

TIBET
AND
ITS RELIGIONS

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By

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TIBET AND ITS RELIGIONS

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In giving this lesson I want you to understand that the subject is so vast that I can only touch the high spots because I could give you hundreds of lectures on the various sects of beliefs in Tibet, the experiences that I had during the years I spent in that country, but first, I want to give you an explanation of the religion of the beliefs of the Tibetans because I believe it necessary for the curious customs and manners they have in the east.

There are two forms of Buddhism: that is the Mahayana Buddhism Hanayana. The Hanayana is called the old Buddhism or older religion. Mahayana Buddhism is the later religion; that is part Buddhist, part Lamaism and part development as a result of the research of the Buddhist Lamas or monks in Tibet. The form which is followed in Tibet is called Mahayana.

We know that in India, Japan and Tibet and in various countries of the east, Mahayana Buddhism is followed, though it is different in each country. Tibet has a form of Mahayana Buddhism which is peculiarly its own and entirely different than the branch de-

veloped in Japan. The Hanayana Buddhism is only found in southern Ceylon, Burma, and Siam. Mahayana, on the other hand, developed into a scientific exposition of definite principles and laws which if followed would bring about certain phenomenal results while one was still in the physical body, while Hanayana, or the older form of Buddhism dealt with one purpose only; that was in the gaining of spiritual enlightenment and paid no attention to the manifestation of any ceremonial patterns. That is merely a background for what I am going to say.

Buddhism was not the original religion or belief in Tibet, though it is the one which is followed in major part at the present time. The original religion in Tibet was called Bon. Buddhism was not introduced until the latter part of the Sixth Century A.D. In fact, we might say that there exists in Tibet, at present, three separate and distinct sects of Buddhism. I will enumerate those and explain their description later on in my lesson, but the original religion was called Bon. The Bon Religion was not a very good religion. It had more devils and demons in it than it did God. The Bon priests were what in modern times we would call black magicians.

Side by side with the ancient Bon religion there was also the remnant of a much older faith or belief which even two thousand years ago had almost van-

ished from Tibet. That religion was called the religion of Chürusu and it was opposed to the ancient Bon demonology and it still survives in some far isolated spots in Tibet and in the east, notably, that place was mentioned some months ago when I spoke on "The Temple of Life."

Lamaism which has been grafted into Buddhism was not found in Tibet until the year 747, a little later than Buddhism and it was brought into the country by a Guru from India who was called Padma Sambhava. He brought something which was distinct from the first Buddhist teachings of Tibet. That is, he brought the first usage of the wheel of life in the form of what they call a Mandala. That is the magic circle reduced to a science and it found a considerable foothold among surviving religions.

We have been accustomed in our speaking and reading to find all of those who are living in Monasteries in Tibet to be called Lamas. That is incorrect. A Buddhist is not a Lama, unless he has attained the rank of Abbot or higher. The others are monks, not Lamas. When we speak of Lamas, that is one who has been appointed Abbott.

In Tibet and surrounding states, there are some four million persons who practice the Lamaistic form of Buddhism. They call it simply "the Religion." They do not concede that there can be

any religion which is superior to or even comes up to what they have. Here in the western world we speak of the Christian religion as the religion, though not in the all-embracing form that the Buddhists do.

Lamaism is divided into three schools. The first one and most superior is called Kahdam-Pa, that is a Tibetan word or phrase which literally translated means, "those bound by commandments," and what is that? That is those who are bound by the law as laid down by the spiritual Gurus or leaders of the past and the followers of that are called, "the Gelugpa," which means literally, the virtuous ones. To that sect belongs both the Dalai and Tashai Lamas, the two great leaders of Lamaism in Tibet. Both of those as well as all of the greater leaders and teachers of Lamaism belong to one of those sects.

There is a very great likeness to the Catholic Church. I have often wondered if some of our very early Christian Fathers did not wander into Tibet and learned some of the Tibetan rituals and incorporated them into the Catholic Church or that the Tibetan incorporated the ritual of the Catholic Church into theirs.

