

# Death

The Way of the Samurai is found in death. Meditation on inevitable death should be performed daily. Every day, when one's body and mind are at peace, one should meditate upon being ripped apart by arrows, being carried away by surging waves, being thrown into the midst of a great fire, being struck by lightning, being shaken to death by a great earthquake, falling from thousand-foot cliffs, dying of disease or committing seppuku at the death of one's master. And every day, without fail, one should consider himself as dead. This is the substance of the Way of the Samurai.

Hagakure

In this work I have tried briefly and accurately, avoiding difficult images and concepts of philosophy, to summarize death phenomenon from the "practical" point of view.

In the modern world the subject of death has replaced sex in the system of our social taboos: death is not spoken about, details and preparation are avoided.

However, death is the most important part of our life: the condition of mind at the time of death defines the nature of the following rebirth and the future karmic way.

Also the action and praying of the people who are feeling pity for the dead are helpful. Rituals and prayers which, according to teachings, can really help the dead to keep orientation and control of mind in Bardo (space between death and the new birth) are also very important, to avoid unhappy rebirth.

Being the physiological phenomenon, experiences of death are universal for all people and therefore, preparation for death, support and compassion to the dead also don't depend on religious affiliation.

## 1. PREPAIRING

The person who isn't owning control over the mind isn't able to distinguish and monitor process of death. As a rule, the thought of death causes rejection and fear in the ordinary person.

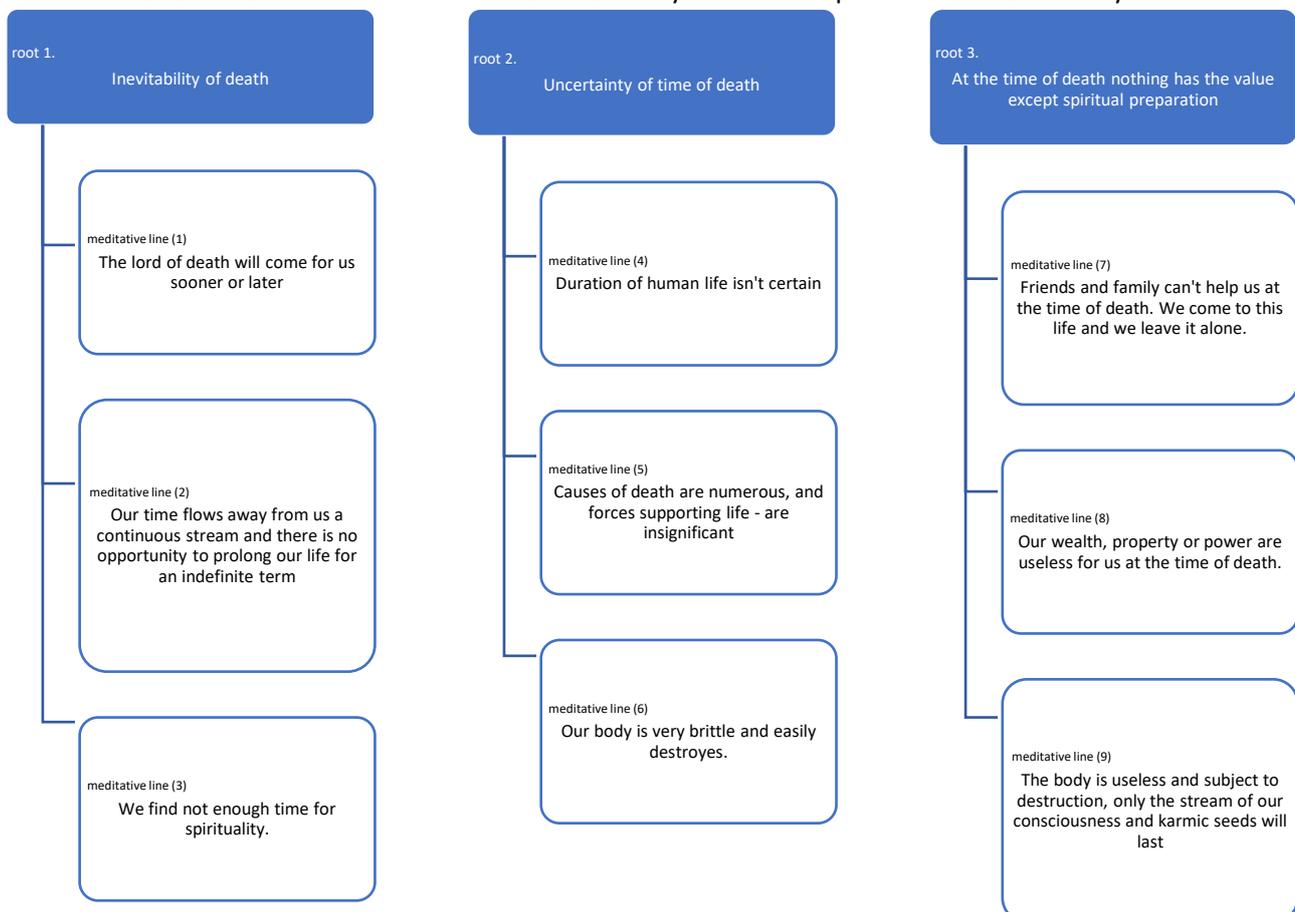
In our everyday life (because of general concealment of this subject), people remove reflections about death in a far corner of the consciousness.

