

The Tibetan Tetralogy of W. Y. Evans-Wentz: A Retrospective Assessment- Part II

Iván Kovács

*The Dharma-Kaya of thine own mind thou shalt see; and seeing
That, thou shalt have seen the All – The Vision Infinite, the Round
of Death and Birth and the State of Freedom.*

Milarepa, *Jetsun-Khabum*¹

Abstract

Part I in this series about the American Tibetologist, W. Y. Evans-Wentz dealt with his biography, succeeded by a short summary of his Tibetan tetralogy. This was followed by an in-depth discussion of his first book, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Part II now continues with the discussion of the remaining three books of the tetralogy: *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa*; *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*; and *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*. The discussions also consider the valuable comments of Donald S. Lopez, Jr., who wrote the forewords to the 2000 edition of Evans-Wentz's tetralogy as published by Oxford University Press. In discussing the *Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, a critical response is being made to C. G. Jung's controversial Psychological Commentary. The conclusion briefly discusses the merits and sincerity of Evans-Wentz's scholarship, and his importance as a pioneering Tibetologist.

The Second Book of the Tetralogy: *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa*

Some Thoughts from Donald S. Lopez,
Jr.'s Foreword

Perhaps the greatest compliment that Donald S. Lopez, Jr. can pay to the popularity of *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa* in his foreword is to refer the reader to the "eloquent testimony"² of the translator, Kazi Dawa Samdup himself, who praises the biography as follows:

Although written more than eight hundred years ago, it is from beginning to end set

down in such a plain and simple style of language that any ordinary Tibetan of today who can read at all can read it with ease and enjoyment. When we add to this that it tells the life-story of one who is looked up to and admired by all Tibetans, of every sect and school, as the Ideal Ascetic, or *Yogi*, and that he is no less esteemed as a poet and song-writer, whose songs are in everybody's mouth among the common people, somewhat like the songs of Burns in Scotland, we see how it is that this life of Milarepa is one of the most famous and favorite books of Tibet. For it is well admired by those who know how to write books as by those who only know how to read them when written.³

Lopez also points out that Evans-Wentz stresses two important things in his introduction about the biography of Milarepa: first, that the biography has a universal quality, placing Milarepa alongside Christian Gnostics, Hindu yogins, and Muslim Sufis as a master of wisdom. Secondly, as a proof of the text's authority, Evans-Wentz repeatedly points out that it is an eyewitness work: "the details of Mila's life were narrated by the master himself to

About the Author

Iván Kovács is qualified as a fine artist. As a writer he has published art criticism, short stories and poems, and more recently, articles of an esoteric nature. He is a reader of the classics and modern classics, a lover of world cinema, as well as classical and contemporary music. His lifelong interest in Esotericism was rounded off with several years of intensive study with the Arcane School.

Rechung, and Rechung himself was present for the miracles that attended Milarepa's passing."⁴

As regards the above, Lopez proposes that "two rather different points might also be usefully made." He argues that Milarepa's worldwide fame is largely due to the success of Evans-Wentz's work, "[b]ut the life of Milarepa is above all a Tibetan work, . . . and should therefore not be universalized to the point that it no longer belongs to its native land."⁵

The other point which Lopez makes is that, "although the life of Milarepa appears to be a first-person account, recorded by his closest disciple, . . . it is in fact a work of high literary achievement, composed some 350 years after the master's death."⁶ Lopez points out that this is no reason to assume that the story is therefore fictional, because other biographies of Milarepa have appeared that preceded Gtsang smyon Heruka's work in 1484, and that the literary qualities of Heruka's work should therefore not be denied, but rather celebrated.⁷

Lopez devotes the remainder of his introduction to a summary of the biography, drawing the reader's attention to the formal aspects of the writing. We learn how the biography opens with a lengthy introductory paean, which extends over 10 pages, singing the praises of Milarepa's exemplary and fabulous life. This, Lopez writes, is followed by the telling of the story which begins with the words "Thus did I hear," the traditional beginning of a Buddhist sutra, a discourse by the Buddha. Lopez explains as follows:

By using these famous words to open his text, the author signals to the reader that they are about to hear the teaching of a Buddha, and that the rapporteur of the teaching, in this case, Rechung, speaks with the authority of a witness. A Buddhist sutra will then identify where the Buddha was staying when the discourse was delivered, and who was in the audience. That same convention is followed here.⁸

Lopez writes how Rechung briefly departs from the formula to recount a dream in which he is in a pure land. There he is invited to at-

tend a discourse by the Buddha Akshobhya, one of the central tantric Buddhas, who speaks of the miraculous deeds of the great Buddhas and bodhisattvas that have lived in the past, concluding with Tilopa, Naropa, and Marpa—Milarepa's own teacher. These stories Rechung has heard from Milarepa before, but in less detail. Akshobhya ends his discourse by announcing that the next day he will tell a story which is more wonderful than the ones already told: the story of Milarepa. As the audience departs in anticipation of the next day's teaching, it wonders about Milarepa's present whereabouts, but Rechung knows that at that moment Milarepa is living in a cave in southern Tibet.⁹

Lopez explains how Rechung's dream introduces a theme which will persist throughout the biography, namely that there are two parallel universes:

In one, Milarepa is an impoverished beggar living in a cold cave; in the other, he is an enlightened buddha residing in a pure land; in one Marpa is a cruel and greedy drunk, demanding payment in exchange for his teachings; in the other, he is a compassionate buddha able to purge the sins of murder from his disciple; in one, Milarepa is a dangerous sorcerer to be avoided at all costs; in the other, he is a kind teacher willing to teach all who approach; in one, Milarepa is a murderer, in the other, a buddha.¹⁰

Lopez draws our attention to the fact that when Rechung awakes from his dream, he realizes that its purpose was to prompt him to ask Milarepa to disclose his own story, but like the Buddha, Mila's initial reaction is to demur. When Rechung insists, Milarepa "consents to 'turn the wheel of dharma,' the traditional term for the Buddha's teaching."¹¹ At this point the narrative shifts to the first person, and Milarepa reveals the story of his life. Lopez points out that as Milarepa is addressing his disciples in response to Rechung's request, each chapter begins in Rechung's voice, as he, for example, asks, "Master, didst thou set off at once to the wild solitudes after receiving the Truths, or didst thou continue to live with thy *Guru*?"¹²

It is toward the end of the story, Lopez tells us, that one of Milarepa's disciples tries to praise his master by claiming that he is a Buddha, and asks Mila which Buddha it might be. To clarify this aspect of Milarepa's buddhahood, Lopez explains as follows:

Tibetans believe not only that enlightened beings take rebirth in the world out of their infinite compassion, but that such beings can be identified. . . These beings are said to have complete control over their rebirth, choosing the time, the place, and the parents in advance . . . It is a further tenet of the Mahayana that the suffering and privation that the Buddha appeared to undergo in his quest for his enlightenment were all a display; the Buddha had in fact been enlightened aeons ago but pretended to renounce the world, practice asceticism, achieve enlightenment, and die, in order to inspire others to follow the path.¹³

At this point it needs to be mentioned that the ability to identify important personages according to their previous lives is an age-old tradition in Tibet. It has been specifically practiced as regards the discovery of the identity of a reincarnating Dalai Lama, as well as the identities of important lamas who are believed to have reincarnated. Such persons among the Tibetans are known as *tulkus*.

Lopez explains how Milarepa's disciple, who is aware of the parallel universe known as the buddha land, believes Milarepa to be the reincarnation of a fully enlightened being, and thus his years of privation in the caves of snowy Tibet only a performance. Thus the disciple asks after Milarepa's true identity. Instead of being flattered by such a question Milarepa responds by saying that there could be no greater insult than to suggest that he is an emanation of a Buddha. To do so would imply the denial of the great suffering he had to undergo in order for Marpa to expunge from him the sins of his youth. It would also minimize the extraordinary efforts he had to make over many years in solitary caves, subsisting only on nettles, so that he could achieve enlightenment in one lifetime. To believe that Milarepa was already enlightened to begin with would

be a denial of the central message of his life, namely that anyone who murders thirty-five people or less is able to achieve buddhahood in the same lifetime.¹⁴

Lopez also points out that the *Life of Milarepa* is not simply about buddhahood, but also concerned with what remains behind:

Hence, the final stages of the story are very much concerned with Mila's legacy, again pointing toward the questions of lineage and legitimacy that would have been pertinent in the centuries after his death. Mila is made to recite the names of his disciples, both major and minor, and to enumerate the many caves in which he meditated, caves that in the future would serve both as potent places of pilgrimage and as sacred sites for the practice of meditators.¹⁵

Surrounding the events of Milarepa's death the laypeople are less concerned with his final instructions and more with making sure that he dies in their region and their quarrel over his corpse is motivated by their desire for those blessings that are imminent in the locality of a saint's passing. It also becomes clear that the more advanced of Milarepa's disciples are also unable to rise above such mundane concerns. They are disillusioned at the absence of relics among his ashes, and Rechung himself finds it necessary to sing a song in which he implores Mila to bestow them. The dakinis (female spirits acting as spiritual muses)¹⁶ respond with a song pointing out to the disciples that their own realization be considered as a relic of their master. Even after the disciples witness the miraculous crystal stupa (a mound-like structure containing Buddhist relics)¹⁷ they still despair at the absence of relics. Finally, Milarepa relents and sends them to unearth a piece of cloth and a lump of sugar that can be endlessly divided among the disciples, the cloth as an amulet and the sugar as a taste of enlightenment, both without being exhausted.¹⁸

Lopez concludes his summary as follows:

It is impossible to comment on all of the remarkable aspects of the story. *The Life of Milarepa* deserves a detailed literary and historical analysis, considering everything

from the economics of Buddhist institutions in Tibet to the subtle use of figures of speech in Mila's famous songs. But Evans-Wentz and Kazi Dawa Sendup provide an excellent place to begin.¹⁹



Milarepa²⁰

W. Y. Evans-Wentz's Contribution to Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa

In his foreword to *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa*, Donald S. Lopez, Jr. remarks that "Evans-Wentz's introduction and notes are unobtrusive, although generally unhelpful."²¹ This writer would beg to differ. Although, as Lopez points out, Evans-Wentz's observations and conclusions are at times faulty, as for example the somewhat simplistic way of distinguishing between the sects of Tibetan Buddhism based on the color of the lamas' hats (Red Hats, Yellow Hats, and Black Hats),²² much information, whether directly or indirectly related to the text, will be welcome to a keen and curious reader. By simply looking at the various sections of Evans-Wentz's introduction, the reader will notice that there are a variety of interesting topics that are discussed.

