

THE HIMALAYAN CONNECTION: UFOs and the Chandian Effect



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Summary

A major problem facing the study of unidentified flying object sighting reports is the lack of an accurate and comprehensive classification system. What are subsumed under the term "U.F.O.'s" are not merely extra-terrestrial space crafts but a whole array of psychological, sociological, and even religious phenomena. In order to alleviate the "category errors" inherent in such a diverse field, I have employed the discoveries of Pandit Faqir Chand (on the nature of religious visions) and the work of Ken Wilber (in transpersonal psychology) to propose a paradigm from which U.F.O. reports will be studied under three distinct divisions: *translative* (re: empirical); *transformative* (re: mental-subtle); and *transfusive* (re: the fusion of empirical and mental-subtle modes of knowledge).

With such a tripartite classification system we can begin to view reports of unidentified flying objects in a non-reductionistic and more understandable light. First, we can distinguish natural occurrences from transmundane apparitions, without damaging the intrinsic quality of the experience itself. Second, though we may continue to search for authentic

translative encounters from life forms outside of our own solar system, our main emphasis (in light of *transformation*) will be to develop a state-of-consciousness-specific understanding of U.F.O.'s. And thirdly, with *transfusive* experiences—where transformation and translation intersect—our investigation will no longer be hampered by the apparent “confusion” of such incidents, but will be able to examine the close link between experiential modes of knowing and empirical-sensory data.

PROLOGUE

Delhi: July 1978

In July of 1978 I was doing genealogical research at Sawan Ashram in Old Delhi, India. Although I was aptly forewarned that the heat in the summer was excruciating, the ninety percent humidity and one hundred degree plus temperatures overwhelmed me. My only relief from the weather came in the evenings. But even then it was slight.

On the second to last day of my stay, Jean Lyotard, a noted architect from Northern California, and I decided to spend some time on the roof of the monastery. He was leaving in a few days to go back to America. I was to go northward for further research on the Radhasoami tradition. The Indic sky sparkled with stars that night and our conversation eventually turned to astronomy—the natural extension of which led to the subject of exobiology and UFOs. Jean said, “I believe UFO’s exist and that we have been visited by higher intelligences from other galaxies.” Knowing first hand of Jean’s intelligence and perceptive observations, I probed further, “why do you say that?” “Because I have seen them myself many times!” His answer was nonchalant. “What were they? Strange lights in the sky, like a luminous ball or a shooting star?” “Yes, but more than that . . . I have been contacted by extraterrestrials personally.” I gulped, realizing that my dinner of dal and chappatis had not yet been fully digested. “What! come with that again.”

“It was in Southern France ten years ago. I was in the countryside when I beheld them. The most beautiful being I have ever seen radiated before me and pointed to the sky. He told me to concentrate on the brilliance above. As I became attentive I was pulled up towards the light. However, the experience was so

intense I hesitated and turned away. I have seen them on many occasions. The being was the most exquisite creature. His face, his eyes were . . . well . . . beyond description.”

I could not help thinking of several fanciful stories I had read before. Jean’s account sounded too much like a headline in *National Enquirer*. But I listened with attention and respect. I appreciated his rationality too much to dismiss his encounter simply as “swamp gas.” Jean perceived the alien as a person of advanced spiritual capabilities, distinguishing his visitor from a technological construct. His description had a mystic ring to it, slightly detached from the cold, hardware experiences I had read about happening to Mississippi fishermen and Louisiana housewives. And then, in the midst of our conversation, a remarkable thing occurred. While both of us were taking a momentary glance at the sky, a fine point of light, like a star, caught our attention. Jean immediately recognized it to be a UFO, and predicted what would happen next; “Watch! The light will speed across the sky and will reappear on the opposite side.” To my bewilderment, it did exactly that. In its next appearance, which took Jean and I a bit of tracking, he mentioned that it would most likely be joined by another of its kind. And so it was. By this time I was totally absorbed. Four star-like lights streaked across the sky. Maneuvering in an unusual manner, they circled several times in the deep blue vault, disappeared, and came into view distinctly again. Then Jean indicated that the lights would go across the sky once more and disappear. They did.