However, for due preparation for dying process, opposite approach is necessary.

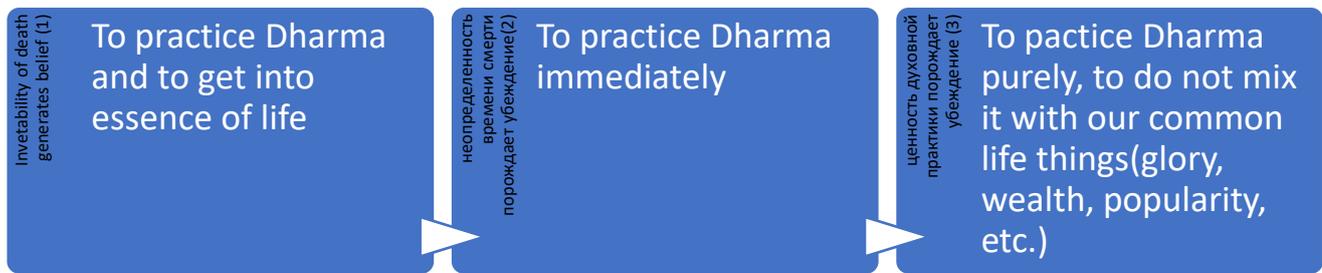
Here I will give two types of meditation for preparation for death.

### 1.1. "Three roots, nine meditative lines and three beliefs"

This meditative reflection about death described in Sutra system can be presented schematically:



Three beliefs generated by meditation about death:



It is necessary to reflect alternately on three roots, every time taking one of meditative lines as a basis and finishing practice by generation of the corresponding belief.

It is important to know how to operate mind and to concentrate it in meditation at the time of death and how to maintain the spiritual aspirations conducting to positive ways in Bardo and thus to create attractive rebirth, and sometimes even Awakening.

## 1.2. Experience of death



### eksoteric means

- external approach: stay in the place of burial, observe the decaying corpses, reflection that your own body is waited the same fate
- internal approach: imagine own dying in details



### esoteric practice

- tantric practice: yoga of mind transferring, for example "Six Naropa Yogas"- dream yoga, bardo yoga, phowa, bardo, clear light yoga, illusory body, tummo.
- yoga of longevity: to neglect a body, conscious reduction of term of life is the heavy karmic offense leading to bad rebirth therefore each practician has to strive for longevity.

Here it is necessary to notice that performance of Tantric methods is demanded by empowerment and the guide of the Teacher and also strong self-organization.

*"To train of spiritually unripe person for Tantra– all the same that to put the small child on a wild elephant"* (Gyalwa Tubten Gyatso, XIII Dalai-lama).

