

'The *Dharma-Kāya* of thine own mind thou shalt see; and seeing That, thou shalt have seen the All—The Vision Infinite, the Round of Death and Birth and the State of Freedom.'—Milarepa.

*Jetsün Kabum*, xii (Lāma Kazi Dawa-Samdup's Translation.)

[BOOK I]

[THE *CHIKHAI BARDO* AND THE  
*CHÖNYID BARDO*]

HEREIN LIETH THE SETTING-FACE-TO-FACE TO THE REALITY IN THE INTERMEDIATE STATE: THE GREAT DELIVERANCE BY HEARING WHILE ON THE AFTER-DEATH PLANE, FROM 'THE PROFOUND DOCTRINE OF THE EMANICIPATING OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS BY MEDITATION UPON THE PEACEFUL AND WRATHFUL DEITIES'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Text: ZAB-CHÖS ZHI-KHRO DGONGS-PA RANG-GRÖL LAS BAR-DOHI THÖS-GROL CHEN-MO CHÖS-NYID BAR-DOHI NGO-SPRÖD BZHUGS-SO (pronounced: ZAB-CHÖ SHI-HTO GONG-PA RANG-DÖL LAY BAR-DOI THÖ-DOL CHEN-MO CHÖ-NYID BAR-DOI NGO-TÖD ZHU-SO).

## DEATH'S MESSENGERS

'ALL they who thoughtless are, nor heed,  
 What time Death's messengers appear,  
 Must long the pangs of suffering feel  
 In some base body habiting.  
 But all those good and holy men,  
 What time they see Death's messengers,  
 Behave not thoughtless, but give heed  
 To what the Noble Doctrine says ;  
 And in attachment frightened see  
 Of birth and death the fertile source,  
 And from attachment free themselves,  
 Thus birth and death extinguishing.  
 Secure and happy ones are they,  
 Released from all this fleeting show ;  
 Exempted from all sin and fear,  
 All misery have they overcome.'

*Anguttara-Nikāya*, iii. 35<sup>b</sup> (Warren's Translation).

## [THE OBEISANCES]

To the Divine Body of Truth,<sup>1</sup> the Incomprehensible, Boundless Light ;  
 To the Divine Body of Perfect Endowment,<sup>2</sup> Who are the Lotus and the Peaceful and the Wrathful Deities ;<sup>3</sup>  
 To the Lotus-born Incarnation, Padma Sambhava,<sup>4</sup> Who is the Protector of all sentient beings ;  
 To the *Gurus*, the Three Bodies,<sup>5</sup> obeisance.

## [THE INTRODUCTION]

This Great Doctrine of Liberation by Hearing, which conferreth spiritual freedom on devotees of ordinary wit while in the Intermediate State, hath three divisions : the preliminaries, the subject-matter, and the conclusion.

At first, the preliminaries, *The Guide Series*,<sup>6</sup> for emancipating beings, should be mastered by practice.

[THE TRANSFERENCE OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS-PRINCIPLE<sup>7</sup>]

By *The Guide*, the highest intellects ought most certainly to be liberated ; but should they not be liberated, then while

<sup>1, 2</sup> See pp. 10-15.

<sup>3</sup> 'These Deities are in ourselves. They are not something apart from us. We are one with all that is, in every state of sentient existence, from the lowest worlds of suffering to the highest states of bliss and Perfect Enlightenment. In this esoteric sense, the Lotus Order of Deities represent the deified principles of the vocal functions in ourselves ; the Peaceful represent the deified principles of the heart or functions of feeling ; the Wrathful represent, in the same way, the functions of our mentality—such as thinking or reasoning, and imagination or memory—centred in the brain.'—Lāma Kazi Dawa Samdup. See p. 131<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Padma Sambhava (Tib. *Pādma Jungnē*), i. e. 'The Lotus-Born', referring to birth under pure, or holy, conditions, commonly called by the Tibetans *Guru Rin-po-ch'e* ('The Precious Guru'), or simply *Guru* (the Sanskrit for 'Teacher'), is regarded by his followers as an incarnation of the essence of the Buddha Shakyamuni in its Tantric, or deeply esoteric, aspect.

<sup>5</sup> See pp. 10-15.

<sup>6</sup> '*The Guide Series*' refers to various treatises offering practical guidance to devotees on the *Bodhi* Path through the human world and thence through *Bardo*, the After-Death State, and onward to rebirth or else to *Nirvāṇa*.

<sup>7</sup> The Text contains merely the Tibetan word *Hpho* (pron. *Pho*), meaning

in the Intermediate State of the Moments of Death they should practise the Transference, which giveth automatic liberation by one's merely remembering it.

Devotees of ordinary wit ought most certainly to be freed thereby; but should they not be freed, then, while in the Intermediate State [during the experiencing] of Reality, they should persevere in the listening to this Great Doctrine of Liberation by Hearing.

Accordingly, the devotee should at first examine the symptoms of death as they gradually appear [in his dying body], following *Self-Liberation [by Observing the] Characteristics [of the] Symptoms of Death*.<sup>1</sup> Then, when all the symptoms of death are complete [he should] apply the Transference, which conferreth liberation by merely remembering [the process].<sup>2</sup>

'transference' (of the sum-total, or aggregate, of *karmic* propensities, composing, or bound up with, personality and consciousness). The use of the term 'soul' being objectionable, since Buddhism, as a whole, denies the existence of a permanent, unchanging personal-consciousness entity such as the Semitic Faiths and animistic creeds in general understand thereby, the translator has avoided using it. But wherever any similar or equivalent term occurs herein it should be taken to imply something akin to 'consciousness-principle' or 'compound of consciousness' as implied by the Tibetan *Hpho*, or else as synonymous with the term 'life-flux' as used chiefly by Southern Buddhists.