When writing about the historical value of the biographical narrative, Evans-Wentz points out that as it has come down to us, it can be considered as a faithful account of the sayings and doings of Milarepa, with due allowance for a certain amount of folk-lore and popular mythology, and perhaps as historically accurate as parts of the *New Testament*.²³ He puts emphasis on the fact that "(t)o all who appreciate Buddhist Philosophy, more especially in its Mahayana form, this book should bring fresh insight. To mystics the world over it should prove to be, as Rechung, its author, would call it, a most precious Jewel . . ."²⁴

As regards the apostolic succession of the Kargyupta sect, to which Milarepa belonged, Evans-Wentz takes the reader back in time to the period when King Song-tsen Gam-po (who died about A. D. 650) reigned as the first Buddhist King of Tibet, and was characterized by the mystical Vajra-Yana form of Buddhism, which the Kargyuptas afterward adopted.²⁵ A key figure of this form of Buddhism was Sambhota who, at the king's request travelled to India to collect Buddhist books, and returned to Tibet with an extensive library, "and so saved for the world much of the learning of India which afterwards was lost in the land of its origin."²⁶

Evans-Wentz relates how in A. D. 1038, Atisha, the first of the Reformers of Lamaism arrived in Tibet from India, and introduced celibacy and a higher morality among the priesthood. Although Atisha is considered one of the Gurus of the Kargyupta sect, he has been sidelined by the Kargyuptas mainly because he sought to gain Enlightenment by intellectual means alone, rather than meditation. For this reason, it fell to the lot of the Great Guru Tilopa to become the first of the great apostles of the Kargyupta Hierarchy.²⁷ Tilopa's importance is ascribed to the fact that he claimed to have received his Mahamudra Philosophy directly from the Celestial Buddha Dorje-Chang, which he, in turn, handed down orally to Naropa, and Naropa transmitted it to Marpa, who was Milarepa's guru. The Kargyuptas "regard Dorje-Chang (Vajra-Dhara) as an equal to the Adi, or Primordial, Buddha,"

and he is thus the “Manifester of the Grace of the Adi-Buddha and inseparable from Him.”²⁸

Regarding Milarepa’s heir in the Kargyupta succession, it was not Rechung, the author of this biography, but the first of Milarepa’s disciples, Dvag-po-Lharje, also known as Je-Gampo-pa, because he was believed to have been the reincarnation of the first Buddhist ruler of Tibet, King Song-tsen Gam-po. Evans-Wentz concludes his narration about the apostolic succession in which he writes: “Je-Gampo-pa himself died in the year 1152, two years after he had founded the Monastery of Ts’ur-lka, the chief seat of the Kargyuptas, and ever since then the Kargyupta Line of *Gurus* has remained unbroken.”²⁹

About Milarepa himself, Evans-Wentz concludes his introduction as follows:

Milarepa, the Socrates of Asia, counted the world’s Intellectualisms, its prizes, and its pleasures as naught; his supreme quest was for that personal discovery of Truth, which, as he teaches us, can be won only by introspection and self analysis, through weighing life’s values in the scale of the *Bodhi-Illuminated mind* . . . How many parallels, too, may be drawn between (Milarepa’s) precepts recorded in this *Biography* and those of another Great Master of Life, will be seen by making comparison with the Sermon on the Mount.³⁰

A Short Sampling of the Text of *Tibet’s Great Yogi Milarepa*

The ensuing discussion and summary of Milarepa’s biography would not be complete without an appropriate sampling of the text itself, which has been chosen from Part II, entitled *The Path of Light*, Chapter VII. It describes the culmination of Milarepa’s training under his Guru, Marpa the Translator, and is taken from a lengthy description by Milarepa to his master, of what he has learnt:

To sum up, a vivid state of mental quiescence accompanied by energy, and a keen power of analysis, by a clear and inquisitive intellect, are indispensable requirements; like the lowest rung of the ladder, they are absolutely necessary to enable one to as-

ceend. But in the process of meditating on this state of mental quiescence (*Shi-nay*), by mental concentration, either on forms and shapes, or on shapeless and formless things, the very first effort must be made in a compassionate mood, with the aim of dedicating the merit of one’s efforts to the Universal Good. Secondly, the goal of one’s aspirations must be well defined and clear, soaring in the regions transcending thought. Finally, there is need of mentally praying and wishing for blessings on others so earnestly that one’s mind-processes also transcend thought. These, I understand, to be the highest of all Paths.³¹

This short passage alone will lend itself to a great deal of thought and analysis for those readers who have in any way progressed beyond the beginning stages of meditation, and who are desirous of eventually reaching for the ultimate prize of human attainment, or liberation from the wheel of life, as it is realized in the bliss of Nirvana.

