

What a Buddhist Should Do When a Person is Dying

人在臨終時，佛教徒應該怎麼做

by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tharchin,
由肯仁波切·格西洛桑達欽建議

In the spring of 1991, the director of an American hospital which often treats Buddhist patients requested advice on any special steps to be taken with followers of the Buddhist religion as they die. Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tharchin the abbot of one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in the world, gave the following brief advice.

1991年春，一家經常治療佛教徒病人的美國醫院的院長，就對待佛教信徒臨終時的特別做法徵詢建議。那時就任世界上最大的佛教寺院之一沙拉梅寺的住持，肯仁波切·格西洛桑達欽，給出了以下簡要的建議。

Question:

How should family, friends, and hospital staff handle a Buddhist who is dying?

問：家人、朋友和醫院工作人員該如何對待臨終的佛教徒？

Answer:

As a person is dying, it is extremely important not to disturb or upset them in any way. Family, friends, and staff should not show any excitement near the deathbed, and should speak softly, in restrained tones. It is best at this time to speak as much as possible about religious topics, according to the religious faith followed by the dying person.

答：當一個人快死的時候，很重要的一點就是不要以任何方式去打擾或擾亂他們。家人、朋友和工作人員在對方臨終之際不應表現出任何激動的情緒，應壓低語調輕和地說話。最好在這個時候根據臨終之人所遵循的宗教信仰，盡可能地談論宗教話題。

If the person is a Buddhist, the people present should try to talk about subjects such as the Buddhas, lamas or great religious teachers, compassion, loving kindness, the wish to achieve enlightenment for the good of all living beings, and especially the fact that the Buddha himself is a place where one can take ultimate refuge or shelter -- a protection which will never fail.

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如果一個人是佛教徒，在場的人應該試著談論諸如佛陀、上師或偉大的宗教導師、悲心、慈心、為了眾生的利益而達到覺悟的願望，尤其要談論佛陀本身就是獲得終極庇佑或保護的地方——永遠不會落空的保護。

The reason for trying to speak about these things is that the last moments of thought in this life are extremely important in determining what will happen to a person in the future: these thoughts trigger particular seeds in a person's mind that will decide where they are to go next. Therefore it is essential to see that these thoughts are as pure as possible. There should be no bad thoughts or disturbing emotions.

試著談論這些事情的原因是，今生最後一刻的念頭對於一個人的未來具有極其重要的決定性意義：這些念頭觸發一個人的意識裡特定的種子，這些種子將決定他們接下來的去處。因此，以盡可能清淨的方式來看待這些念頭至關重要。不應該有不好的念頭或令人不安的情緒。

The process of dying is very similar to what happens when an advanced religious practitioner goes into meditation. The mind goes deeper and deeper, and enters an extremely subtle state. Because of this it moves into a psychic chamber that is located in the area of the heart and forms part of the central psychic channel that passes down through the center of the body.

死亡的過程非常類似於高級宗教修行者進入冥想時所出現的現象。心識進入得越來越深，進入一種極其微妙的狀態。由此，心識進入了位於心臟區域的精神內室，這個內室形成了通過身體中心，向下延續的中央精神通道的一部分。

Although the person has stopped breathing and has to all outer appearances become completely cold and lifeless, this subtle state of mind is nonetheless still present in the body, within this chamber. In some people it may remain there for as long as ten days, although seven days is more typical. The way in which the person's mind is stirred out of this deep, subtle state is the crucial point in the death process.

雖然這個人已經停止了呼吸，體表的一切都已經完全冰冷，沒有生命力，但這種細微的心識狀態仍然存在於身體中，在這個內室裡。對於有些人，它可能會在那裡停留十天之久，而七天更常見。人的心識以哪種方式從這種深層、細微的狀態中被喚醒，是死亡過程中的關鍵所在。

If allowed to do so, the mind will of its own accord come out of the subtle state — and this is actual death. If however we touch or jar the body abruptly, we can waken their mind from its deep state. The mind will leave the body where we touch it: if we touch the lower part of the body, the legs or feet, then the mind will leave from there and in most cases lead the person to a birth in hell or one of the other lower realms. If we touch

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the upper part of the body it is better, for most people will then take a birth in the higher realms. The best place we can touch the person is at the center of the top of the head.

