

Preface

Karmapa Trust, Association of Tibetan Buddhism, after many years of negotiation and on the basis of being a State-approved religious organization, was granted an allowance from the Church Ministry to establish a burial depository within the Bispebjerg Cemetery Gardens. Following negotiation with the Bispebjerg Cemetery administration head, Bente Kilhof, we were allocated a section of the existing columbarium (or Urn Hall).

This facility for burial is open to all Buddhist traditions

Karmapa Trust has decorated this repository accordingly. For the purpose of reserving a space within the hall, it is possible for anyone to approach the Bispebjerg Cemetery Administration (Tel: 35810059). This may also be arranged through funeral directors.

The columbarium was consecrated by His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche on 26th August 1996. Many high lamas have since visited there to offer prayers and it has become a place of significance where it is possible to sit, meditate and pray for the deceased.

Since nobody can know the time of their death, it is important to be prepared mentally and also from the practical point of view. For this reason, it is recommended that one writes down ones wishes within a testament. This relates to oneself as well as relatives and loved ones whom will find this useful when having to deal with the numerous practicalities and arrangements in the midst of ones period of grieving – particularly also for acting in accordance with the wishes of the deceased.

This leaflet includes information on the Buddhist approach to death but is first and foremost a practical guide in connection with the funeral. The leaflet has been written by Lama Ani Ea, Brian Zinck and Ole Nordstrøm. He has been the contact person to the churchyard administration and the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs.

See more about Karmapa Trust on:

www.karmapa-trust.dk

Only the Body Dies

Life is perceived in relation to death. In Buddhism, one is taught to ponder these four foundational thoughts:

Life Is Impermanent

We all have to die and since we have no idea when we will die, it is important to use our time sensibly, not assuming that we will have all the time in the world.

Precious Human Body

It is difficult to obtain a human existence where one may meet a path to enlightenment. We should live our lives with the intention of developing our mind and abilities whilst avoiding as many unskillful deeds as possible. Whatever material possessions we have accumulated cannot be taken with us when we die.

Karma

Karma is the natural law of cause and effect. Positive actions produce good karma; negativity generates suffering. Unnecessarily killing an animal, for instance, leaves an imprint in the mind that results in anxiety, being killed oneself and having a shortened life. Positive actions generate happiness and one can live longer. It is considered most important to develop a benevolent and compassionate mind.

Suffering

Life and suffering are inseparable and especially when one considers birth, sickness, aging and dying. These are fundamental ingredients of our human life that one needs to accept but without becoming depressed nor heavy minded.

Life Testament

If you are terminally ill, one is recommended to refrain from unnecessary life-prolonging treatments. When the brain is dead it is of no benefit to prolong life through artificial means, machinery, etc. unless one has registered ones wishes to be an organ donor. In this case, it is of course extremely beneficial.

Doctors from hospitals, nursing homes, etc. will, if necessary, always contact Rigshospitalet to establish whether the patient has written a life testament. There is a leaflet available from any Apotek (Pharmacies) on Life Testaments or it is available at:

Livstestamenteregisteret, Rigshospitalet, Afsnit 5232, Blegdamsvej 9, 2100 København Ø.

One can not arrange for ones life to be prematurely terminated, but one may choose to not receive life prolonging treatment if one is terminally ill.

Donation of Organs

Donating of organs is invasive and disturbing to the death process. However, if you have given this some considerable thought and decide to donate your organs on death, this is considered highly meritorious and beneficial. Indeed the Dalai Lama is quoted as stressing the importance of motivation.

If a person has not registered for this, the organ donation procedure is potentially very disrupting to the death process. One may experience undue anger and attachment and consider that one is being stolen from. This reaction may cause an unfortunate rebirth. It is recommended that one registers ones wishes by filling out the "Organ Donor" form also available at any Apotek (Pharmacy) and send it to:

Donorregisteret, Rigshospitalet, Afsnit 5231, Blegdamsvej 9, 2100 København Ø.

www.oio.dk/kommunikation/donorregisteret

The form provides for donation options of: all organs; limited or specified organs; no organs.

Autopsy & Post Mortem Examination

A post mortem examination is not advisable since it disturbs the death process. Post mortems become obligatory if there is any question or doubt as to the cause of death; however it is possible to have the examination delayed for 3 days from the time of death, thus allowing time for the mind to leave the body.

