

Extract notes on Tantra - Geshe Tenzin Zopa

In Buddhist Tantra there are four types of tantra, corresponding to the practitioner's ability which are:-

- (1) Action Tantra;
- (2) Performance Tantra;
- (3) Yoga Tantra; and
- (4) Highest Yoga Tantra (HYT)

The consistent and pure practice of any of the 4 types of tantra can bring about enlightenment. The HYT's main focus is to purify or stop (ordinary) death, intermediate state and rebirth by transforming these three bases of into the three bodies/aspects of the Buddha and hence achieve enlightenment.

This is done through the series of yoga which allows the practitioner to gain control over the process of death, the intermediate state and rebirth. This brings about the total liberation from the obscuration to enlightenment. Since these yogas are based on Highest Yoga Tantric practice on simulating death, it is vital for the practitioner to know how a human being dies, i.e. the stages of the death process. This is based on the text known as the Collective Explanations on the Theory of the Womb. The life of the mind depends on the power of the inner wind energy which every single being possesses.

In order to bring about a virtuous direction for our consciousness during the death process, the inner wind energy has to be influenced by the positive energy.

Therefore, the study of the death process for the HYT practitioner is to study the inner winds, which the consciousness rides upon.

In the Tantric Medical Theory, the inner wind comprises of **five root winds**. It is important to know of the existence and functions of these inner winds that support the life of the body and the bodily functions. Inner winds are essential for the functioning of our body and mind. Their main role, however, is to act as mounts for the various minds (different thoughts like virtue, non-virtue neutral). Therefore, it is very necessary for us to know about these inner winds in order for us to gain control over the winds and consequently, control over our consciousness and its direction. for the purpose of purifying the stage of ordinary death, intermediate state and rebirth into three states or three bodies of the Buddha.

(1) The first one is called the **“Life Bearing Wind”**. It abides at the **heart** and it supports life. Its function is cause the activity of inhalation and exhalation, as well as burping and the force behind our expelling saliva.

(2) The second one is labeled as the **“Upward Moving Wind.”** This wind moves in an upward motion. It ascends from the bottom of the body towards the upper parts and resides at the **throat**. This wind moves around the throat and mouth. It causes the activity of speech, swallowing of food & drink and saliva. This wind affects the function of one's different joints.

(3) The third one is called the **“Pervasive Wind”**. It abides at the **crown of the head**. As its name suggests, it pervades the entire body, particularly the three hundred and sixty joints and supports general movement. It functions to enable the body to move. Without this wind, we would be completely immobile. Thus, it allows physical movement, stretching and bending of the limbs, opening and closing of the mouth and eyelids.

(4) The fourth one is called **“Fire Dwelling Wind”**. This wind sits on the **third stage of the stomach**, at the navel area and it moves throughout the internal organs such as the heart, lung, liver, bladder as well as through the inner channels in different limbs and thereby brings about the movement of heat). This wind facilitates the digestion of our food and drink, brings the nutrients to different part of the bodies and also refines bodily waste products such as urine.

(5) The fifth one is called the **“Downward Void Wind”**. It abides at the **lower abdomen**. It moves in the area of the lower abdomen and also moves about in the womb, seminal vessel, urinary bladder and so forth. It functions to hold and release urine, faeces, sperm and menstrual blood.

We need to have a general idea of these five root winds and their functions, in order to be able to engage in the practice of drops and channels. In order to perform purification using drops and channels, first we need to be able to activate and direct those inner winds. Therefore it is necessary for us to know more about the five root winds.

From the practice of the HYT, the practitioner causes these winds in their causal subtle form to dissolve into the very subtle life bearing wind at the heart chakra. Through the use of Tantric meditative techniques, one aims to bring all the inner winds that reside in all parts of the body into the Life-Bearing Wind at the centre of the heart channel wheel (heart chakra).

This has a great effect on the practice of the three kayas. It is necessary for us to be familiar with the different movements of these winds and also the arrangement of the channels, since it is through gaining control over the winds and drops flowing through these channels that the union of spontaneous great bliss and emptiness will be accomplished.

