

A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE on DYING

STAGES OF DISSOLUTION: OUTER & INNER SIGNS¹

1. Body thin, limbs loose, sense that body is sinking, asks to be supported
Sight unclear, cannot open or close eyes. (Earth element is dissolving)
Internally: Mirages
2. Fluids dry up—saliva, sweat, urine, and blood
Body no longer feels pleasure or pain (Water element is dissolving)
Hearing no longer functions
Internally: Smoke
3. Can no longer digest food (Fire element dissolves)
No longer concerned with close ones, nor remember their names.
Inhalation weak. Cannot smell.
Internally: Fireflies, or sparks in smoke
4. Energies move to the heart. (Wind element dissolves)
No longer mindful of the external.
Tongue becomes thick, its root blue; cannot taste.
Body sense no longer senses coarseness or smoothness
Internally: sputtering candle.

EXTERNAL BREATH CEASES

5. Winds in right and left channels above heart enter channel at top of head
Internally: At first, sputtering candle, then clear empty space of white light
“Moonlight”
6. Winds in right and left channels below heart enter channel at base of spine.
Internally: Clear empty space of red light
“Sunlight”
7. Upper and lower winds gather at heart, then enter tiny orb at heart
Internally: thick darkness, swoon
“Darkness”
8. All winds dissolve into subtle life-bearing wind in indestructible drop at heart.
Internally: Clear vacuity, the mind of clear light of death
“Dawn”

¹ Adapted from *Death, Intermediate State and Rebirth*, Lati Rinpoche, tr. Hopkins.
The book's preface explaining these downloadable www.dawnmountain.org. “Resources”