

A Buddhist View to dying and death



Objective

To give an overview of:

- Background to the Buddhist Faith
- Meditation and how it can help
- Preparation before death
- The period after death
- Funeral Ceremonies

Background to the Buddhist Faith



Some Facts

- Around 376 million Buddhists in the world
- UK 2011 Census
 - Approx. 150,000 declared themselves Buddhists
 - About 0.25% of the population
- Buddhism is cultural based i.e. can take many forms

Background on the Buddha

- Buddha means Awakened One
- Buddha Siddhartha Gautama lived in the 5th Century
- Born into a rich family
- Was not happy with his life and left home to find another way

Four Noble Truths

1. The Truth of Suffering
2. The Truth of the Origin of Suffering
3. The Truth of Cessation of Suffering
4. The Truth of the Way leading to the Cessation of Suffering: The Noble Eightfold Path.

Five Positive Precepts

- With deeds of loving kindness, I purify my body
- With open-handed generosity, I purify my body
- With stillness, simplicity and contentment, I purify my body
- With truthful communication, I purify my speech
- With mindfulness clear and radiant, I purify my mind

Karma

- Means actions
- Actions have consequences
- Skillful Karma
- Unskillful Karma

Skilful Karma

- Generosity
- Morality
- Reverence
- Meditation
- Service to the community

Skilful Karma (continued)

- Transference of merit
- Rejoicing about other's good fortune
- Hearing the teaching
- Explaining the teaching
- Understanding the teaching correctly

Unskilful Karma

Three caused by actions:

- Harming living beings (killing)
- Stealing (defined as taking what is not one's own)
- Misuse of the senses (sexual misconduct)

Unskilful Karma (continued)

Four caused by speech:

- Lying
- Slander
- Harsh speech
- Frivolous talk (i.e.gossip etc)

Bad Karma (continued)

Three caused by mind:

- Attachment
- Ill will (anger)
- Ignorance.

Meditation,
chanting
and how it
can help



Types of Meditation

- Mindfulness of Breathing
- Loving Kindness (Metta Bhavana)

Mindfulness of Breathing

- Focusing on the Breath
- How it enters and leaves the body
- The length of Breath
- Type of Breath

Loving Kindness (Metta Bhavana)

Creating a positive frame of mind towards

- Yourself
- A friend
- Neutral person
- Difficult person
- For everyone

Mantras

Different traditions will have their own verses that they will chant.

They can be used to concentrate the mind on a particular aspect of the Buddha.

Preparation before death



Creating a Positive Environment

- Rejoice in merits
- Meditation
- Chanting Mantras
- Encourage friends and family to talk about good times
- Putting things right

The period after death



Revering the Deceased

- Clean and dressing the body of the Deceased
- Organ Donation
- Mark of respect

Funeral Ceremonies



In General

- Length of Service : 45 – 75 minutes (Crematorium Service will be less)
- Flowers - Yes
- Food - No
- Dress Code - (Men/Women) – Casual, some may wear white or dark clothing with a white scarf, armbands
- Source of Readings – Buddhist teachings/Sutras
- Open Casket – Yes
- Period of Mourning – 90 days
- Memorial Services – 3rd, 49th, and 100th day

Preparing for the Funeral

- The hall or the place where the body lies should appear serene and peaceful
- The coffin should be practical and not expensive
- An altar can be set up in front of the coffin with a Buddha image
- A picture of the deceased should be placed along side the Buddha image.
- There should a space for offerings such as flowers, candles and incense

Preparing for the Funeral (cont)

- If monks are not available to preform the rites friends and family may do so
- Recordings of chanting may be played but must be appropriate
- Any monies left over should be donated to a good cause

Paying last respects

- Family and guests should be encouraged to join in the chanting (possible call and respond)
- Guests should stand in front of the altar and bow with their hands clasped together or observe a moment of silence
- Head coverings should be removed when a Buddhist teaching or a sermon is being delivered
- If monks are present you should not place your seat higher than them nor should you sit if they are standing

Suggested Order of Service

- Entrance music or Silent Reflection
- Refuges and Precepts
- Rejoicing in Merits/Tribute
- Buddhist Teaching

Suggested Order of Service (cont)

- Transference of Merits
- Period of Silent Reflection
- Committal
- Mantra or Music to finish

Summary

Hopefully I have given you a:

- Background to the Buddhist Faith
- Meditation and how it can help
- Preparation before death
- The period after death
- Funeral Ceremonies

Terms of Reference

- Triratna Buddhist Order
- There's More to Dying than Death
 - Author: Lama Shepen Hookham
 - ISBN 1-899579-68-0
- The Buddhist Society
- A Guide to a Proper Buddhist Funeral
 - Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc.