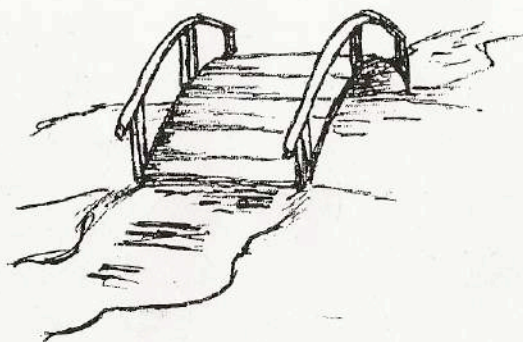


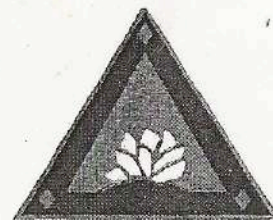


*May all beings transitioning the between
be unafraid
and dissolve into radiant oneness.*

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

*An Adaptation
for
Reading Aloud to the Dead*

Nancy Spence



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Anattasati Magga, Inc., information is inside back cover

Read aloud the day's reading.

Recite the Three Homages, making gassho.

As you get up and leave, place the booklet open to the day's reading on or near the altar.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

The First Between Reality Clear Light

Reading for the first 3 days following
the cessation of the gross outer breath

Reader recites the Three Homages.

Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this opportunity for Great Liberation. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Now you have reached the moment when you can seek a path for your liberation. As your breathing stops, you will begin to experience the primal radiant light that is the first phase in the death process. You have seen this light before and know it to be reality itself – empty and unadorned like space.

This is your primordial mind, empty and radiant, unsullied and unadorned, devoid of center and boundaries. Recognize this dawning radiance for what it is – your own oneness with ALL that is. Let yourself dissolve into this oneness. This reading will guide you to this dissolution.

Also there are unusual dream-like experiences for you right now. Be unafraid of these. They are the spiritual pathways within your physical body. Look at them as follows:

- ~ The mirages you first experience are signs that the earth element in your body is dissolving into the water element.
- ~ Next the smoke is the sign that the water element is dissolving into the fire element.
- ~ Now the glowing fireflies are the sign that the fire element is dissolving into the wind element.
- ~ Now the flickering candle-flame is the sign that the wind element is dissolving into consciousness.

- ~ Next the white moonlit sky is the sign that consciousness is dissolving into luminance.
- ~ Now this red sunlit sky is the sign that luminance is dissolving into more brightness.
- ~ Next this dark sky is the sign that brightness is dissolving into attainment.
- ~ Now this twilight sky is the sign that attainment is dissolving into radiant oneness.

All of this energetic revelation and movement is your spiritual energy now revealed to you in this death transition. Let yourself recognize this opportunity for Great Liberation. Be unafraid and allow yourself to dissolve into radiant oneness.

Reader recites the Three Homages and makes Gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Visions of the Reality Phase

Reading for Day 1

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Listen carefully! Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. You are in the death bardo—your past life has just ended. You have been unconscious for four and a half days. You are wondering, “What has happened to me?” Everything around you appears new and different. During this time, ordinary cyclical existence is suspended and all experience will occur in the form of luminosity and images.

Recognize that you are in the death bardo and there is no thing to fear. All of space will shine with a deep, radiant sky-blue light. This blue light is the appearance of the purity of consciousness in its natural form. An intensely dazzling, radiant and clear sky-blue awareness of the continuum of reality will shine out and pervade your heart. Your whole experience will seem a deep intense blue—so radiant you will hardly be able to look at it. Just let this light be present; allow it into your heart. There is nothing to fear, nothing to do, nothing to turn away from. This is the light of wisdom, born from the wisdom that is you; See if you can stay present to this light—recognize that it is projected from your own inherent wisdom. There is no thing to fear and nothing to do. Simply allow this light to be present. Near this radiant blue light, a dull white light will appear. Even though you may feel drawn to this dull white light, breath easy and do not give it any attention. Because of your past negative karmic deeds, you will feel fear arise and become afraid of the sky-blue light. And you will feel drawn to the dull white light. Please do not give the dull white light your attention. It is an obstacle that will block your path; it will turn you away from freedom. Do not look at it; put your attention toward the radiant sky-blue light instead.

