

Fictitious Tibet: The Origin and Persistence of Rampatism

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Let me first of all stake my claim and explain some terms in the title: an apparently unexterminable tradition of sheer fiction taken as holy fact originated in Europe and America slightly before the turn of the century — the brainchild of some fertile writers and orators, a number of core tales about inaccessible Tibetan and Himalayan mystics took shape in contrivedly esoteric writings which gained steady momentum until its culmination in Lama Lobsang Rampa's, alias Mr. Hoskins', fantastically fraudulent output beginning with *The Third Eye* and its sequels. I call this whole phony tradition "Rampatism" after its phony consummator, Rampa-Hoskins, and his all-too-numerous followers in North America and Europe. This depressing crowd of partly well-meaning, totally uninformed, and seemingly uninformable votaries holds something like this as its modal view: that there is, somewhere hidden in the Himalayas (invariably mis-stressed on the penultimate 'a'), a powerful, mystical, initiate brotherhood of lamas or similar guru adepts, who not only know all the mysteries of the world and the superworld, who not only incorporate and transcend the teachings of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, but who also master all the occult arts — they fly through the air at enormous speeds, they run 400 miles at a stretch without break, they appear here and there, and they are arch-and-core advisors to the wise and the great who hide these ultimate links to supreme wisdom and control. In addition, they know all their previous incarnations, and can tell everyone what his incarnations were and are going to be. Geographically, the area where these supergurus reside is nebulously defined as "Tibet," "Himalaya," and it often includes the Ganges and India. This, very briefly, is the somewhat autoerotic creed of a large, and unfortunately still growing, crowd of wide eyed believers in the mysterious East, apropos which my colleague Professor Hurvitz at the University of British Columbia sagaciously remarked that "for these people, the East must be mysterious, otherwise life has no meaning." To put this somewhat less succinctly and more technically, the enormous, pervasive alienation of Euro-America from the religious themes of the Western world, matched with the general disgruntlement, with the superciliously religious in the established churches, the surfeit with scientific models which seem to generate war and destruction, and most recently the proliferating fascination with the exotic for its own sake — about which later in greater detail — all these contribute to the desperate quest for ideas, rituals, and promises that are different from those of the West, that are distant from the West, and that are easily accessible, without any intellectual effort, without any discursive input.

Let me now present an historical sketch of the increasing ingress of pseudo-Orientalia, and specifically of pseudo-Buddhica and pseudo-Tibetica into Europe and America. During my research into ideological change in the Buddhist clergy in Sri

