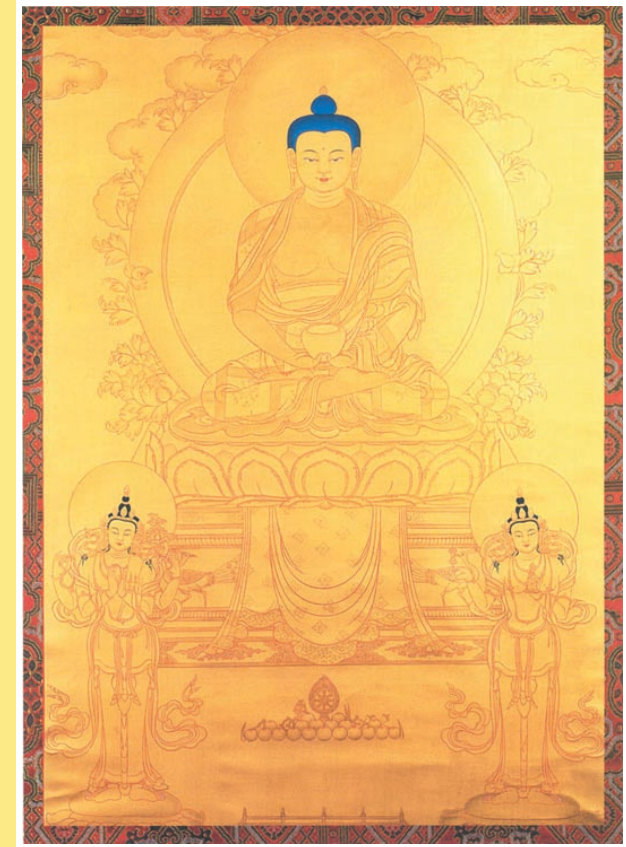


Buddhist Care for the Dying 佛教臨終關懷手冊



For Free Distribution

免費取閱

Edited by Di Cousens

Foreword by Dr Ian Gawler

Published by the Buddhist Council of Victoria

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Buddhist Council of Victoria

Preface

Buddhism is the art and wisdom of living. So, Buddhism is always emphasizing the perfection of our life. Buddhism is based on the principle of cause and effect in the past, present and future. Therefore, Buddha dharma shall be applied not only at the time of dying or death, but also in our daily life.

Ven. Ru-Sun, Abbot, Yun Yang Temple, Narre Warren

About the Buddhist Council of Victoria

The Buddhist Council of Victoria was established in 1996. Its member organisations represent the ethnic diversity of Australia and of Buddhism itself. This booklet is one of a number of initiatives seeking to assist the development of Buddhist culture in Victoria. The Council is also implementing a program of chaplaincy for Buddhist prisoners and is working to develop Buddhist educational materials and teacher training in primary school.

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May all beings benefit.

Aims and Objectives:

The aims and objectives of the Buddhist Council of Victoria are:

To serve as the representative organisation for Buddhist temples, groups and organisations in Victoria;

To liaise with local, state and Commonwealth government departments on behalf of its members;

To keep a watchful eye and to take appropriate action in cases of prejudice, misinformation, disadvantage and insult to member organisations or to Buddhism in general;

To assist in the resolution of disputes between member organisations, if mutually invited, by arranging for independent mediation;

To foster a spirit of fellowship, co-operation, friendship and goodwill between all Buddhist groups in Victoria;

To facilitate the exchange of information and resources between members regarding their respective activities;

To serve as a forum for the discussion of matters of common interest to members;

To co-operate with other religious groups and to work for peace and harmony through inter-religious co-operation.

Foreword

Everybody would hope for a good death. Yet with all that death implies and involves, many people fear death. This fear may well be a primordial fear, deeply seated in the psyche and lives of people from all cultures.

Yet different cultures deal with fear of death in different ways.

In some cultures, the common approach is to attempt to ignore it, to postpone it, to avoid it. Even to go so far as to deny it, as if by denying its very existence, it may not come! Such optimism! For death is real. We all know that. So some cultures accept this fact and study death. Prepare for it. Develop a wisdom and a skill for assisting people with it.

This clearly is a strength of Buddhism. In Buddhism, the fact of death is recognized and accepted as being as real and obvious as anything can be. From this starting point, death is examined closely—both in what is involved in a practical sense, and what is implied in a spiritual sense.

The reality is that this acceptance of death informs that way of living which is characteristic of Buddhism—a recognition and celebration of the preciousness of human life, and a recognition and celebration of how fragile life is. Together these understandings lead to the basis of a compassionate life.

It is fair to say that in the West in general and Australia in particular, that we have been a death denying culture. However, many people throughout the community currently recognize the limitations of this stance, and are looking for fresh ways to support people around dying.

So this much needed booklet, *Buddhist Care for the Dying*, offers two important possibilities.

Firstly, more people throughout this wonderful and diverse community that makes up Australia, will know how best to support Buddhists at the time of death. This is very important as there are strongly held views that would be very close to the heart of most Buddhists at that time.

To be able to assist them appropriately would be a great gift.

Secondly, many people from a non-Buddhist background may find it helpful to understand and reflect upon Buddhist customs, traditions and rituals for the time of death. For instance, it may well be worthwhile just to consider that a person may benefit from their body not being disturbed, touched or

moved for a period of time after their death.

To ponder why this may be so, to contemplate its significance, may well be useful.

So it is easy to commend this booklet published by the Buddhist Council of Victoria and edited skillfully by an experienced Buddhist practitioner, Diana Cousens, it warrants wide distribution and reading.

May all who do read it live long and happy. And when their time does come, die well.

