The Tibetan Book of Living & Dying

A spiritual classic from one of the foremost interpreters of Tibetan Buddhism to the West

'A gentle, humane and eloquent guide'
Guardian

Sogyal Rinpoche
The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying

SOGYAL RINPOCHE
Revised and Updated

Edited by
PATRICK GAFFNEY AND ANDREW HARVEY

I WOULD LIKE TO DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro, Dudjom Rinpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche, Khyentse Sangyum Khandro Tsering Chodron, and all my beloved masters, who have been the inspiration of my life.

May this book be a guide to liberation, read by
the living, and to the dying, and for the dead.
May it help all who read it and spur them on their journey to enlightenment!

Foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama
IN THIS TIMELY BOOK, Sogyal Rinpoche focuses on how to understand the true meaning of life, how to accept death, and how to help the dying, and the dead.

Death is a natural part of life, which we will all surely have to face sooner or later. To my mind, there are two ways we can deal with it while we are alive. We can either choose to ignore it or we can confront the prospect of our own death and, by thinking clearly about it, try to minimize the suffering that it can bring. However, in neither of these ways can we actually overcome it.

As a Buddhist, I view death as a normal process, a reality that I accept will occur as long as I remain in this earthly existence. Knowing that I cannot escape it, I see no point in worrying about it. I tend to think of death as being like changing your clothes when they are old and worn out, rather than
as some final end. Yet death is unpredictable: We do not know when or how it will take place. So it is only sensible to take certain precautions before it actually happens.

Naturally, most of us would like to die a peaceful death, but it is also clear that we cannot hope to die peacefully if our lives have been full of violence, or if our minds have mostly been agitated by emotions like anger, attachment, or fear. So if we wish to die well, we must learn how to live well: Hoping for a peaceful death, we must cultivate peace in our mind, and in our way of life.

As you will read here, from the Buddhist point of view, the actual experience of death is very important. Although how or where we will be reborn is generally dependent on karmic forces, our state of mind at the time of death can influence the quality of our next rebirth. So at the moment of death, in spite of the great variety of karmas we have accumulated, if we make a special effort to generate a virtuous state of mind, we may strengthen and activate a virtuous karma, and so bring about a happy rebirth.

The actual point of death is also when the most profound and beneficial inner experiences can come
about. Through repeated acquaintance with the processes of death in meditation, an accomplished meditator can use his or her actual death to gain great spiritual realization. This is why experienced practitioners engage in meditative practices as they pass away. An indication of their attainment is that often their bodies do not begin to decay until long after they are clinically dead.

No less significant than preparing for our own death is helping others to die well. As a newborn baby each of us was helpless and, without the care and kindness we received then, we would not have survived. Because the dying also are unable to help themselves, we should relieve them of discomfort and anxiety, and assist them, as far as we can, to die with composure.

Here the most important point is to avoid anything which will cause the dying person's mind to become more disturbed than it may already be. Our prime aim in helping a dying person is to put them at ease, and there are many ways of doing this. A dying person who is familiar with spiritual practice may be encouraged and inspired if they are reminded of it, but even kindly reassurance on our
part can engender a peaceful, relaxed attitude in the dying person's mind.

Death and Dying provide a meeting point between the Tibetan Buddhist and modern scientific traditions. I believe both have a great deal to contribute to each other on the level of understanding and of practical benefit. Sogyal Rinpoche is especially well placed to facilitate this meeting; having been born and brought up in the Tibetan tradition, he has received instructions from some of our greatest Lamas. Having also benefitted from a modern education and lived and worked as a teacher for many years in the West, he has become well acquainted with Western ways of thought.

This book offers readers not just a theoretical account of death and dying, but also practical measures for understanding, and for preparing themselves and others in a calm and fulfilling way.
June 2, 1992
The Dalai Lama

Introduction to the Revised Edition

IT IS NOW TEN YEARS SINCE The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying was first published. In this book, I endeavored to share something of the wisdom of the tradition I grew up in. I sought to show the practical nature of its ancient teachings, and the ways in which they can help us at every stage of living and dying. Many people, over the years, had urged me to write
this book. They said that it would help relieve some of the intense suffering that so many of us go through in the modern world. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has pointed out, we are living in a society in which people find it harder and harder to show one another basic affection, and where any inner dimension to life is almost entirely overlooked. It is no wonder that there is today such a tremendous thirst for the compassion and wisdom that spiritual teachings can offer.

It must have been as a reflection of this need that *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* was received with such enthusiasm around the world. At first I was astonished: I had never expected it to have such an impact, especially since at the time of writing this book, death was still very much a subject that was shunned and ignored. Gradually, as I traveled to different countries, teaching and leading workshops and trainings based on the teachings in this book, I discovered the extent to which it had struck a chord in people's hearts. More and more individuals came up to me or wrote to tell me how these teachings had helped them through a crisis in their lives or supported them through the death of a
loved one. And even though the teachings it contains may be unfamiliar, there are those who have told me they have read this book several times and keep returning to it as a source of inspiration. After reading *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, a woman in Madras in India was so inspired that she founded a medical trust, with a hospice and palliative care center. Another person in the United States came to me and said she was baffled by how a mere book could have, in her words, "loved her so completely." Stories like these, so moving and so personal, testify to the power and relevance of the Buddhist teachings today. Whenever I hear them, my heart fills with gratitude, both to the teachings themselves and to the teachers and practitioners who have undergone so much in order to embody them and hand them on.

In time, I came to learn that *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* had been adopted by institutions, centers, and groups of various kinds, educational, medical, and spiritual. Nurses, doctors, and those professionally involved with care for the dying have told me how they have integrated these
methods in their daily work, and I have heard many accounts of ordinary people using these practices and finding that they transformed the death of a friend or close relative. Something I find especially moving is that this book has been read by people with different spiritual beliefs, and they have said that it has strengthened and deepened their faith in their own tradition. They seem to recognize the universality of its message, and understand that it aims not to persuade or convert, but simply to offer the wisdom of the ancient Buddhist teachings in order to bring the maximum possible benefit.

As The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying quietly took on a life of its own, moving inconspicuously through many domains and disciplines, I began to understand the ultimate source of its great influence and appeal. These extraordinary teachings are the heart essence of the oral lineage, that unbroken line of wisdom passed down as a living experience over the centuries. Someone once called this book "midway between a living master and a book," and it is true that both in The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying and behind it, supporting it with their advice and answers to
supporting it with their advice and answers to questions, are the greatest masters of our time. It is their voice that speaks through these pages, their wisdom and their vision of a compassionate world infused by the knowledge of our true nature, the innermost nature of mind. The impact of *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, I believe, is due to the blessing of the lineage and the vibrancy of the oral tradition. Its popularity has been a humbling experience for me, and it has reminded me that if I have any ability to communicate these teachings, it is only because of the devotion inspired in me by the teachings and the kindness of my masters, and nothing else.

Over these last ten years there have been many changes in our attitudes toward death and in the kind of care we as a society offer to the dying and the bereaved. Public awareness of death and the many issues surrounding dying has been heightened. Books, Web sites, conferences, serious radio and television series, films, and support groups have all contributed to a greater openness toward looking into death. There has been a considerable expansion in hospice work and palliative care, and
this has been the period during which, in some countries, the whole field of care for the dying has been opened up. Initiatives of many kinds have taken place, inspired by courageous men and women, for whom I have the greatest respect and admiration. Meanwhile, there have been more and more requests for those working in the Buddhist tradition to take part in projects and explore how they can contribute.

A number of my friends and students have gradually created an international program of education and training based on the teachings in this book and designed to offer spiritual care to the dying, their families, and those who care for them. We offer courses for the medical profession and the public, coordinate volunteers, and have begun to work hand in hand with hospitals, clinics, hospices, and universities. What is encouraging is that there is a growing recognition everywhere that spiritual issues are central to the care of the dying, and in some countries a number of medical schools now offer courses in spirituality and medicine. Yet, I am told, surveys show that denial of death still prevails, and we are still lacking in our ability to offer spiritual
help and care for the dying and answer their deepest needs. The kind of death we have is so important. Death is the most crucial moment of our lives, and each and every one of us should be able to die in peace and fulfillment, knowing that we will be surrounded by the best in spiritual care.

If The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying has played some small part in helping us look at how we deal with our own death and that of those around us, it is an answer to my prayers, and I am deeply moved and grateful. It is still my dream that the teachings presented here be made available to people everywhere, of all ages, and at all levels of education. My original hope for this book was that it would help inspire a quiet revolution in the whole way we look at death and care for the dying, and so the whole way we look at life and care for the living. Our need for spiritual transformation and to take responsibility, in the truest sense, for ourselves and others

has not become any less urgent these ten years on. What would it mean if more and more people thought seriously about their future and the future of the world? Imagine how things would be if we could
Imagine living our lives infusing them with a sacred meaning; if our end-of-life care were always lit by a sense of awe in the face of death; and if we looked on life and death themselves as an inseparable whole. What would be the effect of seeking to make love and compassion the measure of our every action, and of understanding, to any degree, the inmost nature of the mind that underlies our entire existence? This would be a true revolution, one that would free men and women to discover their birthright, that inner dimension so long neglected, and unite them with the fullness of the human experience in all its mystery and grandeur.

Sogyal Rinpoche
Lerab Ling, France
November 2001
I WAS BORN IN TIBET, and I was six months old when I entered the monastery of my master Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro, in the province of Kham. In Tibet we have a unique tradition of finding the reincarnations of great masters who have passed away. They are chosen young and given a special education to train them to become the teachers of the future. I was given the name Sogyal, even though it was only later that my master recognized me as the incarnation of Terton Sogyal, a renowned mystic who was one of his own teachers and a master of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

My master, Jamyang Khyentse, was tall for a Tibetan, and he always seemed to stand a good head above others in a crowd. He had silver hair, cut very short, and kind eyes that glowed with humor. His ears were long, like those of the Buddha. But what you noticed most about him was his presence. His glance and bearing told you that he was a wise and holy man. He had a rich, deep, enchanting voice, and when he taught his head would tilt slightly
backward and the teaching would flow from him in a stream of eloquence and poetry. And for all the respect and even awe he commanded, there was humility in everything he did.

Jamyang Khyentse is the ground of my life, and the inspiration of this book. He was the incarnation of a master who had transformed the practice of Buddhism in our country. In Tibet it was never enough simply to have the name of an incarnation, you always had to earn respect, through your learning and through your spiritual practice. My master spent years in retreat, and many miraculous stories are told about him. He had profound knowledge and spiritual realization, and I came to discover that he was like an encyclopedia of wisdom, and knew the answer to any question you might ask him. There were many spiritual traditions in Tibet, but

Jamyang Khyentse was acclaimed as the authority on them all. He was, for everyone who knew or heard about him, the embodiment of Tibetan Buddhism, a living proof of how someone who had realized the teachings and completed their practice would be.
I have heard that my master said that I would help continue his work, and certainly he always treated me like his own son. I feel that what I have been able to achieve now in my work, and the audience I have been able to reach, is a ripening of the blessing he gave me.

All my earliest memories are of him. He was the environment in which I grew up, and his influence dominated my childhood. He was like a father to me. He would grant me anything I asked. His spiritual consort, Khandro Tsering Chodron, who is also my aunt, used to say: "Don't disturb Rinpoche, he might be busy,"¹ but I would always want to be there next to him, and he was happy to have me with him. I would pester him with questions all the time, and he always answered me patiently. I was a naughty child; none of my tutors were able to discipline me. Whenever they tried to beat me, I would run to my master and climb up behind him, where no one would dare to go. Crouching there, I felt proud and pleased with myself; he would just laugh. Then one day, without my knowledge, my tutor pleaded with him, explaining that for my own benefit this could not go on. The next
time I fled to hide, my tutor came into the room, did three prostrations to my master, and dragged me out. I remember thinking, as I was hauled out of the room, how strange it was that he did not seem to be afraid of my master.

Jamyang Khyentse used to live in the room where his previous incarnation had seen his visions and launched the renaissance of culture and spirituality that swept through eastern Tibet in the last century. It was a wonderful room, not particularly large but with a magical atmosphere, full of sacred objects, paintings, and books. They called it "the heaven of the buddhas," "the room of empowerment," and if there is one place that I remember in Tibet, it is that room. My master sat on a low seat made of wood and strips of leather, and I sat next to him. I would refuse to eat if it was not from his bowl. In the small bedroom close by, there was a veranda, but it was always quite dark, and there was always a kettle with tea bubbling away on a little stove in the corner. Usually I slept next to my master, on a small bed at the foot of his own. One sound I shall never forget is the clicking of the beads of his mala, his Buddhist rosary, as he whispered his
prayers. When I went to sleep he would be there, sitting and practicing; and when I awoke in the morning he would already be awake and sitting and practicing again, overflowing with blessing and power. As I opened my eyes and saw him, I would be filled with a warm and cozy happiness. He had such an air of peace about him.

As I grew older, Jamyang Khyentse would make me preside over ceremonies, while he took the part of chant leader. I was witness to all the teachings and initiations that he gave to others; but rather than the details, what I remember now is the atmosphere. For me he was the Buddha, of that there was no question in my mind. And everyone else recognized it as well. When he gave initiations, his disciples were so overawed they hardly dared look into his face. Some would see him actually in the form of his predecessor, or as different buddhas and bodhisattvas. Everyone called him Rinpoche, "the Precious One," which is the tide given to a master, and when he was present no other teacher would be addressed in that way. His presence was so impressive that many affectionately called him "the
Had I not met my master Jamyang Khyentse, I know I would have been an entirely different person. With his warmth and wisdom and compassion, he personified the sacred truth of the teachings and so made them practical and vibrant with life. Whenever I share that atmosphere of my master with others, they can sense the same profound feeling it aroused in me. What then did Jamyang Khyentse inspire in me? An unshakable confidence in the teachings, and a conviction in the central and dramatic importance of the master. Whatever understanding I have, I know I owe it to him. This is something I can never repay, but I can pass on to others.

