Recitation Text for the Intermediate State

Guru Padmasambhava

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Preface

Preface

This text has been compiled from the translation by lay practitioner Sun Jingfeng of the Esoteric Teaching of Liberation Through Hearing in the Intermediate State (hereafter, Intermediate State). Because many currently circulated recitation

editions add modern explanatory passages for recitation, whereas the original text of Intermediate State states: “The intermediate-state body possesses all six sense faculties and also has karmic powers. It is intelligent and keen, nine times more so than before death,” ritual practitioners need not worry that the deceased will be unable to understand the instructions. Therefore, this compilation focuses on using the original text in its entirety for recitation.

I. This recitation manual is based on the 1994 edition of Intermediate State published by the Shanghai Book Bureau. Its selections are arranged in sequence according to the four phases of the intermediate state. Each phase is further explained in three parts: “Time for Performing the Practice,” “Instructions for Practice,” and “Conducting the Recitation.”

II. To facilitate performing the practice each day, a time-indexed table of contents has been added. Practitioners may consult the relevant instructions for conducting the practice according to the time and number of days since the deceased’s death.

III. The section “Conducting the Recitation” uses the original text of Intermediate State throughout. The bold, italicized orange text indicates the recitation passages, for the convenience of those performing the practice.

IV. All images in this text are from the internet and are for reference only.

V. The matters requiring attention and the explanations in performing the practice draw as far as possible on the original text of Intermediate State. However, to facilitate rapid reading and understanding of the instructional methods, the compilation team has rendered certain original expressions into plain language and rearranged the order of some explanations.

For a fuller understanding, one should still study the original text of Intermediate State and consult Master Yuanyin’s Essential Explanation of the Intermediate State.

Birth and death are great matters in human life; one should treat the end with reverence and honor those who have gone before. To transcend birth and death is all the more the goal and proper duty of practitioners. Now, sustained by the Buddha’s blessing, we understand how one may receive deliverance from the perilous passage of the intermediate state. We should all the more cherish the present, make use of this life and this body, and undertake solid, firsthand practice and realization of liberation: transcend the ocean of emotion and consciousness, cross the river of birth and death, and not wait until the moment of death to place our hopes in others’ rites for the deceased. If this is recognized here and now, the work of assisting the deceased is complete.

Respectfully compiled by the Materials Compilation Team

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Fourteen Important Points to Observe When Assisting the Deceased

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(I) This practice is commonly used in Tibetan funeral rites to assist the deceased. According to Tibetan accounts, the intermediate-state periods described in the text and the liberation attained by the deceased after the practice has been performed have been confirmed through the actual postmortem experience of lamas who attained the highest realization, in which birth and death are one.

Therefore, both readers and those performing the practice should have ample faith and utmost sincerity; then both the living and the deceased will receive great benefit. The deceased may thereby attain liberation, while the living, simply by devoutly reading it seven times and thereby deeply imprinting it upon the field of the eight consciousnesses, may liberate themselves at the time of death even if no one else performs the practice for them.

(II) The principles of the Buddhist sūtras are profound. Those who have never studied them cannot help but feel overwhelmed by them, much less this scripture, which is a great teaching of the esoteric section. Its principles and specialized terminology are rarely found in Exoteric Buddhist sūtras. Those performing the practice to assist the deceased may therefore wonder whether the deceased will understand it.

Here I plainly advise readers: if you are studying it for yourselves, it is best to attain a thorough understanding of the principles of the text. If you are performing the practice for another, you need only read according to this scripture, reciting aloud with every word and phrase clearly articulated and with one-pointed attention; the deceased will certainly be liberated. Why? First, this practice carries the blessing of great power, and its efficacy is equivalent to reciting true words and esoteric mantras. Second, during the intermediate state, the deceased's six sense faculties are keen and clear. Even someone who was dull in life and could not recognize a single character may attain liberation upon hearing it enter the ear.

(III) In Chinese regions, it is customary to invite monastics to perform the Flaming Mouth ritual for the deceased.

The Yogācāra Flaming Mouth food-offering is originally one practice of the esoteric section and is indeed beneficial to the deceased. Yet the Flaming Mouth is the Buddha who presides over the realm of hungry ghosts, which is one of the six

realms. A deceased person in the intermediate state will not necessarily fall into the realm of hungry ghosts. It is therefore better to replace the Flaming Mouth ritual with this practice, whose merit in benefiting the deceased is greater.

In inland China, lamas, acharyas, and vajra masters are all difficult to encounter. Ordinary working people likewise have no leisure to engage in recitation. It is best for learned monastics who have studied Esoteric Buddhism or who possess moral discipline, or for lay practitioners well versed in the practice of phowa and this teaching, to specialize in teaching recitation for others and make it their vocation. In this way, they can aid the deceased while also accumulating provisions for their own rebirth; one undertaking brings two benefits.

(IV) When the complete esoteric practice is performed, it may be divided into four stages:

A. A dying person should exhibit signs of death. First, the five faculties deteriorate: when the eye faculty fails, vision becomes unclear and the eyeballs cease to move; when the ear faculty fails, one cannot hear sounds; when the nose faculty fails, the bridge of the nose becomes crooked; when the tongue faculty fails, speech becomes labored; and when the body faculty fails, the body becomes difficult to move.

Second, the four elements dissolve: the skeletal frame belongs to the earth element, and when it fails, the body becomes rigid; blood belongs to the water element, and when it fails, it congeals and stops flowing; body heat belongs to the fire element, and when it fails, the body becomes cold; breath belongs to the wind element, and when it fails, exhalation exceeds inhalation, the throat makes sounds, and finally the breath ceases altogether.

When such signs of death appear and the deceased is critically ill, the practitioner and family members should pay close attention. When one or two initial signs appear, the practice of phowa should be performed for the person. If the dying person was already able to practice it personally during life and had received verification, there is no need for another person to perform it again; instead, recite more mantras for assisting the deceased or perform Buddhist rites.

For those who have never studied Esoteric Buddhism, the recitations to be performed at this time are as follows: (1) Instructions on Seeking the Great Way Through the Clear Light; (2) Instructions on the Dissolution of the Four Elements; (3) Verses for Arousing the Resolve to Recognize the Clear Light at the Time of Death; and (4) Direct Instructions on the Clear Light.

These should be recited in repeated cycles, without counting the number of recitations. This is the first stage: performing the practice before death.

B. When all the signs of death have appeared and the breath has ceased, wait about twenty minutes, then additionally recite the following scriptural verses: (5) Visualization of the Yidam and Maṇḍala; (6) Instructions on the Intermediate State of Dharmatā and the Six Essential Verses; and (7) Instructions for Recognizing One's Original Nature. These, together with the preceding four texts, should be recited repeatedly without counting the number of recitations. The recitation period is three and a half to four days. At this time, the deceased is in the Intermediate State at the Time of Death; this is therefore the second stage of the practice.

C. By the fifth day, the period of the Intermediate State at the Time of Death has passed and the deceased has entered the Intermediate State of Dharmatā. At that point, follow the provisions of this practice by reciting one kind of scriptural verse each day, in sequence and without disorder. Recite in this manner for fourteen days, making eighteen days in all when counted together with the second stage. This is the third stage of the practice.

D. After the Intermediate State of Dharmatā has ended, the deceased enters the Intermediate State of Becoming. Continue to follow the provisions of this practice by reciting the complete second volume of this scripture each day for thirty-five consecutive days, making fifty-three days in all when counted together with the preceding stages, until the completion of the forty-nine-day period. Proceed in sequence and without disorder. This is the fourth stage of the practice.

If this stage seems too long, it may be divided so that one volume is recited over three days: on the first day, recite through Instruction 12; on the second day, recite from Instruction 12 through Instruction 19; and on the third day, recite from Instruction 19 to the end of the volume. Beginning on the fourth day, start again from the beginning and recite one complete volume every three days in sequence, until the completion of the forty-nine-day period. Although recitation of the entire second volume formally begins on the nineteenth day after death, for the deceased's safety it may be added to the recitations of the preceding stages from the time of death; this is even more complete.

(V) During the period of practice, there is no way to know on which day the deceased attains liberation; one can only continue the recitations in sequence until they are completed. In cases of special difficulty, however, it may be possible to reduce them in light of the deceased's circumstances during life. The scripture does not specify how this should be done. Based on the meaning contained in this practice, the translator proposes the following method of reduction:

A. For one who practiced Esoteric Buddhism or read this teaching during life and possessed moral discipline, recitation may stop after the second stage, lasting three and a half or four days.

B. For one who practiced Exoteric Buddhism during life and possessed moral discipline, recitation may stop after the third stage, lasting eighteen days.

C. For one who had no practice whatsoever during life and did not possess wholesome conduct, the entire text should be recited, lasting fifty-three days. It is also essential to add recitation of the complete second volume immediately after death.

The above gives only a general outline. Whether to increase or reduce the recitations depends entirely upon the circumstances, as weighed by the deceased's family and the practitioner. Moreover, Buddhist power bestows blessings during the practice. After the completion of each intermediate-state period, it is also quite suitable to pray silently and earnestly before the Buddhas and bodhisattvas for an indication of whether the deceased has attained liberation, and then cast lots to determine whether to continue or stop.

In former times, Master Yanshou sought an indication before the Buddha as to whether he should cultivate dhyāna or Pure Land practice. Seven times he drew the lot for the Pure Land, and so he resolved to cultivate the Pure Land. So long as one has utmost sincerity and deep faith, there will invariably be a response, like an echo.

(VI) If someone dies in a distant place and the family receives the news only afterward, they should calculate from the date of death which intermediate state the deceased is in according to the schedule prescribed in the scripture, and perform the practice by reciting the scriptural verses for that day. There is no need to make up the recitation of the scriptural verses for intermediate states that have already passed.

(VII) During the performance of the practice, apart from arrangements prescribed in the scripture, the place before the patient or where the body is laid out must be kept quiet and peaceful. There must not be crowds of people or a confusion of voices that might disturb the consciousness of the dying or deceased person. Above all, family members must not wail, and the killing of living beings must be avoided.

(VIII) The scripture instructs that, before the deceased person's outer breath has ceased, family members should first move the body into the lion's reclining posture, the so-called auspicious posture. According to the various Exoteric Buddhist books on attending the dying, when a person is near death and the four elements are separating, the body should not be touched, lest this increase the person's suffering and give rise to anger, thus preventing rebirth. Even clothing should be put on only after at least eight hours have passed following death. Thus, whether to move the body should be decided in light of the circumstances.

(IX) The term yidam refers to a particular Buddha or bodhisattva in whom one ordinarily places faith and whom one practices, taking that figure as one's object of reliance. Tibetan custom commonly employs the six-syllable great bright mantra, just as people in Chinese regions, regardless of age or sex, can all recite “Namo Amitābha Buddha.”

In this practice, the deceased is repeatedly instructed: “If you have no fixed yidam, take the Great Compassionate Protector as your yidam.” This is because Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva is taken as the yidam in order that it may be more easily impressed upon the deceased's consciousness. In Chinese regions, since everyone knows of Amitābha Buddha, when performing the practice one may add after the words “the Great Compassionate Protector as yidam” the phrase “or take Amitābha Buddha of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss as the yidam and protector,” so that the deceased may more readily understand and attain liberation. This may be applied flexibly by the practitioner, provided it does not depart from the intent of the scripture.

(X) If the deceased has passed beyond the forty-nine-day period without attaining liberation and has not yet been reborn in another realm, the section entitled “Dharma Gate for Protection Against the Ghostly Messengers Who Pursue Life” in the second volume of this scripture states: “The mind-born body of the intermediate state, through changing thoughts, may manifest as a hungry ghost.

All the bodies of rākṣasas and malevolent spirits dwelling in the spaces above and below, capable of displaying every kind of supernatural transformation, are mind-born bodies of the intermediate state. Through changing thoughts, they acquire such bodies,” and so forth. Once the newly deceased has passed through the period of practice, whether they have attained liberation or taken rebirth cannot be known.

If the deceased has manifested as a ghost or spirit in empty space—what is commonly called a wandering soul or wild ghost—without anyone to rescue and liberate them, their suffering is most grievous. Therefore, in Tibetan custom, it is necessary to perform meritorious Buddhist rites within the first hundred days after a death, on the anniversaries of a person's birth and death, and at annual festivals. Ancient Chinese custom is the same. The appended section at the end of the second volume of this scripture contains sūtras and mantras for recitation on behalf of deceased parents, relatives, and dependentless wandering spirits, as well as when one sees beings killed and is unable to rescue them. These may be consulted and adopted as appropriate.

(XI) The various true words and esoteric mantras listed in the appendix possess extremely great power and are simple to recite.

Among them is the “Mantra of Liberation Through Hearing,” which, as this scripture says, brings liberation as soon as it is recited aloud and heard by the ear. This mantra has only five characters, yet its merit equals that of reciting the entire scripture. Then there is the “Great Secret Mantra of Original Awakening,” namely the “Heart Mantra of Samantabhadra, King Tathāgata,” which has only seven characters. The “Mantra of the Assembly of the Hundred Peaceful and Wrathful Deities” is the dhāraṇī encompassing the peaceful and wrathful maṇḍalas of this scripture; reciting it once likewise equals reading and reciting the entire text. Reciting the “Dhāraṇī of the Diamond-Cutter Sūtra” once equals reciting ninety million copies of the Diamond Sūtra.

The “Six-Realm Vajra Mantra” has only six characters. Its merits are all described in the appendix, and each of these mantras is indispensable for assisting the deceased. The merits and power of the “Rebirth Mantra of Akṣobhya Buddha of the East,” the “Rebirth Mantra of Amitābha Buddha of the West,” and the “King Mantra of Śākyamuni Buddha for Extinguishing All Evil Destinies” are likewise described in the appendix. One need only have unwavering faith; then spiritual response and communion will naturally occur.

(12) Although this Dharma is unsurpassed Esoteric Buddhism, it may be expounded publicly. As the scripture says: “For a person who is near death, anyone who understands clearly the words, phrases, and meanings of this text and can articulate them fluently may recite it according to the text.” Thus, one who performs this practice need not be restricted to someone who has previously received Esoteric Dharma. It further says: “Recite it widely before the assembly, and explain it widely and in detail.” Thus, it is evidently unlike other esoteric teachings, which are kept secret and transmitted only to suitable recipients. Readers who may doubt whether this Esoteric Dharma should be publicly circulated may set their minds at ease.

(13) Esoteric Buddhism places foremost importance on transmission from teacher to disciple. Therefore, when assisting the deceased, one should respectfully invite a Vajra Acharya master who has received this Dharma to transmit it; only then is it in accordance with the proper procedure.

If circumstances do not at once come together, then whenever one reads or recites it, one may with utmost sincerity and reverence visualize Guru Padmasambhava, who transmitted this Dharma, or visualize the Great Compassionate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva as one’s own guru, present above one’s head or in the space before one, expounding this Dharma. One then follows and recites it, and may likewise receive blessings. In this way, both the living and the dead benefit. For this Dharma flows entirely from great compassion; the great master is the principal transmitter of this Dharma, and the vast spiritual responsiveness of the Great Compassionate Sage is such that he manifests himself at every time and in every realm, ever responding

to sounds and thoughts as they arise. Nevertheless, when conditions later permit, one should still request transmission from a teacher, as this is more in accordance with the Dharma.

(14) According to the customs of our country, the body is provisionally encoffined three days after death and finally encoffined seven days after death; on the day of final encoffining, the coffin is covered, sealed, and nailed shut. This presumably reflects the belief that, during the first three or four days after death, the consciousness of the deceased has not yet completely left the body, and also guards against the possibility of revival. Under Buddhist monastic regulations, monks seated in urns are cremated only after three seven-day periods have passed.

According to the instructions of this scripture, although the outer breath has ceased after death, the inner breath has not yet ended; this is the stage in which consciousness is stunned and unconscious. For ordinary people, this stage usually lasts three and a half days. For those with meditative stability, however, it may last four days or even one seven-day period before consciousness can completely leave the body.

Today cremation is widely practiced in many places. It conserves financial and material resources as well as time; it is a good method, well intended, with many advantages, and it also accords with Buddhist regulations. Yet, for the safety of the deceased, one must never cremate someone in the evening who has died that morning. It would seem preferable to retain the old custom: in cities, the body should be transported after death to a refrigerated room at a funeral home and encoffined only after three days. In rural areas, where refrigeration is unavailable, a simple coffin may be used provisionally.

After one seven-day period has passed, the body may then be cremated. Or one may follow the method of Muslims: wrap the body in cloth and place it in a box; at burial, remove the bottom of the box so that the body enters the earth. In this way, the safety of the deceased can be protected, material and financial resources can be conserved, and the work of the family members need not be hindered. This special word is added for the attention of those arranging funerals.

阶段	时段		念诵行法	念诵时间及遍数	行法区别		
第一阶段：临命终时	死亡以前	一、为五根败坏：眼根坏则视觉不明眼珠不动；耳根坏则耳不闻声；鼻根坏则鼻柱歪斜；舌根坏则语言涩滞；身根坏则身难转动。 二、为四大消融：骨骸属“地大”，坏则僵硬；血液属“水大”，坏则凝止；体温属“火大”，坏则身冷；气息属“风大”，坏则出气多入气少，喉中作响，终于断绝。此种死相，当亡者病危之际，行法者及其家属，即宜充分注意。	在其死相初现一二种时，应为之修颇哇法。如亡者生前已能自修，并有验证，即无须他人再修，则为之多念度亡等咒或修作佛事。 若对密法素无研习者，此时所作之念诵如下： （一）指示明光寻求大道文 （二）四大融入指示 （三）发心证认死位明光文 （四）明光直指教授	应不计遍数，轮次诵之。	生前曾修密法或曾读本法具有戒行者，可诵至第二阶段为止，为期三日有半或四日。	生前曾修显教具有戒行者，可诵至第三阶段为止，为期十八日。	生前毫无修持，亦未具有善行者，则宜全部诵完，为期五十三日，并须在死亡后，即可添加下卷全经同时念诵为要。
第二阶段：死位中有	0–4 天	亡者死相全现，气息已断时，约经过二十分钟。	（一）指示明光寻求大道文 （二）四大融入指示 （三）发心证认死位明光文 （四）明光直指教授 （五）本尊道场观 （六）法性中有指授及六句要偈 （七）令其认识本来面目教授	轮次念诵，不计遍数。念诵时间为三日半至四日。			
第三阶段：法性中有	5–18 天	迄至第五日“死位中有”时期已过，入于“法性中有”时期	即当依照本法所规定，每日各诵经偈一种，顺次为之，不得紊乱。	如是念诵十四日。			
第四阶段：轮回中有	19–53 天	法性中有期满后，入于“轮回中有”时期	每日各诵本经下卷全文，连诵三十五日（与前并计共为五十三日），至七七期满为止。	在此阶段中，如嫌太长，则可分作三日念一卷：即第一日念至导示第十二为止； 第二日从导示十二念至导示第十九； 第三日从导示第十九念至卷末。 第四日起再从头顺次每三日念一全卷，至七七期满为止。			

First-Phase Practice: Instructions on the First Clear Light in the Initial Phase (Dying Stage)

First-Stage Practice: Instructions on the First Clear Light in the Initial Phase (the Dying Stage)

Verse of Homage

Dharmakāya Amitābha, the Buddha of Infinite Light; sambhogakāya lotus-born peaceful and wrathful deities;

Nirmāṇakāya Guru Padmasambhava, protector of beings; before the venerable guru of the three kāyas, I pay homage.

v. Practice Before the Outer Breath Ceases

I. Time for Performing the Practice

1. The first-stage practice should be performed when the signs of impending death appear. (For the “signs of death,” see item (IV) in Fourteen Important Points to Observe When Assisting the Deceased.)

2. At this time, the deceased person’s outer breath is about to cease but has not yet stopped—that is, before the final exhalation has ended.

II. Instructions for Performing the Practice

1. A yogin should, upon the appearance of the signs of death, rely on the method of liberation through recognizing the signs of death and observe them carefully. When the characteristics of death are fully manifest, the practice of phowa should be applied. Recalling the instructions as taught, the person may attain liberation on their own. If transference has already been accomplished (that is, if consciousness has already been transferred to the Pure Land through the practice of phowa), there is no need to practice this esoteric teaching of liberation through hearing.

2. If this has not been accomplished, the practice should be performed beside the deceased.

3. If the body is not present (see Note 1), perform this practice while seated at the deceased's bed or dwelling place.

[Note 1] Note: If the deceased is far away, one may also request by letter a photograph taken during their lifetime, a corner of a garment worn close to the body, or an object formerly used by them. Place it before oneself and call the deceased by name; the deceased may then respond to the call and come.

4. Regarding the person performing the practice: it is most excellent if the deceased had previously invited an empowerment master of the Esoteric Dharma lineage and that master can be present. Next best is a fellow student or Dharma companion who has received the samaya precepts together with the deceased, or an authentic spiritual friend of the same Dharma lineage. If none of these can be found, one should seek an intelligent person who clearly understands the words and meaning of this text, speaks articulately with a clear voice, and can read and recite the scripture properly many times.

5. Before the deceased person's outer breath has ceased, the practitioner should first reposition the body, placing it on the right side in the lion's posture: lie on the right side, bend the left leg, place the left palm over the left knee, support the right cheek with the right hand, and use the little finger to close the right nostril, leaving only the left nostril open for breathing. This is the auspicious sleeping posture in Esoteric Buddhism.

6. Then count the pulse. If the deceased appears to have fallen asleep and the pulse stops intermittently, press firmly at once to prevent sleep. At that time, the light of wind-wisdom can remain in the central channel, avadhūtī, and will not reverse; consciousness will certainly depart through the brahma aperture at the crown of the head.

(The light of wind-wisdom: this is what the lay practitioners Zhang and Zhao translated from the English text as "psychic heat." The Sanskrit avadhūtī, also called avadhūtī, is within the body's central channel. The root of our life is contained there,

and external winds also gather there. That is, the light of wind-wisdom remains forever unmoving; when it is swept along by the wind-energy that sustains life, a movement brings illness, and an opening brings death.)

(Brahma aperture: at the exact center of the crown of the human head there is an opening called the brahma aperture. For those who practice phowa, this is the aperture referred to in “opening the crown and inserting grass.” When ordinary people are dying, only if their consciousness leaves the body through this aperture is it the proper path to rebirth. If it leaves through another bodily opening, they fall into the path of rebirth. As the scriptures say: “From the crown, one is reborn as a sage; from the eyes, in heaven; from the chest, among hungry ghosts; from the abdomen, as animals; from the knees downward, in the hells through the soles of the feet.”)

7. Essential points for recitation: At this time, the person performing the practice should remain beside the deceased as much as possible, call the deceased by name, and recite the instructions. Bring the lips close to the ear (but do not touch the ear), repeat the exhortations without counting the number of times, and impress them deeply upon the deceased’s mind.

Once the dying person hears this Dharma, they will certainly recall the meaning of the guru’s instructions and, immediately and without interruption, recognize the clear light of their own essence and attain liberation. There is no doubt of this.

III. Conducting the Recitation

(I) Instructions on Seeking the Great Way Through the Clear Light

Alas, virtuous man (name): [If the person is female, say instead, “virtuous woman.” The same applies below.] The time has now come for you to seek the true Great Way. Your breath is ceasing but has not yet ceased. Within the intermediate state, what is called the first clear light is now appearing. First recall the meaning of the guru’s instructions.

When your breath has ceased, all dharmas will be limpidly empty and quiescent, without any remainder. Clear emptiness will appear, boundless within nonexistence, wholly transparent, naked, and undefiled. At that time, your own inner wisdom of realization will suddenly appear. Know that this is your Original Face. I shall also assist you with these instructions.

(II) Instructions on the Dissolution of the Four Elements

Now the signs of the “earth element” dissolving into the “water element” are appearing!

Next, the signs of the “water element” dissolving into the “fire element” are appearing!

Then, the signs of the “fire element” dissolving into the “wind element” are appearing!

As the signs of death appear in the deceased one by one, the person performing the practice must speak gently and softly, repeatedly exhorting and calling to the deceased, close to the ear:

Attend carefully! Attend carefully! Please arouse the supreme resolve; listen attentively and do not let your mind become confused.

If the deceased is a teacher, elder, or senior, add only this exhortation:

Venerable Teacher! (or Honored Elder) Please focus your mind carefully!

For a vajra brother or sister in the same lineage, or for an ordinary person, call them by name and recite the following text.

(III) Verses for Arousing the Resolve to Recognize the Clear Light at the Time of Death

Alas, virtuous man (name): What is called death has now come upon you. You should reflect carefully, arouse the supreme resolve, and say to yourself: “Alas! The time of my death has now arrived. In these circumstances of death, I must vigorously arouse the compassionate bodhicitta. For the benefit and happiness of all sentient beings throughout the realm of space, may I realize perfect Buddhahood.”

From this moment onward, you should further vow, for the benefit of all sentient beings, to realize the dharmakāya clear light at the time of death and, within it, attain the supreme siddhi of Mahāmudrā. Having attained it, you will benefit all sentient beings. Even if you do not attain it then, you should recognize it in the intermediate state and realize the “Mahāmudrā body of union in the intermediate state,” manifesting in response to conditions to benefit all sentient beings equal in number to space. Focus your mind, bring forth this resolve in accordance with it, and hold firmly without relinquishing it. You should also remember without fail the instructions transmitted by the guru and the regular practices you have cultivated in daily life.

The person performing the practice should bring the lips close to the ear and speak with the utmost clarity, without allowing even a moment of stray thought to intrude, so that the deceased may experience this. If the deceased is a teacher, elder, or spiritual friend more venerable than oneself, say:

Honored Elder: Such clear light of the essential nature is now appearing before you. Please begin your practice at once.

If the deceased is a peer or another person, call them by name and recite the following:

(IV) Direct Instructions on the Clear Light (Recite this text repeatedly close to the ear when the outer breath is about to cease but has not yet stopped.)

Alas, virtuous man (name): Listen attentively and do not let your mind become confused! The pure, wondrous clear light of dharmatā is now beginning to appear before you. You must recognize it at once.

Alas, virtuous man: Your present consciousness, your own wisdom of realization, is lucid and radiant. No substantial entity, appearance, form, color, or intrinsic nature can be found; it is empty, limpid, and clear. This is Samantabhadrī, the Mother Buddha of dharmatā. Within your own wisdom of realization, there is openness and ease in original emptiness; your own wisdom of realization, quiescent yet illuminating, does not cease and shines brilliantly. This is Samantabhadra Tathāgata, the wisdom of realization.

In your own wisdom of realization, no substantial entity whatsoever can be found; its essence and appearance are empty and quiescent. Your own wisdom of realization abides brilliantly and clearly, beyond all discrimination. This is the dharmakāya of the Tathāgata. Clear and empty are not separate; abiding in the great mass of light, this is the indestructible Buddha of light beyond birth and death. Recognizing this is supreme. When you recognize the empty luminosity of your own wisdom of realization as Buddha, you directly behold it for yourself within that wisdom of realization. This is to abide in the Buddha's mind-seal.

Recite the preceding four passages aloud three to seven times. Once the deceased understands them, they will first recall the guru's instructions; second, experience their own inner wisdom of realization as naked and undefiled, recognizing it as the clear light; and third, recognize their own Original Face, become the dharmakāya beyond separation or union, and certainly attain liberation.

v. Practice Immediately After the Outer Breath Has Ceased

I. Time for Performing the Practice

1. Wait until the deceased person's outer breath has ceased, at what ordinary people call the "stupor stage" (a general term for unconsciousness or stupor; Western medicine considers it apparent death). At this time, consciousness has not yet completely left the body. The duration of this state is uncertain. Generally, those

well established in practice, firm in quiescent samādhi, and possessing superior channels remain in it longer.

2. At this time, the practice must be performed while the breath-energies in the left and right channels have not yet disappeared.

3. When the outer breath has just ceased, the inner breath still remains. For an ordinary deceased person, this stage lasts about the time needed to eat a meal, approximately twenty to thirty minutes.

II. Instructions for Performing the Practice

1. Once the outer breath has completely ceased, firmly press the pulse points on both sides and clearly convey the four texts above. At that time, the light of wind-wisdom can remain in the central channel, avadhūtī, and will not reverse. Consciousness will further manifest as the essential clear light beyond conceptual elaboration and will certainly depart through the brahma aperture at the crown of the head.

2. If the foregoing practice is missed, the breath-energies subsequently reverse. According to the good or evil karmic force accumulated during life, the light of wind-wisdom escapes from the central channel into the left and right channels. At that time, the appearances of the “intermediate state” suddenly arise.

