

# **Bow's journey through**

# **The Tibetan Book of the Dead**

## **-His 49 day journey after death-**

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## About Bow (in place of foreword)

“The Tibetan Book of the Dead” is a Tibetan scripture, which guides the dead to help them attain liberation while being read to them what they will experience for 49 days after their death. This is a story of the experience of the world described in the scripture taken by Mr. Osho Yamada (commonly called “Bow”) who passed away on January 5, 2015.

Let me introduce a person named Bow a little bit before we come to the story. Bow, in a word, is *a great OJISAN (old guy)* who moved about a lot with an earnest desire to change the world at any rate, and steadily influenced a wide variety of fields.

He is a canoeing pioneer who brought a canoe to Japan and built canoe courses across Japan. In addition, he went around about 1,300 local communities by light truck and created a foundation of nationwide system for recovering fluorocarbon gas that depletes ozone layer. He also established a support organization called “KOBE GENKI MURA (KOBE Lively Village)” when the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake occurred, he led more than 60 projects to a successful conclusion over 7 years and a half, and these projects became the cornerstone for disaster support volunteers we have today.

For more details, please refer to his brief history described later. He was a person who would take action, with a simple goal of helping others in need, for the future of our planet.

He was full of energy, but I also felt that deep inside, he was full of love and sorrow. At the same time, he was full of charm and at times, showed a different side of his personality.-For instance, when he was sitting in a café, he would express his sense of humor and would put a smile on everyone’s faces.

Bow passed away on January 5, 2015, and has started a new journey, which is the world after death written in “The Tibetan Book of the Dead” more than a thousand years ago. I hope that the journey with Bow through this book will be a pleasant one for those living in the present.

Takehiko Yoshizawa  
Translation:Naoko Ishiwata

## Bow – the biography

Translation : Fumio Obata

**1951** - Bow was born in Osaka, Japan. After dropping out of the high school he traveled to the United States and worked as a tour conductor for travel agencies in the US and Canada. He began canoeing while in Canada and after returning to Japan he became the key figure for popularizing the sport there.

**1993** - After hearing the destruction of ozone layer from one of his canoe students, he resigned from his employment and toured around approximately 13000 local councils to appeal for the Freon gas recovery. His action laid the foundation for its recovery system.

**January 1995** - He arrived in the city of Kobe immediately after the Great Hanshin Earthquake occurred. For seven and a half years until 2002 he was the main representative of the NGO group-'Kobe Lively Village' which supported the recovery of the local livelihoods.

**1997**- When the Russian oil currier Nakhodka polluted the coastline with a large amount of crude oil in the Sea of Japan, he began ladling up the oil on his own which subsequently became a huge public operation gathering approximately 340,000 volunteers. He also consulted the foundations of teams of NGOs against natural disasters in various places in Japan as well as other related areas in relief operations.

**1999** - He began the challenge of climbing 108 mountains to symbolically apologize to ozone layer. The climb was called 'The 108 prays' but he posed it to begin the relief operation for the 921 Earthquake in Taiwan. However he managed to climb 80 mountains within seven months.

**2000** - By walking he distributed portions of fire derived from the flame leftover of the Hiroshima Bomb, total in 92 different places all over Japan. He managed the tour within a year. There were praying and countdowns

for peace along with the distributed lights all over Japan on the last eve of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**2001** – After the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack, he joined the ‘Global Peace Campaign’ and raised tens of millions of yen to print protest advertisings against the retaliation.

**2009** - He helped to facilitate the research by the French born, Canadian biologist Gaston Naessens. It later became the Gaston Naessens Academy which introduced somatids and the formulation of 714-X in Japan. It subsequently contributed the start of its clinical practice in the country.

**2011** - At the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake he consulted and assisted various groups of NGOs and individuals who were his close associates and pupils.

# **Bow's journey through The Tibetan Book of the Dead**

## **His 49 day journey after death**

byTakehiko Yoshizawa

Translation:Fumio Obata

On 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Around 7:10AM

'My dear, I'm off then.'

'OK, come home early.'

Bow Yamada saw off his wife, Yoshimi, from the sitting room like usual.

He then looked at the top left-hand side of the television screen to check the time shown by the morning news.

'Well, it's nearly the pick-up time. Let's get to the lobby carefully.'

For about ten years Bow had been undergoing a dialysis therapy three days a week. Lately he got weaker and had to rely on the hospital transport service to continue the therapy. He was expecting to be picked up that morning too.

He wore his usual red jacket and sat himself down in the entrance hall and put on his shoes slowly. He then grabbed the hand rail.

Hop! With a gentle sway he stood up and took his two walking canes, then opened the front door.

Outside the house he took the key out of his pocket and locked the door. But when he turned around to take the first step forward, he suddenly felt very dizzy.

'What...?'

Thud!

Amid the fading consciousness he said to himself

'No I can't go just yet, not now. No!'

He came close to the edge of death for a number of times but each time he managed to return by repeating the same words.

'Mr. Yamada, are you alright?'

His neighbor found him lying on the floor and called an ambulance.

Bow was given all the possible emergency procedures including a cardiac massage but despite the effort he passed away at 9:17 AM.

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### ***The Chikhai Bardo***

#### **"Bardo of the moment of death"**

'No, I can't die...not just yet...'

Bow passed through the deepest abyss of conciseness in which he couldn't even utter a single word, then all of a sudden there was the very moment of his own birth appeared in front of him.

He was seeing the younger days of his mother and the midwife but moments later he suddenly saw his entire life one more time in a split second.

When he met his death for the second time, a powerful light started expanding in front of him. This light seemed infinite that could be radiating

from himself or the world around him. It was so borderless thus impossible to distinguish anything. After such a secession of the whole life experience being repeated and a powerful light covering everywhere, there could have been only one thing - a very confused consciousness.

Shortly Bow realized it

'This, is, the death...'

In this new world Bow's consciousness was still in a flux unable to accept death., He was ready and prepared for his death, as he felt it was coming, but he still hadn't finished all the tasks and preparations that he wished to complete beforehand.

'I want to return...'

He muttered.

Then the light started to dimmer and a scene stated to emerge. It was inside a hospital room.

'Dear!'

Bow saw Yoshimi crouching beside him and his brother and sister both watching over her.

'Yoshimi!'

No matter how loud he shouted, his voice could no longer reach her.

Upon seeing his own dead body, Bow now accepted the reality that it wasn't possible for him to return. A sorrow started filling up his mind.

A little later Yoshimi went out of the room and took her mobile phone out of the bag. She began calling someone. Bow was watching her carefully.

Hello Takehiko? It's Yoshimi here.

Yoshimi was calling Takehiko who was in Ishinomaki\*1 at that time. As soon as Bow found out who she was calling, his consciousness immediately teleported to where Takehiko was.

Takehiko answered the phone

'Hello?'

"Takehiko, it's me, Yoshimi. Thank you for the New Year's card the other day. I was really pleased to receive the photo. There aren't many photos of both of us in together.'

'You're welcome. Sorry it was rather a late posting. I hope you didn't mind.'