Throughout my youth in Tibet I saw the kind of love Jamyang Khyentse used to radiate in the community, especially in guiding the dying and the dead. A lama in Tibet was not only a spiritual teacher but also wise man, therapist, parish priest, doctor, and spiritual healer, helping the sick and the dying. Later I was to learn the specific techniques for guiding the dying and the dead from the teachings connected with the *Tibetan Book of the Dead.* But
the greatest lessons I ever learned about death—and life—came from watching my master as he guided dying people with infinite compassion, wisdom, and understanding.

I pray this book will transmit something of his great wisdom and compassion to the world, and, through it, you too, wherever you are, can come into the presence of his wisdom mind and find a living connection with him.

PART ONE

Living

ONE
MY OWN FIRST EXPERIENCE of death came when I was about seven. We were preparing to leave the eastern highlands to travel to central Tibet. Samten, one of the personal attendants of my master, was a wonderful monk who was kind to me during my childhood. He had a bright, round, chubby face, always ready to break into a smile. He was everyone's favorite in the monastery because he was so good-natured. Every day my master would give teachings and initiations and lead practices and rituals. Toward the end of the day, I would gather together my friends and act out a little theatrical performance, reenacting the morning's events. It was Samten who would always lend me the costumes my master had worn in the morning. He never refused me.
Then suddenly Samten fell ill, and it was clear he was not going to live. We had to postpone our departure. I will never forget the two weeks that followed. The rank smell of death hung like a cloud over everything, and whenever I think of that time, that smell comes back to me. The monastery was saturated with an intense awareness of death. This was not at all morbid or frightening, however; in the presence of my master, Samten's death took on a special significance. It became a teaching for us all.

Samten lay on a bed by the window in a small temple in my master's residence. I knew he was dying. From time to time I would go in and sit by him. He could not talk, and I was shocked by the change in his face, which was now so haggard and drawn. I realized that he was going to leave us and we would never see him again. I felt intensely sad and lonely.

Samten's death was not an easy one. The sound of his labored breathing followed us everywhere, and we could smell his body decaying. The monastery was overwhelmingly silent except for this breathing. Everything focused on Samten. Yet although there was so much suffering in Samten's prolonged dying, we could all see that deep down he
had a peace and inner confidence about him. At first I could not explain this, but then I realized what it came from: his faith and his training, and the presence of our master. And though I felt sad, I knew then that if our master was there, everything would turn out all right, because he would be able to help Samten toward liberation. Later I came to know that it is the dream of any practitioner to die before his master and have the good fortune to be guided by him through death.

As Jamyang Khyentse guided Samten calmly through his dying, he introduced him to all the stages of the process he was going through, one by one. I was astonished by the precision of my master's knowledge, and by his confidence and peace. When my master was there, his peaceful confidence would reassure even the most anxious person. Now Jamyang Khyentse was revealing to us his fearlessness of death. Not that he ever treated death lightly: He often told us that he was afraid of it, and warned us against taking it naively or complacently. Yet what was it that allowed my master to face death in a way that was at once so sober and so lighthearted, so practical yet so mysteriously
carefree? That question fascinated and absorbed me.

Samten's death shook me. At the age of seven, I had my first glimpse of the vast power of the tradition I was being made part of, and I began to understand the purpose of spiritual practice. Practice had given Samten an acceptance of death, as well as a clear understanding that suffering and pain can be part of a deep, natural process of purification. Practice had given my master a complete knowledge of what death is, and a precise technology for guiding individuals through it.

After Samten died we set off for Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, a torturous three-month journey on horseback. From there we continued our pilgrimage to the sacred sites of central and southern Tibet. These are the holy places of the saints, kings, and scholars who brought Buddhism to Tibet from the seventh century onward. My master was the emanation of many masters of all traditions, and because of his reputation he was given a tumultuous reception
For me that journey was extremely exciting, and has remained full of beautiful memories. Tibetans rise early, in order to make use of all the natural light. We would go to bed at dusk and rise before daybreak, and by first light the yaks carrying the baggage would be moving out. The tents would be struck, and the last ones to come down were the kitchen and my master's tent. A scout would go ahead to choose a good camping place, and we would stop and camp around noon for the rest of the day. I used to love to camp by a river and listen to the sound of the water, or to sit in the tent and hear the rain pattering on the roof.

We were a small party with about thirty tents in all. During the day I rode on a golden-colored horse next to my master. While we rode he gave teachings, told stories, practiced, and composed a number of practices specially for me. One day, as we drew near the sacred lake of Yamdrok Tso, and caught sight of the turquoise radiance of its waters, another Lama in our party, Lama Tseten, began to die.

The death of Lama Tseten proved another strong teaching for me. He was the tutor to my
master's spiritual wife, Khandro Tsering Chodron, who is still alive today. She is regarded by many as Tibet's foremost woman practitioner, a hidden master who for me is an embodiment of devotion, teaching through the simplicity of her loving presence. Lama Tseten was an immensely human and grandfatherly character. He was over sixty, quite tall and with gray hair, and exuded an effortless gentleness. He was also a highly accomplished practitioner of meditation, and just to be near him used to give me a sense of peace and serenity. Sometimes he would scold me, and I would be afraid of him; but for all his occasional sternness, he never lost his warmth.

Lama Tseten died in an extraordinary way. Although there was a monastery close by, he refused to go there, saying he did not want to leave a corpse for them to clear up. So we camped and pitched our tents in a circle as usual. Khandro was nursing and caring for Lama Tseten, as he was her tutor. She and I were the only two people in his tent when he suddenly called her over. He had an endearing way of calling her "A-mi," meaning "my child" in his local dialect. "A-mi," he said tenderly, "come here. It's
happening now. I've no further advice for you. You are fine as you are: I am happy with you. Serve your master just as you have been doing."

Immediately she turned to run out of the tent, but he caught her by the sleeve. "Where are you going?" he asked. "I'm going to call Rinpoche," she replied. "Don't bother him, there's no need," he smiled. "With the master, there's no such thing as distance." With that, he just gazed up into the sky and passed away. Khandro released herself from his grip and rushed out to call my master. I sat there, unable to move.

I was amazed that anyone who was staring into the face of death could have that kind of confidence. Lama Tseten could have had his Lama there in person to help him—something anyone else would have longed for—but he had no need. I understand why now: He had already realized the presence of the master within himself. Jamyang Khyentse was there with him always, in his mind and heart; never for one moment did he feel any separation.

Khandro did go to fetch Jamyang Khyentse.¹ I shall never forget how he stooped to enter the tent.
He gave one look at Lama Tseten's face, and then, peering into his eyes, began to chuckle. He always used to call him "La Gen," "old Lama"; it was a sign of his affection. "La Gen," he said, "don't stay in that state!" He could see, I now understand, that Lama Tseten was doing one particular practice of meditation in which the practitioner merges the nature of his mind with the space of truth and can remain in that state for many days as he dies. "La Gen, we are travelers. We're pilgrims. We don't have the time to wait that long. Come on. I'll guide you."

Transfixed, I watched what happened next, and if I hadn't seen it myself I would never have believed it. *Lama Tseten came back to life.* Then my master sat by his side and took him through the *phowa,* the practice for guiding the consciousness at the moment before death. There are many ways of doing this practice, and the one he used then culminated with the master uttering the syllable "A" three times. As my master declared the first "A," we could hear Lama Tseten accompanying him quite audibly. The second time his voice was less distinct, and the third time it was silent; he had gone.

The death of Samten taught me the purpose of
The death of Samten taught me the purpose of spiritual practice; Lama Tseten's death taught me that it is not unusual for practitioners of his caliber to conceal their remarkable qualities during their lifetime. Sometimes, in fact, they show them only once, at the moment of death. I understood, even as a child, that there was a striking difference between the death of Samten and that of Lama Tseten, and I realized that it was the difference between the death of a good monk who had practiced in his life and that of a much more realized practitioner. Samten died in an ordinary way and in pain, yet with the confidence of faith; Lama Tseten's death was a display of spiritual mastery.

Soon after Lama Tseten's funeral, we moved up into the monastery of Yamdrok. As usual, I slept next to my master in his room, and I remember that night watching the shadows of the butter lamps flickering on the wall. While everyone else slept soundly, I lay awake and cried the whole night long. I understood that night that death is real, and that I too would have to die. As I lay there, thinking about death and about my own death, through all my sadness a profound sense of acceptance began slowly to emerge, and
with it a resolve to dedicate my life to spiritual practice.

So I began to face death and its implications very young. I could never have imagined then how many kinds of death there were to follow, one heaped upon another. The death that was the tragic loss of my country, Tibet, after the Chinese occupation. The death that is exile. The death of losing everything my family and I possessed. My family, Lakar Tsang, had been among the wealthiest in Tibet. Since the fourteenth century it had been famous as one of the most important benefactors of Buddhism, supporting the teaching of Buddha and helping the great masters with their work.²

The most shattering death of all was yet to come—that of my master Jamyang Khyentse. Losing him I felt I had lost the ground of my existence. It was in 1959, the year of the fall of Tibet. For the Tibetans, my master's death was a second devastating blow. And for Tibet, it marked the end of an era.
DEATH IN THE MODERN WORLD

When I first came to the West, I was shocked by the contrast between the attitudes to death I had been brought up with and those I now found. For all its technological achievements, modem Western society has no real understanding of death or what happens in death or after death. I learned that people today are taught to deny death, and taught that it means nothing but annihilation and loss. That means that most of the world lives either in denial of death or in terror of it. Even talking about death is considered morbid, and many people believe that simply mentioning death is to risk wishing it upon ourselves.

Others look on death with a naive, thoughtless cheerfulness, thinking that for some unknown reason death will work out all right for them, and that it is nothing to worry about. When I think of them, I am reminded of what one Tibetan master says: "People often make the mistake of being frivolous about
death and think, 'Oh well, death happens to everybody. It's not a big deal, it's natural. I'll be fine.' That's a nice theory until one is dying."^3

Of these two attitudes toward death, one views death as something to scurry away from and the other as something that will just take care of itself. How far they both are from understanding death's true significance!

All the greatest spiritual traditions of the world, including of course Christianity, have told us clearly that death is not the end. They have all handed down a vision of some sort of life to come, which infuses this life that we are leading now with sacred meaning. But despite their teachings, modern society is largely a spiritual desert where the majority imagine that *this* life is all that there is. Without any real or authentic faith in an afterlife, most people live lives deprived of any ultimate meaning.

I have come to realize that the disastrous effects of the denial of death go far beyond the individual: They affect the whole planet. Believing fundamentally that this life is the only one, modern people have developed no long-term vision. So there is nothing to
restrain them from plundering the planet for their own immediate ends and from living in a selfish way that could prove fatal for the future. How many more warnings do we need, like this one from the former Brazilian Minister for the Environment, responsible for the Amazon rain forest?

Modern industrial society is a fanatical religion. We are demolishing, poisoning, destroying all life-systems on the planet. We are signing IOUs our children will not be able to pay... We are acting as if we were the last generation on the planet. Without a radical change in heart, in mind, in vision, the earth will end up like Venus, charred and dead.1

Fear of death and ignorance of the afterlife are fueling that destruction of our environment that is threatening all of our lives. So isn't it all the more disturbing that people are not taught what death is, or how to die? Or given any hope in what lies after death, and so what really lies behind life? Could it be more ironic that young people are so highly educated in every subject except the one that holds the key to the entire meaning of life, and perhaps to our very survival?
It has often intrigued me how some Buddhist masters I know ask one simple question of people who approach them for teaching: Do you believe in a life after this one? They are not being asked whether they believe in it as a philosophical proposition, but whether they feel it deeply in their heart. The master knows that if people believe in a life after this one, their whole outlook on life will be different, and they will have a distinct sense of personal responsibility and morality. What the masters must suspect is that there is a danger that people who have no strong belief in a life after this one will create a society fixated on short-term results, without much thought for the consequences of their actions. Could this be the major reason why we have created a brutal world like the one in which we are now living, a world with little real compassion?

Sometimes I think that the most affluent and powerful countries of the developed world are like the realm of the gods described in the Buddhist teachings. The gods are said to live lives of fabulous luxury, reveling in every conceivable pleasure, without a thought for the spiritual dimension of life. All seems to go well until death draws near and unexpected signs of decay appear. Then the gods' wives and lovers no longer dare approach them, but throw flowers to them from a distance, with casual prayers that they be reborn again as gods. None of their memories of happiness or comfort can shelter them now from the suffering they face; they only make it more savage. So the dying gods are left to die alone in misery.

The fate of the gods reminds me of the way the elderly, the sick, and the dying are treated today. Our society is obsessed with youth, sex, and power, and we shun old age and decay. Isn't it terrifying that we discard old people when their working life is
finished and they are no longer useful? Isn't it disturbing that we cast them into old people's homes, where they die lonely and abandoned?

Isn't it time also that we took another look at how we sometimes treat those suffering with terminal illnesses like cancer and AIDS? I know a number of people who have died from AIDS, and I have seen how often they were treated as outcasts, even by their friends, and how the stigma attached to the disease reduced them to despair, and made them feel their life was disgusting and had in the eyes of the world already ended.

Even when a person we know or love is dying, so often people find they are given almost no idea of how to help them; and when they are dead, we are not encouraged to give any thought to the future of the dead person, how he or she will continue, or how we could go on helping him or her. In fact, any attempt to think along these lines risks being dismissed as nonsensical and ridiculous.

**What all of this is showing us, with painful clarity, is that now more than ever before we need a fundamental change in our attitude toward death and dying.**

Happily, attitudes are beginning to change. The hospice movement, for example, is doing marvelous work in giving practical and emotional care. Yet practical and emotional care are not enough; people who are dying need love and care, but they also need something even more profound. They need to discover a real meaning to death, and to life. Without that, how can we give them ultimate comfort? Helping the dying, then, must include the possibility of spiritual care, because it is only with spiritual knowledge that we can truly face, and understand, death.