Allow yourself to be drawn to this radiance, this wisdom. Take refuge in the compassion and wisdom of the bright sky-blue light. Aim your

willingness toward this blue light, and allow yourself to become one with the continuum of awareness that is eternal.”

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Day 2

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

On this 2nd day, the white light of pure water dawns before you. This white light shines bright and clear—so intense you will hardly be able to look at it. This light may take on others forms, too, so full, so deep, so grand that you can barely comprehend the greatness of all that you see. Open your heart to this white light. Allow yourself to be drawn to it.

Also, though, there appears a soft, smoky light to which you may feel a draw and a liking. It may seem easier to turn toward this smoky light, and you may experience fear toward the white light. Please turn away from this soft, smoky light. Release your liking of it, for it will lead you into unbearable ordeals of hell and suffering. This soft smoky light is an obstacle to liberation. It is projected from your own past hates and angers, from your own negative karmic deeds. Abandon it now.

Allow yourself to turn to the clear white light of pure water. Direct your willingness there and seek the path of liberation and wisdom. Take refuge in the compassion and wisdom of the bright light. Aim your willingness toward this white light, and allow yourself to become one with the continuum of awareness that is eternal.”

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Day 3

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

On this 3rd day of your transition through the death bardo, a yellow light that is the purity of the earth element appears to you. This yellow light is equalizing wisdom; it is dazzling and clear, and has glistening drops and droplets all through it. This yellow light will penetrate your heart, and be almost unbearable for your eyes to behold. Because of its wonder, this yellow light may seem overwhelming. There is no thing to fear, however. Remember: this yellow light is projected from your own inherent wisdom and compassion; you can embrace it within your heart.

Concurrent with this yellow light is the soft blue light associated with the human realm, which may seem easier to turn to. This soft blue light arises from habitual pride and will draw you into a path of destruction and suffering. It is projected from your own unresolved arrogance and pride. It is an obstacle blocking the path of liberation. Abandon this soft blue light; use your attention to stay focused on the yellow light.

Focus your attention and take refuge in the dazzling yellow light of compassion. Direct your willingness toward this yellow light and seek the path of liberation and wisdom. Take refuge in the compassion and wisdom of this dazzling light. Aim your willingness toward yellow light, and allow yourself to become one with the continuum of awareness that is eternal.”

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Day 4

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

On this 4th day, the red light that is the purity of the fire element appears to you. This red light is projected from your own discriminating wisdom; it is brilliantly red; piercing, dazzling and clear; it glistens with drops and droplets. This red light may take on others forms, too, so full, so deep, so grand that you can barely comprehend the greatness of all that you see. This red light will precisely penetrate your heart space; it may be unbearable for your eyes to see. There is no thing to fear with this red light. Open your heart to it. Become one with it. It is your own pure experience of discriminating wisdom that you project all around you.

Concurrent with this red light is a soft yellow light. Turn your attention away from this soft yellow light and focus back on the piercing red light. Although the yellow light may feel pleasant, it will draw you into hunger and thirst, into unsatisfying wants and unfilled cravings that will be never-ending. Long and deep suffering will result from following this soft yellow light. Please abandon it. Release your attraction to it and focus back on the red light of discriminating wisdom.

Focus your attention and take refuge in the dazzling red light of compassion. Direct your willingness toward this red light and seek the path of liberation and wisdom. Take refuge in the compassion and wisdom of this dazzling light. Aim your willingness toward the red light, and allow yourself to become one with the continuum of awareness that is eternal.”

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Day 5

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

On this 5th day, the pure wind element dawns within you as a dazzling green light, piercing and clear. Open your heart to this all-accomplishing wisdom—let it penetrate your heart. With no fear, know it as the natural force of the wisdom of your own awareness. Enter this experience of great, unoccupied equanimity. Release your attention to the familiar; avoid your aversion to the unfamiliar.

Concurrently arising with this dazzling green light is the soft, envy-made red light. Do not indulge in this soft red light, for it leads to fierce jealousy and results in intense suffering. See this soft red light with attraction and aversion in balance.

Abandon your envy and jealousy. Do not be drawn to them.

