Aum shinrikyo

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Aum shinrikyo, a Japanese cult, carried out a series of sarin gas attacks in the Tokyo area in 1994 and 1995. These acts of terrorism were peculiar in that many members of the sect were highly educated individuals.

At that time I was working as an engineer and I was shocked by the fact that many leading engineers were members of Aum shinrikyo. However, although I could not condone their terrorist actions, I could understand their search for spirituality as, I myself, felt caught between the materialistic outlook of my life as an engineer and an interest in spiritual growth. I could say that I started studying psychology to comprehend my own ambivalent feelings.

Several years later, by chance, I was offered the opportunity to interview a female former Aum shinrikyo member. She was a well-spoken, polite and intelligent woman and explained to me why she had been attracted to the cult. During the interview I felt empathy with her thirst for spiritual growth and her sense of spiritual loneliness because of the lack of any kind of forum to discuss spirituality in her daily life. In contemporary Japanese society it would be fair to say that talking about spirituality is rather taboo because people, especially the well-educated, are unconsciously forced to believe in the ideals of materialism. Furthermore, since Japanese religions, such as Shinto and Buddhism, have lost much of their importance in recent years, they offer little to young people in the way of spiritual support.

I felt that this imbalance between spiritual morbidity in Japanese society and people's desire for spiritual growth could have been one of the reasons for Aum shinrikyo's prosperity and eventual ruin. This insight drew me to write this article.

I want to investigate the phenomena of the dark night of the soul and how it develops into a serious spiritual emergency in Japan. Japanese society is highly interdependent, which prevents people from developing a strong sense of individuality. For Japanese people, social harmony has the highest priority and they are pressured to sacrifice their individuality to maintain that harmony. In psychodynamic terms, they develop a strong group ego to compensate for their vulnerable individual ego structure. When a Japanese person recognizes that their group ego is an unsatisfactory construct, he or she faces an existential isolation of his or her vulnerable ego. Some of them cannot put up with the fear of the dark night of the soul and look for an alternative group ego upon which they can depend. They tend to embrace this new group ego as a way to resist fear from deep unconscious realms. If this alternative group ego is not accepted by mainstream society, it may become radicalized and even hostile to society. The Aum Shinrikyo cult, which in 1994 and 1995 killed many people in poison gas attacks, provides an extreme example of an alternative group ego. In this paper, I explain the mechanism of how individuals came to embrace a radical group ego by applying Michael Washburn's developmental model as applied to this particular cult.

JAPANESE SOCIETY

Interdependency in Society

The most marked feature of Japanese culture is its members' interdependency which is defined by the Japanese system of reciprocal responsibilities. Japanese diligence and the need for achievement is usually directed toward collective-altruistic ends (Rotenberg, 1977). Consequently, Japanese people have strong group feelings which provide a basis for strong collective energy. This collective energy can manifest both positively and negatively in Japanese society. It has been one of the driving forces of economic and technological growth, a source of militarism during World War, and a source of racism, especially toward Korean people.

This strong collective energy often causes mental stress among people. To maintain interdependency and to tighten social unity, individuals need to have a similar world view and value system. This systemic need for cohesion makes the dynamics of Japanese society similar to that of a family system. As in a family, the need to keep harmony among society members produces a strong homeostatic energy. Since a rigid social system cannot accept people who have different views without endangering its stability, it may ostracize and even scapegoat them, thus contributing to the creation of such groups as the Aum Shinrikyo.

In Japanese society, if you fail to adjust yourself to the social norms, you will become isolated from society. Such isolation is intensely feared by Japanese people. In order not to be left out of the group, Japanese tend to behave in terms of stereotypes. For instance, politicians make stereotypical statements, high school girls wear the same clothes, and almost all businessmen are required to play golf with coworkers in order to sustain good relations. From the point of view of gestalt therapy, we can say that the relationships among Japanese people are dominated by confluence.

Obstacles to Personal Growth

In such an interdependent society, it is very difficult for a person to develop his or her individuality because such growth would be regarded as rebellion against the social system. Japanese have been trained since childhood to adapt to the social norm by suppressing their individuality, thus creating a strong group ego structure. There are certainly benefits to a strong community, but when a society becomes too rigid, membership can require that the individual respond by not developing a strong sense of individual self, and that can leave a person vulnerable to spiritual crises.