Yoshimi paused a little, and then carried on.

'Listen... Bow Yamada passed away this morning.'

'What?'

Bow was watching all this and at the same time he was so surprised with the teleportation technique he had just done.

'So, this is the teleportation of mind that I heard of...When there isn't a body then the mind can go anywhere it wants.'

Bow said to himself while he watched Takehiko's serious face.

He added

'Takehiko, I now leave the rest up to you. We couldn't do our last meeting but I'm glad that I've already explained the most of the matters to you. Now try to decide how things should be done by yourself.'

A little while back, it was on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 9:59 PM

Takehiko suddenly received a telephone call from Bow. Bow told Takehiko over the phone that he wouldn't be able to live too long and entrusted him two things.

When he died, there wouldn't be any funeral but a farewell party among friends at the Yamanoue hotel in Ochanomizu, Tokyo. And there would be ten of his favorite songs to be played as a gift to the guests.

Bow also asked Takehiko to spread words of The Tibetan Book of the Dead by using his death as a motif.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead is a mantra of Tibetan Buddhism which describes a series of events that the soul encounters within 49 days after death.

Takehiko accepted Bow's request willingly understanding how significant it was for Bow and also for himself, being entrusted such an important task in spite of how little he actually knew about the mantra.

They were planning to meet and discuss the contents after the New Year. Unfortunately the final day had arrived before the meeting was realized.

'My dear!'

Bow heard the voice calling him and immediately returned to the hospital room.

He was astonished how much his hearing had improved. When he was alive he had lost the hearing on one ear, and the other one was just about to go too. But now every single word and phrase sounded crystal clear.

He understood that the connection between hearing and consciousness were well reserved even after the soul had already left the body. He didn't

feel any other bodily senses but the hearing echoed throughout his mind.

Back in the hospital room while Yoshimi was speaking to his body, Bow's brother brought up about the funeral.

'Yoshimi, how would you like to prepare for his funeral?'

'Well, he always said not to have one when he died...so I think we won't prepare it.'

Bow was listening and nodding to Yoshimi's words.

'That's the way it should be.'

The moment he murmured it, the same powerful light as before embraced him. Apparently the most of souls get knocked down unconscious for about 3 days after the light engulfed them. They are confused and in a state of panic immediately after experiencing the death and this light is nothing other than an astonishment and terror for them. However Bow's soul did not panic like before. He had already read The Tibetan Book of the Dead when he was alive and knew what this light exactly meant.

'This light is in fact the true appearance of my own existence. Once I've managed to fuse into it without any fear or resistance, then I will be able to depart in peace.'

'But I want to stay on this earth a little longer...'

On the same day Bow waited until the visibility got clear, then teleported himself to various friends to bid good-byes.

The friends he worked together with  
The group of lads he scolded  
The fellows he broke off after quarrels  
And of course his family

His mind was always with the past. In a spilt of second he could return to any time he wanted to and re-experienced it all over again. He could also enter into someone's mind and understand thoroughly what the person thought and felt. Bow carefully observed all of his life's deeds one by one both from his own perspectives and other people's.

At night he was on a lakeside in Victoria, Canada.  
This was where he met canoeing for the first time.  
There was a beautiful reflection of the moon on the water.

'I'm glad you came to welcome me once again.'  
Bow said to the moon.

At the important turning points of his life there was always a full moon at night.

Every time he saw the moon he spoke to her and had built a special relationship with her. On that night he again looked at the full moon that he adored so much and slowly he begun to accept his death.

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On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day

Four of Bow's close friends - Takehiko, Toru, Shinjon and Naoko came to see Yoshimi. These were the people Bow always called up whenever he came up with a plan. Immediately after hearing the sad news Takehiko organized a meeting with all of them together.

The five of them met at a casual diner place and discussed what should be done.

They decided various things with Bow's character in their minds but what they didn't notice was that he was also in the meeting, sitting at the very end of the row.

After spending the day before visiting so many friends, Bow now fully understood that his voice could not reach anyone, but there were a few

who suddenly remembered him when he spoke to them. With this he had guessed...although he could not transmit his exact thoughts to people, it was nevertheless possible to implement a type of inspiration into their minds. Unfortunately this only worked depending on who he was communicating to. In any case it was fairly easy for Bow to grasp this sense of transmission from somewhere external as he himself always felt the same sensation coming from outside whenever he took on a project or aid work. He also realized that among people there were those who could sense this and could not do so.

In the meeting Bow mainly concentrated on listening to the members' discussions but from time to time he nodded and spoke out his opinions. All the attended carefully decided the plan bearing in their minds how Bow would have thought of it.

'Takehiko, that's wrong!'

'Naoko, that doesn't make sense!'

'Well, well, Shinjon, you always get it right.'

'Toru, you haven't changed at all.'

The time went by as the five of them struggled to come to agreement. It was as though they were actually hearing Bow's advice and propositions.

'OK! That would do. This should be it.'

Bow uttered a word of content which was not heard by any of the attended, but everyone there felt having found a common ground.

Yet Takehiko still had one concern. He wasn't sure whether he could actually write about Bow's afterlife journey based upon The Tibetan Book of the Dead without having a too much of knowledge about it.

Despite such doubt Takehiko still went to the Dalai Lama office in Shinjuku\*2 afterwards and the rest of the members also begun their tasks – Shinjon, Toru, and Yoshimi started tidying the articles left by Bow, and Naoko went to the Yamanoue Hotel to reserve a hall for the farewell party.

Takehiko and Naoko got on the same train and recalled the memories of Bow together. Bow also followed them and listened to their conversation.

Rather randomly, Takehiko suggested to Naoko.

'Let's go to the Dalai Lama office and the Yamanoue Hotel together, shall we?'

'Yeah, why not.'

They went to visit the Dalai Lama office together and later arrived at the Yamanoue Hotel around 6 pm.

After briefly checking the hall they both sat down with the hotel's booking manager in the lobby. Then Naoko suddenly became restless when a woman entered into the lobby and sat on the couch next to theirs.

Naoko asked the woman

'Excuse me, are you Miss. Randy Taguchi\*3?

'Yes I am'.

It was such a coincidence to meet her there. Prior to this they talked about how to contact her to inform Bow's death. Randy Taguchi once worked with Bow for the mine-clearing operation in Cambodia but neither Takehiko nor Naoko actually knew her personally. Fortunately Naoko had gone to one of her talks before and remembered her face well.

They informed Randy Taguchi about the sad news as well as the farewell party at the hotel and when Takehiko brought up The Tibetan Book of the Dead, she quickly responded

'You mean the Bardo Thodol? I know it because I study Buddhism.'

‘Is that so? I was looking for a specialist to help me.’

‘I could explain it to you in parts, but not entirely.’

Takehiko felt so relieved. Bow was again there watching all this, sitting next to the booking manager and couldn’t help smiling at Takehiko. Only Bow knew how this was actually realized.

‘So, that’s the way to use the inspiration technique a little differently.’

He said to himself.

‘Perhaps Toa might have spoken to me like this but I have probably never noticed it. How thankful now I feel towards him.’

‘Bow, you always noticed my signals.’

‘Eh?’

So there was a reunion between the two old friends. Toa was someone Bow knew for a very longtime but he lost his life in a tragic avalanche accident when they climbed a mountain together in the winter. Bow now understood that it was Toa who always sent him the important inspirations when he reached around his 60’s. Toa had already been reincarnated in the next life but in the world of consciousness it is possible to transcend the time and space to meet anyone anywhere. Bow’s mind was now filled up with all the years of gratitude towards his old friend.

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### ***The Chonyid bardo –***

### **“Bardo of experiencing of reality”**

On the 4th day

There was a little change in Bow’s journey.

He noticed a light coming above his head. He looked up then realized that dazzling light had returned again. He observed it carefully this time and found out that the light was coming from the Vairocana, Dainichi Nyorai Buddha with a gentle expression in its face.

It was about the same size as the Great Buddha of Nara\*4 but not made of iron but of the vivid human flesh. The Buddha looked at Bow so tenderly with the light radiating from the left chest that shined all around him.

‘This is incredible.’

Bow bent backwards being completely overwhelmed by this.

The Buddha didn’t say a word but continued to cast an affectionate look at Bow.

Bow thought

‘That light is in fact the core of all existence and also myself too. This Buddha is probably trying to guide me. I shouldn’t be afraid and shall melt into this chest light and I shall depart in peace.’

With one more careful look, Bow spotted a dim white light beside the Buddha. The light bore a reticent but calm feeling which lured Bow to keep looking. It was just like a candle.

‘OK, now I’ve got it.’

Bow understood its meaning.

‘If I proceed into the strong light coming from the Buddha then I’ll be liberated from the cycle of reincarnation and shall be a part of the light that is the origin of universe. But then by proceeding towards the blunt but familiar light I will be once more reincarnated into a different being. Well, I’ve already decided my next path when I spoke to the Moon earlier and I still have some works to do before leaving this earth. I would like to

stay here a little longer. Fortunately it is said that it's possible to do so for 49 days after the death.'

Bow ventured to speak to the Buddha.

'Hello, nice to meet you. My name is Yamada. My friends call me Bow. I was born in a city called Osaka, Japan, and died in Saitama, again in Japan. I'm so honored to be visited by you, Vairocana, Dainichi Nyorai Buddha because up until now I saw you only in various temples. I'm afraid I've already decided my next plan and thinking of taking a different route, if I may explain to you...

He then tried to explain his request as carefully as he could. When he finished it the Buddha slowly disappeared retaining the warm look towards Bow.

'It looks like he accepted my wish. How thankful.'

From that day onwards and for seven days without cease there were different types of Buddhas coming and going and each accompanied a dim light next to themselves.

At each appearance the light changed its color and it looked like there was the new reincarnated world behind its flame. Apparently the lights changed their sorts according to what worlds were behind their flame façades. The both ends were synchronizing to each other.

Bow explained his intentions as best as he could to every Buddha appeared in front of him just like with the first one he met earlier. And all of them agreed and then disappeared

On the 6th day

A Tathgata appeared in front of Bow and it was also accompanying a dim light too. Once again Bow explained his intentions and the Tathgata disappeared silently. Bow sat down in front of the light just like having a

camp fire on a river bank. On that day the light looked rather like a lamplight coated with bluish yellow. It seemed to have a direct route connected down to the human world. When Bow peeped into it, all the earthy places he wanted to visit started to conjure up. Among them Bow spotted a small gathering of people.

On the same day there was a reading of The Tibetan Book of the Dead in respect to Bow instead of a funeral and wake. It invited only a handful numbers of peers and relatives all according to his wish.

'Umm, I'm surprised to see many of them came from far away.'

It was past 4pm when the reading started with Yoshimi's introduction then Takehiko informed the guest all the development up until that point. Lastly Randy Taguchi took over and begun her explanation about The Tibetan Book of the Dead.

Bow thought

'Randy, I'm well impressed. You knew exactly the areas that I was hoping to integrate.'

In Tibetan Buddhism it is believed that the dead never loses his hearing so it is encouraged to guide the dead by speaking to him at the bed side. On that day everyone tried to guide Bow according to what was written about afterlife in The Tibetan Book of the Dead. They were encouraged to explain the text into their own words rather than reading out it directly from the book.

One guest said to Bow's body

'Hi Bow, you must be seeing two different lights. Please proceed towards the dazzling one. You may like the dim one but that's not the one you should go to. Please move towards the dazzling light.'

Bow

'I'm watching you from the dim light (chuckle).'

Another guest said

'I think you may be seeing different Buddha at the moment but they are all just illusions that you created by yourself, so you shouldn't feel scared.'

Bow

'Oh, that was the reason then. Now I've got it.'

And another said

'Soon you will see gods with angry faces in succession but they will guide you to find the right pathway. Please don't be scared of them because they are also illusions that you created with your mind. Although they may catch you and tear you into pieces you won't die as you're already dead anyway. So don't worry about getting caught.'

'Oh, so that's what will happen next. I vaguely remember reading the same stuff in The Tibetan Book of the Dead I've forgotten about it. Thank you.'

Then Bow noticed two things placed next to his coffin.

'Are these also for me? A cigarette and a cup of ice coffee? That's fantastic! Sadly I can't smoke or drink now. Hey, is there anyone who could smoke this for me? '

Randy sensed the signal and asked the fellow guests.

'I think Bow wants someone to smoke his cigarette.'

Toru lighted the cigarette and placed it upwards among the burning incenses.

Bow responded

'No no I didn't mean that. Smoke it properly. Randy, can you hear me again?'

Randy again received the signal

'He actually wants someone to smoke it properly!'

'No problem. I wanted to smoke one anyway.'

Toru stood next to Bow's coffin, lighted another cigarette and begun inhaling it.

Bow was waiting for this.

"That's it! Now!"

At once he teleported himself to the hall by passing through the dim light, and then successfully merged into Toru's consciousness.

Bow was already capable of understanding someone's feeling but now he could actually experience the action too by synchronizing his consciousness to the person's mind.

In this case Bow synchronized his mind to Toru's mind and also tasted smoking the cigarette.

'Well, it does taste good.'

So and so, in such an amicable atmosphere all the guests spoke to Bow one by one

Bow was so pleased to see everyone.

'Toshi, you're now engaged? Akio, you became a father? Gou, so did you? That's amazing. I see, I see. Well, I wish all of you the very best.'

The gathering lasted for two hours then everyone stayed on for drinks. They chatted over the memories of Bow. Bow sat himself down at the corner seat of the hall and watched everyone. When Toru went outside to smoke a cigarette Bow also went out to smoke one through him.

It was a strange gathering but it had its own charm and everyone felt

content at the end because of it.

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On the 7<sup>th</sup> day

Once again there was a Tathgata accompanying a light appeared in front of Bow.

Bow regarded the Tathgata with full of gratitude in response to its very warm expression and vowed to him slowly without saying anything. The Tathgata then simply disappeared. The words were no longer necessary between Bow and Tathgatas to understand each other.