Preparation

Buddhist Testament

It is important to make a Buddhist will and testament well in advance while one is still in sound mind and as soon as possible, since one never knows the time of death. If one hasn't communicated in writing ones wishes with regard to ones death and funeral arrangements, then family members can decide on what arrangements to follow. Still it is very important that one thinks about and makes ones own testament, so expressing ones own wishes. Normally it is not necessary to make a testament with a notary, though it is recommended if one has arrangements relating to matters of finance, property and possessions; also if one is uncertain who may oversee the arrangements. To be absolutely certain of the validity and observance of the document, the will should be made through a notary. In this case, the testament should be written or printed on an appropriate document which can be obtained at the GADs book shop in Strøget (the walking precinct of Copenhagen). Karmapa Trust also sells some with "Buddhist Testament" printed on the form.

One can then go to the Notary Office (Notarialkontoret) with the testament at:

Hestemøllestræde 6, 1450 København K, open from 09:00-15:00

www.domstol.dk

One should bring a valid form of identification such as a driving license and the fee at present is kr. 300.

It is advisable to inform ones family and heirs of the existence of the will and where it can be found. One can even give them a copy so they know of what arrangements to make and also to avoid any unnecessary shock, surprise or ill will. If a Buddhist organization is involved, one should also send them a copy.

One is advised to include a photo of oneself if one wishes for specific Lamas and Rinpoches to offer specific prayers on ones behalf.

One can arrange in advance for prayers to be made at ones death by transferring money to "Begravelseskassen" (the funeral account): Danske Bank Reg. 0238 4588218996

One should write in the space provided that this is for: XX (and include ones name).

Books and other Buddhist artifacts are also gratefully received and the centre will ensure the correct procedures for proper use, distribution, storing or disposal as appropriate.

One may consider making offerings to ones ability. Generally it is advised by Lamas that one gives away money and possessions during ones lifetime since that will reduce attachment to possessions as well as making others happy. It is of course also important to consider ones heirs.

There is a Buddhist Testament printed within this booklet.

The Place of Death

Dying at Home

The place of death is extremely important as a good rebirth is dependent on the death process. If it is possible, it is advised that you should die at home in familiar surroundings. The psychologist Marie Damsholt has taken the initiative to start a centre for conscious life and death: "Center for bevidst Liv og Død", Studiestræde 3D, 2. Sal, 1455 København K. Tel: 33131108.

www.cbld.dk

Volunteers are trained to help families who wish to take care of their dying relative at home. This facility is offered to all religions, but the centre is a project related to the Tibetan Buddhist centre called "Tong Nyi Nying Je Ling" (The Place for Wisdom and Compassion). The volunteers receive a free intensive course.

Hospices

Hospices for dying people are in the process of being made around the country. In Århus, the Lama, Gelongma Damchø Palmo has been actively involved and might be able to help with more information, tel: 86245975.

Visits at the Deathbed

If one wishes, it might be possible for a lama, monk, nun or layperson to be present at the deathbed to offer special prayers similar to visits by a priest. One should contact the Buddhist organization, or the person who is mentioned in the dying person's testament.

Special Prayers

In many cases it may be difficult to organize home visits, but within Tibetan Buddhism one can request respected Lamas or Rinpoches to offer prayers on ones behalf. One can email or send the person's name, and photo if possible.

Lama Ani Ea and Lama Dorji can offer help in formally contacting Tibetan Kagyu Lamas regarding useful or suitable ceremonies and prayers for the dead and they can help with the cremation.

Lama Ani Ea: Tel.: 44446860 Email: ani.ea@webspeed.dk

Lama Dorji: Email: lama@sangyetashiling.dk

Other Buddhist traditions or schools, who may have their own specific ceremonies and rituals, could also be contacted.

The Death Process

According to the "The Tibetan Book of the Dead" it is important to conclude the deceased's life in an appropriate manner by saying pleasant things and refraining from upsetting the dying person by acting in ways that can result in anger or attachment. The atmosphere around at the time of death can have a big impact on the death process. Before you die, the sense faculties weaken. The hearing and tactile senses are the last to dissolve, and therefore it is especially through touching and words that one can show ones compassion. After the last exhalation, the dying person can still hear and that is why one continues to offer prayers.

For the dying person, it is hugely important not to have too much attachment or aversion and to let go of the emotions towards people and possessions of this life. How that will happen during the death process is dependent on ones own karma – the good and bad actions one has committed.

It is important to not overly touch the dead body and preferably to have it left for 3 days.

The Funeral and Interment

It is recommended to use the general Danish methods for interment and follow the legal requirements. The actual funeral is more of a practical affair and it is really the specific prayers and rituals that designate it as Buddhist.