Lanka in 1971, I marveled at a painting in a temple in the southernmost part of the island. In a long subterranean corridor, some two hundred vignettes depicting the phases of the dharma from its inception under the Bodhi-tree in Buddhagaya to the foundation of the particular temple, the last one showed a white woman kneeling and bowing down before the image of the Tathagata and two monks administering sil (the five precepts of Theravada Buddhism) to her; behind her, several white men in tropical hats and western suits, one of them bearded. These, so the monk who showed me around informed me, were Mme. Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott embracing Buddhism. This is historically quite correct. The well-meaning American Colonel Olcott and the Russian-born Mme. Blavatsky, founders of the Theosophical Society, did indeed undergo that ceremony of initiation in that shrine in Sri Lanka. Annie Besant became a convert to Mme. Blavatsky, rather than to Buddhism, about a decade later. Leadbetter and other founding members formed the incipient caucus of the Society which still survives, albeit in highly modified and in a largely reduced form when compared to the initial thrust into the religious ideological world of the early 20th century. Now we must distinguish between the genuine and the spurious elements in the movement as it relates to Buddhism. Annie Besant was no doubt a sincere woman; one of the British Empire's most powerful orators, cofounder of the Indian National Congress, and a fine mind, genuinely annoyed at the inanities perpetrated by and constituted in the missionary scene. Col. Olcott was a genuine person, too, concerned with human affairs, and strongly cognizant of religious options other than those of Christianity. But I think Mme. Blavatsky and Leadbetter were frauds, pure and simple. My definition of a fraud or phony does not quite coincide with the usual dictionary meanings of these terms. A phony does not necessarily doubt the theses he or she propounds — in fact they can be full believers themselves. But what makes them phonies is their basic attitude of refusal of matching their tenets with those of a genuine tradition, and of imitating lifestyles which are alien to them, by doing things that superficially look part of the lifestyle they imitate, or of imitational lifestyles which simply do not exist in any cultural body, except as idiosyncrasies. Leadbetter wrote about the kundalini, the secret serpent power, and a melee of things exoteric and other which he had picked up from Indian sources in early translations. He never learned any of the primary languages — Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan; neither did Besant, Olcott, and Blavatsky. Leadbetter was an aggressive homosexual, and there is no doubt in my mind that he used his esoteric homiletic to seduce young men — some of them very famous indeed in later days. Now I don't object to homosexuality — I think the Gay Freedom movement is well taken and should succeed. But I do object to utilizing bits of theological or other religious doctrinal material to support one's own aesthetical and sensuous predilections. Hindu Buddhist Tantric texts do indeed use sexual models and analogues in their esoteric tracts, so it is quite in order if scholars and practitioners use these texts in support of their sexual behavior, because the support is objectively there. But no Tantric text implies any but heterosexual relations in its corpus. The most recent authentic presentation of the place of sexuality in Tibetan Tantrism ([1](#)) should suffice as a document for the rejection of the esoteric innuendos in Leadbetter's writings. H.V. Guenther, of course, is a valid empire of Buddhist Tibetan studies in and of himself, and it may not be even necessary to quote so exalted a source as his prolific writings in order to dismantle the Blavatsky-to-Rampa type fraudulence; a very average familiarity with Buddhism would do the job.

Mme. Blavatsky's Secret Doctrine, a multivolume work, is such a melee of horrendous hogwash and of fertile inventions of inane esoterica, that any Buddhist and Tibetan scholar is justified to avoid mentioning it in any context. But it is precisely because

serious scholars haven't mentioned this opus that it should be dealt with in a serious publication and in one whose readers are deeply concerned with the true representation of Tibetan lore. In other words, since Blavatsky's work has had signal importance in the genesis and perpetuation of a widespread, weird, fake, and fakish pseudo-Tibetica and pseudo-Buddhica, and since no Tibetologist or Buddhologist would touch her writings with a long pole (no pun intended, Blavatsky is a Russian name, the Polish spelling would be Blavatski), it behooves an anthropologist who works in the Buddhist and Tibetan field to do this job. I don't think that more than five per cent, if that many, of the readers of Lobsang Rampa-Hoskins' work have ever heard about Blavatsky, but Lobsang Rampa-Hoskins must have read them, cover to cover or in excerpts — his whole work reeks of Blavatskyisms; and of course, he doesn't quote sources — fakes never do. Long before Rampa, the whole range of quasi-mathematical spheres, diagrammatic arrangements, levels of existence of consciousness, master-and-disciplehood, hoisted on a style of self-indulgent, self-aggrandizing rhetoric, was more or less created by Blavatsky. Medieval Christian writers, the Hermetics and a large number of kindred thinkers and their products had indeed presented a wide vista of quasi-mathematical, impressionistic imaginary structures; earlier, of course, Jewish mysticism with kabbalistic, Talmudic, and earlier medieval Rabbinical moorings might have set the example for the medieval Christian writings of this kind, unless the Christian writers were — or were also — inspired by whatever filtered through to them from the Greek and Hellenic esotericists, the Pythagoreans and a large number of neo-Pythagorean writings spread through the Hellenic world. Medieval Christian scholars did not read Greek, and whatever they did know about these esoteric systems they obtained through Latin translations. Nobody knows to what degree Blavatsky was familiar with any of this. As an anthropologist, I believe in the perennial possibility of independent invention — people get similar ideas without any necessary mutual communication or diffusion. Be that as it may, Blavatsky's Secret Doctrine and all the subsequent writings of the Esoteric section of the Theosophical Society, later on rechristened "Eastern" to forestall criticisms of mystery-mongering and the pervasive tendency to identify the esoteric with the erotic, rested heavily on such quasi-structural schemes.