To give some of these likenesses, the monks of the high sect, the "Chutukis" are celibates and they also are tonsured as are the monks of the Catholic Church. That is, the top of the

head is shaved. The reason is that the shaving of the head was to symbolize the opening of the thousand-petalled lotus, or the third eye or the Eye Single.

To use the Christian terminology, the Tibetans of that sect have both monks and nuns. They use candles, censers and bells. And they use rosaries, copes, pastoral crooks. In some of the ceremonies the Abbots and higher dignitaries wore mitres as do the higher officials of the Catholic Church. They also follow the same custom of adoration of relics and they have confession just as the Catholic Church but with a difference. They also have intercession for the Mother of God. However they call on Dolma, the mother of men and of God and they have a holy water; they have a divine litany. I could go on enumerating the likeness of the ritual and ceremony for a long time. It seems that sometime in the distant past there must have been a connection.

The second sect among the Tibetans is called 'Kargyu.' They are not celibates and they practice a form of demonology which is a more or less harmless one. It is in that second sect that we find the so-called devil dancers, etc.

There have been very few white persons who have ever reached Lhasa. You can count them on your fingers. We have seen pictures in the "National

Geographic" and other similar magazines and books of the devil dancers of Tibet. We must not make the mistake of thinking that they all worship devils and demons. There are many religions in Tibet that are not the worship of demons.

In the ancient tradition it is said of the Gautama Buddha that after he had preached to men that then he entered the plane of demons and there preached the law to them and converted certain of the devils or demons and the devil dancers of that sect are the celebration of the state of the mystical rites through which, and by which, Buddha converted even the devils in Hell.

The third sect is called the 'Ny-ingma-Pa,' which literally translated means, 'the old ones.' They are the sect that retains a great deal of the old Bon demon and devil worship and they cannot truly be classed among the followers of Lamaism though they do use some of the outer rituals and ceremonies.

The followers of that third sect are those that form that group which are referred to in India and Tibet as the Black Dugpas. They are not called Lamas or Monks. They are called Dugpa Lamas which means literally, black magic or teachers of the black arts.

You will remember how I have told

you how Milarepa went to one of the Dugpas to learn black magic before he finally turned to the right hand path and became one of the great spiritual leaders of the east. His life is particularly significant because it shows how one individual can rise from the very lowest to the highest state of life in one incarnation.

It has been estimated that one-third of all the men in Tibet are either Lamas, monks or what they call lay brothers. The lay brothers are, as a usual rule not what we would call spiritual men at all, but the Lamas without exception are always those who have risen high in spiritual attainment and development.

The Dalai Lama and Tashai Lama rule the followers of Lamaism. The Dalai Lama has his seat at Lhasa while the Tashai Lama is at a town and Monastery called Shigatse though it seems rather contradictory because Lhasa is the capitol of Tibet that actually, the Tashai Lama is the spiritual superior while the Dalai Lama is the Temporal ruler of Tibet. He has an army that keeps order because there are many hill tribes, bands of bandits that are constantly performing acts of pillage, that makes it rather hard for anyone to get through but he has an army.

In addition to the Dalai and Tashai Lamas who rule Tibet temporally, and spiritually, there is a council of men

called, "Chutukis," and those Chutukis are formed by the head or Abbots of all the great Monasteries of Tibet. They hold a great council in Lhasa once a year that is called "The Feast of Lights," where some of the ceremonial happenings take place. One for instance, where the Lama who has prepared himself takes a sharp knife, draws it across the abdomen and cuts himself open and then he reads from the man's entrails the future of that year and then, after that is performed, the wound is instantly healed.

The monks are usually called "Gelong." If you read of a Gelong Lama, he is not a Lama at all. He is a monk and that means one who lives and depends upon the charity of others though that term is taken for the personal disciples of Buddha.

I think it would be of interest to say a little more about the Dalai and Tashai Lamas. The Dalai Lama is considered to be an incarnation of the Bodhisattva; an incarnation who is also called "Chinrisi." In a little while I will explain the difference between Buddha and Bodhisattva; while the Tashai Lama is an incarnation of the Dhyani Buddha Amitabha. There is a great distinction between the Bodhisattva and Dhyana Buddha. It is because the Tashai Lama is considered to be an incarnation of the Dhyani Buddha that he is the spiritual superior of the Dalai Lama.