Recognize the piercing green light as wisdom. Take refuge in it, in its wisdom and compassion. Notice that you can not flee this light—you have created it and projected it from your own wisdom and compassion. There is no thing to fear, and no where to go, no way to get away from it. Focus your attention and take refuge in this dazzling green light of compassion. Direct your willingness toward this light and seek the path of liberation and wisdom. Take refuge in the compassion and wisdom of this light. Aim your willingness toward the piercing green, and allow yourself to become one with the continuum of awareness that is eternal.”

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Day 6

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

On this 6th day, the vision of all five wisdoms—in whatever forms you have projected them—appear to you. Be aware that the five softer images appear concurrently. Also, the purity of the four elements—water, earth, fire, and wind—dawn as the four lights. In the center of them is the all-pervading white light. These lights may appear simply as lights, or they may take forms as images, perhaps couples. Recognize all details of color and form as your own pure wisdom. There is no thing to fear, no thing to turn away from. These pure elements abide in the center of your own heart; they are not anywhere else. They are projected from your own heart’s center and its four directions. They emerge from your heart and appear to you. Recognize them as natural manifestations of your own awareness.

[Name], these images, perhaps holy and sacred to you—not great, not small, each with decorations, color, postures and gestures; perhaps female, perhaps male; a great rainbow of color, arising simultaneously whole—they are your own archetypal sacred images. Recognize them as projections of your own awareness.

From each place in your heart of wisdom and compassion, a brilliant ray of light dawns and connects to your heart center. Each light ray—glistening, dazzling—is like a mirror facing you, very clear, brilliant and awesomely penetrating; without limit and without center. Unending...eternal. Projected from your heart, the wisdom of blue, yellow, and red shine brilliantly upon you, connecting you to your own heart center. All these arise from the natural projection of your own awareness. They come from nowhere else—so release any

attachment, for they are already yours! Relax in the experience of non-conceptualization.

Trust these visions. They are projections of your all-pervading wisdom and compassion. They are like a child meeting its mother, or like greeting a long familiar friend. Recognize your visions as your own creations. Trust your being one with the changeless path of pure reality, and your awareness will dissolve into all that is eternal.

Along with these wisdom lights and images, there also arise the soft, impure, misleading visions of the six realms of existence—the soft white gods, the soft red of semi-gods, the soft blue of humans, the soft green of animals, the soft yellow of hungry ghosts, and the soft smoky light of hell. These six lights arise entwined in parallel with pure wisdom lights. Do not attach, seize or cling to these soft lights. If you fear the wisdom lights, you will assume a body or being in one of the six realms, which leads to the great ocean of suffering.

Turn your attention to the dazzling, piercing, pure wisdom lights. Trust in them—Focus your attention and take refuge in these lights of compassion. Direct your willingness toward these lights and seek the path of liberation and wisdom. Put your trust in these lights. Resist the dull lights of the six modes of existence. Aim your willingness toward the piercing lights, and allow yourself to become one with that which is eternal.”

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Day 7

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

On this 7th day of your experience in the between, a five-colored rainbow light will dawn to purify your instincts. You will be escorted by the energies of wisdom, which emanate from the center and four directions of your heart. You will be guided by these energies. All that arises within you to pull you off your path can be purified by the wisdom energies that emanate from your heart. These energies may appear to you in alarming images; they may appear fierce and scary. They may carry implements that seem unusual and threatening. Remember: all these energies and their forms are projections from your own wisdom: there is no thing to fear.

[Name], concurrently arising with the five-colored rainbow light—which is dazzling, shimmering and so startlingly piercing it can be difficult to see with your eyes—is the soft green light of the animal realm which can entice you. Turn away from the soft green light; turn toward the rainbow light. If you cling to the soft green light, you will fall into the delusion-dominated realm of the animals and you will suffer ignorance and the miseries of stupidity, dumbness, and enslavement.

Loudly, now, the rainbow light thunders with the teachings. This sound is fierce, rumbling, reverberating, like loud, intense sounds repeated and repeated. Turn toward this sound and the 5-colored rainbow wisdom light. Take refuge in the light and sound. Open to the wisdom and compassion that projects them. Allow these to draw you into liberation. Direct your willingness toward the light and sound; seek the path of liberation and wisdom. Aim your willingness toward the piercing light

and sound, and allow yourself to become one with the continuum of awareness that is eternal."