3. Taking advantage of this critical juncture, the practitioner must earnestly provide the instructions in “(I) Instructions on Seeking the Great Way Through the Clear Light,” repeating them without counting the number of times and diligently exhorting the deceased to arouse the resolve.

4. This text must be applied repeatedly before yellow fluid emerges from any of the deceased’s sense openings. (After a person’s outer breath has ceased, yellow fluid will necessarily emerge from one bodily opening. In those of extremely grave evil karma or weak channels and the like, the fluid emerges especially quickly, flowing immediately after the breath ceases and not stopping even for the snap of a finger. In slower cases, it may take as long as the time needed to eat a meal. The slower cases are preferable.)

IV. Conducting the Recitation

(I) Instructions on Seeking the Great Way Through the Clear Light (This passage should be recited with special emphasis and repeatedly)

Alas! Noble son (so-and-so): [If the deceased is female, address her instead as “noble woman.” The same applies throughout below.] The time has now come for you to seek the true Great Way. Although your breath has ceased, it has not yet ended

completely. The first clear light of the intermediate state now appears before you. First recollect the meaning of the instructions given by your guru.

When your breath ceases completely, all dharmas are serenely empty and still, without any remainder. Clear light appears, luminous emptiness boundless as space, wholly transparent, naked, and undefiled. At that time, your innate wisdom of direct realization will suddenly arise. Know that this is your Original Face. I shall also simultaneously assist and instruct you.

(II) Instructions on the Dissolution of the Four Elements

The signs of the “earth element” dissolving into the “water element” now appear!

Next, the signs of the “water element” dissolving into the “fire element” appear!

Then, the signs of the “fire element” dissolving into the “wind element” appear!

As the signs of death appear one by one in the deceased, the ritual practitioner must speak gently and softly, repeatedly exhorting and calling to the deceased’s ear:

Attend carefully! Attend carefully! Please arouse a sublime resolve; listen attentively and do not let your mind become distracted.

If the deceased is a teacher or senior, simply add this instruction:

Revered Master! (or Honored Elder) Please concentrate your mind carefully and recollect!

For Dharma brothers and sisters of the Vajra family, or for ordinary people, call the person by name and recite the following text.

(III) Verses for Arousing the Resolve to Recognize the Clear Light at the Time of Death

Alas! Noble son (so-and-so): What is called death now confronts you. You should reflect carefully, arouse such a sublime resolve, and say to yourself: “Alas! The time of my death has now come. In these circumstances of death, I must arouse with all my strength the compassionate mind of bodhicitta. For the benefit and happiness of all sentient beings throughout the realm of space, may I realize perfect Buddhahood.”

Furthermore, beginning now, for the benefit of all sentient beings, may you realize the dharmakāya clear light at the time of death. Within it, may you attain the supreme siddhi of Mahāmudrā; having attained it, may you benefit all sentient beings. Even if this is not attained, may you recognize it in the intermediate state and attain the Mahāmudrā body of union in the intermediate state, manifesting in response to conditions and benefiting all sentient beings as vast as space.

Concentrate your mind, arouse this resolve in accord with it, and hold fast without relinquishing it. You should also recollect without fail the instructions transmitted by your guru and the regular practices you have undertaken in ordinary times.

The ritual practitioner should place his lips close to the deceased's ear and speak with the utmost clarity, without allowing a single instant of deluded thought to intrude, enabling the deceased to experience it. When the outer breath has completely ceased, press firmly on the pulse points on both sides and clearly say the following. If the deceased is a teacher, elder, or spiritual friend more venerable than oneself, say:

Honored Elder: Such clear light of the fundamental nature now appears before you. Please begin your practice at once.

If the deceased is a peer or another person, address them by name and say the following:

(IV) Direct Instructions on the Clear Light

Alas! Noble son (so-and-so): Listen attentively and do not be distracted! The wondrous, luminous, pure light of dharmatā has now begun to appear before you. You must recognize it at once.

Alas! Noble son: At this very moment, your consciousness—your innate wisdom of direct realization—is vividly radiant. No substance, appearance, form, color, or intrinsic nature can be found; it is empty, clear, and lucid. This is Samantabhadrī, the Buddha Mother of dharmatā. Within primordial emptiness, your innate wisdom of direct realization is empty, still, and open; this innate wisdom is quiescent yet illuminating, unceasing, radiant, and resplendent. This is Samantabhadra Tathāgata, the wisdom of realization.

Your innate wisdom of direct realization is wholly without any obtainable substance; its essence and appearance are empty and still. Your innate wisdom of direct realization abides brilliantly and lucidly, beyond all discrimination. This is the dharmakāya of the Tathāgata. Luminosity and emptiness are inseparable; abiding within a great mass of light, this is the indestructible Buddha of clear light beyond birth and death. Recognizing this is supreme. Recognize the empty luminosity of your innate wisdom of direct realization as Buddha; thereby, within that innate wisdom, you yourself directly behold it. This is to abide in the Buddha's Mind-Seal.

Recite the above four passages aloud three to seven times. If the deceased can recognize the first clear light—that is, the initial clear light indicated above—liberation may be attained immediately.

Selected Mantras and Esoteric Dhāraṇīs in the Appendix

(1) Mantra of Liberation Through Hearing:

Ābǐ jiădāng gā.

(2) Great Mantra of Primordial Awakening (Heart Mantra of Samantabhadra, King Tathāgata):

Māma guōlín sàmǐndá.

(3) Mantra of the Sacred Assembly of the Hundred Peaceful and Wrathful Deities:

Oṃ, ā, hūṃ, bō de zhì dá, mā hā sū kǎ jiā nà, dá dù ā, oṃ, lù rǔ lù rǔ hūṃ, jué, hūṃ.

(4) Dhāraṇī of the Diamond Sūtra That Cuts Through:

Námó pén gā wā dì, zhēn gā bō lā mì dá yà, oṃ, nǎi ēn dǐ dá, ài lì xū, ài lì xū, mǐ lì xū, mǐ lì xū, píng nà yíng, píng nà yíng, námó pén gā wā dì, zhǎi dēng mǔ shāo dì, ài lì dì, ài lì dì, mǐ lì dì, mǐ lì dì, xū rì dì, xū rì dì, wū xū rì, wū xū rì, bù yòu yě, bù yòu yě, suǒ hā.

(5) Six-Realm Vajra Mantra:

Ā ā xià sà mā hā.

(6) Mantra for Completing Omissions:

Oṃ, dū lū dū lū, zhā yà mù kè, suǒ hā.

Second-Phase Practice: Instructions on the Second Clear Light in the Intermediate State

Second Phase Practice—Instructions on the Second Clear Light in the Second Phase of the Intermediate State

Verse of Homage

Dharmakāya Amitābha, Infinite Light; Sambhogakāya Lotus Peaceful and Wrathful Deities;

Nirmāṇakāya Lotus-Born Master, protector of beings; before the venerable guru of the three kāyas, I pay homage.

V. Practice on the Day the Breath Ceases

I. Timing of the Practice

1. That is, beginning about half an hour after the deceased's breathing has ceased. At this time, the instructional text should be recited repeatedly.

2. If, overwhelmed by alarm, doubt, and fear, the person was unable to recognize the aforementioned first clear light, then the so-called second clear light will appear before them within the time it takes to eat a meal after their outer breath has ceased.

I. Instructions for Practice

1. At that time, their consciousness has just left the body. They do not yet know whether they are dead or alive. Karmic delusions, the terrors of Yama, and fierce appearances have not yet manifested. The person conducting the practice must urgently give these instructions.

2. Thereafter, the deceased's consciousness suddenly becomes lucid, and they can comprehend the instructions given by the practitioner. Then, naturally, the mother and child clear lights meet; shining brilliantly, they cannot be tainted by anything. Just as sunlight dispels darkness and shines forth, it destroys karmic force, and liberation is attained.

3. Thereafter, an “mind-born body” gradually manifests (that is, a kind of “illusory body” that one possesses). At this time, the deceased can see appearances as they did while alive; they may see relatives and also hear weeping. If they can recognize these instructions at that time, they will naturally benefit. For karmically delusive appearances have not yet manifested, and everything can readily be transformed.

4. At this time there are two kinds of practice: practitioners of the “completion stage” and practitioners of the “generation stage.” (Yogins who have received Esoteric teachings and have begun to enter visualization of the yidam maṇḍala are called generation-stage practitioners; those who next cultivate the channels, winds, and vital essences within their own bodies are called completion-stage practitioners.)

For a completion-stage practitioner, call their name three times and guide them according to the text “Direct Instructions on the Clear Light” in item (4) of the preceding section.

5. For a generation-stage practitioner or an ordinary person, conduct the practice as follows.

II. Conducting the Recitation

For a generation-stage practitioner, recite aloud the visualization of the yidam and maṇḍala that they regularly cultivated and mastered during life. Call the deceased by name, recite the following text, and tell them:

(5) Visualization of the Yidam and Maṇḍala (Recite this text repeatedly, beginning about half an hour after the deceased has stopped breathing.)

Alas, noble one (so-and-so): You should enter into visualization of the yidam you have personally revered. (This refers to the yidam cultivated and revered by the deceased during life. For example, if one practiced the Avalokiteśvara Dharma, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva is one's yidam; if one practiced the Amitābha Dharma, Amitābha Buddha is one's yidam, and so forth.) Do not let your mind become distracted. Strive earnestly and long with devotion; concentrate upon the yidam. Contemplate all appearances as without inherent nature, like the moon reflected in water; never regard them as substantial.

Having clearly told them the above, if the person is an ordinary person (that is, someone who has not received any Exoteric or Esoteric teachings), tell them:

You should visualize and cultivate the Great Compassionate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. (The Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva transmitted in Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism has two heads and four arms; see the illustration below.)



You should visualize and cultivate the Great Compassionate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. Do not let your mind become distracted. Strive earnestly and long with devotion; concentrate on contemplating and paying homage to the Great Compassionate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. Contemplate all appearances as without inherent nature, like the moon reflected in water; never regard them as substantial.

Thus, even those who did not recognize it in the “earlier intermediate state” can recognize it at this time; do not doubt it.

V. Practice from After the Breath Ceases Through the Fourth Day

I. Timing of the Practice

Beginning about half an hour after the deceased's breathing has ceased and continuing until the fourth day after the breath has ceased. (On the very day the deceased's breath ceases, if there is sufficient strength, one may also make offerings and perform the following practice after repeatedly reciting the “Visualization of the Yidam and Maṇḍala.”)

II. Instructions for Practice

1. If the deceased had received teachings from a master during life but was unable to cultivate them proficiently, and thus cannot themselves recognize the clear light in the intermediate state, a guru or Dharma companion from the same lineage must guide and explain it to them.

2. If the deceased cultivated proficiently during life but, being afflicted by grave illness at death, cannot remember and recognize it, then these instructions on the intermediate state are indispensable. Or, if they were proficient in practice but had violated their commitments and lost their samaya, thereby entering an unfortunate realm, these instructions must on no account be omitted.

3. At this time, the deceased's relatives, beloved spouses, and others must not weep, lest they hinder the practice.

I. Conducting the Practice

1. First, make offerings to the Three Jewels.

Those who are wealthy and able to make offerings should arrange them abundantly. If one's means are insufficient, one may use whatever offerings are available and visualize in one's mind countless supreme offerings manifested from them, filling all space.

2. Next, raise your voice and recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse on the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the consciousness of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the practice.)

Verse on the Power of Truth

By the power of my aspiration, and by the blessing of the Tathāgata,

And by the power of the dharma realm, whatever is contemplated

May manifest swiftly and without obstruction, as appropriate.

(2) Once the preceding verse has been recited, the consciousness of the deceased has been summoned. Visualize it as having come to remain before you to hear the Dharma, and begin reciting the following four sets of scriptural verses.

(I) Verses Invoking the Blessings of All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, ever abiding in the ten directions, endowed with great compassion, foreknowledge, and sacred sight;

Refuges for sentient beings, never forsaking your great compassionate vows, I pray that you descend and accept these offerings sincerely presented.

O great compassionate venerable ones, whose wisdom, compassion, all activities, and inconceivable power are complete,

Now one named [name] has left this present world for that other place, departed this realm for another, and cast off the body of flesh and blood.

Without reliance or protector, without rescue or aid, they face the appearances now manifesting, the most extreme of sufferings.

Their day has ended and their road is exhausted; leaving home for a foreign land, they enter a realm of darkness, bewildered as they approach a precipice.

Terrified and frantic, they flee into the wilderness, pursued by karmic force; perhaps they fall into boundless wastes, or drift upon the ocean.

Their body has no freedom, driven and tossed by karmic winds; perhaps they enter a battlefield and are seized by vicious enemies.

There is nowhere to hide; perhaps they encounter Yama's messengers, cruel ghostly attendants, whose very sight inspires utmost terror.

They undergo all the sufferings of karmic results, dying and reviving without interruption. Their strength to struggle is exhausted; they are battered about in utter loneliness and misery.

May all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, in compassion, bestow rescue and protection. For this one awaiting deliverance, become a refuge.

Grant them the power of your blessings; protect them from the sufferings of the intermediate state, halt the red winds of karma, and dispel the terrors of Yama.

Rescue them safely from the perilous passage of the intermediate state. Alas, O great compassionate venerable ones, do not abandon your compassion.

Do not forget your vast vows; enable them to be freed from every suffering. I humbly beseech the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas: may your compassionate light shine upon them.

With the hook of great compassionate light, do not let them enter the three lower realms. O most supreme venerable Three Jewels, may you compassionately embrace them.

Bestow the power of great compassion, that they may be freed from the sufferings of the intermediate state.

(II) Verses for Deliverance from the Perilous Passage of Fear in the Intermediate State

(1) Ever-abiding Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions, Samantabhadra's peaceful and wrathful deities, and the assembly of holy beings;

Gurus and yidams, ḍākinīs, Dharma protectors: descend here; I beseech you compassionately to hear and grant this prayer.

With wholehearted devotion I take refuge in the guru and ḍākinīs. With great compassion, look down in pity and guide me onward.

(2) Through delusion, I wander in saṃsāra. May hearing, contemplation, and cultivation illuminate me in accordance with reality.

May the lineage gurus guide me before, and the victorious mother ḍākinīs protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led upward to the Buddha-land of perfect awakening.

(3) Through blazing anger, I wander in saṃsāra. May the light of great perfect mirror wisdom illuminate me.

May Vajrasattva guide me before, and Māmakī protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led upward to the Buddha-land of perfect awakening.

(4) Through blazing pride, I wander in saṃsāra. May the light of the wisdom of equality illuminate me.

May Ratnasaṃbhava Tathāgata guide me before, and Buddha-Eye Mother protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led upward to the Buddha-land of perfect awakening.

(5) Through blazing desire, I wander in saṃsāra. May the light of discriminating wisdom illuminate me.

May Amitābha Buddha guide me before, and White-Robed Buddha-Mother protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led upward to the Buddha-land of perfect awakening.

(6) Through blazing jealousy, I wander in saṃsāra. May the light of all-accomplishing wisdom illuminate me.

May Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata guide me before, and Tārā Buddha-Mother protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led upward to the Buddha-land of perfect awakening.

(7) Through blazing ignorance, I wander in saṃsāra. May the light of dharma-realm nature wisdom illuminate me.

May Vairocana guide me before, and Dharmadhātu-Īśvarī Mother protect me from behind.

May I be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to the Buddha-land of Perfect Enlightenment.

(8) When the five poisons blaze forth and I wander in birth and death, may the union of the four wisdoms shine with light.

May the Five Tathāgatas guide me before, and the Five Buddha Mothers protect me behind.

May I be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to the Buddha-land of Perfect Enlightenment.

(9) When deluded appearances blaze forth and I wander in birth and death, may liberating light shine forth, dispelling fear.

May all wrathful deities guide me before, and all wrathful mothers protect me behind.

May I be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to the Buddha-land of Perfect Enlightenment.

(10) When habitual tendencies blaze forth and I wander in birth and death, may coemergent wisdom shine with light.

May the heroic vidyādharas guide me before, and the assembly of ḍākinīs protect me behind.

May I be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to the Buddha-land of Perfect Enlightenment.

(11) May the element of space not become my enemy; may I personally behold the Buddha-land of orchid-colored light.

May the element of water not become my enemy; may I personally behold the Buddha-land of white light.

May the element of earth not become my enemy; may I personally behold the Buddha-land of yellow light.

May the element of fire not become my enemy; may I personally behold the Buddha-land of red light.

May the element of wind not become my enemy; may I personally behold the Buddha-land of green light.

May all rainbow lights not become my enemy; may I personally behold all Buddha-lands.

May I know all sounds to be my own sounds; may I know all lights to be my own lights.

May I know all radiance to be my own radiance; may I personally realize the appearances of the intermediate state.

May I personally realize the three kāyas amid the states of the intermediate state.

(III) The Six Root Verses of the Intermediate State

(1) Alas! Now that the intermediate state of birth is arising before me, I shall forever abandon the idleness of a life without leisure.

Through hearing, contemplation, and cultivation, I shall realize the true meaning without distraction; with mind and its objects lucid and clear, I shall personally realize the three kāyas.

Having this once obtained a human body endowed with leisure and opportunity, do not cast it away upon the path of delusion.

(2) Alas! Now that the intermediate state of dreams is arising before me, I shall forever abandon the heedless sleep of ignorance.

With one-pointed, undistracted concentration, I shall abide in ultimate reality; sustaining realization within dreams, I shall cultivate illusory luminosity.

Do not sleep long like an animal; cherish sleep and unite direct experience with cultivation.

(3) Alas! Now that the intermediate state of dhyāna is arising before me, I shall forever abandon every form of distraction and dullness.

Undistracted and without attachment, I shall abide steadily beyond extremes; may the two stages of generation and completion be revealed.

When all activities have ceased and I cultivate with one-pointed mind, may I not be led astray by the delusion of afflictions.

(4) Alas! Now that the intermediate state at the time of death is arising before me, I shall forever abandon all craving and attachment.

Undistracted, I shall enter into the meaning of the clear and manifest instructions; letting the mind range freely, I shall personally realize the unborn vista of vast space.

As I am about to leave this flesh-and-blood body, burdened by material obstruction, I must recognize that impermanent death has come upon me.

(5) Alas! Now that the intermediate state of Dharmatā is arising before me, I shall forever abandon appearances of terror and fear.

I shall recognize every appearance as realization and wisdom; I shall know the appearances of the intermediate state to be precisely this.

At this critical moment, when great benefit or loss hangs by a thread, why should I fear the peaceful and wrathful manifestations of my own awareness?

(6) Alas! Now that the intermediate state of becoming is arising before me, I shall maintain a single-minded, wholehearted resolve.

When favorable and excellent conditions converge, I shall strive to sustain them; I shall forever close the womb entrance and remember to turn back.

When diligent effort toward pure appearances is the one necessity, I shall forever abandon jealousy and cultivate the union of the guru.

Death comes swiftly and without certainty; in vain have I borne the meaningless deeds of this life.

Great benefit is lost when resolve is not firm; now I have returned empty-handed.

What is needed is certain understanding of the supreme yidam practice. If I do not now cultivate this supreme yidam practice,

or abide wholeheartedly in the guru's instructions personally proclaimed by great accomplished masters,

I deceive myself—something I truly ought not to do. It is most important to understand all these six root verses.

(IV) Prayer of Aspiration for Deliverance from Fear in the Intermediate State

(1) When my karmic recompense is exhausted and I pass away, my relatives from this life can offer no help.

Wandering alone upon the path of the intermediate state, may the great compassionate power of the peaceful and wrathful deities

dispel the darkness of ignorance.

(2) Separated from beloved companions, I drift alone; the illusory appearances of my own awareness are about to arise.

May the compassionate power of all Buddhas grant rescue, so that the hardships of the intermediate state do not give rise to terror and fear.

(3) When the light of the five wisdoms appears at this time, may I recognize my original face without terror or fear.

When the forms of the peaceful and wrathful deities draw near, may I recognize them as the intermediate state and not be afraid.

(4) Should I be constrained by karmic force, may the greatly compassionate deities remove suffering and adversity.

When the primordial sound of Dharmatā resounds like thunder, may it be transformed into the sound of the six-syllable great mantra.

(5) When karma pursues me and there is no help, may the yidam deity remove its suffering.

When karmic force pursues me and I have lost all refuge, may I realize the samādhi of pure light.

(6) When I arise by transformation in the intermediate state of becoming, may I not be led astray by Māra through prophecies.

When the power of whatever I think arises, may I not be deluded or frightened by evil karma.

(7) When the roars of fierce beasts sound forth, may they be transformed into the wondrous sound of the six-syllable Dharma.

When black winds, rain, and snow pursue me, may I realize the heavenly eye of wisdom-light.

(8) When I see others of the same kind in the intermediate state, may I not give rise to jealousy and be born in a higher realm.

When great affliction, hunger, and thirst arise, may the suffering of hunger, thirst, cold, and heat be removed.

(9) When I see my future parents in union, may I contemplate them as the deity in the union of great compassion.

May I gain mastery over birth for the benefit of others and obtain a form endowed with marks, beauty, and luminosity.

(10) If I have obtained an excellent rebirth, may I swiftly comprehend whatever I see and hear.

May no evil karma follow after me, and may all merits and virtues increase through diligent effort.

(11) Wherever I may be born, may I behold the yidam deity face-to-face in life after life.

Having been born, may I be able to speak and understand the great meaning, remember my former lives, and attain dhāraṇī.

(12) Whatever the merits and qualities—greater, middling, or lesser—may I understand them upon hearing, contemplating, or seeing them once.

May every place of my birth be auspicious, and may all sentient beings be at peace and happy.

(13) As are the forms of the Buddha and the peaceful and wrathful deities, their retinues, lifespans, and realms,

and as are their supreme and beautiful names, so may we surely become.

(14) Guru Padmasambhava of Oḍḍiyāna composed this prayer for deliverance from fear in the intermediate state.

May this profound and wondrous Dharma endure forever, until saṃsāra is emptied.

Recite each of the above four verses three to seven times, according to the amount of time available. They must be recited, especially when performing the ritual for the first time. When performing the ritual again later, they may be omitted if time is pressing.

3. Finally, recite the following text:

(I) Instructions on Seeking the Great Way Through the Clear Light

Alas, good man (name): [If the person is female, say instead, “good woman.” The same applies hereafter.] The time has now come for you to seek the true Great Way. Though your breath has ceased, it has not yet entirely stopped. In the intermediate state, what is called the first clear light will arise; first recollect the meaning of the instructions given by the guru.

When your breath has completely ceased, all dharmas will be limpidly empty and quiescent, with no remainder. Clear emptiness will arise, boundless within emptiness, wholly transparent, naked, and without stain. At that time, your own inner wisdom of realization will suddenly arise. Know that this is your Original Face. I too will then give you supporting instructions.

(II) Instructions on the Dissolution of the Four Elements

Now the signs of the element of earth dissolving into the element of water are arising!

Next, the signs of the element of water dissolving into the element of fire are arising!

Then, the signs of the element of fire dissolving into the element of wind are arising!

Attend carefully! Attend carefully! Please arouse the supreme resolve; listen attentively and do not be distracted.

If the deceased is a teacher, elder, or senior person, add only this exhortation:

Venerable Master! (Or, Venerable Elder.) Please concentrate your mind carefully!

(III) Verses for Arousing the Resolve to Recognize the Clear Light at the Time of Death

Alas, good man (name): What is called death has now come before you. You should contemplate and arouse the supreme resolve, saying to yourself: “Alas! The time of my death has now arrived. In these circumstances of death, I must arouse with all my strength the compassionate mind of bodhicitta. For the benefit and happiness of all sentient beings throughout the whole expanse of space, may I realize perfect Buddhahood.”

From this moment onward, for the benefit of all sentient beings, may I realize the dharmakāya of the clear light at the time of death and therein attain the supreme siddhi of Mahāmudrā. Having attained it, may I benefit all sentient beings. Even if I do not attain it then, may I recognize it in the intermediate state and realize the “Mahāmudrā body of union in the intermediate state”; manifesting in response to conditions, may I benefit and bring happiness to all sentient beings as boundless as space. Concentrate your mind, arouse this resolve in accord with it, and hold fast without letting go. You should also retain without loss the instructions transmitted by the guru that you previously cultivated, as well as your regular daily practice.

If the deceased is a teacher or a spiritual friend more venerable than oneself, say:

Venerable Elder: Such clear light of the fundamental nature is now arising before you. Please begin the practice at once.

(IV) Direct Instructions on the Clear Light

Alas, noble son (name): listen attentively and do not be distracted! The pure, wondrous clear light of dharmatā is now beginning to appear before you. You must recognize it at once.

Alas, noble son: At this very moment, your own consciousness is self-knowing wisdom. It is vividly luminous; no entity, appearance, form, color, or intrinsic nature can be found. Empty, limpid, and clear, it is the Samantabhadrī Buddha Mother of dharmatā. Your own self-knowing wisdom rests openly and serenely in its original emptiness; this self-knowing wisdom shines in stillness without ceasing, brilliant and radiant. This is Samantabhadra Tathāgata, the wisdom of realization.

Your own self-knowing wisdom has no entity whatsoever that can be found; its essence and appearance are empty and quiescent. Your own self-knowing wisdom abides brilliantly and luminously, beyond all discrimination. This is the dharmakāya of the Tathāgata. Luminosity and emptiness are not separate; abiding as a vast mass of light, this is the imperishable Buddha of luminosity, beyond birth and death. To recognize this is supreme. Recognize the empty and luminous nature of your own self-knowing wisdom as Buddha; directly behold it for yourself within that self-knowing wisdom. This is to abide within the Mind-Seal of the Buddha.

(5) Visualization of the Yidam and Maṇḍala (Recite this text repeatedly, beginning about half an hour after the deceased has stopped breathing.)

Alas, noble son (name): You should visualize your own yidam—the deity you personally practiced during life. (For example, if you practiced the Avalokiteśvara method, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva is your yidam; if you practiced the Mañjuśrī method or the Amitābha method, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva or Amitābha Buddha is your yidam.) Do not let your mind become distracted. Strive earnestly and with yearning, concentrating on the yidam. Regard all appearances as devoid of intrinsic nature, like the moon reflected in water; never regard them as substantial realities.

If the foregoing is being explained to an ordinary person—that is, someone who has not received the various exoteric and esoteric teachings—say the following:



Visualize this Great Compassionate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. Do not let your mind become distracted. Strive earnestly and with yearning, concentrating on and paying reverence to Great Compassionate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. Regard all appearances as devoid of intrinsic nature, like the moon reflected in water; never regard them as substantial realities.

(6) Instructions on the Intermediate State of Dharmatā and the Six Essential Verses (Recite this text repeatedly, as much as possible, before the fourth day after death.)

Ah! Good son [name], do not let your mind become scattered; listen earnestly and attentively. There are six kinds of intermediate state, including the Intermediate State of Birth, also called the Intermediate State in the Womb.

the Intermediate State of Dreams, the Intermediate State of Dhyāna (also known as the Intermediate State of Meditative Absorption), the Intermediate State at the Time of Death (also known as the Intermediate State at the End of Life), the Intermediate State of Dharmatā (also known as the Intermediate State of Ultimate Reality), and the Intermediate State of Becoming (also known as the Intermediate State of Rebirth Through the Four Great Elements).

Noble son, at this time you will pass through the latter three intermediate states: the Intermediate State at the Time of Death, the Intermediate State of Dharmatā, and the Intermediate State of Becoming. All three now appear before you. Since yesterday, the clear light of dharmatā appeared to you in the Intermediate State at the Time of Death, but you were unable to recognize it; therefore, you have again drifted here without support. Now the Intermediate State of Dharmatā and the Intermediate State of Becoming have both arisen. You must recognize, without confusion, what is indicated in these instructions.

Alas, noble son: What is called death has now come upon you. To depart from this world is not yours alone; it is so for everyone. In this life, do not crave or cling. Even if you crave and cling, you cannot remain here for long. As you wander in the cycle of birth and death, do not cling with longing; instead, remember the guru and the Three Jewels.

Alas, noble son: Whatever terrifying appearances may arise in the Intermediate State of Dharmatā, keep these words in mind and do not forget them. With sincere and correct mindfulness, act in accordance with their meaning. Here are essential verses of instruction:

Alas! The Intermediate State of Dharmatā now appears before me; / all frightening and terrifying appearances must be cut off.

Regard the appearances that arise as my own self-knowing wisdom; / know that they are precisely the realm of the intermediate state.

At this critical and momentous time, / do not fear the peaceful and wrathful deities manifested by my own awareness.