Cremation (Recommended)

At the Bispebjerg crematorium, they have large, newly built cremating facilities where it is possible to sit, recite prayers and meditate in specially designed prayer rooms whilst the body is being cremated. It is also possible to follow the process through to the crushing of the bones and placing in the urn. Before the cremation, it is possible to place a printed mandala on the chest of the deceased.

The Columbarium (Urn Hall)

The columbarium has the advantage that friends, relatives and visiting Lamas, monks and nuns can visit and offer prayers for the deceased.

Scattering the Ashes

In Denmark, one may apply to be allowed to scatter the ashes at sea.

As in other Buddhist traditions, one can take some of the ashes to scatter at holy sites and important pilgrimage places. At the stupa in Bodh Gaya in India there is a stone mandala where suitable prayers and rituals may be done, though one must first make an application to take ashes out of Denmark.

Practical Arrangements

Funeral Directors

Any funeral director or undertaker can provide the necessary arrangements. Several people have been very happy using Bispebjerg Begravelsesforretning, Tagensvej 175, 2400 København NV. Tel: 35816607, www.begravelse-bisp.dk

They have shown understanding for the different practical affairs, as well as the special prayers and rituals performed for Buddhist interments. They also have coffins without crucifixes, should one so wish.

There are certain arrangements one must organize without delay:

- Obtain the death certificate from a doctor.
- Inform the Buddhist organisation that the deceased is connected with.
- Request that the moving and touching of the body be minimised for the first 3 days.
- Contact and make arrangements with funeral directors.
- An appointment to see the body, if required.
- The timing for the cremation and whether one wants to be present.
- Arranging a funeral service.

The Buddhist Columbarium (Urn Hall)

There is a specially decorated Buddhist columbarium at Bispebjerg Churchyard that may be used by Buddhists of all traditions. One can reserve and rent a space to place an urn for 10 years. In 2007 the cost for a single space was 1720 kr., a double space is double that amount. On payment of this amount you are issued with a key to the hall.

The columbarium is normally kept locked but visitors can pick up a key at the churchyard office during opening hours between 09:00 – 14:00.

If you already have a key you can only enter the hall Monday to Friday from 9.00 to 16.00 when the alarm system is inactive. If the alarm system is accidentally activated there is a charge of 500 kr. to cover the cost of alarm de-activation. Smoking in the columbarium is prohibited. Incense can only be burnt but sparingly since the ventilation system is limited. The columbarium is cleaned and cared for by the churchyard staff, but it is requested that one tidies up after oneself - there is a little brush and dustpan under the shrine for this purpose. The hall is simply decorated with a small altar and offering bowls in front of the Buddha statue.

Ceremony

In consideration of family, friends and acquaintances, it is important to arrange a ceremony. One can write down one's wishes of things to have done. If one wants both a Christian and a Buddhist service, this is usually possible in the chapel, but it is important to keep the ceremonies separate. They can for instance take place one after the other with a little break in between.

The chapel at Bispebjerg Churchyard is a beautiful, round building and is neutrally decorated. It can be rented for kr. 250 per hour. If one wishes to use incense it should not be excessive. This is in consideration of the following users of the chapel. There is also a smaller and cozy chapel with good acoustics.

The Buddhist ceremony can be led by a Venerable Sangha member. There are different Buddhist rituals, prayers and songs.

It is possible to create the ceremony according to one's wishes and for this, it is a good idea to write them down in advance. It is for instance possible to sing a couple of Christian songs. One can choose rather neutral ones such as: "Op al den ting", "Se nu stiger solen", "Nu falmer skoven". If the deceased had not clearly indicated specific wishes previously, it can not be certain that a Buddhist interment can take place. There have been several cases where, since ones testament has not specified otherwise, the funeral has been an entirely Christian ceremony even though the deceased was Buddhist.

Kirkegårdskontoret (Churchyard Office)

Frederiksborgvej 125, 2400 Kbh. NV.

Tel.: 35 81 00 59. Opening hours: Monday – Friday at 09:00 – 14:00

www.kbh-kirkegaarde.kk.dk

You can order a place in the columbarium and a time for the cremation of the body directly at the churchyard office or through the funeral directors (NB: the cremation has to take place within five days of dying). The urn can only be placed in the columbarium by making arrangements with the churchyard office at least two days before the placing on the urn. It is obligatory to include the name and personal details on the urn.

Summary of Estimated Funeral Costs (2004):

Columbarium space	1720 kr.
Cremation of the body	2200 kr.
The chapel	500 kr.
Organist	475 kr.
Decoration of coffin	1050kr.
Announcement in local paper	495kr.
Coffin	4675 kr.
Hearse	780 kr.
Coffin Bearers	355 kr.
Urn	660 kr.
Text in gold	1750 kr.
Funeral directors	2250 kr.
Total	16.910 kr.

