



Mangala Shri Bhuti

Bardo Manual

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Introduction

This manual is based on Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche's teachings on the bardos. The first part of this manual focuses on how four spiritual opportunities present themselves in the bardos after death. Next, we will look at how we can prepare ourselves right now to take advantage of these future bardo opportunities. Finally, we will focus on how to support others during the dying process and after death. Please [listen](#) to the 2021 Bardo Manual Sangha Meeting hosted by Study and Practice for additional background on the topics covered in this manual.

Bardo Audio Teaching

This manual is intended to accompany the [Bardo Audio Teaching](#) that Kongtrul Rinpoche gave during the 2004 Nyingma Summer Seminar. Please listen to this audio recording in conjunction with reading this manual.

The Bardo of Dying

This bardo starts at the beginning of the death process and culminates with the natural arising of the mother or ground luminosity, which is none other than the nature of mind that was pointed out to us during the Sessions teachings.

Stage 1: Outer Dissolution

The bardo of dying starts when the body encounters the cause that will eventually lead to death. For example, in the case of cancer, the bardo of dying starts when the terminal cancer first appears in the body. As one gets closer to death, the bardo of dying also includes the outer and inner dissolutions that take place during the dying process. The beginning of the outer dissolution phase includes the deterioration of our physical and mental senses, which causes us to experience confused physical and mental perceptions. The second part of the outer dissolution is when the

elements (earth, water, fire, and air) dissolve. In the [Bardo Audio Teaching](#), Rinpoche describes the specific perceptions that are experienced during the dissolution of the elements. If we have familiarized ourselves with these teachings beforehand, then this understanding will help us to maintain a greater stability when these experiences arise because we will know what is happening to us. The end of the outer dissolution phase is when modern medicine declares the person to be dead.

Stage 2: Inner Dissolution

Even though there are no outer vital signs, death has not yet occurred according to the teachings. This is because there is an internal movement of the person's subtle psychic energy (wind or *lung*) that continues to take place in the body. This inner dissolution phase starts when the person stops physically breathing and ends after the arising of the ground luminosity.

First Opportunity

This inner dissolution is of particular importance in our tradition because there is a natural ceasing of the thought process and emotions that takes place. This cessation of the confused mind reveals the primordial ground of the nature of mind. Our tradition refers to this experience as the *mother luminosity*.

While all sentient beings have this experience, only trained practitioners have the opportunity to capitalize on it. In our tradition, the stability a practitioner has developed to rest in the nature of mind over one's lifetime is referred to as the *child luminosity*. If one has fully stabilized this child luminosity, then when the mother luminosity naturally dawns after the confused mind ceases, one can fully recognize and rest at ease in that state. If this union of the mother and child luminosities fully takes place, then one will attain full enlightenment in that moment and won't be propelled to experience the rest of the bardos; nor will one be forced to

take rebirth as a samsaric being. In other words, one will attain complete buddhahood.

The Luminous Bardo of Dharmata

The bardo of dhamata is the after-death experience of the radiance of the nature of mind or mother luminosity. This luminosity or “clear light” manifests during this bardo as sound, color, and light. For those familiar with the kaya terminology, the mother luminosity experienced in the bardo of dying can be thought of as the dharmakaya, and the appearances that arise from the dharmakaya during the bardo of dharmata are the sambhogakaya forms.

Second Opportunity

If one isn't able to attain enlightenment during the first opportunity as described above, then one will experience the appearances of sound, color, and light that naturally arise out of, and are pure expressions of, the nature of mind. The second spiritual opportunity presents itself to those practitioners who have done sadhana practice during the time they were alive. In sadhana practice, we train ourselves to cultivate pure perception in relation to all appearances that arise in our experience. If we are able to perceive the bardo of dharmata appearances as the body, speech, and mind of the deity, then we can attain full buddhahood through the blessing of the deity and the power of our pure perception.

The Karmic Bardo of Becoming

This is the period between the ending of the bardo of dharmata and taking a new rebirth. While all sentient beings experience the ground luminosity and the pure appearances of the bardo of dharmata, without having done any practice these pass by so fast that one just falls unconscious. After this unconscious state, sentient beings find themselves in the bardo of

becoming. During this time, our experiences are determined by our past karmic imprints. This is similar to our experiences of dreams in this life.