As in instruction (6), have this read aloud so that the deceased may remember its meaning. However many terrifying appearances arise, they must certainly be recognized as one's own Original Face; keep this firmly in mind and do not forget it.

(7) Instructions for Recognizing One's Original Nature (Recite this text repeatedly for the deceased before the fourth day after death.)

Alas, noble son (name): At the time when body and mind separate, the pure appearance of dharmatā—the subtle, wondrous clear light of your own nature—

shines brilliantly. It is startling and awe-inspiring, like shimmering heat haze over open fields on a spring day. Such an appearance occurs for everyone. Do not be afraid or terrified; know that it is the original light of your own dharmatā.

Then, from within the light, there suddenly bursts forth a great and fierce primordial sound of dharmatā, like a thousand thunderclaps resounding at once. Recognize at once that this too is the primordial sound of your own dharmatā. Remain calm and do not be confused; do not be afraid or terrified. At this time, you possess what is called a habit-conditioned mind-born body; you are no longer a physical body of flesh and blood subject to obstruction. Even if "sound," "light," and "rays" arise before you, they cannot harm you, for at this time you have no cause of death. If you can now recognize the original appearances manifested by your own consciousness, you will know that they are the "intermediate state."

Alas, noble son! If you do not recognize these original appearances at this very moment, then no matter how you may have contemplated and cultivated in the human world, if you have not encountered these essential instructions, you will certainly become frightened by "light," terrified by "sound," and afraid of "rays." If you do not understand the essential points of these instructions, you will fail to recognize the three—"sound," "light," and "rays"—and will continue to wander in the bitter ocean of the cycle of birth and death.

In summary, if the "initial phase of the intermediate state" is recognized and realized, that is supreme. If it cannot be realized, then in the "second phase of the intermediate state," clear guidance may open the wisdom of realization, and liberation may still be attained.

Appendix: Selected Mantras and Esoteric Dhāraṇīs

(1) Mantra for Liberation Through Hearing:

A bi jia dang ga.

(2) Great Secret Mantra of Primordial Awareness (Heart Mantra of Samantabhadra, King of Tathāgatas):

Ma ma guo lin sa min da.

(3) Mantra of the Assembly of the Hundred Peaceful and Wrathful Deities:

Om, a, hum, bo di zhi da, ma ha su ka jia na, da du a, om, lu lu lu lu hum, jue, hum.

(4) Dhāraṇī of the Diamond Cutter Sūtra:

Na mo pen ga wa di, zhen ga bo la mi da ya, om, nai en di da, ai li xu, ai li xu, mi li xu, mi li xu, ping na ying, ping na ying, na mo pen ga wa di, zhai deng mu shao di, ai li di, ai li di, mi li di, mi li di, xu ri di, xu ri di, wu xu ri, wu xu ri, bu you ye, bu you ye, suo ha.

(5) Six Realms Vajra Mantra:

A a xia sa ma ha.

(6) Mantra for Making Up Deficiencies:

Om, du lu du lu, zha ya mu ke, suo ha.

Third-Phase Practice: Instructions on the Intermediate State of Dharmatā

Third-Stage Practice — Instructions on the Intermediate State of Dharmatā

Verse of Homage and Refuge

Dharmakāya Amitābha, Infinite Light; sambhogakāya lotus peaceful and wrathful deities;

nirmāṇakāya Guru Padmasambhava, protector of sentient beings—before the venerable guru of the three kāyas, I pay homage.

I. Timing of the Practice

From the fifth day after death through the eighteenth day, a total of fourteen days.

II. Instructions for Practice

II. Instructions for Practice

1. If the deceased is bound by karma and, despite the repeated instructions given above, their consciousness cannot be reached and liberation is not attained, the “third phase of the intermediate state” (that is, the “intermediate state of Dharmatā”) immediately arises.

2. At this time, the consciousness of the deceased is like one just awakening from sleep or a dream and is relatively clear. Although they can see their relatives weeping and wailing, removing the food utensils, changing their clothes, and

cleaning up, those people cannot see them. Although they can hear what others say, when they call out to them, there is no response. Their mind then becomes dejected; knowing that they have died, they seek rebirth and linger uncertainly, wishing to depart.

3. At that time, the three kinds of appearances—“sound,” “light,” and “radiance”—all appear before them. Overwhelmed by the three states of “terror,” “fear,” and “dread,” they do not know where to go. At this time, it is most essential to recite these esoteric instructions on the intermediate state of Dharmatā. Call the deceased by name, recite the following text, and clearly proclaim it aloud.

III. Conducting the Practice

Day One Recitation (On the fifth day after death, two Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

V. Day Five Recitation (On this day, two Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse on the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the spirit of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the ritual.)

Verse on the Power of Truth

By the power of my intention and aspiration, and by the blessing power of the Tathāgatas,

By the power of the dharma realm and all else, whatever objects are contemplated

May appear swiftly and unobstructedly, in accordance with what is required.

Once the preceding verse has been recited, the spirit of the deceased has been summoned. Visualize the deceased as having come to remain before you and hear the Dharma, then begin reciting the following four sets of verses.

(2) Recite the four invocation verses three to seven times. (At the first performance of the ritual, they must be recited at least three times; thereafter, the number may be determined according to the time available.)

(I) Verses Invoking the Blessings of All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

All Buddhas and bodhisattvas, ever abiding throughout the ten directions, endowed with great compassion, foreknowledge, and sacred vision;

Refuges for sentient beings, never abandoning their vows of great compassion: I pray that you descend, accept this offering, and receive this sincere presentation.

All compassionate venerable ones, whose wisdom and compassion, and all the deeds you perform, possess inconceivable power:

Here is one named [name], who has left this present world for the other, departed this realm for another, and cast off the body of flesh and blood.

Without support or protector, without rescue or aid, the most intense suffering is now manifesting before them.

Their day has waned and their road is exhausted; leaving home for a foreign land, they enter a dim and shadowy place, bewildered as they proceed toward a precipice.

In terror and frenzy they run through dense forests, pursued by karmic force; they may fall into boundless wastelands or drift upon the great ocean.

Their body is no longer at ease or under control, buffeted by karmic winds; they may enter a battlefield and be seized by vicious enemies.

There is nowhere to hide; they may encounter the messengers of Yama, and the ghostly attendants, fully equipped with cruel implements, are terrifying to behold.

They undergo every suffering of karmic retribution, dying and reviving without respite. Their strength to struggle is exhausted; tossed about, they suffer in utter loneliness.

May all Buddhas and bodhisattvas, in compassion, extend their protection. For this one awaiting rescue, be a refuge and protector.

Bestow the power of your blessings, protect them from the sufferings of the intermediate state, block the red winds of karma, and dispel the terrors of Yama.

From the perilous, narrow passage of the intermediate state, rescue them safely. Alas, great compassionate venerable ones, may you not abandon your compassion.

Do not forget your vast vows; enable them to escape every suffering. I implore all Buddhas and bodhisattvas: may your compassionate light shine upon them.

With the hook of great compassionate light, do not let them enter the three lower realms. O most excellent venerable Three Jewels, may you receive them in compassion.

Bestow the power of great compassion and free them from the sufferings of the intermediate state.

(II) Verses for Deliverance from the Perilous Passage of Fear in the Intermediate State

(1) Ever-abiding throughout the ten directions, all Buddhas and bodhisattvas, Samantabhadra, peaceful and wrathful, and the ocean-like assembly of noble beings;

Gurus, yidams, ḍākinīs, and Dharma protectors, descend here. I beseech you compassionately to hear and grant this prayer.

With utmost sincerity I take refuge in gurus and ḍākinīs. With great compassion, look down in pity and guide me.

(2) Through delusion I wander in saṃsāra; may hearing, contemplation, and cultivation shine forth as they truly are.

May the lineage gurus guide me in front, and the victorious mother ḍākinīs protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and conveyed to the perfectly awakened Buddha-land.

(3) Through blazing anger I wander in saṃsāra; may the light of great perfect mirror wisdom shine forth.

May Vajrasattva guide me in front, and Māmakī protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and conveyed to the perfectly awakened Buddha-land.

(4) Through blazing pride I wander in saṃsāra; may the light of the wisdom of equality shine forth.

May Ratnasambhava Tathāgata guide me in front, and Buddha-Locanā protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and conveyed to the perfectly awakened Buddha-land.

(5) Through blazing desire I wander in saṃsāra; may the light of wondrous discerning wisdom shine forth.

May Amitābha Buddha guide me in front, and Pāṇḍaravāsinī protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and conveyed to the perfectly awakened Buddha-land.

(6) Through blazing jealousy I wander in saṃsāra; may the light of all-accomplishing wisdom shine forth.

May Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata guide me in front, and Tārā protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and conveyed to the perfectly awakened Buddha-land.

(7) Through blazing ignorance I wander in saṃsāra; may the light of dharma-realm wisdom shine forth.

May Vairocana guide me in front, and Dhātvīśvarī protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and conveyed to the perfectly awakened Buddha-land.

(8) Through the blazing five poisons I wander in saṃsāra; may the light of the union of the four wisdoms shine forth.

May the Tathāgatas of the five families guide me in front, and the mothers of the five families protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and conveyed to the perfectly awakened Buddha-land.

(9) Through blazing deluded appearances I wander in saṃsāra; may the light that dispels fear shine forth.

May all wrathful deities guide me in front, and all wrathful mothers protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and conveyed to the perfectly awakened Buddha-land.

(10) Through blazing habitual tendencies I wander in saṃsāra; may the light of innate wisdom shine forth.

May the heroic vidyādharas guide me in front, and the assembly of ḍākinīs protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and conveyed to the perfectly awakened Buddha-land.

(11) May the element of space not become my enemy; may I directly behold the Buddha-land of orchid light.

May the element of water not become my enemy; may I directly behold the Buddha-land of white light.

May the element of earth not become my enemy; may I directly behold the Buddha-land of yellow light.

May the element of fire not become my enemy; may I directly behold the Buddha-land of red light.

May the element of wind not become my enemy; may I directly behold the Buddha-land of green light.

May all rainbow lights not become my enemies; may I directly behold all Buddha-lands.

May I know all sounds to be my own sounds; may I know all lights to be my own lights.

May I know all radiance to be my own radiance; may I myself recognize the appearances of the intermediate state.

May I directly realize the three kāyas amid the circumstances of the intermediate state.

(III) The Six Root Verses of the Intermediate State

(1) Alas! When the intermediate state of birth now appears to me, I shall forever abandon the idleness of a life without leisure.

Without distraction, I shall hear, contemplate, and cultivate, realizing the true meaning; with mind and circumstances clear and lucid, I shall directly realize the three kāyas.

Having once obtained this body of leisure and endowment, do not cast it away upon the path of delusion.

(2) Alas! When the intermediate state of dreams now appears to me, I shall forever abandon the heedless sleep of ignorance.

With one-pointed mind, I shall abide steadily in reality itself, safeguarding realization within dreams and cultivating illusory luminosity.

Do not sleep long like an animal; cherish sleep and unite direct experience with practice.

(3) Alas! When the intermediate state of dhyāna now appears to me, I shall forever abandon every kind of distraction and dullness.

Without distraction or grasping, I shall abide steadily beyond extremes; may I receive instruction in the two stages of generation and completion.

When all activities have ceased and I cultivate with one-pointed mind, may I not be carried away by the delusion of afflictions.

(4) Alas! When the intermediate state at the time of death now appears to me, I shall forever abandon every craving and attachment.

Without distraction, I shall enter into the meaning of the clear instructions; with free-ranging mind, I shall directly realize the unborn expanse of great emptiness.

As I am about to leave this obstructed body of flesh and blood, I must know that impermanent death is at hand.

(5) Alas! When the intermediate state of dharmatā now appears to me, I shall forever abandon appearances of terror and fear.

I shall recognize every appearance as realizing wisdom; I shall know that these are precisely the appearances of the intermediate state.

At this crucial instant, when great benefit is at stake, why should I fear the peaceful and wrathful manifestations of my own consciousness?

(6) Alas! When the intermediate state of becoming now appears to me, I shall maintain a single-minded and wholehearted intention.

When favorable and excellent conditions converge, I shall strive to sustain them; I shall forever abandon the womb entrance and remember to turn back.

When diligent effort toward pure appearances is the sole necessity, I shall forever abandon jealousy and cultivate the union of the guru.

At death, there is no certainty and all is exceedingly swift; in vain have I borne the burden of meaningless deeds throughout this life.

Having lost the great benefit through lack of resolute will, I now return empty-handed.

The certainty required is the supreme yidam practice. If I do not now cultivate this supreme yidam practice,

Or if I do not rest my mind in the guru's instructions personally proclaimed by great accomplished masters,

I deceive myself—something I truly ought not do. It is most important to understand these six root verses.

(IV) Prayer of Aspiration for Deliverance from Fear in the Intermediate State

(1) Now, as my karmic recompense is exhausted and I pass away, the relatives of my former life are unable to help.

Wandering alone upon the path of the intermediate state, may the compassionate power of the peaceful and wrathful deities

Dispel the darkness of ignorance

(2) Separated from beloved companions, I drift alone; may I recognize the illusory appearances that are about to arise.

May the compassionate power of all Buddhas extend rescue, and may I not give rise to fear amid the perils of the intermediate state.

(3) When the lights of the five wisdoms appear at this time, may I recognize my original face without fear or dread.

The peaceful and wrathful deities are already near; may I recognize the intermediate state and not be afraid.

(4) When I am constrained by karmic force, may the Great Compassionate One remove suffering and adversity.

When the primordial sound of dharmatā resounds like thunder, may it be transformed into the sound of the six-syllable great mantra.

(5) When karma pursues me and there is no aid, may the yidam deity remove its suffering.

When karmic force pursues me and I have lost my protector, may I realize the samādhi of clear light.

(6) When I take spontaneous birth in the intermediate state of becoming, may I receive prophecy and not be turned aside by Māra.

When the force of whatever I think arises, may I not be deluded or frightened by evil karma.

(7) When the roaring cries of fierce beasts arise, may they be transformed into the wondrous sound of the six-syllable Dharma.

When black winds, rain, and snow pursue me, may I attain the divine eye of wisdom-light.

(8) When I see intermediate-state beings of my own kind, may I not become jealous, but be born in a higher realm.

When intense affliction, hunger, and thirst arise, may the suffering of hunger, thirst, cold, and heat be removed.

(9) When I see my future parents in union, may I contemplate the two-bodied deity of Great Compassion.

May I attain mastery over birth for the benefit of others, and obtain a radiant body endowed with marks and signs.

(10) Having obtained a wondrous body of birth, may I swiftly understand all that I see and hear.

May no evil karma follow me, and may I diligently increase every merit and virtue.

(11) In whatever places I may be born, may I behold the yidam deity face-to-face in life after life.

May I be able to speak and know the great meaning as soon as I am born, remember my past lives without forgetting, and attain dhāraṇī.

(12) May I immediately know, upon hearing, contemplating, or seeing them, the various superior, middling, and lesser qualities.

May every place in which I am born be auspicious, and may all sentient beings be at peace and happiness.

(13) May I attain the forms of the Buddha’s peaceful and wrathful deities, their retinues, lifespans, and Buddha-fields;

and may I and all others certainly attain their most excellent and beautiful names.

(14) Guru Padmasambhava of Uḍḍiyāna composed this prayer for deliverance from the fears of the intermediate state.

Until saṃsāra is emptied into quiescence, may this profound and wondrous Dharma endure forever.

3. Instructions for Recitation:

Alas! Good son (so-and-so): You have been unconscious for three and a half to four days. Having revived from unconsciousness, you may ask yourself, “Why are such appearances now arising before me?” You should understand that this is the “intermediate state.” At this time, as you are about to reenter saṃsāra, all appearances manifest as bodies of radiant Buddhas, and the sky is everywhere filled with deep blue light.

At that time, in the central Ghanavyūha Buddha-land (also called the Buddha-land of the Courageous Manifestation of Luminous Points, or the Heaven of Profound Luminosity), the World-Honored One Vairocana Tathāgata (also called Mahāvairocana Tathāgata or Buddha of All-Pervading Light) appears.

His body is white, and he sits upon a lion throne, holding a golden eight-spoked wheel. In union with the Mother of Sovereignty, who is free within the dharma realm of space, he appears before you. This is the naturally pure blue light of the aggregate of form. It shines brilliantly, adorned with luminous points and subtle points of light, resplendent and clear. It radiates before you from the hearts of the father and mother deities, Vairocana Tathāgata and his consort, striking directly into your heart—dazzling to the eyes, impossible to gaze upon directly.

At the same time, a white light of the deva realm, which does not inspire fear, also appears before you. At this time, drawn by the karmic force of ignorance, you fear the blue light. Thus, you become frightened of the light of the wisdom of the essential nature of the dharma realm and wish to flee from it. Yet because the white light of the deva realm does not frighten you, you conceive delight in it and wish to enter it.

I now tell you: at this time, do not fear or dread that resplendent, clear, shining, dazzling blue light, and do not flee from it. It is what is called the light of the Tathāgata—the wisdom of the essential nature of the dharma realm. Deeply generate faith and joy within it, arouse a heart of longing, and say to yourself: “This is the compassionate, gracious light of the World-Honored Vairocana. I shall quickly take refuge and respectfully pray to him.”

Then the World-Honored Vairocana will guide you out of the perilous passage of the intermediate state. Do not delight in, crave, or cling to the non-dazzling white light of the deva realm. If craving and attachment arise, you will fall into the deva realm and again turn within the six realms. This is an obstacle that blocks the path to liberation. Therefore, avert your eyes from it and do not look upon it. Instead, delight in the flashing, dazzling blue light; arouse a strong and earnest resolve; long for the World-Honored Vairocana Tathāgata; focus with utmost sincerity; recite the following verse; and make this aspiration after me:

Alas!

When ignorance blazes fiercely and I wander in birth and death,

May the light of the wisdom of the dharma realm’s essential nature shine upon me.

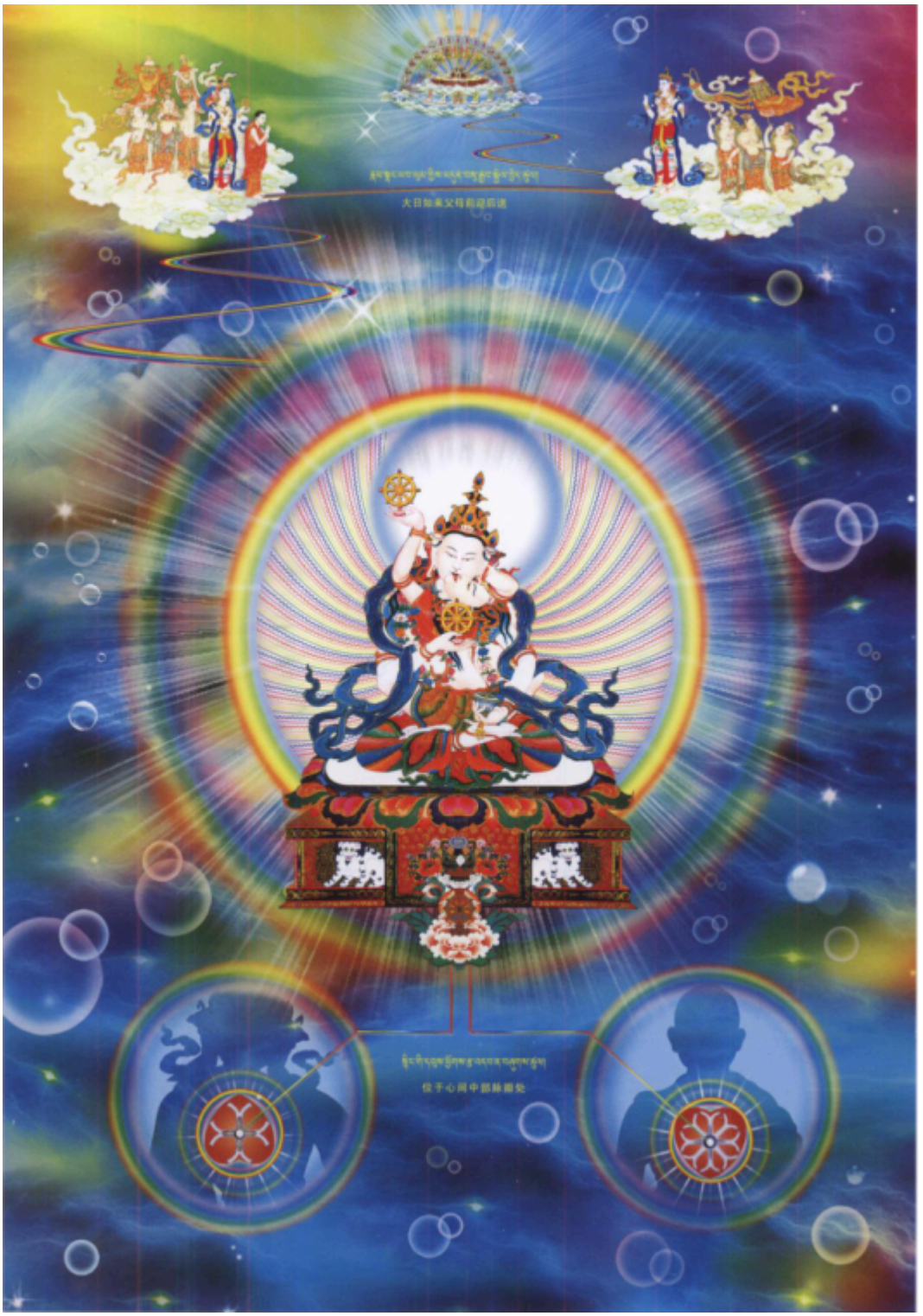
May Vairocana guide me before,

And the Mother of Sovereignty protect me behind.

I pray to be delivered from the fearful and perilous passage of the intermediate state

And led upward into the Buddha-land of perfect awakening.

When you make this aspiration with such reverence and intensity, you will become rainbow light and merge into the hearts of the father and mother deities, Vairocana and his consort. In the central Ghanavyūha Buddha-land, you will attain Buddhahood in the form of a perfect enjoyment body.



Day Six Recitation (On This Day, Six Buddhas Come to Guide the Deceased)

V. Recitation on the Sixth Day After Death (On this day, six Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Next, raise your voice and recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse of the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the consciousness of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the ritual.)

Verse of the Power of Truth

By the power of my aspiration and the blessings of the Tathāgata,

And by the power of the dharma realm, whatever objects are contemplated

May, according to their proper nature, swiftly and unobstructedly appear before us.

After reciting the preceding verse, the consciousness of the deceased has already been summoned. Immediately visualize the deceased coming to remain before you and hear the Dharma, then begin reciting the following four verses of scripture.

(2) Recite the four verses of invocation three to seven times (according to the time available; they must be recited the first time, but may be omitted thereafter if time is pressing).

3. Text for Instruction and Recitation:

Although the instructions have already been given as before, if, owing to karmic obstacles of anger and wrath, one fears and flees from the “light” and “radiance,” then, even after making such aspirations, one may again become confused and fail to awaken. On the second day of the intermediate state of dharmatā, the sacred assembly of “Vajrasattva Akṣobhya Tathāgata” and the light of the evil karma of the hells appear simultaneously before one. At this time, give the following instruction again: call the deceased by name and recite the text below, saying:

Ah, noble son (so-and-so), listen carefully and do not be distracted! On this second day, a white, pure light of the water element will appear before you. At that time, the blue eastern “Realm of Manifest Joy” (Sanskrit: Abhirati; Tibetan: Enbar Gāwa)

the Blessed One Vajrasattva Akṣobhya Tathāgata appears before you. His body is blue; he holds a five-pronged vajra and sits upon a jeweled elephant throne, in union with Māmakī. The two bodhisattvas Kṣitigarbha and Maitreya, together with the pair of female deities Lasya, the Dancer, and Puṣpā, the Flower Bearer, surround them within an ocean of rainbow-light maṇḍalas. All six appear together.

This is the intrinsically pure white light of the aggregate of consciousness, namely the great perfect mirror wisdom. This light shines brilliantly, adorned with bindus

and subtle points of light. It is so dazzling that you nearly faint. It shines before you from the hearts of Vajrasattva Akṣobhya Tathāgata and his consort, striking directly into your heart; your eyes are dazzled, unable to open, and you dare not look directly at it.

At the same time, a dull, smoke-gray light of the hell realm also appears before you together with the light of wisdom. At this time, controlled by the karmic force of anger and wrath, you fear the white light and wish to flee from it; instead, you take delight in the dull smoke-gray light of the hell realm and wish to enter it.

I now tell you: at this time, do not fear or dread that brilliantly shining, dazzling white light, clear and transparent; do not flee from it. It is the inherent power and function of the wisdom you have directly realized within yourself. Clearly and spontaneously abide in the light with equanimity, and give rise to faith, joy, and longing for it.

If you recognize the luminosity that is the essence of your own directly realized wisdom, then, even if you lack devout aspiration, the light of all Buddhas will merge with you, without duality or distinction, and you will attain Buddhahood.

If you do not recognize it as the light of your own directly realized wisdom, then give rise to faith, joy, and longing for it, thinking to yourself: “This is the gracious light of the great compassion of Vajrasattva Akṣobhya Tathāgata.” Quickly take refuge and pray deeply, reflecting that this is the hook of Vajrasattva Akṣobhya Tathāgata’s compassionate light, and that you must not flee from it.

Know that even if you wish to flee from it, it cannot be separated from your body. Therefore, do not be afraid; joyfully pray to it. Then Vajrasattva Akṣobhya Tathāgata will come to guide you, drawing you out of the perilous passage of the intermediate state. Nor should you delight in that dull, smoky light of the hells.

This is the light that comes to lure you because of the karmic obstacles accumulated through your blazing anger and wrath. If you crave and cling to that light, you will fall into the realm of Naraka, the hells, and be trapped in unbearable mire of suffering, with no prospect of release. This is an obstacle that blocks the path to liberation. Therefore, avert your eyes and do not look at it; cut off anger and wrath, and do not crave or cling to it. Instead, deeply revere the brilliant, shining white light. With wholehearted concentration before Vajrasattva Akṣobhya Tathāgata, arouse intense aspiration and joy. Recite the following verse and make this aspiration with me:

Alas!

Through blazing anger and wrath, I wander in saṃsāra;

May the light of great perfect mirror wisdom shine forth.

May Vajrasattva guide me before,

And Māmakī protect me behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage

Of fear in the intermediate state, and be led to ascend to the Buddha land of perfect awakening.

If, with wholehearted sincerity and reverence, you make this aspiration and recite the preceding verse, you will become rainbow light and merge into the hearts of Vajrasattva Akṣobhya Tathāgata and his consort. In the eastern realm of Manifest Joy, you will attain the complete enjoyment body and become a Buddha.



Day Seven Recitation (On This Day, Six Buddhas Come to Guide the Deceased)

V. Recitation on the Seventh Day After Death (On this day, six Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Next, recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse on the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the consciousness of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the ritual.)

Verse on the Power of Truth

By the power of my aspiration and the blessing power of the Tathāgatas,

And by the power of the dharma realm, whatever objects are contemplated

May, according to their proper nature, swiftly appear before us without hindrance.

After reciting the preceding verse, the consciousness of the deceased has been summoned. Visualize it coming to abide before you to hear the Dharma, and begin reciting the following four verses of scripture.

(2) Recite the four verses of invocation three to seven times, according to the time available. They must be recited the first time; thereafter, they may be omitted if time is pressing.

3. Text of the Instructions for Recitation:

Although instructions have already been given as above, there are pudgalas (another name for sentient beings) whose arrogance is great and whose evil karma is profound. Frightened by the hook of the light of great compassion, they flee from it. When the third day of the Intermediate State of Dharmatā arrives—that is, the fifth day after death—the World-Honored One Ratnasambhava Tathāgata, together with his holy retinue, comes to guide them. At the same time, the light of the human realm also appears before them. The instructions should be given by calling the deceased by name and reciting the following text:

Alas, noble son [name], listen carefully and do not be distracted! On this third day, the pure yellow light of the earth element comes before you.

At that time, from the southern yellow Glorious Buddha Land (Tibetan: Pelden; meaning “auspicious,” or translated as “endowed with virtues”), the World-Honored One Ratnasambhava Tathāgata appears before you. His body is yellow; he holds a precious wish-fulfilling jewel and sits upon a horse-shaped jeweled throne. He is united in embrace with Buddha-Eye Mother. The two bodhisattvas Ākāśagarbha and Samantabhadra, together with the two female deities Mālī and Dhūpī—the Goddess

of Garlands and the Goddess of Incense—surround them in an oceanic maṇḍala of rainbow light. Thus all six appear and come before you.