如若可以，心識會主動從這種細微的狀態中出來 — 這是真正的死亡。然而，如果我們突然觸碰或撞擊他們的身體，我們就會將他們的心識從深層狀態中喚醒。我們觸碰到哪，心識就會從哪裡離開身體：如果我們觸碰身體的下部，腿或腳，心識就會從那裡離開。而且大多數情況下，這會令這人在地獄或其他下界出生。如果我們觸碰身體的上半部分會好一些，因為之後大多數人會投生在上界，我們能觸碰的最好位置是頭頂的中心。

It should be emphasized though that one should avoid touching the person altogether. This is because stirring their mind out of its subtle state is actually taking it to the point of death — touching their body causes his mind finally to leave the body, and this is tantamount to killing them. Therefore we should be extremely careful to leave the person alone until the mind has completed the process of the subtle state and departed on its own accord.

但需要強調的是，我們應該完全避免觸碰臨終者。因為把他們的心識從細微的狀態中喚醒，實際上是把人帶到了死亡點 — 觸碰他們的身體會導致心識最終離開身體，而這無異於殺死他們。因此，我們應該相當極其小心地不打擾這個人，直到心識完成了這個細微狀態並自行離開的整個過程。

Question:

How do we know when the mind has departed on its own? What signs will appear?

問：我們怎麼知道心識什麼時候已自行離開？會出現什麼跡象？

Answer: Once the deep, meditative state has been released, certain liquids will come out of the two nostrils of the person's nose, and also from his lower parts. This should not be confused with the passage of urine during the grosser stages of death; the liquids referred to here are known as the "red" and "white" substances, and are involved with the process of physical conception.

答：一旦深度冥想狀態被釋放，某些液體就會從人體兩個鼻孔流出，也會從他的下身流出。這不該與死亡較粗顯階段的尿液排出相混淆；這裡所指的液體被稱為“紅色”和“白色”物質，與物理受孕過程相關。

When the liquids are released, the person is actually dead, and his body can be touched. With some people the subtle state might go on considerably longer, and in such a case you can speak to the person quietly and calmly, and ask him two or three times to come out of it. Then the liquids will be released, and you can touch the body.

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當液體被排出時，這個人實際上已經死了，可以觸碰他的身體。對於某些人來說，這種細微的狀態可能會持續更長時間，在這種情況下，你可以平靜地和他說話，並請他從裡面出來，請兩、三次。然後液體就會被排出來，這時你就可以觸碰身體了。

Question: Is it all right after death to put the body into a refrigerated area?

問：死後把遺體放進冷藏區可以嗎？

Answer:

This is a very dangerous practice. If the mind is still in the subtle state, it will detect the cold and develop a strong desire for warmth. This can cause the person to take birth into one of the hot hells. It is better to wait at least 24 hours after death before refrigerating the body, and very preferable if the period can be even longer. If this is not possible, it is important to ask the person gently to release his state of meditation, as described above.

答：這是一種非常危險的做法。如果意識還處於細微狀態，就會察覺到寒冷，對溫暖產生強烈的欲望。這會導致這個人在某個熱地獄裡出生。最好等到死亡至少24小時後再冷藏遺體，如果等時間更長的話會更好。如果不可能做到，如前文所述的那樣，輕柔地請求這個人從冥想狀態中出來是非常重要的。

Question:

Is it appropriate for a Buddhist to have his bodily organs donated after death?

問：佛教徒死後捐獻身體器官合適嗎？

Answer:

It is a very good thing if one can make this final act of charity with their body. It should however be done out of a motivation of wanting to give, and not for any kind of monetary profit.

答：如果一個人能用自己的身體做最後的善行，那是非常好的事情。然而，這樣做應該是出於一種想要給予的動機，而不是為了任何形式的金錢利益。

Question:

What is the Buddhist position on mercy killing, or ending someone's life to prevent him further, incurable suffering?

問：對於安樂死，或者說，結束一個人的生命以防止他遭受更多無法治癒的痛苦，佛教持什麼立場？

Answer:

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It is very wrong to turn off a life-support system, or to take any similar action, anything that will cause a being's life to end, even if they are "brain dead" but still breathing on a respirator, or the like.

答：哪怕已經“腦死亡”，但仍連接著呼吸器進行呼吸等情況下，關閉維持生命的系統，或者採取任何類似終結對方生命的措施，都是非常錯誤的行為。

Question: What is the Buddhist position on abortion?

問：佛教對墮胎持什麼立場？

Answer:

Abortion is completely wrong. It is murder. In fact it is a particularly repugnant form of murder, since in most cases of murder the victim is someone who can physically attempt to fight back and defend themselves, whereas in an abortion the victim is small and helpless, and cannot protect themselves.