Dr Ian Gawler OAM

Executive Director

The Gawler Foundation November 2003

Introduction

The first large influx of Buddhists to Australia were Chinese miners who arrived in the nineteenth century during the gold rushes in Victoria and New South Wales. Therefore Buddhist settlement in Australia goes back at least 150 years. Another significant influx of Buddhists came about after the Vietnam War in the 1970s. This wave of migration saw the establishment of large Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian communities. Anglo-Celtic and other Australians have taken an interest in Buddhism for nearly a century, and the accessibility of Tibetan lamas since the 1970s has seen the growth in numbers of Australian born Tibetan Buddhists. There are also Australian born Buddhists in all other Buddhist traditions. The recently published census findings (2002) show that Buddhists in Australia number 358,000, making it the largest non-Christian religion.

This increasing diversity of Australian culture demands some new developments in ways of thinking and acting. The Buddhist view of life differs from the Judaeo-Christian view. Rather than perceiving life in this world as finite, beginning at birth and ending at death, Buddhism regards this life as one of a series of lives. Neither the beginning nor the end of this series can be found. All life is in transition. Change and impermanence are constants. The process of death does not happen in a single moment, dying is a complicated transition process whereby a consciousness leaves a body and ultimately finds a new birth.

In some Buddhist traditions, notably the Tibetan, it is believed that advanced practitioners can use the time after death to develop greater meditative absorption. However, it is also understood that this is quite rare.

This project came about as a way of assisting the friends, family and carers of Buddhists who are dying or have recently died. Interviews, based around a standard questionnaire, were conducted with Buddhist organisations in Victoria. Participants included the Buddhist Society of Victoria, the Yun Yang Temple, the Quang Minh Temple, the Tibetan Buddhist Society at Yuroke, the Jikishoan Zen Buddhist Community, the Ananda Maitreya Centre and Infinite Wisdom International.

The manner of treating death in Australia is highly culturally specific – often the principal concerns of care givers are medical and legal.

A Buddhist perspective is significantly different. The principal concerns are spiritual – that a suitable atmosphere may allow the person to die in peace, that appropriate prayers are said, and that qualified religious help is sought and provided. In Buddhism those who have died are seen to still have significant needs. A very great emphasis is given to prayers and good deeds to be done after death in the name of the deceased. These prayers and good deeds, usually gifts to charities and religious organisations, are seen as ways of accumulating good karma – or good causes and conditions – which will benefit the deceased in their future rebirth.

The handling of the body of a deceased is also extremely significant in some Buddhist traditions. Here there is a divergence between the two principal kinds of Buddhism, Theravada and Mahayana. Theravada Buddhists are primarily from Sri Lanka, Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, and Mahayana Buddhists are from China, Tibet, Korea and Vietnam. Chinese Buddhists may come from a range of countries in South East Asia, including East Timor. The Theravada Buddhists interviewed for this report did not request any special handling of the deceased or unease at organ donation or autopsies. By contrast the Mahayana respondents requested that a deceased body not be handled for eight to ten hours after death, and for some Tibetans three days is customary. There was also less acceptance of autopsy and organ donation. These matters should be checked with concerned individuals at the time and are here noted as issues that may well be sensitive.

This booklet is primarily concerned with practical advice. Different answers to the same questions are given according to the two categories, Mahayana and Theravada. There are also contact details for Buddhist organisations at the back.

Much of the advice that is given here would also be applicable to non-Buddhists. It is hoped that providing greater information on this topic will be of benefit in developing more appropriate care of the dying.

Di Cousens,

Editor

Former Director, Melbourne Sakya Centre

The Role of the Monk or Nun¹

In both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism the Buddhist monk performs the pastoral role for the lay Buddhist community. The Buddhist 'monk' or 'nun' lies somewhere between the common notions of monk and priest in Christianity. His or her time of intensive training in the monastery equips him well to give guidance and support whenever called upon to do so. In times of difficulty such as sickness, dying and death, the person or the relatives would often seek out the valued help of a Buddhist monk or nun of their own tradition. It would be the Buddhist monk who would give confidence at the bedside; it would be the monk who advises on the necessary rites for the funeral; it would be the monk who officiates at the funeral and it would be the monk who strengthens the bereaved with kind counsel.

Contact details of different Buddhist organisations are listed at the back. It may not, however, be possible to obtain a monk from the appropriate tradition of a sick or dying person in a time of crisis. In this case many Buddhists would prefer monks or nuns from unfamiliar traditions rather than have no monks or nuns present at all.

Practical Advice

1 The Theravada Tradition²

What follows are the answers given to the questionnaire by Theravada Buddhists. Theravada Buddhists are from Sri Lanka, Burma, India and Thailand.

1.1 During the Dying Process

Q. In your tradition, when a person knows they are going to die, is there any particular method of preparation that will help them?

Encourage the person to recall all the good things that they have done during their life and think only positive thoughts. It is also a time when a person may wish to make some requests, confide in someone, or make a confession. The carer must do everything in a kind and compassionate manner and offer forgiveness if it is requested.

Q. In your tradition, what are good things to do around or for a dying person?

Ideally, the *Satipatthana Sutta* should be read out aloud and a monk invited over to give a Dharma sermon. Practice love and compassion and radiate it to the dying person. Wish very strongly that he or she be free from suffering. Assure them that their family is all right and they are free to go in peace. Create a loving, bright and peaceful atmosphere.

Q. What are things to avoid doing around a dying person?

It is important not to cause confusion in the person's mind. Avoid a noisy or turbulent environment. Do not cry loudly, make a lot of unnecessary noise, express anything negative via thought, speech or action. Do not create uncertainty, anxiety and fear. Do not quarrel and fight over property or other things.

¹ Quoted from the Buddhist Society of Victoria's *Notes On The Care Of Ill And Dying Buddhists*, East Malvern, 1991.

² Informants were Michael Wells, Buddhist Society of Victoria, East Malvern; Rev. Mother Mahaviro, Infinite Wisdom International, Blackburn South; Bhante Kassapa and Mark Shackleton, Ananada Maitreya Centre, Heidelberg.

1.2 At the Time of Death

Q. Are there any particular rituals, ceremonies or procedures that dying people must do or have done for them before they die?

A variety of things are possible, such as the reaffirmation of refuge vows, chanting, transference of merits, or a sermon by a Buddhist monk.

Q. Can you please tell us any particular prayers or mantras that a dying person should repeat or have repeated in his or her presence?

Different chants can be done such as the repetition of Buddha's name:

Namo Sakyamuni, Samma Sambuddhasa, Vandana, Ti-Sarana, Khamatha me Bhante.

If the person has experience of meditation, he or she should meditate on the dying process. They can also reflect on the virtues of enlightened beings, such as the Buddha.

Q. Is it helpful or disruptive to the dying person to have relatives present at the time of death?

The dying person should be consulted on this point ahead of time. For householders it can be helpful to have relatives present. If they are around they must be encouraged not to upset the dying person. At the last moment the person has no recollection/awareness of the family anyway.

1.3 After Death

Q. Is there any particular way that the body should be handled or treated after death? Such as a period of not touching it, or not touching particular parts of the body?

This is not important in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. It should be washed and kept clean until cremation or burial.

Q. Is it acceptable in your tradition to have an autopsy conducted if there is some uncertainty as to the cause of death?

If there is a medical reason or because of a legal requirement then it is okay.

Q. Is it acceptable to use parts of the body for organ donation?

Yes, if the person has agreed.

Q. What is your preferred method of disposal of the body?

Cremation or burial.

Q. What is the most beneficial thing to do for a person after they have died?

It is important to make some donations to monks and charities in the name of the deceased. The death ritual should be performed (Pansakula). The transference of merit ceremony (Punyanmodana) should be performed after seven days, then after three months, and then annually.

Practical Advice

2 The Mahayana Tradition³

What follows are the answers given to the questionnaire by representatives of the Japanese, Chinese and Tibetan traditions. There is some diversity of response so the different approaches are included. These three traditions are all Mahayana Buddhist, as are Buddhists from other parts of Central Asia such as Mongolia, the Kalmuk region of Russia and Korea.

2.1 During the Dying Process

Q. In your tradition, when a person knows they are going to die, is there any particular method of preparation that will help them?

Chinese response:

1. Introduce the Western Pure Land to the sick person.
2. Let the sick person be calm and strong to face death.
3. Help the sick person recite 'Na Mo Oh Mi To Fo'. (Amitabha Buddha's name.)

Tibetan response:

Firstly, the person should organise their Will and give away all of their possessions to others. It is important that they hold on to nothing and have no attachment.

A person may do the visualisation of Vajrasattva or visualise Shakyamuni Buddha. To visualise Shakyamuni Buddha, first imagine that there is a lotus flower in front. On top of that is a moon disc and on top of that is a sun cushion.

³ Informants were Geshe Loden, Tibetan Buddhist Society, Yuroke; Ven. Ru Shan, Yun Yang Temple, Narre Warren and Ekai Korematsu, Jikishoan Zen Buddhist Community, Essendon. Ven. Phuoc Tan, Quang Minh Temple, Braybrook.

The lotus flower symbolises renunciation, the moon disc symbolises bodhicitta,⁴ the sun cushion symbolises the wisdom perceiving emptiness. On top of the sun cushion is one's own root lama in the form of Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Buddha has one face which symbolises direct perception of all objects of knowledge of existence. He has two arms. The right arm symbolises method and the left arm symbolises the wisdom perceiving emptiness. His body is gold in colour. He has an enlightened nature and is without attachment and sits in vajra (lotus) position.

Think, 'You are my guru, my Buddha, my Dharma, my Sangha, my Protector. Through your compassion rescue me from the dangers of the bardo, rescue me from cyclic existence and all suffering. Rescue me from all negativities.'

Through his great compassion golden amrita comes out and dissolves into the person's body. This immediately dissolves all negativities of body, speech and mind. Repeat:

Tayata Om Muni Muni Maha Munaye Soha
and
Namo Gurubhyah
Namo Buddhaya
Namo Dharmaya
Namo Sangaya

Ideally these mantras should be repeated hundreds or thousands of times, depending on the capacity of the person.

Vietnamese Response:

Ask them to reflect on the teaching of the Buddha and think about the impermanent nature of all existence. Tell them to let go of all negative attachment. Dedicate household responsibilities to other family members and let others know of the things they wish for. They should have strong faith in Amitabha Buddha and wish for rebirth in the Pure Land. They should reconfirm or establish faith in the Three Jewels, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The person should try to avoid harbouring hatred and fear.

⁴ Bodhicitta is a Sanskrit term referring to the compassionate wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of others.

Japanese response:

It is important to inform those who are close to the person such as relatives and friends. The dying person should be made to feel peaceful and comfortable. Friends and relatives should take care of them and listen to them. A priest may be invited to do some chanting.

Q. In your tradition, what are good things to do around or for a dying person?

Chinese response:

1. Invite a Buddhist monk or nuns to give Dharma talks on the meaning of life.
2. Invite family and friends together to peacefully recite 'Na Mo Oh Mi To Fo' around the dying person.
3. Try to eat vegetarian meals and do good deeds on behalf of the dying person.

Tibetan response:

Generally tell them – especially if they not a very religious person – that they are looking better and are going to get well. Don't tell the person that they are going to die.

Vietnamese Response:

Give them a good physical and emotional environment. Tell them good stories and comfort them. Reassure them that you can take care of anything that is of concern to their mind. Invite a monk or nun or any strong devotee to come and talk to them. Play soft music or Buddhist chanting.