This is the inherently pure yellow light of the aggregate of feeling, namely the wisdom of equality.

This light shines brilliantly, adorned with bindus and minute points of light. It streams from the hearts of Ratnasambhava Tathāgata and his consort and shines before you, striking directly into your heart. It is so dazzling that your eyes cannot bear to open, and you dare not look directly at it. At the same time, the pale yellow, non-dazzling light of the human realm also appears before you with the light of wisdom and strikes directly into your heart.

At this time, controlled by the karmic force of arrogance, you become frightened by that dazzling yellow light and wish to flee from it. Instead, you become pleased with and attached to the pale yellow, non-dazzling light of the human realm and wish to enter it. I now tell you: do not be frightened or afraid of that brilliant, dazzling, transparent yellow light, and do not flee from it.

It is the inherent power and functioning of the wisdom you realize within yourself. You should remain lucid and uncontrived within that light, calm and at ease, and give rise to trust, joy, and longing for it. If you recognize the luminosity that is the essence of the wisdom you realize within yourself, then even if you lack sincere aspiration, the light of all Buddhas will merge with you, without duality or distinction, and you will attain Buddhahood.

If you do not recognize it as the original light of the wisdom you realize within yourself, then give rise to trust, joy, and longing for it, thinking to yourself: “This is the compassionate, grace-bestowing light of Ratnasambhava Tathāgata.” Quickly take refuge and pray with deep sincerity. Consider that this is the hook of Ratnasambhava Tathāgata’s great compassion, and do not flee from it. Know that even if you wish to flee, it cannot be separated from your body. Therefore, do not be afraid; instead, joyfully pray to it.

At that time, Ratnasambhava Tathāgata will come to guide you, drawing you out of the perilous passage of the intermediate state. Do not take delight in the pale yellow light of the human realm. It is a light that comes to entice you because of the habitual tendencies accumulated through your intense arrogance. If you become attached to it, you will fall into the human realm and again undergo the suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death, sinking into the mire of birth and death with no prospect of liberation. It is therefore an obstacle that blocks the path to liberation.

Therefore, avert your eyes and do not look at it. Sever and relinquish arrogance, cut off habitual tendencies, and do not crave or cling to that light. Instead, generate

deep trust and joy in the brilliant, dazzling yellow light. With wholehearted concentration, long for the World-Honored One Ratnasambhava Tathāgata, recite the following verse, and make this aspiration with me:

Alas!

When intense arrogance drives me through birth and death,

May the light of the wisdom of equality shine forth.

May Ratnasambhava Tathāgata guide me from before,

And Buddha-Eye Mother protect me from behind.

I pray to be liberated from the perilous passage of the intermediate state

And led upward to the Buddha Land of perfect awakening.

If one makes this aspiration with wholehearted sincerity and reverence, one will transform into rainbow light and merge into the hearts of Ratnasambhava Tathāgata and his consort, attaining the perfect enjoyment body of a Buddha in the southern Glorious Buddha Land.



Day Eight Recitation (On This Day After Death, Six Buddhas Come to Guide the Deceased.)

V. Day Eight Recitation After Death (On this day, six Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Next, raise your voice and recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse of the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the spirit of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the ritual.)

Verse of the Power of Truth

By the power of my intention, and by the blessing of the Tathāgatas,

And by the power of the dharma realm, whatever objects are contemplated

May appear swiftly and unobstructedly, each as appropriate.

After the preceding verse has been recited, the spirit of the deceased has already been summoned. Immediately visualize the deceased coming to remain before you and hear the Dharma, then begin reciting the following four scriptural verses.

(2) Recite the four verses of invocation three to seven times (according to the time available. They must be recited the first time; afterward, they may be omitted if time is pressing).

3. Text for instruction and recitation:

As instructed above, no matter how inferior their faculties may be, they will certainly be liberated without doubt.

Yet there may be those who have committed grave offenses, violated samaya precepts, or severed their wholesome roots, and who still cannot recognize it. Overpowered by “desire” and karmic obstacles, they fear and flee from the “sound” and “light.” Then, on the fourth day (that is, the eighth day after death), the holy assembly of the Bhagavān Tathāgata of Immeasurable Light (that is, Amitābha Buddha) appears before them, together with the dull red light of the realm of hungry ghosts, produced by “desire” and “miserliness.” To instruct them, call the deceased by name and recite the following words:

Alas, good son [name], listen attentively and do not be distracted! Now, on the fourth day, the pure red light of the “fire element” appears before you. At that time, the red Bhagavān Tathāgata of Immeasurable Light of the western red “Land of Utmost Bliss,” holding a lotus in his hand and seated upon a jeweled peacock throne, appears before you in union with and embracing the “White-Clad Mother.” The two bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī, together with the pair of

“Goddess of Song” and “Goddess of Light,” surround them in an ocean-like maṇḍala of rainbow light. All six deities appear together.

This is the intrinsically pure red light of the aggregate of perception, namely, the “wisdom of wondrous observation.”

This light shines brilliantly, adorned with bindus and tiny points of light. It dazzles the eyes so that you cannot bear to look at it. From the hearts of the male and female deities, the Tathāgata of Immeasurable Light and his consort, it shines before you and directly into your heart. Though you may not dare to gaze upon it, you should face it without fear. At the same time, the dull, undazzling red light of the realm of hungry ghosts also shines before you together with the light of wisdom. Do not delight in it or become attached to it.

At that time, controlled by the karmic force of intense “desire,” you will become frightened by that dazzling red light and wish to flee from it. Instead, you will take delight in the dull, undazzling red light of the realm of hungry ghosts and wish to enter it. I now tell you: at this time, do not fear that resplendent, dazzling, transparent red light, and do not flee from it.

It is the complete power and functioning of the intrinsic nature of your own directly realized wisdom. Within that light, remain clearly, naturally, and at ease. Moreover, place your faith and joyful longing in it. If you recognize the luminosity of the intrinsic nature of your own directly realized wisdom, then, even if you lack sincere aspiration, the light of all Buddhas will merge with you without duality or distinction, and you will attain Buddhahood.

If you do not recognize it as the source of your own directly realized wisdom, then place your faith and joyful longing in it, thinking to yourself: “This is the compassionate grace-light of the Tathāgata of Immeasurable Light.” Urgently take refuge and pray deeply. Know that this is the compassionate light-hook of the Tathāgata of Immeasurable Light; do not flee from it. Even if you wish to escape, it cannot be separated from your body. Therefore, do not be afraid; rejoice and pray.

Then the Tathāgata of Immeasurable Light will come to guide you, drawing you out of the perilous passage of the intermediate state. Nor should you become attached to the dull, undazzling red light of the realm of hungry ghosts. It is a light that comes to lure you because of habitual tendencies accumulated through your intense “desire.” If you become attached to it, you will fall into the realm of hungry ghosts and suffer the most unbearable torments of hunger and thirst. This will become an obstruction, blocking the path to liberation.

Therefore, do not give rise to attachment to it. Cut off habitual tendencies and do not arouse longing. Instead, rejoice in that resplendent and dazzling red light, and

focus with yearning upon the male and female deities, the Bhagavān Tathāgata of Immeasurable Light and his consort. Recite the following verse, and make this aspiration after me:

Alas!

With desire blazing fiercely, I wander in birth and death;

May the light of the wisdom of wondrous observation shine upon me.

May the Buddha of Immeasurable Light guide me before;

May the White-Clad Buddha Mother protect me behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state

And be led to ascend to the Buddha-land of perfect awakening.

If you make this aspiration with such sincere reverence and earnestness, you will transform into rainbow light, merge into the hearts of the male and female deities, the Tathāgata of Immeasurable Light and his consort, and attain the perfect enjoyment body in the western “Land of Utmost Bliss.”



Day Five Recitation (On the Ninth Day After Death, Six Buddhas Come to Guide the Deceased)

V. Recitation on the Ninth Day after Death (On this day, six Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange offerings as before.

2. Next, raise your voice and recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse on the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the consciousness of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the ritual.)

Verse on the Power of Truth

By the power of my aspiration and the blessings of the Tathāgatas,

And by the power of the Dharma realm, may all objects of contemplation

Appear swiftly and unobstructedly, each as appropriate.

Once the preceding verse has been recited, the consciousness of the deceased has been summoned. Visualize it coming to abide before you and hear the Dharma, then begin reciting the following four verses of scripture.

(2) Recite the four verses of invocation three to seven times (according to the time available. They must be recited the first time; thereafter, they may be omitted if time is pressing).

3. Instructions for the Recitation Text

As instructed above, whatever the inferiority of their faculties, there are none who cannot be liberated. Yet although they have been instructed, there is a class of sentient beings who, long habituated to ingrained tendencies, are ultimately controlled by powerful habitual tendencies and unable to overcome them. Governed by the evil karma of “jealousy,” they become fearful of “sound” and “light” and fail to recognize the hook of great compassion’s light.

Until the fifth day (that is, the ninth day after death), they still drift about without support. At that time, the compassionate light of grace of the Blessed One Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata and his retinue comes to guide them. At the same time, the light of the “asura realm,” brought about by the affliction of “jealousy,” also comes to lure them. At this point, call the deceased by name and recite the following words of instruction:

Alas, son of noble family [name]: Listen attentively and do not be distracted! Today, on the fifth day, the pure green light of the “wind element” appears before you.

At that time, from the northern green “Victory Garden Buddha-field,” the Blessed One Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata appears before you. His body is green; he holds a crossed vajra and sits upon a precious garuḍa throne. He is in union with

Samayatārā, the Mother (that is, Green Tārā). Vajrapāṇi and Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin, the two bodhisattvas, together with the two female deities Jiandi (the Anointing Maiden) and Nide (the Food Maiden), surround them in an ocean of rainbow-light maṇḍalas. All six deities appear together and come before you.

This is the intrinsically pure green light of the aggregate of formations: the wisdom of all-accomplishing action.

This light shines dazzlingly, adorned with bindus and subtle points of light, so brilliant that your eyes can scarcely remain open. It shines from the hearts of the father-and-mother pair, Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata, before you and directly into your heart, so that you dare not gaze upon it. Yet at the same time, the dim green light of the asura realm, an undazzling light produced by "jealousy" as its cause, also appears before you together with the light of wisdom.

In response to these, do not give rise to attachment or aversion; instead cultivate equanimity. (To abide in a state that is neither suffering nor pleasure is called equanimity.) Nor should you delight in them. At that time, controlled by the karmic force of intense jealousy, you will fear and flee from that dazzling green light; instead, you will delight in and become attached to the undazzling dim green light of the asura realm and wish to enter it.

I now tell you: at this time, do not fear that radiant, dazzling, transparent green light, and do not flee from it. It is the inherently complete power and function of the very essence of your own directly realized wisdom. Within that light, remain lucid, spontaneous, calm, and at ease. Moreover, place your faith in it, delight in it, and yearn for it.

If you recognize the luminosity of the essence of your own directly realized wisdom, then even if you lack devout aspiration, the light of all the Buddhas will merge with you, without duality or difference, and you will attain Buddhahood.

If you do not recognize it as the original light of your own directly realized wisdom, then place your faith in it, delight in it, and yearn for it. Think to yourself: "This is the compassionate light of grace of Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata." Urgently take refuge and pray deeply. Know that this is the hook of Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata's compassionate light; do not flee from it. Even if you wish to escape, it cannot be separated from you. Therefore do not be afraid; rejoice in it and pray.

At that time, Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata will come to guide you and draw you out of the perilous passage of the intermediate state. As for the undazzling dim green light of the asura realm, do not give rise to craving or attachment toward it. It is a light that comes to lure you, accumulated through the karmic force of your intense

jealousy. If you become attached to it, you will fall into the asura realm and undergo the exceedingly unbearable suffering of strife and contention. It will thus become an obstacle, blocking the path to liberation.

Therefore, sever your habitual tendencies toward it; do not crave or cling to it. Instead, give rise to faith in the radiant, dazzling green light, and single-mindedly yearn for the Blessed One Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata and his consort. Recite the following verse and make this aspiration:

Alas!

When intense jealousy drives me to wander in saṃsāra,

May the light of all-accomplishing wisdom shine upon me;

May Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata lead the way before me,

And Mother Samayatārā protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage

Of fear in the intermediate state, and to be led upward into the Buddha-field of perfect awakening.

If you make this aspiration with sincere and earnest devotion, you will transform into rainbow light and merge into the hearts of the father-and-mother pair, the Blessed One Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata. You will then directly attain Buddhahood as the complete sambhogakāya in the northern Victory Garden Buddha-field.



Day Six Recitation (On the tenth day after death, forty-two Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

V. Recitation on the Tenth Day After Death (On this day, forty-two Buddhas come together to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Next, raise your voice and recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse on the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the consciousness of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the ritual.)

Verse on the Power of Truth

By the power of my aspiration and the blessing power of the Tathāgata,

And by the power of the dharma realm, whatever objects are contemplated,

May they all, as appropriate, swiftly appear before us without obstruction.

Once the preceding verse has been recited, the consciousness of the deceased has been summoned. Visualize it as having come and remaining before you to hear the Dharma, then begin reciting the following four verses of scripture.

(2) Recite the four invocation verses three to seven times. (The number may be determined according to the time available. They must be recited on the first occasion; afterward, they may be omitted if time is pressing.)

3. Text for Instruction and Recitation

During the preceding five days of the intermediate state of Dharmatā, instructions have already been given many times. However meager one’s merit and karmic affinity may be, even if one failed to recognize it the first time, one should recognize it again; one need only recognize one of them, and there is none who will not be liberated.

Yet there are also those who, despite having received such instructions many times, are accompanied throughout the long night by deeply rooted habitual tendencies. They are not yet familiar with the wisdom of the pure appearances and are governed by karma. Although they are shown the way, they are still led outward by evil habitual tendencies. The hook of great-compassionate light cannot draw them in; they become fearful of the “light” and “radiance,” and again fall into birth and death.

Then, on the sixth day (that is, the tenth day after death), the male and female Buddhas of the five families, together with their retinues, all appear before one at once. At that time, the lights of the six realms also appear together. In giving these instructions, call the deceased by name, recite the following text, and say:

Alas, good son [name]: listen attentively and do not be distracted! Up to yesterday, the Tathāgatas of the five families each manifested their forms. Although instructions were given, you were drawn by evil habits and became fearful of them. Therefore, you remain here even today.

If you had previously recognized the fundamental light of the wisdom of the Tathāgatas of the five families as the appearance of your own essential nature, you would already have been transformed into rainbow light within the bodies of the Buddhas of the five families, and would have become a perfect enjoyment-body Buddha. Because of your ignorance, you still wander here. Therefore, observe carefully and do not be distracted. The complete appearances of the Tathāgatas of the five families, called "the light of the union of the four wisdoms," now come to welcome you. You should recognize them.

Alas, good son: the pure lights of the four elements in four colors now appear before you.

At this time, the male and female Buddhas Vairocana of the central "Dense Array Buddha-field," together with their retinues, appear before you; the male and female Buddhas Vajrasattva of the eastern "Joyous Buddha-field," together with their retinues, appear before you; the male and female Buddhas Ratnasambhava of the southern "Glorious Buddha-field," together with their retinues, appear before you; the male and female Buddhas Amitābha of the western "Land of Ultimate Bliss," together with their retinues, appear before you; and the male and female Buddhas Amoghasiddhi of the northern "Perfect Victory Buddha-field," together with their retinues, emerge from the ocean of rainbow-light maṇḍalas and appear before you.

Alas, good son: besides these paired deities of the five families, there are also the four wisdom kings who guard the four gates: Trailokyavijaya, Yamāntaka, Hayagrīva, and Amṛtakuṇḍalin; as well as the four female gatekeepers: the goddess holding the hook, the goddess holding the lasso, the goddess holding the chain, and the goddess holding the bell. There are also the Buddha of the deva realm, Indra; and the Buddha of the asura realm, "Contentious Mind" (Sanskrit: Pi-moluozhiduo.

Its Tibetan name is Tasangri, and it is also translated as "Pure Mind"); the Buddha of the human realm, Śākyamuni Lion; the Buddha of the animal realm, Lion of Excellent Abiding; the Buddha of the hungry-ghost realm, Flaming Mouth; and the Buddha of the hell realm, Dharma King. These World-Honored Buddhas—the six Buddhas of the six realms—all appear before you. In addition, Samantabhadra Tathāgata and Samantabhadrā Buddha-Mother, the paired primordial Buddhas who are the progenitors of all Buddhas (see Appendix Note Six), also appear before you. Altogether, these are the forty-two sambhogakāya Buddhas. They emerge from

within your own mind and appear before you. All these are manifestations within your originally pure realm; you should recognize them.

Alas, good son: these Buddha-fields do not exist elsewhere; they have always been complete within the four directions and center of your own mind. Now they emerge from your mind and appear before you. Nor do those Buddha bodies come from elsewhere; they are naturally formed through the inherently present power and function of your own inner realization-wisdom. Therefore, recognize them as such.

Alas, good son: these Buddha bodies are neither large nor small, but are equal in size. They possess all ornaments, forms, colors, postures, thrones, and emblems. The Buddha bodies form five groups, each consisting of paired male and female deities. Around each group is a wheel of five-colored light. Within each, the male deity is a bodhisattva who holds the emblem of that family in pairs, and the female deity is a wisdom consort who likewise holds it in pairs. Thus they form the entire maṇḍala, all gathered together and fully appearing before you. These are the yidams upon whom you rely; you should recognize them.

Alas, good son: from the bodies of these paired male and female Tathāgatas of the five families flows the light of the union of the four wisdoms, exceedingly subtle and wondrous. Like dazzling sunlight, it shines upon your mind and appears before you.

First, from the breast of Vairocana radiates the light of the wisdom of the dharma-realm's essential nature, appearing blue, brilliant, and dazzling. A platform of light shines upon and touches your mind, merging with it as one. Upon this platform are blue luminous points, appearing together with the light; like an inverted turquoise canopy, they gleam brilliantly and dazzle the eyes. It is further adorned with five luminous points of its own nature, without center or edge, and embellished with luminous points and subtle points of light as it appears before you.

From the breast of Vajrasattva radiates the light of great perfect mirror wisdom, appearing white. Upon the platform of light are white luminous points, like an inverted bright mirror, adorned with luminous points and subtle points of light as they appear before you.

From the breast of Ratnasambhava radiates the light of the wisdom of equality, appearing yellow. Upon the platform of light are yellow luminous points, like an inverted golden bowl, adorned with luminous points and subtle points of light as they appear before you.

From the breast of Amitābha radiates the light of wondrous discerning wisdom, appearing red. Upon the platform of light are red luminous points, like an inverted coral jeweled canopy, adorned with luminous points and subtle points of light as they appear before you. Beneath these four Buddha-wisdom lights, the radiance is

complete, exceedingly clear, and too dazzling to behold. They are also each adorned with five luminous points of their own nature, without center or edge; everywhere they are embellished with luminous points and subtle points of light, all identical with the light of the wisdom of the dharma-realm's essential nature. What thus appears is intimately connected with your own mind, united and corresponding with it, naturally arising and manifesting.

Alas, good son: all these lights are manifestations of the inherently complete power and function of your own inner realization-wisdom; they do not come from outside. Therefore, merge with them without obstruction. Do not be startled or afraid. Gather your mind into samādhi and remain calmly in non-discrimination. In this state, the bodies and lights of the Buddhas merge with your body as one, and you become a Buddha.

Alas, good son: the Buddha light of the wisdom of accomplishing activities alone does not shine upon you here, because the power and function of your own inner realization-wisdom is not yet complete; therefore, it does not manifest.

Alas, good son: this is what is called "the light of the union of the four wisdoms," also known as "the four secret apertures of Vajrasattva."

At this time, you should recall the oral instructions formerly given by your guru. If you can remember the meaning of those instructions, faith and joyful confidence will arise in the present appearances. It will be like a mother and child meeting, or like old intimates who have long known one another and now meet again: you will immediately recognize them, free from doubt. Regarding the appearances of your own essential nature as your Original Face, and trusting them as the unchanging true path of pure Dharmatā, you will give rise to the "ever-flowing samādhi," merge into the great spontaneous body of realization-wisdom, attain Buddhahood through the enjoyment body, and never regress.

Alas, good son: at the same time as the wisdom lights, the six impure delusive appearances—the six lights of the six realms—also appear before you: the undazzling white light of the deva realm, the undazzling dark-green light of the asura realm, the undazzling pale-yellow light of the human realm, the undazzling pale-blue light of the animal realm, the undazzling pale-red light of the hungry-ghost realm, and the undazzling smoky-gray light of the hell realm. These six lights of the six realms appear together with the wisdom lights.

At that time, do not grasp at any of these lights; remain calmly in non-objectification. If you become fearful of the pure wisdom lights and become attached to the impure lights of the six realms of saṃsāra, you will take on the body of a sentient being in one of the six realms, laboring in the great ocean of suffering of birth and death, with no time for liberation.

Alas, good son: if you have not received the instructions indicated by the guru's oral teachings, you will fear the Buddha bodies and pure lights described above, while instead becoming enamored of the impure lights of saṃsāra.

Do not do so now! Toward the pure wisdom lights, brilliant and dazzling, give rise to reverence, faith, and joyful confidence, and say to yourself: "The great-compassionate wisdom lights of the World-Honored Tathāgatas of the five families have appeared before me in order to pity and receive me. I must quickly take refuge." Do not crave or cling to the lights of the six realms, which are delusive appearances. With single-minded attention, earnestly long for the paired male and female Tathāgatas of the five families. Recite the following verse and make this aspiration after me:

Alas!

As the five poisons blaze fiercely, I wander in birth and death;

May the light of the union of the four wisdoms shine upon me;

May the Tathāgatas of the five families guide me before;

May the wisdom mothers of the five families protect me behind;

May I be freed from the impure illusory lights of the six realms;

May I cross the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state;

May I be sent upward to the five pure lands.

By making this aspiration and reciting it, one recognizes the appearances of one's essential nature and, merging with them without duality, becomes a Buddha. Those of middling capacity, through earnest reverence, recognize them for themselves and are thereby liberated. Those of lesser capacity, through the power of pure aspiration, cut off the gates of birth into the six destinies, comprehend the actual realm of the union of the four wisdoms, and attain Buddhahood through the secret aperture of Vajrasattva.



Day Seven Recitation (On the eleventh day after death, ten Vidyādhara Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

V. Day Seven Recitation (On the eleventh day after death, ten Vidyādhara Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Next, chant the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse of the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the consciousness of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the ritual.)

Verse of the Power of Truth

By the power of my aspiration and the blessings of the Tathāgata,

And by the power of the dharma realm, whatever objects are contemplated

May all, as appropriate, swiftly appear without obstruction.

Once the foregoing verse has been recited, the consciousness of the deceased has been summoned. Visualize it as having come to abide before you to hear the Dharma, and begin reciting the following four verses.

(2) Recite the Four Invocation Verses three to seven times (according to the time available; they must be recited the first time, but may be omitted later if time is pressing).

3. Instructions for Recitation

Moreover, among those who receive such clear and detailed instructions, very many recognize them and attain liberation. Yet there are those of the very lowest capacities who, while living in the human realm, have never been imbued with the true Dharma, who bear grave karmic obstacles, or who have violated their samaya commitments. Deluded by karmic force, they fail to recognize [the truth] even when instructions are given, and thus continue to wander in saṃsāra. Now, on the seventh day of the intermediate state of dharmatā (the eleventh day after death), the noble assembly of the “Pure Ḍākinī Realm,” the “Vidyādhara Class,” comes to guide [the deceased]. At that time, the light of the “animal realm,” produced by the affliction of ignorance, also comes to lure them.

Alas, good son (so-and-so), listen without distraction! On this seventh day, naturally pure multicolored light appears before you. At this time, the sacred deities of the “Pure Ḍākinī Realm,” the Vidyādharas, come to guide you, merging into an ocean of rainbow-light maṇḍalas.

At the center of the maṇḍala is the “Supreme Vidyādhara of Ripened Karma,” called “Lotus Dance Lord.” His body is adorned with the splendor of the five lights. His consort, the “Red Wisdom Ḍākinī,” embraces his body. Holding a curved knife in his right hand and a skull cup filled with blood in his left, he assumes a dancing posture; with the mudrā of a fierce gaze, he looks into space and appears before you.

In the east of the maṇḍala is the “Earth-Dwelling Vidyādhara,” whose body is white and whose expression bears a slight smile. His consort, the “White Ḍākinī,” embraces his body. Holding a curved knife in his right hand and a skull cup filled with blood in his left, he assumes a dancing posture; with the mudrā of a fierce gaze, he looks into space and appears before you.

In the south of the maṇḍala is the “Vidyādhara with Mastery over Life,” whose body is yellow and splendidly adorned. His consort, the “Yellow Ḍākinī,” embraces his body. Holding a curved knife in his right hand and a skull cup filled with blood in his left, he assumes a dancing posture; with the mudrā of a fierce gaze, he looks into space and appears before you.

In the west of the maṇḍala is the “Mahāmudrā Vidyādhara,” whose body is red and whose expression bears a slight smile. His consort, the “Red Ḍākinī,” embraces his body. Holding a curved knife in his right hand and a skull cup filled with blood in his left, he assumes a dancing posture; with the mudrā of a fierce gaze, he looks into space and appears before you.

In the north of the maṇḍala is the “Spontaneously Accomplished Vidyādhara,” whose body is green and whose expression is half wrathful and half smiling. His consort, the “Green Ḍākinī,” embraces his body. Holding a curved knife in his right hand and a skull cup filled with blood in his left, he assumes a dancing posture; with the mudrā of a fierce gaze, he looks into space and appears before you.

Surrounding these Vidyādharas is an immeasurable assembly of ḍākinī mothers: the ḍākinīs of the eight great charnel grounds, the ḍākinīs of the four castes, the ḍākinīs of the three abodes, the ḍākinīs of the ten abodes, the ḍākinī mothers of the twenty-four sacred places, and also heroes, heroines, kiṃkaras, and hosts of Dharma protectors. All of them wear garments of the six bone ornaments and bear thighbone trumpets, skull hand drums, banners of rākṣasa skin,

canopies and flags of human skin, ointment of human fat, and innumerable kinds of musical instruments. They fill all worlds and are filled with blood; shaking heaven and earth, they all appear before you. Every sound of music, too, comes roaring forth with a din that seems to split the brain, as they perform various dances. They come to welcome the deceased whose samaya commitments are intact; they come to admonish those whose samaya commitments have been violated.

Alas, good son: the intrinsic wisdom-light, naturally pure of habitual tendencies, possesses the five colors. Like five-colored threads, it ripples across the sky, flickering and wavering, brilliant and transparent, dazzling to the eye. From the hearts of the five chief Vidyādharas, it shines directly upon your heart; unable to bear looking at it, it appears before you. At the same time, the dull, non-dazzling blue light of the “animal realm” also appears before you together with the wisdom-light.

At that time, moved by habitual tendencies and drawn by delusive appearances, you become frightened of the five-colored light and wish to flee. Instead, attachment arises toward the non-dazzling light of the “animal realm,” and you wish to enter it.

Yet do not be frightened by that dazzling five-colored light. Recognize it as wisdom-light. Within that light, the intrinsic sounds of all dharmas resound, like a thousand thunderclaps sounding all at once—crashing and shaking, roaring and resounding—mingled with the sounds of wrathful mantras, all appearing before you.

Do not be afraid in this state. Do not flee and do not fear. Recognize it at once as the functioning of your own primordial wisdom of realization. Do not crave or cling to the non-dazzling blue light of the “animal realm.” If attachment arises, you will fall into the ignorant animal realm and suffer the misery of being driven by stupidity and unknowing, with no time of escape. Therefore, do not cling to that light. Instead, rejoice in the brilliant and dazzling light that possesses all five colors. With one-pointed concentration, earnestly seek and yearn for the World-Honored Vidyādhara acharyas. Say to yourself:

“Holy Vidyādhara assembly, heroic ones and ḍākinīs, before all you sacred ones, now come to guide me;

Enter that pure abode of the ḍākinīs and come to abide before me. I pray that all you sacred ones

Will compassionately hear and grant this: I, a sentient being, have not accumulated provisions; in the past,

The Tathāgatas of the three times and the sacred assembly of the five families, by the light of great compassion, have come to embrace me.

Pity me: in my ignorance, I have failed to recognize [the truth] and have wasted time until now. How lamentable this truly is!