I have been heartened by the way in which in recent years the whole subject of death and dying has been opened up in the West
by pioneers such as Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and Raymond Moody. Looking deeply into the way that we care for the dying, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross has shown that with unconditional love, and a more enlightened attitude, dying can be a peaceful, even transformative experience. The scientific studies of the many different aspects of the near-death experience that followed the brave work of Raymond Moody have held out to humanity a vivid and strong hope that life does not end with death, and there is indeed a "life after life."

Some, unfortunately did not really understand the full meaning of these revelations about death and dying. They went to the extreme of glamorizing death, and I have heard of tragic cases of young people who committed suicide because they believed death was beautiful and an escape from the depression of their lives. But whether we fear death and refuse to face it, or whether we romanticize it, death is trivialized. Both despair and euphoria about death are an evasion. Death is neither depressing nor exciting; it is simply a fact of life.

How sad it is that most of us only begin to appreciate our life when we are on the point of dying. I often think of the words of the great Buddhist master Padmasambhava: "Those who believe they have plenty of time get ready only at the time of death. Then they are ravaged by regret. But isn't it far too late?" What more chilling commentary on the modern world could there be than that most people die unprepared for death, as they have lived, unprepared for life?
According to the wisdom of Buddha, we can actually use our lives to prepare for death. We do not have to wait for the painful death of someone close to us or the shock of terminal illness to force us into looking at our lives. Nor are we condemned to go out empty-handed at death to meet the unknown. We can begin, here and now, to find meaning in our lives. We can make of every moment an opportunity to change and to prepare—wholeheartedly, precisely, and with peace of mind—for death and eternity.

In the Buddhist approach, life and death are seen as one whole, where death is the beginning of another chapter of life. Death is a mirror in which the entire meaning of life is reflected.

This view is central to the teachings of the most ancient school of Tibetan Buddhism. Many of you will have heard of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. What I am seeking to do in this book is to explain and expand the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, to cover not only death but life as well, and to fill out in detail the whole teaching of which the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is only a part. In this wonderful teaching, we find the whole of life and death presented together as a series of constantly changing transitional realities known as *bardos*. The word "bardo" is commonly used to denote the intermediate state between death and rebirth, but in reality bardos are occurring continuously throughout both life and death, and are junctures when the possibility of liberation, or enlightenment, is heightened.

The bardos are particularly powerful opportunities for liberation because there are, the teachings show us, certain moments that are much more powerful than others and much more charged with potential, when whatever you do has a crucial
and far-reaching effect. I think of a bardo as being like a moment when you step toward the edge of a precipice; such a moment, for example, is when a master introduces a disciple to the essential, original, and innermost nature of his or her mind. The greatest and most charged of these moments, however, is the moment of death.

So from the Tibetan Buddhist point of view, we can divide our entire existence into four continuously interlinked realities: (1) life, (2) dying and death, (3) after death, and (4) rebirth. These are known as the four bardos: (1) the natural bardo of this life, (2) the painful bardo of dying, (3) the luminous bardo of dharmata, and (4) the karmic bardo of becoming.

Because of the vastness and all-comprehensiveness of the bardo teachings, this book has been carefully structured. You will be guided, stage by stage, through the unfolding vision of the journey through life and death. Our exploration necessarily begins with a direct reflection on what death means and the many facets of the truth of impermanence—the kind of reflection that can enable us to make rich use of this life while we still have time, and ensure that when we die it will be without remorse or self-recrimination at having wasted our lives. As Tibet's famous poet saint, Milarepa, said: "My religion is to live—and die—without regret."

Contemplating deeply on the secret message of impermanence—what lies in fact beyond impermanence and death—leads directly to the heart of the ancient and powerful Tibetan teachings: the introduction to the essential "nature of mind." Realization of the nature of mind, which you could call our innermost essence, that truth we all search for, is the key to understanding life and death. For what happens at the moment of
death is that the ordinary mind and its delusions die, and in that gap the boundless sky-like nature of our mind is uncovered. This essential nature of mind is the background to the whole of life and death, like the sky, which folds the whole universe in its embrace.

The teachings make it clear that if all we know of mind is the aspect of mind that dissolves when we die, we will be left with no idea of what continues, no knowledge of the new dimension of the deeper reality of the nature of mind. So it is vital for us all to familiarize ourselves with the nature of mind while we are still alive. Only then will we be prepared when it reveals itself spontaneously and powerfully at the moment of death; be able to recognize it "as naturally," the teachings say, "as a child running into its mother's lap"; and by remaining in that state, finally be liberated.

A description of the nature of mind leads naturally into a complete instruction on meditation, for meditation is the only way we can repeatedly uncover and gradually realize and stabilize that nature of mind. An explanation will then be given of the nature of human evolution, rebirth, and karma, so as to provide you with the fullest possible meaning and context of our path through life and death.

By this point you will have enough knowledge to be able to enter confidently the heart of the book: a comprehensive account, drawn from many different sources, of all of the four bardos and of all of the different stages of death and dying.

Instruction, practical advice, and spiritual practices are set out in detail for helping both ourselves and others through life, through dying, through death, and after death. The book then concludes with a vision of how the bardo teachings can help us understand the deepest nature of the human mind, and of the universe.
My students often ask me: How do we know what these bar-dos are, and from where does the astonishing precision of the bardo teachings and their uncannily clear knowledge of each stage of dying, death, and rebirth come? The answer may seem initially difficult to understand for many readers, because the notion of mind the West now has is an extremely narrow one. Despite the major breakthroughs of recent years, especially in mind/body science and transpersonal psychology, the great majority of scientists continue to reduce the mind to no more than physical processes in the brain, which goes against the testimony of thousands of years of experience of mystics and meditators of all religions.

From what source or authority, then, can a book like this be written? The "inner science" of Buddhism is based, as one American scholar puts it, "on a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of reality, on an already assessed, depth understanding of self and environment; that is to say, on the complete enlightenment of the Buddha." The source of the bardo teachings is the enlightened mind, the completely awake buddha mind, as experienced, explained, and transmitted by a long line of masters that stretches back to the Primordial Buddha. Their careful, meticulous—you could almost say scientific—explorations and formulations of their discoveries of mind over many centuries have given us the most complete picture possible of both life and death. It is this complete picture that, inspired by Jamyang Khyentse and all my other great masters, I am humbly attempting to transmit for the very first time to the West.

Over many years of contemplation and teaching and practice,
and clarifying questions with my masters, I have written *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* as the quintessence of the heart-advice of all my masters, to be a new *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and a *Tibetan Book of Life*. I want it to be a manual, a guide, a work of reference, and a source of sacred inspiration. Only by going over this book and reading it again and again, I suggest, can its many layers of meaning be revealed. The more you use it, you will find, the more profoundly you will feel its implications, and the more you will come to realize the depth of the wisdom that is being transmitted to you through the teachings.

The bardo teachings show us precisely what will happen if we prepare for death and what will happen if we do not. The choice could not be clearer. If we refuse to accept death now, while we are still alive, we will pay dearly throughout our lives, at the moment of death, and thereafter. The effects of this refusal will ravage this life and all the lives to come. We will not be able to live our lives fully; we will remain imprisoned in the very aspect of ourselves that has to die. This ignorance will rob us of the basis of the journey to enlightenment, and trap us endlessly in the realm of illusion, the uncontrolled cycle of birth and death, that ocean of suffering that we Buddhists call *samsara*.6

Yet the fundamental message of the Buddhist teachings is that if we are prepared, there is tremendous hope, both in life and in death. The teachings reveal to us the possibility of an astounding and finally boundless freedom, which is ours to work for now, in life—the freedom that will also enable us to choose our death and so to choose our birth. For someone who has prepared and practiced, death comes not as a defeat but as a triumph, the crowning and most glorious moment of life.
There is no place on earth where death cannot find us—even if we constantly twist our heads about in all directions as in a dubious and suspect land... If there were any way of sheltering from death’s blows—I am not the man to recoil from it... But it is madness to think that you can succeed...

Men come and they go and they trot and they dance, and never a word about death. All well and good. Yet when death does come—to them, their wives, their children, their friends—catching them unawares and unprepared, then what storms of passion overwhelm them, what cries, what fury, what despair!...

To begin depriving death of its greatest advantage over us, let us adopt a way clean contrary to that common one; let us deprive death of its strangeness, let us frequent it, let us get used to it; let us have nothing more often in mind than death... We do not know where death awaits us: so let us wait for it everywhere. To practice death is to practice freedom. A man who has learned how to die has unlearned how to be a slave.

—Montaigne

Why is it so very hard to practice death and to practice freedom? And
why exactly are we so frightened of death that we avoid looking at it altogether? Somewhere, deep down, we know we cannot avoid facing death forever. We know, in Milarepa's words, "This thing called 'corpse' we dread so much is living with us here and now." The longer we postpone facing death, the more we ignore it, the greater the fear and insecurity that build up to haunt us. The more we try to run away from that fear, the more monstrous it becomes.

Death is a vast mystery, but there are two things we can say about it: it is absolutely certain that we will die, and it is uncertain when or how we will die. The only surety we have, then, is this uncertainty about the hour of our death, which we seize on as the excuse to postpone facing death directly. We are like children who cover their eyes in a game of hide-and-seek and think that no one can see them.

Why do we live in such terror of death? Because our instinctive desire is to live and to go on living, and death is a savage end to everything we hold familiar. We feel that when it comes we will be plunged into something quite unknown, or become someone totally different. We imagine we will find ourselves lost and bewildered, in surroundings that are terrifyingly unfamiliar. We imagine it will be like waking up alone, in a torment of anxiety, in a foreign country, with no knowledge of the land or language, no money, no contacts, no passport, no friends...

Perhaps the deepest reason why we are afraid of death is because we do not know who we are. We believe in a personal, unique, and separate identity; but if we dare to examine it, we find that this identity depends entirely on an endless collection of things to prop it up: our name, our "biography," our partners, family, home, job, friends, credit cards... It is on their fragile and transient support that we rely for our security. So when they are all taken away, will we have any idea of who we really are?

Without our familiar props, we are faced with just ourselves, a person we do not know, an unnerving stranger with whom we have been living all the time but we never really wanted to meet. Isn't that why we have tried to fill every moment of time with noise and activity, however boring or trivial, to ensure that we are never left in silence with this stranger on our own?

And doesn't this point to something fundamentally tragic about our way of life? We live under an assumed identity, in a neurotic fairy tale world with
no more reality than the Mock Turtle in Alice in Wonderland. Hypnotized by
the thrill of building, we have raised the houses of our lives on sand. This
world can seem marvelously convincing until death collapses the illusion and
evicts us from our hiding place. What will happen to us then if we have no
due of any deeper reality?

When we die we leave everything behind, especially this body we have
cherished so much and relied upon so blindly and tried so hard to keep alive.
But our minds are no more dependable than our bodies. Just look at your
mind for a few minutes. You will see that it is like a flea, constantly hopping
to and fro. You will see that thoughts arise without any reason, without any
connection. Swept along by the chaos of every moment, we are the victims
of the fickleness of our mind. If this is the only state of consciousness we are
familiar with, then to rely on our minds at the moment of death is an absurd
gamble.

THE GREAT DECEPTION

The birth of a man is the birth of his sorrow. The longer he lives, the
more stupid he becomes, because his anxiety to avoid unavoidable
death becomes more and more acute. What bitterness! He lives for what
is always out of reach! His thirst for survival in the future makes him
incapable of living in the present.
—CHUANG TZU

After my master died, I enjoyed a close connection with Dudjom Rinpoche,
one of the greatest meditation masters, mystics, and yogins of recent times.
One day he was driving through France with his wife, admiring the
countryside as they went along. They passed a long cemetery, which had
been freshly painted and decorated with flowers. Dudjom Rinpoche's wife
said, "Rinpoche, look how everything in the West is so neat and clean. Even
the places where they keep corpses are spotless. In the East not even the
houses that people live in are anything like as clean as this."
"Ah, yes," he replied, "that's true; this is such a civilized country. They have such marvelous houses for dead corpses. But haven't you noticed? They have such wonderful houses for the living corpses too."

Whenever I think of this story, it makes me think how hollow and futile life can be when it's founded on a false belief in continuity and permanence. When we live like that, we become, as Dudjom Rinpoche said, unconscious, living corpses.

Most of us do live like that; we live according to a preordained plan. We spend our youth being educated. Then we find a job, and meet someone, marry, and have children. We buy a house, try to make a success of our business, aim for dreams like a country house or a second car. We go away on holiday with our friends. We plan for retirement. The biggest dilemmas some of us ever have to face are where to take our next holiday or whom to invite at Christmas. Our lives are monotonous, petty, and repetitive, wasted in the pursuit of the trivial, because we seem to know of nothing better.

The pace of our lives is so hectic that the last thing we have time to think of is death. We smother our secret fears of impermanence by surrounding ourselves with more and more goods, more and more things, more and more comforts, only to find ourselves their slaves. All our time and energy is exhausted simply maintaining them. Our only aim in life soon becomes to keep everything as safe and secure as possible. When changes do happen, we find the quickest remedy, some slick and temporary solution. And so our lives drift on, unless a serious illness or disaster shakes us out of our stupor.

It is not as if we even spare much time or thought for this life either. Think of those people who work for years and then have to retire, only to find that they don't know what to do with themselves as they age and approach death. Despite all our chatter about being practical, to be practical in the West means to be ignorantly and often selfishly short-sighted. Our myopic focus on this life, and this life only, is the great deception, the source of the modern world's bleak and destructive materialism. No one talks about death and no one talks about the afterlife, because people are made to believe that such talk will only thwart our so-called "progress" in the world.

Yet if our deepest desire is truly to live and go on living, why do we blindly insist that death is the end? Why not at least try and explore the
possibility that there may be a life after? Why, if we are as pragmatic as we claim, don't we begin to ask ourselves seriously: Where does our real future lie? After all, no one lives longer than a hundred years. And after that there stretches the whole of eternity, unaccounted for ...