<sup>1</sup> A Tibetan work of the *Bardo* cycle, commonly used by *lāmas* as supplementary to the *Bardo Thödol* (see part 9 of Note 1, p. 71). It treats of the symptoms of death in particular, scientifically and in very great detail. The late *Lāma Kazi Dawa-Samdub* had planned its translation into English.

<sup>2</sup> Liberation in this context does not necessarily imply, especially in the case of the average devotee, the Liberation of *Nirvāṇa*, but chiefly a liberation of the 'life-flux' from the dying body, in such manner as will afford the greatest possible after-death consciousness and consequent happy rebirth. Yet for the very exceptional and very highly efficient *yogī*, or saint, the same esoteric process of Transference can be, according to the *lāma-gurus*, so employed as to prevent any break in the flow of the stream of consciousness, from the moment of a conscious death to the moment of a conscious rebirth. Judging from a translation, made by the late *Lāma Kazi Dawa-Samdub*, of an old Tibetan manuscript containing practical directions for performing the Transference, which the editor possesses, the process is essentially *yogīc*, and could be employed only by a person trained in mental concentration, or one-pointedness of mind, to such a high degree of proficiency as to have gained control over all the mental and bodily functions. Merely remembering the process at the all-important moment of death—as the text implies—is, for a *yogī*, equivalent to performing the Transference itself; for once the *yogī's* trained mind is directed

[THE READING OF THIS *THÖDOL*]

If the Transference hath been effectually employed, there is no need to read this *Thödol*; but if the Transference hath not been effectually employed, then this *Thödol* is to be read, correctly and distinctly, near the dead body.

If there be no corpse, then the bed or the seat to which the deceased had been accustomed should be occupied [by the reader], who ought to expound the power of the Truth. Then, summoning the spirit [of the deceased], imagine it to be present there listening, and read.<sup>1</sup> During this time no relative or fond mate should be allowed to weep or to wail, as such is not good [for the deceased]; so restrain them.<sup>2</sup>

If the body be present, just when the expiration hath ceased, either a *lāma* [who hath been as a *guru* to the deceased], or a brother in the Faith whom the deceased trusted, or a friend for whom the deceased had great affection, putting the lips close to the ear [of the body] without actually touching it,<sup>3</sup> should read this Great *Thödol*.

to the process, instantaneously, or, as the text explains, automatically, the desired result is achieved.

<sup>1</sup> The *lāma*, or reader, stationed in the house of the deceased as directed, whether the corpse be there or not, is to summon the departed one in the name of Truth, saying, 'As the Trinity is true, and as the Truth proclaimed by the Trinity is true, by the power of that Truth I summon thee'. Although no corpse be at hand (as there would not be when a person had met a violent or accidental death entailing loss or destruction of the human-plane body; or when, to accord with astrological calculations, the body had been removed or disposed of immediately after death, a not uncommon event in Tibet), the spirit of the deceased, in the invisible *Bardo*-plane body, must, nevertheless, be present at the reading, in order to be given the necessary guidance through the Other-world—as the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* also directs (see p. 19).

<sup>2</sup> This prohibition is found in Brāhmanism too.

<sup>3</sup> According to Tibetan and *lāmaic* belief, the body of a dying person should not be touched, that the normal departure of the consciousness-principle, which should take place through the Brāhmanic aperture on the crown of the head, be not interfered with. Otherwise, the departure may be brought about through some other bodily aperture and lead to birth in one of the non-human states. For example, it is held that if the departure is through the aperture of the ear the deceased will be obliged—ere he can return to human birth—to be born in the world of the *Gandharvas* (fairy-like celestial musicians), wherein sound, as in song and music, is the prevailing quality of existence.

[THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THIS *THÖDOL* BY THE OFFICIANT]

Now for the explaining of the *Thödol* itself:

If thou canst gather together a grand offering, offer it in worship of the Trinity. If such cannot be done, then arrange whatever can be gathered together as objects on which thou canst concentrate thy thoughts and mentally create as illimitable an offering as possible and worship.

Then the 'Path of Good Wishes Invoking the Aid of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas'<sup>1</sup> should be recited seven times or thrice.

After that, the 'Path of Good Wishes Giving Protection from Fear in the *Bardo*'<sup>1</sup> and the 'Path of Good Wishes for Safe Delivery from the Dangerous Pitfalls of the *Bardo*'<sup>1</sup>, together with the 'Root Words of the *Bardo*'<sup>1</sup> are to be read distinctly and with the proper intonation.<sup>2</sup>

Then this Great *Thödol* is to be read either seven times or thrice,<sup>3</sup> according to the occasion. [First cometh] the setting-face-to-face [to the symptoms of death] as they occur during the moments of death; [second] the application of the great vivid reminder, the setting-face-to-face to Reality while in the

<sup>1</sup> See the Appendix, pp. 197-208, where each of these chief *Bardo* prayers (or 'Paths of Good Wishes') is translated.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the two following passages, the first from *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, chap. VI, in *Bodleian MS. 423* (circa fifteenth century), Comper's ed. (p. 39), the second from *The Craft to Know Well to Die* (fifteenth century), chap. IV, Comper's ed. (p. 74):

'Last of all, it is to be known that the prayers that follow may be conveniently said upon a sick man that laboureth to his end. And if it is a religious person, then when the covent [i. e. convent] is gathered together with smiting of the table, as the manner is, then shall be said first the litany, with the psalms and orisons that he used therewith. Afterward, if he live yet, let some man that is about him say the orisons that follow hereafter, as the time and opportunity will suffer. And they may be often rehearsed again to excite the devotion of the sick man—if he have reason and understanding with him.'