Now, before the Vidyādharas and all sacred ones, I earnestly pray: from this day forth, never abandon me!

With the hook of compassion, draw me in! Lead me to rebirth in the pure ḍākinī realm."

Concentrate and earnestly pray in this manner. Recite the following verse and make this aspiration after me:

Alas!

Holy Vidyādhara assembly, graciously hear and grant this;

Please employ your compassion and guide me onto the right path.

As habitual tendencies blaze fiercely, I wander in birth and death;

May the light of innate wisdom shine upon me.

May the heroic Vidyādharas guide me from before,

And the ḍākinī mothers protect me from behind.

I pray to be freed from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state

And led upward to the Buddha-land of perfect awakening.

If one makes this aspiration with such sincere earnestness, one will be transformed into rainbow light and merge into the hearts of the Vidyādhara assembly, and will certainly be born in the "Pure Ḍākinī Realm." All those of good spiritual lineage need only rely on the foregoing instructions and recognize [the truth], and they can attain liberation. Even if they possess evil karma and habitual tendencies, they will certainly be liberated.



Day Eight Recitation (On the twelfth day after death, six Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

V. Day Eight Recitation (On the twelfth day after death, six Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Next, recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse of the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the consciousness of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the ritual.)

Verse of the Power of Truth

Through the power of my aspiration and the blessing power of the Tathāgatas,

And through the power of the dharma realm, may all objects of contemplation

Appear swiftly and unobstructedly, each in accordance with its proper nature.

After reciting the preceding verse, the consciousness of the deceased has been summoned. Immediately visualize the deceased coming to remain before you and hear the Dharma, then begin reciting the following four verses of scripture.

(2) Recite the four verses of invocation three to seven times (according to the time available. They must be recited the first time; thereafter, they may be omitted if time is pressing).

3. Instructions for Recitation

During the first seven days of the Intermediate State of Dharmatā, the peaceful assembly of noble beings appears; now they have passed away. During the latter seven days, beginning on the eighth day of the Intermediate State of Dharmatā, the fifty-eight blazing, blood-drinking wrathful deities come to appear before one. The wrathful assembly of noble beings occupies the same positions as the peaceful assembly, but their manifested forms and appearances differ.

These wrathful appearances arise through the intensified force of the three states of terror, dread, and fear, and are extremely difficult to recognize. Yet, if one can recognize them while remaining lucid, liberation is easy. When the three states of terror, dread, and fear appear, one should rest in the instructions with one-pointed, vigorous effort, without allowing one’s innate wisdom of realization to become scattered or confused.

In such circumstances, if one does not encounter these instructions, then even if one has studied the scriptures and teachings and become as learned as the sea, it is all futile and of no benefit. Moreover, ordinary people become frightened when the three states of terror, dread, and fear arise; they fall into the ravines of the evil destinies and suffer immense misery forever. But mantra yogins of the Vajrayāna

are different. Even those of the very lowest capacity, upon seeing the blood-drinking wrathful noble beings, recognize them as intimate friends and old acquaintances, deeply trust that they are their own yidam, unite with them nondually, and thereby attain Buddhahood.

This esoteric teaching of liberation through hearing is a Dharma for attaining Buddhahood without practice; that is, a Dharma by which liberation is attained solely through hearing. It is also a Dharma for leading those with grave karmic obstacles out of perilous passages; a Dharma by which the distinction is decisively made in a single instant; and a Dharma by which equal enlightenment is realized in a single instant. Truly, it is profound and wondrous! There has never been a sentient being who, upon encountering it, has fallen into an evil destiny.

Having thus explained the importance of "liberation through hearing," we shall now give instructions for the time when wrathful appearances arise in the Intermediate State of Dharmatā. At this point, call the deceased by name, recite the following text, and address them thus:

Alas, good son or daughter [name], listen attentively and do not be distracted! Previously, when the peaceful appearances of the Intermediate State of Dharmatā arose, you did not recognize them; therefore, you are still wandering without support. Now, on the eighth day, the blood-drinking wrathful noble beings come to appear before you. Do not be confused; recognize them.

Alas, good son or daughter [name], this principal deity, the Great Glorious One, is the World-Honored One of the Buddha family, the blood-drinking Buddha Heruka. His body is dark brown. He has three faces, six arms, and four outstretched legs. His right face is white, his left face red, and his central face dark brown. His entire body is enveloped in blazing fire.

His nine eyes are wide open, glaring wrathfully and fearfully; his eyebrows rise like lightning; his fangs protrude, and he roars and laughs, making the sounds "a-la-la" and "ha-ha." He also utters "ga-u" and great, piercing cries. His red and yellow hair blazes upward; his crown is adorned with skulls, symbolizing the sun and moon; and black snakes and freshly severed human heads adorn his body.

Of his six hands: the upper right holds a wheel, the middle right an axe, and the lower right a sword; the upper left holds a bell, the middle left a skull, and the lower left a plow.

The consort is named Buddha-Krodhīśvarī. She embraces the deity's body: with her right arm she clasps his neck, while in her left hand she holds a red conch-shell bowl containing male vital essence, which she offers to his mouth. He sucks it noisily and gives forth a thunderous roar.

From the pores of his vajra-blazing body issues the fire of wisdom, fiercely burning and radiant. With his right leg bent and his left extended, he stands upon a garuḍa throne. This emerges from the “center” within your brain and appears before you in this form. Do not be alarmed or afraid of it; do not give rise to terror. Recognize it at once as the body of your own wisdom of realization—your own yidam. Do not be alarmed or fearful! In truth, it is still the united father-and-mother form of the World-Honored One Vairocana. Therefore, do not be afraid. If you can recognize it, you will be liberated immediately.

As explained above, once you recognize it as your yidam, you may unite with it without duality and realize the perfect enjoyment body of a Buddha.



Day Nine Recitation (On the thirteenth day after death, two Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

V. Recitation on the Thirteenth Day After Death (On this day, two Buddhas come to guide the deceased)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Next, recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse of the Power of Truth” three or seven times to summon the consciousness of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the ritual.)

Verse of the Power of Truth

By the power of my aspiration, and by the power of the Tathāgata’s blessing,

And by the power of the dharma realm, whatever objects are contemplated

May all appear swiftly and unobstructedly, as appropriate.

Once the above verse has been recited, the consciousness of the deceased has been summoned. Immediately visualize it coming to remain before you and hear the Dharma, then begin reciting the following four scriptural verses.

(2) Recite the four verses of invocation three to seven times. (This may be determined according to the time available. They must be recited on the first occasion; afterward, they may be omitted if time is pressing.)

3. Instructions for Recitation

Furthermore, if, frightened, the deceased flees and does not recognize them, then on the ninth day of the Intermediate State of Dharmatā (that is, the thirteenth day after death), the Bhagavān of the Blood-Drinking Vajra family comes to guide the deceased. Call the deceased by name and recite the following, saying:

Alas! Noble son (name), listen attentively and do not be distracted! Now, on the ninth day, the Bhagavān of the Blood-Drinking Vajra family, named “Vajra Heruka,” appears. His body is deep blue; he has three faces, six arms, and stands with four legs outspread. His right face is white, his left face red, and his central face blue.

Of his six hands: the upper right holds a vajra, the middle right a skull, and the lower right an axe; the upper left holds a bell, the middle left a skull, and the lower left a plow. His consort, named “Vajra Krodheśvarī,” embraces his body: her right arm encircles his neck, while her left hand holds a red conch filled with male essence, which she offers to his mouth. The two are joined in embrace.

This emerges from the eastern corner within your brain and appears before you. Do not be startled, do not be afraid, and do not give rise to fear! Recognize it as the body of your own self-realized wisdom—your own yidam. Therefore, recognize it and never be afraid! In reality, it is still the united father-and-mother form of the

Bhagavān Vajrasattva. Give rise to joy; if you can recognize it, you will be liberated at once.

Thus instruct the deceased clearly. If it is recognized as one's yidam, one may merge with it in nonduality and realize the perfect enjoyment body of a Buddha.



Day Ten Recitation (On the fourteenth day after death, two Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

V. Day Fourteen Recitation (On this day, two Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Next, recite the following verses aloud:

(1) First recite the “Verse of the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the consciousness of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before each performance of the ritual.)

Verse of the Power of Truth

By the power of my intention and the blessings of the Tathāgatas,

And by the power of the dharma realm, whatever objects are contemplated

May, as appropriate, swiftly appear before me without obstruction.

Once the preceding verse has been recited, the consciousness of the deceased has been summoned. Immediately visualize the deceased coming to remain before you and hear the Dharma, and begin reciting the following four verses of scripture.

(2) Recite the four verses of invocation three to seven times (as time permits; they must be recited the first time, but may be omitted thereafter if time is pressing).

3. Instructions for Recitation

As stated above, there are also those whose karmic obstacles are especially grave; fear therefore arises in the face of these appearances, and they avoid them without attaining realization. Now, on the tenth day of the intermediate state of Dharmatā (that is, the fourteenth day after death), the Blessed One of the blood-drinking Jewel Family comes to guide the deceased. Call the deceased by name, recite the following passage, and tell them:

Alas, son of good family (so-and-so), listen carefully! Now, on the tenth day, the Blessed One of the blood-drinking Jewel Family, named Ratna Heruka, appears. His body is deep yellow; he has three faces, six arms, and stands with four legs outspread. His right face is white, his left face red, and his central face deep yellow.

Of his six hands, the upper right holds a jewel, the middle right a celestial staff, and the lower right a club; the upper left holds a bell, the middle left a skull, and the lower left a steel trident. His consort, named Ratna Krodhīśvarī, embraces his body:

her right arm clasps his neck, while her left hand holds up a red conch filled with male essence, offering it to his mouth. The two embrace in union.

This emerges from the southern corner within your brain and appears before you. Do not be startled, do not be afraid, and do not give rise to terror! Recognize it as your own self-realized wisdom body—your yidam—and recognize it at once; never be afraid! In truth, it is the father-and-mother union of the Blessed One Ratnasambhava Tathāgata. Therefore, revere it with faith and joy. If you can recognize it, you will be liberated immediately.

Explain this clearly and truthfully as above. If it is recognized as one’s yidam, one may merge with it nondually and realize the perfect sambhogakāya.



Day Eleven Recitation (On the fifteenth day after death, two Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

V. Recitation for the Fifteenth Day After Death (On this day, two Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Next, raise your voice and recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verses on the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the spirit of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (These verses must be recited before each performance of the ritual.)

Verses on the Power of Truth

By the power of my aspiration and the blessings of the Tathāgata,

And by the power of the dharma realm, whatever objects are contemplated

May, as appropriate, swiftly appear before us without obstruction.

Once the above verses have been recited, the spirit of the deceased has been summoned. Visualize the deceased as coming to abide before you to hear the Dharma, and begin reciting the following four verses of scripture.

(2) Recite the four verses of invocation three to seven times (according to the time available; they must be recited the first time, but may be omitted thereafter if time is pressing).

3. Text for Instruction and Recitation

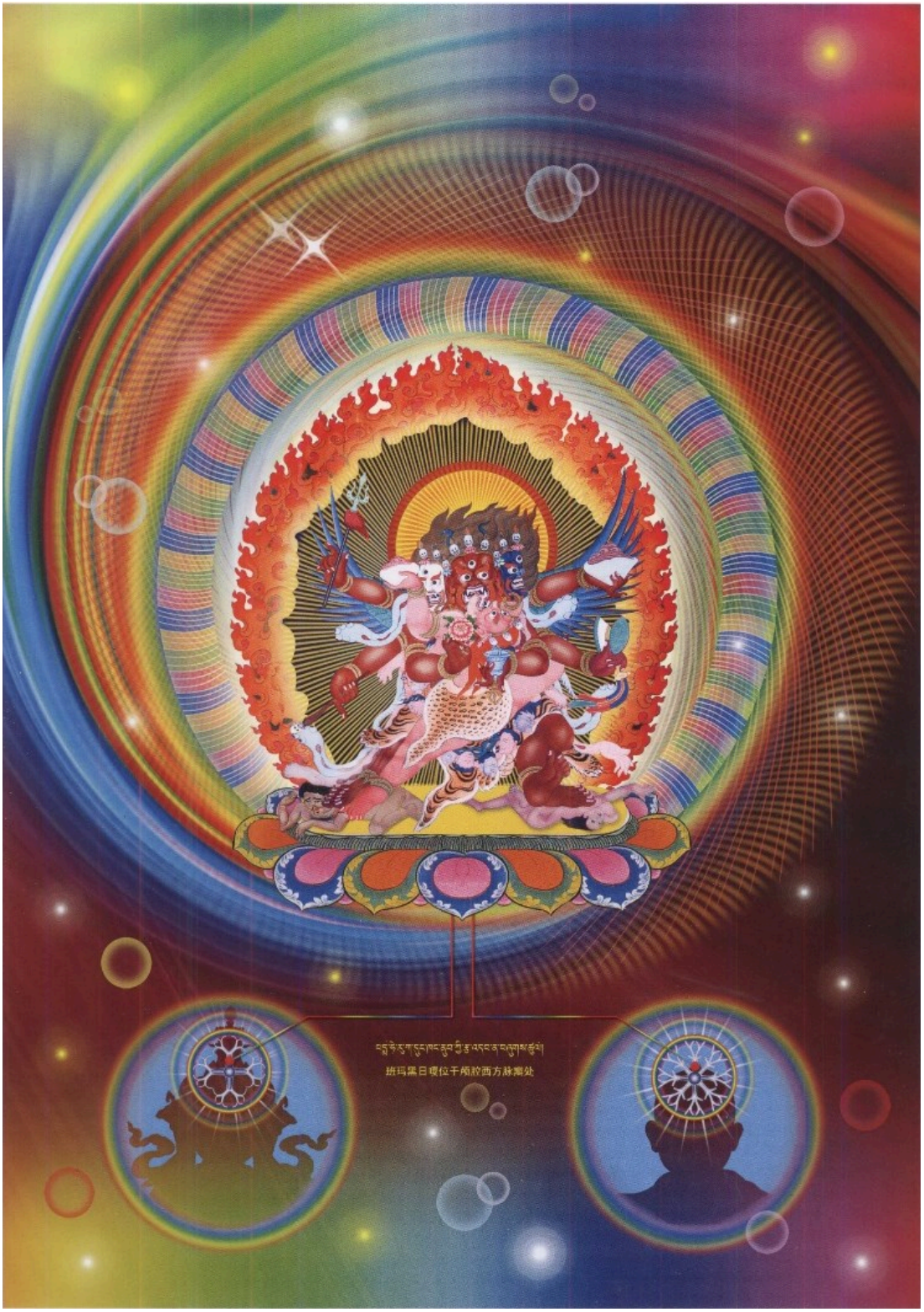
Although instructed as above, the deceased, being influenced by habitual tendencies, may become fearful and flee again. Failing to recognize the yidam, the deceased sees it instead as Yama, the Dharma King, and thus fails to attain recognition. Then, on the eleventh day (that is, the fifteenth day after death), the blood-drinking Blessed One of the Lotus Family comes to guide the deceased. Call the deceased by name, recite the following text, and tell them:

Alas, good son (so-and-so), listen attentively and do not be distracted! Now, on the eleventh day, the blood-drinking Blessed One of the Lotus Family, named Lotus Heruka, comes forth. His body is deep red. He stands with three faces, six arms, and four outstretched legs. His right face is white, his left face blue, and his central face deep red.

Of his six hands, the upper right holds a lotus, the middle right a khatvanga, and the lower right a club; the upper left holds a bell, the middle left a skull-cup filled with blood, and the lower left a ḍamaru. The vidyā consort, named Padma Krodhīśvarī, embraces the deity’s body: her right arm clasps his neck, while her left hand holds up a red conch containing male vital essence, which she offers to his mouth. The two are joined in embrace.

This emerges from the western corner within your brain and appears before you. Do not be startled, do not be afraid, and do not give rise to terror! In truth, these are the father-and-mother deities in union of Amitābha Tathāgata. Therefore, receive them with joy and reverence; if you can recognize them, you will immediately be liberated.

If this is clearly explained, the deceased should be able to recognize them as their own yidam. Then, merging without duality, they may attain the perfect sambhogakāya.



Day Twelve Recitation (On the sixteenth day after death, two Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

V. Recitation on the Sixteenth Day After Death (On this day, two Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Next, recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse on the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the consciousness of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the ritual.)

Verse on the Power of Truth

Through the power of my aspiration and the blessing power of the Tathāgata,

And through the power of the dharma realm, whatever is contemplated

May appear promptly and unobstructedly, according to what is appropriate.

After reciting the preceding verse, the consciousness of the deceased has been summoned. Immediately visualize it as having come to remain before you to hear the Dharma, and begin reciting the following four verses of scripture.

(2) Recite the Four Verses of Invocation three to seven times (according to the time available. They must be recited the first time; afterward, they may be omitted if time is pressing).

3. Instructions for Recitation

Although the instructions have been given as above, the deceased may still be led by habitual tendencies to give rise to fear and flee. Failing to recognize these manifestations as yidams, the deceased does not accept them. Then, on the twelfth day (the sixteenth day after death), the blood-drinking holy beings of the Karma family appear to guide the deceased. After this day, there also appear the eight great charnel-ground goddesses Jiwulima, the eight animal-headed goddesses of the regions, Polomenma, the wrathful animal-faced goddesses who guard the four gates, and the twenty-eight powerful goddesses with diverse animal heads, Wangjiuma, and others. If they are not recognized, fear will arise; therefore, instruction must be given.

At this time, call the deceased by name and recite the following words:

Alas, good son [name]: Today, the twelfth day, the blood-drinking World-Honored One of the Karma family—karma, a Sanskrit word meaning “activity”—appears, named Karma Heruka. His body is deep green. He has three faces, six arms, and stands with four legs extended. His right face is white, his left face red, and his central face deep green; he displays a fierce and terrifying appearance.

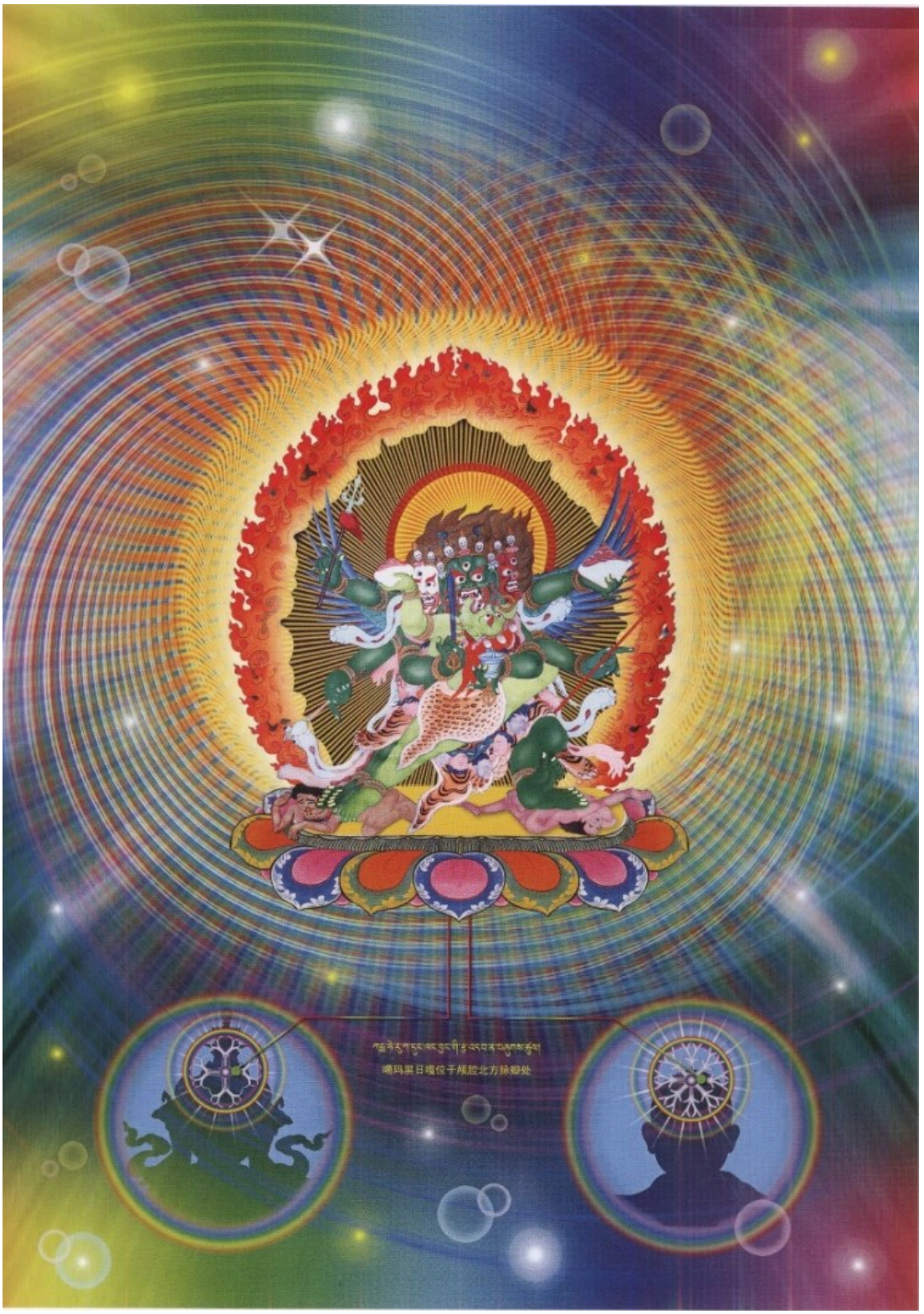
Of his six hands: the upper right holds a sword, the middle right a celestial staff, and the lower right a club; the upper left holds a bell, the middle left a skull-cup, and the lower left supports a plow. His consort is named Karma Krodhīśvarī. Embracing the deity's body, she clasps his neck with her right arm and holds a red conch in her left hand, filled with male essence, which she offers to his mouth; their faces meet as they embrace.

This has emerged from the northern corner within your brain and now appears before you. Do not be startled, do not be afraid, and do not give rise to terror. Recognize it at once as the body of your own realized wisdom—your own yidam—and do not be afraid. In reality, it is still the united father-and-mother form of the World-Honored One Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata. Therefore, revere it deeply and give rise to fervent longing. If you can recognize it, you will be liberated immediately.

If this is clearly explained as above, it can be recognized as one's own yidam, and, merging without duality, one realizes the perfect sambhogakāya.

Thus, in accordance with the essential instructions transmitted by the guru, recognize these appearances of intrinsic nature as nothing but your own inner realized wisdom. It is like a lion skin: one who has seen one before knows that it is merely a skin and is immediately reassured; one who does not understand is at once frightened. If its meaning is explained to such a person and clearly pointed out, the fear immediately disappears.

This Dharma is the same. The blood-drinking holy beings have enormous bodies and massive limbs, as vast as space; when they appear, fear will certainly arise. But upon hearing these instructions and receiving clear guidance, one immediately realizes them as appearances of intrinsic nature, or recognizes them as one's own yidam. Then the Clear Light cultivated during life (the child light) and the spontaneously arisen Clear Light afterward (the mother light) meet. In lucid release, as if encountering an old acquaintance, one awakens with sudden clarity. Without these instructions, even the worthy cannot avoid falling back and drifting in the great ocean of birth and death.



Day Thirteen Recitation (On the Seventeenth Day After Death, Sixteen Buddhas Come to Guide the Deceased.)

V. Recitation on the Seventeenth Day After Death (On this day, sixteen Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Next, recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse on the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the consciousness of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the ritual.)

Verse on the Power of Truth

Through the power of my aspiration and the blessings of the Tathāgata,

And through the power of the Dharma realm, whatever is contemplated

May appear swiftly and unobstructedly, in accordance with its proper nature.

Once the preceding verse has been recited, the consciousness of the deceased has already been summoned. Visualize it as having come to remain before you to hear the Dharma, and begin reciting the following four verses of scripture.

(2) Recite the four invocation verses three to seven times. (The number may be determined by the time available. They must be recited the first time; afterward, they may be omitted if time is pressing.)

3. Instructions for Recitation

Thereupon, the eight great charnel-ground Gaurīs and the various animal-headed goddesses, the Tramenmās, all emerge from the deceased’s brain and appear before them. To instruct the deceased, call out their name and recite the following:

O noble son (name), listen attentively and do not be distracted! From the eight directions within your brain, eight Gaurīs again emerge and appear before you. Do not be frightened or afraid of them. They are described in detail below:

From the eastern quarter of your brain emerges the white Kerimā. In her raised right hand she holds a staff made from a human corpse; in her left hand she holds a skull filled with fresh blood. She appears before you.

From the southern quarter of your brain emerges the yellow Tserimā, holding a bow and arrows.

From the western quarter of your brain emerges the red Pramohāmā, holding a makara banner.

From the northern quarter of your brain emerges the black Petālīmā. In her right hand she holds a vajra; in her left, a skull cup filled with fresh blood.

From the southeastern quarter of your brain emerges the reddish-yellow Pukkasīmā. In her right hand she holds human intestines, while with her left hand she takes food.

From the southwestern quarter of your brain emerges the dark-green Ghasmarīmā. In her left hand she holds a skull cup filled with fresh blood; with her right hand she stirs it with a vajra, assumes a menacing posture, and drinks it.

From the northwestern quarter of your brain emerges the pale-yellow Caṇḍālīmā. She rends a human corpse; with her right hand she takes out its heart, and with her left she eats its body.

From the northeastern quarter of your brain emerges the deep-yellow Śmaśānamā. She tears apart the head and body of a decaying corpse and eats them.

These Gaurīs abiding in the eight directions also surround the five families of blood-drinking deities. They emerge from your brain and appear before you. Do not be frightened or afraid of them.

O noble son (name), beyond the outer perimeter—that is, outside the eight directions described above—there also appear before you the eight animal-headed goddesses, the Tramenmās:

In the east is the deep-purple lion-headed Siṃhamukhā. Her hands are crossed, a corpse is held in her mouth, and she shakes her mane.

In the south is the red tiger-headed Vyāghrīmukhā. Her hands are crossed below, her eyes stare fixedly, and she bares her teeth and furrows her brow.

In the west is the black fox-headed Śṛgālamukhā. She raises a sharp blade in her right hand, holds human intestines in her left, and chews flesh and sucks blood.

In the north is the deep-blue wolf-headed Śvānāmukhā. With both hands she tears apart a corpse, staring fixedly.

In the southeast is the pale-yellow vulture-headed Gṛdhramukhā. She bears a huge corpse upon her shoulder and raises bones in her hands.

In the northeast is the blue owl-headed Ulūkamukhā. In her right hand she holds a vajra; in her left she raises a knife, with which she cuts and eats human flesh.

In the southwest is the dark-red owl-headed Kaṅkamukhā, who likewise bears a huge corpse.

In the northwest is the black crow-headed Kākamukhā. She raises a skull cup in her left hand and holds a sharp sword in her right, cutting out hearts and livers.

These eight animal-headed goddesses, the Tramenmās, also surround the five blood-drinking deities. They emerge from your brain and appear before you. Do not be frightened or afraid of them. Know that whatever appears should be recognized as primordial appearances and as the functioning of realized wisdom.





Image source: An Illustrated Guide to Self-Liberation Through Familiarity with the Practice of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities, provided for reference.

Day Fourteen Recitation (On the eighteenth day after death, thirty-six Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

V. Day Fourteen Recitation (On the eighteenth day after death, thirty-six Buddhas come to guide the deceased.)

1. Arrange the offerings as before.

2. Next, raise your voice and recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse on the Power of Truth” three or seven times, summoning the spirit of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before every performance of the ritual.)

Verse on the Power of Truth

By the power of my aspiration and the blessings of the Tathāgata,

And by the power of the dharma realm, may all objects of contemplation

Appear swiftly and unobstructedly, each as appropriate.

Once the above verse has been recited, the spirit of the deceased has been summoned. Visualize the deceased as having come to remain before you and hear the Dharma, then begin reciting the following four verses of scripture.

(2) Recite the four verses of invocation three to seven times (according to the time available; they must be recited on the first occasion, but may be omitted later if time is pressing).

3. Instructions for Recitation

Alas, noble son [name]: On this fourteenth day (note: this sentence appears in the English translation but not in the Tibetan text), four wrathful animal-faced goddesses guard the four gates. They emerge from your brain and appear before you. You must recognize them at once, as follows:

From the eastern corner of your brain emerges a white “tiger-faced goddess,” holding a hook in her right hand and raising a red skull, filled to the brim with fresh blood, in her left;

From the southern corner of your brain emerges a yellow “pig-faced goddess,” holding a noose;

From the western corner of your brain emerges a red “lion-faced goddess,” holding a chain;

From the northern corner of your brain emerges a green “snake-faced goddess,” holding a bell.

