing dependent on name, body and form, which is called personality. Europeans especially, but also people without philosophic ideas would easily mistake this outward personality for the soul and then they would deny the name of soul to the unborn and endless entity. Do they then consider it as spirit or self — *ātman*? But the difficulty is that the old Buddhists rejected the conception of *ātman* also. So we are left entirely at sea. The Nihilistic Buddhist teaching is plain and comprehensible that there is no soul, only a bundle of Sankaras continuing or a stream of them renewing themselves

without dissolution (Nirvana). But this Mahayanist affair seems a sort of loose and covert compromise with Vedanta.

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Evans-Wentz writes: “There is . . . according to Mahāyānic Buddhism . . . unending evolutionary progression; so that *Nirvāṇa* is to be regarded as a Spiritual Rest-House on the Highway through Eternity” [*p.* 149]. And also: “Man, then no longer man, will . . . help to fulfil the Law of the Higher Evolution, of which *Nirvāṇa* is but the beginning” [*p.* 12]. The above indicate that Nirvana is not the final aim — but whether this is a compromise with Vedanta or with modern ideas is very doubtful. There is almost a contradiction with the following:

“When the Ignorance which was to be overcome hath been dispersed, the effort to overcome it ceaseth, and the Path cometh to an end and the Journey is completed.

“The Journeying having ceased, there is no place beyond the ending of the Path to explore; and one obtaineth the Supreme Boon of the Great Symbol, the Unabiding State of *Nirvāṇa*.”³

The two statements [*i.e.* *the two sentences from Evans-Wentz’s commentary and the two paragraphs from the Tibetan text*] are not only almost but absolutely contradictory. Nirvana cannot be at once the ending of the Path with nothing beyond to explore and yet only a rest house or rather the beginning of the Higher Path with everything still to explore. I think that different views of different Buddhist minds or schools must have been jumbled together without reconciliation. The reconciliation would be that it is the end of the lower Path through the lower Nature and the beginning of the Higher Evolution. In that case it would accord exactly with the teaching of our Yoga.

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It would seem that such a reconciliation would be impossible unless someone had overpassed Nirvana or seen something of

³ *These two paragraphs are from “The Epitome of the Great Symbol” as translated by Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup and Evans-Wentz and published in Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, p. 149. — Ed.*

the Higher Evolution or Higher Nature. Perhaps the author had some sort of insight, otherwise he could not state that Nirvana is a spiritual rest-house and that there is a Higher Evolution. For he writes: “The Great Ones and the *Bodhi-sattvas* . . . renounce their right to pass on to a still Higher Evolution and remain within the Cosmos for the good of all sentient beings. It is these *Bodhic* Forces, thus active in the Cosmos, which . . . lead mankind, step by step, towards a perfected social order on Earth” [p. 149]. This indicates that they come down or back from Nirvana to lead mankind up to Nirvana. Perhaps it would have been better if they had seen something of the Higher Evolution and then come back to perfect society on earth.

The phrase “to pass on” shows that what is meant by them is an evolution not on earth but somewhere beyond, God knows where. In that case Nirvana would be a place or world on the way to other worlds and the soul evolves from one world to another — e.g. from earth to Nirvana and from Nirvana to some Beyond-Nirvana. This is an entirely European idea and it is most unlikely that it was held by the Buddhists. The Indian idea was that the evolution is here and even the Gods if they want to go beyond their Godhead and get liberation have to come down on earth for the purpose. It is the Western spiritualists and others who think that the birth on earth is a stage of progress from some place inferior to earth and after once being born on earth one does not return but goes to some other world and remains there till one can progress to some other better world and so on and on and on and up and up and up as Ramsay MacDonald would say. Again, this “perfected social order on Earth” is certainly not a Buddhist idea, the Buddhas never dreamed of it — their preoccupation was with helping men towards Nirvana, not towards a perfected order here. All that is a sheer contradiction of Buddhism and smells Europe from 3 miles off.

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Evans-Wentz writes: “Thus the Doctrine of the *Shūnyatā*, underlying the whole of the *Prajñā-Pāramitā*, posits . . . an Absolute as inherent in phenomena; for the Absolute is the

source and support of phenomena; and, in the last analysis of things, by the *Bodhi*-illuminated mind, freed of Ignorance, duality vanishes, and there remains but the One in All, the All in One. . . . This supreme doctrine of Emancipation may be summarized by saying that all things are eternally immersed in *Nirvāṇa* . . .” [p. 351]. But how does the doctrine of Shunyata posit an Absolute as the source and support of phenomena and how does it allow a “One in All” or “All in One”?

