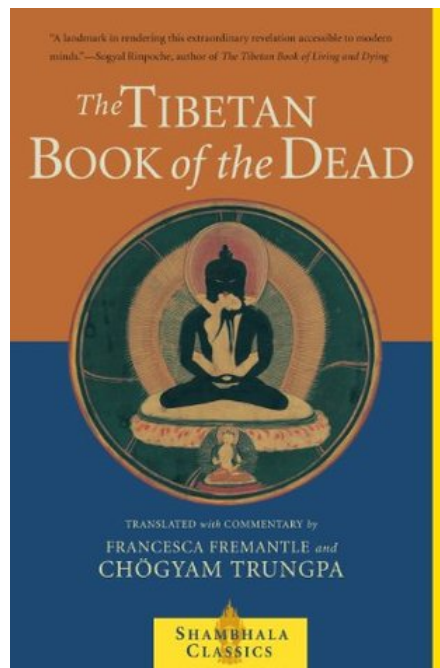




The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo (Shambhala Classics)

Chögyam Trungpa , Francesca Fremantle

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In this classic scripture of Tibetan Buddhism—traditionally read aloud to the dying to help them attain liberation—death and rebirth are seen as a process that provides an opportunity to recognize the true nature of mind. This translation of

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

emphasizes the practical advice that the book offers to the living. The insightful commentary by Chögyam Trungpa, written in clear, concise language, explains what the text teaches us about human psychology. This book will be of interest to people concerned with death and dying, as well as those who seek greater spiritual understanding in everyday life.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo (Shambhala Classics) Details

Date : Published September 28th 2010 by Shambhala Publications (first published 1350)

ISBN :

Author : Chögyam Trungpa , Francesca Fremantle

Format : Kindle Edition 213 pages

Genre : Religion, Buddhism, Philosophy, Spirituality, Nonfiction

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From Reader Review The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo (Shambhala Classics) for online ebook

mike says

i was about 3/4 done with this book when my car was stolen, the book was in the car. i got the car back two days later, but no tibetan book of the dead. hopefully some car thief will have greater understanding on his journey through the next bardo.

Erik Graff says

The YMCA in Park Ridge obtained a new youth counselor after my graduation from Maine South H.S. Jim H. had become a bit of a celebrity amongst our friends, "the Hippies of Hodges Park", by the time of one of my visits home from Grinnell College and we became acquainted. During the summer of 1971 he was reassigned to a YMCA camp in the border lakes region of Northern Minnesota, Camp Wakonda on Lake Vermillion, and had given a general invitation to any and all of us to visit him up there.

Thus it happened that one very early morning in late August Mother drove Kevin Donnelly, Art Kazar and me up to an Edens Expressway exchange on her way to work at Lutheran General Hospital. Having no money not already earmarked for other purposes, college in my case, we were going to hitch up through Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

We made it, amazingly enough, by dawn of the next day. Times were different then. Hitch-hiking was not unusual. The counterculture looked out for its own and they were usually identifiable: me by a pony tail, Kevin by braids and fringed jacket, Art by a full beard. Of course, on the way, we were almost arrested (twice) outside the Wisconsin Dells; risked being killed in a wreck by an angry speedfreak outside of Duluth; had to run away into an unknown pine forest from an armed contingent of drunken "Iron Range Boys" and got caught in a downpour just as we were laying out sleeping bags in a field somewhere around Ely, Minnesota.

Camp Wakonda was a canoe camp inhabited by the aforementioned Jim; Kurt, his assistant from Park Ridge; a boy who had been found living in the Chicago Transit Authority bus sheds--called, unimaginatively enough, "C.T.A."--and one lone woman, Candy, also an employee of the YMCA. Otherwise, it was just us and busloads of kids who'd come up every few days, go to bed, eat a hearty breakfast of flapjacks prepared by us on enormous wood-burning stoves and then go off with guides in canoes. Mostly, we were alone.

Candy, a thirtyish feminist who taught the subject during the year in Chicago, intimidated and attracted me. At that time, being only nineteen, she seemed very, very mature, completely out of my league as I'd just recently lost my virginity. Besides, she was bigger than me, probably stronger too.

I'd brought The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation up because of a general interest in Eastern religions and a growing interest in C.G. Jung, author of one of its introductions. I'd figured that I'd be forced to read it up there in the north woods for lack of anything else to read. Indeed, it was formidable, the critical apparatuses being quite scholarly, the primary Tibetan texts being extremely obscure. I read it in fits and starts, trying to think about liberation from the wheel of dharma, trying not to think of the gorgeous Wendy.