Vulnerability, in itself, can allow sensitivity, transparency and

penetrability, which can be positive characteristics (Almaas, 1989). Such vulnerability encourages people to understand each other intersubjectively and to feel that they are united. However, in modern Japan, this sensitivity is usually shared among people who have the same world view. In other words, Japanese people generally do not understand other groups, and react by ostracizing 'others'. This limited fellowship strengthens the social norm, protecting the dominant value system while excluding those who might threaten the norm. This is a vicious cycle, which many people feel is damaging, although most do not have the courage to change it. However, some people do begin disidentifying from the social norm and start a spiritual journey. They have begun to feel an existential vacuum and are forced to find a more satisfying understanding of themselves.

In the past, Japanese society had a system of supporting an individual's spiritual growth. Until about 1900, spiritual growth was highly respected,

and the community supported one's spiritual journey. People in those days were familiar with Japanese traditional arts such as Ju-doh, Ken-doh (Japanese fencing), Sa-doh (tea ceremony), and Ka-doh (flower arrangement). The word, 'doh,' might be related to the Chinese word 'tao,' which literally means 'a road,' and generally implies a way of being (Hayashi et al., 1992). Through these 'doh' practices, people learned the spiritual path, especially through contact with their teachers. Buddhist monks played an important role supporting people in overcoming difficulties in their spiritual growth.

Through the interaction of individuals and institutions, people respected individual spiritual growth while keeping social harmony. I think that Japanese people in those days came close to realizing 'reciprocal-individualism' (Rotenberg, 1977), a term that refers to an individual's self-reliance or independence being in harmony with the 'selfhood' of others.

However, in modern Japanese society, spiritual growth and its support systems have been denigrated since the Meigi revolution when Japan made contact with Western world. The price of adopting an economic and materialistic world view was the loss of old, nurturing traditions. Contemporary Japanese have few supporters to help them with their spiritual pursuits. Modern seekers often feel desperate loneliness and emotional stress due to their alienation from society, a reality which sometimes causes their encounter with their existential vacuum to turn into a spiritual emergency, when the intensity of their experience overwhelms their vulnerable ego structure.

SPIRITUAL EMERGENCE & SPIRITUAL EMERGENCY IN JAPAN

Difficulty of the Spiritual Journey

It is commonly acknowledged that the person who pursues spiritual growth will face difficulties. They will be terrified of real transcendence, because transcendence entails the 'death' of their isolated and separate self-senses (Wilber, 1996). Furthermore, they will feel difficulty in controlling the exalting emotions which typically accompany expanded awareness. Ferrucci (1982) describes this situation:

'The most common difficulty connected with expanded awareness and increased contact with the superconscious is perhaps a greater sensitivity — sensitivity to the pain of human beings in general (Wordsworth's "still, and music of humanity"), to vulgarity, to aggression and hatred, and so on. Moreover, it is not only the horizontal direction — empathy with and understanding of others — that expands, but also the vertical one. If peaks of consciousness within reach get higher and higher, the abysses of despair, meaninglessness, and aridity, by contrast, get deeper and deeper. In fact, a person who has awakened to the reality and livingness of the superconscious is particularly aware of cycles — cycles of ease, of insight and effortless creativity, alternating with cycles of dysfunctioning and confusion.' (pp. 158-159)

These emotions often lead to spiritual instability, which in traditional spiritual systems is where the guru or teacher serves as a stabilizer. However, the contemporary Japanese generally have no one to consult because their spiritual craving and accompanying difficulties are not comprehensible to most of the people around them. In addition, there are few places in Japan which provide support for people who

are in such a spiritual crisis, although this lack of resources does little to stifle the initial drive. Grof and Bennet (1992) describe the spiritual craving and its danger as follows:

'It has become obvious that human beings have a profound need for transpersonal experiences and for states in which they transcend their individual identities to feel their place in a larger whole that is timeless. This spiritual craving seems to be more basic and compelling than the sexual drive, and if it is not satisfied it can result in serious psychological disturbances.' (p. 204)

Grof and Bennet go on to describe how some middle-aged or elderly people, who continue exploring spiritual growth, may become more and more introspective as their internal lives become more active. They may feel the need to temporarily withdraw from daily activities as they become preoccupied with intense thoughts, feelings and internal processes (Grof & Grof, 1990). Their inner experience can grow to be too overwhelming to cope with by themselves, thus triggering a spiritual emergency. At this point they often want to ask someone for help. While some fortunate people will meet good therapists or religious teachers at this stage, others may seek help from such new cults as the Aum Shinrikyo. And while it is true that in cults some people report positive mystical experiences, it is also true that some people's mystical experiences are often negatively manipulated by cult members. Such manipulation experienced by those undergoing a spiritual emergency can result in danger to themselves and others. An example of one of the worst results of manipulation of cult followers undergoing spiritual emergency (as I will discuss below) is the poison gas terrorism committed by the 'Aum Shinrikyo.'