Having a clear understanding of the placement of the channels, the moving winds and the drops cannot be over-emphasized as it will greatly benefit us when we progress on to meditate on the body mandala. When we perform the body mandala practice, through the force of concentration, we will be able to penetrate the chakras at various places along the channels) which has the effect of activation of the inner winds and therefore the mind.

Teachings on the channels, drops and winds in themselves have no great significance. However, they **become profound practices only when they are motivated by bodhicitta and conjoined with a realization of emptiness.**

There are 72,000 different channels within our body, including the three main ones, namely the central channel which is flanked on both sides (with no intervening space) by the left and right channels. These three channels are straight and adjacent to one another. The left and right channels wrap/coil around the central channel at various major places, thereby forming the so called channel-knots (chakras). These knots constrict the central channel. At each of these places where the channel knots occur except at the heart level, there is one twofold knot formed by a single coil of the right channel and a single coil of the left. They wrap/ coil around the central channel by crossing in front and looping around it. At the heart level, there is a sixfold knot formed by three overlapping loops

of each of the flanking channels. This is the most difficult knot to loosen, but when it is loosened (through meditation) we developed great mental power namely the realization of the clear light mind. At each of these various major channel-knots, a different number of spokes or petals, branch off from the central channel.

The central channel (tsa-uma) begins at the forehead, at the point between the eyebrows and ascends in an arch to the crown of the head. From there, it descends to the spinal cord in a straight line to the space in between the anus and the tip of sex organ. The central channel is of a clear crystal-like nature, not in any way heavy or solid. It is very smooth and soft. We should visualize the central channel as being closer to our back, a little bit in front of our spine. On the basis of the bodhicitta aspiration and understanding emptiness, by activating the winds and channels, one is able to bring about the melting of the drops at the crown, which can bring about the attainment of great bliss and emptiness.

So from here, we can establish that the melting of the drops at the crown, the white substance brings about the bliss of the different stages up to the tip of the secret organ but without release of body fluid. Great bliss is experienced at this point and that energy is retained. The process is then reversed from great bliss backwards as well as transmitting of bliss into the different channels including the 72 thousands different channels throughout the whole body.

To begin with, we have to understand how the central channel manifests within our physical body so that we will be able to identify the chakras precisely. Along these three channels there are 7 chakras at various locations, each with a different number of spokes or petals. The **first chakra** is located at the **forehead (brow/ajna chakra)**, which has a certain number of spokes or petals. The next channel wheel is at the top of the **crown**(crown chakra) with 32 spokes. Next comes the **throat** (throat chakra) with 16 spokes, the **heart** (heart chakra) 8 spokes, the **solar plexus** (navel chakra) with 64 spokes, the **base of the spine** (secret chakra) with 32 spokes, and at the **sexual organ** (jewel chakra) has 8 spokes. There are some drawings from the texts which clearly illustrate channels and chakras. Here, you just have to reflect that within your body, those channels exist at those spots. When you want to do the meditation on wind, channel and drops, it will be more effective by knowing the precise location of the chakras.

In some teachings, the left and right channels are described as being wrapped/coiled around the central channel. The left and right channels are adjacent to each other and all three channels run straight up and parallel to one another. The effect of the left and right channels is to bring about the constriction of wind in the central channel. Therefore, one can picture it the left and right channels having a pressing effect on the central channel.

When death occurs, the wind that serves as the mount of the consciousness, dissolves into the wind in the left and right channels first. This, in turn dissolves into the wind in the central channel. When the wind in the left and right channel dissolves, they become “flattened” thereby releasing the pressure they previously asserted onto the central channel, which in turn allows more movement of the wind within the central channel. This induces the activation of the subtle-mind. Letting the winds enter into the central channel, actualizes our subtle-mind. This experience is felt by every single being without exception. When this dissolution occurs to the ordinary person, it brings great fear as they feel they are being completely annihilated.

As for the yogi, especially the HYT practitioner, he will use this experience of the activated subtle-mind in the spiritual path. Instead of being fearful, the practitioner uses the subtle-mind to engage in the practice of purifying the three bases of death, the intermediate state and rebirth.