Returning to camp, she invited me into her cabin, lit candles, urged me to bed. Timidly, having only known one girl before her, I obeyed.

I finished Evans-Wentz' book on the long bus ride home with a pack of returning wilderness canoers.

What book do I remember reading with more fascination, more dread, more mind-boggling interest? The book takes you on a journey, from the Tibetan perspective, past death, to the journey, according to them, each of us is to take after our lives here. There are long poetic passages, songs, as it were, to be sung by those watching over your body during the aftermath of your life, to help guide you into the nettlesome spiritual world that awaits. Are you prepared? Do you want to be--in case? Well, this book is a good guide. Why? Not just for the "mumbo jumbo" poetry, but Evans-Wentz, a Brit who spent forever in Tibet with monks, writes clearly about their customs and presents, with astute understanding, a synopsis of the byways to a safe passage, through the dark unknown...

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O son of noble family, listen. If you ask what the six lights are: the soft white light of the gods will shine, and similarly the red light of the jealous gods, the blue light of human beings, the green light of the animals, the yellow light of the hungry ghosts, and the smoke-coloured light of hell-beings; these are the six lights. At that moment your body will also take on the colour of the place where you are going to be born.

a must if you have any interest to what begins of your mind, body and soul when you die

I want Goodreads to have an "unable to read" selection. How I looked forward to reading these books. So many people spoke so highly of these books, how they devoured them. I now doubt the veracity of their claims. This book had a prologue, a forward, an index to the plates, a commentary...all taking up the first 150 pages of the book. Then the book. The first 10 pages made Alan Watts read like Dr. Seuss. Unreadable. Incredibly dated. Borders on mysticism and New Age (although it predates the New Age era). And not for the feint of heart. With so many accessible books on Buddhism, these are going into my never to be read pile. No rating, I couldn't finish.

"Then the Lord of Death will drag you by a rope tied round your neck, and cut off your head, tear out your heart, pull out your entrails, lick your brains, drink your blood, eat your flesh and gnaw your bones; but you cannot die, so even though your body is cut into pieces you will recover."

5

This book is really hard to read simply because of what it's about: your experiences after death.

To boil it down greatly, after you die, there are a bunch of days (49, in fact) when a bunch of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas come to you, and you have multiple, multiple chances to be instantly liberated. The book constantly says, "And even who is skeptic or stupid or really, just the dumbest person on the planet will recognize the truth and be liberated" which makes me feel kinda bad because if you're reading this, you weren't liberated! You were either sucked into the human realm or you went all 49 days wandering around, scared out of your wits, until finally you were forced to pick a womb and be born. (And even then, there are five ways to 'close the womb' so that you would be enlightened and yet, you still couldn't get it right!)

The greatest thing about this is their view on enlightenment. There's none of this accept-me-and-you're-saved... even if a skeptic is read to from the Bardo Thodol, they are saved, because the Bardo Thodol contains the ultimate truth. The ultimate truth just is, and if you encounter it, you are automatically taken in by it, due to the nature of the truth itself.

It still doesn't make your experiences after death any less scary, though! (Take a deep breath... they're just your mindful projections... and you're dead so they can't hurt you!)

Vaishali says

The translated book of how to transit to the next life after completing this one. In Tibet, the bridge that does this is called a bardo.

Very useful for someone like me who wants precision in bardo-crossing :)

Bad news: the pathway has scores of steps and lasts upto 5 days ! The book was hence written so that a family member/priest can direct the spirit through the bardo's confusion.

Pure, compassionate, and fearless thoughts are the key to successful crossing, which is perhaps why material life has so many tribulations.

There's also a surprising number of Hindu deities mentioned, though Buddhism is nontheistic and the Tibetan language has no Sanskrit base.

For instance, about 28 goddesses represent some of the emotions a spirit experiences on the bardo.

I hope future scientific research sheds light on this ancient map.

Some notes:

The 6 bardos:

1. birth
2. dreams
3. meditation
4. samadhi
5. dharmata
6. becoming

You will experience 3 states within a bardo :

1. moment before death - full of various luminosities
2. dharmata - full of peacefulness
3. becoming

The newly dead are always addressed with the term "Oh Child of Noble Family" before given directions.

Some things which are said:

"At this time your pleasure and pain are dependent on your own karma."

"The good conscious within you will collect all your good actions like white pebbles, and the bad conscious within you will collect all your evil actions like black pebbles. You will say, 'I have not sinned!' Then the Lord of Death will say: 'I will look into the mirror of Karma'. All your sins and virtues will appear, clearly and distinctly. The pebbles do not lie, and do not fear the Lord of Death."

