## The Asian Classics Institute Practice V: Death and the End of Death

Reading One: What is death meditation, and why do we need it?

The following reading taken from *The Great Book on the Steps to Enlightenment (Lam-rim chen-mo)* of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419).

Ι

CONTEMPLATING
OF THE PROBLEMS OF
NOT MEDITATING ON DEATH

पर्सेश्चर्यः स्वार्था वक्षेत्रः या वक्षेत्य

There are four steps to the contemplation of death.

These are:

Considering the problems of not meditating on death.

Considering the benefits of meditating on death.

Identifying just what kind of death awareness we seek to develop.

How to meditate and develop this awareness of death.

निर्मित्री ने स्निर्मित्या विक्ति स्था होरा से स्वाप्ता त्या स्वाप्ता स्वाप्ता त्या स्वाप्ता त्या स्वाप्ता स्वाप्ता स्वाप्ता त्या स्वाप्ता स्वाप्ता

Here is the first of the four.
Above we spoke of getting
the very essence out of this life,
where now you have a
whole range of spiritual opportunities.
The one thing that could damage
your ability to do so,
from the very beginning,
is the first of what we call
the "four misconceptions."
This is the misconception
where you grasp to
impermanent things as being permanent.

तह्रम्याम् तक्ष्मामाम् स्मायत् स्मायत

There are two versions to this wrong idea. One is more subtle, and one is more gross. The one that could damage your practice is the grosser one, where you look upon your own impermanence, your own mortality, and imagine for some reason that you are *not* going to die.

Now it is true that in your life up to now you have had some awareness that eventually you would have to die. Everybody has this kind of death awareness.

But at the same time you tend to be of the opinion that you won't die, because with every day that passes you say to yourself, "It won't be today, today is not the day that I will die." And you keep this attitude all the way up to the moment of your death.

चतुः व्यव्यात्यवः विवाः याः श्रेष्यः विश्वः व्यतः व्यवः व्यवः विवाः याः विश्वः व्यवः विवाः याः विश्वः व्यवः विश्वः व्यवः विश्वः विश्वः व्यवः विश्वः विश्वः

Suppose you let this kind of attitude go on, suppose you fail to apply the spiritual antidotes that would stop these sorts of thoughts. The thoughts then create a kind of spiritual blindness: you begin to get the idea that you are going to be able to stay here in this life, and then you start to obsess on this life. All you can concentrate on then is how to get what you want, and how to escape what you don't want, in this life. Your life becomes, "Today I need this, and this, and next this."

यहेगाने व मुं आन्दर श्रम या न्दर श्रम अरु न स्रित्य स

This living in the present prevents you from ever examining the greater goals of life: things like happiness in your future life, or nirvana, or enlightenment itself.

This, in turn, blocks you from any desire to enter the Dharma

कुं, पट, श्रायद्रेश्वाता देश्य स्थात स्था

And then even if—by some remote chance you do engage in spiritual activities like learning, contemplation, or meditation, they all become something you are doing only for this life. Whatever good deeds you do this way are of very little strength. Typically they are connected with some bad deed, some breaking of morality or transgression of a vow. In fact it is quite unusual to find any good deeds of this kind that are not interlaced with the very causes that would take you to one of the births of misery.

र्ः। प्रस्तान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यः स्वायान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यः स्वायान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यः स्वायान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यः स्वायान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यान्त्रस्यः स्वायान्त्रस्यान्त्यस्यान्त्रस्यान्य

Suppose even that you do decide to do something for your future life. Without this awareness of death you will find yourself unable to stop the kind of laziness where you put your practice off, where you say to yourself, "I'll get to it later, I'll do all these things eventually, one at a time." You begin to pass the time of your life with all kinds of distractions: with sleep, or lazing around, or wasted talk, or food or drink, or the like. You won't be able to reach a point where the practice that you do has any great energy behind it, where your practice is as it should be.

र्या. स्. क्ष्रमा क्ष्रमा त्या क्ष्रमा स्त्रमा क्ष्रमा स्त्रमा स्त्रम

This kind of hope that you will be able to live for a long time deceives you. You start to have strong attachment to gain, to being honored by other people, and the like. You begin to feel a strong dislike for anything that prevents you, or anything that you think might prevent you, from having these things. There grows in you a dark ignorance that cannot understand the problems these thoughts then give you.

All this brings you a steady torrent of mental afflictions, strong ones, and the many different varieties of them, major and minor: pride, and jealousy, and all the rest.

प्राचित्रः स्वीत्रः स्वात्रः स्वीत्या व्यात्रः स्वात्रः स्वात्रः

These afflictions in turn lead to harmful deeds that you commit in your acts, your words, and your thoughts: deeds like the ten non-virtues, and the five "immediate" deeds, and the five that are close to these, and giving up the highest Dharma, and on and on. Every single day then deeds like these, deeds of tremendous power, capable of leading you to the tremendous sufferings of the three lower realms and the like, will tend to increase, further and further.

द्रान्त्रामी माने ने स्तान्त्राम्य स्त्राम्य स्त्राम स्त्राम्य स्त्राम्य स्त्राम स्

The antidote for all these deeds is the nectar of the Dharma, spoken so true and the further you turn from it then the more tightly you strangle your chances for the higher realms, and ultimate good. Death will rip away your life, and the wrong deeds you have done will drag you to the lower realms, to a fearful place of mighty and savage suffering, to the fires. And so I ask you, where could you find any thought more disastrous for you than this idea, that what is impermanent could ever be permanent?

On this point the *Four Hundred* concurs:

What could be more a disaster than someone Who with no other Lord of Death to kill him Ends up being this Lord of Three Realms For himself, asleep as if all were well?

[The "Lord of the Three Realms" is the Lord of Death; he has total control over all living things except those who are travelling on the path of the realized, those who have seen emptiness directly. If we could reach this path we would have a chance to reach deathlessness, but instead we lazily act as if everything were all right, and end up inviting Lord Death, who would otherwise have to pass us by.]

त.कॅ.क्र्याश.येश विश्व.योशेटश.स्र्। रिम्स.त.र्याश्चार्यात्रीश.र्र.संस.श.पुश.येश रिम्स.तम् । यर्या.गुश.र्र.संस.श.पुश.येश त.क्र्याश.यश्चारः। वश्वश.यशेटश.स्र्रा

The Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life says as well,

You must leave it all behind and go, Along with your karmic baggage, But this you you cannot grasp and so For the sake of friend and foe You do every kind of wrong.

II

CONTEMPLATING THE BENEFITS

OF MEDITATING ON DEATH

क्र-जार्ट्योश्ययविद्यात्त्रम्।

क्रियःश्वाद्यात्रस्त्रस्त्रस्त्रस्त्रम्यः

स्राह्यःश्वाद्यःश्वाद्यःश्वाद्यः

स्राह्यःश्वाद्यःश्वाद्यःश्वाद्यः

स्राह्यःश्वाद्यःश्वाद्यःश्वाद्यः

स्राह्यःश्वाद्यःश्वाद्यः

स्राह्यः

स्

Here secondly is the contemplation of the benefits of meditating upon your death. Suppose now on the other hand that you are able to develop a real awareness of your mortality. You would then be like a person who knew he or she were going to die within the next day or two.