'And if the sick man or woman may, nor can not, say the orisons and prayers before said, some of the assistants [i. e. bystanders] ought to say them before him with a loud voice, in changing the words there as they ought to be changed.'

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the following from *The Craft to Know Well to Die*, chap. IV, Comper's ed. (p. 73): 'After all these things he [the person dying] ought to say three times, if he may, these words that follow.'

Intermediate State; and third, the methods of closing the doors of the womb while in the Intermediate State when seeking rebirth.<sup>1</sup>

## [PART I]

[THE *BARDO* OF THE MOMENTS OF DEATH][INSTRUCTIONS ON THE SYMPTOMS OF DEATH, OR THE FIRST STAGE OF THE *CHIKHAI BARDO*: THE PRIMARY CLEAR LIGHT SEEN AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH]

The first, the setting-face-to-face with the Clear Light, during the Intermediate State of the Moments of Death, is:

Here [some there may be] who have listened much [to religious instructions] yet not recognized; and [some] who, though recognizing, are, nevertheless, weak in familiarity. But all classes of individuals who have received the practical teachings [called] *Guides*<sup>2</sup> will, if this be applied to them, be set face to face with the fundamental Clear Light; and, without any Intermediate State, they will obtain the Unborn *Dharma-Kāya*, by the Great Perpendicular Path.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The first *Bardo* is the *Chikhai Bardo*; the second, the *Chönyid Bardo*; the third, the *Sidpa Bardo*. (See p. 102<sup>4-6</sup>.)

<sup>2</sup> See p. 85<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Text: *Yar-gyi-sang-thal-chen-po*: the 'Great Straight Upward Path'. One of the Doctrines peculiar to Northern Buddhism is that spiritual emancipation, even Buddhahood, may be won instantaneously, without entering upon the *Bardo* Plane and without further suffering on the age-long pathway of normal evolution which traverses the various worlds of *sangsāric* existence. The doctrine underlies the whole of the *Bardo Thödol*. Faith is the first step on the Secret Pathway. Then comes Illumination; and, with it, Certainty; and, when the Goal is won, Emancipation. But here again success implies very unusual proficiency in *yoga*, as well as much accumulated merit, or good *karma*, on the part of the devotee. If the disciple can be made to see and to grasp the Truth as soon as the *guru* reveals it, that is to say, if he has the power to die consciously, and at the supreme moment of quitting the body can recognize the Clear Light which will dawn upon him then, and become one with it, all *sangsāric* bonds of illusion are broken asunder immediately: the

The manner of application is:

It is best if the *guru* from whom the deceased received guiding instructions can be had; but if the *guru* cannot be obtained, then a brother of the Faith; or if the latter is also unobtainable, then a learned man of the same Faith; or, should all these be unobtainable, then a person who can read correctly and distinctly ought to read this many times over. Thereby [the deceased] will be put in mind of what he had [previously] heard of the setting-face-to-face and will at once come to recognize that Fundamental Light and undoubtedly obtain Liberation.

As regards the time for the application [of these instructions]:

When the expiration hath ceased, the vital-force will have sunk into the nerve-centre of Wisdom<sup>1</sup> and the Knower<sup>2</sup> will be experiencing the Clear Light of the natural condition.<sup>3</sup> Then, the vital-force,<sup>4</sup> being thrown backwards and flying downwards through the right and left nerves,<sup>5</sup> the Intermediate State momentarily dawns.

The above [directions] should be applied before [the vital-force hath] rushed into the left nerve [after first having traversed the navel nerve-centre].

The time [ordinarily necessary for this motion of the vital-

Dreamer is awakened into Reality simultaneously with the mighty achievement of recognition.

<sup>1</sup> Here, as elsewhere in our text, 'nerve-centre' refers to a psychic nerve-centre. The psychic nerve-centre of Wisdom is located in the heart. (Cf. pp. 217 ff.)

<sup>2</sup> Text: *Shespa* (pron. *Shepa*): 'Mind', 'Knower'; i. e. the mind in its knowing, or cognizing, functions.

<sup>3</sup> Text: *Sprobral* (pron. *Todal*): 'devoid of formative activity'; i. e. the mind in its natural, or primal, state. The mind in its unnatural state, that is to say, when incarnate in a human body, is, because of the driving force of the five senses, continuously in thought-formation activity. Its natural, or discarnate, state is a state of quiescence, comparable to its condition in the highest of *dhyāna* (or deep meditation) when still united to a human body. The conscious recognition of the Clear Light induces an ecstatic condition of consciousness such as saints and mystics of the West have called Illumination.

<sup>4</sup> Text: *rlung* (pron. *lung*): 'vital-air', or 'vital-force', or 'psychic-force'.