I do not doubt that in her earlier years, Blavatsky must have been a highly eclectic, voracious reader. But as with all nonscholars in the field of religious systems, she did not unmix the genuine from the phony; she obviously regarded all sources as equally valid. Not knowing any of the primary languages of the Buddhist-Hindu tradition, she had to rely on whatever had been translated. And, as an epiphenomenon to the awakening interest in oriental studies, a large number of unscholarly writings emerged, produced by people who thought, or pretended, that they could get at the meat of the newly discovered wisdom of the East by speculating about it in their own way rather than by being guided by its sources, or by seeking guidance from authentic teachers in those eastern lands.

Blavatsky, Besant, and the other founders of the Theosophical movement were of course familiar with other translations then available. The I Ching had just about then been translated into French for the first time, though Richard Wilhelm's classical translation into English was published after the Secret Doctrine. This whole quasi-mathematical, highly self-indulgent speculation, of course, was part of the emotional packet of the Renaissance and the late Middle Ages in general. There is no doubt that esotericism was, always is, a reaction against the official ecclesiastical hierarchy and against the official doctrines. In India and Tibet, esotericization never

took to this kind of pseudo-geometrical-mathematical model, since those models were already part of the official, scholarly traditions available. In these two countries, esotericization used what I call psycho-experimentation models, including the erotic, as instruments of opposition and criticism of the official religious establishments. It is quite obvious that Mme. Blavatsky very much identified with this European tradition of opposing the occidental religious belief system by esoteric, i.e. quasi-mathematical, pseudo-scientific speculations and by writings that encompassed diagrammatic representations of a secret universe. The Secret Doctrine and much of the older "Esoteric" (later "Eastern") sections of the Theosophical Society generated a welter of phantasmagoria of a spherical, cyclical, graphic overlay type; the vague acquaintance with mandala paintings in India added zest to these creations.

I am just not sure whether Mme. Blavatsky read the serious Hindu and Buddhist literature in translation and commentary available in her days, particularly the Sacred Books of the East, created by Max Mueller in the 80's of the last century. If she did, little of it showed in her writings. One of the most annoying features in the "M Letters" (M for Master) is her use of semi-fictitious names, like "H Master K" (Koot Humi). There is, of course, no such name in an Indian language or in Tibetan. But in the Upanishads, there is a minor rishi mentioned by the obviously non-Indo-European name Kuthumi. Just where she picked it up I don't know but I suspect she might have seen R.E. Hume's Twelve Principal Upanishads which was first published by Oxford University Press in the late '80s of the 19th century. The silly spelling "Koot Hoomi" was probably due to the occidental mystery peddlers' desire to make words sound more interesting by splitting them into a quasi-Chinese series of letters. The Master Letters signed "K" are quite clearly Blavatsky's own invention; no Indian or Tibetan recluse talks or writes like the European feuilleton writer of the early 20th century. In a passage, "K" (for Koot Hoomi) criticizes a writer for saying that "the sacred man wants the gods to be properly worshipped, a healthy life lived, and women loved." "K" comments "the sacred man wants no such thing, unless he is a Frenchman." The inane stupidity that must have gone into the early converts actually believing that an Indian or Tibetan guru would use these European stereogibes is puzzling. Yet again mundus vult decipi, and if the average Western alien feels she or he can get to the esoteric goods, she or he tends to lower the level of skepticism to a virtual zero.

The works of Swami Vivekananda appeared at about the same time as the Secret Doctrine. Vivekananda knew of, and heartily detested, the esotericism of the Theosophical Society; he pronounced his disdain at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1892 — at which convention the Theosophists were well represented. But while the followers of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda movements as well as the followers of most other neo-Hindu and neo-Buddhist movements officially decried the esoteric, they and other groups marginal to them either blurred that relatively parochial rejection of the esoteric, or much more commonly, they blended both the esoteric of the Blavatsky type and the Hindu-Buddhist reformist of the Vivekananda-Anagarika Dharmapala types into the kind of broth which is now solidly ensconced in the wisdom-seeking kitchens of the Western world.