All four goddesses hold skull vessels filled with blood in their left hands. These four wrathful goddesses who guard the gates all emerge from your brain. Know that they are your yidams; therefore, recognize them.

Alas, noble son [name]: Outside the circle of the thirty wrathful Herukas, there are also twenty-eight yoginīs called Wangjuma, with diverse animal faces and forms. Holding various weapons, they emerge from your brain and appear before you. Do not be afraid of them. Recognize all that appears as the functioning of the wisdom of your own primordial realization. At this critical moment, when great obstacles may arise, examine this carefully; therefore, remember your guru’s instructions!

Alas, noble son: From the east of your brain emerge a dark-purple “ox-headed rākṣasī,” holding a vajra and the lid of a skull vessel; and a reddish-yellow “snake-headed Brahmā goddess,” holding a lotus.

A dark-green “leopard-headed Mahādeva goddess” holds a trident; a blue “monkey-headed desire-realm goddess” holds a wheel; a red “bear-headed virgin goddess” holds a short spear; and a white “brown-bear-headed Indra goddess” holds a string of intestines. These six yoginīs of the east all emerge from the eastern corner of your brain and appear before you. Do not be afraid of them!

Alas, noble son: From the south of your brain emerge a yellow “bat-headed vajra goddess,” raising a sharp blade; a red “makara-headed peaceful goddess,” holding a treasure vase; a red “scorpion-headed nectar goddess,” holding a lotus; a white “kite-headed moonlight goddess,” holding a vajra; a green “fox-headed staff-bearing goddess,” holding a staff; and a dark-yellow “tiger-headed rākṣasī,” holding a blood-filled skull.

These six yoginīs of the south all emerge from the southern corner of your brain and appear before you. Do not be afraid of them!

Alas, noble son: From the west of your brain emerge a dark-green “vulture-headed flesh-eating goddess,” holding a staff; a red “horse-headed joyous goddess,” holding a torso; a white “garuḍa-headed mighty goddess,” holding a rod; a yellow “dog-headed rākṣasī,” holding a vajra in one hand and cutting with a knife in the other; a

red “hoopoe-headed passion-stirring goddess,” drawing a bow and arrow; and a green “elk-headed wealth-protecting goddess,” holding a treasure vase.

These six yoginīs of the west all emerge from the western corner of your brain and appear before you. Do not be afraid of them!

Alas, noble son: From the north of your brain emerge a blue “wolf-headed wind goddess,” unfurling a banner; a red “sheep-headed wondrous woman,” holding a human stake (a pointed implement for piercing people); and a black “pig-headed Hai goddess,” holding a tooth-cord (a cord threaded through teeth).

A red “crow-headed vajra goddess” holds a child’s corpse; a dark-green “elephant-headed great-nosed goddess” holds a huge corpse and drinks the blood from its skullcap; and a blue “snake-headed water goddess” holds a snake-noose. These six yoginīs of the north all emerge from the northern corner of your brain and appear before you. Do not be afraid of them!

Alas, noble son: In addition, four yoginīs who guard the four gates emerge from your brain and appear before you.

From the eastern corner of your brain emerges a white “cuckoo-headed vajra goddess,” holding a hook; from the southern corner emerges a yellow “goat vajra goddess,” holding a noose; from the western corner emerges a red “lion-headed vajra goddess,” holding a chain; and from the northern corner emerges a green “snake-headed vajra goddess,” holding a bell. These four yoginīs of the four gates all emerge from your brain and appear before you. These twenty-eight yoginīs are also manifestations of the self-arisen bodily power and functioning of the wrathful Herukas; therefore, recognize them.

Alas, noble son! From the empty-quiescent aspect of the dharmakāya appear the peaceful deities; know them to be your Original Face. From the luminous aspect of the dharmakāya appear the wrathful deities; therefore, recognize them. When the fifty-eight blood-drinking sacred beings emerge from your brain and appear before you, if you understand that all appearances are the primordial light of your own inner realization-wisdom, you will immediately merge inseparably with the blood-drinking deities and attain Buddhahood.

Alas, noble son: If you do not recognize them at once, you will certainly be terrified and seek to flee, undergoing great suffering and finding liberation difficult. If you do not recognize them in this way, you will see all the blood-drinking sacred beings as Yama, Lord of Dharma, and fear the blood-drinking yidams. You will tremble, lose consciousness, mistake the appearances of your own nature for demonic appearances, and thus sink into the ocean of birth and death. But if you are free of fear and terror, you will attain Buddhahood.

Alas, noble son! Among these sacred beings of the peaceful and wrathful assemblies, the largest have bodies as vast as space; those of middling size are as vast as Mount Sumeru; and even the smallest are eighteen times the height of your own body. Do not be afraid of them.

The sentient and insentient worlds appear as bodies of light, and all appearances manifest as forms of light. Regard them all as the primordial luminosity of your own inner realization-wisdom. When your own light and these forms merge inseparably, you will attain Buddhahood. Child of the Buddha! Whatever terrifying appearances arise before you, recognize them all as manifestations of your own consciousness, and do not be afraid. Recognize the clear light as the primordial light of your own inner realization-wisdom. If you recognize it thus, there is no doubt that you will attain Buddhahood in this very body at once. This is what is meant by “attaining equal enlightenment in a single instant”; it is precisely this moment. Therefore, accept it with wholehearted faith.

Alas, noble son: If at this time you fail to recognize them and become frightened, all the deities of the peaceful assembly will appear as the protector Mahākāla, and all the deities of the wrathful assembly will appear as Yama, Lord of Dharma. The appearances of your own nature will turn into demonic appearances, and you will sink into the sea of suffering of birth and death.

Alas, noble son: If you cannot recognize your true nature, then even if you are thoroughly versed in all sūtras and treatises and practice Dharma for countless kalpas, you will ultimately fail to attain Buddhahood. If you recognize your true nature, you may attain Buddhahood through one essential point and a single word or phrase. If you do not recognize your true nature, then immediately after death, in the intermediate state of dharmatā, forms of Yama, the King of Death, will appear. The largest Yamas are as vast as space; those of middling size are as vast as Mount Sumeru, king of mountains; and even the smallest are eighteen times the height of your own body. They are innumerable, filling the world and appearing before you.

Their forms bite their lips and gnash their teeth; their eyes are like glass; their hair is tied up above; they have huge bellies and slender waists, with topknots bound atop their heads. Holding instruments of punishment, they utter cries of slaughter, drink and devour brains and marrow, tear apart bodies and heads, and gouge out and eat hearts. In such forms, they fill the world and come before you.

Alas, noble son: When such appearances arise before you, do not be afraid or terrified. Know that your present body has become a habit-formed mind-born body. Even if it is cut and killed, it will not die. In truth, it is the very nature of your emptiness; therefore, do not be afraid.

The Yamas and the like that appear are likewise manifestations arising from the primordial light of your own inner realization-wisdom; therefore, no substantial entity can be found in them. Emptiness cannot be harmed by emptiness. Apart from the manifestations of the power and functioning of your realization-wisdom, none of the peaceful, wrathful, and blood-drinking assemblies, nor the various animal-faced forms, rainbow lights, Yamas, and other terrifying images, has any substantial entity to be found.

If you can recognize them thus, all fear will immediately dissolve, and you will merge inseparably with them and attain Buddhahood. If you cannot recognize them, reflect to yourself: "These are my yidams, who have come to guide me and draw me out of the perilous passage of the intermediate state; therefore, I take refuge in them." You must also deeply trust and rejoice in the Three Jewels, remember the yidam you personally upheld during life (if the deceased did not practice Esoteric Buddhism and has no fixed personal yidam, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva may be taken as the yidam), and invoke the sacred name, chanting:

Holy yidam, I pray that you will hear and heed me!

I now wander amid the hardships of the intermediate state;

I pray only that you swiftly come to rescue me;

Receive and protect me in great compassion!

You should also remember the name of your present guru and make this invocation:

I now wander in the intermediate state. I pray that you swiftly come to rescue me; do not forsake your great compassion, but bestow your gracious protection upon me.

You should also pray to and make aspirations before the blood-drinking assembly of sacred beings. Recite the following verse after me:

Alas!

When, driven by powerful habitual tendencies, I wander in the intermediate state, may I abandon the appearances of terror and fear.

May the holy assembly of peaceful and wrathful deities guide me from before; may the wrathful mothers sovereign in the dharma realm protect me from behind.

I pray to be delivered from the fearful pass of the intermediate state and led upward to the Buddhahood of perfect enlightenment.

Now I journey alone, parted from all family and friends; before me appear only the empty reflections of my own mind.

I earnestly pray that the Buddhas, through the power of their great compassion, will rescue me and dispel all terrors and fears of the intermediate state.

When the light of the five wisdoms appears at this time, do not be afraid or fearful; recognize it as your own true nature.

When the forms of the peaceful and wrathful deities appear, have firm faith, do not be afraid, and recognize them as manifestations of the intermediate state.

Should I, through karmic force, undergo every kind of suffering, may the yidam deities dispel my adversity and distress.

When the dharmatā yidams resound like a thousand claps of thunder, may this immediately turn into the sound of the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra.

When karmic force pursues me and I have nowhere to turn for protection, may the Lord of Great Compassion be my refuge.

When I undergo suffering through karmic habits, may I realize the samādhi of blissful pure light.

May the realms of the five great elements not become my enemies; may I behold the pure lands of the five Buddha families.

If one makes this aspiration with such reverence and earnestness, all terror will certainly vanish at once, and one will assuredly attain the Buddhahood of the sambhogakāya. This is therefore of the utmost importance. Recite it wholeheartedly three to seven times. No matter how grave the deceased's karma or how meager their favorable conditions, there has never been one who was not liberated. If there should nevertheless be such a person—one who, despite repeated performance of the ritual on their behalf, still fails to recognize and be delivered—then they will enter the “later intermediate state,” that is, the “intermediate state of becoming.”



Selected Esoteric Mantras from the Appendix

Selected Mantras from the Appendix

(1) Mantra of Liberation Through Hearing:

A bi jia dang ga.

(2) Great Esoteric Mantra of Primordial Awakening (Heart Mantra of Samantabhadra, King of Tathāgatas):

Ma ma guo lin sa min da.

(3) Mantra of the Assembly of the One Hundred Peaceful and Wrathful Deities:

Weng, A, Hong, bo de zhi da, ma ha su ka jia na, da du a, weng, lu ru lu ru hong, jue, hong.

(4) Dhāraṇī of the Diamond Sūtra:

Nan wu pen ga wa di, zhen ga bo la mi da ya, weng, nai en di da, ai li xu, ai li xu, mi li xu, mi li xu, ping na ying, ping na ying, nan wu pen ga wa di, zhai deng mu shao di, ai li di, ai li di, mi li di, mi li di, xu ri di, xu ri di, wu xu ri, wu xu ri, bu you ye, bu you ye, suo ha.

(5) Six Realms Vajra Mantra:

A a xia sa ma ha.

(6) Mantra for Making Up Omissions:

Weng, du lu du lu, zha ya mu ke, suo ha.

Concluding Summary of the Intermediate State of Dharmatā: The essential instructions for the intermediate state bring liberation simply through hearing. If they are seen with the eyes, liberation is likewise attained. At the time of death, people are usually confused by each and every one of their habitual tendencies. Apart from this Esoteric Teaching of Liberation Through Hearing, there is no other expedient means. Moreover, if someone hears it even once, that person can attain liberation, even if they have accumulated the gravest offenses leading to Avīci.

Therefore, this subtle and wondrous esoteric teaching should be recited aloud extensively among the public, so that people may hear it once. Even if they do not understand its meaning, at the time of the intermediate state their inner wisdom of realization will suddenly become clear, and their memory will be more than nine times stronger than during life. At that time, they will not forget a single word and will be able to remember it. Therefore, explain it widely and in detail to people in the world; recite it aloud before the sick; and recite it beside the ears of the deceased.

Anyone who reads this teaching need only refrain from giving rise to inverted and deluded views about it in order to attain liberation. Therefore, it should be treasured above all!

End of the Instructions on the Intermediate State of Dharmatā.

Fourth-Stage Practice: Instructions on the Intermediate State of Becoming

Verse of Homage and Refuge

I take refuge in the revered protector, the guru and the Three Jewels.

May they compassionately embrace us, so that liberation may be attained in the intermediate state.

I. Timing of the Practice

From the nineteenth to the fifty-third day after death, a total of thirty-five days.

II. Instructions for Practice

1. If, after the foregoing instructions on the intermediate state of Dharmatā, there are still persons who have not attained realization and who bear grave karma, then, because their karmic force is intense, they may fail to understand reality as it is; or, driven by karma, they may be seized by fear and terror. Although they have received the instructions, they may lose their opportunity for liberation. If, by the end of the second seven-day period, they still have not attained recognition, recite the following text and impress it upon their minds.

2. The instructions on the Intermediate State of Becoming include twenty-four guides concerning the realm after death, how to close the womb entrance, how to choose a womb entrance, and methods of rebirth. During the period of the Intermediate State of Becoming, recite the full text of all twenty-four guides each day for thirty-five consecutive days (making a total of fifty-three days when combined with the preceding period).

3. At this stage, if the text seems too lengthy, it may be divided over three days, with one volume recited over that period: on the first day, recite the Intermediate State of Becoming text through Instruction 12; on the second day, recite from Instruction 12 through Instruction 19; and on the third day, recite from Instruction 19 to the end of the volume. Beginning on the fourth day, start again from the beginning and recite one complete volume in sequence over every three days, continuing in this manner until the end of the forty-nine-day period.

4. Those who are able may recite all twenty-four guides on the Intermediate State of Becoming each day during the fourth stage. For greater reassurance, beginning at the time of death, one may directly recite the complete texts of all four stages every day until the completion of the fifty-three-day period; this is still more complete.

III. Conducting the Practice

The Nineteenth Through Fifty-Third Days After Death

V. Days Nineteen Through Fifty-Three After Death

1. Set out the offerings as before.

2. Next, recite the following verses:

(1) First recite the “Verse on the Power of Truth” three or seven times, invoking and summoning the spirit of the deceased to come before you and hear the Dharma. (This verse must be recited before each performance of the ritual.)

Verse on the Power of Truth

By the power of my aspiration and the blessing of the Tathāgata,

And by the power of the Dharma realm, may all objects of contemplation

Appear swiftly and unobstructedly, each as required.

Once the preceding verse has been recited, the spirit of the deceased has been invoked and summoned. Visualize it as coming to remain before you to hear the Dharma, and begin reciting the following four scriptural verses.

(2) Recite the Four Invocation Verses three to seven times (the number may be determined by the time available; they must be recited on the first occasion, but may be omitted thereafter if time is pressing).

3. Recite the instruction text three to seven times.

Twenty-Four Instructions

Ø Instruction 1

(Instructions 1 through 4 explain the arising of the intermediate-state body and its special abilities.)

Good son (name): Listen attentively and do not be distracted! After death, a person may fall into hell, be reborn in the heavenly realms, or become an “intermediate-state body.” Such a body is called an “extraordinary body.”

After your death, you first pass through three and a half or four days of unconsciousness. When you awaken, you encounter the assemblies of peaceful and wrathful sacred beings in the “intermediate state of Dharmatā”; the light of wisdom shines forth, and various manifestations appear as skillful means to guide you. Yet, in your ignorance and lack of understanding, you fear entering realization. Thus you have delayed and harmed yourself until now. You still think that you have just awakened from a dream, while at the same time you have become a luminous body, resembling the physical body you possessed in life. As the verses taught in the esoteric scriptures say:

You will gain an illusory form resembling your former body and the body in which you are to be reborn;

You will possess equally all the perceptive capacities of the six sense faculties, and move about freely without obstruction;

You will possess karmically derived supernormal powers and powers of transformation; beings of the same kind will see your form with their pure celestial eyes.

These verses describe the state in which you now find yourself. The scriptures explain the luminous body as one that “resembles your former body and the body in which you are to be reborn.” This means that the body the deceased will assume, conditioned by the karmic deeds of previous lives, likewise possesses a form resembling one adorned with corresponding blessings. It is called the “mind-born body.” Yet it is illusory and unreal, changing in accordance with karma.

Thus, if through your former karma you are to be reborn in a heavenly realm, the appearances of that realm will immediately arise before you. Or, if you are to be reborn in the realm of asuras, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, or hell beings, the appearances of each realm will manifest in accordance with your karmic retribution. This is all karma bringing forth its results, like a shadow following its form.

The phrase “resembling your former body” conceals a reference, in the words “former body,” to the flesh-and-blood physical body you had three and a half or four days before your death. The words “to be reborn” refer to the circumstances of the place where you will be reborn in the future. Thus, the scriptural line “resembling

your former body and the body in which you are to be reborn" should be understood as resembling both the physical body you have abandoned and the physical body you will assume when you undergo rebirth again in the future.

If such appearances of a body in which you may be reborn arise before you, then whatever happens, do not give rise to craving for that body, nor be timid or fearful. If fear gives rise to such craving, you will again fall into the cycle of birth and death and suffer without end.

Until yesterday, you still had not awakened to the "intermediate state of Dharmatā," and so you have wandered until now, without a place of refuge. Now you should follow the instructions transmitted by your master. Do not let your mind scatter; settle yourself well, and let things be naturally, without contrivance. Then the realm of inner wisdom and primordial clear light will naturally appear before you. If you can do this, you will attain liberation and no longer enter the womb gate of rebirth.

If you cannot do so, then with faith, joy, and reverence, visualize your master, yidam, or the "Great Compassionate Protector" above your crown, sheltering you. With intense yearning and joy, pray sincerely, focus your faith single-mindedly, and hold firmly to it without letting it slip away. This is essential.

With the foregoing instructions, if the deceased can understand and uphold them as taught, they will attain liberation and no longer sink into the sea of suffering of birth and death. If, drawn by karmic force, they still fail to understand and enter realization, call the deceased by name again, recite the following text, and say:

Ø Instruction 2

Good son (name): Listen attentively and do not be distracted! The preceding verse says, "You will possess equally all the perceptive capacities of the six sense faculties." This means that although in life you may have been blind, hard of hearing, unable to walk well, or otherwise impaired in your sense faculties, now, in the state of the "intermediate state," your eyes can see, your ears can hear, and your six sense faculties are intact. You are alert and quick-minded, with all faculties complete. This proves that you have left the world and are wandering in the intermediate state. Understand this principle and keep it firmly in mind.

Furthermore, the phrase "move about freely without obstruction" means that you have now acquired the mind-born body of the intermediate state and have already departed from the obstructive flesh-and-blood body. Therefore, you possess various special abilities, and you may go wherever your thoughts reach.

You may pass through rocks, mountains, hills, earth, houses, and even Mount Sumeru and the four continents, traveling wherever you please without obstruction.

Only Bodhgayā—the Vajra Seat in India, where all the Tathāgatas of this fortunate eon manifest their attainment of Buddhahood—and the impure gate of a mother's womb cannot be passed through. Even Mount Sumeru, king of mountains, presents no obstruction to your coming and going through it. This proves that you are wandering in the "intermediate state." You must understand this well, earnestly remember your master and yidam, and pray wholeheartedly to the "Great Compassionate Protector." This is of utmost importance!

Ø Instruction 3

Alas! Good son (name): The phrase "possessing karmically derived supernormal powers and powers of transformation" does not mean that these powers arise from the merit of your cultivation or from meditative concentration. Rather, they are supernormal powers brought about by karma and belong to karmic continuity—the result flows forth from the cause, and the branch from the root; when cause and result, root and branch, resemble one another, this is called continuity.

In a single instant, you can circle the "four continents and Mount Sumeru." Wherever you wish to roam, you can arrive there in a moment, as swiftly as a strong man extends or bends his arm. Whatever you recall or seek, whether remembered or not, nothing fails to manifest. Now that you can manifest freely without obstruction, recognize this and pray for your master's confirmation.

Ø Instruction 4

Alas! Good son (name): The phrase "beings of the same kind will see your form with their pure celestial eyes" means that, during the "intermediate state," beings of the same kind whose karma is equal can see one another's forms. Those of the same kind who are to be reborn in heavenly realms can also see one another, and the same is true of other destinies. But you must not become attached to them. Instead, contemplate and cultivate the "Great Compassionate Protector."

The phrase "seeing forms with pure celestial eyes" further means that such sight is accomplished through the power of blessings comparable to those of the heavenly beings. Those with pure celestial eyes gained through actual cultivation of meditative concentration can also see, but they cannot see everything. When they concentrate on what is before them, they see it; when they do not concentrate, they do not see it. If their minds wander outward, they cannot see it either.

Ø Instruction 5

(Instructions 5 through 9 explain the special conditions of the intermediate-state body.)

Alas! Good son (name): With this intermediate-state body, you will see the familiar scenes of the human world, your relatives and old friends, as though in a dream. Although you see them with your own eyes and approach to speak with them, none hears you or responds.

You see that your household is mourning, while your relatives wail and weep. Then you think, “Am I dead now? What am I to do?” As soon as this thought arises, you experience extremely intense suffering, like a fish being fried in a hot cauldron. You are now undergoing this yourself! Yet you have already passed into another world. Though you torment yourself in vain, what benefit is there? Do not become attached! If you had a master during life, pray to that master. At the same time, contemplate your yidam or the “Great Compassionate Protector” and pray; then your suffering will cease of itself, and your fears will be dispelled.

Ø Instruction 6

Alas! Good son (name): You are blown and driven along by the winds of karma, and it is very difficult to exercise self-mastery. Having lost your freedom, you have no inner wisdom on which to rely. You are like feathers swept up by the wind, rising and falling as they are carried; or like a rider galloping wildly on an untamed horse, jolted painfully onward, breathing without pause, wandering without support.

Suddenly, you hear people calling your name and weeping. Although you tell them not to cry, those who weep act as if they do not hear and never heed you. Again you think, “Am I dead?” Then you experience immense suffering once more. But now, do not grieve.

Moreover, the light you see, whether by day or night, is always like the pale gray-white light of dawn. You remain in the “intermediate state” for one week, two weeks, three weeks, four weeks, five weeks, six weeks, or even seven weeks—forty-nine days. Ordinarily, however, the suffering of the “intermediate state of becoming” lasts twenty-two days, though its duration is not fixed and depends upon karma.

Ø Instruction 7

Alas! Good son (name): At this time, the red winds of the ocean of karma are most terrifying and unbearable. They surge violently from behind you, driving and blowing you onward. Do not be afraid of them. Know that they are merely illusory appearances manifested by the delusion of your own consciousness.

There are also places of utter darkness, most difficult to endure, that now confront you. At this time, sounds of “striking” and “killing” arise, and all manner of terrifying enemies appear before you. Do not be afraid of them.

Furthermore, for those with grave and extreme evil karma, flesh-eating spirits and man-eating rākṣasas appear, each bearing various weapons and shouting amid the clamor of “strike” and “kill.” Howling and surging, they rush straight toward you in a most ferocious manner. Various terrifying wild beasts also appear to pursue you. Violent winds and rain, heavy snow and dense fog, crowds in pursuit, and frenzied assaults all come rushing upon you. Great noises also arise, like mountains collapsing and seas roaring, like blazing fire erupting and thundering, or like furious winds howling. Such tremendous sounds leave you nearly terrified to death.

Then you flee in all directions, choosing no path, until you encounter three great precipices—one white, one black, and one red. Their cliffs are a thousand fathoms high, their depths unseen; every way of escape is cut off, and you are on the verge of falling into these three great precipices. Alas, good son: the three precipices are “greed,” “anger,” and “ignorance”; they are not material things. At this time, know that you are already in the “intermediate state of becoming.” Recite the name of the Great Compassionate Protector, call your own name, and chant:

I take refuge in Great Compassion, the noble Avalokiteśvara;

Master and Three Jewels, bestow your compassionate blessings;

I only beg for rescue and release from this perilous passage;

Do not let me be carried into the three lower realms.

Pray thus with utmost earnestness, and do not forget it!

Ø Instruction 8

Furthermore, those who have accumulated provisions and who, during life, sincerely practiced the pure Buddhist teachings will have merit and virtue as their protection behind them, and bliss as their guide before them, coming to welcome them. As for those whose good and evil karma in life are equal, they experience neither suffering nor pleasure; only appearances of dimness, ignorance, and dull neutrality arise.

Good son (name): Thus, whenever any pleasurable object of the five desires—form, sound, fragrance, taste, or touch—appears before you, do not crave or cling to it. Cast aside every thought of seeking, and say only to yourself:

I offer all this goodness and bliss to my master and the Three Jewels.

This means that if you experience pleasure, wholeheartedly contemplate offering it upward to the guru and the Three Jewels; never greedily seek to enjoy it yourself. If an appearance of neither suffering nor pleasure, of equanimity, arises, then abide in

the realm of Mahāmudrā through your innate wisdom of direct realization—without contrivance, adjustment, or distraction. This is of utmost importance!

Ø Instruction 9

O noble son (name): At that time, should you come upon bridges, the eight great sacred stūpas, temples, and the like, you may rest only briefly and cannot remain for long. Because your consciousness has already separated from your body and you cannot act independently, you will become dejected, afflicted, and sorrowful. The consciousness that knows will be dazed and unsettled, having nothing on which to rely. Then you will think to yourself: “Alas! I am dead. What am I to do?” Once this thought arises, your heart will lose all hope; unable to bear your grief and lamentation, intense suffering will press in upon you all at once.

Since you can no longer remain in one place and must go elsewhere, do not entertain all kinds of hopes and desires. Simply abide in the originally unmoving state of your innate wisdom of direct realization. As for food, you may partake only of that specially prepared for you; you have no right to taste other offerings.

At this time, none of your relatives or friends can be of any help to you. All this is the appearance of the wandering mind-born body in the intermediate state of becoming.

At this time, pleasure and suffering arise in accordance with karma. You will see your home and surroundings, your relatives, and even your own corpse. Again you will lament: “I am now dead—what can I do, what can I do?” Overwhelmed by despair, you will become anxious and dejected, thinking: “If only I had a body, what could I not do?” Thinking thus, you will wander back and forth, seeking a physical body. Such appearances are what you now experience.

Even if you enter your corpse nine times or more, you will be unable to remain in it. Since the intermediate state of dharmatā has already lasted so long, your corpse may have frozen in winter or decayed in summer; otherwise, your relatives may have cremated or buried it, cast it into water, or given it to vultures and wild beasts to devour. Though you may wish to enter it again, you cannot.

Having nowhere to dwell, you will be extremely unhappy and will suddenly feel yourself being pushed and hurled into mountain cliffs and rocky crevices. Thus you will now undergo every kind of suffering: this is the intermediate state of becoming. In seeking your body, you find only suffering. Do not give rise to attachment to the body; remain calmly in spontaneous non-contrivance.

As instructed above, if the deceased person's consciousness can follow these teachings and practice accordingly, liberation will be attained in the intermediate

state.

However, if, through the force of evil karma, one cannot attain realization despite having received these instructions, then call the deceased by name again and recite the following words:

Ø Instruction 10

(The Scene of Judgment in the Underworld)

Alas! O noble son (name): Listen carefully! All the sufferings you are now undergoing are karma created by yourself; no one else can bear them in your place. Only by praying with utmost sincerity to the Three Jewels can you receive protection and rescue.

If you neither pray in this way nor know how to practice Mahāmudrā or contemplate the yidam, then the deity of goodness, who has been with you since birth, will count the good deeds you performed during life with white pebbles; and the deity of evil, who has been with you since birth, will count the evil deeds you performed during life with black pebbles. These beings will come to lead you away. (In Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism, the deities who govern goodness and evil are collectively called the five coemergent deities: beings who have been inseparable from a person since birth and who preside over goodness and evil from five locations in the body. They resemble the Three Corpse Spirits of Chinese Daoist scriptures. Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism has specific practices concerning them.)

At that time, you will be utterly panic-stricken, trembling with terror, and may try to lie, saying, “I have committed no evil.” Then the King of Yama will say: “I have a karmic mirror that can reveal all.” He will hold up the mirror for you to see, and every good and evil deed you performed during life will appear in it clearly and completely, without the slightest error. Though you lie, it will be of no benefit.

Then the King of Yama will tie a rope around your neck, drag you down from the hall, cut off your head, split open your heart, pull out your entrails, suck out your brain fluid, drink your blood, eat your flesh, and gnaw your bones. Though you suffer, you will not die. Though your body is shattered, it will become whole again; you will again undergo cutting and chopping, and again feel great pain.