Most ordinary persons are completely overwhelmed by fear at this time. However, for the yogi, whenever the gross mind subsides and the subtle mind arises, the yogi knows

that this is the time when the winds are moving within the central channel and that because of that, there will be the sensation of being annihilated. The yogi will then remember that one should not be fearful but use this subtle-mind actualize the path by using the techniques of the HYT.

The root substances namely, the white and red drops, which we received from our father and mother at the onset of conception, resides within the central channel, upon which every act of our physical and mental activities (inclusive our health condition) are derived.

These white and red drops reside at two different places within the central channel. The **root essence from father** which brings about **the white drop** which has the ability of increasing the white drops in our body, reside at the **crowns (crown chakra)**; and the **red drops, the root essence from mother**, resides at the navel chakra central and has the ability to increase the red drops.

The white drop which has the ability to increase is able to produce the (seminal fluid) drops and again the red drop produces the blood (during menstruation). The subtle and fused red and white drops however, is called the indestructible drop and resides at the heart chakra.

This **indestructible drop** that abides at the **centre** of the heart channel wheel within the central channel it the size of a small pea. Some texts described it as the size as of a mustard seed. Many of the lamas liken it to a grain of the Indian red dhal. The red dhal is smaller than the black dhal. The shape of the indestructible drop is slightly flat and roundish. Many lamas say it is half-moon shape. Whatever, it is not necessary that every human must have the same size or shape. Different texts have different versions.

The indestructible drop is a mixture of white and red and hence pinkish in colour. However, the top part of the drop is more prominently white and the bottom half-part more reddish. The reason why it is called the indestructible drop is because the moment when we were conceived in our mother's womb, these two subtle drops (the white drop and the red drop), the substances which come from our parents, come together in union. When the cells of our mother and father came together, they contained delicate, clear, essential drops of energy and formed a kind of oyster, joined at the base and opened at the top. The moment the consciousness enters there, the oyster closes and the consciousness remain inside. It remains closed up to the moment of death. It opens at the first entry of life (of consciousness) and it again opens at the departure of the mind (during death-time). During the period in-between (between life and death), nothing can destroy it. It remains inside the indestructible drop.

The practice of transferring of consciousness also known as *powa*, is about opening this "oyster" indestructible drop.

In the Vinaya Sutra, it is stated that the mind that enters into the indestructible drop is called the spirit of the mind. We can also refer to it simply as "mind". **Mind is very subtle and is in the manner of an inner wind.** This Life-Bearing Wind, which is clear and capable of cognition moves about like the wind. At the time of death, all the inner winds ultimately dissolve into this Life Bearing Wind and right there, the experience of the clear light of death manifests.

In order to actualize the clear light mind, we have to bring all the inner winds, the gross winds and the winds within the three channels, including all the winds which were described before, the different stages of winds, **into the central channel and dissolve them into the Life Bearing Wind which is within the indestructible drop.** The moment the winds enters there, it brings about the clear light experience and that why they call it the clear light of death. The consciousness of the volume of grossness and

subtleness depend on the rider of the horse. One's consciousness, whether the gross aspect or the subtle aspect, functions on the basis of the inner wind. That is why consciousness/mind is said to be the rider of the horse (inner winds). Death begins with the sequential dissolution of the four elements, earth, water, heat and wind. The earth element refers to the solid part of the body, such as bones, teeth and nails etc. And the dissolution of the wind means that the wind is no longer capable to act as the mount of the consciousness. At the time of death, this loss of ability of the inner winds to support the consciousness, induces radical changes that the consciousness experiences.

What happens to the elements of the body with regards to the inner winds is this. When the earth element (solid aspects of one's body) dissolves, the inner wind which supports that element, ceases. The consciousness supporting the next element becomes increasingly manifest. The ceasing of the capacity of one element, followed by the greater manifestation of another element is called dissolution. It does not mean the earth element "melts" and becomes water. It is a matter of experiencing one element as becoming weaker and the next element becoming more prominent. In other words, when the "earth element" diminishes, the next element (water) is perceived more clearly. It is the same with regards to the dissolution of the other elements. The dissolution of the elements brings with it external sensations and internal signs and are associated with the decline of the aggregates and the effect on the different stages of wisdom.