Let me now proceed to the arch-paradigm of esoteric phoniness of the latter days. In the mid-fifties. Messrs. Secker & Warburg, a perfectly respectable publishing firm in Britain, sent me a manuscript for evaluation. The author's name was Lama Lobsang Rampa, the title The Third Eye. I was suspicious before I opened the wrapper: the

"third eye" smacked of Blavatskyan and post-Blavatskyan hogwash. The first two pages convinced me the writer was not a Tibetan, the next ten that he had never been either in Tibet or India, and that he knew absolutely nothing about Buddhism of any form, Tibetan or other. The cat was out of the bag very soon, when the "Lama", reflecting on some cataclysmic situation in his invented past, mused, "for we know there is a God." A Buddhist makes many statements of a puzzling order at times, and he may utter many contradictions; but this statement he will not make, unless perhaps — I am trying hard to find a possible exception — he is a nominal Nisei Buddhist in Seattle, Washington, who somehow gets into Sunday school at age eleven and doesn't really know what he is talking about. Even if we apply a very lenient scholarly defense for the statement "there are gods (lha) in Tibetan and North Indian Buddhism; by courtesy, the numerous Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the highly diffuse Buddhist pantheon could be, and sometimes are, referred to as gods" — the statement "there is a God" is and remains impossible for any Buddhist. The lha (deva) are gods because the European language translations of deus in Christian usage do not distinguish between God and gods on the lexical level. The capital 'G' is a very late attempt to remedy this, since there were only capital letters in Roman script at the time the Christian theological notions were conceptualized and codified. There may be thousands of gods, then, in Buddhism, but there certainly is no God. The ontological and affective status of the Buddha in Sri Lanka Buddhism, and *mutatus mutandis*, in other Buddhist areas, has recently bothered a very fine British scholar. [\(2\)](#) I concur with his results: though the Buddha is indeed worshipped like a god in many ways, he is not seen as a god, or as God. The semantic entailment of "God" is that of creatorhood, control, power, etc., which the Buddha obviously cannot have, since he has passed into mahanirvana and is hence extinct: in fact only Buddhas are extinct — men, gods, demons, etc., are in samsara; they, or some of them, have power, up to the power of creation like Brahma the Hindu demiurge, or the Judeo-Christian God.

But this was only one of the inane impossibilities of *The Third Eye*. Every page bespeaks the utter ignorance of the author of anything that has to do with Buddhism as practiced and Buddhism as a belief system in Tibet or elsewhere. But the book also shows a shrewd intuition into what millions of people want to hear. Monks and neophytes flying through the mysterious breeze on enormous kites; golden images in hidden cells, representing earlier incarnations of the man who views them; arcane surgery in the skull to open up the eye of wisdom; tales about the dangers of mystical training and initiation — in a Western world so desperately seeking for the mysterious where everything is so terribly accessible to inspection, where the divine has been bowdlerized or institutionalized, where it speaks with the wagging-finger lingo of moralistic nagging, the less hardy and the softer will seek that which is the opposite of all these turn-off factors.

I do not know how many of the readers of *The Third Eye* and the books that followed it, by the same author, actually believe in these cretinistic confabulations. But this is beside the point — for even if a reader tells us that he or she does really not believe in these things but that they serve as an inspiration, consolation, edification, and what not, this does not reduce the tragedy of the situation; far from it, it enhances the pathetic quality of the whole set. We cannot take our emotional cues from things, events and persons whose nonexistence we know. Taking instruction from parables is a different thing, it is morally and intellectually admissible. But the tales contained in *The Third Eye* do not even qualify as parables, since no moral qualities attach to

mystical surgery and kite-flying and the whole lot of events the author has generated in his comic strip. We cannot permit the aesthetic argument either; the operation to open the third eye, the mystical apparitions, etc., may not be true or morally important, but they are pleasant to contemplate. If this were the only reason why people read *The Third Eye*, we could dismiss it with a shrug. But it isn't; for even where the aesthetic quality of these stories is praised, it is done with a view to obtaining esoteric knowledge — and esoteric knowledge cannot be had from esoteric lies.