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Day 8

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

On the previous seven days, the peaceful energies arose as you were transitioning through the bardo. As you did not recognize the light, you are still wandering in the between. Now, on this eighth day, images of grossness and ferocity arise. Do not waver! Recognize them as projections of your own mind. What images can scare you and cause terror to arise? These are what appear before you now: monstrous creatures, mocking you with laughs and taunts; ageing demons causing fear and panic to arise in you; images with huge bodies and powerful limbs, armed with every ability to main and terrify you.

Remember, [Name]. These images emerge from your own mind. Do not fear them. Do not hate them. Recognize them as your own projections. Simply acknowledge them; accept their presence and offer a bow of gratitude. You will be liberated and become one with that which is eternal the moment you recognize them for what they are!"

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Day 9

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Again, on this ninth day of your transition, new images of grossness and ferocity arise. Recognize these as projections of your own awareness. Your mind will project images that scare you. Whatever these images might be, do not fear them. Do not hate them. They are your own projections of awareness. If you recognize them for what they are, you will be liberated.”

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Day 10

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Again, on this tenth day of your transition, new images of grossness and ferocity arise. Recognize these as projections of your own awareness. Your mind will project images that scare you. What images can scare you and cause terror to arise? These are what appear before you now: monstrous creatures, mocking you with laughs and taunts; ageing demons causing fear and panic to arise in you; images with huge bodies and powerful limbs, armed with every ability to main and terrify you.

Whatever these images might be, do not fear them. Do not hate them. They are your own projections of awareness. If you recognize them for what they are, you will be liberated.”

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

Reading for Day 11

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Again, on this eleventh day of your transition, new images of grossness and ferocity arise. Recognize these as projections of your own awareness. Your mind will project images that scare you. What images can scare you and cause terror to arise? These are what appear before you now. What images can scare you and cause terror to arise? These are what appear before you now: monstrous creatures, mocking you with laughs and taunts; ageing demons causing fear and panic to arise in you; images with huge bodies and powerful limbs, armed with every ability to main and terrify you.

Whatever these images might be, do not fear them. Do not hate them. They are your own projections of awareness. If you recognize them for what they are, you will be liberated.”

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

Reading for Day 12

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

On this twelfth day, your mind will project images that appear wrathful and demonic. You will project deeply repressed elements of your own mind—terrifying because you have denied them until now. There is no nice self-image here. You will see fierce beings, primal forces of natures and the grim side of reality. Do not fear these images. Do not hate them.

Repeatedly, fierce, gross and terrifying images arise from the four directions of your mind. These images look deranged and distorted. They arise from fears you have buried deep in your mind. They are projected from your mind. Over and over, they arise, one after the other, from the four directions of your mind. They carry instruments of torture and destruction; perhaps they are performing revolting and repulsive acts. Do not fear and do not hate these images. They are projections of your own mind. Recognize whatever arises as the creativity of your own visionary awareness. Make peace with them all. Recognize the wild and intense imagery generated within your own mind. All visible existence arises as lights and images to you.

Oh, [Name]! What you see, whatever terrifying visions occur, recognize them as your own visions, projected from your own mind. Recognize the clear light as the natural energy of your own awareness. Remember! This is your mind! Insofar as they arise from the natural creativity of your own awareness, you must firmly decide that all you see—the mild, the fierce, the demonic—none of these is substantially, objectively existent! Once you understand this, all fears and terrors become liberated on the spot and you dissolve into non-duality. Call upon those who have

taught and shown you wisdom and compassion; sincerely ask for their guidance and love."

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Day 13

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

"Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Again, on this thirteenth day, your mind will project images that appear wrathful and demonic. You will project deeply repressed elements of your own mind—terrifying because you have denied them until now. There is no nice self-image here. You will see fierce beings, primal forces of natures and the grim side of reality. Do not fear these images. Do not hate them.