The Stages of Dissolution During the Death Process

(1) First stage of simultaneous dissolution (simultaneous because many aspects of the dying person are degenerating at the same time)

The factor or element that dissolves first is the "earth element", *the aggregate of form.* *The external sign* is that one's body becomes very thin, with the limbs being loosened, one's body is very heavy as if sinking beneath the earth or as if the whole mountain is pressing onto you or that you have fallen into the crater after an earthquake, sinking deeper and deeper into the hole, ambushed by colossal broken pieces of mountain rocks of various sizes. These are the external signs.

The internal sign is that one starts to have inner visions like mirage, the appearance of shimmering water in the distance. If you happen to go to the desert in the very hot sun, when you look on the sand in the distance, there appears an image of a pool of water there. This is only the reflection of the sun onto the sand. The inner vision of appearance of mirage is the first sign to occur when the death process begins.

At the same time, *the basic mirror-like wisdom* that we have i.e. the ordinary consciousness that is able to perceive many objects simultaneously starts to degenerate.

When this basic mirror-like wisdom degenerates, one's sight becomes unclear and dark. Objects of sight cannot be seen clearly and it's not because we watched too much television or at the computer too much. Here it is a natural, physical experience degeneration of that occurs during the death process.

Corresponding to this, the five senses also degenerate alongside the dissolution process. The first one is *the eye sense.* The external sign is one cannot open or close the eyes easily. At the time of dying, once you open your eyes, you don't have the strength to close them. Once you close them, you don't have the strength to open them again. The ability of the eye senses to focus on the colour and shape of objects is diminished.

(2) Second stage of simultaneous Dissolution

The second dissolution is of the water element, giving way to the arising of the fire element. The *external sign* is that physically one's saliva, sweat, urine, blood and bodily fluids begin to dry up and one begins to feel very hot. At the same time, one will experience that oneself is being drawn into the ocean, with no escape, feeling totally helpless. You feel you are drowning, totally encircled by strong swirling energy of water, dragging you to the deepest bed of the ocean. There is no solid entity to hold onto, only water.

The *internal sign* or vision is the appearance of smoke, just like we see in the incense puja and how smoke appears.

In terms of the aggregates, *the aggregate of feeling*, namely that of pleasure, pain and neutrality (feelings of joy, suffering and indifference) are no longer felt. A sense of being totally blank is experienced.

The internal sign of the appearance of smoke correlates with the Basic Wisdom of Equality i.e. the ability of our ordinary consciousness to recognize pleasure, pain and neutrality. One feels detached from one's mind.

In terms of the five sense, *the "ear sense"* is dissolving. External sounds can no longer be heard and even the buzzing in the ears cease. One no longer hear external or internal sounds. At this time, the practitioner should remember that is the experience of the second stage of dissolution of the water element.

Instead of being overwhelmed by fear when experiencing these signs, one should transform them into the practice.

(3) Third stage of simultaneous dissolution

The involves the dissolution of the fire element, giving way to the wind element.

The *external sign* is that one cannot digest food or drinks. The digestion process becomes incapacitated because the fire element is beginning to disintegrate, giving way to the wind element. At this time, one is no longer mindful of even close relationships because the *aggregate of discrimination* (which enables us to recognize people and our relationship with them) degenerates at this stage. One will not even remember one's family members nor the most loved one. You are totally cut-off from those memories. One loses the capacity to distinguish between close relatives, friends and other people; one forgets the names of people and objects.

The *internal sign* is the appearance of fireflies or the sparks within the smoke. Like when we do Incense Puja, one can clearly see sparks within the smoke.

Here, *the basic wisdom of analysis* which in our ordinary consciousness is able to recognize and distinguish between persons and the level of closeness, remember names and so forth, is lost. At that time, even if you wanted to call somebody or wanted to send a last message, you would not be able to remember the name nor the number.