Third Opportunity

The third spiritual opportunity presents itself to those who have kept their practice commitments or samaya and have done practice during their lives. For example, through having accumulated merit and having dedicated that merit towards taking rebirth in a celestial realm, one can take rebirth in a pure realm like Guru Padmasambhava's Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain realm or Amitabha's Sukhavati realm. Once born in a pure realm, one can then continue one's path without hindrance and swiftly attain full enlightenment.

Fourth Opportunity

Similar to the third opportunity described above, this opportunity presents itself to those who have kept their samaya, accumulated merit, and dedicated the merit. However, instead of being reborn in a pure realm, this level of practitioner takes rebirth in the human realm again in a situation that is conducive to continuing one's spiritual path.

Preparing for Death: The Natural Bardo of Life

The natural bardo of life spans the time between birth and death in one particular lifetime. Within the natural bardo of life, there are the bardo of dreaming and the bardo of meditation. The bardo of dreaming is our experience while sleeping. It is significant to practitioners because it offers a preview of what our experience will be like at death. The bardo of meditation is the time we spend in a meditative state during this life.

Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche connects the signs that may occur in the bardo of dreaming to our efforts in the bardo of meditation:

“When you put your knowledge of Dharma into practice by doing meditation sessions--possibly four sessions a day--then how well you're doing will show up in the dream bardo. If you can recognize that you're dreaming and see all you experience as an expression of your mind, or if you have positive dreams such as seeing the lama or yidam through doing sadhana practice, those are signs that you will do well in the bardos of death.”

During the three bardos of life (natural bardo of life, dream bardo, and meditation bardo), we can prepare to make best use of the opportunities presented to us in the three bardos of death (the bardo of dying, the luminous bardo of dharmata, and the karmic bardo of becoming).

Maintaining Spiritual Commitments or *Samaya*

We can only take advantage of the spiritual opportunities in death if we have maintained our spiritual commitments or *samaya*. The main commitments of the three yanas are to refrain from harming beings, to be of benefit to beings, and to maintain pure perception. In addition to these, we should maintain our commitment to practice and do our best to keep harmonious relations with the Sangha.

For those who have started the ngondro practice, Rinpoche highly encourages us to recite the Vajrasattva mantra 108 times per day, or at the very least 21 times. This will repair the damages to our samaya and protect us from falling into the lower realms.

The Tantra of Immaculate Confession says:

The hundred-syllable mantra is the quintessence of the mind of all the Sugatas. It purifies all violations, all breaches, all conceptual obscurations. It is the supreme confession, and to recite it one hundred and eight times without interruption repairs all violations and

breaches and will save one from tumbling into the three lower realms. The Buddhas of the past, present, and future will look on the yogi who recites it as a daily practice as their most excellent child, even in this very lifetime, and will watch over and protect them. At their death they will undoubtedly become the finest of all the Buddhas' heirs.

Preparing for the First Opportunity

The nature of mind practice introduced in the Sessions teachings provides the basis for preparing to take advantage of the opportunity presented to us in the bardo of dying. If we are able to fully stabilize our nature of mind practice or child luminosity, then we will be able to merge with the ground luminosity and, as is said in ngondro, we'll be "liberated as naturally as a child running to its mother's lap."

Preparing for the Second Opportunity

Sadhana practice prepares us to take advantage of the second opportunity, which arises during the bardo of dharmata. If we are able to perceive the bardo of dharmata appearances as the body, speech, and mind of the deity, as we have trained to do in the sadhana practice, then we will attain full buddhahood through the blessing of the deity and our own pure perception.

Preparing for the Third Opportunity

The third opportunity is to take rebirth in a pure realm and to continue one's path there. In order for this to happen, one must cultivate faith, accumulate merit, and dedicate the merit towards taking rebirth in that pure realm (listen to [Khenchung Bob Reid's Link](#) for more information on this topic).

Faith

It is taught that there are enlightened realms that stand outside of the samsaric realms. These are the pure realms, which are characterized by enlightenment; they are inhabited by enlightened celestial buddhas, yidams, dakinis, and Dharma protectors. When the ring of our faith is met by the hook of these enlightened beings' compassion, then it is possible to take rebirth in their pure realms. Once born in a pure realm, we can swiftly traverse the path and attain enlightenment. So it is vital to start cultivating a strong faith now, so that this faith will arise in the bardo of becoming. One sign of having cultivated this type of strong devotion is that it arises in our dreams. Since the dream state and bardo of becoming are both shaped by our karmic imprints, remembering the deity in the dream is a positive indicator that we will remember the deity in the bardo.