Repeatedly, fierce, gross and terrifying images arise from the four directions of your mind. These images look deranged and distorted. They arise from fears you have buried deep in your mind. They are projected from your mind. Over and over, they arise, one after the other, from the four directions of your mind. They carry instruments of torture and destruction; perhaps they are performing revolting and repulsive acts. Do not fear and do not hate these images. They are projections of your own mind. Recognize whatever arises as the creativity of your own visionary awareness. Make peace with them all. Recognize the wild and intense imagery generated within your own mind. All visible existence arises as lights and images to you.

Oh, [Name]! What you see, whatever terrifying visions occur, recognize them as your own visions, projected from your own mind. Recognize the clear light as the natural energy of your own awareness. Remember! This is your mind! Insofar as they arise from the natural creativity of your own awareness, you must firmly decide that all you see—the mild, the fierce, the demonic—none of these is substantially, objectively existent! Once you understand this, all fears and terrors become liberated on the spot and you dissolve into non-duality. Call upon those who have

taught and shown you wisdom and compassion; sincerely ask for their guidance and love."

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

The Transitional Phase of Rebirth

Sidpa Bardo

Reading for Days 14, 15, 16, 17

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

"Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

You have heard the teachings of the reality many times now, yet it has been difficult for you to recognize your own inherent purity and oneness. Listen well, now, for at any moment, liberation is always possible.

Having an astral body, you will come upon your relatives and your home as though in a dream. Though you try to talk to your relatives, they can not hear you and will not answer you. You may experience terrible anguish at feeling so cut off. But it is useless for you to cling longingly to your relatives and friends; let go of them. Call upon whatever compassionate manifestation of spiritual energy you are familiar with to guide you through this transitional phase.

There will begin to appear to you visions of your coming life. You want to make a good choice, with favorable circumstances, in a pleasant environment, with good opportunities to study and practice the teachings of wise ones. Be willing to ask those you call wise teachers to guide you to such honorable choices. This phase of your transition will last for around twenty days. Open your heart to compassion, and you will release any fear and anguish.

Now, in your present, clear, fluid energy form, you can transform your body to whatever you choose. Though you are driven by instinctual karmic impulses within your primal energy, you can now choose and direct yourself toward your future existence. If you are to be born a god, you will have visions of the heavens. If you are to be born a demi-god, a

human, an animal, a hungry, wanting being or in a hellacious existence, you will have visions of the realm you will be born in.

Since this imaging is so, do not follow after every vision that arises. Do not attach to anything that arises. Do not give your energy to any vision you see. Without wavering, recall your teachings of the clear light, the naked pure, vibrant eternal. Enter into this, relax into the experience of non-grasping and non-doing. With this recognition, you will be liberated.

If you do not recognize the pure light, then meditate on and recall your vision of your spiritual teachers. Feel the presence of these beings on the crown of your head. Devote your total focus here. It is so important. Do not waver. Focus on the crown of your head over and over."

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Powers and Problems of a Between-Being

Reading for Days 18, 19, 20

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

"Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Now your senses are flawlessly clear and complete. Even if any sense was impaired in life, now in the between, your eyes sharply discern forms, your ears clearly hear sounds and so forth. Recognize this sense of clarity as a sign that you have died and are wandering in the between.

Your mental body is unobstructed, your awareness is freed from containment—you lack a solid body. In your astral body, you can move anywhere, anytime: through walls, houses, land, rocks, and earth.

If you can not recognize the pure light of oneness, then be careful to not follow after any vision that arises. Do not attach to anything that arises. Do not give your energy to any vision you see. Without wavering, recall your teachings of the clear light—the naked, pure, vibrant eternal. Enter into this; yield to the experience of non-grasping and non-doing. With this recognition, you will be liberated. If you do not recognize the pure light, then meditate on and recall your vision of your spiritual teachers. Feel the presence of these beings on the crown of your head. Devote your total focus here. It is so important. Do not waver. Focus on the crown of your head over and over."

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Days 21, 22, 23

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

"Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Now you find you have special abilities that seem magical compared to your past existence. In a split second, you can circle the whole planet. You can think about any place you wish and arrive there in an instant. You can stretch to anywhere and return back to your place. But the various magical powers are not so miraculous; please ignore them. That you have the ability to manifest anything is a sign of your existence in the between. If you can not recognize the pure light of oneness, then be careful to not follow after any vision that arises. Do not attach to anything that arises. Do not give your energy to any vision you see. Without wavering, recall your teachings of the clear light, the naked pure, vibrant eternal. Enter into this; relax into the experience of non-grasping and non-doing. With this recognition, you will be liberated."