If this person had even a feeble understanding of the Dharma, or of course anything more than that, then he or she would quickly realize that none of their loved ones, nor any of the things they owned or anything else, could go on the journey with them.

All their attachment to these things would stop. The great majority of people at this point would automatically start to feel some desire to get the essence out of the life they had left to them, and so they would start to engage in acts such as giving to others, and such.

You now should be the same.

Think of the gain and honor, the fame and other such things you hope for from others—
all these worldly hopes and dreams.

Try to see that all the efforts you put into these things are empty, meaningless, like useless shells of wheat once the grain has been taken out.

Try to understand how these thoughts deceive you, how they wait to snare and trap you.

Stop now all your bad deeds.

यन्त्रास्त्रक्तं त्र्रेत् क्ष्याः क्ष्याः व्यक्ष्यः व्यक्षः व्यवक्षः विष्यवक्षः व्यवक्षः विष्यवक्षः व्यवक्षः विष्यवक्षः विष्यवेषः विष्यवक्षः विष्यवक्षः विष्यवेषः विष्यवक्षः विष्यवक्षः विष्यवेषः विष्यवक्षः विष्यवेषः विष्य

Exert yourself now in the opposite in good deeds, such as going for refuge, and observing an ethical way of life, and the like. Amass these kinds of deeds constantly, and with a sense of reverence and joy. This body and the rest may be meaningless, but you can give them the highest meaning; you can use them yourself to climb to the highest state there is, and then you can lead others there as well. And then I would ask you another question: where could you find any more important deed you could do, than this?

This is why the awareness of death is praised in so many places, with so many metaphors. We see for example the following, from the *Sutra of the Great Nirvana*:

Of all the crops plowed in the ground, the Autumn crops are greatest.
Of all the tracks left on the ground, the elephant's are greatest.
Of all the thoughts a person can have, the thoughts of impermanence and death are the greatest ones,
For these are the thoughts that clear away all the desire, ignorance, and the pride of all three of the realms.

मिर्यक्षेत्र, स्रेष्ट्र स्ट्रिंग स्ट्र

The awareness of death has been praised in other similes as well, sometimes for example compared to a great hammer, which can smash in a single stroke all your mental afflictions, and harmful deeds. It is also compared to a huge gateway, where every good and pure thing can come on through to you, all in a single rush.

लट्ट्या । तक्षात्र व्या । विकार्ट्या क्ष्या विकार्ट्या । विकार्या । विकार्ट्या । विकार्या । विकार्ट्या । विकार्ट्या । विकार्या । व

The Anthology too states,

Come to see that this body of yours is fragile as a piece of china,
And that all other things which exist are something similar to a mirage.
When you can, then the spears that demons hurl turn instead to flowers,
And the Lord of Death, who stands there hungering for you, dies himself.

विश्वान्त्र्रम्थाः विश्वान्त्र्यान्त्र्यः विश्वान्त्र्यः विश्वान्त्रयः विश्वान्ययः विश्वान्ययः विश्वान्त्रयः विश्वान्ययः विश्वान्त्रयः विश्वान्ययः विश्वान्ययः विश्वान्यय

It says as well that,

Those who have seen what it is to grow old, who have seen the suffering of disease, Those who have seen what it is to die, who have seen the mind depart and leave, They can give up the family life, so much like a prison hard and fast; Never imagine though that the masses could lose their worldly wanting.

ततुःश्रीयश्रश्चेश्चर्ता ।

ततुःश्रीयश्चश्चेशःविदःत्वा ।

यतुःश्चेयशःशुःविशःवः ।

यतुःग्वेयशःशुःविशःवः ।

यतुःग्वेयशःशुःविशःवः ।

यतुःग्वेयशःशुःविशःवः ।

यतुःग्वेयशःशुःविशःवः ।

यतुःग्वेयशःशुःविशःवः ।

यतुःश्चेयशःशुःश्चेयः ।

यतुःश्चेयशःशुःश्चेदः ।

यतुःश्चेयशःशुःश्चेदः ।

यतुःश्चेयशःशुःश्चेदः ।

यतुःश्चेयशःशुःश्चेदः ।

यतुःश्चेयशःशुःश्चेदः ।

यतुःश्चेयशःशुःशुःवशः ।

यतुःशुःवशः ।

यतुःशुःवशः।

यतुः।

To put it briefly, the time for a person to do something of value is now, and only now—now while we possess a body and life like this, so full of spiritual leisure. You and I have spent most of our time in the births of misery, and we come up now and again to the better births; but the vast majority of the time was in the realms where we had none of the necessary opportunities, and so we had no chance at all to undertake any spiritual practice.

And the fact that in this moment here, when we have found the kind of life where we could do some practice, we nonetheless do nothing the way it should be done, is all in the final analysis due to our belief that we will not die, just yet.

We can say then that our natural bias towards thinking that we won't die is the root of every trouble we have.

The antidote for this way of thinking—that is, to stay aware of our imminent death—is then the root of anything good that could ever come to us.

पश्चिरः पर्दे स्वाप्तः स्वापतः स्वापत

This being the case, you should never let yourself think, "This is one of those practices meant for people who have nothing more profound to meditate upon." And you should never let yourself think that, "It is admittedly something we should meditate upon, but only at the beginning of our practice, and only for a bit at that; it's not something that warrants a continual effort to put into practice." Rather you should try to develop a true understanding, from the depths of your heart, where you realize that this is a meditation which you need at the start, at the end, and all throughout the path. With this understanding established within you then, you must meditate upon your death.

#### III

#### WHAT DEATH AWARENESS IS

याश्रम्यात्यम्यात्यस्य स्त्राद्धे हि.क्ष्मेयात्यस्य स्त्राद्धे स्

Here is the third step identifying just what kind of death awareness we seek to develop. Now there is a kind of terror that a person can feel when he or she fears that they are about to be torn away from their loved ones and such. This fear stems from a very strong attachment for those around you, and is the natural fear of a person who has never attempted any kind of practice of the path. As such, it is *not* the awareness of death that we are talking about having to develop here.

पर्से प्रश्नामा त्रि स्थान विषय स्थान स्यान स्थान स्य

What then is this awareness? There is not a single being who has taken on a body by force of their past deeds and their mental afflictions who is exempt from the absolute certainty of death. It is true that, in the short run, trying to develop some fear about this fact might not enable you to stop it. Nonetheless you really must try to develop some fear that you might die before you have been able to achieve your goals for your future life: that you might die before you have managed to put an end to anything that might cause you to be born in one of the lower realms, or before you have achieved all those things that would lead you to the higher realms, and to ultimate good.