Within about half a year from the time I read the manuscript, and reported to the publishers that the book is a fraud and should not be published, Messrs. Secker & Warburg evidently also asked other Tibetologists and people who know the subject matter, among them Hugh Richardson, the last British and the last Indian Government Resident in Lhasa; Marco Pallis, the British scholar-traveller; and Heinrich Harrer of *Seven Years in Tibet* fame, whom Mr. Richardson had once put under arrest in Lhasa. All of these people concurred, and gave the publishers independent, identical reports: the book is a fraud, and the man is a fake. However, publishers are not the harbingers of authenticity, but businessmen. They published the book in spite of the negative reports, anticipating its sales potential. And they were right. I understand the six British editions sold close to eighty thousand copies. The German translation, wouldn't you know it, sold close to a hundred thousand, and comparable numbers of copies were sold in other European languages.

Mr. Richardson and some other irate scholars then took the initiative into their own hands, to trace and subdue the writer. It didn't take long; The Tibetan Lama turned out to be Mr. Hoskins, an Irish ex-plumber, who sat it out in various libraries in London, reading science fiction, pseudo-orientalia including, no doubt, Blavatsky and concocting this amazing book. These findings were published in the British press, and booksellers were warned about the matter, so as not to be involved in fraud. E.J. Brill, the famous oriental publishing house and book agent in Leiden, Netherlands, circumvented the issue by advertising the book and adding a note in small print, indicating that the book was no genuine study of Buddhism or Tibet, but that it was interesting for the experiences it conveyed.

Now one would have thought that the disclosures about Rampa-Hoskins and Khasa-Hyde Park might impede, if not stop, the production. Far from it. Most of the millions who kept buying the book and its follow-ups did not know about the facts — they simply hadn't read the statements in the British press. Quite a few, however, did read or hear about these disclosures, and remained followers, no less ardent of the Lama; to wit, two Canadians who called me long distance from Toronto one night, saying: "Sir, you are a wicked person. You say Lama Lobsang is an Irish plumber; well he may be in the body of an Irish plumber, but the soul of a Tibetan Lama lives in him." "Well, then I can't win," I admitted, and they hung up. Reactions to this incredible situation are variegated and, to the cultural anthropologist concerned with ideological change, highly fascinating; and they are far more complex than the Canadians' effusions. Less than a year ago — over a decade after the Publication of *The Third Eye*, a colleague of mine, a historian with perfectly respectable academic credentials, visited and told me about the wisdom of Rampa, with glowing eyes. When I told him the facts in straight, brief words, he was visibly shaken, but said something like: okay, maybe the man is not Tibetan, but he grasps the truths of Buddhism. He does nothing of the sort, I said and proved — but I did not convince the man. He (that historian

friend of mine) had gone into Roling, Macrodiar, Yin and Yang, Hatha Yoga, and a half dozen of other things eminently available in America. To him, the question of genuineness or spuriousness did not pose any problem, and I have a strong hunch that this blurring of the possible distinctness between the genuine and the spurious is very much part of the total pattern of eclectic attraction to the esoteric.

Hoskins moved to Toronto and founded an ashram-like place with a medium-large following up to date. This is in the way of things on the lunatic fringe: but astoundingly, he wrote sequels of at least three more books after the exposure of *The Third Eye*, starting with *Doctor in Chunking*. All of these have been out in paperback for years, and they are visible on all sorts of shelves — bookstores of course, drugstores, airports, even Greyhound bus stations. Since publishers are no charitable organizations, this means that the books sell, in great numbers. Saying what I say about Lobsang Rampa, and mutatis mutandis about most other pseudo-Asian cults in the Western world, I have, of course, made many more enemies than friends. People simply cannot stand the idea that there is no abominable snowman, that there is no white brotherhood somewhere in the Himalayas, and that people do not fly through the air except in planes; least of all can they suffer the idea that religious specialists in Tibet are scholars, tough theologians, and down-to-earth monastic leaders, with lots of hard political know-how, and with the measure of cruelty and strategy that seems to be common to all ecclesiastical leader who also have secular powers; and this, of course, was very much the case in Tibet before the Chinese takeover.

