

Contemplation: Impermanence and Death

First, contemplate impermanence—the progression from birth to old age and death, people who have come and gone, possessions, shifting scenery, the kaleidoscopic play of phenomena.

Think about the universe in constant motion; think about the subatomic particles of your own body, so kinetic that in any instant their existence and whereabouts are only a probability.

Contemplate death, the countless deaths before and the countless deaths yet to come, the uncertainty of when and how death will happen next.

Imagine specific ways death might occur, the sudden severance from friends and family. Contemplate until you perceive the seeming cohesion of life as a transparent illusion. When weary of contemplation, rest the mind.

When thoughts arise, direct them toward compassion. Reflect on how we usually live in denial of impermanence, yet are undercut again and again when what we relied on as solid and enduring disintegrates and disappears.

Remember the suffering at the moment of death—the fear, the separation from loved ones and possessions—and remember the tumultuous experiences in the *bardo* after death. Think how most beings, oblivious to impermanence, lose their sense of priority. Reflect in this way until compassion for them surges forth, then rest, beyond concept.

Again, when mind's incessant creativity gives rise to thoughts, direct them toward prayer, that all beings may attain such profound realization of impermanence that it totally purifies the tendency to hold to appearances as real, as well as all attachment and aversion that stem from that holding.

Pray that you may go through death's transitions maintaining recognition of mind's nature and that your realization will become so strong that you can rescue others from the turmoil of the *bardo*. Then rest the mind.

Finally, when thoughts present themselves, formulate the commitment to live and practice in unwavering cognizance of impermanence. Commit yourself to realizing the true nature of all phenomena, positive or negative, and to searching for the absolute essence. With this resolve, relax in uncontrived meditation.

Source: Tromge, Jane. *Ngondro Commentary: Instructions for the Concise Preliminary Practices of the New Treasure of Dudjom*. Compiled from the teachings of H.E. Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche. Junction City, CA: Padma Publishing, 1995.