答：墮胎是完全錯誤的。是一種謀殺。事實上，這是一種特別不道德的謀殺行為，因為在大多數謀殺案件中，受害者是能夠試圖反擊和自衛的人，而在墮胎時，受害者弱小而無助，無法保護自己。

Question: What is the Buddhist position on contraception?

問：佛教對避孕持什麼立場？

Answer:

Contraception is not killing, in types of contraception where conception has not occurred, but it is preventing a being from achieving a higher birth, a precious human life.

答：避孕不是殺人，有些避孕措施中懷孕還沒有發生，但它正阻礙一個生命獲得更高的出生，獲得寶貴的人生。

Question: Is there any way that we can help a person after he dies?

問：一個人死後，我們有什麼辦法可以幫助他嗎？

Answer:

In our lives we do a great many bad deeds, and they remain with us, like small black stones. We have also done a very few good deeds, either purposely or by sheer accident, and these are like small white stones. Nonetheless, by the force of our prayers, and by the blessings of the goodness of the "three gems" of Buddhism — that is, the Buddha, the high realizations of Buddhism, and people who have gained

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them — it is possible that at a very crucial point in the process of death, or during the "inbetween" period before the next life, the power of the white stone or few good deeds can be pulled out and triggered, rather than the power of the many black stones. It would be a little like winning the lottery.

答：我們生生世世做了很多壞事，它們就像黑色的小石頭一樣留在我們身上。當然，不管是出於刻意還是純屬偶然，我們也做了一點好事，就像白色的小石頭一樣。儘管如此，借由祈禱的力量，借由佛教“三寶”的加持——即佛陀，對佛學的高度證悟，以及獲得此證悟的人——在死亡過程中的一個非常關鍵的時刻，或者在下一世之前的“中間”階段，白色石頭或那點善行的力量可以戰勝眾多黑色石頭的力量先拔頭籌而被優先激發。這就有點像中彩票了。

Question: What particular prayers or rituals can be held to help the dead person?

問：可舉行什麼特別的祈禱或儀式來幫助死者？

Answer:

After the person dies, their mind enters a state called the "bardo" or inbetween state. During this period they are still seeking out his next birth. This "inbetween" being will never live for more than seven days, although they themselves can die and become an inbetween being again — for up to a total of seven times, or a total of 49 days, before the next birth is taken.

答：人死後，他們的意識進入一種稱為“中陰”或中間的狀態。在此期間，他們仍在尋找下一次投生。這種“中間”生靈的壽命不超過七天，儘管它們自己可能會死亡並再次成為中間生靈，在下次投生前——它們最多會活七次，即總共49天。

Because the inbetween state even in the longest case cannot last more than 49 days, we normally perform one ritual on the 49th day after the person's death (for all these prayers, we take the day of death as the first day counted). We believe that this ceremony, which is known as "jang-chok" or "ritual for the purification of bad deeds," can actually help the dead person to take a higher birth.

因為中間狀態最長也不能持續超過49天，我們通常在人死後的第49天做一次儀式（對於所有的祈禱，都把死亡的那一天作為第一天計算）。我們認為這種被稱為“jang-chok”或“淨化惡行儀軌”的儀式，可以真正幫助死者獲得更高的出生。

During this ceremony we lay out some pieces of the dead person's clothing. The "inbetween" being, or the person after his death and before their next birth, has a very subtle physical form, and during this "inbetween" period exhibits extranormal powers

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such as the ability to pass through walls. They are aware of outer physical events and can be present at the ceremony, attracted to his belongings.

在這個儀式上，我們陳列一些死者的衣物。“中間”身，或者說在死後和下一次出生前的人，有一個非常微妙的身體形態，在這個“中間”期間展現超凡的力量，如穿牆的能力。他們意識到外在的人事物，會被自己的物品所吸引而出席這個儀式，。

Even though they may not understand the language in which the ritual is held, it is still effective for him. This is because the power of the ritual comes from what we call the "infallible three." The first of these is the blessing of the three jewels, mentioned above. The second is the power of emptiness, or the truth of the fact that nothing can exist inherently. The third is the pure and selfless intent to help the dead person, felt in the hearts of the people performing the ritual.