ACTIVE LAZINESS

There is an old Tibetan story that I love, called 'The Father of 'As Famous as the Moon.'" A very poor man, after a great deal of hard work, had managed to accumulate a whole sack of grain. He was proud of himself, and when he got home he strung the bag up with a rope from one of the rafters of his house to keep it safe from rats and thieves. He left it hanging there, and settled down underneath it for the night as an added precaution. Lying there, his mind began to wander: "If I can sell this grain off in small quantities, that will make the biggest profit. With that I can buy some more grain, and do the same again, and before too long I'll become rich, and I'll be someone to reckon with in the community. Plenty of girls will be after me. I'll marry a beautiful woman, and before too long we'll have a child ... it will have to be a son ... what on earth are we going to call him?" Looking round the room, his gaze fell upon the little window, through which he could see the moon rising.

"What a sign!" he thought. "How auspicious! That's a really good name. I'll call him 'As Famous as the Moon.'"..." Now while he had been carried away in his speculation, a rat had found its way up to the sack of grain and chewed through the rope. At the very moment the words "As Famous as the Moon" issued from his lips, the bag of grain dropped from the ceiling and killed him instantly. "As Famous as the Moon," of course, was never born.

How many of us, like the man in the story, are swept away by what I have come to call an "active laziness"? Naturally there are different species of
come to call an "active laziness"? Naturally there are different species of laziness: Eastern and Western. The Eastern style is like the one practiced to perfection in India. It consists of hanging out all day in the sun, doing nothing, avoiding any kind of work or useful activity, drinking cups of tea, listening to Hindi film music blaring on the radio, and gossiping with friends. Western laziness is quite different. It consists of cramming our lives with compulsive activity, so that there is no time at all to confront the real issues.

If we look into our lives, we will see clearly how many unimportant tasks, so-called "responsibilities" accumulate to fill them up. One master compares them to "housekeeping in a dream." We tell ourselves we want to spend time on the important things of life, but there never is any time. Even simply to get up in the morning, there is so much to do: open the window, make the bed, take a shower, brush your teeth, feed the dog or cat, do last night's washing up, discover you are out of sugar or coffee, go and buy them, make breakfast—the list is endless. Then there are clothes to sort out, choose, iron, and fold up again. And what about your hair, or your makeup? Helpless, we watch our days fill up with telephone calls and petty projects, with so many responsibilities—or shouldn't we call them "irresponsibilities"?

Our lives seem to live us, to possess their own bizarre momentum, to carry us away; in the end we feel we have no choice or control over them. Of course we feel bad about this sometimes, we have nightmares and wake up in a sweat, wondering: "What am I doing with my life?" But our fears only last until breakfast time; out comes the briefcase, and back we go to where we started.

I think of the Indian saint, Ramakrishna, who said to one of his disciples: "If you spent one-tenth of the time you devoted to distractions like chasing women or making money to spiritual practice, you would be enlightened in a few years!" There was a Tibetan master who lived around the turn of the century, a kind of Himalayan Leonardo da Vinci, called Mipham. He is said to have invented a clock, a cannon, and an airplane. But once each of them was complete, he destroyed them, saying that they would only be the cause of further distraction.

In Tibetan the word for body is līi, which means "something you leave behind," like baggage. Each time we say "līi," it reminds us that we are only travelers, taking temporary refuge in this life and this body. So in Tibet people did not distract themselves by spending all their time trying to make
people did not distract themselves by spending all their time trying to make their external circumstances more comfortable. They were satisfied if they had enough to eat, clothes on their backs, and a roof over their heads. Going on as we do, obsessively trying to improve our conditions, can become an end in itself and a pointless distraction. Would anyone in their right mind think of fastidiously redecorating their hotel room every time they booked into one? I love this piece of advice from Patrul Rinpoche:

*Remember the example of an old cow,*
*She's content to sleep in a barn.*
*You have to eat, sleep, and shit—*
*That's unavoidable—*
*Beyond that is none of your business.*

Sometimes I think that the greatest achievement of modern culture is its brilliant selling of samsara and its barren distractions. Modern society seems to me a celebration of all the things that lead away from the truth, make truth hard to live for, and discourage people from even believing that it exists. And to think that all this springs from a civilization that claims to adore life, but actually starves it of any real meaning; that endlessly speaks of making people "happy," but in fact blocks their way to the source of real joy.

This modern samsara feeds off an anxiety and depression that it fosters and trains us all in, and carefully nurtures with a consumer machine that needs to keep us greedy to keep going. Samsara is highly organized, versatile, and sophisticated; it assaults us from every angle with its propaganda, and creates an almost impregnable environment of addiction around us. The more we try to escape, the more we seem to fall into the traps it is so ingenious at setting for us. As the eighteenth-century Tibetan master Jikme Lingpa said: "Mesmerized by the sheer variety of perceptions, beings wander endlessly astray in samsara's vicious cycle."

Obsessed, then, with false hopes, dreams, and ambitions, which promise happiness but lead only to misery, we are like people crawling through an endless desert, dying of thirst. And all that this samsara holds out to us to
drink is a cup of salt water, designed to make us even thirstier.

**FACING DEATH**

Knowing and realizing this, shouldn't we listen to Gyalse Rinpoche when he says:

> Planning for the future is like going fishing in a dry gulch; Nothing ever works out as you wanted, so give up all your schemes and ambitions.  
> If you have got to think about something—  
> Make it the uncertainty of the hour of your death ...

For Tibetans, the main festival of the year is the New Year, which is like Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and your birthday all rolled into one. Patrul Rinpoche was a great master whose life was full of eccentric episodes that would bring the teaching to life. Instead of celebrating New Year's Day and wishing people a "Happy New Year" like everyone else, Patrul Rinpoche used to weep. When asked why, he said that another year had gone by, and so many people had come one year closer to death, still unprepared.

Think of what must have happened to nearly all of us one day or the other. We are strolling down the street, thinking inspiring thoughts, speculating on important matters, or just listening to our Walkman. A car suddenly races by and almost runs us over.

Switch on the television or glance at a newspaper: You will see death everywhere. Yet did the victims of those plane crashes and car accidents expect to die? They took life for granted, as we do. How often do we hear stories of people whom we know, or even friends, who died unexpectedly? We don't even have to be ill to die: our bodies can suddenly break down and
go out of order, just like our cars. We can be quite well one day, then fall sick and die the next. Milarepa sang:

When you are strong and healthy,
You never think of sickness coming,
But it descends with sudden force
Like a stroke of lightning.

When involved in worldly things,
You never think of death's approach;
Quick it comes like thunder
Crashing round your head

We need to shake ourselves sometimes and really ask: "What if I were to die tonight? What then?" We do not know whether we will wake up tomorrow, or where. If you breathe out and you cannot breathe in again, you are dead. It's as simple as that. As a Tibetan saying goes: "Tomorrow or the next life—which comes first, we never know."

Some of the renowned contemplative masters of Tibet, when they went to bed at night, would empty their cups and leave them, upside down, by their bedside. They were never sure if they would wake up and need them in the morning. They even put their fires out at night, without bothering to keep the embers alight for the next day. Moment to moment, they lived with the possibility of imminent death.

Near Jikme Lingpa's hermitage was a pond, which he had great difficulty crossing. Some of his disciples offered to build him a bridge, but he replied: "What's the use? Who knows if I'll even be alive to sleep here tomorrow night?"

Some masters try to wake us up to the fragility of life with even harsher images: They tell each of us to reflect on ourselves as a condemned prisoner taking our last walk from our cell, a fish struggling in the net, an animal lining
Others encourage their students to imagine vivid scenarios of their own death, as part of a calm and structured contemplation: the sensations, the pain, the panic, the helplessness, the grief of their loved ones, the realization of what they have or have not done with their lives.

Body lying flat on a last bed,
Voices whispering a few last words,
Mind watching a final memory glide past:
When will that drama come for you?

It is important to reflect calmly, again and again, that death is real, and comes without warning. Don't be like the pigeon in the Tibetan proverb. He spends all night fussing about, making his bed, and dawn comes up before he has even had time to go to sleep. As an important twelfth-century master, Drakpa Gyaltsen, said: "Human beings spend all their lives preparing, preparing, preparing ... Only to meet the next life unprepared."

TAKING LIFE SERIOUSLY

Perhaps it is only those who understand just how fragile life is who know how precious it is. Once when I was taking part in a conference in Britain, the participants were interviewed by the BBC. At the same time they talked to a woman who was actually dying. She was distraught with fear, because she had not really thought that death was real. Now she knew. She had just one message to those who would survive her: to take life, and death, seriously.

Taking life seriously does not mean spending our whole lives meditating as if we were living in the mountains in the Himalayas or in the old days in Tibet. In the modern world, we have to work and earn our living, but we should not get entangled in a nine-to-five existence, where we live without any view of the deeper meaning of life. Our task is to strike a balance, to find a middle way, to learn not to overstretch ourselves with extraneous activities and preoccupations, but to simplify our lives more and more. The key to finding a happy balance in modern lives is simplicity.
In Buddhism this is what is really meant by discipline. In Tibetan, the term for discipline is *tsul trim*. *Tsul* means "appropriate or just," and *trim* means "rule" or "way." So discipline is to do what is appropriate or just; that is, in an excessively complicated age, to simplify our lives.

Peace of mind will come from this. You will have more time to pursue the things of the spirit and the knowledge that only spiritual truth can bring, which can help you face death.

Sadly, this is something that few of us do. Maybe we should ask ourselves the question now: "What have I really achieved in my life?" By that I mean, how much have we really understood about life and death? I have been inspired by the reports that have appeared in the studies on the near-death experience, like the books by my friend Kenneth Ring and others. A striking number of those who survive near-fatal accidents or a near-death experience describe a "panoramic life review." With uncanny vividness and accuracy, they relive the events of their lives. Sometimes they even live through the effects their actions have had on others, and experience the emotions their actions have caused. One man told Kenneth Ring:

> I realized that there are things that every person is sent to earth to realize and to learn. For instance, to share more love, to be more loving toward one another. To discover that the most important thing is human relationships and love and not materialistic things. And to realize that every single thing that you do in your life is recorded and that even though you pass it by not thinking at the time, it always comes up later.4

Sometimes the life review takes place in the company of a glorious presence, a "being of light." What stands out from the various testimonies is that this meeting with the "being" reveals that the only truly serious goals in life are "learning to love other people and acquiring knowledge."

One person recounted to Raymond Moody: "When the light appeared, the first thing he said to me was, 'What have you done to show me that you've done with your life?' or something to that effect... All through this, he kept stressing the importance of love ... He seemed very interested in things concerning knowledge too .."5 Another man told Kenneth Ring: "I was asked—but there were no words: it was a straight mental instantaneous communication—'What had I done to benefit or advance the human race?'"6

Whatever we have done with our lives makes us what we are when we die. And everything, absolutely everything, counts.
At his monastery in Nepal, my master’s oldest living disciple, the great Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, had come to the end of a teaching. He was one of the foremost teachers of our time, the teacher of the Dalai Lama himself, and of many other masters who looked to him as an inexhaustible treasure-house of wisdom and compassion. We all looked up at this gentle, glowing mountain of a man, a scholar, poet, and mystic who had spent twenty-two years of his life in retreat. He paused and gazed into the distance:

"I am now seventy-eight years old, and have seen so many things during my lifetime. So many young people have died, so many people of my own age have died, so many old people have died. So many people that were high up have become low. So many people that were low have risen to be high up. So many countries have changed. There has been so much turmoil and tragedy, so many wars, and plagues, so much terrible destruction all over the world. And yet all these changes are no more real than a dream. When you look deeply, you realize there is nothing that is permanent and constant, nothing, not even the tiniest hair on your body. And this is not a theory, but something you can actually come to know and realize and see, even, with your very own eyes."

I ask myself often: “Why is it that everything changes?” And only one answer comes back to me: That is how life is. Nothing, nothing at all, has any lasting character. The Buddha said:

This existence of ours is as transient as autumn clouds.
To watch the birth and death of beings is like looking at the movements of a dance.
A lifetime is like a flash of lightning in the sky,
Rushing by, like a torrent down a steep mountain.

One of the chief reasons we have so much anguish and difficulty facing death is that we ignore the truth of impermanence. We so desperately want everything to continue as it is that we have to believe that things will always stay the same. But this is only make-believe. And as we so often discover, belief has little or nothing to do with reality. This make-believe, with its misinformation, ideas, and assumptions, is the rickety foundation on which we construct our lives. No matter how much the truth keeps interrupting, we prefer to go on trying, with hopeless bravado, to keep up our pretense.

In our minds changes always equal loss and suffering. And if they come, we try to anesthetize ourselves as far as possible. We assume, stubbornly and unquestioningly that permanence provides security and impermanence does not. But, in fact, impermanence is like some of the people we meet in life—difficult and disturbing at first, but on deeper acquaintance far friendlier and less unnerving than we could have imagined.

Reflect on this: The realization of impermanence is paradoxically the only thing we can hold onto, perhaps our only lasting possession. It is like the sky or the earth. No matter how much everything around us may change or collapse, they endure. Say we go through a shattering emotional crisis ... our whole life seems to be disintegrating ... our husband or wife suddenly leaves us without warning. The earth is still there; the sky is still there. Of course, even the earth trembles now and again, just to remind us we cannot take anything for granted....

Even Buddha died. His death was a teaching, to shock the naive, the indolent, and complacent, to wake us up to the truth that everything is impermanent and death an inescapable fact of life. As he was approaching death, the Buddha said:
Of all footprints
That of the elephant is supreme;
Of all mindfulness meditations
That on death is supreme.

Whenever we lose our perspective, or fall prey to laziness, reflecting on death and impermanence shakes us back into the truth:

What is born will die,
What has been gathered will be dispersed,
What has been accumulated will be exhausted,
What has been built up will collapse,
And what has been high will be brought low.