I said a moment ago, that the

Tibetan religion has a form of confession. That is, if a person has troubles, if there is something which they find preying upon their mind, which they fear is hindering their walking the path, then, they may go to a Lama and there they may confess. Unlike the Catholic Church, the Lama does not absolve them from their sins by giving them penance. He will show them the acts which they can perform which will enable them to negate the cause they have set up but then they have to go out and do it. Only the individual can remove the effect of the cause which that individual has set up and they can only do so by living or acting in such a way that they counterbalance the evil action.

We hear a great deal about the Lamas of Tibet but very few persons have heard anything about the nuns of Tibet. Actually, there are thirty-seven great Nunneries in Tibet, who have from as many as a few hundred to thousands headed by abbesses, who are considered to be incarnations of Divine beings. The greatest one has at its head an Abess who is considered as being the living incarnation of Dolma, the Great Mother of God. Only those Abesses have spiritual authority in Tibet.

The nuns, like the monks and Lamas, shave their heads and are forbidden to wear any ornaments of any kind and they wear red robes like the red-robed Lamas.

In the Monasteries the men and women look so much alike that sometimes it is often hard to tell a nun from a monk. I believe, so far as the outer appearance is concerned there is really less distinction between men and women there than any place in the world. Those nuns are the most loved of all of the people of Tibet. They never refuse help to anyone and it is nothing unusual to see some message come in that there is someone sick maybe seventy-five or one hundred miles away and three or four nuns take packs on their backs and start out in a storm. They give any help that they are called on to give.

It has been said and I believe truly that never has there been one single time that those nuns have been molested even by bandits and it is also said, and I believe truly, that there has never been a time when one of them has been harmed by wild beasts which are sometimes very ferocious. Many times, parties of armed men travelling through that country will lose animals and in some cases two or three of their party to the animals. The greatest Nunnery in all Tibet is the one in Gyantse.

Tibet is not just a place where people study religion as some suppose. There are also colleges of learning there. There are three great colleges there: One at Lhasa; one at Shigatse and one at Gyantse where that great Nunnery is found. They teach all branches

of knowledge, mathematics, languages, and now, even our modern branches of science. That is like the part which is like our western colleges but in addition, they also teach religion. They teach it from two great books; one called the Tangyur has 108,000 pages in it; 108 books, each with a thousand pages. Before one can attain the degree called Ge-she-dr which is relative to our doctor of Divinity in this country they have to be able to quote at will from the Tangyur of 108,000 pages. If a person becomes a Doctor of Divinity in Tibet they have to know the Tangyur because the Tangyur contains all of the accumulated knowledge of the Tibetan religion - not only about the spiritual plane but about all planes of existence including the material.

We hear considerable about the so-called fighting monks of Tibet and I have heard informed persons say they do not follow the teachings of Buddha if they are taught to kill. The fighting monks are not monks or Lamas but are composed of those who did not pass the first test and were rejected in the monasteries and usually, they live in the outskirts of towns and they drink, gamble and fight among themselves. They will start a fight with the fighting monks of some other lamasary. These things also give rise to confusion in the minds of persons because only the monks and real lamas of the two highest sects do not believe in killing in any way, form or fashion.

Speaking of those fighting monks, if a boy or girl is to become a monk or nun they are sent to a monastery and there they may rise or fall depending on their willingness or application. Some of the Abbots or Lamas have been those who were the poorest of the poor when they entered as novices.

All the Monasteries in Tibet are immediately wealthy. I am not speaking of the Monasteries in Nepal and the border states but the great monasteries are all immensely wealthy and are self-contained. That is, they raise their own food and do their own work. Very little is imported to Tibet.