Aum Shinrikyo and New Cults

Cults, for the purpose of this paper, will be defined as religious groups having a pyramid type authoritarian leadership structure with all teaching and guidance coming from the person or persons at the top. Many Japanese people who face spiritual awakening may seek help from such new cults as the Aum Shinrikyo. The Aum,

founded in 1984 by the guru Shoko Asahara, started as a yoga school. In 1986, Asahara declared that he had accomplished 'ultimate liberation,' which he said was approved by Tibet's god king, the Dalai Lama. He also advertised that the Dalai Lama had given him a divine mission to spread real Buddhism in Japan (Kaplan & Marshell, 1996).

The Dalai Lama, however, recalls giving Asahara no special mission. In fact, he remembers Asahara showing more interest in learning how to structure a religious organization than in Buddhist thought. According to an aide to the Dalai Lama, 'Asahara was nothing special' (Kaplan & Marshall, 1996). It seems that Asahara and the top members of the Aum took advantage of the meeting with the Dalai Lama, which unfortunately led some people to believe that Asahara had true religious wisdom. Asahara also played on the public's interest in psychic powers. He claimed to be able to float in the air and to have experienced an awakening of Kundalini. Asahara said that he had extensive psychic powers, such as prophecy, clairvoyance, out of body experience. These claims attracted many people. His followers numbered about 10,000 in 1995, with most members being younger than 40 years old.

In the 1970's and 1980's, many new cults were founded in Japan. According to Simazono (1995), most of these cults have the following traits:

- A largely young membership

- Members are forced to donate large amounts of money

- Exploitation of mass media

- Interest in life after death

- Interest in psychic powers

- Interest in eschatology, beliefs concerning the end of the world

- Worship of a charismatic leader

- Criticism of other religious groups

Driving this new cult boom was a growing interest in spirituality in the 1980's. During this period, many people became sceptical of the claimed benefits of unlimited progress through material, technological and economic growth. For many, traditional religions such as Buddhism did not answer their questions. In fact, some Japanese Buddhists were criticized for specializing more in funerals than in the study and application of Buddhism. Some people thought that the emerging cults might have the answer. In fact, it is clear that some of the cults did indeed study religion earnestly. For instance, the members of the translation section in the Aum translated many Buddhist Scriptures written in Sanskrit (Steinhoff & Itoh, 1996).

The Aum's doctrine was basically a combination of Mahayana Buddhism and Vajrayana Buddhism. Their purpose was to accomplish liberation through austerity. Austerity included physical mortification, and special practices using psychedelic drugs. Many top leaders of the Aum Shinrikyo admitted to using LSD in their practices (Hayashi, 1998).

In 1989, a group of journalists started an anti-Aum campaign, claiming that, among other crimes, many minor members were

imprisoned by the Aum. They also criticized the Aum's money-making system that coerced members to make huge donations. Some of the young members donated, without permission, large amounts of money from their parents' bank accounts. The negative publicity gradually drove Aum members to more extreme acts such as the alleged murder of a lawyer who denounced the Aum, along with all his family members (Egawa, 1995; Hayashi, 1998).

In 1991 the guru, Shoko Asahara, started announcing prophecies which predicted a final world war. He said that the final war would occur in 1997, and only the Aum members would survive it. They began to make military preparations for the war, buying guns, bombs, tanks, as well as producing poison gas in their own laboratories (Hayashi, 1998). Most top members of the Aum thought that anyone who opposed the Aum should be killed. They believed, at least superficially, that this kind of murder was necessary to eliminate the victims' bad karma. From the point of view of Aum doctrine the victims would be purified and they would live their next life without the influence of their bad karma.