即使他們可能不懂儀軌所持的語言，但對他來說仍然有效。這是因為儀軌的力量來自於我們所說的“不敗之三”。其中第一是上述提及的三寶的加持。第二是空性的力量，或者說是任何事物都不從本身內在存在的事實。第三是進行儀式者內心所感受到的純粹的、無私的幫助死者的意圖。

Incidentally, even if the dead person has already taken their rebirth by the time of the 49th day, the prayers will be effective in helping them in that rebirth. For this reason too it is a custom to hold an additional purification ceremony earlier, on the seventh day after death (again counting the day of death as the first day). Again the person's clothes are used, and the *jang-chok* is read, usually along with a set of nine prayers known as the *munlam de gu*, or any appropriate *munlam* type of prayer.

附帶一句，即使死者在第 49 天的時候已經投生了，祈禱對幫助他們投生也有效。也是出於這樣的原因，在死後的第七天（同樣把死亡的那一天算作第一天）提前多舉辦一場淨障儀式成了一種習俗。再一次，死者的衣服會派上用場，讀誦 *jang-chok*，通常還同時念一組九篇的祈禱文，也就是 *munlam de gu*，或任何適合的 *munlam* 類型的祈禱。

Question: Are there particularly effective prayers that can be read around the person as he actually dies?

問：當一個人真正死亡之際，有沒有特別有效的祈禱文可以在他周圍讀誦？

Answer:

If the dying person has received the necessary initiations, it is very good if you can recite to them, calmly and clearly, the *dakkye* ritual used in the secret teaching of Vajra Yogini. The *tundruk* or secret six-session prayer is also very good. These rituals have a special power for the dying person because the prayers and visualizations have become

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ingrained in them, since he has recited and practiced these on a regular basis throughout their life. The prayers are effective whether or not they can at that point clearly hear or comprehend them.

答：如果臨終的人已經接受了必要的灌頂，如果你能平靜而清晰地向他們背誦金剛瑜伽母密法中使用的本尊儀軌，是非常好的。*Tundruk*，或秘密的六支祈禱，也是非常好的。這些儀式對臨終的人有一種特殊的力量，因為祈禱和觀想在他們的內心已經根深蒂固，因為他們的一生中經常背誦和練習這些。所以無論他們是否能在當時清楚地聽到或理解其內容，祈禱文都有效。

Any other kind of *munlam* or prayer can be read around the dying person, if neither of the above is appropriate. It is also good if you can recite the *Om manipadme hung* prayer, which is familiar to nearly every Buddhist in our community.

如果上述兩種都不合適，可以在臨終的人周圍閱讀任何其他形式的 *munlam* 或祈禱文。如果你能背誦我們團體內幾乎每一位佛教徒都熟悉的觀音心咒(*Om manipadme hung*)祈禱文，也是好的。

Question: What kind of funeral ceremony is appropriate for a Buddhist?

問：什麼形式的喪葬適合佛教徒？

Answer:

There is no great difference whether the body is cremated or buried. There is a tradition not to burn the body in a case where the person has had a serious and contagious disease, since it is believed that the smoke from the cremation would be unhealthy for other beings; in this case, burial would be preferred. In general though the practice of burial uses up what would otherwise be useful land for the living. We also believe that there are certain spirits which we can't see, and which are able to partake of the body's flesh. Some of them are made ill by the flesh of a human, so that again cremation would be preferred.

答：遺體火化或土葬沒有太大的區別。有一個傳統是，不焚燒已患有嚴重的傳染性疾病的遺體，因為人們認為火葬產生的煙對其他生命而言是不健康的。在這種情況下，土葬更合適，儘管，總的來說，土葬佔用了他人可用作謀生的資源。我們也相信有一些我們看不見的生靈，而且他們能夠食用遺體的肉。有些生靈會因食用了人肉而生病，所以又更傾向用火葬。

Incidentally, in some countries it has become a tradition to hold parties or "wakes" including alcohol drinking, in connection with a funeral. Lord Buddha specifically

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prohibited the use of alcohol or drugs for Buddhists, and so Buddhists should avoid this practice.

附帶一句，在一些國家，葬禮跟有飲酒活動的聚會或“守夜”連在一起已成為一種傳統。佛陀世尊明確禁止佛教徒飲酒或吸毒，所以佛教徒應該避免這種行為。

Question: What should be done with the belongings of the dead person?

問：應該如何處理死者的遺產？

Answer: Of course, the wishes of the person as they expressed them before their death should be followed.

答：當然要遵從死者生前所表達的願望。