<sup>5</sup> Text: *rtsa-gyas-gyon* (pron. *tsa-yay-yōn*): 'right and left [psychic] nerves'; Skt. *Pingāla-nāḍī* (right [psychic] nerve) and *Idā-nāḍī* (left [psychic] nerve). (Cf. p. 215.)

force] is as long as the inspiration is still present, or about the time required for eating a meal.<sup>1</sup>

Then the manner of the application [of the instructions] is:

When the breathing is about to cease, it is best if the Transference hath been applied efficiently; if [the application] hath been inefficient, then [address the deceased] thus:

O nobly-born (so and so by name), the time hath now come for thee to seek the Path [in reality]. Thy breathing is about to cease. Thy *guru* hath set thee face to face before with the Clear Light; and now thou art about to experience it in its Reality in the *Bardo* state, wherein all things are like the void and cloudless sky, and the naked, spotless intellect is like unto a transparent vacuum without circumference or centre. At this moment, know thou thyself; and abide in that state. I, too, at this time, am setting thee face to face.

Having read this, repeat it many times in the ear of the person dying, even before the expiration hath ceased, so as to impress it on the mind [of the dying one].

If the expiration is about to cease, turn the dying one over on the right side, which posture is called the 'Lying Posture of a Lion'. The throbbing of the arteries [on the right and left side of the throat] is to be pressed.

If the person dying be disposed to sleep, or if the sleeping state advances, that should be arrested, and the arteries pressed gently but firmly.<sup>2</sup> Thereby the vital-force will not be able to return from the median-nerve<sup>3</sup> and will be sure to pass out

<sup>1</sup> When this text first took form the reckoning of time was, apparently, yet primitive, mechanical time-keeping appliances being unknown. A similar condition still prevails in many parts of Tibet, where the period of a meal-time is frequently mentioned in old religious books—a period of from twenty minutes to half an hour in duration.

<sup>2</sup> The dying person should die fully awake and keenly conscious of the process of death; hence the pressing of the arteries. (Cf. p. xxix.)

<sup>3</sup> 'Skt. of text: *dhutīh* (pron. *dhūti*), meaning "median-nerve", but lit. "trijunction". V. S. Apte's *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Poona, 1890) gives *dhūti* as the only similar word, defined as "shaking" or "moving", which, if applied to our text, may refer to the vibratory motion of the psychic force traversing the median-nerve as its channel.—Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup.

'*Dhūti* may also mean "throwing away", or "throwing out", with reference

through the Brahmanic aperture.<sup>1</sup> Now the real setting-face-to-face is to be applied.

At this moment, the first [glimpsing] of the *Bardo* of the Clear Light of Reality, which is the Infallible Mind of the *Dharma-Kāya*, is experienced by all sentient beings.

The interval between the cessation of the expiration and the cessation of the inspiration is the time during which the vital-force remaineth in the median-nerve.<sup>2</sup>

The common people call this the state wherein the consciousness-principle<sup>3</sup> hath fainted away. The duration of this state is uncertain. [It dependeth] upon the constitution, good or bad, and [the state of] the nerves and vital-force. In those who have had even a little practical experience of the firm, tranquil state of *dhyāna*, and in those who have sound nerves, this state continueth for a long time.<sup>4</sup>

to the outgoing of the consciousness in the process of death.'—Sj. Atal Bihari Ghosh.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 18, 87<sup>a</sup>, 215. If non-distracted, and alertly conscious, at this psychological moment, the dying person will realize, through the power conferred by the reading of the *Thōdol*, the importance of holding the vital-force in the median-nerve till it passes out thence through the Aperture of Brāhma.

<sup>2</sup> After the expiration has ceased, the vital-force (lit. 'inner-breath') is thought to remain in the median-nerve so long as the heart continues to throb.

<sup>3</sup> Text: *nam-she* (pron. *nam-she*): Skt. *vijñāna* or, preferably, *chaitanya*: 'conscious-principle' or 'object-knowing principle'.

<sup>4</sup> Sometimes it may continue for seven days, but usually only for four or five days. The consciousness-principle, however, save in certain conditions of trance, such as a *yogī*, for example, can induce, is not necessarily resident in the body all the while; normally it quits the body at the moment called death, holding a subtle magnetic-like relationship with the body until the state referred to in the text comes to an end. Only for adepts in *yoga* would the departure of the consciousness-principle be accomplished without break in the continuity of the stream of consciousness, that is to say, without the swoon state referred to.

The death process is the reverse of the birth process, birth being the incarnating, death the discarnating of the consciousness-principle; but, in both alike, there is a passing from one state of consciousness into another. And, just as a babe must wake up in this world and learn by experience the nature of this world, so, likewise, a person at death must wake up in the *Bardo* world and become familiar with its own peculiar conditions. The *Bardo* body, formed of matter in an invisible or ethereal-like state, is an exact duplicate of the human body, from which it is separated in the process of death. Retained in the *Bardo* body are the consciousness-principle and the psychic nerve-system (the counterpart, for the psychic or *Bardo* body, of the physical nerve-system of the human body). (Cf. p. 161<sup>a</sup>.)

In the setting-face-to-face, the repetition [of the above address to the deceased] is to be persisted in until a yellowish liquid beginneth to appear from the various apertures of the bodily organs [of the deceased].

In those who have led an evil life, and in those of unsound nerves, the above state endureth only so long as would take to snap a finger. Again, in some, it endureth as long as the time taken for the eating of a meal.

In various *Tantras* it is said that this state of swoon endureth for about three and one-half days. Most other [religious treatises] say for four days; and that this setting-face-to-face with the Clear Light ought to be persevered in [during the whole time].