त्र्युरःहै।

य्रम्भावायायसस्य देन्द्रम्य प्रम्य देन्द्रम्य प्रम्य प्रम्

If you had this kind of fear, over these kinds of things, then it would help you to do something about them, and at the moment of death itself you would have no reason to be afraid. If on the other hand you find yourself unable to achieve these goals, then when death comes you will be tormented by regret, of two different kinds. In a general sense, you will realize that you were unable to free yourself from the circle of suffering life. More specifically, you will begin to feel sheer terror over the possibility of having to drop into the realms of misery.

त्रीट्ट्रीया। त्रीट्ट्रीया। विकारिक्षाक्ष्यान्यक्षा त्रीट्ट्रीया। विकारिक्ष्यान्यक्षा त्रीट्ट्रीयान्त्रीयान्त्रीयान्त्रीयान्यक्षा त्रीट्ट्रीयान्त्रीयान्त्रीयान्त्रीयान्त्रीयान्त्रीयान्यक्षा त्रीट्ट्रीयान्त्रीयान्त्रीयान्त्रीयान्त्रीयान्त्रीयान्त्रीयान्यक्षा त्रीट्ट्रीयान्त्रीय

As the Birth Stories say,

You concentrate your every effort, but there's no way to stay; What possible benefit can it be to feel a sense of fear And tremble over something that you can now never repair?

You can tell for yourself by looking at the nature of this world,
That those who did wrong are at this point consumed by intense regret;
They realize then that they didn't at all do good the way they should,
And begin to suspect that in the life beyond they will come to suffer.

यह्मका विकामक्षेट्यामार्टा । स्मान्यामा विकामक्ष्ट्रियामान्याम् । स्मान्यामान्यामान्यामान्याम् । स्मान्यामान्यामान्यामान्याम् । स्मान्यामान्यामान्यामान्यामान्यामान्याम् । स्मान्यामान्यामान्यामान्यामान्यामान्यामान्यामान्याम् । स्मान्याम्याप्यामान्याम्याप्याप्याप्य

The fear that you begin to feel
as you die confuses you,
Making it difficult to recall
the very deeds there were
That you did before, and that you feel
such strong regret for doing.

So make in your life a habit now to do only deeds pure white; For could a person fear Lord Death who lives the Dharma too?

तयुःस्तुरःर्र्। यदेयाःजःलटःयाःजःयह्यास्य विश्वःयाश्चरसः प्रदेशःदेःयहयासःयःल्ट्सःयहरःस्तुर्रः। विश्वः स्रम्भःया ।याटःजःदेशःयरःल्ट्रंसुर्रः। विश्वः यक्षःयश्चरःयास्यसःग्रह्मः। यद्याःद्वेःयक्षेत्रः

The Four Hundred too has the following verse:

Anyone who's truly sure, Who says to themselves, "I'll die," Leaves every kind of fear behind; How could they then fear Death?

याञ्चित्राचाक्ष्यात् व्यक्ति विष्टि विषटि विष्टि विष्य विष्टि विष्य विष्टि विष्य विष्टि विष्टि विष्य विष्टि विष्टि विष्य विष्य विष्य विष्टि विष्य विष्य विष

Suppose then that you are able to contemplate your impermanence, and think to yourself, over and over again, "There is absolutely no doubt that I am quickly going to be ripped away from my body, and from all of my possessions." This would allow you to block the kind of desire that still entertains some hope that you will be able to avoid losing all these things. And then you would feel none of the fear of death that comes because your mind is tormented by the thought of this loss.

# The Asian Classics Institute Practice V: Death and the End of Death

Reading Two: Death is Certain

The following reading is taken from *The Great Book on the Steps to Enlightenment (Lam-rim chen-mo)* of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419).

#### IV

#### HOW TO MEDITATION ON DEATH

Next we cover the fourth step, which is how to meditate and develop this awareness of death.

You should do the meditation in three stages, going through the three principles, the nine reasons, and the three resolutions.

यश्रम् । देशःयन्यत्वे । देशःयन्यत्वे । देशःयत्वे । दे

We will proceed then through the three of

contemplating how it is certain that we will die;

contemplating how there is no certainty when we will die; and

contemplating how, when we do die, nothing but the Dharma can be of any help to us.

विश्वाश्ची

श्चिराश्ची

श्चिर

The first of the meditations has three parts; here is the first, which is contemplating how the Lord of Death must certainly arrive and, when he does, how nothing at all can stop him.

No matter what kind of body you take on yourself, death must come to you. As the *Anthology on Impermanence* states,

If total Buddhas,
and self-made Buddhas as well,
And the listeners who are
the followers of the Buddha,
Must all eventually leave
their holy forms,
Why need then speak of normal people?

दशकाग्री,योश्चर-रें.बियोकान्दर-शुरी विश्वाश्ची संद्री कि.स्रियोकान्ते,योर-तक्क,यालान्त्राश्ची व्यन्तः संद्री कि.स्रियोकान्ते,योर्थाल्ये,याः कालान्त्राश्ची व्यन्तः ध्रेन-त्याश्चन-प्रमित्राह्म-त्राह्म-त्राह्म-त्राह्म-त्राह्म-विश्वाश्ची-विश्वाश्चित्रः विश्वाश्ची-त्राह्म-

We can say too that death will come to you, no matter where you go. The same text says,

It doesn't matter where you go;
the place does not exist
Where death would find it
difficult to intrude.
There is no such place in the sky,
nor at the bottom
Of the sea, nor deep within
a mountain keep.

So too death makes no distinction at all for the proper order of young and old when it comes to destroy its victims. On this the same work says,

Those who are now and those who are yet to be,
Must all relinquish this body, and travel on.
Realize, you wise ones, that all this dies;
Live the Dharma, and do what must be done.

पक्तिः चन्त्रात्यः व्यक्तः स्त्रात्यः विद्यक्ष्याः स्वाद्याः स्वत

Beyond this is the fact that no one can free themselves from the Lord of Death by outrunning him, nor turn him back with magic words or the like.

As the scripture known as *Advice to the King* states,

Suppose for example that you were surrounded on all four sides by four great mountains, solid, firm, hard to the core, indestructible, unbreakable, indomitable, adamantine, and massive, stretching to the highest limits of the sky. And then suppose suddenly that they caved in upon you.

र्रा स्यान्त्रस्य स्थान्य स्यान्य स्थान्य स्थान्य स्थान्य स्थान्य स्थान्य स्थान्य स्थान्य स्य

Every trace of vegetation from the roots, to the stalks, to the branches, to the twigs, and out to the leaves, would be crushed to powder. And every living creature there, every sentient being, every spirit too, would be smashed to dust. And as the mountains fell in it would happen in a minute, and no one would be able to outrun them, or force them back, or buy them off. Nor but with the greatest difficulty could you use any kind of magic substance, or magic words, or any sort of elixir to stop them.