In terms of the senses, the *nose sense* degenerates. Inhalation becomes weak and exhalation becomes stronger and longer. If you look at a dying person, the inhalation tends to be very short but the exhalation is very long.

We have no choice but to experience these dissolutions. They are unavoidable. Therefore, we need to remind ourselves constantly of these dissolutions through the power of concentration and practice. This way, we will not be dominated by fear when the signs related to the various dissolutions at death-time arise.

(4) Fourth stage of simultaneous dissolution

The factor dissolving here is the” wind element.”

The *external sign* is that inhalation and exhalation ceases. This is because the inner winds begin to move towards the heart. At this time, the person will be declared medically dead (heart & breath stop). However, from the yogic point of view, the death process has not completed yet.

The *internal sign* is the appearance of a spluttering butter-lamp, that is reddish, very bright but whose flame is unsteady. It is reddish and very bright but unsteady. Some texts describe the appearance of the spluttering butter-lamp about to go out.

The *aggregate of compositional factors* degenerates.

The basic wisdom of achieving activities, i.e. our ordinary consciousness that is mindful of external activities, their purpose and so forth, completely ceases. Even if somebody wants to remind you of things or plays a CD of Amitabha mantra, there is no hearing sense. Someone may try to place a holy picture for you to see but no sight is possible.

The “*tongue sense*” degenerates. The external sign of this is that the tongue becomes thick and short. The root of the tongue becomes blue and the tongue shrinks. I saw this when my late master passed away. It shrank to the point where the tongue seemed totally lost. He reminded us that the appearance of mirage is appearing now. When mirage appears, most of us ordinary beings are already helpless and find it difficult to practice.

That morning, my master’s exhalation was very long and inhalation very short. I thought that he was already dying. We all rushed to Him and He said, “No. I will not die till tonight. Go back”. That night, He was quite calm. He said, “The sign of mirage is appearing. Now we shall start the prayers. Sign of mirage is appearing.” Even at this stage, His mind was very stable and clear. This is a very simple yet clear example that consistent and deep training in the causal stage presents great opportunities to actualize the resultant dharmakaya. He did it. He went into clear light meditation. I saw the tongue shrinking. I opened his mouth and could not see the tongue. However, during the cremation, the entire tongue was there! (Laughter). After cremation, amongst the ashes, the whole tongue was there. It’s amazing!

Student: If a person is in coma, will the person still experience all these signs.

Geshela: Whether one is in a coma or not, when death occurs, all the external and internal signs are experienced. The length of appearance of the signs can be long or short. For some people, it could even take months. That is why I said, it may be that we have already started. The moment we take birth, we are already heading towards death. Similarly with our skin. As the earth element dissolves, our skin becomes very rough, loose and very dry, requiring us to apply cream.

Student: A person who is clinically dead i.e. breathing has stopped, brain activity has stopped by earth element may still be intact - how would this person be aware of the external & internal signs?

Geshela: Although that person may not be able to experience things through the

bodily senses, the subconscious mind remains alert in all these experiences. This brings a lot of fear and negative thoughts of anger, attachment or ignorance. The fear itself is negative. The practitioner should strive to remain steady, have a clear and concentrated mind that is undisturbed by the dissolutions.

The first four stages relate to the dissolution of the elements in relation to the body. The next 4 stages of dissolution relate to the dissolution in relation to consciousness.

The first three of the 4 remaining appearances are the white appearance, the red appearance and black near-attainment appearance, which appear before one gets into the clear-light mind stage. Just before the clear light mind stage, the 80 conceptual thoughts also dissolve (i.e. during the 7th stage).

(5) The fifth stage of simultaneous dissolution

Factor dissolving here is the mind of white appearance, where the wind in the right and left channels **below** the heart enter the central channel at the base of the spinal chord. The internal sign is of a very clear vacuity filled with white light.

(6) Sixth stage of simultaneous dissolution

At this time, one should remind that oneself is already clinically dead and that one is entering the sixth stage of dissolution, namely the mind of red appearance occur.