Then Bow teleported to a crematory where his body was now laid. It was in the morning of the same day and there were his relatives and a few friends attending to bid farewell to his body.

Bow's mind stood by the head and warmly took a long look at his entire body.

'How worn out this body is. Thank you for working so hard until now. I'm very proud of you.'

It was the day when the Mt. Fuji appeared so clearly from the morning. Bow looked at the Mt. Fuji and said to himself

'I climbed it five or six times with this body...'

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On the 12<sup>th</sup> day

From that day on the situation surrounding Bow begun to change again.

Until then he only saw kind looking Buddhas but now he began receiving a

series of Acalas with horrific appearances.

The first one appeared in front of him was Hevajra Tantra which had three heads and six arms. Its body sprayed out luminescent fire and all of his nine eyes were wide open. His eyebrows were shaking like thunder lighting.

When Bow turned around and saw the god standing right in front of him he was completely shocked by its fierce appearance.

Woooow!

Even for Bow it was such a surprise and he couldn't help uttering a shriek.

When there is no physical restriction like a body, the consciousness radiates its emotion without limit. Once a dead man's soul meets Hevajra Tantra, in most cases his mind is seized by a tremendous terror that spreads like a boundless waveform. With this the soul gets knocked down unconscious for numbers of times. Even for Bow it was the same and he also fainted.

After waking up he managed to calm down a little, and recalled Randy Taguchi mentioning such raging gods earlier in the gathering.

'So that was it then. OK, I can prepare myself well for those angry gods the next time I meet one.

When he decided, stood and turned around, the same Hevajra Tantra again appeared in front of him.

'Gosh!'

He got again seized by a surprise but this time he managed to retain the composure and spent some moments to bring calmness back.

He thought to himself that even Hevajra Tantra tore him apart, he

wouldn't die again as he was in the state of Śūnyatā – emptiness and Hevajra Tantra was actually his guardian angel which was also an illusion that his mind had created. Slowly he managed to understand the situation.

Then there was a serene and tranquil state of mind arrived inside Bow.

'Now I see that if I accept this god then I will attain Buddhahood and depart in peace. However I've already decided what to do next. I shall explain it to him.'

Feeling a little nervous Bow introduced himself to Hevajra Tantrato like he did to the earlier Buddhas and explained the same intention to stay here a little longer.

Afterwards Hevajra Tantra disappeared silently.

According to The Tibetan Book of the Dead there is an intension behind the appearance of Hevajra Tantra, which is to induce a strong concentration and instantaneous force by creating a sense of terror and the result would be an acceleration of Buddhahood attainment for the soul. A consciousness is in a vast boundless state that gets easily destructed so this phenomenon encourages it to concentrate all its focus onto one single point.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> day

Another Hevajra Tantra appeared in front of Bow.

Like usual he vowed to the god and explained his intention to stay here as best as he could. Also the day was very special for Bow and he asked for a permission to briefly return to the earth.

The day was the 20th anniversary of the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake\*5.

At 5:46AM Bow was looking down the cityscape of Kobe from the top of Mt. Rokkou.

He re-experienced various memories of that time 20 years ago – the mother and child whom he couldn't rescue upon his arrival in Kobe, and the pot of stew which was the beginning of the Kobe lively village\*6 he started with other volunteers. The activities, many encounters, and many good-byes, all of which he recalled like yesterday.

'It's time to get down there.'

There was a bunch of the old friends talking about the old days at the East Park next to the city hall. Everyone already knew about Bow's death and he was all ears to what they talked about.

Bow was reflective

'Indeed everyone got older. He has lost so much hair. No wonder I have died then.'

Bow watched people eating soba noodles from the soup kitchen.

'I'd love to eat warm soba noodle one more time...If it's possible the ones from Shinsyu\*7.'

Bow also came to the reunion of the Kobe lively village at the Mikage Koukai hall and listened to all the episodes back then along with his own reflection.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> day

The Great King Yama, the god of death, appeared.  
It was completely different from the previous Hevajra Tantras. It was really huge, as big as a mountain.

It was snarling, sacking blood with numerous hands but had a dignified bearing.

Bow said

‘Wow. So this is The Great King Yama...This is incredible...’

The great king held a thick notebook and read out what was written inside with his enormous pair of vitreous humours. He gave Bow a fierce look and said

‘This book contains the record of your life. Your life is about three times thicker than a normal person. It took a longtime for me to finish reading it. So, what do you think of your life?’

Bow responded

‘Sorry for the late introduction. My name is Yamada but my peers and friends call me Bow.’

Bow raised his voice like doing a hi-de-ho towards a mountain.

The Great King Yama said

‘There is no need to shout. Speak normally as I can hear you without a problem. So, what do you think of your life?’

‘Hmm, well...’

Bow took his time thinking of each word.

‘It was a life with so many bumpy roads.’

‘I see.’

‘I was always clumsy but I lived it fully. I also caused many troubles too. I was let down and betrayed by many people, so I would say I have tasted anger, sadness and bitter tears probably ten times more than a normal person. But I also experienced rejoice and delight ten times more as well. However, by experiencing my whole life once again, I discovered that I also

let down and betrayed so many people and was actually helped by the ones I thought I was helping. When I was alive I always regretted my mistakes but I'm still doing the same even after coming to the other side.

'Ha ha ha. It looks indeed as bumpy as you say.'

'But it was still a very happy life. Of course I can still regret so much but I'm full of feelings of gratefulness.'

'That's right. You played a huge part. You nurtured not just your soul but many others' souls too. This is a big credit.'

'No I don't think so. I only took actions and advised people around me when it was necessary. After that everyone just grew up on their own.'

'I see. Now then what is your next plan?'

'I've already decided.'

Bow told his intension and The Great King Yama disappeared silently. At the precise moment when the great king completely disappeared Bow saw the god's figure had changed into that of himself.

Bow thought

'Even the great king was in fact myself too. In short, one can't deceive oneself. Everything is transparent and clear. We're in the world in which there can't be any cheating or lying.'

He then spent the rest of the day quietly.

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## ***The Sidpa Bardo***

## "Bardo of rebirth"

Between 19<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> days

When Bow was alive he had a very poor eyesight and hearing. He had lost the sense of smell and all of his teeth too. He couldn't even walk without a cane. However in this world he could see everything so clearly, hear voices no matter how far away they were from, distinguish the differences between all sorts of smell, and pass through all the walls and rocks without being prevented.

Bow visited various times and places and looked back different stages of his life attentively.

He went back to the small factory areas in the East Osaka where he grew up. He was now a small child again and enjoyed one of his favorite playing tricks. It was to use his father's legs like a playground slide. His father always took a very good care of Bow who wasn't born a strong child, and in that reunion moment the father's love overflowed through Bow's consciousness.

The next Bow was in Hiroshima. He once organized a photo session trying to form human letters of 'NO WAR NO DU'\*8 with the fellow friends. It became chaotic when they realized that the photo wasn't in fact taken after the letter had already been disbanded. Everyone had to be recalled to do the same thing again. He watched the slapstick event fondly from the above overlapping his own feeling over everyone else's feeling.