The whole universe, scientists now tell us, is nothing but change, activity, and process—a totality of flux that is the ground of all things:

Every subatomic interaction consists of the annihilation of the original particles and the creation of new subatomic particles. The subatomic world is a continual dance of creation and annihilation, of mass changing into energy and energy changing to mass. Transient forms sparkle in and out of existence, creating a never-ending, forever newly created reality.

What is our life but this dance of transient forms? Isn’t everything always changing: the leaves on the trees in the park, the light in your room as you read this, the seasons, the weather, the time of day, the people passing you in the street? And what about us? Doesn’t everything we have done in the past seem like a dream now? The friends we grew up with, the childhood haunts, those views and opinions we once held with such single-minded passion: We have left them all behind. Now, at this moment, reading this book seems vividly real to you. Even this page will soon be only a memory.

The cells of our body are dying, the neurons in our brain are decaying, even the expression on our face is always changing, depending on our mood. What we call our basic character is only a "mindstream," nothing more. Today we feel good because things are going well; tomorrow we feel the opposite. Where did that good feeling go? New influences took us over as circumstances changed: We are impermanent, the influences are impermanent, and there is nothing solid or lasting anywhere that we can point to.

What could be more unpredictable than our thoughts and emotions: do you have any idea what you are going to think or feel next? Our mind, in fact, is as empty, as impermanent, and as transient as a dream. Look at a thought: It comes, it stays, and it goes. The past is past, the future not yet risen, and even the present thought, as we experience it, becomes the past.

The only thing we really have is nowness, is now.

Sometimes when I teach these things, a person will come up to me afterward and say: "All this seems obvious! I’ve always known it. Tell me something new." I say to him or her: "Have you actually understood, and realized, the truth of impermanence? Have you so integrated it with your every thought, breath, and movement that your life has been transformed? Ask yourself these two questions: Do I remember at every moment that I am dying, and everyone and everything else is, and so treat all beings at all times with compassion? Has my understanding of death and impermanence become so keen and so urgent that I am devoting every second to the pursuit of enlightenment? If you can answer ‘yes’ to both of these, then you have really understood impermanence."

THREE

Reflection and Change

WHEN I WAS A CHILD IN TIBET, I heard the story of Krisha Gotami, a young woman who had the good fortune to live at the time of the Buddha. When her firstborn child was about a year old, it fell ill and died. Grief-stricken and clutching its little body Krisha Gotami roamed the streets, begging anyone she met for a medicine that could restore her child to life. Some ignored her, some laughed at her, some thought she was mad, but finally she met a wise man who told her that the only person in the world who could perform the miracle she was looking for was the Buddha.

So she went to the Buddha, laid the body of her child at his feet, and told him her story. The Buddha listened with infinite compassion. Then he said gently, "There is only one way to heal your affliction. Go down to the city and bring me back a mustard seed from any house in which there has never been a death."

Krisha Gotami felt elated and set off at once for the city. She stopped at the first house she saw and said: "I have been told by the Buddha to fetch a mustard seed from a house that has never known death."
This page contains a passage from a book discussing the process of accepting death, the transformation that can occur through this acceptance, and the personal insights gained from such experiences. The text explores the idea of compassion, the role of death in spiritual growth, and the transformation that can occur when one accepts impermanence. It also reflects on the experiences of individuals who have undergone such transformations, and the lessons they have learned. The text is rich in contemplative language, reflecting the deep philosophical and spiritual nature of the subject matter.
Why is it so difficult for people to even conceive of the depth and glory of the nature of mind? Why does it seem to many such an outlandish and improbable idea? Perhaps because the nature of mind is something we are not used to seeing clearly. When we are in the midst of our daily lives, our minds are often occupied with mundane thoughts and concerns, leaving us little time to reflect on the deeper aspects of our existence. The nature of mind is not something that can be easily grasped through the senses, as it is a pure and transcendent quality that exists beyond the physical world.

The nature of mind is the root of understanding itself. In Tibetan, we call it "wisdom". It is the power to recognize the true nature of things, to understand their inherent emptiness, and to see beyond the superficial appearances. This wisdom is the foundation of all spiritual realization and is the source of all enlightenment.

In this way, the nature of mind is the key to liberation from samsara, the cycle of birth and death. It is the true nature of reality, beyond the duality of subject and object, beyond the illusion of self and other. It is the ground of all existence, the source of all compassion, and the root of all wisdom.

In Tibetan, Gesar of Ling is a famous literary figure who personifies the nature of mind. Gesar is described as a spiritual warrior, someone who can never be put down. From the moment Gesar was born, his evil uncle Trotung tried all sorts of tricks to take him down, but Gesar always rose stronger. It was thanks to Trotung's efforts, in fact, that Gesar was to become so great. This gave rise to the saying: "When Trotung is strong, Gesar becomes even stronger."

For the Tibetans Gesar is not only a warrior but also a spiritual one. To be a spiritual warrior means to develop the nature of mind, to cultivate wisdom and compassion. The path of Gesar is the path of the Mahayana, the path of the Great Vehicle, where the aim is to benefit all sentient beings, where the aim is to reach enlightenment for the sake of others. This path is marked by the cultivation of the six perfections, the virtues of布施, morality, productivity, patience, effort, and mindfulness. Gesar personifies these virtues and shows us what it means to be a spiritual warrior, someone who can rise above the obstacles, someone who can never be put down.
The masters say: “If you create an auspicious condition in your body and your environment, then meditation and the awakening of Rigpa. There is a connection between the posture of the body and the mind. The posture is the meditation. The posture secures the practice, and the dedication that secures the practice is the Rigpa.” It is like pouring a handful of sand onto a flat surface; each grain settles of its own accord. This is how you relax into your true nature, your natural great peace. When I meditate, I am always inspired by this poem by Nyoshul Khenpo:

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meaning "Precious Master," by the Tibetan people. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche said: "There have been many incredible and ... blessing toward beings in this difficult age is Padmasambhava, who embodies the compassion and wisdom of all the buddhas.

1. Using an Object

The Buddha taught 84,000 different ways to tame and pacify the negative emotions, and in Buddhism there are countless methods of meditation: ... and that anyone can practice and benefit from. They are using an object, reciting a mantra, and "watching" the breath.

THREE METHODS OF MEDITATION

There is a spark of hope, a playful humor, about this posture that lies in the secret understanding that we all have the potential to be a buddha. According to the special luminosity practice of Dzogchen, all the light of our wisdom-energy resides in the heart center, the main "door" of our being. Many great masters of Dzogchen say that our wisdom energy is expressed most naturally and powerfully in the eyes, so the eyes are the "doors" of the luminosity. In Dzogchen, the eyes are the "windows" of your heart and the "doors" of your wisdom. You have to keep them open and at ease, so that your wisdom energy is able to flow without obstruction and you can perceive it clearly. The more your eyes are open, the more you will be able to perceive your wisdom energy. The eyes are the "windows" of the heart and the "doors" of your wisdom energy. In Dzogchen, you keep your eyes open and let your wisdom energy flow through them.

In my tradition of meditation, your eyes should be kept open: this is a very important point. If you are sensitive to distractions from outside, when you begin to practice you may find it helpful to close your eyes for a while and then try opening them slowly. Once you feel established in calm, gradually open your eyes, and you will find your gaze has grown more peaceful, more energetic, more open.

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In the Dzogchen teachings it is said that...
To them they become obstacles. Experiences are not realization in themselves; but if you remain free of attachment to them, they become what they really are, that is, materials for realization.

EXPERIENCES

In the ordinary mind, we perceive the stream of thoughts as continuous; but in reality this is not the case. You will ... a gap in which the Rigpa, the nature of mind, is revealed. So the work of meditation is to allow thoughts to slow down,
KARMA

way, it is because of our actions in one life, pure or impure, that we are linked with another life, and we are not free from their results.

The studies on this subject also show that the near-death experiencers tend afterward to be more open and inclined toward accepting reincarnation.

I have found that modern spiritual practitioners lack the knowledge of how to integrate their meditation practice with their life. I have seen too many meditations that were not real, and that only prolonged the feeling of being meditative. Because there is a difference between being meditative and being a meditative person.

Before the expedition left, Arthur Flowerdew was introduced to a world authority on Petra and author of a book on the site. The BBC recorded Arthur Flowerdew's pre-visit description of Petra, so as to compare his observations and impressions with his post-visit description.

The King asked Nagasena: "When someone is reborn, is he the same as the one who just died, or is he different?"

The expert and archaeologist of Petra who accompanied Arthur Flowerdew could not explain this very ordinary Englishman's uncanny knowledge of the city. He said:

This is an astonishing statistic considering how dominant the materialist and scientific philosophy is in almost every aspect of life. The materialist and scientific philosophy is in almost every aspect of life. The materialist and scientific philosophy is in almost every aspect of life. The materialist and scientific philosophy is in almost every aspect of life. The materialist and scientific philosophy is in almost every aspect of life. The materialist and scientific philosophy is in almost every aspect of life.

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I have seen and read of a land in the land of enlargement and the greatest wisdom of life. I have said about the wisdom in my studies, and I always stress the necessity of practicing it. I have also realized that one cannot practice it without being a meditative person.

One of the interesting aspects of the rebirth phenomenon is that it is not limited to the Eastern religions. In fact, it has been reported in many cultures around the world. The phenomenon of rebirth has been observed in cultures as diverse as the ancient Egyptians, the Aztecs, the Mayans, the Incas, and the Inuit.

Before the expedition left, Arthur Flowerdew was introduced to a world authority on Petra and author of a book on the site. The BBC recorded Arthur Flowerdew's pre-visit description of Petra, so as to compare his observations and impressions with his post-visit description.
I have said that the bardos are opportunities, but what is it exactly about the bardos that makes it possible for us to seize the opportunities they offer? The answer is simple: They are all different states, and different realities, of mind.

When our minds are in a bardo state, our thoughts and emotions are not going to be as usual, and the way we perceive things is going to be different. It’s like when we are dreaming, our mind is in a different state and we see and experience things differently. In the bardos, our mind is in a similar state, but it is not a dream and it is not a hallucination.

Everything in our life is a bardo, and everything in our life is a dream. When we are awake, our mind is in a bardo state, and when we are asleep, our mind is also in a bardo state. The difference is that when we are awake, we are aware of it, and when we are asleep, we are not.

When we are in a bardo state, we are not going to be able to see things as they really are. Our perceptions are going to be distorted and our thoughts are going to be confused. But this is not a bad thing, it is actually a good thing. Because when we are in a bardo state, we are able to see the true nature of our mind and the true nature of reality.

The true nature of our mind is called the "clear light," and it is the essence of our mind. When we are in a bardo state, we are able to see the clear light, and we are able to see the true nature of our mind.

The bardo states are the time when we are free from the confusion of the world, and we are free from the confusion of the mind. This is because when we are in a bardo state, we are not going to be able to see the world as it really is. Our perceptions are going to be distorted and our thoughts are going to be confused.

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The true nature of our mind is called the "clear light," and it is the essence of our mind. When we are in a bardo state, we are able to see the clear light, and we are able to see the true nature of our mind.
is its down-to-earth, no-nonsense practicality, and its acute sense that the greatest achievements take the deepest patience and the longest time.

The derision of a world of doubters could not destroy.

worth of the teachings, but a destructive form of doubt that leaves us nothing to believe in, nothing to hope for, and nothing to live by.

presence of wisdom and joy and bliss that you really are. A new life, utterly different from that when you were ... those emotions and thoughts that in the states of death, the bardos, would otherwise take on an overwhelming reality.

beings look much the same, but perceive things utterly differently, and we each live in our own unique and separate individual worlds. As Kalu Rinpoche says:

was extremely profound. So they went on asking him questions, and they found that whatever they asked, he knew the ... far and wide, and in no time at all he was teaching members of each of the different schools their own unique traditions.

There is a story I love about a Zen master. This master had a faithful but very naive student, who regarded him as a ... all his faith and left, saying how disappointed he was to find that his master was not fully enlightened. Otherwise, he

ego and its grasping are at the root of all our suffering. Yet ego is so convincing, and we have been its dupe for so

In just the same way, in Tibetan Buddhism there is a basic, normal, elementary spiritual education, a complete spiritual ... called the "three wisdom tools": the wisdom of listening and hearing; the wisdom of contemplation and reflection; and the

Looking at the world around us, and into our own minds, we can see that the six realms definitely do exist. They exist in ... context of our life in those realms. And they exist also inwardly as the different seeds and tendencies of the various

At the beginning, when we first become fascinated by the spiritual path and all its possibilities, ego may even encourage us and say: "This is really wonderful. Just the thing for you! This teaching makes total sense!"

Lifetimes of ignorance have brought us to identify the whole of our being with ego. Its greatest triumph is to inveigle ... ego's lies, we are just too scared to abandon it, for without any true knowledge of ... as the alcoholic feels reaching for the drink that he knows is destroying him, or the drug addict groping for the

In ancient times, then, there were extraordinary masters and students as receptive and single-minded as that bandit who ... mind to one powerful wisdom method and work with it directly, there is a real possibility we would become enlightened.

The mind of death is the mind in the first bardo. When we enter the mind of death, we enter the reality of death. It is in the mind of death that we begin to understand that our world is a dream and that our experience is not "real," that we are dreaming. The mind of death is the mind of seeing the end of the cycle of rebirths and returning to the truth of our nature.

Doubts arise whether we are in the midst of sleep or dream, in the midst of death or rebirth. In the language of the bardo, they arise when we are in the bardo of the moment of passing: our mind is not clear, our perception is not pure, and our senses are not refined. This is the mind of death and dream.

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the teachings are rare; and those who really take them to heart and embody them in their actions even rarer, as rare, in fact, "as stars in broad daylight."

For example, in Sera Monastery, one of the great monasteries of the Tibetan tradition, there are twelve thousand monks and nuns, and by the way, there are about the same number of nuns and monks. And some years ago, when I was there, I found that there were about twenty-five or thirty young women in the monastery at that time. They had trained for several years, but they were not yet ready to be nuns.