For this reason, all great practitioners of the Buddhism emphasize the importance of preliminary practice and development of Bodhichitta:

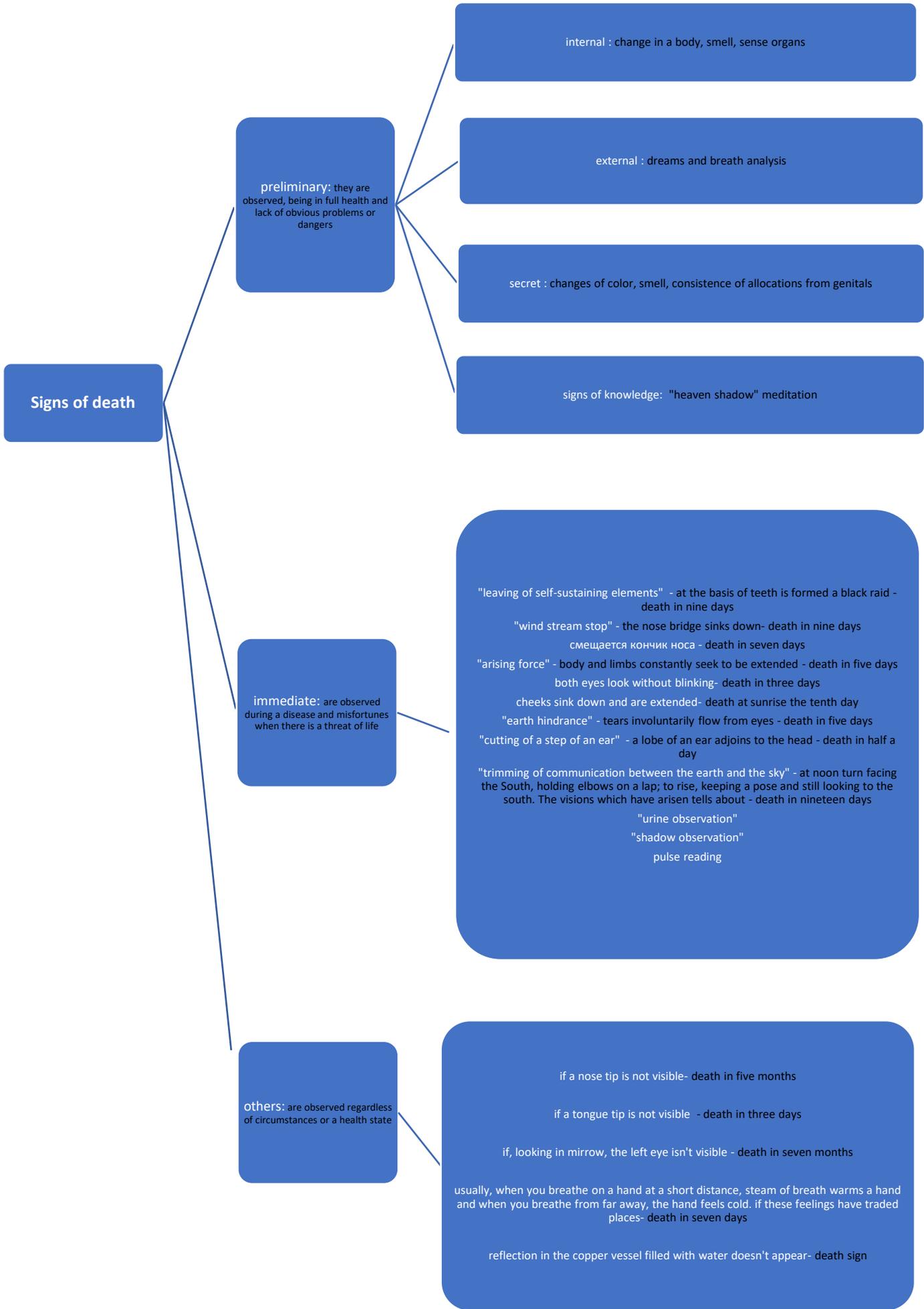
*"There are a lot of levels of Dharma, the most basic of which – development of goodheartedness, consciousness of love and compassion. Even if we can't find time and forces for the highest meditative practice or studying of philosophy then, we should try to maintain the benevolent relation to our relatives, never to harm anybody, but, on the contrary, only to help others. If we act this way, negative will gradually leave a stream of our consciousness. Painful emotions will disappear, and our life will constantly improve the quality. Then during our own death, we will be able to hold feeling of peace and to be ready to meet the future with understanding."* (Gyalwa Tubten Gyatso, XIII Dalai-lama).

## 2. DEATH PERIODS

### 2.1. Signs of death.

From the Buddhist point of view our life is in our hands in the sense that, using free will, we can form events which will make our destiny. However there is an element of karmic predisposition. Negative karmic seeds create the dangerous moment in our life and, working through forces of delusions which we carry in our mind, bring us untimely death.