He also visited the places where he distributed a portion of the flame from the original the light of souls\*9. Some of these portions had already been extinguished but he found the survived flames and calmly watched them burning in those places.

He went to visit all the people he met in his life anew but he felt a little lonely. Although he talked to them they could never notice his presence.

Also because he could read the people's minds he was hurt by some of their opinions. However he was moved full-heartedly by the sincerity and the faith they indeed had in him.

He toured around the places and people all of which he had come across and observed the earth and humanity as a whole. By now Bow had developed very sharp senses which enabled him to penetrate every error and unfaithfulness in human beings. As a result he felt a raging anger and became worried about the humanity and the earth.

However when he saw the matter in the perspective of individual souls striving for the truth and improvement, he could observe the work of humanity with calmness and tranquility.

Between 27<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> days

When there were about 3 weeks left Bow begun one of the last things he needed to do before-his departure from earth

That was climbing.

Since 1999 Bow had attempted to climb all the 100 renowned mountain peaks in Japan, and the addition of 8 more peaks will bring the total to 108.

When all the heights of 108 peaks were added together, it became as high as ozone layers in the atmosphere. Bow's climb meant a ritual gesture to pray for its recovery and also to ask for its forgiveness. Unfortunately it was interrupted when the 921 earthquake struck Taiwan\*10 and he had to stop the climb when there were still 28 peaks left to do, to take part in the rescue operation.

He was able to reach the peak in a flash of second or by floating all the way if he wanted to, but he opted to walk on foot, step by step, one mountain a day.

Of course Bow was now merely a consciousness without a body so the climb didn't tire him as there wasn't even a footprint on the snowy mountain paths. But it didn't matter - He still had to carry on with the notions of walking and climbing.

While he was climbing he encountered various phenomenon. Certain illusions triggered by his past karma begun to appear.

During this period of illusions those who have done many bad deeds will spend the days being chased by a devil like presence and those who have lived faithfully will experience pleasure and happiness. And those who have done nothing will encounter a sense of stupidity surrounded with emptiness and colorlessness.

In Bow's case he was full of happiness for few moments, but then suddenly he felt being chased by a strong sense of terror. He knew all these illusions were created by his own karma so he simply accepted all the sins that he had done, and reflected them thoroughly while he climbed each remaining peak.

He posed a little when he was at the half way, the peak of the 14<sup>th</sup> mountain, Mt. Daizen, out of the remaining 28. He then noticed that his appearance was getting thinner and more transparent. It meant that the transitional process was gradually approaching for him to be reincarnated into the next being.

When he was climbing Mt. Hōō, which was the 18<sup>th</sup> mountain, there were six dim lights suddenly showed up in front of him. These were indeed the same lights which accompanied various Buddhas earlier.

White light leading to the God realm  
Yellow light leading to the Human realm  
Green light leading to the Demi-god realm  
Blue light leading to the Animals realm  
Red light leading to the Hungry ghost realm  
Grey light leading to the Hell realm

Before the process of reincarnation the most appropriate light shines onto the soul according to what types of deeds it has done and what results it has achieved in its lifetime.

For Bow it was the white light that shined on him.

It was easy for him to simply proceed towards the light but there were still things left to do. He was well aware that it was an attachment that he should have broken off from, nevertheless he continued to climb.

The 28<sup>th</sup> mountain, the very last one out of the all the 108, was Mt. Miyanoura in Kagoshima prefecture, in Southern Japan. When he reached its peak he observed the earth from the height of ozone layer.

Bow thought

'I just can't help adoring this planet and all the living forces down there. Please let this continue forever...'

He prayed and uttered a sentence

'We apologize to you.'

And for the very last he said

'Thank you.'

These spiritual words were delivered to ozone layer, all the people he had been associated with, the earth he loved so sincerely, and all the life forces inhabiting the planet.

On the 49th day

It was the day when the farewell party took place. Bow watched all the preparation coming along.

‘Thanks so much everyone.’

At 1pm the guests started arriving in the hall. These people all had their paths having crossed with Bow somewhere in their lives.

They were  
those who were helped by Bow  
those who worked with Bow  
those who had quarrels with Bow  
Everyone liked him so much.

Bow said

‘Well well, it’s been far too long! Gosh he aged a lot. What? He also became a father?’

In the hall there was a chair set up for Bow. One by one everyone spoke to Bow where the chair was. Bow was there listening to them, nodding and sometimes answered like he used to do.

‘Umm...I think that’s wrong.’

No one could hear him but he responded sincerely.

Then the songs Bow loved were introduced. Bow was intending to choose them by himself but it wasn’t finally realized. It was now only Yoshimi who knew most of his favorite tunes so she was asked to consult the choices for the party.

He appreciated each one of them and listened to them delightfully but also got a little disappointed with some of his favorites missing.

‘Well, I would have loved to hear that one as well.’

Masanori Ooe, with whom he spoke with on the phone at the end of the last year, also came to the party. Ooe was the first writer who introduced The Tibetan Book of the Dead to Japanese audience and he explained the

content of the book to the guests.

Just as Bow hoped everyone had accepted and embraced the idea of ‘soul is immortal’ which was written in The Tibetan Book of the Dead. He was now truly content from the bottom of his heart

Then at the end of the party there was the last music being played.

It was ‘Hymn to Hope’

For Bow, this music was literally about himself. It was the sound that he wanted everyone and everything in front of him to listen to. Every time he was at a mountain peak or anywhere with a great view he let every mountain, every tree, and every single leaf hear this music. For him it was a prologue before he submerged into a meditation, an epic, a celebratory words and an epilogue.

Bow finally said

‘OK!’

Among the six dim lights of reincarnation, the one he chose was the yellow light, the human realm. And he had already chosen what being to be reincarnated into.

‘I would like to be born to a couple who will have a child with disability.’

Bow said such an important decision like ordering a bowl of curry like he used to do in restaurants.

Then in front of him a couple appeared.

While observing the couple he found himself being jealous of the woman and realized he would be born as a female.

‘Huh, I’ll be born as a woman next. That would be interesting.’

It is said that at this point if one gets possessed by jealousy or hatred, then there will be an error while being reincarnated into the next being.

Bow quietly accepted this sense of jealousy that naturally emerged in him and slowly took each step.

Bow had worked harder than anyone. On the other hand he also said it was his job not to move. Bow knew very well that the work he had to play was to point out what directions and actions for other people around him to take. And the body he chose was an immobile one. While others were trying to help his immobility, their souls got enhanced by their very actions. Already during his lifetime Bow had known that he would become such an existence which made others around him grow further and further.

And just like that Bow's new journey had begun.

For other's souls to grow and develop he used his very own. That was precisely the part he had played and the wish he had always carried with him.

## Annotations

### Ishinomaki\*1

Ishinomaki is a northern port city in Miyagi prefecture which was devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011. A group of volunteers who were friends and pupils of Bow Yamada set up a NGO called OPEN JAPAN to support the locals in the city and nearby regions. Takehiko Yoshizawa has been the main representative since 2013.