Accumulation of Merit

Ngondro Practice

Rinpoche's aspiration is for all MSB members to at least start the ngondro practice. This practice in itself creates the roots of merit to be reborn in Guru Rinpoche's pure realm of the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain.

The Words of My Perfect Teacher states:

Anyone whose devotion and samaya are completely pure and who complete the path up to Guru Yoga, even without doing the main practice, will be reborn in the Glorious Mountain of the South Western Continent. In that pure Buddhafield they will travel the path of the four Vidyadhara levels even more swiftly than the movements of the sun and moon and reach the level of Samantabhadra.

In fact, Rinpoche teaches that the practice of dissolving the visualization in the Guru Yoga section of the ngondro is actually a form of *phowa*, or

transference of consciousness practice. It's suggested that we do this phowa of dissolving ourselves into Guru Rinpoche frequently in post-meditation so that we become habituated to it. If this practice becomes second nature, then we are likely to remember it in the bardo of becoming. If we do the practice in the bardo, then we can transfer our consciousness to Guru Rinpoche's pure realm.

Tsok Practice

Whether done alone or with a group, MSB members are encouraged to do regular tsok practice. In the *Benefits of Tsok Practice* (see [Appendix I](#)), Rinpoche clearly explains that “tsok practice is a ticket to the Copper-Colored Mountain.” Please refer to the [MSB Tsok Manual](#) for more details about this practice.

Mantra Practice

Members of MSB at every level of practice are encouraged to recite the Vajra Guru mantra, both in formal sessions and during post-meditation, with the aim of reciting a total of 100 million mantras over a lifetime. These mantras can be accumulated in the shrine room, while driving, or basically at any time. One should dedicate the merit towards being reborn in Guru Rinpoche's pure realm in the next life. In a Personal Link teaching (5/30/04 - Personal Link #198), Rinpoche summarized the significance of aspiring to be reborn in this pure realm. (Listen to the [Rebirth](#) and [Pure Land](#) audio excerpts from this Link teaching.)

The following is an excerpt from this teaching:

“If we can do as many Vajra Guru mantras as possible every day, consistently trying to strengthen our connection and devotion to Guru Rinpoche, and to deepen our commitment to meet with him in the next life, then, by the end of our life, we will have accumulated many mantras, and we will be reborn on the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain. Faced with the suffering of samsara in this life, we have

been very lucky to come in contact with the Dharma and the Nyingma lineage, and to be doing the practices Guru Rinpoche left for our benefit. So we can live this life fully, and then die with a secure mind, thinking, ‘I will continue my path on the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain,’ rather than, ‘I’ll be like a feather in the wind.’”

Dedication of Merit

It is important to dedicate any accumulation of merit specifically towards taking rebirth in a pure realm during the bardo of becoming. For example, the [Guru Rinpoche Supplication](#) composed by Kongtrul Rinpoche concludes with:

When the appearances of this life dissolve,
May I, with ease and great happiness,
Let go of all attachments to this life,
As a son or daughter returning home.
And at that time may you, Guru and Dakini, receive me,
And guide me to the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain.
With great desire and single-pointed trust, I supplicate you.

So always take the time to dedicate the merit towards taking rebirth in a pure realm. Our main pure realm aspirational prayer is the [Guru Rinpoche Supplication](#), but past lineage masters have also composed a [variety of aspirational prayers](#) to be reborn in the pure realms.

Preparing for the Fourth Opportunity

This level of practitioner takes rebirth in the human realm again in a situation that is conducive to continuing one’s spiritual path.

Power of Nonviolence

Listen to this [Nonviolence and Rebirth audio recording](#) to learn about the positive effects that leading a nonviolent life will have on one’s next rebirth

and continuing one's path in the next life.

Power of Tsewa

In "[Meeting Death with an Open Heart.](#)" a chapter in *Training in Tenderness*, Rinpoche states:

As we keep opening our hearts further and further, we accumulate merit and attract good conditions for our well-being and growth. In our next life, we are likely to find ourselves with even more supportive circumstances for continuing to develop our tsewa. For someone who has embarked on the bodhisattva path, another life is another chance to make progress. It is something to look forward to rather than fear.

Refuge Vow

The power of the Refuge Vow alone will enable one to continue one's path in future lives and eventually attain enlightenment. Rinpoche especially encourages us to recite [The Outer, Inner, and Secret Refuge Practice of the Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo](#) if death is imminent or on behalf of the deceased (see [Appendix II](#)).

In the *Sutra of the Heart of the Sun* it is stated:

He who has made the Buddha his refuge
Cannot be killed by ten million demons;
Though he transgress his vows or be tormented in mind,
It is certain that he will go beyond rebirth.

Bodhisattva Vow

Each member of MSB does some form of the [Bodhisattva Vow practice](#) every day, so we can have complete confidence that the power of bodhicitta will ensure a fortunate rebirth if we have kept our samaya.

In *Maitreya's Prayer of Dedication* it is stated:

That which brings you out of the falling down into the lower realms,
That which bring you to be reborn in the higher realms,
That which remedies the fear of old age, sickness, and death,

I praise the supreme bodhicitta.

Kongtrul Rinpoche often quotes Tai Situ Rinpoche, who once said that as practitioners we should be content with making one percent progress in this lifetime because that means that we will attain enlightenment in 100 lives instead of perpetually cycling in samsara.

Kongtrul Rinpoche adds:

“Generate aspiration bodhicitta practice every morning, have your good deeds that you naturally perform throughout the day be a paramita practice, and dedicate that merit towards the enlightenment of all beings. With that, one’s spiritual practice is quite complete, and I’m sure, in just doing that, one will make the one percent progress in this lifetime that Tai Situ Rinpoche was talking about. And we can all be very sure that we can see each other in the human world once again and not be born as a fish or cow in the next life.”

Lineage Ceremony

Once one completes the MSB Lineage Ceremony and starts the practices of this lineage beginning with Sessions, this will undoubtedly serve as the cause for one to continue one’s path in future lives and attain enlightenment in a relatively short amount of time either in a pure realm or the human realm.

In *The History and Vision of MSB*, Kongtrul Rinpoche states:

And if one does not attain a state of enlightenment in the dissolution time, then in a couple of lifetimes it is certain—if one keeps one samaya well—that one will attain a state of enlightenment. So this gives us tremendous hope. In his commentary on *Three Words that Strike the Vital Point* by Garab Dorje, Patrul Rinpoche stated, “*Min*

kyang lo dé, A la la!” which means, “Even if I do not attain the state of enlightenment in one lifetime, this is certain to be the case within a few lifetimes.” “*A la la!*” means it is wondrous to be able to meet this lineage and this set of practices, to be able to embark on this path.

Calling to the Guru

If one has strong devotion and recalls one’s Root Teacher in the bardo with faith, then one will be guided to a higher rebirth either in a pure realm or the human realm. However, one must take the time to cultivate this strong devotion before one dies in order for it to arise and have a positive effect in the bardo. It’s not that the teacher will come and rescue you independent of your having made the effort to cultivate devotion over the course of your life.

Moreover, in *Words of My Perfect Teacher* it is stated:

Meeting and being guided by our teacher in the intermediate state can only take place because of a connection already created by our own limitless devotion and the power of the teacher’s compassion and prayers. It is not that the teacher comes physically. So, if you lack devotion, however perfect the teacher may be, he will not be there to guide you in the intermediate state.

Supporting Others

The information provided below is in relation to the passing of a Mangala Shri Bhuti member. If one is close to a non-MSB member who is in the process of passing or who has died, it is recommended to recite the *Tangtong Gyalpo Refuge Prayer* or OM MANI PEME HUNG (commonly known as “the Mani”), the Six-Syllable Mantra of Chenrezig. MSB members may also recite the *Blazing Sadhana* liturgy on behalf of a deceased non-member. However, Mangala Shri Bhuti is not directly responsible for organizing or hosting group practice sessions for deceased non-members.