The sixth stage of simultaneous dissolution is described as **the mind of red increase** and the upper and lower winds gathering at the heart. The wind exerts force at the heart chakra. The upper wind moves in a clockwise circular movement and gradually goes downwards and the lower wind spirals upwards in anticlockwise motion and they simultaneously exert pressure on the indestructible drop at the **centre of the central channel**. To gauge where the location of the indestructible drop is, you need to measure from the crown up to the secret part. If we have inner wind imbalance, there is one particular heart wind problem known as “nying loong”, where when one touches the area, it is very sensitive and very painful. Between the spinal vertebrae number 6-7, where the indestructible drop resides, if there is too much wind movement there, it causes tension, agitation, impatience, insomnia and it can hurt right there. It is not advisable to do acupuncture for that condition. It is better to do warm oil massage.

There are two medicinal herbs known as “gonyeh” and “zati”. Crush them together and mix them with heated massage oil and apply it to this area. It will help and soothe your mind.

The internal sign, the vacuity is filled with redness.

When the mind of red increases appears, when the upper and lower winds gather at the heart and dissolved into the ‘drop’ and the internal sign appears like the first vacuity filled with thick redness, internally swooning.

(7) Seventh stage of simultaneous dissolution

Then we come to the **seventh stage of simultaneous dissolution**, the mind of the black near-attainment. The cause of this appearance is due to the wind in the right and left channel **above** the heart, entering the central channel. During this process, all inner winds enter into the very subtle Life Bearing Wind in the central channel, into the indestructible drop at the heart. This is also the period where the 80 conceptual thoughts dissolve.

As the black near-attainment begins to dissolve, the mind of the clear light of death arises. The appearance is like late dawn, clear, bright, without any signs of redness, white nor darkness. A sense of calm, soothing, bliss is experienced within the subtle mind. The practitioner then remains in clear light meditation. Here, the very subtlest mind experiences the feeling of bliss and that blissful mind recognizes the lack of inherent existence. **This combination of clear light meditation together with the blissful mind** is called the **union of great bliss and emptiness.** The practitioner can remain in this meditation for one day, two days, three days, one week, 10 days or more. It is up to the practitioner. This is the time that can be used by the practitioner to realize emptiness directly.

A this stage, one is not merely influenced by meditation on emptiness but is totally immersed in the actual realization of emptiness/the absence of inherent existence, coupled with bliss. The union of great bliss and emptiness is the actual dharmakaya .

As a summary, once the physical aggregates/elements have dissolved, the dissolutions relating to the consciousness begin. Upon the inception of the fifth stage of dissolution, the gross senses cease and the subtle ones manifest. First the gross thought processes cease; upon the arising of the mind of white appearance, the mental state experiences a vacuity filled by white light. Though free from gross thoughts, it remains dualistic and in turn dissolves into the heightened mind of the red (6th stage of dissolution) appearance, which then dissolves into the mind of black appearance (7th stage of dissolution).

(8) The eighth stage of simultaneous dissolution

Just before this point, all that appears is a vacuity filled by darkness during which the person goes through a sensation of inner unconsciousness. This thus leaves a totally non dualistic vacuity, bringing forth **the 8th stage of simultaneous dissolution, namely the mind of clear light** , free from the white, red and black appearances. At this moment, the consciousness leaves the body. This is the completion of “death” according to the tantra teachings.

From the tantric perspective, the point of actual death is not linked to the inhalation and exhalation but to the appearance of the mind of clear light. Every person will experience these dissolutions and inner visions as well as this stage of lucid vacuity for up to three days or more or less depending on the practitioner. The clear light state is the experience which occurs after the death process is complete; clear light meditation is using that experience in the path. Although everyone will experience the clear light state, not everyone knows how to do the clear light meditation.

After the 8th stage of dissolution, when the consciousness departs from the body, there are external signs. They include the red drop in the form of blood from the nose or pinkish or cream discharge and the white drop in the form of a whitish-fluid discharge from the lower body. If the deceased person’s body was very weak, it is more likely that there will be the whitish discharge from the secret part/lower part of the body.