As the objects manifested, disappeared, and lighted up again in the Asian blackness, I experienced the vividness of a UFO sighting. But the question that remained was one of explanation: satellites? beam reflections? too much curry?

THE HIMALAYAN CONNECTION

In the Foothills of Hoshiarpur

Little did I realize that night in Old Delhi that a vital clue to the significance and meaning of UFOs would come a month later when I was doing field work in the foothills of the Himalayas.

Because of my research on the gurus in the Radhasoami tradition, I visited Faqir Chand, a 92 year old sage who had been

engaged in intensive spiritual practices since 1905. He was regarded within the *Shabd Yoga* community to be one of the most advanced yogic masters in India. It was in Basra Bagdad (Iraq) during World War One when Faqir realized one of the most pivotal secrets in understanding transmundane phenomena. The implications for comprehending UFO sightings are staggering.

In his autobiography, *The Life and Work of Baba Faqir Chand* (Lane, in press), Faqir relates how in the middle of a battle at Hamidia the form of his guru Shiv Brat Lal manifested to him and said, "Faqir, worry not, the enemy has not come to attack but to take away their dead. Let them do that. Don't waste your ammunition." (Lane, in press, p. 9). Faqir then sent for the Subedar Major and narrated the appearance and direction of his guru. He followed the same strategy and all were saved. When Faqir reached Bagdad after the fighting, however, many of Shiv Brat Lal disciples began to worship him instead. Faqir recollected:

It was all unexpected and strange for me. I enquired of them, 'Our Guru Maharaj is at Lahore. I am not your Guru. Why do you worhsip me?' They replied, "On the battle field, we were in danger. Death lurked in hand. You appeared before us and gave us correct directions. We were spared." I was wonder struck by this explanation. I had no knowledge of it at all. I, myself, being in trouble at that time, had not even remembered them. A mystery shrouded the whole thing, "who appeared inside them?" (Lane, in press, p. 9)

When Faqir discovered that his own guru (Shiv Brat Lal) was *unaware* of his manifestations (p. xii), he concluded that the answer to the perplexing problem of religious visions must rest in the nature of consciousness itself. Faqir elaborated:

People say that my Form manifests to them and helps them in solving their worldly as well as mental problems, but *I do not go anywhere*, nor do I know anything about such miraculous instances.

O' Man, your real helper, is your own *Self* and your own *Faith*, but you are badly mistaken and believe that somebody from without comes to help you. No Hazrat Mohammed, no Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, or any other God, Goddess, or God comes from without. This entire game is that of your impressions and suggestions which are ingrained upon your mind through your eyes and ears and of your *Faith* and *Belief*. (p. 23)

Thus, following Faqir's lucid argument, the *modus operandi* for religious visions is not due to outside or disconnected forces (although exterior stimuli can act as a catalyst for it), but to the internal process of concentration. A force that for approximately sixteen hours a day enables one to see the everyday, common sense, lawful world, and for another several hours at night can allow one to fly to the moon, converse with unknown people, and create incredible panoramas. Consequently, the appearance and duration of such visions is intimately related to consciousness and focality. Dreaming serves as the classic and perhaps most misunderstood example.

The Chandian Effect: The Experience of Certainty

What bearing do the discoveries of the sage of Hoshiarpur have on Jean's experience and those of others like him? Simply this: *the nature of one's attention is related directly to the perception one experiences*. If our perspective alters so does what we perceive. As ancient Upanishadic speculation and current studies in consciousness have shown (Grof, 1975; Pribram, 1977), we do not see the world as it "is." Rather, owing to our neurological structures, we see the universe—incoming stimuli—relatively; appearances flowing in and out depending on our own biologically defined anatomies. This "predicament" has meaning, content, and purpose within the framework of our own lived-through experiences. However, it is naive to say that our interpretation of life from science, philosophy, or religion absolutely explains the world as it really is. Instead, what we have are metaphorical models of explanation, which work respectively within the brackets of our own purviewed existence. The unseen thread, the larger gestalt, however, will go by undetected (Wilber, 1982a). With sharply contoured (mathematical, if you choose) operating mechanisms, we find ourselves living in a universe understood *not* by pure perception but by alternating analogs.