### Shinjuku\*2

One of Tokyo's 23 special wards which holds the biggest train terminal possibly in the world. The Dalai Lama Office was founded in Shinjuku Ward in 1976 and its territorial jurisdiction covers the Eastern Asia including Japan.

### Randy Taguchi\*3

Randy Taguchi is a novelist and essayist who is vocal about Japan's social problems through her numerous activities including novels, support groups, public discussions, and non-fiction reportages. Her recent theme covers the Early Buddhism, also the development surrounding the Fukushima nuclear plant.

### The Great Buddha of Nara\*4

The most famous Buddha statue in Japan which was completed in 752 and enshrined in Todai-ji temple in the city of Nara, Nara prefecture, in the Kansai region. This Buddha statue is a very familiar image among Japanese and is often referred to for its gigantic size and grandeur.

### The Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake\*5

On January 17<sup>th</sup> 1995, a 6.8 Mw earthquake struck the city of Kobe in Hyogo Prefecture. It devastated the city and approximately 6,434 people lost their lives. Bow Yamada arrived the city the next day and quickly

established himself as a renowned NGO coordinator.

#### The Kobe lively village\*6

The biggest NGO base which Bow Yamada set up in the city of Kobe. Numerous young volunteers spent time there to support the survivors. Some of them later became specialists for the disaster relief and emergency management.

#### Shinsyu\*7

A province in Nagano prefecture, famous for its fine production of soba noodle.

#### NO WAR NO DU\*8

On 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2003 around 6,000 people gathered in Hiroshima for a peaceful protest against war and DU(depleted uranium). Depleted uranium is *uranium with a lower content of the fissile isotope U-235 than natural uranium...Civilian uses include counterweights in aircraft, radiation shielding in medical radiation therapy and industrial radiography equipment and containers used to transport radioactive materials(Wikipedia).*

#### The light of souls\* 9

It derives from the actual left over of the flame from the explosion of the nuclear bomb in Hiroshima in 1945. The late Tatsuo Yamamoto found a fire in the basement of his uncle's bookstore and put it in a small portable fuel tank. He then kept it going for two decades. The fire has been parted, distributed, and shared in various places mainly among temples since 1968. Bow Yamada was taking a part in the project.

#### The 921 earthquake\*10

On 21<sup>st</sup> September 1999, a 7.3 Mw earthquake struck in Jiji, Nantou County, Taiwan. 2,415 people lost their lives and 11,305 were injured. Bow

Yamada supported his Taiwanese acquaintances and their NGOs by raising the rescue funds in Japan.

## **What is “*The Tibetan Book of the Dead*” ?**

by Masanori Ooe

Translation: Mimi Noda

San-chan was Bow's daughter's dog. I took care of San-chan for a while when Bow was promoting his book *The War Poisoning*, as Bow was too busy. When I asked him the dog's name, he said, "I don't know. It's the day before Christmas Eve, so how about San?" More than ten years have passed since that day.

I met Bow for the first time when he stopped by my house while on his walking pilgrimage for peace. He was carrying the "Light of Peace," a torch kept in Hoshino Village in 2000, a memorial to those who suffered from the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. In 2000, I requested that he participate in "Inochi no Matsuri," the Festival of the Living. He was the perfect manifestation of the book he had given me, "*Get the Power of Life.*"

Bow stated in his will that his mission was to make *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* available to as many people as possible. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* indicates that we can reach Buddhahood and escape the samsara cycle of death and rebirth. However, Bow wished to return to the world as a bodhisattva. I see the larger outline of his life in *Bow's Journey*.

*The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is a scripture for guiding us after-death which is about relief the soul the period of a moment of death until rebirth. Generally, it is considered to be 49 days, so a Buddhist memorial service for relief of the dead person is performed posthumously in Japan for that period of time.

*The Tibetan Book of the Dead* tells us that one who doesn't learn to die cannot learn to live. The instant of death is the moment when the deceased becomes one with reality.

"A key to understanding life and death is to regain one's [true nature of the heart] by going back to the deeper essence. And it happens at the moment of death."

It is nothing but the "I" which blocks us from seeing the [true nature of the heart]. It is therefore precisely the instant of death, when the "I" is extinguished, that we may see the ultimate reality.

First, a lesson of "Bardo of the dying" is talked to a dying person.

Many people, pursued by fear of death, lose awareness. However, if death is faced without fear, with the realization that it is merely a step on the journey, the moment of death becomes the moment of realization, the moment of finding the ultimate light of knowledge. It is the ray which is the sky itself.

"O nobly-born (so-and-so), listen. Now thou art Experiencing the Radiance of the Clear Light of Pure Reality. Recognize it. O nobly-born thy present intellect, in real nature void, not conformed into anything as regards characteristics or colour, naturally void, is the very Reality, the All-Good.

Thine own intellect, which is now voidness, yet not to be regarded as of the voidness of nothingness, but as being the intellect itself, unobstructed, shining, thrilling, and blissful, is the very consciousness, the All-good Buddha.

Thine own consciousness, not formed into anything, in reality void, and intellect, shining and blissful ---these two,---are inseparable. The union of them is the *Dharma-Kāya* state of Perfect Enlightenment.

Thine own consciousness, shining, void, and inseparable from the Great Body of Radiance, hath no birth, nor death, and is the Immutable Light---Buddha Amitābha.

Knowing this is sufficient. Recognizing the

voidness of thine own intellect to be Buddhahood, and looking upon it as being thine own consciousness, is to keep thyself in the [state of the] divine mind of the Buddha.”<sup>(1)</sup>

However, most people lose awareness because of their fear of death and cannot dissolve into the clear light. This state lasts for about 3 days.

Then, the dead person falls into [Bardo, which is the duration of the experiencing of the true character of existence.] The first seven days, Gods of peace visit the deceased in order to try to rescue him. Shortly the dead person awakes from loss of awareness. On the first day, Vairochana, Dainichi Nyorai Buddha of the radiant blue beam, comes to greet the dead person. However, because the dead person is stunned and frightened, s/he cannot dissolve into the beam of Dainichi Nyorai Buddha.

In this way, for seven days, Gods such as Bodhisattva and Tathgata come one after another to try to rescue the dead person.

At this point, *The Book of the Dead* explains that the deceased has been experiencing the true nature of existence.

May I recognize whatever [visions] appear, as the reflections of mine own consciousness.

May I not fear the bands of Peaceful and Wrathful :Deities], mine own thought-forms.”<sup>(2)</sup>

If people cannot dissolve into the light yet because of fear, Buddhaheruka (the aspect of the wrath of Dainichi Nyorai Buddha) among others will appear, emitting a more subdued light for seven days, in the effort to save the deceased.

If one cannot yet wake up to [the true nature of the heart], they are drawn before the Great King Yama. A Lama (guide monk) says this to a dead person who is stunned and frightened at the experience.