If one has large financial and capital assets, one cannot claim financial support from the health authority (Sundhedsforvaltningen). However one may be able to receive money through ones pension scheme or if one is a member of "Danmark" (a health insurance).

The Venerable Sangha member

One should consider giving a donation to the involved organization to cover the expenses of the Sangha members who are performing the traditional ceremonies for the deceased.

It is suggested that the donation should be at least 2000 Danish kroner.

References

This document was compiled drawing on oral instructions from the following Venerable Lamas:
Tai Situ Rinpoche, Ayang Rinpoche, Tenga Rinpoche, Bokar Rinpoche and the Danish lamas Ani Ea and Damchø Palmo.

Bibliography

Sogyal Rinpoche: "Den tibetanske bog om livet og døden", Gyldendal. (The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying).

Tenga Rinpoche: "Bardo og Befrielse", Karmapa Tryk. (Bardo and Liberation).

Bedemændenes Landsforening (Funeral Directors Organisation): "Når nogen dør" (When someone dies).

Tel: 45 93 14 11, www.bedemand.dk

Kræftens Bekæmpelse: "Ved livets afslutning". Tel. 35257500, www.cancer.dk

Buddhistisk testamente (Buddhist Will and Testament)

vedrørende min død og bisættelse (concerning my death and interment)

Skriv ja/nej

(Write yes/no)

_____ Oprettet for notaren den (drawn up with Notary) _____
_____ Beror hos familie/venner(deposited with family/friends): _____

_____ Kopi hos buddhistorganisationen (copy lodged with Buddhist Organisation): _____

Mit navn (My name): _____ cpr. nr. _____

Adresse (Address): _____

Jeg ønsker (I wish):

_____ En buddhistisk lama/munk/lægmand til stede ved mit dødsleje (A Buddhist lama/monk/layperson is present at my deathbed).

_____ Ovenstående buddhistorganisation bedes straks underrettet ved min død (The above-mentioned Buddhist organisation should be informed immediately upon my death).

_____ Giv straks besked til nedenstående Ærværdige/Rinpoche/Lama.

(Please inform immediately the below mentioned Venerable Monk/Rinpoche/Lama of my death).

Navn (Name): _____ Tel./e-mail: _____

Bisættelsen (Interment):

_____ Ligbrænding (Cremation).

_____ Fjernelse af smykker o.l. fra liget (Removal of jewelry, etc. from body).

_____ Asken i buddhistisk urnehal på Bispebjerg kirkegård (Ashes to be placed at the Buddhist columbarium Bispebjerg Kirkegård). Tel.: 82 33 46 00

_____ Andet (other):

_____ Bisættelsen må bekendtgøres (Interment may be announced). Evt. hvor og hvilket medie (e.g. where and how).

_____ Bisættelse med afholdelse af buddhistisk ceremoni (Buddhist ceremony to be performed for interment). *Særlige ønsker på bagsiden (Special wishes on reverse side of form)*.

_____ Bønner ved ligbrændingen (Prayers at cremation).

_____ Bønner i 49 dage med specielt ritual den 49. dag, samt på årsdagen (Prayers for 49 days and special ritual on 49th day and 1st year anniversary).

Livstestamente (Life Testament):

_____ Livsforlængende behandling, hvis jeg er uafvendeligt døende (Life prolonging treatment if I am terminally ill).

_____ Anmeldt til Livstestamenteregisteret (Notified to the Life Testament Register).

_____ Sovepiller eller smertestillende behandling umiddelbart før døden (Sleeping pills or pain management immediately before dying).

_____ Obduktion (Post Mortem).

_____ Transplantationsdonor. Hvis ja, underret (Organ Donor. If yes, notify):

_____ Anmeldt til Donorregisteret (Notified to the Donor Register).

Overdragelse af ejendele (Transfer of Belongings):

_____ Alle mine buddhistiske ejendele overdrages til buddhistorganisationen (All my Buddhist belongings transferred to Buddhist Organisation):

_____ Følgende buddhistiske ejendele overdrages til (Following Buddhist belongs given to): _____

(Benyt evt. bagsiden)(Reverse side of document can be used)

_____ Donation for buddhistisk medvirken til bisættelse m.m. (Donation for Buddhist ceremonies at interment, etc.) _____ kr.

_____ Indbetalt til begravelseskasse (Paid to "begravelseskasse"/funeral account): _____ kr. _____

_____ Yderligere pengegaver (Further donations): _____ kr.

_____, den (Date) _____

Underskrift (Signature)