The phrase “source and support of phenomena” sounds like your Overmind, which is the support of the Cosmos. Perhaps someone had some such perception while experiencing the silence leading to Nirvana.

How is this Absolute different from the Absolute of the Vedanta? or this emancipation different from the Vedantic mukti? If it were so, there would never have been all this quarrel between Buddhism and the Vedantic schools. It must be a new-fangled version of Buddhism or else it was a later development in which Buddhism reduced itself back to Adwaita.

The phrase “all things are eternally immersed in *Nirvāṇa*” seems to me at once bold and beautiful and gives an idea of the Silence. From this it is clearer that the realisation of Nirvana, if put in your terminology, is just the realisation of the Silence behind the Cosmos — from which Overmind would be two or three steps. But by “renouncing their right to pass on to a still Higher Evolution” they have managed to miss Overmind for two or three thousand years.

Yes. But is this Higher Evolution really a Buddhistic idea or only a European version of what Nirvana might be?

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“Think not of the past. Think not of the future. Think not that thou art actually engaged in meditation. Regard not the Void as being Nothingness.

“At this stage do not attempt to analyse any of the impressions felt by the five senses, saying, ‘It is; it is not.’ But at least for a little while observe unbroken meditation, keeping the body as calm as that of a sleeping babe, and the mind in

its natural state [i.e. free of all thought-processes].” . . .

“Whatever thoughts, or concepts, or obscuring [or disturbing] passions arise are neither to be abandoned nor allowed to control one; they are to be allowed to arise without one’s trying to direct [or shape] them. If one do no more than merely to recognize them as soon as they arise, and persist in so doing, they will come to be realized [or to dawn] in their true [or void] form through not being abandoned.”⁴

“The Clear Light . . . symbolizes the unconditioned pure *Nirvāṇic* Consciousness, the transcendent, Supramundane Consciousness of a Fully Awakened One. It is a Mystic Radiance of the *Dharma-Kāya*, of the *Nirvāṇic* Consciousness free of all *sangsāric* or conditioned obscuration. It cannot be described; It can only be known; and to know It is to know the Thatness of all things. As being colourless, or without qualities, It is the Clear Light; as being without limitations, It is All-Pervading Intelligence; as being unknowable in terms of *sangsāric* consciousness, and without form, It is the Formless Void.”⁵

The extracts you have sent are very interesting and quite sound — the processes recommended can, if one can carry them out, help greatly in the quieting of the mind.

The Tibetan Nirvana as described in the last extract is very much like the Tao of Laotse. It is more and more said now that that is the real teaching of Buddha and of Buddhism.

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People here became very enthusiastic about that book by Evans-Wentz. But I think their reading of it may be a bit uncritical. They found many things in it that are similar to our

⁴ *These are the first and second to last of fourteen extracts from “The Epitome of the Great Symbol” as translated by Dawa-Samdup and Evans-Wentz and published in Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, pp. 119–39, which were typed and sent to Sri Aurobindo by a correspondent. — Ed.*

⁵ *This is the third of three extracts from Evans-Wentz’s commentary on texts published in Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines (p. 166). These were typed immediately after the extracts mentioned in footnote 4 and sent along with them to Sri Aurobindo. The correspondent did not mention that the first set of extracts were from the translation and the second set from the commentary. — Ed.*

yoga, but they may be missing whatever defects or misrepresentations the book may contain.

Somebody sent me some extracts about ways of meditation which were good. There are elements in most Yogas which enter into this one, so it is not surprising if there is something in Buddhism also. But such notions as a Higher Evolution beyond Nirvana seem to me not genuinely Buddhistic, unless of course there is some offshoot of Buddhism which developed something so interpreted by the author. I never heard of it as part of Buddha's teachings — he always spoke of Nirvana as the goal and refused to discuss metaphysically what it might be.

12 July 1936

Theosophy

I am reading *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom*, a Theosophical book. It seems like the principles are quite reasonable. Only there is too much of Buddhism, which they seem to want to make into a world cult.

It is a movement that has taken from each previous movement European or Asiatic some of its knowledge and mixed it with much error and imagination of a rather vital character. It is that mixture and the mental character of its knowledge that prevent it from being a sound thing. Many start with it, but have to leave it if they want to get to real spiritual life and knowledge.

4 November 1933