Japanese response:

It is good to listen to his or her wishes. It is important to help with laundry and shopping. In Japan women offer a support group – there is a wish not to die in a hospital. The family will take care of eating and medical things. In general not many people request chanting to be performed.

Q. What are things to avoid doing around a dying person?

Chinese response:

1. Avoid crying or touching the dying person.
2. Avoid resuscitating a dying person.
3. Give them vegetarian food – they should not have animal meat or fish.

Tibetan response:

The bad things are shouting, criticising, getting angry.

Vietnamese Response:

Do not disturb them. Be careful of loud noise or rough music they do not like. Do not tell stories that raise unwholesome thoughts in the mind. Treat them with care and be gentle.

Japanese response:

It is best to avoid talking too much about too many ideas. If a dying person has a lot of concerns then imposing other people's ideas doesn't help. Their mind is sharp. It does not help to impose a lot of things. One should have an attitude of openness. When meeting with a dying person it is important to come without expectations and to make a connection. Practical help is often the most important. For example, having a supply of clean clothes. There may be a lot of psychological things to work out.

2.2 At the time of Death

Q. Are there any particular rituals, ceremonies or procedures that dying people must do or have done for them before they die?

Chinese response:

They should contemplate, 'I am now following the Buddha and am going to be reborn in a Pure Land.' Then they can be calm to face death.

Tibetan response:

Recite the *Heart Sutra*, Chenrezig long Dharani, or other texts that are familiar to the person. See if they have texts that they use and practice those.

Vietnamese Response:

The first is repentance and purification. It is time to repent of all past actions. The second is to confirm refuge in the Triple Gem. Recite Namō A Di Da Phat as though they are listening and reciting along. Recite this as much as possible. Play tapes to chant along. Place an image of the Buddha in front of them. There should be signs and sounds that will remind them of Amitabha Buddha.

Japanese response:

Once a person has passed away then a priest should be called to do a service. This will include the recitation of sutras. For monks and nuns the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* will be recited. For ordinary people it varies from school to school. Generally it is most common to recite either the *Heart Sutra* or the Dharani of Avalokiteshvara. It is good to recite a sutra that is familiar. Another possible text is the chapter on bodhicitta from Dogen's teaching. The most important thing for the dying person is their last breath and last consciousness. They should try to pass away with perfect peace of mind. Those that are present should try and develop bodhicitta and an unselfish attitude and not feel proud that they are doing something for the dying person.

Q. Can you please tell us any particular prayers or mantras that a dying person should repeat or have repeated in his or her presence?

Chinese response:

Recite: 'Na mo Oh Mi To Fo'.
(Japanese and Tibetan informants reaffirmed their previous answer.)

Vietnamese Response:

The mantra of Determination to take rebirth in the Pure Land, name of the Amita Buddha 'Namō A Di Da Phat' and also the Maha Prajna Paramita Sutra.

Q. Is it helpful or disruptive to the dying person to have relatives present at the time of death?

Chinese response:

At the time of death, if the relatives can be calm and quiet it is helpful.

Tibetan response:

At the point of death seeing relatives may be upsetting.

Vietnamese Response:

Crying and mental and emotional disturbance is not beneficial as it only strengthens attachment. Do not do anything that may cause anger to arise.

Japanese response:

Better to have as many relatives and close family as possible.

2.3 After Death

Q. Is there any particular way that the body should be handled or treated after death? Such as a period of not touching it, or not touching particular parts of the body?

Chinese response:

1. After death the body should not be touched and moved within eight to ten hours.
2. Strictly refrain from crying.

Tibetan response:

The body should not be handled for three hours and three days would be preferable. If the body has to be moved, then the hair must be pulled from the top of the head. There are different signs of death – first the breathing stops, then there may be heat at the heart for quite a while. Death is final after a red drop comes out of the nose and a white drop comes out of the sexual chakras.

Vietnamese Response:

Avoid touching in the first eight hours – no washing or changing clothes.

Japanese response:

In Japan the immediate family should clean the whole body, ideally with fragrant water. Then they should be dressed in clean white clothes. This should be done before the mortuary people come. In Japan everything is prepared in white. White kimono and white underclothes. In Australia white is not necessary. Something clean is fine.

Q. Is it acceptable in your tradition to have an autopsy conducted if there is some uncertainty as to the cause of death?

Chinese response:

Yes, if an autopsy is legally requested, but it should be avoided in the first eight to ten hours after death.

Tibetan response:

Generally an autopsy does not matter once the person is definitely dead. Family should make the decision. It is a matter for the medical profession.

Vietnamese Response:

Vietnamese accept autopsy where required by law.

Japanese response:

Autopsy is a matter for the family and depends on the will of the person. There is no rule.

Q. Is it acceptable to use parts of the body for organ donation?

Chinese response:

Normally the organ donation would happen as soon as the dying person is passing away or just about to pass away, so unless the person has a very strong will to overcome the physical pain it is suggested to avoid organ donation.

Tibetan response:

No comment.

Vietnamese Response:

We encourage people to become organ donors, with the awareness that they are doing something beneficial for another person. This is meritorious and will benefit your future life.

Japanese response:

Organ donation is fine. Either the person can make their intentions known or else the family can decide.

Q. What is your preferred method of disposal of the body?

Chinese response:

Cremation one week after death, then dispose of the ashes in the natural environment such as burial in the ground or dispersal in the sea.

Tibetan response:

Depends on culture.

Vietnamese Response:

Vietnamese prefer burial but from a Buddhist point of view cremation is better. It is good to return a body back to ash. There is no need of a big monument or a costly tomb.

Japanese response:

In the modern day there is cremation but farmers in the countryside have a cemetery.