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When we admit our addiction and simply ask...
These reflections inspire a strong sense of "renunciation," an urgent desire to emerge from samsara and follow the path to liberation, which forms the foundation for the specific practices of Dzogchen. For as long as we cling to the ordinary mind and remain within the framework of samsara, our path to enlightenment will be obstructed. So the first step in the practice of Dzogchen is to transform and awaken our ordinary mind through the process of purification and accumulation of good karma, which is the groundwork for the path of the mahamudra. In this process, you will gradually empty your ordinary mind of its habitual patterns and obsessions, as well as any accumulations of negative karma, and you will seek to replace them with the qualities of clear light and wisdom. As you do, you will get yourself off the wheel of samsara and bring you to the state wherein your Rigpa can be revealed to you.

In Dzogchen the View is introduced to the student directly by the master. It is the directness of this introduction that characterizes Dzogchen and makes it unique. In other schools of Buddhism, the View is usually presented indirectly through the logical reasoning of the scholastics, which can be abstract and difficult to understand. In Dzogchen, the View is presented in a direct and straightforward manner, through the personal experience of the student, and the student is invited to see it for themselves.

It is very important for the student to be prepared and ready when the master chooses the time to show them the original face of Rigpa. This is the moment when the student is able to recognize the View directly. It is a crucial step in the practice of Dzogchen, and it is actually possible, if a practitioner really puts their heart and mind to it, in one lifetime.

"Great Perfection." I prefer to leave it untranslated, for Great Perfection carries a sense of a perfect-ness we have to strive for. It is a goal that lies at the end of a long and grueling journey. Nothing could be further from the true meaning of Dzogchen: the extraordinary wisdom. Human beings have come to a critical place in their evolution, and this age of extreme confusion, exclusivity, complex metaphysics, and culturally exotic paraphernalia, a path at once simple and profound, a path that speaks of the unadorned truth of Rigpa and the naked presence of the buddhas.

The master can transform your ordinary mind by means of several different techniques. Two of the most powerful are phowa and the practice of Guru Yoga.

Phowa is a practice of the transference of consciousness at the moment of death. For if, at the moment of death, you have the chance to transcend the causal chains of samsara and enter into the realm of Rigpa, you will experience the ultimate liberation. This practice is the culmination of the path of Dzogchen, and it is actually possible, if a practitioner really puts their heart and mind to it, in one lifetime.

Guru Yoga is a practice of devotion and purification. It is the practice of generating a profound and genuine faith in the guru and the practices they have introduced. Through this practice, you can accept the blessings of the guru and receive the realization of the precious店里 of the nature of Rigpa.

The most important thing about the master is that he or she is the embodiment of the buddhas. All the situations of life, even those that once seemed tragic, meaningless, or terrifying, are transformed into an opportunity for you to see the presence of the master. You no longer need to escape or run away, but can turn and face it - the master dissolves into light and becomes one with you, in the nature of your mind. Recognize beyond any doubt that the master is not just an entity in the space, but that you are the absolute master. Where else would all the enlightened beings be but in the Rigpa, in the nature of your mind?
A rainbow body is a special state of enlightenment that can be attained in the Dzogchen tradition. It is a condition in which the mind is completely free of all limitations and impediments. When a practitioner has attained the rainbow body, they are said to be in a state of great clarity and confidence, where all thoughts and emotions are liberated naturally. This is the heart and basis of Dzogchen practice.

In Dzogchen, the fundamental nature of everything is called the "Ground Luminosity" or the "Mother Luminosity." It is the essence of the mind, the pure and pristine nature of awareness itself. When the mind is in this state, it is said to be in Rigpa, which means "abode" or "residence."

Dzogchen meditation is a continual flow of Rigpa, like a river. It is essential to perfect this practice of the merging of the two luminosities and the self-liberation of risings in the mind. The finishing of the rainbow body can happen spontaneously, and it is the result of the merging of the mother luminosity and the father luminosity, which are the two aspects of the mind.

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There is more to compassion than wishing for the well-being of others and then doing nothing to make it happen. Compassion is being willing to actively help others. After all, if you are truly compassionately motivated, you will want to do something to help others. Compassion is a state of being that enables action. That is why in our tradition we see compassion as the source and essence of enlightenment, and the heart of enlightened activity. As Shantideva says: ‘Grasping mind’s enterprise; when we have really pursued its operations into their most subtle hiding places; when we have really understood just how our whole life is involved in that grab, when we have really grasped the truth of it, then we shall find it to be the source of all suffering, of samsara the ocean of death. As the person is dying, there is no privacy: They are hooked up to monitors, and attempts to resuscitate them will ... fails. There will be no chance of leaving the body undisturbed for a period of time after death, as the masters advise. Families resist letting their loved ones go, thinking that to do so is a betrayal, and a sign that they don’t love them. You look back on the shore, and see all your family and friends waving goodbye. You have no more. The time we have had together has been enough, and I shall always cherish it. Please now don’t hold onto life any longer. Let go. I give you my full and heartfelt permission to die. You are not alone, now or ever. You have all my love."
To make and to make the internal relationship of compassion to self completely ready and beneficial, add the benefits that it has been done to others. We need to do in a very specific way, before itself and what is the ultimate result. It is from including for the sake of others that suffering comes. We go on being happy thinking that by giving something to others we can get happiness, and so we try to be happy. But truly, compassion is not what you give, but what you do, how you do it. A meditation of compassion needs to be done in a very specific way. The basic way of doing compassion is: first, to benefit others, and second, to benefit your own heart. In compassion, first, is that the great compassion, 2. It is also, as the great masters of the past have shown, the source of all benefit. Suppose you have a desire such as a lover in this. By taking on the qualities of suffering being in, in addition to your own, which will in full compassion you became a very powerful method of the cause to the result. I remember there was a story about a group of people, who, when they were in a dangerous situation, gave their lives to others. The thing that is most important is that the power of compassion – compassion – is far greater than the power of suffering. This is why I call this first stage of the practice "environmental Tonglen." To make the internal relationship of compassion to self completely ready and beneficial, add the benefits that it has been done to others. "Bodhichitta to an inexhaustible treasury of generosity; and compassion, when understood in its profoundest sense, is known and seen as the natural radiance of the nature of mind, the skillful means that rises from the heart of wisdom." The best way to do this practice, and any practice of Tonglen, is to begin by evoking and resting in the nature of mind. People believe that anyone—anyone at all—can do it. Even if you have no religious faith, I urge you simply to try it. I have found Tonglen to be of the greatest possible help. Now that I have introduced you to the various methods of evoking compassion, and to the importance and power of the Tonglen practice in helping you to actually practice compassion in your own life, let us move on to the second stage of the practice. The second stage is known as "ultimate" or "absolute" Bodhichitta, the true heart of the enlightened mind. The teachings compare absolute Bodhichitta to a "vast and almost unimaginable" sense of the benefit of others. In this section we will look at the three basic stages of compassion: compassion: considering yourself the same as others, compassion: considering yourself the same as others, and compassion: considering yourself the same as others. So the Bodhichitta "never declines and never decreases, always increasing and growing and becoming more and more boundless. Equanimity is one of the four essential facets, with loving-kindness, compassion, and joy. This is why I always recommend that you begin the Tonglen practice for others by first practicing it on yourself. Before you can truly practice Tonglen, you have to be able to evoke compassion in yourself. That is harder than we often think. One of the best ways to do it is to imagine that you are a suffering person yourself. The real root of the Tonglen practice is the mind of the Buddhist "training of the heart," the mind of the enlightened mind by training in what are called "Bodhichitta in aspiration" and "Bodhichitta in action." The quality of mercy is not strained, when your fear touches someone's pain it becomes pity, when your love touches someone's pain, it becomes compassion. The very idea of "Tonglen" means our enlightened essence, and what is in our hearts. The vast and almost unimaginable compassion of these lines astounded him, and he set out to find the master who had created them. And even in samsara I shall have no real joy if I do not exchange my happiness for the happiness of others. And even in samsara I shall have no real joy if I do not exchange my happiness for the happiness of others. The problem is that you are not going to be able to generate compassion for others while you are生產ing for yourself. The power of the Tonglen practice is a "radical change" in the heart of the practitioner. You can also mentally dedicate the merit of that action to your friend or relative who helped you to open your heart. And even in samsara I shall have no real joy if I do not exchange my happiness for the happiness of others. The vast and almost unimaginable compassion of these lines astounded him, and he set out to find the master who had created them. And even in samsara I shall have no real joy if I do not exchange my happiness for the happiness of others. It is for this reason that I consider the Tonglen practice to be so extremely profound and powerful. Compassion is a far greater and nobler thing than pity. Pity has its roots in fear, and a sense of arrogance and self-importance. Tonglen, it is the practice of exchanging your suffering for the suffering of others. Before you can truly practice Tonglen, you have to be able to evoke compassion in yourself. The very idea of "Tonglen" means our enlightened essence, and what is in our hearts. The vast and almost unimaginable compassion of these lines astounded him, and he set out to find the master who had created them. And even in samsara I shall have no real joy if I do not exchange my happiness for the happiness of others. The vast and almost unimaginable compassion of these lines astounded him, and he set out to find the master who had created them. 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Saartje. In the Tonglen practice of giving and taking we do the opposite: we envision a mass of black smoke coming towards us, with our out-breath, and visualize this mass of black smoke destroying everything that has been harmful to those we love. And as this dissolves, we imagine that our very body is transformed and purified.

The name of the practice of Tonglen comes from the Sanskrit words “tong” and “len,” which mean “to give” and “to receive,” respectively. In the Tonglen practice of giving and taking, we visualize our own suffering mingling with the suffering of others, and we visualize our own healing mingling with the healing of others. In this way, we practice compassion for all sentient beings, and we practice the art of giving and receiving.

The first step in the Tonglen practice is to visualize a form of pure golden light in the sky before you. You may choose to envision a beautiful flower, a rainbow, or any other natural form that you find uplifting and inspiring. You may also choose to visualize a form of pure golden light that represents your own innermost wish for peace and happiness.

In the Tonglen practice of giving and taking, we visualize our own suffering mingling with the suffering of others, and we visualize our own healing mingling with the healing of others. In this way, we practice compassion for all sentient beings, and we practice the art of giving and receiving.

The second step in the Tonglen practice is to visualize your heart opening to the suffering of others. You may choose to envision a friend, family member, or even a stranger in need, and you may choose to imagine their Personal Identity Card (PID), which shows what they need and what they are like. You may also choose to envision a form of pure golden light that represents your own innermost wish for peace and happiness.

In the Tonglen practice of giving and taking, we visualize our own suffering mingling with the suffering of others, and we visualize our own healing mingling with the healing of others. In this way, we practice compassion for all sentient beings, and we practice the art of giving and receiving.

The third step in the Tonglen practice is to visualize your heart opening to the healing of others. You may choose to envision a form of pure golden light that represents your own innermost wish for peace and happiness.

In the Tonglen practice of giving and taking, we visualize our own suffering mingling with the suffering of others, and we visualize our own healing mingling with the healing of others. In this way, we practice compassion for all sentient beings, and we practice the art of giving and receiving.

The fourth step in the Tonglen practice is to visualize your heart opening to the compassionate action of others. You may choose to envision a form of pure golden light that represents your own innermost wish for peace and happiness.

In the Tonglen practice of giving and taking, we visualize our own suffering mingling with the suffering of others, and we visualize our own healing mingling with the healing of others. In this way, we practice compassion for all sentient beings, and we practice the art of giving and receiving.

The fifth step in the Tonglen practice is to visualize your heart opening to the compassionate action of others. You may choose to envision a form of pure golden light that represents your own innermost wish for peace and happiness.

In the Tonglen practice of giving and taking, we visualize our own suffering mingling with the suffering of others, and we visualize our own healing mingling with the healing of others. In this way, we practice compassion for all sentient beings, and we practice the art of giving and receiving.

The sixth step in the Tonglen practice is to visualize your heart opening to the compassionate action of others. You may choose to envision a form of pure golden light that represents your own innermost wish for peace and happiness.

In the Tonglen practice of giving and taking, we visualize our own suffering mingling with the suffering of others, and we visualize our own healing mingling with the healing of others. In this way, we practice compassion for all sentient beings, and we practice the art of giving and receiving.

The seventh step in the Tonglen practice is to visualize your heart opening to the compassionate action of others. You may choose to envision a form of pure golden light that represents your own innermost wish for peace and happiness.

In the Tonglen practice of giving and taking, we visualize our own suffering mingling with the suffering of others, and we visualize our own healing mingling with the healing of others. In this way, we practice compassion for all sentient beings, and we practice the art of giving and receiving.

The eighth step in the Tonglen practice is to visualize your heart opening to the compassionate action of others. You may choose to envision a form of pure golden light that represents your own innermost wish for peace and happiness.

In the Tonglen practice of giving and taking, we visualize our own suffering mingling with the suffering of others, and we visualize our own healing mingling with the healing of others. In this way, we practice compassion for all sentient beings, and we practice the art of giving and receiving.

The ninth step in the Tonglen practice is to visualize your heart opening to the compassionate action of others. You may choose to envision a form of pure golden light that represents your own innermost wish for peace and happiness.

In the Tonglen practice of giving and taking, we visualize our own suffering mingling with the suffering of others, and we visualize our own healing mingling with the healing of others. In this way, we practice compassion for all sentient beings, and we practice the art of giving and receiving.
HELDING, THE BOSS OF DEATH

From the Heart of the Bodhisattva

...the only lesson you have. Keep that in your mind, and do not be distracted.

...of liberation in the bardo.

...her whole life practicing, and had met the same great masters. She had a thick volume of Longchenpa's writings, the Dzogchen saint. She had enjoyed eating meat; yet just before she died, she didn't want to touch meat at all. She had been the queen of her world, and few people had thought of her as a...
LEAVING THE BODY

practice, or an exalting piece of music. What I pray is that your every waking moment should mingle with the blessing of the practice, in an atmosphere alive and luminous with inspiration.