At this time, when they count good and evil deeds with pebbles and drag you away, do not be frightened and do not lie. Do not fear Yama or the prison guards. Know that you are now a mind-born body: even if you are chopped, killed, or cut to pieces, there is no cause for death. In truth, your body is originally empty in its own nature; why should you be afraid?

The appearances you see are deluded appearances produced by your own consciousness, mere forms in empty space. The mind-born body formed by your habitual tendencies is empty in its very substance and originally without form. Because it is formless, it cannot be grasped by touch. All that has been described above is transformed from the deluded appearances of your own consciousness. Thus, in the external realm there appear Yama, prison guards, gods, ghosts, blood-drinking rākṣasas, ox-headed beings, and the like; yet in truth, no real thing can be found.

Know that this is the intermediate state. Practice Mahāmudrā samādhi. If you do not know how to practice it, investigate through contemplation, to the best of your ability, what the very nature is of that which gives rise to fear in you. You will then realize that self-nature is wholly unfindable and empty; this is the dharmakāya. This emptiness is not a nothingness in which nothing exists; it is the emptiness that is not empty of reality.

When awareness and thought arise vividly and clearly, this is the esoteric meaning of the sambhogakāya. Luminosity and emptiness are nondual and never separate; in its very substance it is empty, and emptiness is no different from luminosity—utterly naked and unobstructed. To abide at that very moment amid unbearable appearances is the self-nature body. Further, its innate power and functioning appear everywhere without ceasing; this is the great-compassion nirmāṇakāya.

Alas! O noble son: Wait quietly and contemplate; do not become distracted. If you recognize the four bodies described above, you will certainly be liberated and will undoubtedly attain Buddhahood. This is the dividing line between Buddhas and sentient beings. At this time, it is of the greatest importance that the mind not become distracted! Otherwise, you will remain forever sunk in the mire, with no time when escape may be sought.

It is said: “In a single instant lies the difference; in a single instant one attains perfect awakening.” Now is precisely that time. Until yesterday, because of distraction, you lost the opportunity for liberation. Therefore, as soon as the intermediate state appeared, you failed to recognize it, and fear immediately arose. If you again lose this opportunity through distraction, the compassionate gaze of the noble ones will be cut off midway, and you will be unable to attain liberation; you will have no alternative but to follow your karma.

With the instructions above, liberation may be attained even without recognition. If the deceased is an ordinary person who does not know how to contemplate and practice, call the deceased by name again and recite the following words:

Ø Instruction 11

(The Scene of Judgment in the Underworld)

Alas! O noble son (name): If, after receiving the instructions above, you still do not know how to contemplate and practice, then be mindful of the Buddha! Be mindful of the Dharma! Be mindful of the Saṅgha, and pray to the Great Compassionate Protector! Whenever any fearful appearances arise, contemplate only the Great Compassionate Protector and your yidam. If, during life, you received a name bestowed by an empowerment master, recite that name and the name of your root guru, and state them before Yama, the Dharma King. Even should you have fallen into perilous gorges amid sheer cliffs, nothing will be able to harm you, and you will certainly be freed from suffering.

With the instructions above, whoever can recognize them will certainly be liberated. If liberation has still not been attained, then, as an earnest reminder, call the deceased by name again and recite the following words:

Ø Instruction 12

(Redirecting the Power of All Thoughts)

Alas! O noble son (name): The appearances before you now bring joy in one instant and sorrow in the next. Feelings of suffering and pleasure are most intense, like bolts shot suddenly from a crossbow. When all these states alternate between tension and release, let them follow their own course; purify thoughts of attachment and aversion, and the appearances will cease of themselves. If you possess the cause for birth in a heavenly realm, appearances of that heavenly realm will arise at once.

If your relatives, not understanding cause and effect, kill many living beings and make offerings to pray for blessings on your behalf, impure appearances will arise in you and intense anger will flare up. Thus the continuity of rebirth will be formed, and you will be born in hell. When living beings are killed for the deceased, the karma of that killing weighs heavily upon the deceased, who must undergo its retribution.

While the deceased is in the intermediate-state body, on seeing this, they immediately call for it to stop. But their relatives pay no heed and continue killing as before, whereupon intense anger arises. Therefore, the deceased is now instructed never to give rise to anger, lest they be born in hell. For this reason, anger must never arise!

Moreover, you may become greedily attached to the property you left behind in life, or learn that others have seized and enjoyed your possessions, and thereby give rise to anger toward them. Know that even if you give rise to greed and anger, you can

do nothing about the matter, and it will be of no benefit to you. Therefore, do not crave or cling to the property you left behind in life. Decisively abandon it and cast it away; whoever may use or seize it, do not be miserly. Maintain instead a mind of generosity. With sincere reverence, contemplate offering it to the guru and the Three Jewels, and abide in a state free from greed and attachment.

Furthermore, if others perform rites to assist you after death, reciting the “Gangani Dhāraṇī” and the “King of Mantras for Destroying All Evil Destinies” (these are the two principal mantras used for assisting the deceased; both appear in the appendix), and other such practices, but do so without purity or in accordance with the Dharma.

The ritual performer may be dull and drowsy, negligent, in breach of samaya, impure in discipline, or careless and disrespectful in conduct toward the true Dharma; or may profane the true teaching by using funerary rites of the Black Teachings.

Because you possess subtle karmic powers, you will be able to see this. You may then lose right faith in the monastics performing the practice, give rise to wrong views, and become fearful and unsettled. Once you know this, you will think to yourself: “Alas! I have been deceived by them!” Your mind will become disappointed, dejected, and unhappy. You will no longer give rise to faith and understanding toward pure appearances, but instead develop wrong views and lose right faith. Thus the continuity of rebirth will be formed, and you will certainly be born in an evil destiny; this brings you no benefit.

Although the spiritual friends among your descendants may perform Buddhist rites for you in however impure a manner, you should think: “This impurity is an appearance of my own consciousness. How could the sacred words of the Buddhist scriptures be impure? It is like seeing one's own dirty form reflected in a mirror: the impurity is in my own appearance. Moreover, these spiritual friends have the Saṅgha as their body, the true Dharma as their speech, and the Buddha's nature as their mind. Therefore, I should take refuge in them, generate a mind of confident understanding, sincerely delight in pure appearances, and know that whatever Buddhist rites my descendants perform will certainly benefit me.” Give rise to this thought of pure appearances, and never forget it.

Moreover, if you have causes for rebirth in the lower realms, the appearances of those realms will immediately arise. Your descendants and relatives, on account of your karmic offenses, may perform pure Buddhist rites free of admixture with heterodox shamanic practices, inviting a lama or acharya. When you behold the excellent ritual procedures of body, speech, and mind, joy and great delight will arise in your heart. As soon as this thought arises, it will form the continuity leading

to rebirth. Although it may have been a cause for falling into an evil destiny, through this merit you will certainly be redirected upward to a higher realm. Therefore, do not give rise to impure thoughts; do not become biased or make discriminations regarding appearances of faith and joy. You must be extremely attentive.

Alas! Good son (so-and-so): In summary, your present innate wisdom has lost its support. At its slightest stirring, appearances of wholesome and unwholesome realms arise, and it can exert great force. If unwholesome appearances arise, do not think about them. Instead, recall any one practice you cultivated during life. If you had no such practice, let joy arise in your heart; with utmost sincerity, take refuge and pray to the “Great Compassionate Protector,” earnestly aspiring to make the following prayer:

Alas!

Now I travel alone, parted from all relatives and friends; before my eyes are only the empty appearances reflected by my own mind.

I earnestly pray that the Buddhas, through their great compassion, may rescue me; may they dispel all the terrors and fears of the intermediate state.

When, through karmic conditions, I undergo every kind of suffering, may the yidam deity dispel my hardship and distress.

When the intrinsic sound of dharmatā resounds like a thousand thunders, may it immediately become the sound of the six-syllable great mantra.

When pursued by karma and left without refuge, may the Great Compassionate One become my protector.

When I suffer under the sway of karmic habits, may I realize the samādhi of pure light and bliss.

Recite the preceding prayer firmly and earnestly. You will certainly receive guidance and attain what you seek; there is absolutely no deception in this. By reciting it in this way, once recognition occurs, liberation is attained.

Moreover, liberation should be attained through repeated practice and recitation as described above. If one remains constrained by karmic force and still finds it difficult to recognize, repeat the explanation and recite it many times; one will naturally receive great benefit. At this point, call the deceased by name again, recite the following text, and tell them:

Ø Instruction 13

(The Dim Lights of the Six Realms of Ordinary Existence Appear)

Alas! Good son (so-and-so): If you remember but do not retain the various instructions given above, then at this time your former body will gradually dissolve, vanish, and disappear, while your subsequent body will become increasingly distinct, causing unbearable sorrow and distress. You will then think to yourself: "Alas! I have suffered every kind of pain. Whatever body I am to take, where shall I seek it?" As soon as this thought arises, you will rush to and fro, drifting about without knowing where to go. The cycle of rebirth in the six realms will then appear. Whichever realm is evoked by karma, the light of that realm will appear with increasing intensity.

Alas! Good son (so-and-so): Listen carefully! What are the lights of the six realms? The light of the deva realm is grayish white; the light of the asura realm is dark green; the light of the human realm is pale yellow; the light of the animal realm is dark blue; the light of the hungry-ghost realm is pale red; and the light of hell alone is like smoke and mist. When these lights appear, the color of your body will take on the light-color of whichever realm you are karmically destined to enter.

Alas! Good son (so-and-so): At this time, the method of instruction is of the utmost importance. Whatever light appears, regard it all as radiance emitted by the "Great Compassionate Protector." Visualize its light gradually approaching, knowing that it is the Great Compassionate Lord, the Noble Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. This is the most profound and essential instruction, and it can block the places of rebirth.

Or, if you have previously practiced any yidam, contemplate it as an illusory appearance, entirely without inherent nature. Continue this contemplation for a long time, and you will know this as the "pure illusory body." Then contemplate the form of the yidam gradually vanishing from outside to within, until it cannot be found. Rest for a moment in the dharma realm, in a state of luminosity and emptiness free from grasping.

Then contemplate the yidam again, and then the clear light, alternating these visualizations. Next contemplate your own innate wisdom, which likewise gradually vanishes from outside to within. Emptiness pervades everything; luminosity pervades everything; the dharmakāya pervades everything. Abide evenly in the appearance of the dharmakāya, free from conceptual elaboration. On this basis, you will naturally block the places of rebirth and attain Buddhahood.

Instructions 14 through 19 are teachings for avoiding birth and death by closing the womb entrance:

There are also many who, although they have practiced and may ardently aspire, have not cultivated with sufficient familiarity in ordinary times and therefore still fail

to recognize. They become confused and unaware, wandering about the womb entrance. At this point, the instruction for closing the womb entrance is of the utmost importance. Call the deceased by name again, recite the following text, and tell them:

Ø Instruction 14

Alas! Good son (so-and-so): If you still do not recognize despite the instructions given above, then at this time, due to karmic force, you may move upward, move levelly, or gaze downward. Such appearances are about to arise. At this time, contemplate and remember the “Great Compassionate Lord.”

Moreover, as stated before, appearances of violent winds and rain, heavy snow and dense fog, hailstones and darkness, and crowds pursuing you will arise. Though you may wish to escape, those whose merit and virtue are slight will instead flee toward places of suffering, while those whose merit and virtue are complete will reach places of happiness.

Good son! At this time, the place where you will be reborn, or the realm into which you will be born, and all its appearances will immediately arise before you. At this critical moment there are very many profound and essential instructions. Do not be distracted; listen attentively with one mind. Because you have previously failed to recognize the various essential points of these instructions, and because your cultivation has been extremely weak, you must choose a place to go. Listen attentively with one mind.

Here there is a method for closing the womb entrance, which is extremely important. This method has two parts: (1) the method of closing the entrance by means of the person who enters; and (2) the method of closing the entrance into which one enters.

(1) Instructions for Preventing the Deceased from Entering the Womb Entrance

Alas! Good son (so-and-so): If you have practiced any yidam, contemplate whatever appears as illusion, entirely without inherent nature, like the moon reflected in water, clearly and luminously manifest. If you have no particular yidam, take the “Noble Great Compassionate Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva” as your yidam, and visualize him clearly, shining and radiant.

Then contemplate the yidam vanishing from outside to within, without form. Wherever it vanishes, contemplate it as returning to the unfindable luminosity and emptiness. This is a profound essential point and the excellent method for preventing entry into the womb entrance; therefore, contemplate in this way. If at

that time you still cannot close it, you will be preparing to enter a womb. Listen again to the following instruction:

(2) Instructions for Closing the Womb Entrance into Which One Is to Enter

Moreover, the profound instructions for closing the womb entrance into which one is to enter consist of five steps. Listen carefully!

(1) First Step in Closing the Womb Entrance

Ø Instruction 15

There is a verse:

Alas!

Now that I have arisen in the intermediate state of becoming, I must keep my thought wholly single and sincere.

Strive to sustain the meeting of favorable conditions; forever cut off the womb entrance and remember to turn back.

When striving for pure appearances is the one essential need, cut off jealousy forever and cultivate the guru in union.

Recite the preceding verses for the deceased in a clear voice, urging their mind onward. Have them contemplate according to the text and practice in sequence. This is most essential, most essential!

The meaning here is as follows. “Now that I have arisen in the intermediate state of becoming” means that you have now fallen into the state of the intermediate state of becoming, a condition that you can verify from its appearances. Try now to look into water or a mirror: you will not see your form or color, nor will you see any bodily shadow. This is because you have left behind the obstructive flesh-and-blood body of your former life and have become a mind-born body, drifting without support. This is the evident sign that you have entered the intermediate state of becoming. Therefore, keep your thought wholly single and sincere, taking “single-minded devotion” as foremost.

It is like controlling a horse with reins: concentrate with one mind and gallop forward, fearing that evil karma may pull you along and cause your thoughts to change. While you were human, if you had faith in and recollection of any one of the true Dharma, the empowerment instructions of a guru, sacred scriptures, or this Esoteric Teaching of Liberation Through Hearing in the Intermediate State, then

“strive to sustain the meeting of favorable conditions” and do not become distracted.

You should know that the boundary between rising and descending lies at this very moment. If, in this instant, you lose it through negligence, it is the time when suffering will manifest and arrive. If, in this instant, you can keep your thought single and sustained, it is the time when happiness will manifest and arrive. Therefore, “keep your thought wholly single and sincere” and “strive to sustain the meeting of favorable conditions.” Now the time has come to close the womb entrance: this is what is meant by “forever cut off the womb entrance and remember to turn back” and “when striving for pure appearances is the one essential need.”

As stated above, at this time one must first purify the womb entrance and then explain the method for closing it. There are five steps in all. The first step has already been explained; the second, third, fourth, and fifth steps will now be given. Remember and retain them well.

(2) Second Step in Closing the Womb Entrance

Ø Instruction 16

Alas! Good son (so-and-so): At this time, the appearance of a man and woman in union will arise before you. When you see it, firmly maintain the resolve not to enter between them. Contemplate the man and woman, your prospective parents in union, as the guru and his consort. Pay homage to them, mentally make offerings, show utmost reverence, request the true Dharma, and concentrate with all sincerity. You will certainly be able to close the womb entrance.

If it still does not close and you are bound to enter a womb, contemplate the man and woman, your prospective parents in union, as your yidam; or contemplate the yidam, the “Great Compassionate Protector,” in the form of the father and mother in union. Make offerings to them, mentally transform offerings—meaning offerings manifested by your own mind—and present them. Request that they grant you siddhi. If you do this with utmost sincerity, you will be able to close the womb entrance.

(3) Third Step in Closing the Womb Entrance

Ø Instruction 17

Moreover, if the womb entrance has still not been closed as explained above and you are about to enter it, the third step gives instructions for eliminating attachment and aversion. There are four kinds of birth: birth from an egg, birth from a womb, transformational birth, and birth from moisture. The meanings of birth from an egg and birth from a womb are the same in this respect.

As stated before, a man and woman in union will appear before you. At that time, you may enter their womb through attachment or through aversion. Once you enter the womb, you may be born as a horse, a chicken, a dog, a human being, or any other kind of being; all are possible.

If one is to be reborn as a man, one manifests male characteristics and feels deep aversion toward one's father and desire for one's mother. If one is to be reborn as a woman, one manifests female characteristics and feels deep jealousy toward one's mother and longing for one's father. Through these causes and conditions, one then enters the womb entrance, at the very time when the male and female red and white luminous drops meet, having experienced "coemergent bliss" (one of the four joys in Esoteric Buddhism).

bliss and ideation give rise to the appearance of dullness and confusion, and one congeals into the embryonic forms called "kalala" (the embryo during its first week in the mother's womb) and "arbuda" (the embryo during its second week in the mother's womb). Upon emerging from the womb and opening one's eyes, one may instead find oneself a dog, suffering in a dog's kennel.

Or one may be in a pigsty or an ant nest, or be born as a calf or lamb. Unable to turn back, dull and ignorant, and in the depths of despair, one undergoes every kind of suffering and affliction. Thus one wanders on without end, perhaps entering hell or being born as a hungry ghost, ceaselessly revolving through the six realms and oppressed by immeasurable sufferings. Or one may become a mahoraga (a great-bellied crawling being). Such people remain attached and fail to awaken, wholly without fear. How pitiable and lamentable—indeed, it makes one's heart tremble to speak of it.

Without the sublime instructions of a guru, how could one avoid falling into the perilous cliffs and caves described above? Once one has fallen in, one sinks into birth and death, with no prospect of escape. Therefore listen to what I say and keep these instructions firmly in mind. Now, heed carefully and retain the instructions given here for stopping attachment and aversion and closing the womb entrance.

This is the meaning of the foregoing: "To turn back and forever close the womb entrance, remember this: when pure appearances alone are needed, strive to eradicate jealousy and cultivate the guru in union." Was it not stated above? If one is to be reborn as a male, one loves the mother and hates the father; if one is to be reborn as a female, one loves the father and hates the mother. Thus the appearance arises from jealousy. At this time there are profound essential instructions. Alas, good son, when deluded thoughts of attachment and aversion arise, meditate as follows:

Alas! Sentient beings such as I are heavily burdened with evil karma and sink into birth and death. Relying on attachment and aversion, if we do not free ourselves, we indulge in attachment and aversion and thereby cast ourselves into birth and death. We drown throughout long kalpas in the vast ocean of suffering, immeasurable and boundless, never able to escape. From this day onward, I shall abandon attachment and aversion and never again give rise to them. Ah! Henceforth, I shall never again give rise to attachment and aversion.

Reflect in this way; admonish and reproach yourself. Maintain this with utmost single-mindedness and forcefulness. As the scriptures say:

Only this vow can close the womb entrance.

Alas, good son (name): do not let your mind be scattered. Keep your thoughts wholly focused, and maintain this with utmost sincerity. This is most essential.

(4) The Fourth Step in Closing the Womb Entrance

Ø Instruction 18

Although the foregoing instructions have been given, if the womb entrance is still not closed and there is a tendency to enter it, there are further instructions on "illusion and unreality" to enable one to close the womb entrance. Meditate as follows:

Alas! The parents in union, the violent rain and wind, the crashing thunder, the frightening appearances, and all the substantial forms of the sentient and insentient world are by nature like illusions. However they may appear, they are ultimately not real. All are illusory and unreal, like dreams and illusions, impermanent and unfixed. Why become attached? Why be afraid? This is seeing something where there is nothing. All dharmas arise originally from the mind; the nature of mind is like an illusion and has been empty from the very beginning. How could one reach the other shore by going there?

Alas! From the beginningless past, you have remained deluded and unawakened. You grasp what is nonexistent as existent, what is false as real, and what is illusory as true. This has continued for a long time, and you have sunk into birth and death down to the present. If you still do not recognize illusion and unreality, you will forever sink in the ocean of suffering and fall into the mire of manifold pains, with no end in sight. Therefore contemplate all this.

It is like a dream or illusion, like an echo in an empty valley, a mirage, an image in a mirror, flowers in empty space before the eyes, or the moon reflected in water. Even for an instant, reality cannot be found within it. Therefore focus your thoughts wholly and maintain this with utmost sincerity. Cast aside the thought that things

are real, and sustain undivided concentration. You will surely awaken and turn back in time. Once you determine this single-mindedly and know that it is unreal, the womb entrance will close of itself.

(5) The Fifth Step in Closing the Womb Entrance

Ø Instruction 19

Although the essential instruction on contemplation of illusion has been given as before, if one still takes things to be real, the womb entrance remains unclosed, and the appearance of entering the womb in confusion is about to arise, there are the following instructions on the “clear light.”

Good son (name): although you have done this, the womb entrance alone remains unclosed. Now, at the fifth step, meditate on the “clear light” to close the womb entrance. The method of visualization is as follows:

Alas! Contemplate all dharmas: they are my own mind. This mind is emptiness itself —without arising and without cessation.

Meditate in this way, settling the mind in the naturally abiding realm of “non-doing.” It is like pouring water into water: they naturally merge. Settle the mind in its original source; follow its naturalness, move freely within it, and remain at ease. Without contriving anything in what is originally uncontrived, remain thus, unmoving. Then the womb entrances of the four modes of birth will certainly be closed.

The foregoing has presented many kinds of profound instructions for closing the womb entrance. Among persons of superior, middling, and lesser capacities, there is none who cannot be liberated. Why is this?

First, because the consciousness in the intermediate state possesses defiled spiritual powers; as soon as it hears what I say, it comes directly before it.

Second, because even if one was blind or deaf while alive, at this time all six sense faculties are complete, and one can understand whatever is said.

Third, because one is constantly pursued by terror and fear, one will look carefully to one’s own welfare; the mind is not scattered, and memory is strong. As soon as one reflects upon what I say, it comes directly before one.

Fourth, because consciousness has lost its support and longs for happiness and pleasure, as soon as it is instructed, it immediately responds and is easily guided.

Moreover, at this time the power of memory is lucid and keen, nine times greater than during life. Though one may have been dull while alive, at this time, through

the power of karma, one's inner wisdom shines forth clearly. One is capable of understanding all teachings through familiarity and can thereby grasp their essential points.

At that time, if Buddhist rites are performed for the deceased, they will certainly be effective and equally beneficial. Therefore, during the forty-nine days after death, it is most important to recite this Esoteric Teaching of Liberation Through Hearing earnestly for the deceased. If liberation is not achieved through one instruction, liberation may be achieved through the next; if not through the next, then through repeated instructions.

Instructions Twenty through Twenty-One: Instructions on Choosing a Womb Entrance

Furthermore, the karma of sentient beings is inconceivable. There are many whose cultivation of wholesome karma from the beginningless past has been too slight, whose conditioning by unwholesome karma is strong, and whose karmic obstacles are too heavy. Even when instructions are given and they direct their thoughts with utmost sincerity, they still find liberation difficult. If they were previously unable to close the womb entrance, there are now profound instructions on choosing a womb entrance, as follows:

First recite the Verses Invoking the Blessings of All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, then recite the Four Refuges:

(I) Verses Invoking the Blessings of All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

All Buddhas and bodhisattvas, ever abiding throughout the ten directions, endowed with great compassion, foreknowledge, and sacred sight;

You are the refuge of sentient beings and do not abandon your vows of great compassion. We pray that you descend, accept us, and receive our sincere offerings.

All compassionate venerable ones, whose wisdom, compassion, activities, and power are inconceivable;

Now one named [name] leaves this present world for that other realm, departing this world for another, already freed from a body of flesh and blood.

Without reliance or protector, without rescue or aid, the appearances now arising are those of the most extreme suffering.

At the end of the road as daylight fades, leaving home for a foreign land, one enters a dark and hidden place, bewildered and heading toward a precipice.

In terror and frenzy one runs through dense forest, pursued by karmic force; one may fall into a boundless wilderness or drift upon the great ocean.

The body has no freedom, driven and tossed by the winds of karma; one may enter a battlefield and be seized by cruel enemies.

There is nowhere to hide; one may encounter Yama's messengers, whose ghostly attendants are fully armed with cruelty and terrifying to behold.

One undergoes all the sufferings of karmic results, dying and reviving without interruption. One's strength to struggle is exhausted; one is utterly helpless and alone in misery.

May all Buddhas and bodhisattvas compassionately bestow protection. For this one awaiting rescue, be a refuge and protector.

Grant the power of your blessings; protect them from the suffering of the intermediate state. Stop the red winds of karma and dispel the terrors of Yama.

Rescue them safely from the perilous narrow passage of the intermediate state. Alas, great compassionate ones, do not abandon your compassion.

Do not forget your vast vows. Enable them to be free from every suffering. We beseech the Buddhas and bodhisattvas: may your compassionate light shine upon them.

With the hook of great compassionate light, do not allow them to enter the three lower realms. Supreme venerable ones of the Three Jewels, may you compassionately gather them in.

Bestow the power of great compassion and enable them to be free from the sufferings of the intermediate state.

(II) The Four Refuges

Namo Gurubhyaḥ, Namo Buddhāya, Namo Dharmāya, Namo Saṅghāya.

Then call the deceased by name, recite the following, and say to them:

Alas, good son (name): listen carefully! Although you have already received the instructions you encountered earlier, you did not understand them. Now the womb entrance has not been closed, and the time of rebirth is at hand. Therefore you must choose a womb entrance for yourself. Exert wholehearted faith and aspiration; listen carefully, accept these instructions in faith, and do not lose them.

(1) A General Survey of the Various Places of Rebirth

Ø Instruction 20

Alas, good son (name): signs of the place where you are to be reborn now appear before you. Recognize them immediately and observe carefully which continent is preferable, so that you may choose accordingly.

If you are to be reborn in Eastern Videha, you will see an ornamented lake where geese and swans, male and female, chase one another and play upon the water. Do not go there; immediately turn your thoughts back. Even if some happiness may be found there, it is a continent where the Buddha-Dharma does not spread. Therefore do not enter it.

If you are to be reborn in Southern Jambudvīpa, you will see splendid palaces. If you seek rebirth, you may enter there.

If you are to be reborn in Western Godānīya, you will see an ornamented lake with herds of mares and stallions. Do not go there either; immediately turn back. Though this continent is prosperous, it is a continent where the Buddha-Dharma does not spread. Therefore do not enter it.

If you are to be reborn in the Northern Kuru continent, you will see a lake adorned with cattle, or a lake adorned with trees. If you are to be born there, because of the five grasping views (namely, the view of the body, wrong view, extreme view, attachment to views, and attachment to precepts and prohibitions; see the entry on the five views, p. 367, in the Practical Dictionary of Buddhism), recognize it at once: you must not enter there either. Although that continent has longevity and blessings, the Buddhadharma cannot spread there; therefore, do not enter it. The circumstances of rebirth in the four continents have been explained to you one by one. You must discern them clearly and take care not to enter rashly.

If you are to be reborn in the deva realm, you will see exquisite celestial palaces made of precious jewels. Your mind will delight in them; through the fruition of your merit, you may be reborn in that land.

If you are to be reborn in the asura realm, you will see pleasing forests and trees, or circles of fire revolving toward one another. Do not enter there either; immediately turn your thoughts around and turn back.

If you are to be reborn in the animal realm, you will see mountain caves, stone caverns, terrifying deep hollows, and pervasive smoke and mist. You must never enter them.

If you are to be reborn in the hungry ghost realm, you will see a vast wilderness, desolate and uninhabited, with no grasses or trees above; fissures in the earth and shallow hollows; deep, impenetrable darkness; or densely wooded continents and

islands. If you go there, you will be born in the hungry ghost realm and undergo all kinds of suffering from hunger and thirst. Under no circumstances must you enter there. Immediately turn your thoughts around and turn back; resolutely do not go.

If you are to be reborn in the hell realm, then, through the fruition of evil karma, you may hear singing, or find yourself without freedom and unable to resist, compelled to enter. Or you may see dark continents and birds, black houses, red houses, or dark holes in the ground. When such appearances arise, if you enter any one of them, you will undergo the unbearable sufferings of heat and cold in the hells, with no prospect of release. You must hold firmly to a resolute mind and never go there.

It is essential to recite the foregoing instructions in turn at that time.

(2) The Dharma Gate for Protection from the Ghostly Officers Who Pursue One's Life

Ø Instruction 21

Alas, noble son (so-and-so): although you may wish not to go, you cannot act freely. Prison guards drawn by your karma pursue you from behind; having lost your freedom, you can scarcely resist. Other prison guards and ghostly officers who summon life confront you from the front and drag you along. Black mist, a great red wind of karma, roaring sounds, violent winds and torrential rain, heavy snow and dense fog, hailstones and knives of ice press upon you from every side, leaving nowhere to flee.