Spiritual Advisors (SA)

Mangala Shri Bhuti members are highly encouraged to find a person who can commit to serving as their personal spiritual advisor (SA). Please keep in mind that all members are asked to maintain a relationship with a personal [study and practice representative](#) (SPR), and for many it may make sense for the SPR to also serve as the person's designated SA. However, this isn't required and one's SA doesn't necessarily even need to be an MSB member or even Buddhist. Choosing your SA is a very personal decision.

Ideally, before any sign of the person's illness, the SA will:

- Work with them to create a [Five Wishes document](#). During this process, questions may arise about the Buddhist view on such matters as life support, resuscitation, and organ donation. Such questions do not have "one size fits all" answers. However, "[Appendix II: Questions about Death.](#)" from Sogyal Rinpoche's *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, and "[Questions About Other Aspects of Death.](#)" from Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche's book *Living is Dying*, include some very helpful teachings on how to approach these complex issues. Please also feel free to reach out to a [khenchung](#) if you need any support with these types of topics.
- Have a copy of the sangha member's completed [Five Wishes document](#) or similar document and be familiar with all of the directives included in that document.
- Have the names and phone numbers of family and loved ones. (It is helpful to have the Five Wishes and loved ones' contact information saved in an easily-accessed document on one's phone—as an icon, for example—for quick access in an emergency.)
- It's important for the person to notify the family ahead of time about the role of their spiritual advisor.

- Please feel free to contact a [khenchung](#) if you need any support with the recommendations listed above.

When death is approaching, the SA will:

- Attach a [takdrol mandala](#) to the person's body and have [mendrup](#) on hand to put in an orifice when it's clear that death could happen soon.
- During the days leading up to death, create a team of people who can take turns practicing in the presence of the dying person by reciting the *Tangtong Gyalpo Refuge Prayer* or the Mani mantra as much as possible.
- If the dying person is in a hospital setting, the SA will need to communicate with the hospital staff about Buddhist end of life practices (letting the deceased remain in the room as long as possible after death, attaching the takdrol, putting mendrup in an orifice, allowing people to practice with the body, etc.). It might be helpful to request the assistance of a hospital chaplain, since advocating on behalf of the patient and family for religious observances is part of the hospital chaplain's job.
- Please feel free to contact a [khenchung](#) if you need any support with the recommendations listed above.

After death, the SA will:

- Follow the instructions found in this manual on [How to Relate to the Body Following Death](#).
- Work with family members to help organize the [cremation and memorial](#) if desired.
- Coordinate the [Blazing Sadhana](#) MSB practice sessions at the designated times.
- Please feel free to contact a [khenchung](#) if you need any support with the recommendations listed above.

The Five Wishes Document

The Five Wishes document is a type of living will that is easy to understand, inexpensive, and legally binding. Five Wishes allows you to state: which person you want to make health care decisions for you when you can't make them (medical power of attorney); the kind of medical treatment you want or don't want; how comfortable you want to be; how you want people to treat you; and what you want your loved ones to know. Please note that in many cases, the person selected to serve as one's power of attorney is often the same person who serves as one's spiritual advisor. Also, it's helpful to designate a backup power of attorney in case it isn't possible for the primary power of attorney to be physically present during one's passing. Five Wishes is now valid in 40 states, including Vermont and Colorado. It's suggested that this document be updated every 5 years. For more information, look at <https://www.fivewishes.org/for-myself/>

Takdrol Mandala

The Takdrol is one of the “five methods that lead to liberation without the need for meditation.” It can come in many forms. In our case it is a text of a tantra, which has the benefits of Liberation Upon Touch (see [pages 214-219 in *Living is Dying*](#) for more information). If the dying person is passing slowly, tape the Takdrol Mandala under the arm on the right rib cage for a woman and under the arm on the left rib cage for a man. Once the person is dead, the Takdrol may be put on the heart center, where it will remain even during cremation. If the person dies suddenly, simply tape the Takdrol Mandala at the heart center. [Takdrols](#) can be ordered on the MSB Store free of charge or one can simply [print](#) and use the image (see links below).

Mendrup

Just after passing, *mendrup* can be placed in the mouth. If that's not possible, any orifice will do (nostril, ear canal, etc.). The mendrup granules can be mixed with a fluid (e.g. water), and only a small amount of this fluid needs to be inserted into the orifice. Contact a [khenchung](#) to learn how to acquire *mendrup*.