Q. What is the most beneficial thing to do for a person after they have died?

Chinese response:

1. To do the ritual/ceremony once every seven days for seven weeks;

2. The whole family should take vegetarian food for 49 days (fish is considered non-vegetarian);
3. The belongings of the deceased should be given to charity;
4. The family should give donations to religious groups or charities under the name of the deceased.

Tibetan response:

Do the appropriate prayers for 49 days. Give money to poor and destitute people, the homeless, feed birds and give money to hospitals. Dedicate the merit to the dying person.

Vietnamese Response:

Whenever a relative or friend does any meritorious deed they should dedicate the merit to the deceased. Meritorious action could be vegetarianism, chanting, meditation, charity work, planting trees, releasing animals that might have been cooked or caged etc. Dedicate the merit to the deceased. Chant for 49 days after the person has died. Ask the monks and other Buddhist devotee friends to join in prayers.

Japanese response:

Ceremonies should be performed after seven days and again after 49 days.

Every family has a family shrine and offerings should be put on the shrine. Ashes will be kept on the altar. After 49 days the ashes can be put in a temple or a cemetery for ashes. There is a new custom of putting ashes in the sea or on a mountain. Relatives make offerings to priests or to the temple. It is not customary to make offerings to charities on their behalf. Japanese who die in Australia are outside of customary systems and some special arrangements may have to be put in place at an earlier time.

There is a big difference between what is done for wealthy people and others. In general the basic and most important thing for everybody is that there are some prayers and that the wishes of the deceased are observed. The first thing is that close friends and family have a reunion and memorial service on the 49th day with chanting and a priest. For wealthy people ceremonies are conducted on their behalf for many years.

Then there are memorial services after one year, three years, seven years, 13 years, 25, 35 and finally 50 years. After 50 years the ceremonies are complete. In Japan the temple keeps a registry of memorial dates and sends a notice to the family.

It looks like these ceremonies are for the deceased but in fact they are for the people who have survived. If all the family and people who are connected to the person come together and have a dinner together then it means that everything is going well and peace is maintained. A memorial brings the past and the present together and gives a chance for some reflection. If there has been a misfortune then people can come together and be reconciled. It reduces the karma of the deceased person.

Vietnamese Section

Lời giới thiệu

Phật Giáo là tuệ giác và nghệ thuật sống, Phật Giáo luôn nhấn mạnh đến việc làm để hoàn hảo cuộc đời. Phật Giáo dựa trên thuyết nhân quả trong quá khứ, hiện tại và tương lai.

Vì lẽ đó, Phật Pháp không phải chỉ dùng trong phút lâm chung, nhưng được áp dụng cả trong đời sống thường nhật của chúng ta.

Hòa Thượng Như Sơn (Ru Shan) Trụ trì chùa Vân Dương, Narre Warren

Lời nói đầu

Ai cũng mong muốn được chết một cách an lành. Tuy nhiên nhiều người lại sợ chết bởi tất cả những điều liên quan và ẩn dấu trong đó. Có thể đây là sự sợ hãi nguyên thủy, chôn kín trong tâm linh và cuộc sống con người thuộc tất cả mọi truyền thống văn hóa.

Mỗi nền văn hóa đối phó với sự sợ hãi cái chết bằng những cách khác nhau.

Cách giải quyết thông thường theo một vài nền văn hóa là không để tâm đến sự chết, tìm cách trì hoãn hoặc là tránh không đề cập đến nó. Thậm chí họ còn phủ nhận sự chết, cho là nếu mình từ chối sự hiện hữu của tử thần thì có thể cái chết sẽ không đến. Như thế là một cách suy nghĩ thật lạc quan bởi vì sự chết là có thật. Ai cũng biết điều này. Vì thế một số nền văn hóa chấp nhận sự thật và nghiên cứu về cái chết. Vậy hãy chuẩn bị cho lúc lâm chung. Hãy khai triển tuệ giác và kỹ năng để trợ giúp cho mọi người trong giờ phút sau cùng ấy.

Đây thật sự là sức mạnh của Phật Giáo. Theo tinh thần Phật Giáo, cái chết được nhận diện và được coi như là một sự thật hiển nhiên. Bắt nguồn từ nhận thức đó, người ta phân tích tỉ mỉ cái chết theo quan niệm thực tế và những gì ẩn tàng trong đó theo ý nghĩa tâm linh.

Thật ra việc chấp nhận sự chết được thấy qua cách sống tiêu biểu theo tinh thần Phật Giáo, nghĩa là quý trọng cuộc sống cùng lúc ý thức được sự vô thường của kiếp nhân sinh. Những hiểu biết ấy tạo thành nền tảng cho một cuộc sống từ bi.

Người ta cho rằng các quốc gia Tây Phương nói chung và nước Úc nói riêng thuộc về truyền thống văn hóa tránh đề cập đến sự chết. Tuy nhiên, gần đây nhiều người trong cộng đồng ý thức được giới hạn của quan niệm này và đang tìm kiếm những phương thức mới để trợ giúp người đang cận kề cái chết.

Vì thế, quyển sách hướng dẫn rất có giá trị mang tên Chăm Sóc Cho Người Sắp Từ Trần Theo Quan Niệm Phật Giáo cho ta thấy được hai khả năng quan trọng.

Trước tiên sẽ có thêm nhiều người trong xã hội Úc đa dạng và phong phú này biết được cách tốt nhất để trợ giúp Phật tử trong lúc lâm chung. Điều này rất quan trọng vì vào giờ phút ấy có những niềm tin mãnh liệt được đa số Phật tử ôm ấp trong tâm.

Thứ đến, nhiều người không phải là Phật tử có thể được lợi ích khi hiểu biết thêm về phong tục, truyền thống và nghi thức Phật Giáo trong giờ phút lâm chung. Thật là một điều thú vị khi quan tâm tới việc một Phật tử được lợi lạc khi tử thi mình không bị làm phiền, đụng chạm hay di chuyển trong một khoảng thời gian nào đó sau khi họ mãn phần. Suy tu và chiêm nghiệm tại sao sự việc lại xảy ra như vậy cũng là một điều ích lợi không kém đối với người khác.