The Third Book of the Tetralogy: *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*

Some Perspective on the Texts by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. and W. Y. Evans-Wentz

Of all four books of Evans-Wentz’s tetralogy, *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* is the most obscure, and despite the copious editorial comments and footnotes by Evans-Wentz that try to make sense of its texts, it is the least successful as regards their correct interpretation. In Donald S. Lopez, Jr.’s foreword to the book, this is largely ascribed to Evans-Wentz’s somewhat one-sided interest in esoteric matters, which in its particulars was primarily aimed at Hindu yoga, rather than Tibetan Buddhism, and “(i)t is this system that Evans-Wentz seeks to identify with the disparate Tibetan texts translated in this volume.”³²

In his general introduction to *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, Evans-Wentz explains that the seven “Books” (i.e. texts), are arranged in a definite order or sequence. He points out that

in all schools of yoga, neophytes who are to follow the Path need to know the rules and regulations that apply to the yogic career which they have chosen, and these rules are the subject matter of Book I. As Lopez sums it up in his foreword, “(t)he first of these (books) is a collection of aphorisms by Milarepa’s most famous disciple, Sgam po pa . . . entitled *A Garland of Jewels [of] the Supreme Path* . . . (and) has twenty-eight chapters, each containing (with three exceptions) ten admonitions concerning the practice of the Buddhist path: ‘the ten things to be avoided,’ ‘the ten things one must know,’ etc.”³³ Lopez explains that the text itself cannot be identified as characterizing any single sect of Tibetan Buddhism, but rather is intended as useful and easily memorized advice for anyone embarking upon the Buddhist path.³⁴

Evans-Wentz’s short comment from his general introduction on Book II explains that the yogi is confronted with the problem of the nature of the mind and of reality. If the yogi is able to solve this problem in accordance with the instructions as they are set forth in this book, he will have mastered both himself and his mental processes. Then, having attained bodhic (intuitional) insight, the yogi can safely advance to the more specialized practices that are expounded in Book III.³⁵

Lopez’s comment on Book II is more detailed and specific. He points out that the title of this book, *Notes on the Mahamudra*, has not been quite accurately rendered into English. Evans-Wentz translated “Mahamudra” as “The Great Symbol,” but Lopez claims that a more accurate rendering would be “The Great Seal.” The Great Seal is understood to be a state of enlightened awareness in which phenomenal appearance and noumenal emptiness are unified. Such a state is considered to be primordially present and not something that is newly creat-

ed, i.e. every moment of consciousness is considered to bear its seal. Lopez explains that “(i)instead of emphasizing the attainment of an extraordinary level of consciousness, the Great Seal literature exalts the ordinary state of mind as both the natural and ultimate state, character-

ized by lucidity and simplicity.”³⁶ The ordinary mind is contrasted with the worldly mind, with the understanding that the ordinary mind is comparable to a mirror that reflects reality exactly as it is, whereas the worldly mind is considered as distorted by its mistaken perception of subject and object as real. Lopez explains that rather than trying to destroy the worldly mind, as other systems do, in the Great Seal, the worldly mind is acknowledged for its ultimate identity with

the ordinary mind, because every deluded thought contains within it the lucidity and simplicity of the ordinary mind. To attain wisdom, all that needs to be done by the yogi is to recognize this identity, and acknowledge that the natural purity pervades all existence, including the worldly or deluded mind.³⁷

Returning to Evans-Wentz’s commentary, he informs the reader that once the *Bodhic* insight as taught in Book II has been attained, one can, “without danger, attempt the more specialized *yogic* practices expounded in Book III. Of these the most difficult and dangerous (notice how Evans-Wentz contradicts himself at this point) is the sixth, namely, the transference of the mundane consciousness; and this is set forth in more detail in Book IV.”³⁸ To gain more clarity on this issue it is necessary to revert back to Lopez and compare what he says:

These various practices (as set forth in Book III) . . . represent a collection of various tantric teachings that were current in Bengal in the eleventh century. They are all considered highly advanced teachings intended to result in buddhahood. Within the

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fourfold tantric division, they are teachings of the completion stage . . . of highest Yoga Tantra . . .”

Book III contains six teachings which are “inner heat, illusory body, clear light, dream, bardo, and consciousness transfer.”³⁹ The first of these, inner heat, is the foundational practice, and takes up almost half of Book III, and also applies to the other five teachings. As it involves the central channel of the spine, the chakras or energy centers of the yogi, and subtle energies, it can be considered a type of kundalini yoga, and Lopez informs us that Milarepa was considered to be adept at it. Lopez elaborates on this as follows:

The ability to cause the winds (i.e. subtle energies) to enter the central channel (of the spine) provides the meditator with access to various profound states of consciousness essential to the attainment of buddhahood, most importantly the mind of clear light, the subject of the fourth of the six teachings . . . It is the most profound state of consciousness that, upon realization of emptiness, is transformed into the omniscience of a buddha.⁴⁰

Lopez explains that the first four of the six teachings are intended to bestow buddhahood in this lifetime, and if this is not possible, the last two provide means for doing so after death. In this regard, the teaching on consciousness transfer describe a technique “for forcibly causing one’s consciousness to travel up through the central channel (of the spine), exit from the aperture in the crown of the head, and travel to a pure land (a Buddhist heaven), (which is) an ideal realm for the achievement of enlightenment.” If consciousness transfer is not achievable, there still remains the opportunity in the after death state (bardo), which is similar to that described in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, in which the recognition of the clear light offers the opportunity of liberation, or if this is not possible, to follow instructions that show how to attain an auspicious rebirth.⁴¹

Book IV is entirely about consciousness transfer and Lopez explains that it is similar to what has already been given in Book III, except that it is more detailed. It consists of two teachings,

the first of these dealing with consciousness transfer at the moment of death, so that the consciousness can be sent to a pure land. The second teaching is intended for those who are already adept at consciousness transfer and are instructed how to use such knowledge when helping someone recently deceased, and directing them into an auspicious realm, either to a pure land, or an advanced stage of the bodhisattva path.⁴²