Practices During the Dying Process and After Death

During the days before and leading up to a person's demise, loved ones, sangha, and the dying person are encouraged to recite *The Outer, Inner, and Secret Refuge Practice of the Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo* (see [Appendix II](#)) in Tibetan or English, or the Mani mantra.

Lojong Guidelines

During the period leading up to death, it's important to become familiar with the lojong slogan, *The Mahayana instructions for the transference of consciousness are the five strengths. Conduct is vital*. Kongtrul Rinpoche's books, *The Intelligent Heart* and *Like a Diamond*, both include detailed commentaries on this slogan. Both are for sale in the MSB Store.

How to Relate to the Body Following Death

The ideal situation is that:

- A [takdrol mandala](#) has already been attached to the body.
- [Mendrup](#) has already been placed in an orifice.
- Embalming or autopsy procedures are avoided.
- The body remains in the place of passing for at least 72 hours and is not moved or touched during this period of time.

- A shrine is set up with offering bowls, candles, and special items from the shrine belonging to the deceased.
- A team of friends and family are encouraged to take turns reciting the *Blazing Sadhana*, [The Outer, Inner, and Secret Refuge Practice of the Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo](#) in English or Tibetan, or the Mani mantra (OM MANI PEME HUNG) with the body, day and night, for the 72 hours following the person's demise.
- After an initial practice period of 6 to 10 hours, cleanse the body head to toe with saffron water, taking care not to jostle the body. This cleansing should be performed by someone close to the deceased and handled with great respect and modesty.

Keep in mind that although the above situation is ideal, it may not be possible to follow these instructions fully. In those cases just follow the instructions the best you can. Remember that it's important to stay flexible with the circumstances and to do one's best to keep the setting as relaxed and peaceful as possible. For example, if it's not possible to not move the body for 72 hours, then just try to do this for as long as possible, even if it's only 4 - 6 hours.

Additional suggestions:

- To prepare the corpse for the practice period, keep the room very cool by using A/C, opening windows in the winter, etc.
- The time of cleansing the body with saffron water is a good opportunity to dress the deceased in the clothes they will be wearing for cremation. At this time dry ice can be placed to keep the body cool for the 72-hour period.
- If you are not working with a funeral home, lay plastic sheets beneath a cover under the body to catch fluids as they exit. Have several large bags of crushed ice and, if possible, ten pounds or more of dry ice. Prepare ice packs in doubled plastic bags. Combine the dry ice with the regular ice. Arrange the packs around the body.

- If the body must be moved to a new location before 72 hours have passed, set up a shrine in the new location and practice there for the remainder of the time.
- It is best to refrain from weeping and expressing sorrow when near the body, and to ask that people not physically touch it.
- In his [Bardo Audio Teaching](#), Rinpoche mentions that the spiritual advisor could help to guide deceased members during their time in the bardos. Traditionally, Tibetans rely on the instructions that appear in Karma Lingpa's *Bardo Tödrol Chenmo* (translated as *The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo* or *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*). A simplified version of this text can be found in Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche's book [Living is Dying](#). You may read this on behalf of someone else, or you may ask others to read it to you after your own death as a reminder.

Blazing Sadhana Practice

Blazing Sadhana is a collection of prayers, mantras, and aspirations compiled by the Ven. Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche. This sadhana was created mainly to be practiced by our sangha following the death of a fellow Mangala Shri Bhuti sangha member. The [Blazing Sadhana](#) is available to download in the MSB Store free of charge. Please use your personal discretion as to which one to use based on your time and circumstances. This sadhana is restricted to Mangala Shri Bhuti members and isn't intended for distribution to the public.

The sangha does *Blazing Sadhana* practice together before and during the cremation. During the 49 days following the person's death, it is beneficial to do *Blazing Sadhana* as an individual or group practice, daily or on every seventh day. On the 49th day, the MSB Sangha is encouraged to gather and do this practice as a group. We generally do the full version of the

Blazing Sadhana during practice sessions during the first week and on the 49th day, and we do a brief version of the *Blazing Sadhana* for the weeks in between (for more information see the [Full](#) and [Brief Blazing Sadhana Practice Outlines](#)).

Cremation and Memorial

Preparation For Cremation

A shrine should be set up at the location of the cremation. This could be a simple shrine of seven bowls of saffron water with a Buddha statue or the shrine that was set up for the 72-hour practice period. It depends on timing and ease of transport. If there isn't space or one is unable to set up a shrine at the crematorium, leave the shrine in place where the 72-hour practice period took place until the cremation is complete.