O nobly-born, when such thought-forms emanate, be thou not afraid, nor terrified; the body which now thou possesses being a mental-body of [*karmic*] propensities, though slain and chopped [to bits], cannot die. Because thy body is, in reality, one of voidness, thou needest not fear. The [bodies of the] Lord of Death, too, are emanations from the radiances of thine own intellect; they are not constituted of matter; voidness cannot injure voidness. Beyond the emanations of thine own intellectual faculties, externally, the Peaceful and the Wrathful Ones, the Blood-Drinking Ones, the Various-Headed Ones, the rainbow lights, the terrifying forms of the Lord of Death, exist not in reality. <sup>(3)</sup>

The dead person who still feels fear and wanders without being able to recognize the voidness, has to return to <Bardo of seeking rebirth>.

Gradually, the deceased becomes able to see the worlds of rebirth. Lama guides the deceased to the most suitable of one of six worlds: Heaven, Asura, the world of humans, the world of beasts, the world of starvation, and Hell.

Heaven, or Paradise, is not the final world of deliverance either. It, too, is one of the worlds of samsara.

In the Tibetan Buddhism, there is a Mantra which is one of the most common methods to escape the samsara cycle of death and rebirth: On-Mani-Padme-Hum (the Bible, precious stone, lotus flower, forever). It said to have the power to shut off the entrances to rebirth into the six worlds, or six ways, of samsara. If one chants this every day, there would be no way except to be Buddha when one dies because there would be no place to be born again. A Buddha (Hotoke) is a person who has awoken and been escaped from the cycles of samsara.

Then, finally, one sees the entrance of the womb, is drawn into it, loses consciousness of post-death reality, and is born again into this world.

This period is thought to be 49 days long. At this point, the journey of the soul, as described in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, ends.

If one can grasp the truth that death is not the final end of existence for a single and limited entity but rather a step in the great flow of life, indeed a step towards unification with the great flow of life, that understanding will change tremendously a person's attitude towards both life and death.

On February 22nd, a Buddha-Bow who completed the 49 day path of enlightenment chose, despite recognizing the clear light of Buddha, to be born again into this world. I would like to celebrate the birth of a new Buddha.

(1) Evans-Wentz, W. Y. "The Tibetan Book of the Dead," (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 95-96.

(2) Evans-Wentz: 103.

(3) Evans-Wentz: 148.

## **Words and Things beyond Words**

by Randy Taguchi

Translation: Naoyo Asada

It was truly a coincidence that I should go to the Yamanoue Hotel that day. I was shocked to hear of Bow's death but I might have known it already deep inside of me; I had a strange feeling. I have experienced my brother's, my parents' and my in-laws' deaths. I visited each of their deathbeds (except for my brother's who killed himself). Every time someone in my family died, I could feel it in my bones. I felt something, almost like a sign. I could see them off; our goodbye was mutual. Death for me wasn't always a melancholy experience. Ever since I was a child, I believed that the soul never dies. I was not taught this by anyone but I knew it almost instinctively.

I witnessed my friends' deaths several times. Many among the youngest died of cancer. When young people are struck by disease many are filled with grief, but I have always found myself to be surprisingly calm. The reason I don't fear death is because I have already experienced so much of it in my family. I have an innate sense of what dying people want, so I know how to carry out their wishes. I know that once I do this, they can die peacefully.

However, I don't know what journey the soul will take after death. I have tried not to dwell on it. I believe the story of the soul needs to be told carefully. The idea that the soul lives on and transcends the flesh is a powerful one; capable of great possibility, but also of terrible destruction; terrorists, for example, often make use of this idea, seeking relief and glory through death. The eternal soul influences people's perspective on life. I am always afraid of this when I hear the news of a suicide bombing. Affirming the afterlife can diminish life in the flesh. Above all, it is paramount to recognize how precious it is to be born in and of this world.

I was born a woman and bore a child. She was born the year after my brother's death. It seemed that she decided to be born of me and not the other way around. I became pregnant after twelve years of

marriage, so I was surprised. About five months I had a dream; the fetus in my womb came out and said, "Hello, mom. I know you are going to be a writer. Do not let my birth stop you."

I never knew I would be a writer. Being a writer requires not only talent, but luck as well. Because of that I was almost embarrassed to have it as my dream. When I told my husband, he urged me to continue writing; that subconsciously I wanted to do it. The baby was born a girl. When she had just begun to talk, she cried and said, "I left many friends behind in my past life." ; she seemed to remember things from before her birth - "I was watching you and father on TV from the clouds above." she said. She pointed to the nearby shrine where we often go and said, "I fell onto the shrine and flew into your womb."

My first work (published when my child was only two) amazingly became a best-seller. Given that I had only a simple dream guiding me to begin to work as a writer, my success was all the more surprising. I had never expected in my wildest fantasy to become a best-selling writer. About half a year before I made my debut, a psychic (whom I had never met) cold called me and said, "You will work for God. I was told to help you." I was invited by him to \*Izumo Taisha, given a plane ticket, and was placed in a hotel free of charge. I didn't understand why people were being so nice to me; it was embarrassing. That year, I met several people who had mysterious powers and I felt encouraged.

I began to realize that it was my calling to write about the soul. But I was worried because writing about the soul is usually deemed a slightly taboo subject. My editor suggested to me, "Write a love story or write a mystery or..." Because of that, I was lost and didn't know what to write. I was anxious about being a professional writer and crafting my best novel yet. My first fifteen years seemed to pass by in the blink of an eye. During that time I made it through my relative's deaths while raising my child.

I met Bow after I became a writer. Around the time we met, I was studying various social problems. I started studying discrimination, religion, Buddhism, worldwide nuclear issues, public health, and welfare for the

disabled. At the same time I was struggling to fulfill my calling in life as a writer. I had never before touched on spiritual things. Therefore, I tried to accept Bow's way of living but we often disagreed and battled.

Once, when we visited Cambodia to inspect the removal of landmines, we ended up having an argument on a street in Phnom Penh. I didn't quite understand why Bow shared the \*\*remnant fire of the atomic bomb, even though I was helping him. I knew that the only way I could ever fully understand his selfless actions was to delve into the realm of his soul. To anyone else, his actions might have seemed crazy, but I knew that his upstanding soul wouldn't allow anything else. I always supported him but kept my distance. I often asked him," Why are you doing all of this?"

As time passed by, my in-laws gradually passed away and my daughter left home to start a life for herself. I finished my job as a housewife and as a caretaker. Now I have a clear sense of what I should write. I am content.

I was devastated by Bow's death at the Yamanoue Hotel. I believe his dying wish was to pass down "Bardo Thodol" to the next generation, so that people know that the soul transforms and lives on even after death. The Creator's will is for the soul to become more beautiful little by little, step by step. The Earth is but one of many training places. According to Tibetan Buddhism, devoting yourself to others' happiness is the only way to attain truth.

I think Bow's life was an endless series of noble actions. It was a pure practice of salvation that went beyond mere words. It was very meaningful for him to leave behind the words "Bardo Thodol". In order to fulfill his dying wish we need to train ourselves each day in the pursuit of ultimate altruism. It depends on how we act toward other people; place to place and moment to moment. I think he would want us to keep living for others without fail; I know he believed that our sole purpose on Earth is to improve the lives and hearts of others.