What these metaphors are (or, more precisely, which level of reality we behold) depends on what I call the *Chandian Effect*—the experience of certainty, named after the late Faqir Chand who was the first person in the *Sant Mat* tradition to bring this issue to light. It is from this bedrock *quality* that we distinguish, acknowledge, and discriminate so-called reality from appearance

or illusion. What we call the actual world is dependent solely upon the vibration and consistency in the persuasiveness of certainty. Although we can see, hear, smell, and touch our reality, what determines our conviction that this world is real is not based empirically but is rather an immeasurable *quality*—an undefinable feeling. This is strange indeed, for *quality* is an experience that science cannot study (save as an epiphenomenalism) but without which there would not be *any* scientific or intellectual endeavors! Science, which is itself rooted primarily upon the concept of materialism (a unified theory of what is real and substantial) excels or disintegrates upon the degree ascertainable of this primordial *quality*. Hence, *quantity*—that which is measurable and which science holds as true and permanent—proceeds a priori from quality and not vice versa. Smith (1976) has elaborated more on this important distinction.

The experience of certainty is a propelling force behind how we make up our days, fashion our plans, articulate our hopes. If there occurs a break in the *Chandian Effect*, our normal waking state would collapse into a passing phantasm. Like our nocturnal dreams, it would be stored away and temporarily forgotten. The experience of certainty is so overwhelming that when it radiates forth the question of illusion seldom arises. Just as the chair is quite solid when we strike it with our hand, so too does the world appear concrete and vivid when the *Chandian Effect* pervades (Wilber, 1979).

Our state of reality is determined by the movement of consciousness into various expressions of the *Chandian Effect*. Each level of awareness is controlled and empowered by its inherent degree of certainty, which is determined by the intensity and duration of its minimum threshold (Wilber, 1981a). Thus, for example, we are predisposed to call the waking state “real” because it is longer (and hence, by extension, more vivid) than the dreaming stage. We say this only when we are awake, however, never while we are dreaming (Maharshi, 1972). The reason behind this is simple. At each level where attention is established (Wilber, 1980), a *certainty boundary* is in effect, which, owing to the given center of awareness, varies in strength, time, and permanence. Hence, even the waking state, although extremely real, only lasts about eighteen hours normally until the *Chandian Effect* structured upon this level runs down below the minimum

threshold and our consciousness shifts to another region. So it is with the dream stage. At the moment of sleep (itself nothing but the transition of attention) we find ourselves occupied in a world that just hours before we thought was nothing but an incredible illusion—because it was dimmed by the intensity of the certainty force inherent in the waking state—but with which we now deal quite seriously: running away in terror from death or luring attractive mates for orgasmic satisfaction. From this native pattern of awareness we can see that our lives are simply natural progressions of consciousness from various boundaries within the *Chandian Effect*. Wilber (1981b) has detailed this progression, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically, in his transpersonal view of evolution.

The Development of Consciousness

Wilber illustrates in his book *The Atman Project* (1980) that consciousness develops essentially along two major avenues: *translation* and *transformation*. When attention gravitates within a given state (e.g., the waking state), neither altering it nor transcending it, *translation* ensues. Awareness is thus established within a particular field of the *Chandian Effect*, being held in constriction by the inherent *certainty boundary*. This does not mean, however, that change is not taking place—it indeed is—but only that the change is within given parameters. In other words, although there is a constant flux in our waking world, the changes themselves do not radically convert the state itself. Smith (1976) describes this same movement of attention as *horizontal*, development that proceeds along (i.e., within) the given plane of action.

On the other side, the shift of consciousness from one state to another (Wilber points out clearly that it can both ascend and descend; see Wilber, 1982b), or the conversion of the realm itself, is called *transformative*. In this regard an entirely different state of awareness is experienced. It is an ontologically diverse expression of the *Chandian Effect* with a new certainty boundary and threshold. Smith (1976) calls it *vertical* ascension, and religiously it is known as *ganz andere*, the *mysterium tremendum* (Eliade, 1959).