Tôi xin được hân hạnh giới thiệu đến quý vị quyển sách hướng dẫn rất có giá trị do Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Tiểu Bang Victoria phát hành và được một Phật tử thuần thành, cô Diana Cousens, hiệu đính.

Mong tất cả những người đọc quyển sách nhỏ này có được một đời sống trường thọ và an lạc. Rồi khi phút lâm chung đến thì được chết một cách bình an.

Dr. Ian Gawler OAM

Giám Đốc The Gawler Foundation

Tháng Mười Một 2003

Theo truyền thống Phật Giáo, khi một người biết được mình sắp sửa lìa đời, có cách chuẩn bị đặc biệt nào để giúp họ hay không?

Khuyến bệnh nhân nhớ lại những lời Đức Phật dạy về vô thường. Nên buông bỏ các ý tưởng bất thiện, giao phó công việc và trách nhiệm lại cho những người thân nhân khác và cho thân nhân biết những nguyện vọng của mình. Nên phát khởi lòng tin với Phật A Di Đà và cầu vãng sanh về cảnh giới Tây Phương Cực Lạc. Nhớ lại hoặc phát tâm quy y Tam Bảo: Phật, Pháp, Tăng. Đừng để lòng lo sợ và sân hận chi phối.

Theo truyền thống Phật Giáo, những điều tốt ta nên làm cho người sắp từ trần là gì?

Cố gắng tạo sao cho không khí quanh người bệnh được yên tĩnh. Kể cho họ nghe những câu chuyện vui, giúp cho họ được an lành và vững chí. Nhờ chư tăng ni hoặc các nam nữ cư sĩ đến nói Phật pháp cho người bệnh nghe. Cho họ nghe những bản nhạc nhẹ hoặc tiếng tụng kinh.

Những điều gì tránh không nên làm gần người sắp từ trần?

Đừng làm động thân tâm của người bệnh bằng tiếng ồn, xúc chạm mạnh vào thân thể hoặc những điều làm tâm họ thêm lo lắng. Cư xử với họ thật nhẹ nhàng.

Có những nghi thức, lễ lạc hay thủ tục đặc biệt nào mà người sắp lìa đời phải thực hành hay ta phải làm cho họ trước khi họ chết hay không?

Trước hết là cầu sám hối các tội lỗi đã gây tạo từ trước. Sau đó là lễ phát tâm quy y Tam Bảo. Thường xuyên niệm “Nam Mô A Di Đà Phật” tưởng chừng như người bệnh đang nghe và niệm theo. Niệm càng nhiều càng tốt nhưng không quá nhanh hoặc quá chậm. Có thể mở máy niệm rồi niệm theo. Đặt một tượng Phật trước mặt họ hoặc bất cứ hình ảnh hay âm thanh nào nhắc nhở họ tưởng nhớ tới Phật A Di Đà.

Xin vui lòng cho chúng tôi biết có những bài kinh, câu chú hay danh hiệu nào mà người sắp lìa đời nên tụng niệm hay người khác nên tụng niệm với sự có mặt của họ hay không?

Nên tụng chú Vãng Sanh Quyết Định Chơn Ngôn, danh hiệu Phật A Di Đà, và kinh Ma Ha Bát Nhã Ba La Mật La.

Người sắp chết sẽ được lợi lạc hay bị phiền nhiễu nếu có thân nhân hiện diện ở chung quanh họ trong giờ phút lâm chung?

Sự hiện diện của thân nhân không ảnh hưởng chi cả, chỉ ngại khi thân nhân có cử chỉ và hành động làm động loạn thân tâm người bệnh. Khóc than tạo thêm lưu luyến, trách cứ làm cho người bệnh nổi sân khí.

Sau khi họ chết, có yêu cầu gì đặc biệt để chăm sóc cho tử thi hay không? Thí dụ như không đụng đến tử thi trong một khoảng thời gian nào đó hay không chạm đến phần nào của tử thi?

Không được đụng chạm đến thân thể của người mất trong 8 tiếng đồng hồ đầu tiên, kể cả việc thay đồ hoặc tắm rửa. Ngoại trừ việc tối ưu cần thiết.

Trong trường hợp nguyên nhân cái chết không được rõ ràng, truyền thống Phật Giáo có chấp nhận việc giải phẫu để khám nghiệm tử thi hay không?

Người Việt chấp nhận autopsy chỉ khi nào luật pháp bắt buộc.

Việc hiến tạng cơ phận có được chấp nhận không?

Hạnh từ bi của đạo Phật khuyến khích việc cống hiến bộ phận cơ thể sau khi qua đời để lợi ích cho tha nhân. Vì phước báo của việc này giúp cuộc sống tương lai tốt đẹp hơn.

Quý vị muốn lo việc hậu sự cho thân nhân mình theo cách nào?

Đa số người Việt chọn cách chôn cất, nhưng theo đạo Phật thì hỏa táng vẫn hay hơn vì xát thân được trả về với cát bụi nhanh chóng. Mồ mã uy nghi có thể là việc làm có lợi ích cho người sống hơn là cho người đã chết.

Điều gì tốt nhất mình có thể làm được cho một người sau khi họ đã qua đời?

Bất cứ lúc nào thân nhân hoặc bạn bè làm được điều phước thiện gì cũng nên hồi hướng, nghĩ tưởng và chia xê cho người quá cố. Điều thiện đó có thể là: ăn chay, niệm Phật, thiện định, tử thiện, trồng cây, phóng sanh, v.v... Mỗi mỗi đều gởi tặng công đức này cho họ. Nên tụng niệm và làm phước thiện như vậy cho họ trong suốt 49 ngày. Nên thỉnh chư tăng ni hoặc các cư sĩ Phật tử về chùa tụng kinh và cầu nguyện cho người quá cố 7 lần trong 49 ngày đó.

