

Theos Bernard, the nephew of Pierre Bernard, authored the book *Hatha Yoga* that has been published over and over again in various languages. It provides the only record that we have of a serious hatha yoga or, as he called it, tantra yoga practise. Its documentation support is from the three primary hatha yoga texts. Most of the phenomena described in that book are in those texts. The holding of the breath for one hour to attain Samadhi is described in the purana texts. However the repeated bastrikas quantification and repetitions; the specific quantified practises are not referred to in those texts. There is some other description in his other book *Heaven Lies Within* such as a *cakrapuja* which is a saivite initiation with *bhang* and occasionally sex but his description appears to be from the literature.

Two biographies have recently come out on Theos Bernard, Douglas Veenhof's *White Lama* and Paul Hackett's *Theos Bernard: White Lama*. Both supply further information on Theos Bernard and are fascinating to read.

From these texts we get an entirely different picture of Theos Bernard. He travelled into Tibet and collected important texts which have later found their way into Harvard and Yale. His papers are at Berkley. Just the physical task of bringing those hundreds of texts out of Tibet at a time when they were not available anywhere else (apparently they have hardly been used since) was a heroic effort.

However there are more distasteful elements to Theos Bernard's story. He did try to affiliate with Pierre Bernard and managed to make off with one of his wealthy students. He was subsequently supported in all his efforts by wealthy women, one who was considerably older than him. He claimed status affiliations and the possession of various powers all of which were circumspect and part of his exotic celebrity promotion. He promoted himself shamelessly both in Tibet and in America later. He did not learn yoga from an Indian guru who did not want to be named as he stated but from his father who appears to have learned something from the same Sylvais Hamati. Subsequently, his father expended a great deal of effort seeking a guru in India to teach him without success indicating that he did not consider his knowledge satisfactory.

Both of these Biographies are interesting to read and contribute distinct information even if they overlap. Veenhoff's is easier to read as a dramatic story but Hackett quotes letters to Theos' wives and quotations that give us perhaps more insight into his personal feelings and aims. This biography is well researched giving the historical context as well as detailed information on various points. Hackett is a Tibetan and Buddhist scholar.

All in all, one is somewhat disappointed with Theos Bernard. One certainly is tempted to locate him with the yoga hucksters. Still, his book *Hatha Yoga* is a classic in its own right. Further, one should not forget that one's most important guru is one's own self. His book has been important to many people. His collection and indexing of texts in Tibet and his aims, even if he did not know what he was doing and did not have language, was an incredible task. On the other hand, his obsession with fame and promotion, also an incredible task, is less attractive.

Gerhard Richter said that since there are no longer any philosophers or priests, the most important people in the world today are artists. The Camaka of the Rudradhyaya of the Krishnayajurveda also has

a verse paying reverence to the politicians and merchants and those that deceive us as well. Theos Bernard led an extraordinary life and left a relatively indelible mark on the world, like artists do.