*"Simultaneous weakening of three factors supporting life: the term of life, vital energy bla and karmic force - is the reason of inevitable death."* (Amritahridaya-Tantra)

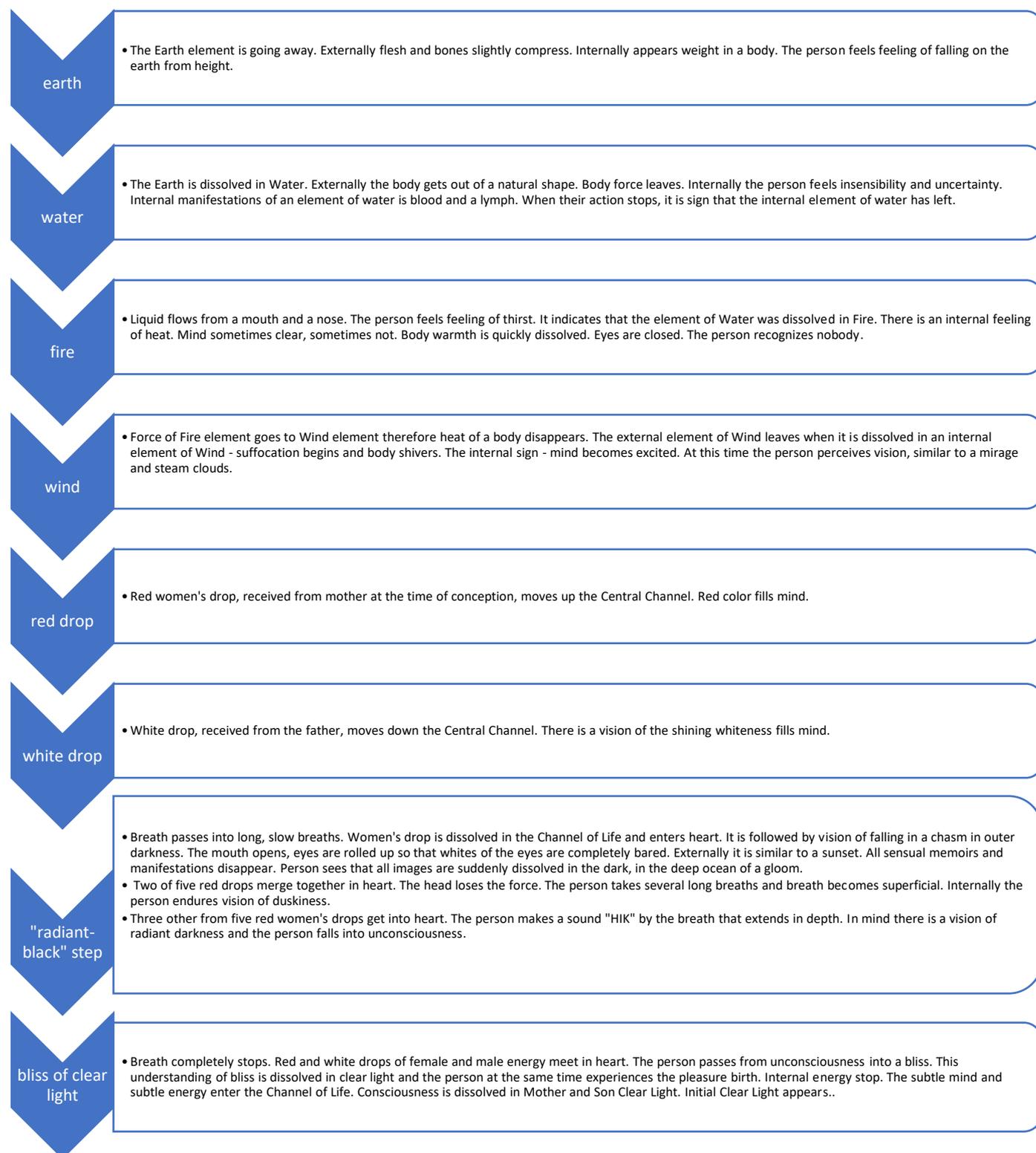


When there are signs specifying to death, it is especially important to be engaged in practice of yoga of longevity. In Buddhism each life is considered sacred, but human – especially because of an opportunity to reach Awakening. Therefore, any practicing the Dharma has responsibility to the body which in Vajrayana is considered as the temple of the deity.