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Days 24, 25, 26

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

"Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Now you experience pure clairvoyance. You can see and be seen by the same species as you yourself are. Thus if some beings are of the same species and are going to be reborn as humans, they can all see each other. This pure clairvoyance arises from your practice of contemplation, if you are not distracted. If you can not recognize the pure light of oneness, then be careful to not follow after any vision that arises. Do not attach to anything that arises. Do not give your energy to any vision you see. Without wavering, recall your teachings of the clear light, the naked pure, vibrant eternal. Enter into this, relax into the experience of non-grasping and non-doing. With this recognition, you will be liberated."

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Days 27, 28, 29

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

"Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Now you encounter relatives and familiar places as if in a dream. Though you seek to communicate with these relative, they do not answer. If you see relatives and dear ones crying and you can do nothing, you feel a searing pain. But however greatly you suffer, tormenting yourself does not help. Ask your spiritual teachers, your angels to help you. Appeal to a being of compassion, however you project this being to be. Do not attach to loved ones—this is useless. Do not suffer; do not fear.

Your mind is helpless and unstable, like a feather blown on the wind, spinning and fluttering. You tell those mourning, "Don't cry—here I am!" They take no notice of you. You realize you have died and you feel great anguish. Do not indulge in this pain.

There is constant twilight—gray as the pre-dawn autumn sky, neither day nor night. This kind of existence in the between can last for days...weeks. Recognize the pure light of oneness. Do not follow after any vision that arises. Do not attach to anything that arises. Do not give your energy to any vision you see. Without wavering, recall your teachings of the clear light, the naked pure, vibrant eternal. Enter into this; relax into the experience of non-grasping and non-doing. With this recognition, you will be liberated."

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Reading for Days 30, 31, 32

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

"Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Now you will experience the great red wind of evolution that will drive you from behind, fiercely, terrifyingly. Remember: this is your own projection; do not be afraid of it. A frightening thick darkness draws you from the front, irresistibly. You hear terrifying harsh cries, such as "Kill!" "Strike!" Do not be afraid of these sounds and images. If ferocious wild animals pursue you, if you are hunted through blizzards, storms, and fog, if you flee avalanches, floods, wildfires, hurricanes, remember: these are your own hallucinations. They are projections of your own lust, hate, and delusion. Let them go! Do not attach to any images and sounds that arise.

Recognize this moment of existence in the between. Recall your teachings of the clear light, the naked pure, vibrant eternal. Ask your spiritual teachers to show you compassion and to guide you through the between.

If you have gathered merit, you will be entertained with various delights and pleasures; if you have been dominated by delusion, you will feel stupefied and indifferent. Whatever happens, do not crave! Do not long for joy or pleasures. Do not hate stupefaction or indifference. Abandon attachment to all of these. Set your mind on that which is eternal.

Also, structures such as bridges, temples, cathedrals, huts, and stupas will seem to shelter you for a moment—but do not cling to them at length. Since your mind lacks a body, it can not settle down. You feel cold, you become angry and distraught, and your awareness seems erratic, volatile and unsteady. You think, "Now I have died—what can I do?" Your heart may feel cold and weak. You must travel and can not

attach to any one place. Do not attach to any of these experiences—they are projections of your own mind. Let your mind come to rest.

You have no food except what is dedicated for you. There is no certainty about your friends. These are signs that your mental body is wandering in the existence between. You think, "How nice it would be to have a new body!" Then you have visions of looking everywhere for a body, even trying to enter your old corpse, which you can not do. You feel sick at heart. Remember: this kind of suffering is in the nature of this rebirth phase. Even if you find a body, there will be nothing other than the suffering. So give up longing—longing for a body, longing for family, friends. Rest your mind. Focus yourself without distraction in the experience of creative non-action. Enter into the teachings of compassion and wisdom; relax into the experience of non-grasping and non-doing. With this recognition, you will be liberated.