पर्चेयात्तरः श्रीत्वाद्धेर्यात्तरः श्रीत्वाद्धः स्थात्तरः श्रीत्वाद्धः स्थात्तरः श्रीत्वाद्धः स्थात्यः स्यात्यः स्थात्यः स्थात्य

Here, great King, our life is the same.
When the four great terrors
make their appearance,
no one can outrun them,
nor force them back,
nor buy them off.
Nor but with the greatest difficulty
could you use any kind of magic substance,
or magic words,
or any sort of elixir
to stop them.

श्राचान्नुः भारत्रेन् । विश्वान् । विश्वान्

And what are these four terrors? They are aging, and sickness, and death, and trouble. Great King, I say to you: aging is the fact that our vitality is inevitably obliterated; sickness is the fact that our health is inevitably obliterated; trouble is the fact that any good thing that ever comes to us is inevitably obliterated; and death is the fact that our very life is inevitably obliterated. All four of these come to us, and we cannot outrun them, nor force them back, nor buy them off. Nor but with the greatest difficulty

could you use any kind of magic substance, or magic words, or any sort of elixir to stop them.

यश्रिम्यादेश प्रतियात्राद्ध्रीयः नेत्यस्य स्वादियाः प्रतियात्राद्ध्याः स्वाद्धाः स्वाद्ध्याः स्वाद्ध्याः प्रतियात्राद्ध्याः स्वाद्धाः स्वाद्धाः स्वाद्ध्याः स्वाद्धः स्वत्यः स्वाद्धः स्वत्यः स्वाद्धः स्वाद्धः स्वाद्धः स्वत्यः स्वाद्धः स्वत्यः स्वाद्धः स्वाद्धः स्वत्यः स्वाद्धः स्वाद्धः स्वाद्धः स्वत्यः स्वाद्धः स्वाद्धः स्वत्यः स्वत्यः स्वाद्धः स्वत्यः स्वत्यः स्वाद्धः स्वत्यः स्वत्यः स्वादः स्वत्यः स्वत्यः स्वत्यः स्वतः स्वतः

Kamawa too once said,

A person is supposed to be frightened of death now, and then unperturbed when it actually comes. You and I though act the opposite: we feel no concern for it now, and then when it actually comes we tear at our chest in agony.

दश्चा विशामश्चर्याः स्ट्रास्त्र स्ट्र स्ट्रास्त्र स्ट

The second reason here is the contemplation of how it is impossible to add any time onto your life, and how it continually leaks away, without a pause.

The scripture entitled *Entering the Womb* describes the longest you could live as follows:

Nowadays the longest you can live, supposing you are able to take care of yourself in the very best way possible, is a hundred years, or a touch more.

Even if you could live for a hundred years, the time would pass very quickly. This is because years pass in months, and months in their turn pass in days, and days pass in daytimes and nighttimes. These too pass in the shortest periods, of mornings and evenings and the like.

So a human lifespan in general is something which is very short.

हुर्यः हुर्यः स्वाप्तः स्वापत

You and I can see for ourselves, moreover, that we've already used up a good number of these days. As for the days we have left, we know we are helpless to add a single moment to them. They leak away, twenty-four hours a day, without the slightest pause. On this the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says,

Our lifetime constantly leaks away, Day and night, without a moment's pause. If your life is leaking away, and never being replenished, Then how can you imagine, that you will never die?

There are many examples you can use during your contemplation of these points. Think of weaving a carpet: you are building it up with rows of yarn, and each row is nothing more than a few threads of wool. But if you work steadily, it all adds up and soon you've finished an entire carpet.

त्यम् त्या क्ष्यं व्याप्त व्यापत व्याप्त व्यापत व्

Think too of a flock of sheep. When they are led to the slaughter house, they go forth with only one very short step at a time. But every single step brings them inexorably nearer to their death.

य.रेट.रे बक्ष.के.यचच.त.चबुब.रे.कु.क्षेंत्र.रे.चर.बक्ष.वर्जे. के.प्रींट.रेचा.सुषु.क्षेंब.वर्ज्ञ.चवका.रु.चाचर.क्री.घ.

Think too of the rapids of a great river, or of a waterfall as it leaps from the top of a high cliff. The moments of your life are rushing away, just the same.

यश्चार्याः स्थान्यः स्थानः स्थान्यः स्यान्यः स्थान्यः स्थानः स्थानः स्थान्यः स्थान्यः स्थान्यः स्थान्यः स्थान्यः स्थान्यः स्थान्यः स्थान्यः स्थान्यः स्थानः स्थान्यः स्थान्यः

A cowherd takes a club up in his hand and drives the cattle, totally helpless, to their destination.

Just so do sickness and the natural aging of our bodies drive us, totally helpless, into the presence of the Lord of Death. You must use a whole variety of such examples in your meditation upon death; as the *Anthology* again says,

द्युर-व-विवास्तर त्युर-व-क्षेत्र। स्थितः विवास्तर त्युर्ग्य । स्थितः विवास्तर विवास विवास

When for example you start to weave a carpet,
You build it up,
a string of wool at a time—
Eventually then
you weave it to the end.
Human lives are just the same.

Those condemned to death are another example,
Passing along with a single step at a time,
Drawing ever closer to the slaughter.
Human lives are just the same.

The rapids of a mighty river Rush unstoppable to their end; The passing of a human life Is just as irreversible.

श्चीता विश्वामार्थरश्चात्तं स्ट्राः ।

स्वाप्तान्त्रं स्वाप्तान्तं स्वाप्तान्तः स्वाप्तानः स्वापत्तानः स्वापत

Our lives are simple hardship, short, And something full of suffering; With simple speed we are destroyed, Like letters scratched on water.

A cowherd grasps his staff and drives The cattle to their final end, While sickness and the plague of age Force us to the feet of the Lord of Death.

यश्रिकाःश्री विकान्यः पुरान्तः स्वान्तः स्वान्य

They say as well that the great Lord Atisha would go to the edge of a stream and meditate there on the death; he would comment that "Sitting here and watching this trickle of water pass by is a wonderful way to meditate on life's impermanence."

The *Sutra of the Cosmic Play* uses a number of similes as well:

The three realms are impermanent, like a cloud in the autumn sky;
Watching as people are born and die is the same as theater.
The passing of a person's life is a single flash of lightning;
We rush on our way to the end with speed, like a mountain waterfall.

It has been said that, "For a person who has the least bit of ability to reflect and draw some inferences on the inside, there is nothing outside of them that doesn't speak of impermanence." As such, you should try to find in your life a whole variety of examples for the fact of impermanence. Use these examples for your contemplation and if you contemplate thus on a regular basis, then you will gain a true recognition of your impermanence. Just thinking these things over once or twice is not enough to reach this kind of knowledge.

यहँब.भ.च्य.यश्चर.यश्चर.य्यं यश्चर.य्यं यश्चर्यं यश्चयं यश्चयं यश्

As Kamawa once said,

Here's a question for all you people who said you tried to do this contemplation but didn't get any result from it.

Just when was it that you were contemplating? All day long you were distracted by other things.