Finally, some top members of the Aum committed terrorist acts using their stock of poison gas in 1994 and 1995. Eighteen people were killed and more than 5,000 were injured (Egawa, 1995). The terrorism was conducted not only to disturb ongoing investigations of various Aum crimes but also to realize the guru's prophecy of the final war. Their hope was that the terrorism would become the trigger of the final war.

DANGER OF SPIRITUAL EMERGENCY

The Dark Night of the Soul

Many people in transformational processes delve into dark areas through which they must pass before they reach a state of freedom, light, and serenity. This is the period I call the 'dark night of the soul.' The concept of the dark night of the soul comes from the writings of St. John of the Cross, and these days is mainly advocated in dynamic-dialectical models of transpersonal theories. These models conceive of the psyche as having two opposite poles, namely, the nonegoic and egoic poles, or more fully, the psycho-dynamic and mental-egoic poles. Washburn (1994) describes the functions of the two poles of psyche as follows:

'The nonegoic pole is a source of all dynamic, biophysical, instinctual, and affective potentials, and it is the point of origin of creatively spawned images and symbolic meanings as well. In contrast, the egoic pole is the center of operational cognition and rational volition. The egoic pole is the part of the psyche that is responsible for forging concepts, performing analyses and inferences, formulating and executing decisions, and, in general, operating in a logical, discursive, deliberate, linear, and durational manner.' (p. 11)

Before encountering the 'dark night of the soul,' the ego is independent of the nonegoic pole, in what Washburn (1994, 1995) calls the 'egoic' or 'mental egoic' stage. In this

stage, the nonegoic pole is submerged in the unconscious by original repression. In the subsequent stage of 'regression in the service of transcendence,' the original repression is loosened. The mental ego becomes vulnerable and re-encounters the nonegoic pole and its energy, which generally is experienced as feelings of fear, loneliness, insanity, or death. This return of the ego to the non-egoic pole generally happens around middle-age, and can be triggered by physical or mental stresses.

Table 1 shows typical events when Japanese people may feel estranged from society.

Table 1:

Typical Periods When Japanese People Feel Out of Step With Society

	AGE	EVENTS IN LIFE	REACTIONS
(a)	18	College entrance exam	If a student fails to enter a college, he or she may feel despair
(b)	22	Graduation from college	He or she may not feel prepared to enter society
(c)	around 40	Promotion to full manager	If an employee fails to get a promotion, he or she may feel life is hopeless
(d)	around 50	Children leaving home	Mother may feel that her role in the family is over
(e)	around 60		He or she may feel that his or her role in society is over

At these points, individuals have to disidentify with the previous situation and re-identify with a new situation. For instance, in period (a) or (b), they must disidentify with the old norm dominated by the school system or the family codes in order to adjust to new social norms dominated by a larger system. During the transition period, they are temporarily separated from a familiar group ego, and in this vulnerable state may be exposed to the power of the nonegoic pole. The Aum Shinrikyo consists of many younger members who joined the cult around the periods of (a) or (b) shown above.

There is another aspect to this process of re-encountering the non-egoic pole, especially in an interdependent society like Japan. Many people in Japan tend to depend deeply on their social networks. Because of their strong social interdependency, it is difficult for them to develop a strong ego structure. And, since they may be unable to repress the nonegoic pole by themselves, they rely on social norms which protect their vulnerable egos. In other words, such dependent people try to repress their nonegoic pole through their group ego which identifies with social norms. The experience of encountering the non-egoic ground for socially dependent people who have a strong group ego can be especially threatening. In those who become alienated from their social group the relatively undeveloped ego becomes vulnerable when faced with the power of the non-egoic ground since they have abandoned their social identification which had afforded some measure of protection.

Yet, even strict conformity is not a guarantee of safety, because in Japan people can often feel that they are left out of society. Even a seemingly minor failure can lead a person to feel that he or she is socially incompetent. For instance, a 40 year old white-collar worker who fails to get a promotion to full manager would likely feel that his life is hopeless, because he thinks that everyone around him regards him as a failure. He identifies so strongly with his position in the company that a blow to his social status is an assault on his sense of self.

The Dark Night of the Soul and The Aum Shinrikyo

When a vulnerable ego is exposed to the power of the nonegoic pole, the result is often the experience of the dark night of the soul. People in this vulnerable state are overwhelmed by their various fears, including fear of the unknown and fear of losing control, because nothing covers up their vulnerability. Their relationship with reality shifts, and they find it difficult to meet the demands of every day life. Their fear is often so serious that they need to ask help from outside.