The manner of applying [these directions] is:

If [when dying] one be by one's own self capable [of diagnosing the symptoms of death], use [of the knowledge] should have been made ere this.<sup>1</sup> If [the dying person be] unable to do so, then either the *guru*, or a *shishya*, or a brother in the Faith with whom the one [dying] was very intimate, should be kept at hand, who will vividly impress upon the one [dying] the symptoms [of death] as they appear in due order [repeatedly saying, at first] thus:<sup>2</sup>

Now the symptoms of earth sinking into water are come.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The full meaning implied is that not only should the person about to die diagnose the symptoms of death as they come, one by one, but that he should also, if able, recognize the Clear Light without being set face to face with it by some second person.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the following instructions, from *Ars Moriendi* (fifteenth century), Comper's ed. (p. 93): 'When any of likelihood shall die [i. e. is likely to die], then it is most necessary to have a special friend, the which will heartily help and pray for him, and therewith counsel the sick for the weal [i. e. health] of his soul.'

<sup>3</sup> The three chief symptoms of death (which the text merely suggests by naming the first of them, it being taken for granted that the reader officiating will know the others and name them as they occur), with their symbolical counterpart, are as follows: (1) a bodily sensation of pressure, 'earth sinking into water'; (2) a bodily sensation of clammy coldness as though the body were immersed in water, which gradually merges into that of feverish heat, 'water sinking into fire'; (3) a feeling as though the body were being blown to atoms, 'fire sinking into air'. Each symptom is accompanied by visible external changes in the body, such as loss of control over facial muscles, loss of hearing, loss of sight,

When all the symptoms [of death] are about to be completed, then enjoin upon [the one dying] this resolution, speaking in a low tone of voice in the ear:

O nobly-born (or, if it be a priest, O Venerable Sir), let not thy mind be distracted.

If it be a brother [in the Faith], or some other person, then call him by name, and [say] thus:

O nobly-born, that which is called death being come to thee now, resolve thus: 'O this now is the hour of death. By taking advantage of this death, I will so act, for the good of all sentient beings, peopling the illimitable expanse of the heavens, as to obtain the Perfect Buddhahood, by resolving on love and compassion towards [them, and by directing my entire effort to] the Sole Perfection.'

Shaping the thoughts thus, especially at this time when the *Dharma-Kāya* of Clear Light [in the state] after death can be realized for the benefit of all sentient beings, know that thou art in that state; [and resolve] that thou wilt obtain the best boon of the State of the Great Symbol,<sup>1</sup> in which thou art, [as follows]:

'Even if I cannot realize it, yet will I know this *Bardo*, and, mastering the Great Body of Union in *Bardo*, will appear in whatever [shape] will benefit [all beings] whomsoever:<sup>2</sup>

the breath coming in gasps just before the loss of consciousness, whereby *lāmas* trained in the science of death detect, one by one, the interdependent psychic phenomena culminating in the release of the *Bardo* body from its human-plane envelope. The translator held that the science of death, as expounded in this treatise, has been arrived at through the actual experiencing of death on the part of learned *lāmas*, who, when dying, have explained to their pupils the very process of death itself, in analytical and elaborate detail. (See p. 162<sup>2</sup>.)

<sup>1</sup> In this state, realization of the Ultimate Truth is possible, providing sufficient advance on the Path has been made by the deceased before death. Otherwise, he cannot benefit now, and must wander on into lower and lower conditions of the *Bardo*, as determined by *harma*, until rebirth. (See p. 135<sup>2</sup>.)

<sup>2</sup> The Tibetan of the text is here unusually concise. Literally rendered it is, 'will appear in whatever will subdue [for beneficial ends] whomsoever'. To subdue in this sense any sentient being of the human world, a form which will appeal religiously to that being is assumed. Thus, to appeal to a Shaivite devotee, the form of Shiva is assumed; to a Buddhist, the form of the Buddha Shakya Muni; to a Christian, the form of Jesus; to a Moslem, the form of the Prophet; and so on for other religious devotees; and for all manners and conditions of mankind a form appropriate to the occasion—for example, for subduing

I will serve all sentient beings, infinite in number as are the limits of the sky.'

Keeping thyself unseparated from this resolution, thou shouldst try to remember whatever devotional practices thou wert accustomed to perform during thy lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

In saying this, the reader shall put his lips close to the ear, and shall repeat it distinctly, clearly impressing it upon the dying person so as to prevent his mind from wandering even for a moment.

After the expiration hath completely ceased, press the nerve of sleep firmly; and, a *lāma*, or a person higher or more learned than thyself, impress in these words, thus:

Reverend Sir, now that thou art experiencing the Fundamental Clear Light, try to abide in that state which now thou art experiencing.

And also in the case of any other person the reader shall set him face-to-face thus:

O nobly-born (so-and-so), listen. Now thou art experiencing the Radiance of the Clear Light of Pure Reality. Recognize it. O nobly-born, thy present intellect,<sup>2</sup> in real nature void, not formed into anything as regards characteristics or colour, naturally void, is the very Reality, the All-Good.<sup>3</sup>

Thine own intellect, which is now voidness, yet not to be children, parents, and vice versa; for *shishyas*, *gurus*, and vice versa; for common people, kings or rulers; and for kings, ministers of state.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the following, from *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, chap. V, in *Bodleian MS. 423* (circa fifteenth century), Comper's ed. (p. 35): 'Also, if he that shall die have long time and space to be-think himself, and be not taken with hasty death, then may be read afore him, of them that be about him, devout histories and devout prayers, in the which he most delighted in when he was in heal [i. e. health].'