At night all you did was sleep.

Perhaps you should stop lying to yourself.

यश्चर्याः चर्याः चर्यः

At the end of our life, the Lord of Death comes and destroys us, and we travel on to our next life. But there is something else too that happens all during the interim, during every hour of our life here. There is not a single moment at all when our lifetime is not slipping away, when it is not getting shorter and shorter, even as we go somewhere, or stay somewhere, and even as we sleep. So in a sense we are always on our way to our next life, we are travelling there now, and we have been on the move every second from the day we first entered our mother's womb.

पदः श्री याः प्राचितः प्रमायः स्थाः प्राचितः स्थाः स्

Therefore even in these days, while we still live, we are living only to die: those emissaries of Death, the ones called Sickness and Aging, are dragging us towards him. Don't take any comfort then in the fact that you haven't died yet, don't get the idea that you are staying anywhere, and that you haven't yet started off on your journey to the next life. You are like a man who just fell off the edge of a great rock crag; you would be foolish to take some comfort from the fact that you are still in mid-air, and haven't hit ground yet.

पर्वत्मः स्वरुष्यः वर्षे । वर

The following lines too are quoted in the commentary on *The Four Hundred:* 

This warrior amongst men, from the very first night,
From the moment of entering the womb in this world
Walks with each passing day, with ne'er a delay,
Into the presence of the Lord of Death.

च्यायाच्य्यात्त्र स्थात्त्र स्थात्य स्थायाच्यात्त्र स्थायाच्य्य स्थायाच्या स्थाय स्थायाच्या स्थाय स्याय स्थाय स्य

The *Words on Stopping the Four Misconceptions* also speak to this point:

Suppose you had fallen from the peak of some high mountain top,
And were just about to die—would you then in the free-fall feel content?
From the moment of their birth they race to one goal only, death;
How before they reach there then could any living being relax?

All of the above is meant to show how it is certain that we will die quickly.

ग्रीशसीत्यत्वः कें त्याय्यत्यः कें त्याय्यत्यः केंद्रः स्थायत्यः स्थायः स्था

Next is contemplating how certain it is that you will die without having had any time to practice the Dharma, even while you were alive.

Suppose you were able to live to the end of one of those longest lives that we described above. Even so it would be wrong to think that you would have any free time all that time. So far in your life you have squandered a great deal of time meaninglessly; as for what remains, you will pass half of it in sleeping.

The other half you will also spend meaninglessly, your mind filled with a great many other distractions. You will while away your days of good health and then arrive at old age, your body and mind worn out, and lacking any energy to do any Dharma, even if you wanted to.

क्रमान्त्र स्वास्त्र स्वा

The point is that the window of opportunity during which we can undertake our spiritual practice is nothing more than a very brief period. As *Entering the Womb* relates,

You spend half of it wrapped in sleep.

Ten years is wasted by childhood,
and another twenty in old age.

From what's left you have to subtract
the time you spend in grief,
and the time you spend crying in anguish,
and the time you spend in physical pain,
and the time you spend
in deep unhappiness,
and the time you spend in strife.

Subtract too the time that you spend
going though all those
thousands of different diseases
which the body is subject to.

स्त्री । प्रमानिक्षः वर्षान् । प्रमानिक्षः वर्षः वर्षः स्त्राच्याः स्त्राचः स्त्राच्याः स्त्राच्याः स्त्राच्याः स्त्राच्याः स्त्राच्याः स्त्राच्याः स्त्राच्याः स्त्राच्याः स्त्राचः स्त्

The Words on Stopping the Four Misconceptions concur:

Suppose you live to a human's longest life; it can never be more than a hundred years.

Of these you spend the beginning, your youth, and the end, old age, in a meaningless way.

In the days that are left, all your hopes and plans are smashed by sleep, and disease, and the rest;

Tell me then how much time is left over, for those who live as humans, to feel any kind of contentment?

# क्रमःशुःवर्षे,यःजुःस्यःश्वःत्यःश्वःतःस् मुयःरटःयक्षिरःरटःयःक्ष्मःयद्यःत्यदःयर्जुजःयः । सक्ष्यःशःवर्षे,यःवःवः स्वःयःशःवर्षे

Chekawa too has said,

I have been alive for sixty years; and if you take away the time that I spent feeding myself, and sleeping, and being sick, there were not even five years left that I had for spiritual practice.

And so all the good things of this life are like the happiness within one night's dream: you wake, and then it's nothing more than a memory. The time comes to die, and everything good you ever had lives only in a dim remembrance.

This great enemy, death, will surely come; nothing can stop him. You should contemplate this fact—try to wonder, "Why do I take such pleasure in the lie of this life?" Make up your mind that you absolutely must now practice some Dharma; swear it to yourself, continually.

त्र-श्री-प्रकृत्त्वश्चित्र। वश्चित्र। ।गुःसुःहःषेःत्रयःवहेषःहेषःक्षः स्रित्यःत्वा ।याद्यःपःसेःचह्रवःद्यादःसेः स्रुकःत्वा ।याद्यःपःवहेषःद्यादःसेः स्रुकःत्वा ग्रीस्थःप्रकृतः

Remember the *Birth Stories*, where it says:

Alas, you worldly ones so full of affliction of the mind;
Why do you take such pleasure in a land of shifting sands?
The shining glory of the kumuda bloom, opening to the moon,
Soon enough turns nothing more than a simple memory.

विष्यायाय्ये स्थान्य स्थान्त्र स्थान्त्र स्थायाः विष्यायायाः स्थायः स्यायः स्थायः स्यायः स्थायः स्य

It's something of a pure amazement too that all of us
Thrust into a life like this are not consumed by total fear;
Damn the Lord of Death, who stands and blocks all pathways out,
While we oblivious feel content, and have an enjoyable day.

श्री.ब्रियो.यट्टी.या.ट्योय.यट्टायो.यो.यंट्टायो । व्या.यट्टाया.यंट्टाय.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाय.यंट्टाया.यंट्टाय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्टाय.यंट्टाय.यंट्टाय.यंट्टाय.यंट्टाय.यंट्टाय.यंट्टाय.यंट्टाय.यंट्टाय.यंट्टाय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्याय.यंट्ट्य्य.यंट्ट्य्य.यंट्ट्य्य.यंट्य.यंट्ट्य्य.यंट्य.यंट्य.यंट्य.यंट्य.यंट्य.यंट्य.यंट्य.यंट्य.यंट्य.यंट्य.यंट्य.यंट्य.यं

We all share enemies, dreadfully powerful, ones we cannot stop:
Their names are sickness, age, and death; they attack us even now.
If it's certain that we are headed for agony in the world beyond,
How could anyone with a mind

be content in the one here now?

Go now and contemplate these lines, from the *Epistle of Kanika*:

The Lord of Death, the heartless one, Lays waste to the efforts of a lifetime; With such a death on its way to him, What man of wisdom would sit and wait?