Just to let you know how hard it is to become a lama, they have two hundred and fifty three rules or laws laid down and before a monk can become a lama he has to pass five years without violating a single one of the two hundred and fifty-three rules and ignorance of the law is no excuse and before they can become a lama they have to live five years without breaking a single one of the two hundred and fifty-three rules and some of them are hard to follow. That is the reason I really object to the misuse of the term 'Lama' is applied to the monks and novices.

We find some very peculiar conditions in Tibet. For instance, at Dongste, which is between Gyantse and Shigatse we see the most populous place where the followers of the third sect

of lamaism live; that is those who study, follow the old Bon Religion with just a smattering of Buddhism and Lamaism tacked on.

It is a place where the majority of the so-called Entombed Hermits are found. The reason they are called the 'Entombed Hermits' is that a person had to bury themselves underground for a considerable period of time which varied from several months and in a few cases, a lifetime. There are more than 2500 of those followers of Bon that have entombed themselves and there is a monastery at the same place and quite a few hundred monks in attendance. They pass into these caves every so often and they never see the light of day because their food is given to them at night and they pass the time in there in self-discipline and in training the mind to certain powers.

A lot of people have also confused that as being some of the practices of Buddhism and it is not. You will remember that the Buddha did not teach such practices. He said they were futile; that the middle way was the path to follow.

In Tibet we find some very curious customs; for instance, the Prayer Wheel. Most of you have heard of them. Every monk and lama in Tibet has his own little Prayer Wheel. You see tens of thousands of them in Tibet. At every stream of water you will see from one

or two hundred to perhaps thousands of persons turning their Prayer Wheels. They are a cylinder that has Prayers to God written on them and those are rolled tightly around the skin of that Prayer Wheel and placed inside and they believe that every time the wheel turns that all the prayers in there have been heard so it is easy to pray in Tibet, and most of them have a little Prayer Wheel because most of them believe that at the very best they are not so good but that at the very best they can stand being prayed for all the time.

Another very interesting custom and something you see all over Tibet is what they call a 'Chorten Cenotaph.' A Chorten Cenotaph is a monument that has been erected to some great saint, teacher or lama. They are all formed in one way. First there is usually a giant flat rock and over that they build a half hemisphere to form a circle and usually, on the roof of that are painted prayers, symbols and mantrams and on top of that is a cylinder and on top of that is a crescent. Some people when they see that think the Buddhists have adopted something from Mohammedism.

They convey a reminder of certain occult principles to every one who passes over it and the base is considered to represent the earth; the hemisphere, water; the cylinder, air and the crescent ether. Also, they are considered to represent the four states of being;

the crescent, spiritual and the base, physical; the hemisphere, the astral and the cylinder, the mental.

Also, you will find painted on every one of those the almost universal prayer of Tibet; that is, the AUM MANI PADME AUM; AUM TAT SAT HUM, but even if you do not see the second line of the Mantram, you will always see the AUM MANI PADME AUM. They divide that into six symbols and each is considered to have a definite meaning. Aum represents the Heaven world and the color white and many times the letters that form the mantram are painted in different colors which they symbolize. MA is blue and represents the astral plane; NI is yellow and represents the earth; PAD represents the animal plane and is green in color; ME represents the ghost world and its color is red, while HUM represents Hell or darkness and its color is black. Those are the symbols of the AUM MANI PADME AUM.

Usually when a lama passes through one of the Chorten Cenotaph he will stop in the center and tell his beads. The beads are 108 in number and represent two symbols: the 108 names of Chinrisi and the 108 names of Dolma, the Mother of Mercy, the two great principles of the Adi-Buddha.

Now let us examine the religions and the Gods of Tibet. I want to examine them especially from the most enlightened and first sect to which the

Dalai and Tashai Lamas belong. First, they divide the higher or divine world into three classifications and the Divine Spirit into three states of being. First there is the Adi Buddha; the Universal Buddha Spirit; we would call it in the Christian world, the Universal World Spirit, or Christ Spirit. Then, they have what they call the Dhyani Buddhas or Heavenly Buddhas. Then, they have the Bodhisattva, the potential Buddhas but who have not become or are not Buddhas. The Dalai Lama is an incarnation of Bodhisattva while the Tashai Lama is an incarnation of Adi Buddha; the Divine or Universal Spirit.