<sup>2</sup> Text: *Shes-rig* (pron. *She-rig*) is the intellect, the knowing or cognizing faculty.

<sup>3</sup> Text: *Chös-nyid Kün-tu-bsang-po* (pron. *Chö-nyid Küntu-zang-po*), Skt. *Dharma-Dhātu Samanta-Bhadra*, the embodiment of the *Dharma-Kāya*, the first state of Buddhahood. Our Block-Print text, in error here, gives for the All-Good (*Kuntu-Zang-po*, meaning 'All-Good Father') *Kuntu-Zang-mo*, which means 'All-Good Mother'. According to the Great Perfectionist School, the Father is that which appears, or phenomena, the Mother is that which is conscious of the phenomena. Again, Bliss is the Father, and the Voidness perceiving it, the Mother; the Radiance is the Father, and the Voidness perceiving it, the Mother; and, as in our text here, the intellect is the Father, the Voidness the Mother. The repetition of 'void' is to emphasize the importance of knowing the intellect to be in reality void (or of the nature of voidness), i. e. of the unborn, uncreated, unshaped Primordial.

regarded as of the voidness of nothingness, but as being the intellect itself, unobstructed, shining, thrilling, and blissful, is the very consciousness,<sup>1</sup> the All-good Buddha.<sup>2</sup>

Thine own consciousness, not formed into anything, in reality void, and the intellect, shining and blissful,—these two,—are inseparable. The union of them is the *Dharma-Kāya* state of Perfect Enlightenment.<sup>3</sup>

Thine own consciousness, shining, void, and inseparable from the Great Body of Radiance, hath no birth, nor death, and is the Immutable Light—Buddha Amitābha.<sup>4</sup>

Knowing this is sufficient. Recognizing the voidness of thine own intellect to be Buddhahood, and looking upon it as being thine own consciousness, is to keep thyself in the [state of the] divine mind<sup>5</sup> of the Buddha.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Text: *Rig-pa*, meaning 'consciousness' as distinct from the knowing faculty by which it cognizes or knows itself to be. Ordinarily, *rig-pa* and *shes-rig* are synonymous; but in an abstruse philosophical treatise, as herein, *rig-pa* refers to the consciousness in its purest and most spiritual (i. e. supramundane) aspect, and *shes-rig* to the consciousness in that grosser aspect, not purely spiritual, whereby cognizance of phenomena is present.

In this part of the *Bardo Thödol* the psychological analysis of consciousness or mind is particularly abstruse. Wherever the text contains the word *rig-pa* we have rendered it as 'consciousness', and the word *shes-rig* as 'intellect'; or else, to suit the context, *rig-pa* as 'consciousness' and *shes-rig* as 'consciousness of phenomena', which is 'intellect'.

<sup>2</sup> Text: *Kun-tu-bzang-po*: Skt. *Samanta* ('All' or 'Universal' or 'Complete') *Bhadra* ('Good' or 'Beneficent'). In this state, the experiencer and the thing experienced are inseparably one and the same, as, for example, the yellowness of gold cannot be separated from gold, nor saltiness from salt. For the normal human intellect this transcendental state is beyond comprehension.

<sup>3</sup> From the union of the two states of mind, or consciousness, implied by the two terms *rig-pa* and *shes-rig*, and symbolized by the All-Good Father and the All-Good Mother, is born the state of the *Dharma-Kāya*, the state of Perfect Enlightenment, Buddhahood. The *Dharma-Kāya* ('Body of Truth') symbolizes the purest and the highest state of being, a state of supramundane consciousness, devoid of all mental limitations or obscurations which arise from the contact of the primordial consciousness with matter.

<sup>4</sup> As the Buddha-Samanta-Bhadra state is the state of the All-Good, so the Buddha-Amitābha state is the state of the Boundless Light; and, as the text implies, both are, in the last analysis, the same state, merely regarded from two viewpoints. In the first, is emphasized the mind of the All-Good, in the second, the enlightening *Bodhi* power, symbolized as Buddha Amitābha (the personification of the Wisdom faculty), Source of Life and Light.

<sup>5</sup> Text: *dgongs-pa* (pron. *gong-pa*): 'thoughts' or 'mind', and, being in the honorific form, 'divine mind'.

<sup>6</sup> Realization of the Non-*Sangsāra*, which is the Voidness, the Unbecome, the

Repeat this distinctly and clearly three or [even] seven times. That will recall to the mind [of the dying one] the former [i. e. when living] setting-face-to-face by the *guru*. Secondly, it will cause the naked consciousness to be recognized as the Clear Light; and, thirdly, recognizing one's own self [thus], one becometh permanently united with the *Dharma-Kāya* and Liberation will be certain.<sup>1</sup>

[INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE SECOND STAGE OF THE *CHIKHAI BARDO*: THE SECONDARY CLEAR LIGHT SEEN IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEATH]

Thus the primary Clear Light is recognized and Liberation attained. But if it be feared that the primary Clear Light hath not been recognized, then [it can certainly be assumed] there is dawning [upon the deceased] that called the secondary

Unborn, the Unmade, the Unformed, implies Buddhahood, Perfect Enlightenment—the state of the Divine Mind of the Buddha. Compare the following passage, from *The Diamond* [or Immutable] *Sūtra*, with its Chinese commentary (trans. by W. Gemmill, London, 1912, pp. 17-18): 'Every form or quality of phenomena is transient and illusive. When the mind realizes that the phenomena of life are not real phenomena, the Lord Buddha may then be clearly perceived.'—(*Chinese Annotation*: 'The spiritual Buddha must be realized within the mind, otherwise there can be no true perception of the Lord Buddha.')