Almaas (1989) describes the condition during which the vulnerable ego faces the unconscious realm as follows:

'If you let yourself be really human and not cover up your vulnerability, you'll see that you're completely under the influence of reality. If you let yourself be, you can experience intense love, intense pain, or tremendous fear. You not only can experience tremendous fear, but can actually know that you are feeling afraid, and that you will actually die.' (p. 194)

Spiritual explorers who take part in cults may be temporarily soothed because cult members are seemingly sympathetic to their spiritual process. However, problems could emerge. Since Japanese people have a tendency to form interdependent systems which stem from strong fellowship, they tend to stop the developing spiritual process and instead come to rely on the new interdependent social system as an alternative to the previously abandoned social norm. This tendency can be seen as a driving force in the development of radical cults.

Table 2 shows the constitution of the Aum members who renounced the world and lived in Aum communities (Shimazono, 1995).

Many cults such as the Aum Shinrikyo force absolute worship of their leaders and blind obedience to the cult doctrine, both of which act as replacement structures for the larger societal norms which have been abandoned and which also act to protect an individual's vulnerable ego. Such excessive worship and obedience prevents people from going through a true spiritual process.

Table 2 :

Constitution of the Aum Shinrikyo members

AGE	NUMBER OF 'AUM' MEMBERS
0-19	79 (7.1%)
10-19	86 (7.7%)
20-29	529 (47.5%)
30-39	311 (27.9%)
40-49	80 (7.2%)
50	27 (2.4%)
Unknown	2 (0.2%)

Intense Sensory Stimulation

Some cults like Aum Shinrikyo force their believers to engage in intense sensory stimulation to accelerate the spiritual awakening process, regardless of the physical or psychological strength of the individual. The most common methods used by the Aum were physical austerity and drug use. The following are the latent dangers of intense sensory stimulation:

Excessive Physical Austerity

Many Aum believers practiced 15 to 20 hours of daily physical activity. Such intense physical stimulation tends to distort one's mental and physical well-being. One of the results can be susceptability to altered psychic states. Huxley (1970) explained this as follows.

Mortification is not, as many people seem to imagine, a matter, primarily, of severe physical austerities. It is possible that, for certain persons in certain circumstances, the practice of severe physical austerities may prove helpful in advance towards man's final end. In most cases, however, it would seem that what is gained by such austerities is not liberation, but something quite different — the achievement of 'psychic' powers. (p. 99)

Such psychic powers, as those claimed by Asahara, have little to do with spiritual growth. According to many spiritual traditions, seeking such psychic powers presents a dangerous illusion and can be an obstacle to true spiritual advance. Many members of the Aum mistakenly believed that claims of psychic powers certified the validity of the Aum's doctrine which made members even more devoted to the cult.

Drug Use

The Aum used drugs such as LSD which were intended to stimulate spiritual activity (Hayashi, 1998). LSD easily breaks the sensory barrier and has been used with the

goal of revealing the deep realms of the unconscious, something leading to powerful feelings of love, mystical oneness with all things, and union with God (Will & Rosen, 1983). However, it is also possible to experience tremendous fears when re-encountering archetypal images or when re-experiencing the birth process. Depending on the effect of psychedelic drugs, negative as well as positive effects are possible.

Many Aum members were forced to use psychedelics without appropriate preparation. They reported extreme fear as well as elevated feelings during an austerity which was called the 'Initiation of Christ,' in preparation for which they took LSD (Hayakawa, 1998). Following is a summary of the reported experiences by Aum members (Egawa, 1995; Kaplan & Marshall, 1996), which correspond to the typical effect of LSD (Doweiko, 1996):

- *Visual and auditory hallucinogen including visions of hell.*

- *A sense of distortion of time and space.*

- *Unitive consciousness.*

- *Increased body temperature.*

- *More than 8 hours of effect.*

The visual images were so clear that LSD takers believed the experience was real. However, the experience was also so powerful that they were overwhelmed by it. The believers who experienced extreme fear became more dependent on the cult which offered to protect them from their fears. Others who encountered a positive sense of unity would attribute the blissful experience to the guru or to the cult doctrine.

