

CEREMONY FOR CLOSING THE COFFIN

[This ceremony has several possible functions. It can be used for paying last respects to the deceased and closing the coffin in a home, church or temple, practice centre or funeral home before a procession and burial ceremony; or it can be used in the crematorium for paying last respects to the deceased and closing the coffin before a ceremony of cremation. This ceremony can also be used to cleanse, purify and dress the body of the deceased and to place it into the coffin, if local customs and laws allow such a ceremony to be conducted by clergy and family.

During this ceremony, the water of the nectar of compassion is sprinkled on the body of the one who has passed away and on the coffin in order to restore freshness and purity. A bowl of clean, clear water and a branch of willow or a small flower with many petals are needed to perform the ceremony. The clear water symbolises the power of concentration, and the branch of green willow or flower symbolises deep understanding. If this ceremony is used to cleanse, purify and dress the body of the deceased, then clean cloths for the washing and clean, comfortable garments for dressing should be prepared.

One or more relatives, friends or representatives of the family are invited to prepare and share offerings of words, song and poetry to remember the virtues and achievements of the deceased.]

1. Opening the Ceremony

Incense Offering.

Touching the Earth.

2. Opening Verse

[bell x 3]

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa

[bell]

The Dharma is deep and lovely.

We now have a chance to see, study and to practise it.

We vow to realise its true meaning.

[bell]

3. Introductory Words

[Adapt as appropriate]

Today the community has gathered to consecrate the body of [*name of deceased*] with purified water, the nectar of compassion, and to pay our last respects while invoking the names of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The children, relatives and friends of [*name of deceased*] are here to take part in the ceremony. We ask the community to

listen with a quiet mind. Please let us be aware of our breathing and the good fortune we have to be together today, offering all our love and support to [*name of deceased*] and to each other during these profound moments of transformation.

4. **Contemplation on No-Coming and No-Going** 🎵

This body is not me.
I am not limited by this body.
I am life without boundaries.
I have never been born,
and I have never died.

Look at the ocean and the sky filled with stars,
manifestations from my wondrous True Mind.

Since before time, I have been free.
Birth and death are only doors through which we pass,
sacred thresholds on our journey.
Birth and death are a game of hide-and-seek.

So laugh with me,
hold my hand,
let us say good-bye,
say good-bye, to meet again soon.
We meet today.
We will meet again tomorrow.
We will meet at the source every moment.
We meet each other in all forms of life.
[bell]

5. **Sharing of Relatives and/or Friends**

[At this time one or more relatives, friends or representatives of the family share some words or a song to remember the virtues and achievements of the deceased.]

6. **Verses of Consecration**

[The head of ceremony raises up the bowl of clear water with their left hand and forms the mudra of peace with their right hand at the level of the forehead, and then chants aloud to consecrate the water. Members of the community follow their breathing, listening with ease and concentration.]

[Chanted by head of ceremony]

This water's shape is round or square
according to the container that holds it.

In the spring warmth, it is liquid; in the winter cold, it is solid.

When its path is open, it flows.

When its path is obstructed, it stands still.

How vast it is, yet its source is so small it is difficult to find.

How wonderful it is in its streams which flow endlessly.

In the jade rivulets, the footprints of dragons remain.

In the deep pond, water holds the bright halo
of the autumn moon.

On the tip of the king's pen, water becomes
the compassion of clemency.

On the willow branch, it becomes
the clear fresh balm of compassion.

Only one drop of the water of compassion is needed,
and the Ten Directions are all purified.

[bell]

7. Dharma Words

[The head of ceremony holds the bowl of consecrated water in their left hand and a willow sprig in their right.]

[Chanted by head of ceremony]

This water has eight special qualities.

It washes away the dust and impurities of all living beings,
leading them all into the wonderful Avatamsaka World

May all beings without exception overcome their suffering.

Water does not need to be washed by water,
that is the wonderful Dharmakaya.

Dust does not cling to dust,
that is how our mind opens naturally.

When we sprinkle the water which is the nectar of compassion,
our place of enlightenment is purified.

The wilting plant grows fresh and green again,
the world of defilement changes into a world of purity,
and all beings are refreshed and can live in peace and joy.

Homage to the Bodhisattva Who Refreshes the Earth.

[bell x 3]

8. Verses of Praise

The nectar of compassion is seen on the willow branch held by the Bodhisattva.