Even now Bow still tells me, smiling, "Randy, true joy means living for everyone's happiness. You won't see how great it is until you practice."

Thank you, Bow.  
Thank you for passing on your message of peace.  
Thank you for making this world a better place.  
Surely I will see you again on this beautiful planet.

\*Izumo Taisha is one of Japan's most important and oldest shrines. The shrine used to be ruled by a powerful clan in pre-historic times and the region plays a central role in the creation of Japanese mythology.

\*\* The late Tatsuo Yamamoto found a fire in the basement of his uncle's bookstore in Hiroshima after the atomic bomb. He took a small portable fuel tank and touched it to the fire. The fire lit the tank, and the flame became a reminder of his uncle. He brought it back home to Kyushu and kept it going for two decades. His village has continued to keep the fire going as a symbol of peace.

## The Editor's Message

by Sithar Kunchok

Vice-Chairperson, Association for Promotion of Tibetan Buddhism

I was approached by Mr. Yoshizawa of General Incorporated Association of Open Japan, to give a short introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* for groups associated with Open Japan, which are engaged in volunteer work in the aftermath of natural calamities such as the recent earthquake and tsunami in Tohoku.

Their mentor and leader, Mr. Osho Yamada who recently passed away, stated in his will that his mission was to make this book available to as many people as possible. He worked and organized diligently in support of victims of natural disasters such as the earthquake in Kobe, Taiwan, and Sumatra, and in land mine removal in Cambodia. I was impressed by his devotion to the needy people of disaster-struck area. So I would like to say a few words about this book.

*The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is an old and important example of religious literature, unique in many ways, thought to have been written around the eighth century.

In general, the teaching of Buddhism deals much with death and life, as well the life between death and life which is called "Bardo". Even then, we don't find much information as to the circumstances of the era. However, *The Book of the Dead* describes many unique experiences of mind and spirit after death. Some of them are quite fearful. In my understanding, though, these experiences are merely mental or psychological reflections of our mind and actions. In Buddhism, we believe that all of our actions and thoughts in our past and present lives will reflect and have an effect on our future lives, even in Bardo.

There are three levels in Bardo. The first level is the Chi Kha'I Bardo, which is the period immediately after death, a time when the

person may not realize he or she has died. During this period, one's mental experience will be mainly leftover transitory impressions and also attachment to the life left behind. This experience is not so important as it's a temporary illusion. Then the second level is the Cho Nyid Bardo, which is the most important part in the Bardo life. Because one is looking neither to the past nor future, but simply experiencing the mental state of the moment, it does not have many distractions. In Buddhism, the innate nature of mind is purity, serenity and clear light. Therefore it is very important to experience it as deeply as possible with no discrimination. It is experiencing the reality of mind as it is. So trying to maintain it as long as one can is very important. The third level, the Srid pa'l Bardo, is important for a special reason. It is the time when we begin to think about where to reincarnate. It is important to maintain mental equanimity as our wishes and desire during this time will affect our future lives. So during this time, we should try not to experience any kind of delusions and always to maintain very virtuous mental condition. These experiences are depicted in various texts by experienced masters of the past. There are many messages and spiritual practices that we can learn from them.

The experience of our life and death is a spiritual journey towards a better life or state of mind. Thus it emphasizes that how we act and what we think are important for our mental well being.

I pay my respects to Mr. Yamada, who was concerned about people's happiness in their future lives even at his death, and wished to spread *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. I hope that his good influence in his present life continues to his future life, and brings him more happiness.

## **Afterword by the author**

“I am sure Bow is here.”

After Bow’s death, I felt it for the first time when there was a full moon when I looked up at the sky the night of January 5th, the day Bow passed away, then I felt it on the following occasions; when I met with Randy at the YAMANOUYE Hotel; when I found some people had already somehow sensed Bow’s death when I conveyed his death; an episode of cigarette in a story-telling session of “The Tibetan Book of the Death”; the day of cremation was the seventh day after his death and on that day we had a clear vision of Mt. Fuji; it was 20 years to the month of his death since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake occurred; and the date of “Farewell Party” fixed by adjustment with the hotel staff was the 49th day from the date of his death (about the seventh day and the 49th day after the death, I realized them absolutely later). Although this all might have been coincidence, that is too good to be true, and it seems to me that foreshadowing has been already ready, which helped me to write a story.

I came to know Bow in late summer of 2007, and sent an e-mail to his address on the web. Then one week after that, Bow-san came to meet me in Osaka of his own accord. I was so impressed at that time, and looking back, I felt like my mind was carried away by Bow from that time. I have started social activities in earnest from an encounter with Bow, and almost all of the activities I have done were triggered by suggestions from Bow. I had moved about for hands and feet of Bow who had gradually lost his strength, and I served something like a secretary to him. Meanwhile, I always touched Bow’s words and heart. After all, although the largeness and the depth of Bow was immeasurable for me, I added Bow-san’s personality what I understood, the words from him, lyric of music he moved, etc. to this story, while thinking of this 7 and a half years.

I wrote about Bow’s decision to eventually transmigrate to a disabled child while reminiscing back to the time when I introduced him a story of

the soul transmigrated to a disabled child (“TENSHI NO KIGURUMI (A child wearing an angel suit)” (by Soko Oniiru, Shin Nihon Bungei Kyokai (New Japan Literary Arts Association)) by mail news, and there was a call from Bow, saying “this is what I had been saying, ‘my work is not moving’, and I want to be like that too. Well done, Take-chan!(Bow called me Take-chan)”

On December 28, 2014 at 21:59, the last time I talked with Bow and an unforgettable time for me. Bow left quite a heavy will to me saying “using my death as a theme, I want you to make a book of attaining liberation of “The Tibetan Book of the Dead” with Tibetan Buddhist monks, and to introduce what is written in it to many people. If possible, I want you to ask a message from His Holiness The Dalai Lama.” Suggestions from Bow always made me feel a little tightness in my chest, loading a burden which is about twice my height on my shoulder (LOL). For example, he proposed the activity of atomic flame to me, although I had never been to Hiroshima, and proposed the car sharing support, although I can’t drive a car.

However, these burdens passed by Bow have helped me grow, and I really thank him. I pleasantly accepted his requests/suggestions. I suppose, thanks to Bow’s support, there was an encounter with Mr. Kunchock Sithar of Tibetan Buddhism Promotion Association, and under his supervision, the draft was finished and I managed to get the point where I can sound out His Holiness The Dalai Lama’s message (although I could not make it for the first edition, if we can issue the second edition, it would be wonderful if we could carry his message). When I think about this heavy suggestion being the end, I feel it really precious

After Bow’s death, I can feel him being closer to me. It feels like when I call him for help, he shows up right away, and gives me advice, but on the other hand, I feel like I am being watched by him all the times, which makes me think I cannot live a lukewarm life. I learned from Bow’s death, that death is not a separation, but a unification.

Bow, thank you very much for giving me precious opportunities until the very end.

From now on, I will find a burden by myself and carry it on my shoulder,  
and pass it to the  
next person. Bon voyage!

February 15, 2015

Takehiko Yoshizawa

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