However, if rituals of practice of long life are executed, and signs of death aren't eliminated it means that the term of life is exhausted, and it is necessary to practice “consciousness transfer yoga” immediately.

## 2.2. Death experience.

First of all, five feelings begin to change. External sign – vomiting and loss of appetite. The body begins to lose heat. Because of fear human hardly raises the head. Internal sign – feeling as if the head kind of falls down. Then the experiences connected with leaving of each element, movement red and white drops and consciousness transition are shown.



It is said that process of death takes time sufficient for acceptance of food, that is about 30-40 minutes, however consciousness stays in a body rather long time – up to three days. During this time do not disturb the body. When there are signs of decomposition of a body, as a rule for the third day, it can be subjected to cremation or burial.

### **2.3. Being in Bardo.**

After division of a body and mind, the Mind experiences short flash of Clear Light, and then enters Bardo - the state between death and rebirth.

*"Human life in Bardo usually lasts seven days though in certain cases it is even shorter. If during this time person doesn't find the suitable place for rebirth, then "small" death happens and then again rebirth in Bardo. There can be seven such cycles that in general makes forty nine days in Bardo while the person is ready to accept rebirth."* (Lama Tsonhawa)

Bardo is similar to the world of dreams, and a body which possess at this time, with a body in a dream.

*"How to recognize Bardo? It is a lot of terrible and strange images not similar to anything from what you looked earlier at, will appear before you. This is a sign that you are in Bardo.*

*Forces of Earth element have gone therefore you hear sounds of the breaking-up mountains and trembling of the earth, and above the ground all it seems collapsing and falling, there is a stone rain.*

*Energy of Water element has gone, there are terrible feelings as if you sink in the middle of the ocean.*

*Energy of Fire element has gone therefore it seems that fire flares everywhere and the terrifying sounds of the cracking and hooting flame blow up in your ears and fight in your heart.*

*Wind element energy has changed and you feel as if you stand among a great storm and is captured by horror.*

...

*There are also six weak signs:*

*Before death mountains and a walls stopped your free movement, but now nothing disturbs, and you can move where you want, just thinking of it. Earlier you had to put effort to make something, and now everything is made without efforts. Earlier, when you talked to friends or relatives, you were answered, now nobody answers your words. There are indications of mind: the sun and the moon don't shine, and the body of Bardo which you possess doesn't cast a shadow.*

...

*There are also six signs of uncertainty in behavior indicating a lack of safety and stability: the constant movement through the known and unknown places, sometimes beautiful, sometimes ugly, a frightening environment; fast change of a situation: woods, then temples, etc.; or now you go, and at the next moment you eat, you sleep or you sit; the changing relation to food which sometimes seems good and at once disgusting; uncertainty with people around which seem friends, strangers, frightening; instability of thoughts.*

*All these signs indicate that you have died and now you are in Bardo."* (Lama Mahasukha. Nature of Bardo. Commentaries to Six Yogas of Naropa)

### **3. HELP TO DYING**

The most important – to cause and support good feelings in consciousness dying as dying with positive mind almost guarantees positive rebirth.

*"If predictions of death are received, it is very important to apply the counteracting meditation, rituals and yoga methods. To do not use this effective methods is equivalently to murder"* (Karma Lingpa)

To allow someone to die when he can be cured, or to refuse the spiritual help is the worst of karmic offenses.

#### **3.1. Mantras and praying:**

OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MYNI YE SWAHA – Buddha Shakyamuni mantra helps to keep a control on mind during dying

OM MANI PADME HUM – Avalokiteshwara mantra

TAYATA OM BEKANDZE BEKANDZE MAHA BEKANDZE RANDZA SAMUNG GATE SOHA – Medicine Buddha mantra.

Also any prayers from any religious faith connected with peace deities can be used. If the person belonged to any religion during lifetime, then it is necessary to carry out rituals and prayers, close to his perception.

Generally speaking, the mind in Bardo is deprived of lifetime criticality and stereotypes and perceives not so much information part of the message, how many its power component, therefore it is possible to address to dying in any language and within any model of the world.

### 3.2. Rituals for elimination of signs of death and for prolongation of life:

First Dalai-lama indicated three main methods of log-life yoga:

- Amitaus yoga. It can be used for prolongation of own life or for someone else.
- Tantric methods connected to Tara deity.