This merciless warrior stands and aims His unfailing merciless arrow at you; In the time before he lets it fly then Try to make something of your life.

# The Asian Classics Institute Practice V: Death and the End of Death

Reading Three: The time of death is uncertain; and what to do when it comes

The following reading taken from *The Great Book on the Steps to Enlightenment (Lam-rim chen-mo)* of Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419).

वयाः श्रेश्वाः वयाः व्याः व्य

Here next is the second of the three principles: contemplating how there is no certainty when we will die. It is an absolute certainty that death will come to us at some point between today and a hundred years from now. It is not certain though which day between these two he will choose. As such, we would have to admit that it's impossible to come to a definite conclusion whether we will die, for example, today.

त्र्रण्यास्त्रेश्वरः द्वीत्रास्त्रे त्र्यास्त्रे त्रे त्र्यास्त्रे त्

Nonetheless, if you are going to try to think more on the mortal side, then you will have to develop the attitude that you will die today. If you tend to think more on the side that denies your mortality—that is, if you tend to think that you won't die today, or that you probably won't die today then you will constantly be acting on the assumption that you're going to continue to be here, rather than living to help your future life. Right in the middle of everything then the Lord of Death will come to take you, and you will have to die in anguish.

यहमाहेद्रायां वित्रायां वित्रायं वित्

If you spend every day getting ready to die, you will find yourself able to achieve many goals that relate to your future lives. This is an excellent thing to do regardless of whether you actually die that day or not. And it is an absolute necessity if you *do* happen to die that very day.

This truth can be illustrated with the following example. Suppose you have a sworn enemy, a very powerful one, and that he is planning to make some vicious attack on you. Suppose too that the general timeframe for this attack has been decided: you know that he is going to come for you sometime between this date and that date. You're not sure exactly which day he's going to appear, but you would certainly have to be on your guard every single day. Our case with death is exactly the same.

विवान्ते ते वकाने ते प्रकाश वका श्रम्भ विवाने ते प्रकाश विवाने के प्रकाश विवान के प्रकाश विवास वि

Suppose you are able to develop this attitude where you believe that you are going to die today, or at least that it is very likely that you will die today. The result is that you will start getting things ready for what is surely going to come—that is, for your next life—and you will stop concentrating on preparing things for your current life.

If you are unable to develop this attitude, then you will continue to believe somehow that you are going to be staying here in the present life, and you will continue to concentrate on organizing things for this life. You will continue too to ignore what's needed for your future life.

त्येरः द्वा यादश्याठेयाः हुः धुदः रेटः तुः यश्रः स्वा यादशः तुरः द्वा व्यवशः तुरः यादशः तुरः द्वा व्यवशः तुरः यादशः तुरः यादशः व्यवशः तुरः यादशः तुरः यादशः तुरः यादशः तुरः यादशः तुरः यादशः तुरः यादशः विद्यः यादशः तुरः यादशः विद्यः यादशः यादशः विद्यः यादशः विद्यः यादशः यादशः विद्यः यादशः विद्यः यादशः यादशः

If for example you believe that you are going to be living in a certain house for a long time to come, you concentrate your time on making the house a nice place to live. If one the other hand you believe that you are moving to another house, if you believe that you will not be staying in the house where you are, then you naturally begin to concentrate on getting everything ready for the place you're going to go. Again, our case is just the same.

This proves that you must develop the attitude that you are going to die today, every day.

वी विद्री:प्राचीश्वेश:प्रश्नी विद्रान्ति:श्वेशःप्राचीः क्रि:देशःग्री विव्यः द्रश्नशः स्ट्रान्ति:श्वेशः विद्रान्ति:प्राच्यश्वेशः प्रवटः प्रवाः क्रिः स्वाः स्विः स्व विद्रान्ति:प्राच्यश्वेशः प्रवटः प्रवाः क्रिः स्वाः स्व विद्रान्ति:प्राच्यश्वेशः प्रविद्रान्ति:

There are three reasons to prove this second principle, that there is absolutely no certainty when you are going to die. The first is the contemplation that here on the continent of Dzambu, lifetimes are anything but fixed. Looking at things in a broad way, we can say that the length of a life on the continent of Unpleasant Sound is something which is fixed. And although on the other continents the span of life is not fixed, there are many cases where a certain length of life is normally the case.

यह्मायुःश्चीदःयवेःक्वें ने विद्यानुः स्वाद्याय्येदान्ते। दूरायुः वें व्याद्यायाः ने स्वाद्यायाः ने स्वाद्यायाः स्वाद्यायः स्वाद्यायाः स्वाद्यायः स्वत्यायः स्वाद्यायः स्वाद्यायः स्वाद

Here on the continent of Dzambu, though, a person's life is anything but fixed. There are times at the beginning of the world when people can live up to an "inestimable" number of years. Eventually though there comes a time when the the longest life we can point to is only ten years. Even nowadays we can see with our own eyes how indefinite lifetimes can be, as death comes for the old, and the young, and those in between, at random.

विश्वता क्रिट्ट्रायाक्ष्या यहे. संस्थान विश्वता विश्व

As the Treasure House says,

Here indefinite: at the very end, Ten years; at the beginning "inestimable."

The Anthology too states,

In the morning a lot of people were standing here;
By evening some of them were missing.
In the evening a lot of people were standing here;
By morning some of them were missing.

So too it says,

We see men die, we see women die, We see those in the bloom of health die; So how on earth could you point to someone And say, "He's young, he'll certainly live."

# क्षाया । १ तब्रिमायक्षायाः स्वाप्ताः स्वाप्ताः स्वाप्ताः स्वाप्ताः स्वाप्ताः स्वाप्ताः स्वाप्ताः स्वाप्ताः स्व

Some people die still in the womb, Some people die in the moment of birth, Some people die standing still, Some people die on the run.

है। विश्वास्त्र हो । देश मुद्दार प्रति । विश्वास्त्र हो। विश्वास्त्र हो।

Some are old, some are young,
Some are strong ones in between,
They walk and then drop,
in a steady stream,
Like ripe fruit falling from a tree.

यश्रश्राच्यात्रच्यात्रच्यात्रच्यात्रच्यात्रच्

Think of great lamas you've known, or friends, or anyone—
the people that you've seen yourself, or heard about from others—
who died before their time.
Something on the outside, or something on the inside of them, came and killed them suddenly, before they were able to do all the things they were hoping to do.

You must think to yourself,
"I'm in exactly the same situation now
that they were in when they died..."
Try to think this truth
over again and again;
try your best to reach
this realization
of your death.

वियम् प्रमाने वियम् प्रमाने क्ष्या क्ष्य क्ष्या क्ष्य क्ष्या क्ष्या क्ष्या क्ष्या क्ष्या क्ष्या क्ष्या क्ष्या क्ष्या क्ष्य क्ष्या क्ष्या क्ष्या क्ष्य क्ष्या क्ष्य क्ष्या क्ष्य क

Next is the contemplation that the things that can kill you are very, very many; whereas the things that can keep you alive are very few.

