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From the Agamas

Death: The Yogi's Instruction Manual

Guiding the soul to depart the body through the top of the head

The following text is from chapter nine of the knowledge section of Raurava Agama, "Departure and Absorption of the Soul." The chapter discusses how the sadhaka, or sincere devotee of Siva, should approach death.

A perfect sadhaka is one who has known well the science of Sivayoga. He should be systematically worshipping Lord Siva and his guru. He should have a firm, unwavering resolve. He should have thoroughly studied and contemplated the concepts set forth in the Agamas. Such a sadhaka, having repeatedly seen inauspicious visions [in his dreams], such as an elephant, horse, chariot, unfavorable weapons or other bad omens, should understand that a proper time for the departure of his soul is fast approaching. The sadhaka may be a householder or a king. Whatever be his order of life, on knowing that the departure of his soul is imminent, he should perform fire ritual by making oblations related to the five cosmic elements in the fire of consciousness created by astra mantra ["Om hah astraya phat"].

Having selected a proper place, he should purify himself well, his consciousness being charged with specific mantras. Having strewn sara grass and darbha grass over the selected ground and seating himself there, he should meditate on Rudra, whose form is designed with astra mantra, who is the creator and destroyer of the worlds, and who through brahma astra mantra ["Om ham sivastraya hum phat"] is invincible. [The two astra mantras are Siva's power of omniscience and omnipotence.] The sadhaka, well trained in meditation and well-skilled in the techniques of yoga, should contemplate the form of astra through the yoga of supreme consciousness. He should assume a fitting and comfortable posture, either svastika or padma. He should keep the upper part of his body erect and his neck upright. He should hold his hands below, in such a way as to display the yogic kurma mudra.

Let him not clench his teeth together, and let him keep his eyes half closed. Having subdued the snake of deep attachment to worldly pleasures, he should restrain his five organs, which are the vehicles for the senses related to the five elements. He should regulate the movement of inbreath and outbreath.

Six inches above the navel, the heart lotus shines forth with the brightness of the rising young sun. At the center of the heart lotus there is the solar region; and at the center of the solar region there is the lunar realm. At the center of the lunar realm there is the fiery region with its innate purity. At the center of the fiery mandala, the Great Lord Ishvara is present. He presents Himself there with a luster comparable to pure crystal.

The sadhaka should install his consciousness, perfected and illumined by such specific discipline and astra mantra, at the center of the heart of Ishvara. There, within that heart cave, it assumes by its own force a form of astra, burning with the

pure fire of Siva. This astra form, assumed by the consciousness of the sadhaka, rises to the head and then to the crest of the skull, the brahmarandhra. Breaking open the brahmarandhra, it reaches the solar realm of the Sivaloka within a fraction of a second.

Upon the head of the sadhaka who is the knower of the Supreme Mantra, a motionless luminous light gets formed. At this moment, the sadhaka should draw out his soul in the form of astra, contemplating Ekavira Rudra and His Shakti, and unite it with the brahmarandhra through the process of dharana yoga, concentration. The soul drawn out in this way departs from his body.

All other aspects of the soul depart from various parts of his body, such as legs and others, and accumulate again in the plane of brahmarandhra. Having departed from the brahmarandhra, the soul, associated with all of its essential aspects, swiftly passes through the outer region of the brahmamda [universe] known as loka-aloka (region of visible and invisible worlds). Getting itself separated from this region and from the dual state of prakrti and purusha, the exalted and great soul assumes a resplendent subtle form and becomes identical with all the worlds and all that exists by means of its pervasiveness. Finally, it enters into the Great Lord, Siva, who is very subtle.

At this stage, the attending sadhaka (an associate of the liberated sadhaka) should keep the body from which the soul has departed upon the stretch of darbha grass and sara grass designed in the form of astra and cover it with clothes and offer perfumes. He should touch the head of the body with the accompaniment of the mantra "samharaya bhutani hiranya."

Then the attending sadhaka should offer oblations into the fire with the mantras pertaining to the Lord of Vidyas and contemplate upon the departed soul as identical with the Supreme Lord, in a systematic way as ordained in the Agama. In this way, the soul gets liberated from the bonds through the process of astra sama yoga. There is no doubt about this.

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