<sup>1</sup> If, when dying, one be familiar with this state, in virtue of previous spiritual (or *yogic*) training in the human world, and have power to win Buddhahood at this all-determining moment, the Wheel of Rebirth is stopped, and Liberation instantaneously achieved. But such spiritual efficiency is so very rare that the normal mental condition of the person dying is unequal to the supreme feat of holding on to the state in which the Clear Light shines; and there follows a progressive descent into lower and lower states of the *Bardo* existence, and then rebirth. The simile of a needle balanced and set rolling on a thread is used by the *lāmas* to elucidate this condition. So long as the needle retains its balance, it remains on the thread. Eventually, however, the law of gravitation affects it, and it falls. In the realm of the Clear Light, similarly, the mentality of a person dying momentarily enjoys a condition of balance, or perfect equilibrium, and of oneness. Owing to unfamiliarity with such a state, which is an ecstatic state of non-ego, of subliminal consciousness, the consciousness-principle of the average human being lacks the power to function in it; *karmic* propensities becloud the consciousness-principle with thoughts of personality, of individualized being, of dualism, and, losing equilibrium, the consciousness-principle falls away from the Clear Light. It is ideation of ego, of self, which prevents the realization of *Nirvāṇa* (which is the 'blowing out of the flame of selfish longing'); and so the Wheel of Life continues to turn.

Clear Light, which dawneth in somewhat more than a meal-time period after that the expiration hath ceased.<sup>1</sup>

According to one's good or bad *karma*, the vital-force floweth down into either the right or left nerve and goeth out through any of the apertures [of the body].<sup>2</sup> Then cometh a lucid condition of the mind.<sup>3</sup>

To say that the state [of the primary Clear Light] endureth for a meal-time period [would depend upon] the good or bad condition of the nerves and also whether there hath been previous practice or not [in the setting-face-to-face].

When the consciousness-principle getteth outside [the body, it sayeth to itself], 'Am I dead, or am I not dead?' It cannot determine. It seeth its relatives and connexions as it had been used to seeing them before. It even heareth the wailings. The terrifying *karmic* illusions have not yet dawned. Nor have the frightful apparitions or experiences caused by the Lords of Death<sup>4</sup> yet come.

During this interval, the directions are to be applied [by the *lāma* or reader]:

There are those [devotees] of the perfected stage and of the

<sup>1</sup> Immediately after the passing of the vital-force into the median-nerve, the person dying experiences the Clear Light in its primitive purity, the *Dharma-Kāya* unobscured; and, if unable to hold fast to that experience, next experiences the secondary Clear Light, having fallen to a lower state of the *Bardo*, wherein the *Dharma-Kāya* is dimmed by *karmic* obscurations.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. p. xxx.

<sup>3</sup> Text: *shes-pa*, rendered here as 'mind'. The translator has added the following comment: 'The vital-force, passing from the navel psychic-nerve centre, and the principle of consciousness, passing from the brain psychic-nerve centre, unite in the heart psychic-nerve centre, and in departing thence from the body, normally through the Aperture of Brāhma, produce in the dying person a state of ecstasy of the greatest intensity. The succeeding stage is less intense. In the first, or primary, stage, is experienced the Primary Clear Light, in the second stage, the Secondary Clear Light. A ball set bounding reaches its greatest height at the first bound; the second bound is lower, and each succeeding bound is still lower until the ball comes to rest. Similarly is it with the consciousness-principle at the death of a human body. Its first spiritual bound, directly upon quitting the earth-plane body, is the highest; the next is lower. Finally, the force of *karma* having spent itself in the after-death state, the consciousness-principle comes to rest, a womb is entered, and then comes rebirth in this world.'

<sup>4</sup> Text: *Gshin-rje* (pron. *Shin-je*): 'Lord of Death'; but the plural form is allowable and preferable here.

visualizing stage. If it be one who was in the perfected stage, then call him thrice by name and repeat over and over again the above instructions of setting-face-to-face with the Clear Light. If it be one who was in the visualizing stage, then read out to him the introductory descriptions and the text of the Meditation on his tutelary deity,<sup>1</sup> and then say,

O thou of noble-birth, meditate upon thine own tutelary deity.—[Here the deity's name is to be mentioned by the reader.<sup>2</sup>] Do not be distracted. Earnestly concentrate thy mind upon thy tutelary deity. Meditate upon him as if he were the reflection of the moon in water, apparent yet in-existent [in itself]. Meditate upon him as if he were a being with a physical body.

So saying, [the reader will] impress it.

If [the deceased be] of the common folk, say,  
Meditate upon the Great Compassionate Lord.<sup>3</sup>

By thus being set-face-to-face even those who would not be expected to recognize the *Bardo* [unaided] are undoubtedly certain to recognize it.