In twentieth century western civilization, with its persistent materialism and psychological reductionism (aspects of

translation), anything which is exterior to the translative world must be reduced down to a simpler, and thus graspable, component. If the *transformative* event cannot be collapsed, which Wilber (1981a), Smith (1976), and others argue that it cannot, it may be classified as a “hallucination”—which explains nothing. Or, the “ganz andere” experience may be elevated to the unapproachable ideal, goal, or god of the culture (Da Free John, 1980). Wilber (1981a) explicitly details the difference between *translation* and *transformation*:

It comes to the same thing to say that translation is a change in surface structures, and transformation is a change in deep structures. Recall our simple analogy of an eight-story building; each of its floors is a deep structure, while all the particular objects (rooms, furniture, offices, etc.) on each floor are its surface structures. Translation, then, is moving around on one floor; transformation is moving to a different floor altogether (pp. 71-73).

A third aspect to the development of consciousness that Wilber briefly touched upon in *Up From Eden* (1981) but did not define concisely is what I call *transfusion*, the intersecting of *translation* with *transformation*. Often when consciousness proceeds to a higher level it does not do so wholly, remaining partially within the lower order (Wilber, 1981a). It is, therefore, difficult to determine what is genuinely *transformative* from a radical *translative* event. And this situation is especially compounded when both forms of development are taking place simultaneously. With a reductionist paradigm we presume that the higher comes from the lower (where in actuality the opposite is true; Smith, 1976) and thus tend to misread *transformation* as an aberration on the real (re: *translative*) world. This concept of *transfusion*, which is why there exists so much confusion in the field, is important in understanding how consciousness can at one end *transform* and on the other *translate* but at the same instant not be mutually exclusive.

It should also be added that mistaking the higher with the lower can also work in reverse. For instance, certain religious experiences that appear nonrational are sometimes elevated to a transrational status, when, in fact, they are prerational. *Transfusion* can work in both directions, thereby causing scholars to commit what Wilber calls a pre/trans fallacy (1982b). Materialistic science has a tendency to *reduce* higher modes of being,

whereas uncritical transpersonal psychologists have a proclivity to categorize nonrational experiences as transmundane. Both lack a clear and incisive structuralism according to Wilber (1983b).

Toward a Tripartite Classification System of UFO Reports

This leads us to the main thesis of this article: a tripartite classification system of unidentified flying object sighting reports. Employing the preceding terminology on the development of consciousness (Wilber, Smith, et al.), we can place experiences of UFOs within three major categories: *translative*, *transformative*, and *transfusive*.

Translation (Fusion: Empirically Verifiable)

Simply put, translative experiences of UFOs are perceptions of natural phenomena *within* the consensus reality that have yet to be named or identified correctly. For the most part, UFO researchers have been trying to prove the empirical (that is, scientifically verifiable) basis behind unidentified flying objects. This is, above all else, primarily a *translative* endeavor, attempting to place UFOs *within* a rational and, therefore, explainable paradigm. However, there is a major problem confronting this attempt. The term UFO has become synonymous with alien creatures or spaceships that have come from other planets or galaxies. The near impossibility of such visits by extraterrestrials has been pointed out by several eminent scientists, including Carl Sagan (1972). Besides the evidence being scant (or nonexistent), the explanations for “close encounters” or sightings do not necessarily have to be exobiological or exotechnological; in fact, as Vallee (1979) indicates, they could well be sociological.

Thus, it is likely that most of what we call unidentified flying objects are nothing more than satellites, “falling stars” (meteorites), weather balloons, disguised defense operations and a whole array of natural phenomena. Nevertheless, *translative* investigations conceivably could encounter extraterrestrials and place their findings before the general public as long as there was *empirical* data sufficient to support such an event.

Transformation (Diffusion: Experientially Verifiable Through Consciousness)

Among the millions of UFO sightings reported each year, there are a select few that describe vivid and remarkable personal encounters with extraterrestrial beings. No matter what rational (i.e., *translative*) explanations may be offered to account for this type of experience, the contactee while undergoing the event will perceive it as extremely real (and, in some cases, more real than our own waking world) and will be convinced of its authenticity. Science generally will not be able to grasp this experience in itself and will classify it as an “hallucination”, as some scientists have done with Near-Death Experiences (Siegel, 1981), or, if following Carl Sagan’s lead, “a miswiring in human neuroanatomy” (Sagan, 1979). Although these may look like plausible explanations for such transmundane phenomena, they do not in essence explain the occurrences “as is.” Rather, they reduce the experiences down to fit an empirical-sensory model. This reductionism is particularly misleading and, if allowed to dominate our thinking, reduces higher, more unified modes of being.