Mystical yoga of acceptance of food from the sky where practicing represents what absorbs vital energy of stars.

### 3.3. Yoga of transfer of consciousness Phowa (*'pho-ba*):

This method of meditation can be applied by practitioner himself or for others. Phowa is one from of "Six Yogas of Naropa", along with yoga of mystical fire Tummo, yoga of an Illusory Body, Dream yoga, Clear Light and Bardo yogas. The yoga of transfer of consciousness for the dead becomes at the time of death or shortly after it.

*"Various methods of preparation of mind for death and transfer of consciousness are taught in the Sutras and Tantras. ... It is necessary to practice that from them most of which corresponds to your abilities, a basis, karmic predispositions and subconscious tendencies determined by the consultation of the Teacher. Then, when death comes, it is possible to use easily a method and to make desired transfer"* (First Dalai-lama).

### 3.4. Ritual of the help to the dead of recognition of Bardo images and transfer of consciousness.

Methods of "care of the dead" act on that principle that during wandering in Bardo he is sensitive as to positive, so to negative impulses. Though the condition of mind of the person at the time of death defines his further karmic movement, nevertheless, there is a space for improvement and the help. Such help influence if made in sincere participation or the strong method applied by the skilled ritualist.

The first purpose of a ritual is to attract and keep attention of the dead and to force him to realize the fact of death and staying in Bardo.

The following process is a transformation of five delutions of consciousness into five pure elements. All kind of good forces are called for training of the dead for a decisive stage of recognition Bardo and focusing of his mind to transfer consciousness from Bardo to favorable rebirth.

At the moment of transfer of consciousness make fire and a corpse or the image of the dead are cremated. The dead is convinced to reflect on the ephemeral nature of a body and not to become attached to it, and to transform the body, the speech and mind to three bodies of Buddha and to five types of wisdom.

In a final stage of a ritual dead is instructed in how to avoid the new birth (closing of a door in a bosom), or if it is impossible, to choose the favorable birth.

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སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་བདེ་བ་དང་བདེ་བའི་རྒྱ་དང་ལྷན་པར་གྱུར་ཅིག།  
*sem chen tam che dewa dang dewe gyu dang den par gyur chik*  
**May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness,**

སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་སྤྱུག་བསྐྱེད་དང་སྤྱུག་བསྐྱེད་ཀྱི་རྒྱ་དང་བྲལ་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག།  
*sem chen tam che duk ngel dang duk ngel gyi gyu dang drelwar gyur chik*  
**May all beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering,**

སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་སྤྱུག་བསྐྱེད་མེད་བའི་བདེ་བ་དང་མི་བྲལ་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག།  
*sem chen tam che duk ngel me be dewa dang mi drelwar gyur chik*  
**May all beings never be separated from the supreme joy that is beyond all suffering,**

སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་ཉེ་རིང་ཆགས་ལྷང་གཉིས་དང་བྲལ་བའི་བཏང་སྟོམ་ལ་གནས་པར་གྱུར་ཅིག།  
*sem chen tam che nye ring chak dang nyi dang drelwe tang nyom la ne par gyur chik*  
**May all beings abide in equanimity, free from attachment, aversion and sorrow.**



## LITERATURE

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by Gyalba Tubten Gyatso, XIIIth Dalai Lama (*rgyal-ba-thub-bstan-rgya-mtsho*), 1921

= Self-freedom with Knowing of Death Signs (*'chi-mtshan-rtags-par-rang-sgrol*)

Terton Karma Lingpa (*gter-ston-kar-ma-gling-pa*)

= Yoga of mind transfer (*'pho-bai-dmar-khrid*)

Lama Tsechokling Yeshe Gyaltzen (*yongs-'dzin-'tsho-mchog-gling-ye-shes-rgyal-mtshan*)

= Care about dead (*rdo-rje-'jigs-byed-rjes-'dzin*)

Lama Mahasukha (*bla-ma-ma-ha-su-kha*)

### 2. Commentary by Dr. G.K.Yung "The Tibetan Book of Death"

### 3. "The Tibetan Book of Death" Bardo Thodol (*zab-chos-zhi-khro-dgsongs-pa-rang-grol-las-bar-doh'-thos-grol-chen-mo-chos-nyid-bar-do'i-ngo-sprod-bzhugs-so*)

Elena Shirshova

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