But matters go deeper than that. We have to investigate the extreme dislike of hard theological, scriptural, commentatorial argument, a dislike that characterizes all followers of the neo-Hindu-Buddhist, and the pseudo-Asian movements of a millennial type. In the first place, anti-scholasticism is one of the hallmarks of millennial movements at any time. Since Tibetan Buddhism is something very different from millennialism, I do not discount the possibility that the more highly esoteric churches like the Nyingmapa, Karmapa, and minor groups might have been classifiable as millennial at the time of their inception, not on the top echelon of their scholarly leadership, but more probably in its populist parameters. But for the last hundred years or more, Tibetan Buddhism, even in its most highly esoteric forms as in the Nyingma, has been very much an ecclesiastical, establishmentarian affair. The Fifth Dalai Lama might have been a maverick in his days, but he is now certainly as canonical as the milder and more domestic figures of Tibetan hagiography. By the same token, many if not most of the religious founder figures in the world were marginal to their coreligionists, on the fringe, rejected by the establishment. But the process of ascent, plateau formation, and descent as virtually certain consecutive phases in the development of any religious movement, millennial or other, has been studied by anthropologists during the past decade. (3)

At this time, there are roughly three hundred institutions in North America which claim a Hindu or Buddhist or, to a lesser extent, a Taoist background. Numerically, the Buddhist reference prevails; this is natural, since it includes Indian, Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan sources, or alleged sources. The guru business is good business, and this has been shown in some recent writings. (4) But this does not detract from the fact that Buddhism, Hinduism, and the other genuine traditions of the East are misrepresented, and that an image of Tibet is created, and perpetuated, which cannot but be harmful to the future interface between Tibetan culture and the

West. It is to these misrepresentations which I now turn, in my concluding assessment.

The first and foremost problem, oddly enough, has a very simple answer. How can the millions of intellectually inert, but good-willed seekers after the mysterious East be informed about the actual traditions of Buddhism, about the actual Tibet? The answer is that the reading agents — libraries, booksellers, and publishers — have to put in some additional effort to market authentic works on these topics, along with the Rampaesque trash. Until a decade ago, good works on these topics were indeed available only to scholars, published by not too handy publishers, and in expensive editions with a small circulation. But this is no longer so. A basic library, in English, of works on Tibetan and other Buddhism is available in any bookstore, and with no greater quest than the works of Rampa and other pseudomystics and gurus. Helmut Hoffman's "Religions of Tibet", E. Conze's paperback introductions to Buddhism, and for the more motivated, some of the works of Herbert V. Guenther, David L. Snellgrove, and perhaps my own *Tantric Tradition* (an Anchor-Doubleday paperback, if I may blow my own trumpet at this opportune moment), are items that might be had for the asking, quite literally. Now some might charge that mine is a naive assumption; that readers at large will choose good books over inauthentic but interesting books in the quest of truth. But I do not think matters are quite that simple, and the common reading public is perhaps less dumb than meets the eye. I would think that the initial reading of phony interesting stuff (*Autobiography of a Yogi*, Lobsang Rampa, Castaneda, etc.) prompts most readers to continue with something more authentic in the same line, if what is more authentic is equally available. It now is, as I pointed out, but it is not known to most that this is the case. It has to be, and can be, made known by the book and publishing trade.