In his short summary of Book V, Evans-Wentz informs the reader that the yogi is instructed in a very occult yogic method on how to attain the mental state of non-ego, (or as he calls it “impersonalization”), which is largely pre-Buddhistic. He warns that “(n)one save a very carefully trained and *guru*-guided *yogin* ought ever to attempt this *yoga*.”⁴³

In his summary of Book V, Lopez begins with a cursory description of the ritual which is an integral part of this teaching, but it is more practicable first to identify this teaching’s objective, which is the confrontation of the practitioner’s vices, which are considered the root cause of suffering, and thus need to be eliminated on the path to buddhahood.⁴⁴ Lopez points out that in Buddhism demons are regarded as the projections of desire, hatred, and ignorance, and “according to an Indian enumeration, one’s own mind and body are regarded as ‘the demon of the aggregates’ and one of the demons to be eliminated (in the ritual of this teaching) is attachment to one’s own body.”⁴⁵ (The personification of one’s vices in the form of demons might be somewhat foreign to a person who subscribes to the workings of a rational mind, but those individuals who are able to access the astral plane with their psychic abilities will confirm that such a belief is not entirely without foundation.) The intention of confronting one’s “demons” as obstacles to liberation is certainly laudable, but considering the method employed to achieve this objective, which this particular teaching prescribes, all one can say is that it is most extreme and bizarre. Lopez describes how this teaching known as the *chöd* ritual is performed and the practitioner is expected to frequent cemeteries and other sites fraught with danger, where he or she will pitch a tent, perform a

dance, beat a drum, and blow on a trumpet made from a human thigh bone.⁴⁶ This is to be followed up by a meditation in which the practitioner imagines his or her consciousness in the form of the goddess Vajrayogini, abiding in the central channel. Lopez details the procedure as follows:

She exits from the aperture at the crown of the head, at which point the meditator's body is imagined to collapse. Vajrayogini cuts off the crown of the skull of the prostrate body, which is immediately transformed into a huge cauldron, into which the body is thrown. The boiling of the body produces an elixir that is offered to all the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and to all sentient beings and spirits, both benevolent and malevolent . . . By severing the skull from the body, one cuts attachment to the body, resulting in wisdom . . . Because the body is the object of such great attachment, the gift of the body is often praised as the highest form of the perfection of giving.⁴⁷

If one considers that Buddhism is supposed to be a spiritual path that follows the famed Middle Way, which is intended to avoid all excesses and extremes, the practice of *chöd* is most definitely baffling and incomprehensible. This teaching, as expounded in Book V, is the most fascinating as regards *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, and an integral part of the more exotic Buddhist practices, but it is unlikely that any sane person who has been brought up in the Western tradition will go so far as to experiment with it and try it out for himself. In fact, this applies to most of the teachings in *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, and is endorsed by Lopez himself, who in a somewhat humorous way puts it as follows: "The texts translated in Books II, III, IV, and V are very much of the 'don't try this at home' variety. There is thus a certain salvation in the many errors in the translations: they prevent the reader from attempting to put them into practice."⁴⁸

In his short summary of Book VI, Evans-Wentz simply points out that it deals with the Five Wisdoms⁴⁹ and Lopez elaborates on this as follows:

The sixth text in *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* is a brief work . . . entitled *Mode of Being of the Long Hum Endowed with the Five Wisdoms* . . . The mantra *hum* is one of the most prevalent and potent in tantric Buddhism. In the mantra *om ab hum*, a white *om* is visualized in the head chakra, a red *ab* is visualized at the throat chakra, and a blue *hum* is visualized at the heart chakra. In many tantric meditations, infinite *hums* are emanated from the heart to fill the universe and are then gathered back into a single *hum* in the meditator's heart. The entire universe then melts into emptiness, beginning at the edges and moving inward, until the body of the meditator, visualized as a buddha, also dissolves, leaving only the letter *hum*. The *hum* then begins to dissolve from the bottom, until it too disappears into emptiness.⁵⁰

Lopez explains that in its orthographic representation, the mantra consists of five parts, and in this particular text, each of those parts is made to correspond to one of the Buddha lineages and to the five wisdoms of a Buddha, which are "the wisdom of the sphere of reality, the mirror-like wisdom, the wisdom of equality, the wisdom of specific understanding, and the wisdom of accomplishment."⁵¹

About the last book in *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, Book VII, Evans-Wentz states that "the essence of the most transcendental of all Mahayanic teachings is set before the *yogin* for profound meditation and realization."⁵² What Evans-Wentz calls the "most transcendental" is nothing less than the most famous of Buddhist sutras, the *Heart Sutra*, which Lopez identifies as being "renowned for its terse exposition of the doctrine of emptiness."⁵³ Lopez informs us that it is known by heart by Buddhists throughout Tibet, Korea, China, and Japan, and that it is among the most commented upon of Buddhist texts. Rather than burden the reader with a sampling of the rather cumbersome, and thus outdated, translation of the *Heart Sutra* as rendered by Evans-Wentz, here follows a sampling of a modern translation. Although the reader is free to give the text his or her own interpretation, a hint as to its understanding might be appropriate, by drawing the

reader's attention to the significance of the concept of *maya*, which views all life in its manifest form as illusory.

All things are empty:
 Nothing is born, nothing dies,
 Nothing is pure, nothing is stained,
 Nothing increases and nothing decreases.

.....
 There is no ignorance,
 And no end to ignorance.
 There is no old age and death,
 And no end to old age and death.
 There is no suffering, no cause of suffering,

No end to suffering, no cause of suffering,
 No end of suffering, no path to follow.
 There is no attainment of wisdom,
 And no wisdom to attain.