Chinese Section

序言

佛教是生活的藝術及智慧，強調現實生活的圓滿。根據佛教三世因果的基本法則，佛法不單單適用於臨終之時，更應該運用於日常生活之中。

雲陽寺 住持 釋如山

前言

所有人都期望健康長壽。許多人懼怕死亡的暗示及陰影。這些根本恐懼起源於各種文化的人們的心靈及生命深處。

不同文化的人對處理死亡恐懼有不同的方式。

有些文化，一般的方式是樂觀的企圖忽視它、延遲它或逃避它。甚至否認它，好像這樣死亡就不會來臨了。但我們都知道死亡是真實的，所以有些文化接受死亡同時研究它。建立幫忙人們面對死亡的智慧及技巧。

很清楚的這是佛教的力量。佛教確認同時接受死亡的事實。在這個基礎上，死亡被以實用的方式及心靈的方式仔細的觀察著。

事實上由於接受死亡，所以能以珍惜人身可貴及脆弱而面對生活，同時基於以上的瞭解而過慈悲的人生。

西方社會尤其是澳洲在文化上可以說是否認死亡的，雖然如此，不同社區的許多人現在已承認這方面的不足而尋求新的方式來幫忙臨終者。

所以這本極被需要的手冊可可提供兩個重要的可能性。

首先，由多元及美好的社區所組成的澳洲能有更多人能知道如何幫忙臨終者的最佳方式，這是非常重要的，因為這些信念可以深入大部分的佛教信徒的內心，能適當的幫忙臨終者是個重大的禮物。

其次，對許多非佛教背景的人能幫助他們瞭解及反映佛教面對臨終的傳統、習俗及儀式。例如，對死亡一段時間內的亡者不去打擾、碰觸或移動他們的身體是很有利益的，同時去思維為什麼要如此作及其重要性也是很有用的。

這本由維省佛教會發行，並由經驗豐富的佛教行者戴安衲，卡森編輯的手冊值得廣為流佈。

祈願所有閱讀這本手冊者健康長壽，同時當壽命盡時能夠善終。

高樂因博士

高樂基金會執行總裁 2003

臨終建議

大乘佛教

2.1 臨終過程

如何幫助那些知道自己將死的臨終者？

漢傳佛教：

1. 對病者介紹西方極樂世界
2. 讓病者內心平靜堅強的面對死亡
3. 幫忙病者誦念 南無阿彌陀佛

作哪些事會對臨終者有益？

漢傳佛教：

1. 請佛教法師說明生命的意義
2. 請親人眷屬環繞臨終者平靜的念 “南無阿彌陀佛”
3. 親人家屬吃素食，同時替臨終者作功德

避免在臨終者旁邊作哪些事情？

漢傳佛教：

1. 避免哭泣或碰觸臨終者。

2. 避免對已無希望之絕症者，再作痛苦的復甦急救。
3. 讓臨終者食用素食，避免吃肉殺生結惡緣。

2.2 亡者臨死時

對臨終者須作哪些特殊的法事唱誦或程序？

漢傳佛教：

臨終者須思維“我正要跟隨佛陀往生到極樂世界”如此他們將可平靜的面對死亡。

在臨終者前應念誦哪些經咒或禱詞？

漢傳佛教：

念誦“南無阿彌陀佛”

親友出現在亡者前是有益？還是有害？

漢傳佛教：

瀕死時，如果親友能保持平靜安詳，則對亡者有益。

2.3 死亡後

死亡後應如何處置遺體？例如多少時間不可碰觸遺體？或那些部分不可碰觸？

漢傳佛教：

1. 死亡8到10小時內，不可碰觸或移動亡者屍體。
2. 嚴禁在亡者面前哭泣。

如對死亡原因有疑問時，是否允許解剖驗屍？

漢傳佛教：

是！如果依法律須作解剖。但是須在死亡至少8到10小時後再解剖。

是否可以接受 捐贈亡者器官？

漢傳佛教：

一般器官捐贈，需要在亡者將死或死後立即摘取使用。所以除非亡者能有堅強的意志力能忍受肉體的痛苦，否則建議還是避免作器官捐贈。

如何處理屍體的方式較合適呢？

漢傳佛教：

死亡一週後火化，再將骨灰埋在土中或散投於海中回歸大自然

往生後，做哪些事對亡者最有益呢？

漢傳佛教：

1. 作七，連續作七個星期。
2. 家屬吃素食49天〔魚肉非素食〕
3. 將亡者遺物捐贈給慈善機構。
4. 以亡者名義捐贈給寺廟或慈善機構。

Contact List – Buddhist Temples and Organisations

Representing all Buddhist Traditions

Buddhist Council of Victoria
PO Box 6104, Footscray West, VIC 3012
Tel: (03) 5427 3300, Fax: 5427 3488
Email: senge@iprimus.com.au
Contact person: Brian Ashen
www.bcvic.org.au www.buddhistcouncil.org

Cambodian Tradition

Cambodian Buddhist Association of Victoria Wat Buddharangsee

159 Clarke Road, Springvale South, VIC 3172
Tel: (03) 9546 3466 or 9546 2432
Tradition: Theravada, Cambodian
Contact: Ven. Sovann Srey, Cambodian Mission: Mr Hue

Chinese Tradition

Yun Yang Temple

6 Reservoir Road, Narre Warren North, VIC 3805
Tel: (03) 9796 8079, Fax: 9796 9969
Email: yunyang@vicnet.net.au
Web site: home.vicnet.net.au/~yunyang
Tradition: Mahayana, Ch'an
Abbot: Venerable Ru-Sun
Contact: Ms Pamela Foo or Ms Katy Tai
Tel: (03) 9561 6938