"The six realms of light will shine, and the one that shines most brightly due to your previous life's karma is the one you'll be born into."

(Six types of Soft Light:)

1. white light of the gods
2. red light of the jealous gods
3. blue light of human beings
4. green light of the animals
5. yellow light of the hungry ghosts
6. smoky light of hell-beings

(Since enlightenment is preferred over re-entry into the life/death cycle, the newly dead is coached all the way through with these reminders:)

"Those who have not meditated properly will be confused, and quickly look for a womb to re-enter."

"Listen without distraction. Focus one-pointedly and try to close the womb of karma."

"Think: Now when the bardo of becoming dawns upon me, I will concentrate my mind one-pointedly, strive to prolong the results of good karma, close the womb entrance and think of resistance. This is the time when perseverance and pure thought are needed. Do not forget, do not be distracted. Now is the time which is the dividing line between going up or going down. Whatever you concentrate on will come about, so do not think of evil actions. Remember the teachings. Do not forget, do not be distracted. By slipping into laziness, even for a moment, you will suffer forever. Now is the time whereby if you concentrate one-pointedly, you will be happy forever."

Edward Michael says

the essential preparation to death. Every spiritual seeker must try to understand this extraordinary wisdom and knowledge

Aaron says

Whew! This one took a while.

Thurman's articulation (and sometimes analysis) of the art of death preparation through Tibetan Buddhism is patiently layered. His writing is accessible, if complex, and his translation work, though wordy and abstract, is still digestible given range of abstraction he must have waded through.

THE TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD chronicles the steps necessary to authentically aid an individual's encounters with the many between states of existence. There are two critical facets of this book that make it a dynamic text for Buddhism research.

(1) Thurman contextualizes and prefaces his translation of Padma Sambhava's treasure texts with an exquisite historical observation of the cultural importance/ fascination/ understanding of "the phenomena of dying," as the Dalai Lama states in the foreword. What is the role of dying/death among Tibetans and Tibetan civilization? Thurman details his research prior to his translation work. (2) Thurman provides a running commentary of sorts, a parallel breakdown of every single prayer, verse, appeal, poem, and daily instruction. You don't realize the value of his hard work until later on, when the verses become redundant and the prayer descriptions become increasingly abstract. It can be difficult to follow, reading the translation as is; fortunately, Thurman takes the time to provide his interpretation of the material as well.

The book is not without some areas of question. Thurman's apparent disdain for Darwinian, evolutionary psychology, and natural selection was handled rather funnily; a backhanded complement to theories that "need some revision," he says. I additionally wish he did more to tie together his incredible writings on nothingness and voidness to his translation work; his understanding of these concepts is expansive and his writings bring tremendous clarity, but he doesn't reference back to them as often as would have been most helpful. Lastly, as much as I loved his work on the role of death/dying in Buddhist culture through the centuries, I always wish there was more (not that it was particularly necessary . . . it's just what I think he does best).

Nikki says

The introduction and the commentary served as a great setup for the text itself, though still didn't prepare me for what I was in for. At first it seemed very different from other Buddhist texts I've read. It definitely didn't have the almost warm-fuzzy, reassuring feeling I get when reading Thich Nhat Hanh's books. But then I was reading through, starting to think the ideas were getting repetitive - I had an epiphany. It's personal and detailed, but it blew open a part of mind. The psychological metaphors offered in the book are truly transformative. I finished reading it yesterday, and I still don't think it's done sinking in.

Stacey says

I quite enjoyed this book. Better than I expected, and actually easy to read. Although I'm pretty doubtful that these things exactly happen to you after you die (just how exactly does the author know about all these intricate details!), I still believe in a lot of the concepts it presents, not only for thinking about post-death, but also in this lifetime. The worst thing to fear is fear itself! And your after-life is dictated by the state of your mind in the present life. If you are an angry or jealous person, you will be haunted by the projections of your mind's anger and jealousy after you die. So, think happy thoughts & be at peace.

If that really is the case (your current mindset affects your afterlife), it is interesting to ponder whether a peaceful/happy murderer (if such a thing could exist) would suffer in the after-life. Or what would happen to the person (true story) who got in a car accident, damaged their brain, and then was so convinced that his parents were robots that he decapitated his dad to search for the battery. Also interesting to think about religious extremists who believe they are doing the noble thing. However I think most, if not all, 'sane' people that are willing to go to the length of murder must have a very conflicted and tortured mind.

Also interesting to think about in the context of dreams. If you are dreaming and afraid, it is the perfect time to try and remember that everything you see is just a projection of your mind, you have no body, no reflection, no shadow. If you do remember to think this in your dreams, it would probably result in frequent lucid dreams, since I imagine you'd then realize you were dreaming (or dead).