The Bodhisattvas rely on the Perfection of Wisdom,
 And so with no delusions,
 They feel no fear,
 And have Nirvana here and now.

All the Buddhas,
 Past, present, and future,
 Rely on the Perfection of Wisdom,
 And live in full enlightenment.
 The Perfection of Wisdom is the greatest mantra.

It is the clearest mantra,
 The highest mantra,
 The mantra that removes suffering.

This is truth that cannot be doubted.
 Say it so:

Gone,
 Gone,
 Gone over,
 Gone fully over.
 Awakened!
 So be it!⁵⁴

The Fourth Book of the Tetralogy: *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*

Background to the Texts

While the third book of Evans-Wentz's tetralogy was identified as the most ob-

scure as regards its subject matter, and for this reason largely misinterpreted, Donald S. Lopez, Jr. considers the fourth and last book, *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* as "the least successful volume . . . at least as a representation of Tibetan Buddhism. Like the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, it is a book that occupies two separate worlds, the world of Evans-Wentz, with his unique blend of Theosophy and Vedanta, and the world of the translated texts, that is, the world of Tibetan Buddhism."⁵⁵

Another major reason affecting the quality of this book can be ascribed to the fact that due to Kazi Dawa Samdup's premature death Evans-Wentz had to depend on less-skilled translators. The only contribution Kazi Dawa Samdup has made to *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* is as translator of the third text, which is a mere 14 pages of the entire book.⁵⁶ There was the added problem regarding the translation of the second of three independent texts. This text is considered a Nyingma work, which was rendered into English by two Geluk monks. It needs to be mentioned that Nyingma and Geluk are two distinct Tibetan Buddhist sects, Nyingma being the oldest and Geluk the newest, thus an obvious problem when the text to be translated and the translators belong to different camps.⁵⁷



Padmasambhava⁵⁸

Book I: An Epitome of the Life and Teachings of Tibet's Great Guru Padma-Sambhava

As summarized in Lopez's foreword, the first text (Book I) of *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* is a biography of Padmasambhava, and attributed to Padmasambhava himself, who allegedly dictated it to his consort, the queen Ye shes mtsho rgyal, and was then hidden by him in the Tibetan landscape, so that it could be found at an appropriate time in the future when Tibet was ready to receive its teaching. The text was supposedly found by O rgyan gling pa in 1352, who claimed to have discovered it in the heart of a stone image of a guardian deity at the entrance to the Crystal Rock cave in the Yarlung Valley. However, modern scholars regard this text, and in fact, other so-called treasure texts, as originating not at the time of Padmasambhava, who is believed to have visited Tibet at the end of the eighth century, but rather at the time of their discovery, and as having been compiled or authored by the discoverers themselves.⁵⁹

Lopez declares that regardless of its true origins as regards its authorship, the biography is a remarkable work.⁶⁰ He goes on to list the significant points of its narrative as follows:

Padmasambhava's glorious lineage as an emanation of the Buddha of infinite Light, Amithaba; the Buddha's prophecy, as he is about to pass into nirvana, that twelve years hence he would appear as Padmasambhava to teach the secret mantras; his miraculous appearance as a beautiful eight-year-old child in the middle of a lotus blossom in the middle of Dhanakosa Lake (hence his name Padmasambhava, "Lotus Born"); his life as a prince, in which . . . he . . . marries a beautiful princess, before deciding to renounce the world . . . his tutelage under the Buddha's attendant Ananda . . . his defeat of the opponents of Buddhism; some thousand years later, his invitation to Tibet to subdue the demons and establish his first monastery at Bsam yas; and his departure to the land of the raksasas.⁶¹

Lopez also points out that in the course of the narrative "there are long excursions into Bud-

dhist doctrine, as well as descriptions of the qualifications necessary for the future discoverers of Padasambhava's hidden treasure texts."⁶² He concludes by saying that the work is a favorite among Tibetans due to its brilliant description of their great culture hero and the fascinating description of his great and miraculous deeds.⁶³

Book II: The Profound Doctrine of Self-Liberation by Meditation upon the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities

In Lopez's foreword we learn that the doctrine of this text is also referred to as the Great Perfection. Its teachings, which are also found in Bon, (the pre-Buddhist, shamanistic religion of Tibet), describe the mind as the primordial basis, which possess qualities "such as presence, spontaneity, luminosity, original purity, unobstructed freedom, expanse, clarity, self-liberation, openness, effortless, and intrinsic awareness."⁶⁴ This type of awareness, called in Tibetan *rig pa*, cannot be accessed through conceptual elaboration or logical awareness, because "the primordial basis is an eternally pure state free from the dualism of subject and object, infinite and perfect from the beginning, ever complete."⁶⁵ Some scholars prefer to call this text the "Great Completeness" rather than "Great Perfection," because the latter term implies that at some point the intrinsic awareness became perfect; while, in actual fact, it has always been so. It is the mind that creates the appearances of the world, the sphere of human suffering, and all such appearances need to be understood as illusory. The deluded mind believes its own creations to be real, and thereby forgets its true nature of original purity. Thus for the mind to try to liberate itself is futile, because it is already liberated. The technique to arrive at this realization is to employ a variety of practices which enable the practitioner to eliminate karmic obstacles, at which point the mind needs to eliminate all thought, and then experience itself by recognizing its true nature. The mind needs to become like a mirror that reflects whatever object stands before it, without allowing itself to be affected by the object.⁶⁶