This prayer is offered for you:

May the spiritual Teachers, as numerous as atoms in all universes,

Stir from their deep awareness for all beings' sake,

And please turn the wheels of Dharma,

Filling the universe with teachings to the ends of space."

Reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Encountering the Judge of Death

Reading for Days 33, 34, 35

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

"Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Your suffering comes from your own evolutionary acts; there is no one else to blame. It is your own evolution, so ask teachers of compassion and wisdom to guide you. Pray sincerely to whatever embodiments of spiritual ideals you believe in and they will protect you. If you do not do this and do not know any other useful spiritual practices, then you will see your good and harmful deeds being counted out like contrasting pebbles. You will probably become very scared and irritated. You will tremble and try to lie to whatever stands in judgment over you. All your past deeds will suddenly be revealed to you, both good and harmful, and you will know that your lies have been useless. Then the one who judges you will seize you and behave in ways that will leave you in agony. Do not lie, and do not be afraid of this judgment. Abandon all your fears and anxieties. Recognize all these things as hallucinations—as projections that arise through your own past karma. Recognize that there is nothing other than your own hallucinations. There is no external, existent judge. So pray to whatever spiritual beings give you comfort; call out to beings of compassion, and you will be liberated from rebirth.

Until yesterday you were given to distraction; you did not recognize what arose as the between and you were gripped by so much terror. If you again surrender to distraction, the cord of compassion will be cut and you will go into abodes that lack all freedom. Be careful; be mindful! Contemplate anything—any image or color or sound—as the natural projection of your mind's creative energy. Remember those who have given you spiritual guidance; recall their teachings now. Pray

to whatever spiritual beings give you comfort; call out to beings of compassion, and you will be liberated from rebirth."

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

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Avoiding the Dull Lights to Block Rebirth

Reading for Days 36, 37, 38

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

"Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Listen carefully. If you have failed to recognize anything that has been explained to you, the memory of your past body will gradually fade and the appearance of your future will become clearer. You will start looking for any body in which to be reborn. You will now feel drawn to anything that appears to you.

The six lights of the six realms of existence will gradually shine forth and the light of the realm most appropriate for your karmic past will shine brightest. These are the soft white light associated with the realm of the gods, the red of the demi-gods, the blue of humans, the green of animals, the yellow of hungry ghosts, and the smoky light of the hell realm. At this moment, your astral body also takes on the color of the realm into which you are going to be reborn.

The key point of the instruction at this point is this: no matter which color shines before you, visualize that color as the being of greatest compassion. Focus your mind intensely upon this image and gradually let it shrink and disappear into the empty luminosity of reality. You will then be liberated from all rebirths."

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho,

The Tibetan Book of the Dead
Blocking the Door of the Womb

Reading for Days 39, 40, 41

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

If you have not understood the instructions you have already been given, you will now begin to have the sensation of moving upwards, sideways or downwards through the power of your previous karmic acts. As previously explained, you will also have visions of fierce winds, blizzards, hailstorms, and dark fogs, or of being pursued by crowds of people. You will try to find refuge and escape from them. At this time, you should bring to mind and visualize beings of great compassion—Jesus, Mother Teresa, Kanzeon—or any other embodiment of your spiritual ideal. Identify yourself with this compassion and goodness. When you have a clear and vivid image of this being before you, visualize this being gradually dissolving inwards from the edges until nothing remains but the empty luminosity that is beyond conceptual thought. As you enter into this state, you will succeed in blocking off entrance into a womb.

[Name], if this has not worked for you and you are on the brink of entering into a womb, there are still several ways of blocking off entrance into a womb. Concentrate and listen carefully!

You will now see couples making love. When you see them, do not enter in between them but hold yourself off with mindfulness. Instead, see them as the divine Mother and Father. Imagine yourself respectfully making offerings to them and asking them for their blessings. Ask for their teachings. Then, at this moment, you will definitely block off entrance into a womb. If this fails to block entrance to a womb, and you are still on the verge of entering a womb, visualize the couple

as the Mother and Father of universal compassion. Imagine yourself respectfully making offerings to them and devoutly asking them to bestow spiritual attainment upon you. This method will also block off entrance to a womb.