Persons who while living had been set face to face [with the Reality] by a *guru*, yet who have not made themselves familiar with it, will not be able to recognize the *Bardo* clearly by themselves. Either a *guru* or a brother in the Faith will have to impress vividly such persons.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the following, from *The Craft to Know Well to Die*, chap. IV, Comper's ed. (p. 73): 'And after he [the person dying] ought to require the apostles, the martyrs, the confessors and the virgins, and in special all the saints that he most loved ever.'

<sup>2</sup> The favourite deity of the deceased is the tutelary (Tib. *yi-dam*), usually one of the Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, of whom Chenraze is the most popular.

<sup>3</sup> Text: *Jo-vo-thugs-rje-chen-po* (pron. *Jo-wo-thu-ji-chen-po*): 'Great Compassionate Lord', synonymous with Tib. *Spyan-ras-gzigs* (pron. *Chen-rā-si*): Skt. *Avalokiteshvara*.

<sup>4</sup> A person may have heard a detailed description of the art of swimming and yet never have tried to swim. Suddenly thrown into water he finds himself unable to swim. So with those who have been taught the theory of how to act in the time of death and have not applied, through *yogic* practices, the theory: they cannot maintain unbroken continuity of consciousness; they grow bewildered at the changed conditions; and fail to progress or to take advantage of the opportunity offered by death, unless upheld and directed by a living *guru*. Even with all that a *guru* can do, they ordinarily, because of bad *karma*, fail to recognize the *Bardo* as such.

There may be even those who have made themselves familiar with the teachings, yet who, because of the violence of the disease causing death, may be mentally unable to withstand illusions. For such, also, this instruction is absolutely necessary.

Again [there are those] who, although previously familiar with the teachings, have become liable to pass into the miserable states of existence, owing to breach of vows or failure to perform essential obligations honestly. To them, this [instruction] is indispensable.

If the first stage of the *Bardo* hath been taken by the forelock, that is best. But if not, by application of this distinct recalling [to the deceased], while in the second stage of the *Bardo*, his intellect is awakened and attaineth liberation.

While on the second stage of the *Bardo*, one's body is of the nature of that called the shining illusory-body.<sup>1</sup>

Not knowing whether [he be] dead or not, [a state of] lucidity cometh [to the deceased].<sup>2</sup> If the instructions be successfully applied to the deceased while he is in that state, then, by the meeting of the Mother-Reality and the Offspring-Reality,<sup>3</sup> *karma* controlleth not.<sup>4</sup> Like the sun's rays, for example, dispelling the darkness, the Clear Light on the Path dispelleth the power of *karma*.

<sup>1</sup> Text: *dag-pahi-sgyu-lus* (pron. *tag-pay-gyu-lü*): 'pure (or shining) illusory body': Skt. *māyā-rūpa*. This is the ethereal counterpart of the physical body of the earth-plane, the 'astral-body' of Theosophy.

<sup>2</sup> With the departure of the consciousness-principle from the human body there comes a psychic thrill which gives way to a state of lucidity.

<sup>3</sup> Text: *Chös-nyid-ma-bu*: Skt. *Dharma Mātri Putra*: 'Mother and Offspring Reality (or Truth)'. The Offspring-Truth is that realized in this world through practising deep meditation (Skt. *dhyāna*). The Mother-Truth is the Primal or Fundamental Truth, experienced only after death whilst the Knower is in the *Bardo* state of equilibrium, ere *karmic* propensities have erupted into activity. What a photograph is compared to the object photographed, the Offspring-Reality is to the Mother-Reality.

<sup>4</sup> Lit., 'karma is unable to turn the mouth or head', the figure implied being that of a rider controlling a horse with a bridle and bit. In the *Tantra of the Great Liberation*, there is this similar passage: 'The man blinded by the darkness of ignorance, the fool caught in the meshes of his actions, and the illiterate man, by listening to this Great Tantra, are released from the bonds of *karma*' (cf. *Tantra of the Great Liberation*, line 205, as edited by Arthur Avalon, London, 1913, p. 359).

That which is called the second stage of the *Bardo* dawneth upon the thought-body.<sup>1</sup> The Knower<sup>2</sup> hovereth within those places to which its activities had been limited. If at this time this special teaching be applied efficiently, then the purpose will be fulfilled; for the *karmic* illusions will not have come yet, and, therefore, he [the deceased] cannot be turned hither and thither [from his aim of achieving Enlightenment].

## [PART I I]

### [THE BARDO OF THE EXPERIENCING OF REALITY]

#### [INTRODUCTORY INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE EXPERIENCING OF REALITY DURING THE THIRD STAGE OF THE BARDO, CALLED THE CHÖNYID BARDO, WHEN THE KARMIC APPARITIONS APPEAR]

But even though the Primary Clear Light be not recognized, the Clear Light of the second *Bardo* being recognized, Liberation will be attained. If not liberated even by that, then that called the third *Bardo* or the *Chönyid Bardo* dawneth.

In this third stage of the *Bardo*, the *karmic* illusions come to shine. It is very important that this Great Setting-face-to-face of the *Chönyid Bardo* be read: it hath much power and can do much good.

About this time [the deceased] can see that the share of food is being set aside, that the body is being stripped of its garments, that the place of the sleeping-rug is being swept;<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Text: *yiid-kyi-lüs* (pron. *yiid-kyi-lü*), 'mental-body', 'desire-body', or 'thought-body'.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 92<sup>3</sup>, 95<sup>2</sup>, 96<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> The references are (1) to the share of food being set aside for the deceased during the funeral rites; (2) to his corpse being prepared for the shroud; (3) to his bed or sleeping-place.