As regards Evans-Wentz's involvement with this text, Lopez states that he clearly recognizes its importance, and he is both passionate and eloquent in his exposition, but misguided in his interpretation. He actually appeals more often to Plotinus or Ramana Maharshi than to any Tibetan, or even Buddhist, source. For Evans-Wentz, awareness is "the One Mind . . . the Universal Mind, the Over-Mind, the Cosmic Consciousness."⁶⁷ Lopez is adamant that "(s)uch language is foreign to Buddhist thought in general and to the Great Perfection in particular."⁶⁸

Book III: *The Last Testamentary Teachings of the Guru Phadampa Sangay*

According to Lopez's summary, Book III consists of Evans-Wentz's selection from an unfinished translation left by Kazi Dawa Samdup. It is a collection of aphorisms attributed to the Indian yogi Pha dam pa sangs rgyas, who is said to have visited Tibet on several occasions in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries before his death in 1117. The aphorisms are addressed to the people of Ding ri, where Pha dam pa sangs rgyas founded a monastery. It contains Buddhist teachings on impermanence and the uncertainty of the time of death, on the importance of good deeds such as pilgrimage and prayer, and admonitions to have faith in the guru, as well as instructions on meditation.⁶⁹

Some Reflections on C. G. Jung's Psychological Commentary on the *Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*

As regards Jung's commentary on the *Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, Lopez writes the following: "One finds here the same misreading of the *Self-Liberation through Naked Vision Recognizing Awareness* . . . that one found in his commentary to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. There are the same gross cultural stereotypes of East and West, the same admonitions that Europeans not practice yoga, the same unsuccessful attempt to interpret 'Eastern' consciousness in the light of his theory of the unconscious . . . A thorough study of Jung's misreading, wilful and otherwise, of 'Eastern Religions' remains to be written."⁷⁰

Although this writer intends nothing like a "thorough study," nevertheless, he wants to take up the challenge proposed by Lopez, by simply pointing out, which in his view, are some of the most obvious statements by Jung with which he disagrees. It needs to be remembered that this writer's viewpoints are, in their turn, largely shaped by the teachings of Alice A. Bailey and the Tibetan Master, Djwhal Khul, and consequently open to challenge by adherents of other schools.

Before proceeding with a closer look at Jung's commentary, it needs to be said that independent of his opinions and views on Oriental philosophy and Eastern religions, his status as a great pioneer of Western psychology remains unchallenged. His contribution in this regard, such as the concepts of the collective unconscious, the archetype, the complex, and synchronicity, were well ahead of his one-time co-worker, Sigmund Freud, and did much good to point Western psychology in the right direction. It is only when he tries to explain the oriental point of view in terms of his own system of thinking that their validity is brought into question.

Although Jung's tone and style strike one as confident and persuasive, his commentary is often characterized by broad generalizations, whether he is trying to distinguish between the Eastern or Western mind, or their respective religions. Likewise, when he comments on Eastern religion, there is no distinction made between Hinduism and Buddhism, or in fact, any other branch of Eastern religion, such as e.g., Zoroastrianism, Taoism and Confucianism.

What is also clearly apparent is that the types he describes are too distinct and stereotypical, without any possibility, or hope, of commonality or complement between them. To quote his own words, Jung's view on the difference between East and West is explicit and uncompromising:

I refrain from describing what would happen to Eastern man should he forget his ideal of Buddhahood, for I do not want to give such an unfair advantage to my Western prejudices. But I cannot help raising the

question of whether it is possible, or indeed advisable, for either to imitate the other's standpoint. The difference between them is so vast that one can see no reasonable possibility of this, much less its advisability. You cannot mix fire and water. The Eastern attitude stultifies the West, and vice versa. You cannot be a good Christian and redeem yourself, nor can you be a Buddha and worship God. It is much better to accept the conflict, for it admits only of an irrational solution, if any.⁷¹

At first glance the above comparison appears to be true, but only takes Christianity and Buddhism into account. In fact, the ethical objectives of both these religions appear to be identical, as well as their attitudes and cautionary warnings as regards the sensuous or worldly view and lifestyle. Christians are commanded to love, and Buddhists are encouraged to practice compassion. The one speaks of salvation, the other of liberation, and both lead respectively to heaven and nirvana. Had Jung attempted a comparison between the *New Testament* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the "fire and water" comparison would have been even less appropriate, with no reason for "stultifying" from either side. Those readers who are familiar with both scriptures will admit that there is not a single controversy between the spiritual objectives and ethical standards of their teaching.

The other important issue which needs to be addressed is the question of consciousness, and its related vehicles of perception, such as the mind, the ego, and the personality. If the reader considers what was said about Jung's commentary on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and the problems arising from his comparison between his Collective Unconscious and the Dharma-Kaya, it is necessary to exercise caution, rather than reaching seemingly obvious, but invalid conclusions.