When these appearances arise before you, you may seek a place of refuge in which to escape. Then you will see, as described above, splendid houses, cliff caves, holes in the ground, dark secluded pathways, or lotuses and the like (for there are also those in the celestial realms who are miraculously born from lotuses). Wishing to escape, you may enter one without careful discernment. It will then close around you, and you will hide within it, afraid to go outside. Yet from that point onward, you will be unable to get out.

You do not wish to leave because you think that, once outside, you will encounter suffering. You become attached to the place in which you are staying; if you go outside, you again fear the terrifying appearances of the intermediate state. Thus doubts and fears arise, and you remain hidden without moving. But once you enter and take on any kind of body, you will undergo all manner of pain. All these are appearances by which ghosts and demons detain and obstruct you. At this time there is also a most profound and excellent instruction. Listen carefully, retain it, and do not forget it.

At this time, if prison guards pursue you, you cannot act freely, and various terrifying appearances arise, then in that very instant you must have deep faith and visualize

Great Victorious Heruka (the Blood-Drinking Deity), Hayagrīva, the Wisdom King (a wrathful deity of Esoteric Buddhism), Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva, or whichever yidam you practiced and venerated during your lifetime. Visualize them standing before you as terrifying wrathful wisdom kings, with immense bodies and powerful limbs, capable of crushing every obstacle and adversity into minute dust.

Through the blessing of their great compassionate power, you may free yourself from the prison guards and gain the freedom calmly to choose a womb entrance. This is a profound and true instruction; preserve it and do not forget it.

Noble son (so-and-so), there are also the devas of meditative absorption, who are reborn through the power of samādhi. As for hungry ghosts, malignant spirits, rākṣasas, and the like, they arise because, during the intermediate state, the mind's thoughts change. Thus they take the bodies of hungry ghosts, malignant spirits, and rākṣasas, are able to manifest various magical transformations, and become mind-born bodies.

The hungry ghosts dwelling throughout the spaces above and below, and the appearances of hungry ghosts manifested in the air, number as many as eighty-four thousand. All belong to mind-born bodies of the intermediate state, produced through changing thoughts. If at that time you can recollect the meaning of the Mahāmudrā of emptiness, that is supreme. If you cannot practice this, practice illusory yoga. If you cannot do even that, then do not become attached to any thought whatsoever; practice visualization of the yidam, the Great Compassionate Protector, and you will naturally realize the sambhogakāya Buddha. (Illusory yoga is also a highest esoteric practice of the Kagyü school of Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism.)

The following explains how to transfer consciousness for rebirth and how to choose rebirth in the human realm:

Alas, noble son (so-and-so): as explained above, if through the force of karma you must enter a womb, there is now an instruction for choosing a womb entrance, which I shall explain to you. Listen carefully and do not forget it. Do not enter any womb entrance in which rebirth is possible. If prison guards appear and you cannot act freely, visualize Hayagrīva, the Wisdom King. Moreover, you now possess subtle spiritual powers and can know all places in sequence; therefore, you should make a careful choice.

Furthermore, there are two methods of selection: one is the method of transferring to a pure Buddha-land; the other is the method of choosing a womb entrance in impure saṃsāra. Choose either of these two Dharma gates as you wish. The instructions are as follows:

(1) The Method of Transferring Consciousness for Rebirth in a Buddha-Land Pure Land

Ø Instruction 22

First, the instruction for transferring to a pure realm of ḍākinīs is this: make the following aspiration and recite it to yourself:

Alas, how grievous is my suffering! From beginningless kalpas until this day, this body has sunk and floundered in the mire of birth and death. Now I must reject it. In past lives, I long encountered the Buddhas, yet I was unable to attain liberation. This is truly lamentable. I have now become weary and disgusted with saṃsāra; it is frightening and repellent, and I must flee from it swiftly. The time has come. Therefore, I aspire to be miraculously born from a lotus at the feet of Amitābha Buddha, the World-Honored One, in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Reflect in this way, pray with intense earnestness, concentrate with utmost sincerity, and long for it with all your heart.

Or, according to the Buddha-land in which you yourself have faith and delight, aspire to be reborn in the eastern Manifest Joy Buddha-land, the land of Akṣobhya Tathāgata; in the central Ghanavyūha Buddha-land, the land of Vairocana Buddha; in the northern City of Wealth, the abode of Vajrapāṇi Bodhisattva and Vaiśravaṇa, the Heavenly King; before Guru Padmasambhava in the western Lotus Light Palace of Oḍḍiyāna; or in any Buddha-land of your own faith and delight. Seek it joyfully and concentrate upon it; with utmost sincerity and reverence, without allowing your mind to become scattered, make the aspiration for rebirth there. You will then be reborn in that land without interruption.

Again, if you wish to go to the Inner Court of Tuṣita and draw near to Maitreya, the Compassionate One, simply say to yourself: “Now that I am in the intermediate state, the time is ripe for me to go to the Inner Court of Tuṣita and draw near to Maitreya, the Compassionate One.” Seek this intensely and earnestly, and concentrate with utmost sincerity. You will then be miraculously born from a lotus womb before the Compassionate One.

(2) Rebirth Through Entering a Womb and Returning to the World of Dust

Ø Instruction 23

Furthermore, if you cannot be reborn in a Buddha-land but wish to enter a womb, or if circumstances compel you to enter a womb, there is now an instruction for choosing a womb entrance in impure saṃsāra. Listen well and carefully. As explained before, choose wisely which continent to enter. With your spiritual

powers, observe everywhere. You may enter a place where the true Buddhadharma flourishes.

When one is to be reborn through a particular womb entrance, one sees an impure mass of blood and develops the notion that it has a fragrant taste, becoming attached to and desirous of it; one is then reborn there. Therefore, when all the various appearances described above arise, do not generate attachment, nor appearances of love and hatred. Choose only a good womb; seek it with sincere concentration and joyful aspiration. This is most essential. At this time, make the following aspiration:

Alas! For the benefit of sentient beings, may I be reborn as a wheel-turning king; or in a brahmin lineage, like the king of great śāla trees; or as the child of a great accomplished one; or in a lineage of pure and undefiled transmission of the true Dharma; or in a lineage whose parents possess perfect right faith. For the benefit and happiness of all sentient beings, may I take a body endowed with every blessing and merit.

Having made this aspiration, then enter that womb with a firm resolve. At the same time, emit light to bless the womb, visualize it as a supremely fine palace, and visualize the Buddhas and yidams of the ten directions, together with the Great Compassionate Protector, compassionately blessing you as you enter the womb. This is essential.

Furthermore, when choosing a womb, because of karma one often mistakes a good womb for a bad one and a bad womb for a good one. Therefore, at that time, the essential points of selection are extremely important. The instruction is as follows:

When the appearance of a good womb arises, do not generate a mind of craving and attachment. When the appearance of a bad womb arises, do not generate a mind of aversion and rejection. Toward good and bad, neither grasp nor reject; be free from both love and hatred, and abide in equanimity. This is the profound essential point for entering a womb.

After giving the foregoing instructions, except for a certain kind of person able to receive them, there are those whose harmful habitual tendencies are difficult to remove; those unable to relinquish love and hatred; persons of lesser faculties burdened by grave offenses; and those as dull as animals. Such persons should be led to take refuge in the Three Jewels in order to prevent these obstacles. Call the deceased person's name again, recite the following passage, and tell them:

Ø Instruction 24

Alas, noble son (so-and-so): since you are unable to choose a womb entrance and unable to relinquish love and hatred, whatever appearances may arise, you need only recite the names of the Three Jewels, take refuge with reverence, pray to the Great Compassionate One, raise your head, and proceed with focused attention. Recognize the Original Face of the intermediate state. Immediately cast aside your attachment to relatives, children, intimate friends, and close companions from your former life, for none of these can benefit you. The light of the deva realm is white, and the light of the human realm is yellow; you may enter either. You may also enter exquisite jewel palaces and delightful gardens.

Give the foregoing instructions repeatedly, even up to seven times.

Finally, recite each of the following three times: (1) Verses Invoking the Blessings of All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; (2) Verses for Deliverance from the Perilous Passage of Fear in the Intermediate State; (3) The Six Root Verses of the Intermediate State; and (4) Prayer of Aspiration for Deliverance from Fear in the Intermediate State.

(1) Verses Invoking the Blessings of All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

All Buddhas and bodhisattvas, ever abiding throughout the ten directions, complete in great compassion, with foreknowledge and sacred vision;

Refuges for sentient beings, who do not forsake your vows of great compassion, we pray that you descend, accept us, and receive these sincerely offered gifts.

All compassionate venerable ones, whose wisdom, wisdom and compassion, and all activities possess inconceivable power—

Here is one named [name], leaving this present world for that other realm, departing this world for another, already freed from the body of flesh and blood.

Without refuge and without support, without rescue or aid, they now behold the appearances of utmost and terrible suffering.

The day is ending and the road is exhausted; leaving home for a foreign land, they enter a shadowy realm, bewildered as they head toward a precipice.

In terror and frenzy, they race through tangled forests, pursued by karmic force; they may fall into boundless wilderness or drift upon the great sea.

The body is no longer free, driven and tossed by the winds of karma; they may enter the midst of battle and be seized by vicious enemies.

There is nowhere to enter or hide. They may encounter Yama's messengers, while the ghostly attendants stand ready with cruel torments, dreadful to behold.

They undergo the many sufferings of karmic fruition, dying and reviving without respite. Their strength to struggle is exhausted; they are helpless and utterly alone.

May all Buddhas and bodhisattvas, in their compassion, bestow protection and rescue. For those awaiting rescue here, may they serve as refuge and support.

Grant them the power of blessings; protect them from the sufferings of the intermediate state; ward off the red winds of karma and dispel the terrors of Yama.

Rescue them safely from the perilous passages of the intermediate state. Alas, Great Compassionate One, may you not forsake your compassion.

Do not forget your vast vows. Enable them to escape all sufferings. We beseech the Buddhas and bodhisattvas: may your compassionate light shine upon them.

With the hook of great compassionate light, do not let them enter the three lower realms. Most excellent honored ones of the Three Jewels, may you compassionately receive them.

Bestow the power of great compassion, enabling them to escape the sufferings of the intermediate state.

(II) Verses for Deliverance from the Perilous Passage of Fear in the Intermediate State

(1) Ever-abiding Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, Samantabhadra and the assemblies of peaceful and wrathful noble beings,

Gurus and yidams, ḍākinīs and Dharma protectors, descend here; we earnestly beseech you to hear and grant this prayer.

With utmost sincerity, I take refuge in the gurus and ḍākinīs. With great compassion, look down in pity and guide me.

(2) Through deluded error, I wander in birth and death. May hearing, contemplation, and cultivation illuminate reality as it is.

May the lineage gurus guide me from before, and the victorious mother ḍākinīs protect me from behind.

I pray to be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to ascend the Buddha-field of perfect awakening.

(3) When anger blazes and I wander in birth and death, may the light of great perfect mirror wisdom shine upon me.

May Vajrasattva guide me from before, and Māmakī Buddha-Mother protect me from behind.

I pray to be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to ascend the Buddha-field of perfect awakening.

(4) When arrogance blazes and I wander in birth and death, may the light of the wisdom of equality shine upon me.

May Ratnasambhava Tathāgata guide me from before, and Buddha-Eye Buddha-Mother protect me from behind.

I pray to be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to ascend the Buddha-field of perfect awakening.

(5) When desire blazes and I wander in birth and death, may the light of wondrous discerning wisdom shine upon me.

May Amitābha Buddha guide me from before, and White-Robed Buddha-Mother protect me from behind.

I pray to be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to ascend the Buddha-field of perfect awakening.

(6) When jealousy blazes and I wander in birth and death, may the light of all-accomplishing wisdom shine upon me.

May Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata guide me from before, and Tārā Buddha-Mother protect me from behind.

I pray to be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to ascend the Buddha-field of perfect awakening.

(7) When ignorance blazes and I wander in birth and death, may the light of dharma-realm wisdom shine upon me.

May Vairocana guide me from before, and Dharmasovereign Buddha-Mother protect me from behind.

I pray to be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to ascend the Buddha-field of perfect awakening.

(8) When the five poisons blaze and I wander in birth and death, may the united light of the four wisdoms shine upon me.

May the Tathāgatas of the five families guide me from before, and the Buddha-Mothers of the five families protect me from behind.

I pray to be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to ascend the Buddha-field of perfect awakening.

(9) When deluded appearances blaze and I wander in birth and death, may the light that dispels fear shine upon me.

May all wrathful deities guide me from before, and all wrathful mothers protect me from behind.

I pray to be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to ascend the Buddha-field of perfect awakening.

(10) When habitual tendencies blaze and I wander in birth and death, may the light of coemergent wisdom shine upon me.

May the heroic vidyādharas guide me from before, and the assembly of ḍākinīs protect me from behind.

I pray to be delivered from the perilous passage of fear in the intermediate state and led to ascend the Buddha-field of perfect awakening.

(11) May the element of space not become my enemy. May I personally behold the blue-light Buddha-field.

May the element of water not become my enemy. May I personally behold the white-light Buddha-field.

May the element of earth not become my enemy. May I personally behold the yellow-light Buddha-field.

May the element of fire not become my enemy. May I personally behold the red-light Buddha-field.

May the element of wind not become my enemy. May I personally behold the green-light Buddha-field.

May all rainbow lights not become my enemies. May I personally behold all Buddha-fields.

May I know all sounds to be my own sounds; may I know all lights to be my own lights.

May I know all radiance to be my own radiance. May I personally recognize the appearances of the intermediate state.

May I directly realize the three kāyas amid the circumstances of the intermediate state.

(III) The Six Root Verses of the Intermediate State

(1) Alas! When the intermediate state of birth now arises for me, I must forever abandon the leisure of this life and all indolence.

Undistracted in hearing, contemplation, and cultivation, I shall realize the true meaning; with mind and objects lucid and clear, I shall directly realize the three kāyas.

Having obtained this leisure-and-endowment body just once, do not cast it away upon the path of confusion.

(2) Alas! When the intermediate state of dreams now arises for me, I must forever abandon the heedless sleep of ignorance.

Undistracted and single-minded, abide steadily in reality itself; safeguard realization within dreams and cultivate illusory luminosity.

Do not sleep long like an animal. Cherish the direct experience of sleep and unite it with practice.

(3) Alas! When the intermediate state of dhyāna now arises for me, I must forever abandon every kind of distraction and dullness.

Undistracted and without grasping, abide steadily beyond extremes. May the two stages of generation and completion be revealed.

When activities have ceased and I cultivate single-mindedly, may I not be carried away by the delusions of afflictions.

(4) Alas! When the intermediate state at the time of death now arises for me, I must forever abandon every craving and attachment.

Undistracted, enter into the meaning of the lucid instructions; let the mind range freely and directly realize the unborn vista of vast space.

As I am about to leave this obstructed body of flesh and blood, I must recognize that impermanent death is at hand.

(5) Alas! When the intermediate state of dharmatā now arises for me, I must forever abandon appearances of terror and fear.

Recognize every appearance as the wisdom of realization; know the appearances of the intermediate state to be just this.

When great benefit hangs by a thread, why fear the peaceful and wrathful forms transformed by my own awareness?

(6) Alas! When the intermediate state of becoming now arises for me, I must maintain a single, wholehearted intention.

Strive to sustain the meeting of excellent conditions; forever sever the womb entrance, and remember to turn back.

When diligent effort toward pure appearances is the one necessity, forever abandon jealousy and cultivate the union of guru and consort.

Death comes without certainty and with utmost swiftness; it is futile to bear the burden of the meaningless deeds of this life.

Great benefit is lost when resolve is unsteady; now I have returned empty-handed.

The certainty required is the sublime yidam practice. If I do not now cultivate this sublime yidam practice,

Then even the instructions personally proclaimed by great accomplished masters, and the guru's teachings, will not provide a secure abiding place.

To deceive oneself in this way is truly not fitting. It is most important to understand these six root verses.

(IV) Prayer of Aspiration for Deliverance from Fear in the Intermediate State

(1) When my karmic recompense is exhausted and I depart, the relatives of my former life will be unable to help.

As I wander alone upon the path of the intermediate state, may the great compassionate power of the peaceful and wrathful deities

Dispel the darkness of ignorance.

(2) Separated from beloved companions, I drift alone; the illusory appearances of my own awareness are about to arise.

May the compassionate power of all Buddhas rescue me, so that the terrors of the intermediate state do not arise.

(3) When the lights of the five wisdoms appear at this time, without fear or dread may I recognize my own original face.

When the forms of the peaceful and wrathful deities draw near, may I recognize the intermediate state and not be afraid.

(4) If I am controlled by karmic force, may the Great Compassionate One remove suffering and adversity.

When the natural sound of dharmatā resounds like thunder, may it be transformed into the sound of the six-syllable great mantra.

(5) When karma pursues me and no help is at hand, may the yidam deity remove its suffering.

When karmic force pursues me and I have lost my refuge, may I realize the samādhi of pure light.

(6) When I arise by transformation in the intermediate state of becoming, may I not be turned aside by Māra when receiving prophetic guidance.

When the power of thought becomes operative, may I not be deluded or terrified by evil karma.

(7) When the roar of fierce beasts arises, may it be transformed into the wondrous sound of the six-syllable Dharma.

When black winds, rain, and snow pursue me, may I realize the divine eye of wisdom-light.

(8) When I see fellow beings in the intermediate state, may I not give rise to jealousy, but attain a higher rebirth.

When the intense afflictions of hunger and thirst arise, may the sufferings of hunger, thirst, cold, and heat be removed.

(9) Should I see my future parents in union, may I contemplate the Great Compassionate Deity in union.

May I gain mastery over rebirth for the benefit of others and obtain a radiant body adorned with excellent marks.

(10) Should I obtain an excellent body of rebirth, may I swiftly understand whatever I see and hear.

May no evil karma follow after me; may I diligently increase all virtues.

(11) Wherever I am reborn, may I behold the yidam deity face to face in life after life.

Having been born, may I be able to speak and understand the great meaning, remember my past lives without forgetfulness, and attain dhāraṇī.

(12) May I know, upon hearing, contemplating, or seeing, the various superior, middling, and lesser qualities.

May every place of rebirth be auspicious, and may all sentient beings be at peace and happy.

(13) May I attain the forms of the Buddha's peaceful and wrathful deities, their retinues, lifespans, and Buddha-fields.

Just as their supremely excellent and beautiful names are, so may we certainly attain them.

(14) Master Padmasambhava of Uḍḍiyāna composed this Prayer of Aspiration for Deliverance from Fear in the Intermediate State.

Until saṃsāra is emptied, may this profound and wondrous Dharma endure forever.

(End of recitation)

Concluding Remarks on the Intermediate State of Becoming

Conclusion on the Intermediate State of Becoming: During the "intermediate state of becoming," performing this esoteric teaching of instruction is especially beneficial for sentient beings with wholesome karma, enabling them to continue their wholesome causes. It is like clearing and opening a blocked watercourse so that the water may flow into its channel. Among all those whose sins are grave and whose evil is extreme, there are none who, upon hearing this Dharma, cannot be liberated.

Why is this so? Because at that time the supreme peaceful and wrathful deities all come to guide them, while demonic obstacles accompany them. As soon as they hear this Dharma, their experiential appearances are transformed, and they attain liberation. Moreover, because the deceased have already cast off their bodies of

flesh and blood and have lost what they formerly relied upon, they are more readily transformed.

During the “intermediate state,” although they may be wandering in any distant place, they possess subtle spiritual powers and can see. Upon hearing themselves called, they immediately appear; once reminded, they immediately awaken. In an instant, they can redirect their minds. Therefore, this Dharma has exceedingly great benefit. It is like a crossbow: once released, it invariably strikes the bull’s-eye. It is also like a huge log that a hundred people cannot lift: once it floats upon the water, it may travel freely at will and reach every place in but a moment. Or it is like a fierce horse that is difficult to tame: once controlled by the reins, it naturally becomes subdued.

Therefore, for all who have newly died, perform this Dharma beside the corpse, if the corpse is present, and repeatedly recite it aloud until blood or yellow fluid issues from the nostrils. During this time, do not move the corpse. Also, in accordance with the samaya of the yidam in whom the deceased had faith, perform the practice and dedicate its merit to the deceased. Do not kill any living being.

Relatives must not wail or weep beside the corpse. They should make every effort to perform Buddhist rites extensively for the deceased. Moreover, other practices besides this Esoteric Teaching of Liberation Through Hearing in the Intermediate State may also be added and recited at the end of the text; this is even more excellent and beneficial.

Furthermore, this Dharma should be recited regularly during one’s lifetime, and its words should be committed thoroughly to memory. Once karmic recompense is exhausted and the time of death arrives, when the signs indicating the fixed time of death appear, if one still has the strength, one should recite it oneself and contemplate the meaning of its words. If one’s strength fails, a companion should read from this scripture and recite it aloud, ensuring that every word and phrase is clear. Liberation will certainly be attained; of this there can be no doubt.

Moreover, this is a profound instruction through which liberation is attained upon seeing the Dharma, without the need to practice meditation and contemplation. It is also a profound instruction that rescues those burdened with grave karmic obstacles from a narrow passage. Those with the karmic affinity to encounter this profound and wondrous Dharma must not forget these words, even if seven dogs bark and pursue them! At the time of death, among the teachings of all Buddhas and the powers of the Buddhas of the three times, none surpasses this.

The Esoteric Teaching of Liberation Through Hearing in the Intermediate State, called the Intermediate-State Instructions, which can liberate all sentient beings of one essence, is concluded.

Appendix: Expanded Collection of Mantras for Recitation

Appendix: Supplementary Collection of Selected Recitation Mantras

1. The Four Refuges

Namo Guru Bei (Taking refuge in the guru)

Namo Buddhaya (Taking refuge in the Buddha)

Namo Dharmaya (Taking refuge in the Dharma)

Namo Sanghaya (Taking refuge in the Saṅgha)

2. The Root Mantra and Heart Mantra of Guru Padmasambhava

(1) Root Mantra

Om, Ah, Hum, Bie Zha Gu Lu, Bei Ma, Xi Di, Hum.

(2) Heart Mantra

Om, Bei Ma, Bie Zha, Hum.

1. Heart Mantras of the Five Buddhas

(1. Vairocana Buddha of the center. 2. Akṣobhya Buddha of the east. 3. Ratnasaṃbhava Buddha of the south. 4. Amitābha Buddha of the west. 5. Amoghasiddhi Buddha of the north.)

(1) Om, Ah, Zhi Na Zhi Ga, Om, Hum.

(2) Om, Ah, Bie Zha, Zhi Ga, Hum, Hum.

(3) Om, Ah, Lie Na, Zhi Ga, Suo, Hum.

(4) Om, Ah, A Luo Lie Ga, A, Hum.

(5) Om, Ah, Jian Zha, Die Ga, Ha, Hum.

2. Mantra of the Assembly of the One Hundred Peaceful and Wrathful Deities

Om, Ah, Hum, Bo Di Zhi Da, Ma Ha Su Ka Jia Na, Da Du A, Om, Lu Lu Lu Lu Hum, Jue, Hum.

3. Six-Realms Vajra Mantra

Ah A Xia Sa Ma Ha

4. Liberation Through Hearing Mantra

A Bi Jia Dang Ga

5. Great Secret Mantra of Primordial Awareness

Ma Ma Guo Lin Sa Min Da

6. Medicine Buddha Tathāgata Mantra

Die Ya Ta, Om, Bei Ka Zhe, Bei Ka Zhe, Ma Ha Bei Ka Zhe, Re Za, Sa Meng Ga Die, Suo Ha.

7. Mantra for Rebirth Through Akṣobhya Buddha of the East

Namo Re Da Na, Da Re Ya Ya, Om, Gang Ga Ni, Gang Ga Ni, Nuo Zha Ni, Nuo Zha Ni, Zhuo Zha Ni, Zhuo Zha Ni, Zhuo Sa Ni, Zhuo Sa Ni, Ba Re Di Ha Na, Ba Re Di Ha Na, Sa Er Wa, Ga Er Ma, Ba Ran Ba Na, Ni Mei, Sa Er Wa, Sa Duo Nan, Za Suo Ha.

8. Heart Mantra of Amitāyus Buddha (Buddha of Longevity)

Om, A Ma Re Ni, Jie Wen Die Ye, Suo Ha.

9. Amitābha Buddha Rebirth Mantra

Namo Ba Ga Wa De, A Mi Da Ba Ya, Da Ta Ga Ta Ya, A Er Ha De, San Mu Ya, San Bu Da Ya, Die Ya Ta, Om, A Mi De, A Mi Duo Ba Wei, A Mi Da, San Ba Wei, A Mi Da, Bie Jian De, A Mi De, Ga Mi Ni, Ga Ga Na, Ge Lie De, Ga Lei, Sa Er Wa, Ga Lie, Xia Cha Yang, Ga Lei, Suo Ha.

10. Heart Mantra of Amitābha Buddha

Om, Bei Ma Da Lie Hum.

11. One-Syllable Heart Mantra of Amitābha Buddha

Om, A Mi Die Wa, Sha.

12. Mantra of Śākyamuni Buddha, King Who Eliminates All Evil Destinies

Namo Ba Ga Wa De, Sa Er Wa, Du Er Ga De, Ba Lie Shao Da Ni, Luo Zha Ya, Da Ta Ga Da Ya, A Er Ha De, San Mu Ya San Bu Da Ya, Die Ya Ta, Om, Shao Da Ni, Shao Da Ni, Sa Er Wa, Ba Bang, Bi Shao Da Ni, Xu Die, Bi Xu Die, Sa Er Wa, Ga Er Ma, A Wa Re Na, Bi Shao Da Ni, Suo Ha.

13. Diamond Sūtra Dhāraṇī

Namo Ba Ga Wa De, Ban Ruo Za Ba Re Mi Da Ya, Om, Na Dang Di Da, Yi Li Xi, Yi Li Xi, Mi Li Xi, Mi Li Xi, Bi Na Yan, Bi Na Yan, Namo Ba Ga Wa De, Bu Re Da Deng Ya Bu Re Di, Yi Ri Di, Yi Ri Di, Mi Ri Di, Mi Ri Di, Xu Ri Di, Xu Ri Di, Wu Xu Ri, Wu Xu Ri, Bu You Ye, Bu You Ye, Suo Ha.

14. Heart Mantras of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva

(1) Om, Qing, Xi Re Zha Hum.

(2) Om, Bu Re Ma Ni, Da Re, Suo Ha.

15. Heart Mantra of Vajrasattva

Om, Bie Zha Sa Duo Hum, Ah.

16. Hundred-Syllable Mantra

Om, Bie Zha Sa Duo Sa Ma Ya, Ma Nu Ba La Ya, Bie Zha Sa Duo, Die Luo Ba Di Cha, Jie You Mei Ba Wa, Su Duo Ka Yu Mei Ba Wa, Su Bu Ka Yu Mei Ba Wa, A Nu Ri Duo Mei Ba Wa, Sa Er Wa, Xi Di Mei Bu Re Ya Cha, Sa Er Wa, Ga Er Ma, Su Zha Mei, Ji Deng Shi Yi Yang, Gu Lu Hum, Ha Ha Ha Ha, He, Ba Ga Wang, Sa Er Wa, Da Ta Ga Da, Bie Zha Ma Mei Men Zha, Bie Zha Ba Wa, Ma Ha Sa Ma Ya, Sa Duo A Hum, Pei.

17. Mantra for Completing Omissions

Om, Du Lu Du Lu, Zha Ya Mu Ke, Suo Ha.

18. Great Light Mantra

Om A Mo Ga Wei Lu Qie Na Ma Ha Mu De La Ma Ni Pai De Ma Jie Wa Na Pai Na Wa Lu Da Ya Hum

The illustration below is the Sanskrit-script diagram of the Great Light Mantra transmitted by Master Yuanyin. When the Sanskrit letters of the mantra touch the remains, the deceased is immediately reborn in the Pure Land. (Please print it on yellow paper. After printing, empower it with the mantra mudrā at least 108 times.)

“At the time of death, we write this Great Light Mantra as a mantra text and place it on the person’s chest. If the person is cremated, cremate this mantra along with them, and, illumined by this Great Light, they will ascend to heaven. If the person is not cremated—for example, as in funerals abroad, where the body is placed in a coffin—they will also be saved.” (Excerpted from Master Yuanyin’s Haikou teachings)

不空绢索如来大光明陀罗尼，可沿虚线剪裁后使用。