In Tibet they say there are five Dhyani Buddhas that manifest in relationship to earth, this particular planet; five and five only; never more and never less. Those are called:

1. Vairocana-Akshobhya.
2. Ratnasam.
3. Bhava.
4. Amitabha.
5. Amogha.

Those are the five incarnations or five Dhyani Buddhas that have to do with the spiritual guides of earth.

The Tibetans know about Christ and they say that Jesus, the Christ was an incarnation of Vairocana, the Dhyani Buddha, that is one of the five heavenly Buddhas or Divine Spirits that have the spiritual guidance of the earth and that the Maitreya who is yet to come

will be an incarnation of Amogha; the Dhyani Buddha just as they say the Tashai Lama is an incarnation of Amitabha, the fourth of Dhyani Buddha.

They say that each of the five or Dhyani Buddhas have a corresponding Bodhisattva and a corresponding earthly Buddha. It is for that reason we hear so much of the living Buddhas in Tibet. They are not Dhyani Buddhas except in the case of the Tashai Lamas.

The Dhyani Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are spiritual. They belong to what the Tibetans call the formless world or Arupalaka and they are considered as belonging to the formless world though manifesting in the world of form and they are personalities, individuals, individual manifestations on rays of the Divine Spirit.

They say that the human Buddhas are existent in the world of form although free from the necessity of rebirth and these aid struggling humanity in the light and they say every Buddha has three bodies:

1. Dharmakaya; the body of the law;
2. Sambhogakaya; the body of compassion;
3. Nirmanakaya, the body of transformation or transmutation; that each have those three bodies. A Buddha who appears on earth has at least two bodies but he has renounced the highest body and if he concerns himself with earthly affairs he belongs or manifests only in

the last body. When he has renounced the first and second body then the Buddha who appears on earth; and that includes Gautama Buddha, Maitreya, the Lord of the World, Jesus, the Christ and others, have renounced what is called Paranirvana in Tibet, though they have attained Nirvana.

Nirvana is the state of the Dhyani Buddha in which personality still exists but if they pass Nirvana into Paranirvana then they no longer ever return in form or shape or substance to any plane of being. They however, have not gone into nothingness because all those come, forth from the Adi Buddha, just as we say, all things come forth from God.

If a Buddha passes into Paranirvana he is called Dharmakaya or the soul who has passed beyond life, who has renounced life and has entered into the goal because that is the goal of all Buddhahood.

All, sometime in the infinite future will pass into Paranirvana and that state is one which they say is the totality of all the laws which pervade the cosmos, and whose recognition constitutes the perfect enlightenment of the soul.

Laying aside religion for just a moment, let us examine something of the temples found in Tibet. There is an almost invariable likeness of all the

temples in Tibet. First, there is a portico, and in that portico are found the guardians of the four quarters. Those are the guardian spirits that prevent the entrance of any negative spirit or being. Always, just over the entrance there is a painting of the Wheel of Life, sometimes called the Mystic Mandala and within are great images of Gautama, the Dhyanis, Bodhisattvas, disciples and saints.

Then off from that are little alcoves or smaller rooms; then niches all over the walls of great disciples or Buddhist saints and an image of Maitreya is almost always found in those temples - usually found in the right hand side of the far end of the temple and there is a peculiar fact about him.

Maitreya is never shown in the ordinary cross-legged posture of Buddha but either standing or sitting on a chair. The Tibetans say, Maitreya, the Lord of the World, will not appear in the east but in the west and therefore they show him standing or sitting as a western man would do.

I want to speak now about Lhasa and the capitol. To most people, Lhasa is Tibet though it is far from it. Shigatse is the great spiritual center. Lhasa is the place of the temporal ruler, the Dalai Lama. When you approach the city from India you come from the southwest and there is a low, long range of hills that hide Lhasa and

then is spread out a great fertile valley and the valley in which Lhasa is found is the largest and most fertile and the largest in Tibet and of course, it is the most heavily populated and the city is found in a great fertile plain and just at one side of the city there arises a great rock hill that arises to a height of about sixty, seventy, or eighty feet and it looks taller than it is because of the great building, the Potala erected on a hill.