To understand the psychic components that go into the making of a human being, it is necessary to understand the Self as defined in Jungian psychology. According to Jung's system "(t)he ego is the center of consciousness, whereas the Self is the center of the total per-

sonality, which includes consciousness, the unconscious, and the ego. The Self is both the whole and the center. While the ego is a self-contained little center of the circle contained within the whole, the Self can be understood as the greater circle."⁷²

The esoteric view, based on Hinduism, and adapted by Alice A. Bailey and the Tibetan Master, Djwhal Khul, is somewhat different, and at first appearance more complicated, but once understood, direct and clear-cut. First, there is the most easily understood distinction between the lower and higher selves, or more specifically, the personality and the Soul. The personality, consisting of the physical-etheric, emotional, and lower mental vehicles, is that unit of consciousness whereby a human being is understood to be able to interact with the manifest, or concrete world with which we are all familiar. It is considered the seat of self-consciousness, and thus its objectives are largely considered as selfish. The Soul, on the other hand, is characterized by wisdom and love, and therefore group-conscious. It is also the mediator between atma - buddhi - manas (spirit - intuition - abstract mind), and the personality.

As can be seen from the above, the self, and the states of consciousness resulting from it are understood in rather different terms, and should thus not be explained by trying to draw parallels between them. Neither can one say that either the one or the other is right or wrong, but simply admit that truth is relative, and often dependent on various points of view, and that they can be equally valid when defined on their own terms.

In his commentary, Jung writes the following about what he understands as consciousness:

To us consciousness is inconceivable without an ego; it is equated with the relation of contents to an ego. If there is no ego there is nobody to be conscious of anything. The ego is therefore indispensable to the conscious process. The Eastern mind, however, has no difficulty in conceiving of a consciousness without an ego. Consciousness is deemed capable of transcending its ego condition; indeed in its 'higher' forms, the

ego disappears altogether. Such an ego-less mental condition can only be unconscious to us, for the simple reason that there would be nobody to witness it.⁷³

In the above quotation Jung would have us believe that Easterners are out to destroy their egos in favor of a “higher,” albeit unconscious mental condition. Such a false conception is typical of most Western readers who come into contact with Eastern philosophy and religion, but who have not delved deep enough, and thus developed a superficial, and thus erroneous understanding of the Eastern mind. Whether one looks at the *Upanishads*, the *Yoga Sutras*, or the *Bhagavad Gita*, none of them ever suggest the necessity of having to destroy one’s ego to enable one to gain higher states of consciousness. They do suggest, however, methods of purification and discipline whereby the content of the mind is rendered more effective and organized. This is achieved by meditation and contemplation, first freeing the mind of its prejudices and wrong habits of thinking. Secondly, meditation aims at transforming the mind into a fit instrument by which it can *consciously* register impressions from higher levels of consciousness, and then by an accurate process of mental discrimination and interpretation, give those impressions a clear and definite form. The only practicable way whereby higher states of consciousness can be accessed is through occult meditation, and as any practiced meditator will testify, its discipline will result in a more focused and purposeful attitude towards life rather than an unconscious and diffused awareness, as Jung would like us to believe. One might add that the Eastern and Western spiritual practitioners are not as far apart as we are made to believe. In their respective monastic communities, the common goal is the discouragement of vices and the acquisition of virtues, and much of this is achieved by their respective disciplines and meditations which are aimed to make this possible.

In conclusion, it is appropriate to close with a few short quotations from mystics and holy men representative of both the East and the West, and thereby demonstrate that their wisdom and inspiration comes from but one

source, namely the collective treasure house of the human soul:

*Heaven is nothing other than a revelation of the Eternal One, where everything works and wills in silent love.*⁷⁴ (Jacob Boehme)

*There exists only the present instant . . . a Now which always and without end is itself new. There is no yesterday nor any tomorrow, but only Now, as it was a thousand years ago and as it will be a thousand years hence.*⁷⁵ (Meister Eckhart)

*Unless purer love and veneration be innate within one’s heart, what gain is it to build a stupa?*⁷⁶
(Milarepa)

*Compassion is not religious business, it is human business, it is essential for our own peace and mental stability, it is essential for human survival.*⁷⁷ (Dalai Lama XIV)

Conclusion

Looking at Evans-Wentz in retrospect, we can safely conclude that his body of work and formidable scholarship classifies him as an important and pioneering figure of Tibetology. Whilst this article was being reviewed in preparation for publication, an anonymous reviewer pointed out that Donald S. Lopez, Jr., “like many very orthodox Buddhists, has an unfavorable bias against Evans-Wentz, probably due to Wentz’s Theosophical and Hindu connections.” This reviewer suggested that it might be emphasized that Evans-Wentz’s four pioneering works had, in fact, “a beneficial, even monumental influence on the Buddhist Movement in the West, and that as with all pioneering works of this nature, where very little is known concerning the nature of the teachings... there is bound to be many mistakes.” This reviewer expresses his amazement at the small amount of mistakes either in the translations or in Evans-Wentz’s excellent commentaries and the writer of this article cannot but wholeheartedly agree.

As regards Evans-Wentz’s sincerity towards the teachings which are propagated in his books, one only needs to consider the way he lived. Although he had a considerable amount

of money at his disposal, he was never enticed by luxury and riches, and his lifestyle was always simple and frugal. His groundbreaking efforts to make public the material contained in his Tibetan tetralogy gave many readers the opportunity to acquaint themselves with esoteric matters in general and Tibetan Buddhism in particular. The fact that Oxford University Press has deemed it important enough to republish his tetralogy in 2000, is proof enough of its value. Its republication is an assurance of Evans-Wentz's status as a classic occult writer whose books are still appreciated in the 21st century.

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- 9 Ibid., K.
- 10 Ibid.
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- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid.
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- 64 Ibid., M.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid.
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