Secondly, and perhaps much more importantly, there are now in North America at least two, possibly more, authentic Tibetan Buddhist centers, viz. Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's Karma Dzong in Boulder, Colorado, and his *Tail of the Tiger* in Barnet, VT.; and Lama Tarthong's Nyingma center at Berkeley, California. In Britain, there are another two, and I understand something of the kind has recently been created in Switzerland, possibly by the Tibetan refugee settlers in that country. Now what the inmates of the *Tail of the Tiger*, etc., do is authentic — it is tedious, serious, yet perfectly positive Buddhist meditation, and a certain amount of basic Buddhist learning, probably not less than for the lower clergy in Tibetan monasteries before the Chinese invasion. Tarthang in Berkeley even teaches Tibetan language and literature to his students. Now here is the main argument for the augmentation of these centers and institutional sequels: since literally thousands of Americans, mostly young, keep thronging to spiritual, mystical, quasi-Eastern centers of meditation, and since they do not know the difference between the genuine and the spurious, why not generate more of these genuine centers with a better apparatus of spread, diffusion, and propaganda? An analogy, which I found in a totally different context a long while ago, immediately comes to my mind; during the beginning of the hippie counter-culture, Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan, two of India's best classical musicians, became very popular, — marijuana and LSD, unbeknownst to these masters of the string, helped the sales of their LP's in this country, for the sitar and the sarod sound magnificent under these drugs even if you know nothing whatsoever about the music. Then, about three years ago, under the spell of the pathological artistic eclecticism of the rock era, some Indian film music also became available in American record stores. Now to the buying public, the wide-eyed rock lovers and the denizens of the

counter-culture under thirty, the content of these records makes no difference at all, and the time has come, unfortunately, when you hear less and less Ravi Shankar and more and more Lata Mangeshkar (the Hindu Doris Day, so to speak) at rock and hash sessions all over the country. But this didn't have to be so. Everything Indian was welcome, equally welcome, so if the rubbish could have been screened out, the genuine stuff could have remained intact. Similarly, since the wide-eyed, sickening, gullible public cannot distinguish between phony outfits along the Coast and in New York or elsewhere, and genuine institutions like Tail of the Tiger, etc., why not channel it to the genuine? For this to happen, the genuine has to be more accessible, better known, and of course, better organized. The main reason for the 15-year-old 19-year-old (the latter being his real age, the former his official age) guru from India, for Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Transcendental Meditation, for Prabhupada Bhaktivedanta and his hopping ISKON Hare Krishna jokers being so popular and well known is precisely that they have better P.R. services. I think this could be done for the few genuine Tibetan (and other Buddhist) organizations as well.

In summary, then, the answer lies in the enhancement and certification of genuine and genuinely available, Tibetan Buddhist institutions in this country and in other parts of the Western world, and in the undermining of the phony, in a systematic fashion. The phony can only be undermined by pointing out the genuine and by comparing them with each other. I do not think that the dry orientalist scholars can do that, since the hungry public detests them, ranking them with the worst part of the establishment. But I think the few lamas in this country who do know English can and must do that. Once the process has been set going, more learned and more competent guides can be invited from the expatriate religious community in India. To get the true lama and his skills in, Lobsang must get out. He may still be a good plumber, and that is a lucrative, honest job. Or, if he has learned some powers since he abandoned his tools, he could of course rightly set himself up as a curer, or even a teacher of meditation if it helps — but not Tibetan meditation. I never saw why Don Juan must be a Yaqui (which he is not) to teach something important, nor why Hoskins must be Tibetan (which he is not) if he has something important to teach.

Footnotes

1. H.V. Guenther, *The Tantric View of Life*, Los Angeles: Shambala Press, 1972

2. R.F. Gombrich, *Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. Especially Chapter 3, "The Buddha".

3. A.F. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," in *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956) 264-81; A. Bharati "Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, Ritual, and Belief Systems," in *Biennial Review of Anthropology*, ed. B.J. Siegel, Stanford University Press, 1972, 230-283

4. Khushwant Singh, "The Guru Business," in *New York Sunday Times Magazine*, April 30, 1973; A. Bharati "Hindus Ignorant of Hinduism and Phony Swamis Abroad," in *Illustrated Weekly of India*, Bombay, March 18, 1973

Agehananda Bharati was born Leopold Fischer in Austria in 1923. In his youth he studied Hinduism and Indian languages. In 1949 he went to India and was ordained as a sannyasin in the Dashanami Order. His autobiography is entitled ***The Ochre Robe*** (1962). He also wrote ***The Tantric Tradition*** and ***Light at the Center: Context and Pretext of Modern Mysticism*** (1976). He died in 1990 or 1991.

Převzato z: <http://www.serendipity.li/baba/rampa.html>

(20. 8. 2007)