The Potala is in Lhasa. It is the seat of the government of the Dalai Lama and it is three hundred feet high and it is built in terraces that have been cut out in the rocky hill and on each side there are buttresses that hold the weight of the building. As it is perched on top of a hill there, that of course helps to give an immensity of ceiling and height. When you see it from the rise of the rocky hills the most peculiar thing is its color.

The central part of it is a dull crimson in color and that is called the "Red Palace" and on top of that are found five great golden pavilions. They are the color of pure gold and travelers do not say whether they are gold or not but they are composed of thin sheets of beaten gold and travellers are not permitted into those pavilions. The wings are dazzling white so we have red, white and gold so with the combination of those three colors it really is a gorgeous sight when you approach

it and on each side coming up along those buttresses are great stairways and steps. All of them are about one hundred and fifty feet in width and they rise up to those buttresses down below.

In between the buttresses are the gardens and at certain times of the year those gardens are a riot of flowers and that Red Palace contains the Royal Chapel, the Throne Room and the apartments of the Dalai Lama.

Just to give you a brief description: in the Throne Room which is in the main room there are giant pillars that support the room and those pillars are composed of the same dull crimson rock that the Palace is built of, and the ceiling is covered solid with one giant piece of silk that has been embroidered with all the symbols that are found in Tibet on the sacred book and it is the most marvelous piece of work in the world and all of the rooms or almost all the rooms in the Red Palace are ceilinged in that silk and the walls are decorated with frescos and mosaics and portray old scenes from the teachings of Buddha and some of the saints and the lamas of the ancient past.

In the Throne Room there are 108 doors that lead off that Throne Room and everyone of those doors is carved and covered with these prints of beaten gold until it looks like you are in a room that is covered with gold and each

one of these doors portrays the meaning of one of the 108 beads in the rosary. It gives the complete principle or law that is involved in it.

The Potala is not old. It is not an ancient place. It was only built in the Sixteenth Century. It is comparatively modern but it was built on the site of an older temple and that older temple is still found within the Potala and that is the inner sanctuary that no one except the Supreme Council is ever allowed to enter and there is a gateway or doorway that connects with Shamballa. It was there before the Bon Religion came to Tibet and is still there, intact, carefully preserved because it is the entrance to the place where the spiritual work of the entire world is guided from it.

The outer circuit of Lhasa is encompassed by a circular road that goes all around Lhasa and it is said that if one travels that road they will have seen everyone of the great places that is in Lhasa. I have often wondered if that great road with seven great temples around it might not have been referred to by John because I have found so much similarity in the customs. One is three miles from Lhasa and one, two and a half miles from Lhasa and the other six thousand miles. Those are the two largest monasteries. The Potala is not a monastery; it is the Palace of the Dalai Lama.

I want to mention one other thing and that is that though we assume the Dalai and Tashai Lamas to be the two greatest of all the leaders of Tibet, they are not. The Galai Lama is the temporal ruler; the Tashai is the Spiritual ruler but the Abbot of the Golden Monastery, that is found about sixty miles from Lhasa is considered to be the greatest soul in all Tibet. The one at the present time is called, Ser-Ti-Rimpoche. He is considered the greatest master of them all and the supreme teacher of all Tibet and to his monastery the highest Lamas and all those who have passed through the lesser stages go. It has two statues of Maitreya, the Lord of the world in it and one of them portrays Maitreya in western dress. The other one is the statue of Buddha, which according to tradition, was carved from life by one of his disciples and is considered one of the most sacred carvings in all Tibet.

THOUGHT - Thought is that power which creates; it is the direct cause of all external expression. As there cannot be a thought without a thinker, it is therefore the evidence of being; it is limitless, all-powerful for good or for evil - indeed no evil exists only as it is caused by perverted thought. "As a man thinks, so is he." Let no rank or poisonous weeds find a place therein; only beautiful flowers that shall give forth sweet perfume and be a well-spring of happiness to our fellow beings.