Buddha was alive, and is the most holy statue in the whole of Tibet. Ben could not make out whether it was a buddha or a... to see what all the talk was about. So he put on his boots and walked, week after week, to get to Lhasa in central Tibet.

How then do we most sensitively help ordinary spiritual practitioners who are dying? All of us will need the love and... It would be ideal, and a great blessing, if their master were with them; but if this is not possible, their spiritual

him, think of him in your heart, and die in a state of devotion. When your consciousness awakens again after death, this...

successful the practice has been.

the moment of death, the practitioner ejects his or her consciousness and merges it with the wisdom mind of the Buddha, ... can be carried out by the individual, or effected by a qualified master or good practitioner on the individual's behalf.

THE PRACTICES FOR DYING

Let us look now at the two causes of death: the exhaustion of our natural life span, and an obstacle or accident that brings our life to an untimely end.

An image that is often given to characterize the bardo of dying is that of a beautiful actress sitting in front of her... going out on stage. In just the same way, at the moment of death the master reintroduces us to the essential truth of the

master, and unite your mind as one with him or her as you die.

THE TRANSMITTED DEATH OF THE 100 HEADS IS BOUND

So if, at the moment of death, we have already a stable realization of the nature of mind, in one instant we can purify... the expanse of the primordial purity of the nature of mind, and attaining liberation. Padmasambhava explained this:

Think, then, of the moment of death as a strange border zone of the mind, a no-man’s land in which on the one hand, if we...

Now that the bardo of dying dawns upon me,

"As the music or the tape of the teaching goes on playing, drift off to sleep in it, wake up in it, doze in it, eat in...

"Ben went home to Kongpo, told his wife everything that had happened, and instructed her to keep an eye open for the Jowo...

"Rely on whatever for you is the most inspiring of all the practices. And if it is difficult for you to visualize or...

A beloved student of mine was dying of cancer, and asked me how best she should practice as she came nearer to death, particularly when she no longer had the strength to concentrate on any formal practice.

In our tradition ordinary practitioners will also pray to whichever buddha they feel devotion for, and with whom they feel a karmic connection. If it is Padmasambhava, they will pray to be born in his glorious pure realm, the Palace of

"I will abandon all grasping, yearning, and attachment,

...it is vital, as we come near to death, to essentialize all our spiritual practice into one “heart... Padmasambhava, which tells us, at the moment of death, to: “Enter, undistracted, into clear awareness of the teaching.”

A-pe Dorje knew that it is vital, as we come near to death, to essentialize all our spiritual practice into one “heart...

"...free of all care and concern about death. They do not need to concern themselves with when or where they will die, nor do they have any need of teachings, instructions, or reminders.

For us to see the dharmata directly, without the interposition of any kind of mind, we must have completely purified our mind of all thoughts, doubts, and delusions. But if we are still living, it is not yet too late...

It is said that “medium practitioners of middling capacity die like beggars in the street.”

Oldest light on the Upper Gompa Mountain, and it is black, like you see and reason, they draw to the values be “Mālak” behaves, the maravilla for Lo Manthang.

THE ONE WHO IS A CHANGING ONE

The moment of death is the most critical moment in the life of a practitioner, the moment of the transformation of the mind.

As present, our body is shaded with the care of our own conscious. We measure it, without thinking, by our will and our ego, and the thoughts and fake experiences resulting from our base of the immaculate consciousness. Because our body seems so weighty to us, our “I” seems to exist and “you” seem to exist, and the entire body, duality and more.

"Oh, what a beautiful world we are in!" Maged-Sam said, sitting in the courtyard of the monastery. "Oh, the world we are in!"

Padmasambhava knew that it is vital, as we come near to death, to essentialize all our spiritual practice into one “heart...

"...free of all care and concern about death. They do not need to concern themselves with when or where they will die, nor do they have any need of teachings, instructions, or reminders.

It is said that “medium practitioners of middling capacity die like wild animals or lions, on snow mountains, in mountain caves and empty valleys.”

"When I die, I will be born into the Pure Land of Amitabha, and I will be born in a female body. If I am born male, I will immediately want to become female. If I die, I will immediately want to attain enlightenment.

"The One who is a Changing One is one who is gradually changing into the dharmata through the transformation of the mind. He is called the One who is a Changing One because he is changing and changing into the dharmata, which is the ultimate level of all existences.

The Dharmata means “the dharmata.” The dharmata, or the state of the mind that is free from all thoughts, doubts, and delusions, is the ultimate level of all existences. It is the dharmata that Padmasambhava used to introduce the students to the bardo of dying. In the bardo of dying, students are introduced to the dharmata through the transformation of their mind.

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"I will abandon all grasping, yearning, and attachment,

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"The One who is a Changing One is one who is gradually changing into the dharmata through the transformation of the mind. He is called the One who is a Changing One because he is changing and changing into the dharmata, which is the ultimate level of all existences.

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The enlightened mind has fallen away. And what is revealed is the primordial ground of our absolute nature, which is like a pure and cloudless sky.

You visualize the master in the forehead center. And when the air element dissolves and the sign of the torch appears, you focus entirely on transferring your consciousness into the wisdom mind of your master.

Awareness of these changes as he or she falls asleep. Because what is important to remember is that this sequence of events happens as the wind moves from grosser to subtlest levels of consciousness.

What then is happening when we die? It is as if we are returning to our original state; everything dissolves, as body and mind dissolve. When one dies, which means that all the negative emotions, the root of samsara, actually cease, and then there is a gap.

In the modern world are not looking for them. Often nurses in busy hospitals rely on their intuition and many other external signs to know if someone might be dying. They also observe, but not at all in a systematic way, some physical signs, such as the change in skin color.

The result is that each stage of the dissolution has its physical and psychological effect on the dying person, and is reflected by external, physical signs as well as inner experiences.

The first thing we may be aware of is how our senses cease to function. If people around our bed are talking, there will be a gradual development and dawning of ever more subtle levels of consciousness. The process becomes more and more refined as the wind moves from grosser to subtlest levels of consciousness.

The sense consciousnesses arise from one's mind. The flesh, bones, organ of smelling and odors are formed from the earth element. The breath, organ of touch and physical sensations are formed from the air element. The fire, organ of sight and form are formed from the fire element. The water, organ of taste and enjoyment are formed from the water element. The mind, organ of sound and consciousness are formed from the mind element.

Kalu Rinpoche writes: "The internal experience for the dying individual is of a great wind sweeping away the whole world, including the dying person, an incredible maelstrom of wind, consuming the entire universe."

The bardo of dying falls between the moment we contract a terminal illness or condition that will end in death, and the actual coming of death. It is as if we are in the experience of going through the first stage of dying. The coming of the bardo is a prerequisite to the coming of death, and reminds us to alert ourselves. And for a practitioner each stage of dying will be a signpost, or energy-centers, from which channels branch off like the ribs of an umbrella.

At the moment of death, the body is completely gone, with no separate awareness. We are only a heap of flesh. In our last feeling of contact with our physical environment is slipping away. The smell of death begins to hang over us. As the aggregate of feeling is dissolving, bodily sensations are going numb and then twitch. The sense consciousnesses are ceasing. Some sources say that we feel as if we were drowning in an ocean or being swept away by a huge river.

In advanced yoga practice, this system is visualized very precisely by a yogin. By causing the winds to enter and exit the body, the yogin can influence how death proceeds.

There are several bardo signs that can be observed by the practitioner. They are the aggregate of sensations of body and mind, and are signs of the coming of death. Some of these signs are: a shrill cry, a shiver in the head, a tearing sensation in the chest, a feeling of cold, a feeling of heat, a feeling of darkness, a feeling of light, a feeling of death, a feeling of rebirth, a feeling of being born, a feeling of being dead, a feeling of being born again, a feeling of being dead again, a feeling of being born once more, a feeling of being dead once more, a feeling of being born a third time, a feeling of being dead a third time.

The bardo of dying is also called the "intermediate state" or "bardo of dying." It is a stage in which the mind is separate from the body, and is not yet ready to enter the next realm of existence. During this time, the mind is said to be "in a state of suspension." The mind can experience various sensations and images, and can reflect on its own practice and realization.

The bardo of dying is a crucial stage in the process of dying, as it is a time of transition between the grosser and subtlest levels of consciousness. During this time, the mind can gain essential insight and clarity, which can help the practitioner to prepare for the coming of death.

Any spiritual practice we do, since it accumulates "merit," will help prolong our lives and bring good health. A good practitioner is one who is spiritually whole, and this is both the greatest source of healing and the strongest protection against illness.

Do not be in a rush to judge a dying person. Be honest and kind in your dealings with them. The dying are not interested in what we think of them. We may not have the ability to understand them, but we can show compassion.

The bardo of dying is also known as the "bardo of death," or "bardo of the death of the mind." It is a stage in which the mind is separate from the body, and is not yet ready to enter the next realm of existence. During this time, the mind can experience various sensations and images, and can reflect on its own practice and realization.

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The wisdom of light is in a many-sided way: "It's energy and it's also information—content, form and structure. It's the potential for everything."

The doctor and nurse were upset by this, and so Rinpoche relaxed his posture slightly. He, nevertheless, assumed a posture resembling a dead body. As Rinpoche turned his face, a profound feeling of peace and happiness settled on us all and spread through our minds. All of us present felt that the

The医生和护士都很生气，因此他们稍微放松了姿势。然而，他仍然保持了一种类似死者的姿势。当仁波切转开脸时，我们所有人都感到一种和平和幸福的感觉弥漫开来，每个人都能感觉到，他离我们很近。
It tells them that the terrifying bardo figures are nothing more than their own deluded mind-molecules, and that they have only "a mental body of habitual tendencies," and are therefore empty too. "So emptiness cannot harm emptiness." The bardo figures are not just a reality of the bardo itself, but also a reality of the mind itself. In the bardo world, the dead traveler's mind is its own worst enemy, and it is up to the traveler to overcome these delusions and fears in order to achieve liberation.

The traveler's mind is a complex and delicate system, and it is vulnerable to the influence of the bardo figures. The traveler must be vigilant and mindful of their own thoughts and emotions in order to avoid being swayed by these figures. The traveler must also be patient and compassionate with themselves, as they are going through a difficult and challenging time.

The traveler's mind is also vulnerable to the influence of the bardo figures in their dreams. In the bardo world, dreams are a powerful tool for the traveler, as they can help them to gain insight into their own mind and to understand the nature of the bardo.

The traveler is encouraged to use their dreams as a tool for self-awareness, and to use them to gain insight into their own mind. The traveler must be open to the possibility of seeing the bardo figures in their dreams, and they must be willing to interpret these dreams in order to gain insight into their own mind.

In the bardo world, the traveler must be careful to avoid being swayed by the bardo figures, and they must be vigilant in order to avoid being deluded by these figures. The traveler must be patient and compassionate with themselves, and they must be willing to use their dreams as a tool for self-awareness.

The traveler must also be aware of the bardo figures' influence on their dreams. The bardo figures are not just a reality of the bardo itself, but also a reality of the mind itself. The traveler must be careful to avoid being swayed by the bardo figures in their dreams, and they must be vigilant in order to avoid being deluded by these figures.

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The Tibetan Book of the Dead

The soul is therefore said to be an empty vessel. As the dead person's consciousness leaves the body, it is said to pass through the three gates of heaven, the moon, and the sun. The soul then enters the bardo, the intermediate state between death and rebirth. During this time, the soul can choose which realm of samsara to be reborn in, depending on the karmic conditions of the deceased. The bardo teachings emphasize the importance of purification and the cultivation of spiritual practices to guide the soul towards a beneficial rebirth.

One important aspect of the bardo teachings is the practice of the phowa, which is said to have a great impact on the soul's future. The phowa is a ritual performed by the deceased's relatives, which aims to help the soul's consciousness find its way to the appropriate realm of rebirth. If performed successfully, the phowa can help the soul to avoid unfavorable rebirths and guide it towards a beneficial one.

Another important practice is the meditation of the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities, which is said to have a powerful effect on the soul's future. This practice involves visualizing oneself as one of the deities, and focusing on the wisdom and compassion of the deity, in order to help the soul find its way to a beneficial rebirth.

In addition to these practices, the bardo teachings emphasize the importance of cultivating the three gems of the Dharma: faith, virtue, and wisdom. Cultivating these virtues during life can help to guide the soul towards a beneficial rebirth, even if the soul is in the bardo at the time of death.

In conclusion, the bardo teachings provide a powerful framework for understanding the spiritual aspect of the transition between life and death. By cultivating the appropriate practices and virtues, we can help to guide the soul towards a beneficial rebirth, even in the face of the challenges of the bardo.
In the near-death experience, the mind is momentarily released from the body, and goes through a number of experiences akin to those of the mental body in the bardo of becoming.

Many near-death experiencers describe the light itself:

You can learn so much, if you let yourself, from the grief and loss of bereavement. Bereavement can force you to look at the depth of your pain and desolation and face the immensity of your loss. This process is not easy, but it does have a purpose.

Open your heart and invoke him or her with all the pain and suffering you feel. If you feel like crying, don't hold back: let your tears flow, and really ask for help. Know that there is someone who is absolutely there for you, someone who listens to you, who understands you with love and compassion, who will surround you at that time of great need. Call to him or her for comfort.

So whatever you do, don't shut off your pain; accept your pain and remain vulnerable. However desperate you become, accept your pain and remain vulnerable. Pain means that you have a soul that is alive, a life that is worth living, a purpose that is at stake, a mission that is possible. Only by remaining vulnerable can you discover the depth of your soul.

OPEN YOUR HEART AND INVOKE HIM OR HER

Keep the heart open. You concentrate on this speck of light because as you are propelled forward you anticipate reaching this light. This light communicates to you, in an instant telekinesis your thought waves are read, regardless of language. In this experince, you have nothing to fear. I was immediately put at absolute ease. In the past if someone like a doctor had said, "It's okay, you can go," you might not have known what to do. But my guide said, "You're okay."