If this fails to block entrance to a womb, and you are still on the verge of entering a womb, you can still do so by dispelling attachment and hatred. When you see couples making love, you will have strong feelings of jealousy. If you are going to be reborn as a male, you feel desire for the woman and hatred for the man; if you are going to be reborn female, you feel desire for the man and hatred for the woman. When attachment, lust and hatred arise in this way, say to yourself, “I have accumulated such negative karma that I have wandered lost in the cycle of existence until now because of attachment and hatred. If I continue to feel attachment and hatred in this way, I shall wander lost in the cycle of existence endlessly and sink again into the deep ocean of suffering. I resolve now that I shall abandon all attachment and hatred, never again to attach to desire or aversion.” If you concentrate whole-heartedly on these thoughts, you will be able to block off entrance into a womb.

But even if you have done this and yet it has failed to block off entrance to a womb and you are still on the verge of entering a womb, then you can still do so by meditating on the unreal nature of things. You tell yourself that all you are experiencing is illusory: the mother, the father, the impelling force of your karmic acts. Though they appear to you, they are in fact unreal. They are like mirages or images in dreams. All these things are merely projections of your mind’s own making. If you can shatter your belief in their reality in this way, you will be able to block off entrance to a womb. Like water being poured into water, let the mind flow into its own reality; release it into its own nature. Let the mind relax and soften easily and openly. This will block the womb door for all forms of rebirth. Meditate again and again on this teaching.”

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

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Choosing an Appropriate Womb

Reading for Days 42, 43, 44, 45

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

Even though you have already been given instructions many times, you have not understood them. Since you have not blocked the womb entrance, it is now time for you to take on a new body. Listen carefully to this guidance and instruction. You will begin to see various signs that indicate the place and condition of your future rebirth. Some places will appear very alluring while others may seem disgusting. No matter what places appear to your clairvoyant sight, do not go to them but generate the urge to resist their attraction and aversion and the illusion of safety they give you. If you have previously learned any special spiritual practices—prayer, meditation—remember them now and use them to block your entry into a womb. If nothing else, visualize a being of great compassion and allow yourself to be drawn to this compassion. In this way you will become a celestial compassionate being.

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

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Taking Refuge

Reading for Days 46, 47, 48, 49

Reader lights incense, saying the Three Homages; then sits down in meditation and reads out loud clearly and strongly the passage for the day.

“Gassho to you, [Name]. Blessings of love and respect we offer to you in this transition. This reading is for you, to support and guide you through the between, through this death bardo. Listen carefully to this reading. Direct your attention to these words without distraction.

[Name], if you know how to choose an appropriate womb for rebirth and yet cannot abandon attachment or hatred, call upon your representatives of your highest spiritual ideals. Ask them to protect and guide you, regardless of whatever you experience at this time. Pray to all beings of compassion. Abandon all possessive clinging. Release your attachment to past relatives, friends, places, forms. Hold a view of spiritual detachment. Experience universal loving equanimity. Go now into the blue light of the human realm or the white light of the divine realm.”

The reader recites the Three Homages and makes gassho.

On the 49th day, the reader ends the reading with this:

“This ends the reading of the Tibetan Book of the Dead for the benefit of [Name]. We offer the merit of this reading to [Name], so s/he may realize Truth.

Homage to all the Buddhas in all Worlds.

Homage to all the Bodhisattvas in all worlds.

Homage to The Scripture of Great Wisdom.

Nancy Spence is founder and Teacher for Anattasati Magga, Inc., a Soto Zen Buddhist Sangha for the Laity in Western North Carolina and Tuolumne County, California. She leads monthly Buddhist Services, offers individual spiritual guidance, and leads three-day and week-long silent meditation retreats. Nancy trained as a Buddhist Priest at Vichara Bodhiyana Monastery and as a Lay Minister at Shasta Abbey, both in California. Nancy completed a Master of Science in Psychology in 2001, has a private counseling practice, and facilitates personal growth groups through InnerVision.

Through the Mindfulness Center of Asheville, Nancy offers self-discovery programs for those seeking to transcend adversity and suffering. She authored *Back to Basics: An Awareness Primer*, the workbook used in initial group work. She is known for providing a safe and supportive framework for the pursuit of personal and spiritual awareness. Small groups meet once a month.

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