The influence of intense sensory stimulations

In the end, these intense sensory stimulations (excessive physical austerity, drug use, etc.) led some believers, especially younger members, to mental problems. According to Engler (1984), in order to practice an 'uncovering' technique, it is necessary for practitioners to develop a cohesive and integrated self structure. When one fails to do this, they are vulnerable to the following pathologies:

-Autistic and psychotic personality *structures and presymbiotic psychoses due to failures of early attachment and bonding.*

-Schizophrenic and psychotic disorders due to failures of self-differentiation.

-Personality disorders due to failures of self and object integration .

According to Japanese psychologist Hayao Kawai (Murakami & Hayashi, 1998), many young believers in the Aum had not attained an age-appropriate level of integrated self. He describes the typical Aum member as being 'too vulnerable to hold the worldly passions in themselves.'

It is my contention that it was this immature self structure (itself a product of a rigid, conformist society) which in the context of an outcast cult group led to the fanaticism of the Aum members.

Radicalism

What is it that leads some cults into fanatic acts and dogma? The Aum committed terrorism in 1994 and 1995 which was followed in 1996 by

members of an American cult, 'Heaven's Gate,' who committed mass suicide. Why do they tend to become extreme? The following is my consideration of the mechanism of radicalism, using the Aum as an example.

Before believers join cults, they generally go through a process of disaffection from their society. They realize there is more to life than simply adopting social expectations. They begin seeking a more personalized purpose in life. This is followed by the realization that the social conventions which had protected them previously is gone, and they have to face the power of the non-egoic ground without the protection of the social norms. Because their egos are too vulnerable to bear this, they fail to integrate the egoic and nonegoic poles. In this state seekers accept protection from the guru and from the cult doctrine which seem to have the power to shield them from the terrors of the non-egoic ground. In this way the cult doctrine takes over the role of members' previous protective social norms. After admission to the Aum Shinrikyo, new members were required to face the power of the non-egoic ground again through intense sensory stimulation. However, because the ego was still vulnerable, it returned to the cult doctrine which is the safe haven of the ego. Repeating this process, the cult's doctrine became stronger and members became more dependent on the cult. Furthermore, the tradition of Confucianism in Japan, which prohibits people from talking back to elderly or higher ranking people, eliminated criticism of the doctrine among members and reinforced the blind obedience to cult doctrine.

The fear of encountering the power of the non-egoic ground increased among the members. The fear, which was related to archetypal images and the trauma of birth, tended to create a collective sense of crisis. Grof and Bennet (1992) describe the mechanism as follows:

'The trauma of birth involves a life-and-death struggle, with a potential for becoming the basis for many extremes of emotion. As an event that we all share, it has the potential for bringing about mass scale psychological aberrations, with perhaps hundreds of thousands of people sharing a common experience of tremendous unconscious rage. The archetypes of the collective unconscious could also be sources of mass psychopathology, since they are endowed by extraordinary psychological power, cutting across all individual boundaries.' (p. 212)

In the Aum case, the collective sense of fear and crisis was projected onto society and finally transformed into rebellion against society.

Case of Dr. Hayashi

In this section I will use the example of Dr. Ikuo Hayashi, one of the top members in the Aum Shinrikyo and a participant in the Tokyo poison gas attack, as an example of the radicalism of the cult members. I refer primarily to his autobiography (Hayashi, 1998) in this analysis of the psychology of Hayashi's crimes.

Dr. Hayashi was born in 1947 to the family of a medical doctor, the fifth of six children. In his childhood, he developed a strong attachment to the Emperor and the Emperor's family, a position strongly influenced by his

father's world view. For Dr. Hayashi, Emperor Hirohito was an omnipotent figure. Shintoism, in which the Emperor is regarded as a living God, naturally became the base of his spirituality.

Dr. Hayashi was loyal to his family's expectations and became a medical doctor. He earned his family's pride because becoming a medical doctor is regarded as one of the highest achievements in Japanese society. His

In the Aum case, the collective sense of fear and crisis was projected onto society and finally transformed into rebellion against society

academic and professional achievement seemed to define him as an ideal person both to his family and to society. However, his Shintoist-oriented world view clashed with the idealism of other young people who were opposed to the Japanese royal system. Consequently he found himself isolated in relation to his peers. This was his first experience of social alienation. Dr. Hayashi did not share the mainstream mind set for his age group and he eventually sought solace in Buddhism. In Japan Buddhism is compatible with Shintoism. Traditional Japanese people view Shintoism as a religion which successfully co-exists with Buddhism as a philosophy for one's spiritual growth. Thus, he could join Buddhist groups without feeling that he was betraying the Emperor.