An example of the basic flaw in this outlook is language. To understand the novel, *The Great Gatsby*, for instance, the whole story must be read. It is on that level alone that the intention of the writer is most completely apprehended. Now you can break the work down to its chapter headings, and then to its paragraph arrangement, then to its sentence structure, and finally to its words. Yet if you were only to examine the letters themselves, not the words they make up, nor the sentences they form, nor the entire paragraphs they construct, and finally the story they compose, then the entire point, intention, and purpose of the novel is lost. Reductionism is actually anti-informational and does not increase our understanding but only constricts it. Wilber (1981a) elaborates:

The truth of the naturic realm is decided by empirical (sensory) data, but the truth of the mental realm . . . is established only by intersubjective discussion among a community of concerned interpreters, whose data is not sensory but symbolic. The point is that even though truths in the mental-symbolic sphere are non-empirical and cannot be determined by empiric-scientific inquiry, nonetheless they can be decided . . .

... I consider exclusive empiricism to be radically and violently reductionistic, no matter how cleverly concealed; the demand for “empirical proof” is really a demand to strip the higher levels of being of their meaning and value and present them only in their aspects that can be reduced to objective, sensory, value-free univalent dimensions (pp. 32-33).

Thus, following Wilber’s argument, there can be *transformative* UFO encounters that are symbols emerging from a separate ontological ground of consciousness. Some may argue about why there isn’t any physical (empirical) proof for such a novel and important event. Just as a dreamer cannot bring the actual “substance” of his or her dream into the waking world, but only its symbols, and just as the materialist cannot carry his or her universe into a dream (except symbolically), so too is it for the UFO contactee who experiences a *transformative* incident.

Transfusion

[*Confusion: The Intersection of Translation with Transformation*]

The third and last category represents the intersecting of *translation* with *transformation* that I have termed *transfusion*. Perhaps the reason why many UFO reports are so fantastically mixed up, irrational, or weird is because of the fusion of these two forms of development. A good example of this was presented on the ABC news show *20/20*. In an attempt to explain how one young man had a close encounter of the third kind, it was shown that at the moment of his experience an underground vault emitted electrical currents of light that formed strange apparitions in the sky. When that same light struck the young man it *may* have invoked a temporary alteration in his cerebral cortex and thus produced an hallucination (later recounted as a “UFO abduction”). Viewers of the television program, after hearing two scientists give rational (i.e., *translative*) explanations for apparent UFO landings, may have become convinced that what the man witnessed was a natural, if uncommon, occurrence. However, the contactee himself, because he underwent a *transformative* experience (seeing it as real and as objective as the print on this page), could not really accept the *translative* natural explanation. This con-fusion of many UFO encounters accounts for why the

subject is riddled with fanaticism, religiosity, and garbled hokum.

It should be remembered, however, that simply because a UFO contact is nonrational does not mean that it is necessarily a transrational experience. As Wilber (1981a) has shown about dreams the same applies to UFO encounters. Psychologists and UFO-ologists must distinguish between *prerational states* (which, in Wilber's terminology, includes the archaic-uroboric, magical-typhonic, and the mythic-membership stages) and *transrational states* (which encompasses psychic, subtle and causal structures; Wilber, 1981a).

In light of *transfusion*, what may be occurring in several UFO encounters is a *regression* from rationality into subconscious and prepersonal states. Such relapses may be triggered, though, by physiological or *translative* elements. Carl Jung, for instance, argues along this line in his book *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth* (1958), pointing out that many UFO sighting reports have the earmarks of being archetypes projected into consciousness by the Collective Unconscious. However, because Jung is not clear in distinguishing between *prerational* and *transrational* archetypes (he usually fuses the two; Wilber, 1982b), he fails to differentiate between regressive and progressive UFO encounters. Nevertheless, the important point in all of this is that we investigate all nonrational experiences with a critical structuralism and an empathetic phenomenological hermeneutics.