Brief Dharma Address by Sangha Member

Just before the body enters the cremation chamber, the BA or another sangha member can give a Dharma address. This is not to memorialize the deceased but to bring everyone's mind to the Dharma and set the tone for the practice. This address should take no longer than 10 minutes. One could simply read from a text or speak of quotes from texts. After this address, family, sangha, and friends can offer a flower and khata to the deceased before the body enters the cremation chamber. There should be an umdze who is familiar with the practice to lead the assembly.

Transition from Dharma Address to Cremation

As the body enters the cremation chamber, participants will recite the Heart Sutra three times within the context of the Blazing Sadhana liturgy. Then continue with the sadhana with the Seven-Line Prayer and the Three Kayas Mantra. Ideally participants will continue reciting the mantra for the

entire cremation until the burning of the body is complete (approximately two hours). If participants cannot stay the whole time, then recite the mantra for at least an hour. After reciting the mantra, perform the closing practice of the Blazing Sadhana.

Memorial Service

After the closing of the practice, family, friends, and sangha may choose to gather at a planned location for a memorial service. Offerings of remembrance of the deceased are welcome at this ceremony, as well as offerings of photos, music, songs, poetry, dance, etc.

Appendices

Appendix I - Benefits of Tsok Practice

The following teaching is an excerpt from the [MSB Tsok Manual](#) and was given by Kongtrul Rinpoche on Sept. 10, 2008 at Phuntsok Choling during a tsok.

Doing the tsok practice twice a month is the best preparation for accomplishment in this life, at the time of death, and in the bardo. This is true for even the worst practitioners of this lineage. After receiving the abhisheka, if we just keep the samaya by attending the bimonthly tsoks, Guru Rinpoche has promised that he will be there after our death to guide us to the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain. Even if we've been completely lost in samsara, there is no doubt that we will meet with Guru Rinpoche in the *sipa bardo*, the bardo of becoming.

For ordinary beings in the bardo, having a chance to attain enlightenment depends on having a chance to go to the Copper-Colored Mountain. We hope for the best—to be liberated in this life, or in the bardo of dharmata—and we prepare for the worst, by at least doing tsok practice twice a month. Guru Rinpoche's vajra words and promise are that he will meet us and guide us to the Copper-Colored Mountain. It's otherwise difficult to have full confidence to be liberated in the bardo, so this is an important practice.

What kind of practitioner are we? What chance do we have to attain enlightenment in this life or in the first part of the bardo, the bardo of dharmata? Based on our level of distraction and our various circumstances, it is difficult to say what our chances are. Few can confidently say they will attain enlightenment in this life or in the bardo of dharmata. Even for those who have done years of retreat in the practice of Dzogchen Nyingtik, it is rare nowadays to have that kind of confidence. From the Dzogchen texts' point of view, that confidence is necessary, and it must be based on certain signs. But what if we don't have the signs? And even many great practitioners who do have the signs and know where they will be reborn still do feast practice. Masters who have had all four visions still do feasts twice a month. His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche never missed doing a tsok in their lives.

Coming to the tsok regularly requires commitment and dedication. People keep up their commitment to health by exercising every day, even though they can't take their body with them after death. You can come to the feasts even without understanding much —just with the aspiration to be guided by Guru Rinpoche to the Copper-Colored Mountain, and continue your path there. By not coming, you miss so many blessings, and can easily become lost in confusion. I was thinking of moving the center back down to Boulder to make it easier for people. But I decided against it for this reason of commitment. I thought about how Buddha Shakyamuni intentionally

established gathering places for his followers in remote areas so that people had a reason to visit those places.

This is not pressure. It is just information. The purpose of coming to tsoks isn't merely to maintain a tradition of ritual. Regular tsok practice is like our insurance policy, a policy guaranteed by Guru Rinpoche himself. We aren't just trying to save the face of the lineage or MSB, while getting irritated and resentful that others aren't participating. Regular tsok practice is our best insurance to continue the Nyingtik path. Keep this in your heart. If your participation also helps continue the tradition, it is a double service: to yourself and to the lineage.