There are many things that threaten the kind of life we live: threats that are living beings, and threats that are inanimate objects. Humans and inhumans, beings of the spirit realm, do harm to us in many different ways. Beings of the animal realm threaten our body and life in a variety of ways as well.

You have try to contemplate thoroughly all the ways in which these living things can hurt you; and how too that inner things like sickness, and outer things made of the various physical elements, attack you constantly.

त्रांबर त्रांचे त्रां

Moreover, your body consists by necessity of the four elements. Their nature is to be in conflict with each other, which causes the energies of the four to fall out of balance, some asserting themselves too strongly, and some becoming too weak. This situation triggers then illness within the body, and this eventually rips out your life. And so in a way you are under attack by the components of your own body. Since these elements are a very part of you, life is by nature a very fragile thing.

प्रस्थायम् स्त्रीत्रायम् स्त्रीत्रायम् प्रस्थायम् स्त्रीत्रायम् स्त्रीत्रम् स्त्रम् स्त्रीत्रम् स्त्रम् स्त्रीत्रम् स्त्रीत्रम् स्त्रीत्रम् स्त्रीत्रम् स्त्रम् स्तित्रम् स्त्रीत्रम् स्त्रीत्रम् स्त्रीत्रम् स्त्रम् स्त्रीत्रम् स

The Sutra of the Great Nirvana says as well,

And then there is the conception of death: see your life as standing there, surrounded all the time by a mass of hate-filled enemies, life leaking away with every moment, and no hope at all of ever filling back what was lost.

म्राम्बुमा बिम्नान्ता म्रीम्बर्गामम्बर्गामा स्थितःरम्बरायर्गाम्भेनः भूत्रम्बर्गामम्बर्गामा

The String of Jewels also states,

The tools of Lord Death are the very world around us;
Our lives are just the same as candles standing in a tempest.

The Letter to a Friend mentions,

Our lives are filled with danger, and we are more fragile
Than a bubble of water swept along in the wind.
The fact that we live long enough to exhale after inhaling,
Or wake again from a night of sleep, is truly a miracle.

र्यदःशुःर्याश्रश् । विश्वास्त्रर्था । विश्वास्त्रर्था । विश्वास्त्रास्त्र्याः स्वास्त्रास

The Four Hundred again says,

Alone they have no power
to give us birth;
Only as a group
can the elements in us work.
As such it would be a mistake
for a person to say
That this inner war
could ever feel good.

These are the days when the five degenerations have spread to a very great extent, when it is infinitely difficult to find anyone who is capable of amassing the powerful good karma necessary for producing any very long lifetime. Food and other kinds of medicinal substances have little potency, and lack any great power to stop diseases.

The general ability of the body to break down easily the things we eat and drink, so that the great elements within the body can be properly nourished, is declining.

We find it difficult to digest these things, and even after they are digested they have little beneficial effect on our bodies.

There is an additional problem caused by the fact that we are able to collect only small quantities of good karmic energy, whereas we commit massive amounts of bad deeds.

These diminish greatly the power of practices such as repeating a number of mantras, and so it is extremely difficult to use these methods to lengthen our lifespan, and such.

मुन्नस्म सूर्यं विकास स्थान स्यान स्थान स्यान स्थान स

Beyond all this is the fact that there is nothing at all that we use to keep ourselves alive that cannot also turn into something that kills us.

We spend our lives searching for food and drink, or a place to stay, or friends or the like, with the intent that they help keep us from dying.

But they can all turn into something that kills us instead.

If we eat or drink too much, or too little, or swallow something which is not clean or the like, it can kill us.

Our house can collapse on us, and our friends can cheat us,

and they can all in the end lead us to our deaths. You literally cannot find anything which is supposed to keep you alive that cannot kill you as well.

विष्याम्बद्धाः विष्याः विष्यः विष्याः विष्यः विष्

Moreover, life itself is directed at dying; even if there were more objects that were supposed to function to keep us alive, we could hardly put any faith in them. As the *String of Jewels* says,

The things that can kill us are many; Those that keep us alive are precious few, And act as well to kill us. We must as such do all the Dharma we can.

मुन्नम्बम्नम् उत्भाविष्यः प्रमान्त्रम् विनः मुन्नम् व्यक्षः स्वानः स्वा

Next is the contemplation that there is no certainty when we will die, for the reason that our bodies are extremely fragile.

Our bodies really are very fragile, very much like a bubble, and it requires no great injury to destroy our life-force: even something like the prick of a thorn, if we disregard it, can kill us.

The point is that none of the things that can kill us has to try very hard to kill us.

The Letter to a Friend says,

Great edifices like the earth itself, and the mountain
At the center of the world, and the seas, all burn
When the seven suns rise, and not even dust remains.
Who needs to mention then that fragile thing called man?

Once you have taken this contemplation to its end, it will occur to you clearly that there is no certainty at all when the Lord of Death will decide to come and destroy your body and life. You will realize that you have no time left; and then you must make many solemn vows to yourself, you must resolve to practice the Dharma here and now.

यह से प्रमादे ही स्थान स्थान

As the Epistle of Kanika states,

The Lord of Death is partial to no one; When he strikes, he does so suddenly. Don't ever say then you'll "Do it tomorrow"; Practice the Dharma instead with speed.

It's no good thing for a human being Ever to say, "I'll do it tomorrow"; The tomorrow when you are no longer here Is a day that beyond any doubt will come.

त्रमः तर्र्यन् स्तरः स्त्रीत् । स्वाप्तः स्त्रीतः स्त्राः स्त्रीतः स्त्राः स्त्रीतः स्त्राः स्त्रीतः स्त्रीतः स्त्रीतः स्त्राः स्त्रीतः स

That mighty prince of accomplished practitioners, Shri Jagata Mitra Ananda, has also spoken:

The spirit lord will take
this form you rent,
In health, in its prime,
in an hour of contentment,
And rip away in that very moment
its heart.

You sit there now unconcerned by disease or death By decline and the like, but when the day arrives To meet them face to face you'll know nothing to do.

Of all the three principles, this one, the contemplation that it is totally uncertain when you will die, is the most important. Since this attitude is the critical one, you must do your best to make it grow within you.

यान्य स्वादित्व स्वाद्य स्वाद

Here finally are the three reasons behind the third principle, which is that, when you die, nothing but the Dharma can be of the least help to you.

So we have seen that we will be forced to pass on to a future life. When the day comes, you can be surrounded by any number of friends and relatives, by people who love you and whose hearts are torn, but there is not a single one of them that you can take along with you. You can be the owner of a great heap of lovely riches, any amount of them at all, but you cannot carry along with you a single molecule. When you die you must give up even the flesh and bone that are part of your very being; it's ridiculous then to think that you could keep anything else.