A single drop of this nectar is enough to bring life to the Ten Directions of the Cosmos.

May all afflictions of this world disappear totally, and may this practice centre be completely purified by the Bodhisattva's nectar of compassion.

[bell]

9. May the Day be Well 🎵

May the day be well and the night be well.

May the midday hour bring happiness too.

In every minute and every second, may the day and night be well.

By the blessing of the Triple Gem, may all things be protected and safe.

May all beings born in each of the four ways live in a land of purity.

May all in the Three Realms be born upon Lotus Thrones.

May countless wandering souls realise the three virtuous positions of the Bodhisattva Path.

May all living beings with grace and ease, fulfil the Bodhisattva stages.

The countenance of the World-Honoured One, like the full moon or like the orb of the sun, shines with the light of clarity.

A halo of wisdom spreads in every direction, enveloping all with love and compassion, joy and equanimity.

Namo Shakyamunaye Buddhaya

Namo Shakyamunaye Buddhaya

Namo Shakyamunaye Buddhaya

[bell x 2]

10. Invocation of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas 🎵

[This is chanted as the body of the deceased and the coffin are sprinkled with consecrated water. As the chanting continues, the assembled community is invited to circumambulate in a clockwise direction around the coffin, paying their last respects and offering flowers and gifts. The chanting is concluded when everyone has had the chance to pay their final respects, and the coffin is then closed. If the body is being

washed and dressed, the chanting continues during this time and concludes once the body has been laid into the coffin.]

Introductory Verse

[Chanted by head of ceremony]

The river of attachment carries living beings
away to the sea of suffering,
where waves of afflictions rise by the thousands to submerge us.
In order to transcend the wheel of samsara,
with one-pointed concentration we invoke the names of Buddha.

Recitation

[All chant each name three times]

Namo Shakyamunaye Buddhaya

[Homage to Shakyamuni Buddha, the Fully Awakened One]

[bell]

Namo Amitabhaya Buddhaya

[Homage to the Buddha of Infinite Light]

[bell]

Namo Manjushriye Bodhisattvaya

[Homage to Manjushri, Bodhisattva of Great Understanding]

[bell]

Namo Samantabhadraya Bodhisattvaya

[Homage to Samantabhadra, Bodhisattva of Great Action]

[bell]

Namo Avalokiteshvaraya Bodhisattvaya

[Homage to Avalokiteshvara, Bodhisattva of Great Compassion]

[bell]

Namo Kshitigarbhaya Bodhisattva

[Homage to Kshitigarbha, Bodhisattva of Great Aspiration]

[bell]

11. The Three Refuges 🎵

I take refuge in the Buddha,
the one who shows me the way in this life.
I take refuge in the Dharma,
the way of understanding and of love.
I take refuge in the Sangha,
the community that lives in harmony and awareness.

[Bell]

Dwelling in the refuge of Buddha,
I clearly see the path of light and beauty in the world.
Dwelling in the refuge of Dharma,
I learn to open many doors on the path of transformation.
Dwelling in the refuge of Sangha,
shining light that supports me, keeping my practice free of obstruction.

[Bell]

Taking refuge in the Buddha in myself,
I aspire to help all people recognise their own awakened nature,
realising the Mind of Love.
Taking refuge in the Dharma in myself,
I aspire to help all people fully master the ways of practice
and walk together on the path of liberation.
Taking refuge in the Sangha in myself,
I aspire to help all people build Fourfold Communities
to embrace all beings and support their transformation.

[Bell x 2]

12. Sharing the Merit 🎵

Reciting the sutras, practising the way of awareness,
gives rise to benefits without limit.
We vow to share the fruits with all beings.
We vow to offer tribute to parents, teachers, friends and numerous beings
who give guidance and support along the path.

[bell]

May we be born now in the Pure Land
within the heart of a lotus flower.
In the moment when the lotus blooms,
we touch the reality of no-birth and no-dying.
May Buddhas and Bodhisattvas be our companions

on the wonderful path of practice.

[bell]

May we end all afflictions
so that understanding can arise,
the obstacles of unwholesome acts be dissolved,
and the fruit of awakening be fully realised.

[bell]

13. Words of Gratitude

[At this time, a relative or friend of the deceased is invited to come mindfully before the community to offer a few words of gratitude to everyone who participated in the ceremony.]

14. Invitation to Burial or Cremation

[The head of ceremony then invites the community to continue with the burial or cremation ceremony.]