All in all, def a cool book.

Robert Geer says

Pg 224-225

There being no two such things as object of meditation and meditator, if by those who practice or do not practice meditation the meditator of meditation be sought and not found, thereupon the goal of the meditation is reached and also the end of the meditation itself.

There being no two such things as meditation and object of meditation, there is no need to fall under the sway of deeply obscuring Ignorance; for, as the result of meditation upon the unmodified quiescence of mind, the non-created Wisdom instantaneously shines forth clearly.

Pg 231

Changes in one's train of thoughts [or in one's association of ideas] produce corresponding changes in one's conception of the external world.

Therefore, the various views concerning things are due merely to different mental concepts.

Pg 233

The happiness of gods in heaven-worlds and of men' is another mental concept.

The three unhappy states of suffering', too, are concepts of the mind.

Ignorance, miseries, and the Five Poisons' are, likewise, mental concepts.

Self-originated Divine Wisdom' is also a concept of the mind.

Pg 234

Nothing save mind is conceivable.

Pg 238

As soon as one's mind is known to be of the Wisdom of the Voidness, concepts like good and evil karma cease to exist.

Even as in the empty sky there seems to be, but is not, a fountain of water, so in the Voidness is neither good or evil.

When one's mind is thus known in its nakedness, this Doctrine of Seeing the Mind Naked, this Self-Liberation, is seen to be exceedingly profound.

Seek, therefore, thine own Wisdom within thee.

It is the Vast Deep.

Pg 246

The Eagle of the Mind is sure to take its flight with wings spread free;

Train yourselves to fly as freely, even now, O Tingri folk.

Pg 248

The SANGSARA and NIRVANA have their source in the ONE MIND.

Pg 250

All creation, within and without, is contained in one's own mind,
Like the water in the ice; seek to know this truly, Tingri folk.

Pg 252

Though one thinketh joys and sorrows come of causes of opposite,
Yet within oneself are found their roots and cause, Tingri folk.
If excess of faith should lead you to contempt of truth at times,
Meditate karmic results in the Sangsara, Tingri folk.

Pg 234

The full realization of the passing away into Nirvana is also a concept of mind.
Misfortune caused by demons and evil spirits is also a concept of mind.**
Gods and good fortune are also concepts of mind.
Likewise, the various 'perfections' are mental concepts.

Existence and non-existence, as well as 'the Non-Created', are concepts of the mind.

**Like Jesus and His disciples and the early Christians as a whole, the Tibetans believe that invisible beings, commonly called demons and evil spirits

The religious point of view always expresses and formulates the essential psychological attitude and its specific prejudices, even in the case of people who have forgotten, or who have never heard of, their own religion. In spite of everything, the West is thoroughly Christian as far as its psychology is concerned. Tertullian's 'anima naturaliter christiana' holds true throughout the West-not, as he thought, in religious sense, but in the psychological one. Grace comes from elsewhere; at all events from outside. Every other point of view is sheer heresy. Hence it is quite understandable why the human psyche is suffering from UNDERVALUATION. Anyone who dares to establish a connection between the psyche and the idea of God is immediately accused of 'psychologism'; or suspected of morbid 'mysticism.' The East, on the other hand, compassionately tolerates those 'lower' spiritual stages where man, in his blind ignorance of KARMA, still bothers about SIN and tortures his IMAGINATION with a belief in absolute gods, who, if he only looked DEEPER, are nothing but the veil of ILLUSION woven by his own unenlightened mind. The psyche is therefore all-important; it is the all-pervading Breath, the Buddha essence; it is the Buddha Mind, the One, the DHARMA-KAYA. All existence emanates from it, and all separate forms dissolve back into it. This is the basic psychological prejudice that permeates Eastern man in every fiber of his being, seeping into all his thoughts, feelings, and deeds, no matter what creed he professes.

Little Miss Esoteric says

I really don't want to write reviews anymore, providing data for amazon, but I seriously wish I'd read this book earlier. Puts metaphysical concepts into context. Also, I'm really not interested in nit picking over the merit of alternate translations. It's clear enough, no matter which way it's told.

Helen says

I have read the Tibetan book of the Dead, but I haven't. To read it once, isn't to read it at all. It takes time, effort, and a particular frame of mind, to truly get to grips with the text. You can take from it what you need,

or take all of it, and make of it what you will. I find it very difficult to write a 'review' of the Tibetan Book of the dead. Listen to 'Tomorrow Never Knows' by The Beatles. The choral sounds in this music, reflect (only a little) the spirit of this masterpiece.