CONCLUSION

With the classification system I have proposed we can begin to view reported experiences of UFOs in a nonreductionistic and more understandable light (see Table 1). First, we can distinguish natural occurrences from transmundane apparitions, without damaging the intrinsic quality of the experience itself. Second, though we may continue to search for authentic *translative* encounters from life forms outside of our own solar system, our main emphasis (in light of *transformation*) will be to develop a state-of-consciousness-specific understanding of UFOs. And thirdly, with *transfusive* experiences—where translation and transformation intersect—our investigation will no longer be

hampered by the apparent confusion of such incidents, but will be able to examine the close link between experiential modes of knowing and empirical sensory data.

Hence, what I am arguing for in the field of UFO studies is the same thing that Ken Wilber in *A Sociable God* (1983) argues for in the study of religious phenomena: a hierarchical structuralism. Because UFOs are not merely extraterrestrial spacecraft, but a whole array of psychological, sociological, and even religious phenomena, a “transcendental sociology” (Wilber, 1983) is needed in order that UFO studies does not fall prey to materialistic reductionism or uncritical phenomenological hermeneutics.

Indeed, such a transpersonal structuralism is concordant with the *Chandian Effect*. When the *certainty boundary* is questioned intensively, or naturally transcended, the attractive and binding force of that level of consciousness recedes, revealing the tentative nature of its existence. As Wilber has clearly indicated (1980), there is an ascendant ontology behind the evolution of the universe, one which is marked by an increasing degree of awareness. This idea must be kept in the forefront of UFO-ologist’s minds, because unidentified flying objects are more than a exotechnological issue.

By applying the tripartite paradigm that I have proposed (which will, of course, become more sophisticated and exact in time) it will serve as a critical normative to the UFO phenomena, allowing for a much needed structural adjudication. For instance, in looking back at my experiences atop Sawan Ashram in Old Delhi, India, it would appear that what I experienced was not remarkably *ganz andere*, but was most likely a peculiar *translative* event with naturalistic explanations. However, what Jean Lyotard witnessed in Southern France, or what Faqir Chand saw in Basra Bagdad, was of a *transformative* dimension, in that a higher state of awareness was experienced.

The real mystery, therefore, is not in alien space creatures who prey upon naive inhabitants, but in the very nature of attention. To comprehend the restraining certainty hold of the *Chandian Effect* and how consciousness evolves through its various boundary thresholds is the most important frontier awaiting the study of UFOs. The problem, as several UFO-ologists have already stated, has not been a case of “unidentified” but one of “misidentified”.

TABLE 1
A Tripartite Classification System of UFOs

| <i>Symbol & Structure of Development:</i> | Translative | Transformative | Transfusive |
|--|--|--|--|
| | <i>Horizontal</i> | <i>Vertical</i> | <i>Intersectional</i> |
| |  |  |  |
| Primary Mode of Understanding and Investigation: | Empirical-sensory | Experiential-mental-subtle (regressive and progressive) | Empirical/ Experiential fusion (either pre or trans) |
| Major Causes (Known): | Mis-identification of natural occurrences (e.g., satellites, jets, disguised defense operations, etc.) | Transference of attention; a different state of consciousness (e.g., out-of-body experiences; religious visions/raptures; near-death encounters; or, relapses into pre-conscious states) | Bio-chemical alternation within brain, which, in turn, invokes an altered state of awareness (e.g., drugs such as L.S.D. and Ketamine; also natural accidents which inflict some significant change within the central nervous system) |
| Materialistic (and epiphenomenalistic) explanations: | Natural phenomena (ultimately explainable by science) | Brain as locus operandi (dreaming, chemical imbalances, hallucinations, "miswiring in human neuro-anatomy") | Exterior stimuli influencing—via body chemistry—the normal procedures of the central nervous system (chemical intoxication; abrupt changes in the body) |
| Transpersonal (Chandian-Wilberian) explanations: | Natural-empiric phenomena | Psychic/subtle (Higher states of consciousness; progressive) or Magic/mythic (lower forms of awareness; regressive) | <i>Con-fusion</i> or the intersecting of natural-empiric forms of development with psychic-subtle modes of consciousness (trans) or Magic-Mythic manifestations (Pre) |

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