क्ष्यायश्वरायर प्रमुन्न स्वर्थ स्वर्ध स्वर्थ स्वर्य स्वर्थ स्वर्य स्वर्थ स्वर्य स्वर्थ स्वर्य स्वर्

We can say then that
each and every good thing of this life
will send us away,
and we too will send them away,
and pass on to our next life:
this is, simply, quite certain to happen.
You must contemplate
how this is coming to you today,
and you must contemplate how,
when the moment comes,
it is only the Dharma
which will be your refuge,
and your protector,
and your one true friend.

As the Epistle of Kanika says,

The karma ripens, and all your deeds From before abandon and leave you alone. Driven by all the new karma now, You're forced ahead by the Lord of Death.

Everyone you've ever known
Is left behind, and only the good
Or bad you've done comes with you.
Please understand,
and do only things that are right.

# पर्वेर.क्र्रा क्रि.टश.बट.ज.रेचीश.चक्र्य.हेर. उर्वेर.क्रेट.। विविधाश.बश.उह्या.हेर.चालेश. विवेह.च्या.टेश.घश.क्रेट.। के.चाङ्याह्य.हेर.विवेर.

It's just as Shri Jagata Mitra describes it:

Now matter how wealthy you are, Your Highness, Once you die and slip to the world beyond, It's like standing stripped in an empty desert—

हिश्र-श्री-वर्चट-वर्चट-श्री-श्राच्या-व्योश श्रम्भा । याद्या-व्या-व्या-श्री-श्रमा-श्री-श्रम्भा यया-श्र-श्रम्भा । प्राच्चिया-श्री-श्रम्भा श्रम्भा । याद्या-श्रम्भा । प्राच्चया-श्रम्भा । याद्या-श्रम्भा । याद्य-श्रम्भा । याद्य

Alone, without the Prince,
without the Queen,
Without a stitch of clothing,
without a friend,
Without a kingdom,
without a country at all;
Solitary, single,
not a trusted servant in sight.

# यःगलयः कुर्जी । ज्ञान्यश्चरमः याः विद्यः स्त्री । विद्यः याश्चरः स्त्री

To put it simply,
how could you hope for more
In a land where you are no longer
the owner
Even of the name
you once called yours?

## पद्मिर-द्यायार्द्र्वाके:बिर-विवाहुःक्रेद-द्यायायाः दर-क्रेद-प्यर-द्याय-प्यर-प्यद-विवाहुः प्यद्ये । पद्मिर-द्याय-प्यस्थस्य स्था

Thus it is then that you must contemplate upon the awareness of your death: the spiritual leisure you now possess is extremely valuable; it is extremely difficult to find; and aside from its being so hard to find it is also extremely easy to lose.

Suppose we fail even to attempt reaching something of ultimate benefit, for our next life and beyond; suppose instead we spend all the time from now up to the moment of our death in the pursuit of the things that make us feel good, and in avoiding the things that cause us pain.

Common animals are more skilful at this endeavor than we could ever be; we need to engage in some kind of activity that distinguishes us from beasts. Otherwise achieving the kind of life in a higher birth that we enjoy now is essentially the same as never having attained it at all.

योश्वरश्चरात्रः द्वीरः र्रा विश्वरायदे स्तुरः द्वितः क्रियाशः हो द्वारः योशः यद्वे । विश्वरः श्वरः विश्वरः द्वितः क्रियाशः हो स्वारः विश्वरः विश्वरः

As the Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life puts it,

There are certain insignificant gains That are not a difficult thing to attain Even for a cow if she tries;

Yet there are those who suffer from karma And waste this perfect leisure and fortune, Achieved with such effort, on nothing more.

### त्रश्च स्थ्री न्याय शे वुद्ध त्या त्या वी या वि स्थेत । विश्वात मुक्ते स्था विद्या स्था वि स्थित ।

And so even though the awareness of your death may sometimes seem a difficult thing to develop, you must still make great efforts to do so, for it is the very foundation of the path.

स्त्रीं स्वर्धः विष्णः विषणः विष्णः विषणः विष्णः व

Potowa too has said,

My guiding lamp is nothing but this meditation on my own impermanence. It helps me to clear away all my concern about the things of this life my friends and possessions and so on and realize that I will be flying away to my next life, alone, with no one to come along with me. Then I am truly able to stop my attachment to my current life, and maintain an intention never to do anything which is against the Dharma. As long as you find yourself unable to reach this state of mind, you will find too that the road to each and every part of the teaching is shut off to you.

Dolpa once stated,

You must along the way undertake practices to amass the energy of good deeds, and to purify yourself of spiritual obstacles. So too you must make supplication to the angels, and to your Lama. If then you put all your heart into contemplating this attitude, if you focus on it, then you will be able to attain it. Things produced by causes have a basic nature that they can never just stay the same, and you will find that you can arrive at certain kinds of attitudes that you thought you could never develop in a century.

पर्वट्टाया प्रश्नित्ता क्षेत्रक्ष्य प्रत्युत्ता स्त्रित्ता क्ष्या प्रत्युत्ता स्त्रित्ता स्ति स्त्रित्ता स्ति स्त्रित्ता स्त्रित्ता स्त्रित्ता स्त्रित्ता स्त्रित्ता स्त्रित्ता स्त्रित्ता स्त्रित्ता

They say too that when someone would ask Kamawa if they could move on to a new spiritual topic he would say, "Work again on the old one." When they asked if he could finish up the old one, he would say, "There is no finish to the old one." So if your mind can handle it, do the meditation as I have described it above. If your mind cannot handle it, then try to keep as many of the nine reasons for the three principles as fits your capacity.

यार्श्वरः स्वरः त्रित्रः याः स्वरः याः स्वरः त्रिः स्वरः त्राः स्वरः स्वरः त्राः स्वरः स्

Meditate over and over on your death until you gain a complete disgust for the activities of this life; until you can think of them like pretty jewelry offered to a person being dragged to the place of his or her execution.

चित्रं चित्रं मित्रं मित्रं

The subjects of how to serve a spiritual guide, of the spiritual fortune and leisure of this life, and of our impermanence are found throughout the supreme form of speech, the word of the Buddha, and the commentaries upon it. You must come to realize that these are instructions to be put into practice at each point where they occur, and so you should actually undertake them at each step.

If you do so, then you will be able to grasp the true intent of the victorious Buddhas quite easily. You should apply this advice to each of the other sections here as well.

# त्यों.य.यक्षित्राग्ने, यही स्मान्यस्य स्त्री । वर्षे, य.यक्षित्राग्ने, यही स्मान्यस्य स्त्री

This brings us to our second major division, which is the contemplation of what will happen to us in our next life.

This involves thinking about the relative happiness and suffering of the higher and lower realms.

। विकार्शका विकार विकार

She is a sponsor of the Dharma
Whose gifts of faith spread far and wide,
And Yangdzom Tsering in the deed done here
Has given birth to a pure white force.
May this power send her across the spiritual
Levels and paths, with the speed of a carriage,
And bring her quickly to the capital city
Of secret Union, before and beyond all time.

Let goodness grow forever!