Until the consciousness leaves the body, there is a danger of the negative karma of destroying a human life, e.g. cremating or burying a body before actual death occurs. And in the case of a HYT practitioner who remains in the self-generation practice during the death process, if one interrupts that by arranging for the body to be cremated, there is the danger of destroying an enlightenment body. Likewise, there is the danger of drawing blood from a Buddha or Bodhisattva, as the practitioner might have been self-generating as a Buddha-deity. Therefore, until we see the signs, we have to be careful.

Prior to the consciousness leaving the body, any violent handling of the body will disturb

the process of the death, possibly resulting in the lower rebirth for the dying person, as well as the caretaker. Especially for those practitioners doing practice during the death process - if they were in the midst of clear light meditation - and you happened to disturb that practice before they finished their meditation, we would cause them to lose the greatest opportunity to attain enlightenment. Therefore if death happens to a Dharma brother or sister who practices HYT, it would be best if taken care of by those who are familiar with this practice. In fact, as a general rule, we should take care of each as advised by the teachings.

As a related point, we should not simply assume things. Since we know about this teaching on the dissolutions and signs of the consciousness leaving the body, we might think that once a deceased person remains after three days without any decay of the body, he must be getting into clear light meditation. If this is in fact the case, there is a danger of your committing the negative karma of lying because you have merely assumed that the person is already in clear light meditation, which is like saying that someone has achieved the direct realization of emptiness. Unless you know for sure, there is a danger of breaking the vow against lying. Therefore, we have to observe the deceased person's daily life to see whether the person was a serious practitioner or not, whether that person had qualities to have that kind of ability. Also, we cannot rely totally on ordinary appearances. A person practicing HYT need not be renowned as a very kind person because it is possible that due to the force of his past lifetime efforts, he is now able to engage in clear light meditation.

After the 8th stage of dissolution - When the clear light stage ceases

When the clear light ceases, the consciousness then goes through a reverse process, going through the same prior 7 stages of dissolution.

The mind is subtle. If we do not habituate ourselves with the signs and dissolutions, these signs can be fearsome, especially at the time of death. All are illusions. You are lying on the bed but the appearance of the signs appear to you as real and generate so much fear, e.g. colossal mountains collapsing onto you. Even at the first dissolution, one can totally freak out, feel totally overwhelmed by fear and negativities. That is how one is thrown into the lower realms such as the hell realms, the hungry ghost realms and the animal realms.

When practicing HYT, one needs to have clear understanding of the stages of practice, namely the generation stage and the completion stage. These 2 stages operate as a cause and result. Completion stage is actualizing the resultant dharmakaya after accumulating all the causes of the buddhahood during the generation stage. Here we should feel how fortunate we are to be able to access this extraordinary practice of the Highest Yoga Tantra. Whether we practice well or not, we will at least have the positive imprint. By understanding how to do the practice, the meanings behind the symbols and putting effort into the three kayas practice, we begin to cut the root of samsara.

One does not need to wait for aeons to practice this. With proper motivation, receiving proper initiations from a qualified vajra master with instructions and living in pure morality, one should practice well these two stages (generation stage and completion stage). Then at the time of dying, we can perform those practices to guide ourselves. And especially if we live an ethical life, devote correctly to one's Guru and are really hardworking, we can actualize the two stages within this causal stage, right now, on this very cushion, within this lifetime.

Bardo-being: The person who has completed the death process is reborn into the intermediate state as a bardo being and its subtle body can go wherever it likes, through mountains, so forth, in search of a place to take rebirth. It travels unobstructed, except for two places namely Bodhgaya's stupa or holy image and the other is the future

mother's womb. Other than these two objects, a bardo being can travel anywhere, traverse miles within a microsecond. The lifespan of the intermediate state can last for a period of 7 days depending whether or not it meets its karmically-linked parent-to-be. If they are not encountered within the first 7 days, the bardo being will undergo a small death, experiencing the 8 signs of the death process as outlined earlier. Then this being will again experience the 8 signs of dissolution in reverse order and be reborn in the second intermediate state. This can happen for a total of 7 rebirths in the intermediate state, making it 49 days during which time a realm of birth will be found.