Of course, do the tsok wherever you are, but when you have the opportunity, do the tsok at the center. The gathering of males and females, dakas and dakinis, creates important tendrel. The Nyingma and Kagyu lineages emphasize coming to the gathering. In the celestial and human realms, the gathering of male and female energy is important. A feast is a party, and you can't have a party by yourself.

For us, tsok practice is a ticket to the Copper-Colored Mountain. We develop the right relationship by committing to do the feast without resistance, so that even the worst kind of Nyingtik practitioner will still, without a doubt, join the mandala at the Copper-Colored Mountain. Guru Rinpoche doesn't require the commitment from us; we have to develop the connection from our own side. The hook of Guru Rinpoche's compassion is always there, but in the bardo of becoming, it will be of no benefit without a ring, the relationship we have developed with Guru Rinpoche through the tsoks.

Some things in life are very simple and easy. If you had clairvoyance, it would be easy to win the lottery by knowing the winning numbers. You could just fill out the ticket and win. Attendance at tsoks is that simple and

easy, and the benefits are much greater than winning a lot of money.

So just by coming to the tsoks, without any high realization, wisdom, or skillful means, you will be reborn in the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain to continue your path there and swiftly attain enlightenment. Even if you're distracted, preoccupied, and don't have signs of realization, you can still be certain to attain rebirth in the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain.

Appendix II - Benefits of Refuge

[The Outer, Inner, and Secret Refuge Practice of the Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo liturgy](#)

When you take refuge in the Three Jewels with devotion on behalf of someone who's died, the Three Jewels are immediately going to be there and see the whole situation clearly, since you're making that connection. Where can the deceased escape from the broad view of the Three Jewels? Their compassion, blessings, and guidance will be immediately there. Even though the dead don't know how to make that connection, if you make it on their behalf, they immediately make the connection as well. Therefore, I think doing the practice of refuge—reciting the refuge over and over for the deceased—is very powerful, especially during the first forty-nine days. The prayer we should do is Avalokiteshvara's refuge prayer, called *The Outer, Inner, and Secret Refuge Practice of the Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo*. This prayer is very helpful. I do it all the time, day and night, whenever there's a need. It was given directly to Tangtong Gyalpo's teacher by Avalokiteshvara himself for Tangtong Gyalpo to spread, and later he received it from his teacher and spread it. It has been one of the most powerful refuge prayers of all. I've given it to a few people to do it, to transform their life circumstances and different difficulties and patterns, and it seems like it really has worked wonderfully.

Appendix III - Resources

Digital Resources

All of the linked resources found in this manual are listed below.

- Audio Recordings
 - [2004 Bardo Teaching audio recording](#)
 - [Rebirth audio teaching](#)
 - [Pure Realm audio teaching](#)
 - [Nonviolence and Rebirth audio recording](#)
 - [Sangdo Palri Rebirth Prayer audio recording](#) - sung by Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche
- Documents
 - [Pure Realm Aspirational Prayers](#)
 - [Benefits of Tsok Practice](#)
 - [Tsok Manual](#)
 - [“Meeting Death with an Open Heart”](#)
 - [The Outer, Inner, and Secret Refuge Practice of the Mahasiddha Tangtong Gyalpo liturgy](#)
 - [Bodhisattva Vow practice](#)
 - [Five Wishes Document](#)
 - [Blazing Sadhana](#)
 - [Full](#) and [Brief](#) Blazing Sadhana Practice Outlines
 - [Takdrol](#) (order one from the [MSB Store](#))
 - [Living is Dying](#) by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche

- Suggested Texts

- ["Advice for a Dying Practitioner"](#) by Dodrupchen Jigme Tenpe Nyima
- "The Mahayana instructions for the transference of consciousness are the five strengths," from *The Intelligent Heart* by Kongtrul Rinpoche
- "The Mahayana instructions for the transference of consciousness are the five strengths," from *Like a Diamond* by Kongtrul Rinpoche
- *Luminous Emptiness* by Francesca Fremantle
- *Mind Beyond Death* by Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche
- *Peaceful Death, Joyful Rebirth* by Tulku Thondup
- *A Sacred Compass: Navigating Life through the Bardo Teachings* by Anam Thubten
- *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo*, by Francesca Fremantle (Translator), Chogyam Trungpa (Translator)
- *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* by Sogyal Rinpoche