And so the quest goes on. But so often, tragically, friends and family of the bereaved expect them to be "back to normal" after a few months. This only intensifies their bewilderment and isolation as their grief continues, and sometimes even deepens.

At this point, you may feel like crying. Don't hold back: let your tears flow, and really ask for help. Know that there is someone who is absolutely there for you, someone who listens to you, who understands you with love and compassion, who will surround you at that time of great need. Call to him or her for comfort.

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Closer to the Light: Learning from Children's Near-Death Experiences

7

Science must try to explain the near-death experience because therein lies the key to its own growth.... History tells us that every culture in the past has had a different explanation for this phenomenon; it's one of the puzzles that just might force scientists to develop a new scientific method, one that will incorporate all the experiences of dying and the dead. We have revealed ourselves to each other. Today we are no longer afraid to speak of any of these experiences and to exchange them, for we have a common bond of love and understanding. We are all children of the same cosmic family. And now, it looks as if we are not alone in our search for the mystery of life and death. We have found that the near-death experience has something to do with the experience of life and death, and that it is not only human beings who have the potential to have such experiences. We have discovered that the same thing can happen to animals and even to plants. We have learned that the near-death experience is not just a human experience, but a universal experience.

The tradition of deloks continues in the Tibetan Himalayan regions today. These deloks are quite ordinary people, often skilled in music and dance, and are selected through a process of divination. They are believed to be able to see into the future and to communicate with the dead. The delok will be asked to describe the experience of the deceased and to convey any messages they may have. In Tibet, while the delok was undergoing his or her experience, the orifices of the body were stopped with butter, and the body was placed on a bed of straw. After a while she heard someone whom she thought was her father calling to her, and she followed him. She arrived in the room where the parinirvana ceremony was being performed, and saw her father sitting on a throne. She was given a bowl of milk and honey, and was told to drink it. She then saw a group of people sitting on the floor, and recognized them as her parents and other relatives. She was told to pay respect to them, and to remember that their love for her would continue even after they had passed away.

Another person told Margot Grey:

I was looking down into a large fit, which was filled with swirling gray mist and there were all these hands and arms reaching up and trying to grab me. I felt that I was being pulled into the fit. I was very scared, but I suddenly realized that I was not afraid of death. I was not afraid of anything. I was just floating there, and I was happy. I felt that I was in a wonderful place, and that I was seeing things that I had never seen before.

2. Other Experiences of Death

He called it a phenomenon that belongs to the natural bardo of this life. Is their experience of the light similar to the dawning of the Buddha? That higher spiritual reality is here and now, in life, if only we can discover and enter it.

When you realize that you are not dependent on anyone or anything, you can be free to live your life as you wish. You can no longer be afraid of death, because you know that you will continue to exist in some form. You can no longer be afraid of the unknown, because you know that you are not alone. You can no longer be afraid of the past, because you know that you can change it. You can no longer be afraid of the future, because you know that it will be a continuation of the present. You can no longer be afraid of the present, because you know that it is a gift.

The message of the near-death experience is one of the most important messages that we can receive from the dead. It is a message that we must all hear, and a message that we must all act on. It is a message that we must all share with others.

It is true that the near-death experience is the beginning of a journey, and that it is a doorway to a new understanding of life and death. But it is also true that the near-death experience is a message that we must all receive, and a message that we must all act on. It is a message that we must all share with others.

The delok would then return to the living world, and would report back to the family. The family would then decide what to do with the body, and would follow the advice of the delok. In Tibet, the delok was considered to be a very important person, and was respected by all the people.

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the very concept of God, because you are nothing but the mystique of the universe.

And, may I say, why have a mystique if you are nothing but the universe?

The truth is, you are not a mystique; you are the universe, and the universe is not a mystique; it is you.

The only thing that exists is the mystery of the universe.
Khyentse Rinpoche grow to be as powerful and fully enlightened as possible, to help us through the clangers of this age.

never give up hope whatever the terrors and difficulties and obstacles that rise up against them. May those obstacles ... and still bless the earth with their presence; may they take heart, as I have constantly taken heart, from the living

the spreading of wisdom into all reaches of our experience. We need bodhi-sattva lawyers, bodhisattva artists and ... consciously as channels of compassion and wisdom at every level and in every situation of society, working to transform

of how best you can do so, with whatever skill or ability you have, in whatever circumstances you find yourself. I pray then that you will come to know in the very core of your being the living truth of these words by Nyoshul Khenpo:

teaching in the modern world is how those who are following the teachings can be helped and inspired to find the right ... environment in which fully to practice them, follow them through, and come to realize and embody their heart essence.

unremembered, and to all those who go on and on being deprived of the opportunity to practice their spiritual path.

part, I felt, with amazed gratitude, that he was giving his blessing also to all that I had been trying to do for the teachings in the West over the years.

the world without his radiance: to "strive with our whole being to attain perfection."

impermanence than the passing of a supreme master, one who had seemed the very axis of the world? It made all of us who ... we can that tradition he so nobly represented. It is up to us to do what the Buddha's disciples did, when left alone in

of healing are inseparable? What I hope from this book is that it will help inspire everywhere a debate about what ... of hospital care, and in the actual treatment of the dying is urgently needed, and I hope this book will make a humble

dying, and about the spiritual nature of death and dying should be made available to all levels of society; it should be ... care, and to find the ultimate happiness that can only come from an understanding of the nature of mind and of reality"

bardo teachings be a scientific mystical dialogue, one that we can still only barely imagine, but that we seem to be on the threshold of? And what would that mean for humanity?

APPENDIX ONE

TWENTY-TWO

My Teachers

We spend millions of dollars every minute on training people to kill and destroy, and on bombs and planes and missiles. But we

"I

want every

Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro (1896-1959) was the most outstanding Tibetan master of the last century. Authority on all traditions and holder of all lineages, he was the heart of the non-partisan movement in Tibet.
Dudjom Rinpoche (1904-1987), one of Tibet's foremost yogins, scholars, and meditation masters. Considered to be the living representative of Padmasambhava, he was a prolific author and revealer of the treasures concealed by Padmasambhava.

Photo: Peri Eagleton
Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910-1991) was acknowledged as a peerless master of the Dzogchen teachings and discoverer of the spiritual treasures of Thoknyen-ab. He was the spiritual disciple of Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro and master of many important lamas, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama.
Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and Sogyal Rinpoche.

Photo: Haeko Rah.
Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche (1932-1999) was such a consummate master of Dzogchen that his disciples regarded him as the great master Longchenpa in the flesh. He was the teacher of many of the younger generation of lamas as well as a number of Western Buddhist teachers. 

Photo: Peter Fry,
Nyoshul Khenpo and Sogyal Rinpoche at the Rigpa retreat in Wales in 1986.

Photo: Nick Seehausen.
Khandro Tsering Chodron was the spiritual wife of Jamyang Khyentse Chokyi Lodro and is regarded as the foremost woman master in Tibetan Buddhism. Photo: Graham Price.
What if we are caring for a dying person who asks us to remove life-support? Kalu Rinpoche said:

"For example, a person dying in the final stages of bone cancer may develop pneumonia, which if not treated may lead to other complications. In some cases, doctors may recommend that life-support be discontinued to prevent further deterioration. It is important to discuss these options with the patient and family, and to ensure that any decision is based on the best interests of the patient."
We may not be able to save the patient's life. We may not be able to relieve the patient's suffering. Whatever we do, success in the sense of achieving the patient's goals may be impossible. We have the ability to do much good, but the outcome will be uncertain and may not be what the patient wants. We are trying to do what we can, but we may not be successful. When we try, we may cause suffering or harm. But even if it is not ultimately successful, it can never be thought of as karmically damaging or karmically negative.

When a healer is instructed by a patient to remove life-support systems, that puts the healer in a difficult position, because the patient is the one who told us to do it. The healer's intention is to help the patient and relieve suffering, but the patient may not want to do that. The karmic consequences depend upon the healer's intent because the healer will be depriving someone of the means to stay alive, regardless of the fact that it was the patient who told us to do it. If the healer intends to help the patient and relieve their suffering, then from that state of mind it seems as though acting unethically might not be harmful.

CHOOSING TO DIE

The same 1990 Gallup poll cited earlier showed that 66 percent of people in the United States believed that a person in great pain, with "no hope of improvement," had a moral right to choose euthanasia. In a recent survey, 61 percent of people said they would choose euthanasia if they were in a hospital for a month. In France, 68 percent of people said they would choose euthanasia if they were severely ill. In Japan, 24 percent of people said they would choose euthanasia if they were in a hospital for a month. In the United States, 46 percent of people said they would choose euthanasia if they were in a hospital for a month. In Japan, 24 percent of people said they would choose euthanasia if they were in a hospital for a month.

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Two Mantras hold you all in my heart, and I see you all bright and shining. There is no darkness. It is just light from Padmasambhava’s heart, pervading all of us. Thanks to the master’s blessing.

The problem comes between parents and children is a very strong. Such benefit can be worked on added bonus of that book. If our approach to our parents is marred by resentment and anger and our relationship is continually in need of our care, but for the benefit of other beings and particularly, the case, our personal

At that point it may be of use to try to explain the teachings, but paradoxical and very much concrete on the nature of the bodhisattva is preserved alternative help. Falk Reppels explains:

"The paradoxical need for explanation here is a very important. In offering the service to your father is in another encounter, you may well do with the head of your current and happiness. And a very important factor in your configuration is in a desire. And the benefit comes between parents and children is a very strong. Such benefit can be worked on added bonus of that book. If our approach to our parents is marred by resentment and anger and our relationship is continually in need of our care, but for the benefit of other beings and particularly, the case, our personal

When I thought I was dying, two years ago, I did what was natural: I cried out, and I was answered. And it took me ... dissolving. Dorothy was ready to die, but her body was not ready to let go, because her heart was strong. So each...
The Vajra Guru mantra, OM AH HUM VAJRA GURU PADMA SIDDHI HUM, is pronounced by Tibetans: Om Ah Hung Benza Guru Pema Siddhi Hung. This exploration of its meaning is based on explanations by Dudjom Rinpoche and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

OM AH HUM

When we invoke Padmasambhava, we recall his wisdom mind by saying the recitation of OM AH HUM. This is the essence of Padmasambhava’s essence, and the karmic deity of Tibet. There is a famous saying that the Buddha of Compassion became so embedded in the Tibetan consciousness that any child who could say the word “mother” could also recite the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM. This is what is meant by “the Vajra Guru Mantra, OM AH HUM, is the essence of Padmasambhava.”

The syllables OM AH HUM have outer, inner, and “secret” meanings. At each of these levels, however, OM stands for the body, AH for the speech, and HUM for the mind. Together, the three syllables represent the transformation of the body, speech, and mind of all the buddhas.

In the outer level, OM AH HUM bring the realization of the outer aspects of the nature of mind: OM brings the realization of its transforming Energy and Compassion, AH brings the realization of its radiance Nature, and HUM brings the realization of its subtle Essence.

SIDDHI HUM

SIDDHI HUM is pronounced to invoke the radiance and all-pervasive presence of the buddha, theSource of all benefits, as well as to invoke the qualities of the buddha. AHHUM stand for the speech and manifestation of the buddha. AHHUM brings the realization of the inner aspects of the nature of mind: AHHUM brings the realization of its radiance Nature, and AHHUM brings the realization of its skylike Essence.

The Vajra Guru mantra, OM AH HUM VAJRA GURU PADMA SIDDHI HUM, is pronounced by Tibetans: Om Ah Hung Benza Guru Pema Siddhi Hung. This exploration of its meaning is based on explanations by Dudjom Rinpoche and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.
6. In the Tibetan Book of the Dead, Jampa Yeshe explains that in its true sense, it is a wind that is highly turbulent when it blows. 11 The Sanskrit word prana expresses mind’s aspect of mobility, and mind its aspect of awareness, but they are essentially one and the same thing.

9. There are also certain buddhas who pledged that whoever hears their name at the moment of death will be helped. Simply reciting their names into the ear of the dying person can be of benefit. This is also done for animals when they die.

3. From Francesca Fremantle and Chogyam Trungpa,

4. Psychotherapists say too that one of the core tasks for their clients is to develop self-respect and “positive self-esteem” and to allow them the experience of well-being that is an essential part of our development as human beings.


3. A dakini is a female embodiment of enlightened energy.

2. The three kayas are the three aspects of the true nature of mind described in Chapter 4: its empty essence, radiant nature, and all-pervasive energy; see also Chapter 21, “The Universal Process.”


29. In addition, all my attempts to verify my experiences were met with skepticism and hostility. I also made many attempts to accomplish this with the aid of a medium, but I am convinced that the medium was not fully accurate.


31. The reason why I believe in the existence of these spirits is that they are often able to influence me, and have done so in my life. They have also appeared to me in my dreams, and I have had many other experiences that seem to confirm their existence.

32. This account follows Khandro Tsering Chodron’s memory of Lama Tseten’s death.

33. A dakini is a female embodiment of enlightened energy.

34. This is the account of a teaching given by Kalu Rinpoche in 1983, as recorded by the writer.

35. The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Jampa Yeshe explains that in its true sense, it is a wind that is highly turbulent when it blows. 11 The Sanskrit word prana expresses mind’s aspect of mobility, and mind its aspect of awareness, but they are essentially one and the same thing.

36. The Three Kayas.

37. The Three Kayas.

38. The Three Kayas.

39. The Three Kayas.

40. The Three Kayas.
Chapter 21. In this passage, I make great effort of the mind's suggestions to Dr. Elyn Saks, whom I became interested in The Known World. The Dead, edited by Israeli and Canadian, was scheduled to be published by Penguin in 1999.


5. See Chapter 21. In this passage, I am most grateful for the kind suggestions of Dr. Gyurme Dorje, whose translation of The Known World of the Dead, edited by Israeli and Canadian, was scheduled to be published by Penguin in 1999.


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