Fo Guang Yuan Buddhist Centre Box Hill

24A Rutland Road, Box Hill, VIC 3128
Tel/Fax: (03) 9890 8188
Email: info@ibcv.org
Web site: www.ibcv.org
Tradition: Mahayana, Humanistic Buddhism
Affiliation: Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order
Spiritual Director: Venerable Master Hsing Yun
Teachers: Venerable Man Chien, Venerable Man Wang
Contact: Venerable Jue Chang

Japanese Tradition

Jikishoan Zen Buddhist Community

11 St James Street, Moonee Ponds, VIC 3039
Tel/Fax: (03) 9370 5847
Email: jikishoan@alphalink.com.au
Web site: www.jikishoan.org
Tradition: Soto Zen
Teacher: Ekai Korematsu

Korean Tradition

Soen Centre

Kinglake
Spiritual Head: Ven. Chikwang Sunim
Tradition: Korean, Ch'an
Tel: 0409 764 488

Lao Tradition

Wat Lao Melbourne

698-700 Whitehorse Road, Mitcham, VIC 3132
Tel: (03) 9872 4697
Tradition: Theravada, Laotian
Abbot: Ven. Bounmy Souriyao

Wat Lao Dhammanivet

40 Coomora Road, South Springvale, VIC 3172
Tel: (03) 9706 3142
Tradition: Theravada, Laotian
Teacher: Ven. Viengxay

Theravada Tradition

Buddhist Society of Victoria

71-73 Darling Road, East Malvern, VIC 3145
Tel: (03) 9571 6409, Fax: 9571 3904
Email: bsvmelb@vicnet.net.au
Web site: www.bsv.net.au
Tradition: Theravada
Contact: Prem Nawaratne (Hon. Secretary)
Teachers: Resident Monk, & Visiting Senior Monks

Infinite Wisdom International

79-81 Eley Road, Blackburn South, VIC 3130
Tel/Fax: (03) 9808 5584
Tradition: Non-sectarian
Teacher: Reverend Mother Mahaviro
Contacts: Amy Ng, Meng Ng and Rita Kryshkovski

Thai Tradition

Wat Dhammarangsee

387-389 Springvale Road, Forest Hill, VIC 3131
Tel: (03) 9878 6162
Tradition: Theravada, Thai
Abbot: Ven. Phra Khru Vinaithorn Tanee

Tibetan Tradition

K.E.B.I.

Carlton North, VIC, 3054
Tel: (03) 9387 9422
Tradition Tibetan, Kagyu
Spiritual Head: Ven. Traleg Rinpoche

Tibetan Buddhist Society

1425 Mickleham Road, Yuroke, VIC 3063
Tel: (03) 9333 1770, Fax: 9333 3181
Email: contact@tushita.org
Web site: www.tibetanbuddhistsociety.org
Tradition: Tibetan, Gelugpa
Spiritual Head: Ven. Geshe Acharya Thubten Lodan
Contact: Jean D'Cruz

Tara Institute

3 Mavis Ave, East Brighton, VIC 3187
Tel: (03) 9596 8900, Fax: 9596 4856
Residents Tel: (03) 9596 6197
Email: tarainst@netspace.net.au
Web site: www.tarainstitute.com.au
Tradition: Tibetan, Gelugpa (FPMT)
Teacher: Ven. Geshe Doga
Contact: Ms Merilyn Jones

Vietnamese Tradition

Quang Duc Buddhist Temple

85-105 Lynch Road, Fawkner, VIC 3060
Tel: (03) 9357 3544, Fax: (03) 9357 3600
Tradition: Mahayana, Vietnamese
Email: quangduc@quangduc.com
Web site: www.quangduc.com
Abbot: Ven. Thich Tam Phuong
Vice Abbot: Ven. Thich Nguyen Tang

Quang Minh Temple

United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation of Victoria
18 Burke Street, Braybrook, VIC 3019
Tel: (03) 9312 5729 or 9311 0278
Fax: (03) 9311 0278
Email: quangminh@quangminh.org
Web site: www.quangminh.org
Tradition: Pureland, Vietnamese
Abbot: Ven. Thich Phuoc Tan

REGIONAL VICTORIA

Bendigo

Atisha Centre

RMB 1530 Eaglehawk, Bendigo, VIC 3556
Tel/Fax: (03) 5446 3336
Email: atisha_office@impulse.net.au
Web site: www.atisha.tripod.com
Tradition: Tibetan, Gelugpa (FPMT)
Spiritual Director: Lama Zopa Rinpoche
Director: Venerable Tony Beaumont

Thubten Shedrup Ling Monastery

RMB 1530 Sandhurst Town Road
Eaglehawk (Bendigo City) VIC 3556
Web site: www.tsl.imi.tripod.com
Tradition: Tibetan, Gelugpa (FPMT)
Spiritual Director: Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Buddhist Care of the Dying

Director: Ven. Thubten Samten (Dennis Kenny)

Email: tsl@impulse.net.au

Tel.: 61 03 54463691

Contact : Ven. Lhundrub Jinpa

Geelong

Drol Kar Buddhist Centre

160 Portarlington Road, Newcomb, Geelong, VIC 3219

Tel: (03) 5248 2727

Web site: geocities.com/drol_kar

Tradition: Tibetan, Gelugpa

Resident Teacher: Geshe Sonam Dhargye Llarampa

Contact: Jampa Droma

Warrnambool

Buddhist Meditation Group Warrnambool

c/o Mrs Elaine Leong

2 Sapphire Court, Warrnambool, VIC 3280

Tel: (03) 5561 1823

Tradition: Non-sectarian