After graduation from medical school, Dr. Hayashi started working at hospitals. Witnessing patients' deaths spurred his interest in Buddhism. Buddhists believe that when all living things die they are continually reincarnated. They will experience this cycle until one is liberated through spiritual practices which purify his or her worldly passions. Hayashi thought seriously about the meaning of death. He finally came to believe that liberation was the only way of salvation from the cycle of death and rebirth.

Hayashi joined a Buddhist cult named the Agon-shu when he was thirty in order to attain liberation. However, he soon felt that this would not be possible because the guru of the Agon-shu said that he himself had not yet been liberated. Hayashi looked for a more 'effective' cult and finally decided to join the Aum Shinrikyo after reading its literature which said that Shoko Asahara, the Aum's leader, had an ultimate power to take his disciples to liberation. His decision to join the Aum was no doubt catalyzed by the death of the Emperor. Needing to fill the void in himself caused by the Emperor's death, he latched onto another seemingly omnipotent leader.

After joining the Aum, he seriously practiced asceticism to attain liberation. He did meditation, yoga practices, and fasting. He also took psychedelics to reach an altered state of consciousness during which he had 'out of body experiences,' and 'unitive consciousness.' This confirmed for him that he was on the right path to liberation.

Fear of isolation was another factor in Hayashi's fanatism. When he quit his job and joined the Aum he left ordinary life and so lost respect from the majority of people. He had no place to return, since in Japan once one drops out of the normal course of life, it is almost impossible to re-enter it. The mainstream sees dropouts as people who put group harmony into disorder and consequently it continues to exclude them. On the other hand, he gained a comfortable life in the Aum Shinrikyo. He was respected by many Aum members because he was on track for membership in the elite section of the cult. Furthermore, the sense that he shared an ideal with other members proved to be a peaceful and soothing experience for him. Afraid of being excluded by the Aum, he clung to the group and slipped gradually into more and more fanatical practices.

Hayashi blindly obeyed Shoko Asahara and his doctrine because he believed that Asahara was the only person who had the power to take him to liberation. For Dr. Hayashi, Asahara was all-good. Hayashi was so naïve that he was as delighted as a child when Asahara validated his mystical experiences and offered recognition that he had attained a certain level of spiritual development. Because of his blind belief, Hyashi not only followed Aum teachings but also committed many crimes following the guru's orders including kidnapping and experimentation on human bodies. Although he sometimes felt guilty about these criminal activities, he denied his guilt by thinking that the victims deserved to be punished because they were in the way of the Aum's attempt to realize an ideal world. Eventually, Hayashi believed that anything which opposed the Aum was bad.

Another essential factor in Hayashi's involvement with the Aum was his fear of Asahara. When he first joined the Aum, Hayashi thought that he knew far more than Asahara about Buddhism (p. 61). Over time, this sense of intellectual superiority turned into the fear that Asahara was jealous of Hayashi's knowledge of Buddhism and of his excellent academic background (p. 131). As Hayashi continued in the Aum his fear of Asahara deepened until Hayashi began thinking that Asahara hated him and would kill him if he made a mistake. This escalation of fear in combination with Hayashi's ascetic and physically demanding living style destabilized what was already a weak ego.

To suppress his fear toward Asahara, Hayashi tried to project his fears onto external objects. For instance, when Asahara talked about ordering the death of a leader of another cult named Soukagakkai, Hayashi neutralized his fear of Asahara by persuading himself that the leader of the other cult was indeed a threat to the Aum and that he deserved to die (p. 172). In this way, Hayashi avoided facing his fears.

Hayashi confessed in his autobiography that since his childhood, he had had a tendency to deny and rationalize his fears (p. 178). I think that the basis of his fears was closely related to his sense of mortality. Death has been a significant theme in his life since childhood. In his autobiography, he recalled the accidental death of a canary, his childhood pet, as his first traumatic event (p. 11). His adult

devotion to Buddhism became serious when he faced patients' deaths in hospitals, and the Emperor's death was an important event that helped trigger his joining the Aum. Ironically, as his spiritual practice continued, he inevitably contacted his fear of death. However, his relationship with Asahara and the Aum fed his fears rather than relieving them. He tried to avoid dealing with his fear of death through rationalization and projection.

One of the top executives ordered Hayashi and some other members to commit the poison gas attack in Tokyo, implying that it was Asahara's order. Although at first Hayashi was confused by the order, he finally decided to take part in the crime, rationalizing that it was the best way to realize the Aum's plan to establish an ideal world. His logic was that although many people would die by this act of terrorism, Asahara would purify their karma and lead them to proper rebirth. After he sprinkled poison gas in a subway train he regretted his act. However, when he got a promotion to be the Aum's top executive he was relieved because the promotion indicated that he was accepted by Asahara.

Several months after the terrorism, Hayashi was arrested. In his autobiography he confessed that he had given himself up to Asahara and Aum doctrine (p. 401). He expressed his regret by saying, 'I feel ashamed of myself because I brought disgrace to my family and my school (p. 460).' These statements imply that his priorities (Asahara, Aum, school, family) always focused on persons or groups outside of himself. He rarely followed his inner wisdom. Instead he followed external rules. He had not developed his own self structure. This dependence on external structure and his over-attachment to Asahara and the Aum Shinrikyo finally led him to the ultimate crime of murder.

SUPPORT FOR SPIRITUAL EMERGENCY

Spiritual emergency is a stage in the process of spiritual growth, and though the outcome is often positive, there are nonetheless dangers which could hinder spiritual development or even manifest as a pathology. In Japan, we need to consider people's interdependency and its particular role in the process of spiritual development.

The following is a proposed guide which I believe Japanese people need to consider when they select spiritual or religious groups, teachers, therapists, or other helpers.

People should be assisted in establishing an appropriate level of individuality. Japanese people tend to be too involved in an interdependent society system, which can hinder the formation of an integrated and coherent self.

Those chosen to help must have appropriate knowledge about the spiritual process: They need to be familiar with the dynamics of the process, its healing properties, and the dangers involved.

Clients must receive sufficient care until their process of spiritual emergence is finished. Helpers must allow clients to undergo the transformational process and to continue support until the process is

completely finished. Incomplete care could induce a spiritual/psychological crisis.

A group leader should not be too charismatic. Focused worship on a charismatic leader typically results in dependency and weak ego structures.

Helpers should not be excessively preoccupied with psychic power. It is not relevant to spiritual growth. If excessive attention is given to cultivating psychic powers, it can hinder spiritual development.

Excessive preoccupation with eschatology can be dangerous. In many cases eschatology, in which people believe that the world will end in the near future, is a reflection of one's inner fear stemming from archetipal realms. Furthermore eschatology leads people to the belief that they are chosen.

Psychedelics and other drugs should not be abused. Without sufficient knowledge about both pharmacology and spirituality, drug abuse may lead people into spiritual crises.

Before using any uncovering techniques, helpers must properly assess each client's mental condition. If the client has not reached certain levels of self-integration, 'uncovering' techniques could be harmful.

Clients and helpers should keep in contact with society. If they aggressively oppose society, they tend to grow more extreme. The goal of spiritual development is not isolation from society, but re-entering it with a new self-structure.

According to these guidelines, the Aum leadership, doctrine and practice were damaging to spiritual growth.

CONCLUSION

In the process of spiritual growth, many people go through what Washburn calls a 'regression in the service of transcendence,' which for some becomes intense enough to qualify as a spiritual emergency. These people are overwhelmed by the power of the non-egoic ground, due to the vulnerability of their weak ego structure. In Japan people are particularly prone to spiritual crises since Japanese society does not allow people to form a strong ego structure. The social system is traditionally focused on keeping harmony among people rather than on developing individuality. Therefore, people adhere to rigid social norms in order to protect their vulnerability. They identify with the strong social norm which suppresses the power of the non-egoic ground. Many Japanese seek spiritual growth, but when they try to disidentify from society's norms they fall into spiritual emergency. It is likely that their vulnerable egos will have to face the power of the non-egoic ground without any protection, an experience which is often too overwhelming to integrate. These people tend to look for replacements for abandoned social norms instead of forming an integrated and coherent ego. This may stop their spiritual growth, blocking the flow of their potential development.

In Japanese society, issues concerning the process of spiritual growth have been ignored and underestimated for a long time. In an aging society like Japan, we need to establish a new system which will enable people to integrate the non-egoic pole and the egoic pole, in the context of the modern society.

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