

CEREMONY FOR THE DECEASED

[This ceremony can be used when we hear of the decease of a loved one, or when we wish to commemorate the anniversary of the decease of a loved one. Traditionally, this ceremony is also used on the one-hundredth day after decease.]

A photograph of the deceased should be placed on the ancestral altar with a small placard on which are written his/her name and the dates of birth and passing away. Also, an offering of food should be made to the deceased and placed on the ancestral altar in front of his/her photograph. The food should be something that the deceased enjoyed during his/her lifetime.

Ceremonies for the deceased should be guided by a dharma teacher and adapted to suit the circumstances as well as local customs and traditions.]

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. The Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore

[bell]

Avalokiteshvara

while practising deeply with

the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore,

suddenly discovered that

all of the five Skandhas are equally empty,

and with this realisation

he overcame all Ill-being.

“Listen Sariputra,

this Body itself is Emptiness

and Emptiness itself is this Body.

This Body is not other than Emptiness

and Emptiness is not other than this Body.

The same is true of Feelings,
Perceptions, Mental Formations,
and Consciousness.

Listen Sariputra,
all phenomena bear the mark of Emptiness;
their true nature is the nature of
no Birth no Death,
no Being no Non-being,
no Defilement no Immaculacy,
no Increasing no Decreasing.

That is why in Emptiness,
Body, Feelings, Perceptions,
Mental Formations and Consciousness
are not separate self entities.

The Eighteen Realms of Phenomena
which are the six Sense Organs,
the six Sense Objects,
and the six Consciousnesses
are also not separate self entities.

The Twelve Links of Interdependent Arising
and their Extinction
are also not separate self entities.
Ill-being, the Causes of Ill-being,
the End of Ill-being, the Path,
insight and attainment,
are also not separate self entities.

Whoever can see this
no longer needs anything to attain.

Bodhisattvas who practise
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore
see no more obstacles in their mind,
and because there
are no more obstacles in their mind,
they can overcome all fear,
destroy all wrong perceptions
and realise Perfect Nirvana.

All Buddhas in the past, present and future
by practising the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore

are all capable of attaining
Authentic and Perfect Enlightenment..

Therefore Sariputra,
it should be known that
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore
is a Great Mantra,
the most illuminating mantra,
the highest mantra,
a mantra beyond compare,
the True Wisdom that has the power
to put an end to all kinds of suffering.

Therefore let us proclaim
a mantra to praise
the Insight that Brings Us to the Other Shore.

*Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!
Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!
Gate, Gate, Paragate, Parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha!"*

[Bell x 2]

4. Introductory Words

[Adapt as appropriate]

Today the community has gathered to recite and practise the sutras, to invoke the Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' names, to make offerings and to transfer the merits to [*name of deceased*] on the ____ anniversary of the day of their decease. 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. Parents and grandparents, whether they are still alive or have left this life, are present in their children and grandchildren. The life of children and grandchildren is the life of the parents and the grandparents. The life of the ancestors carries on in the life of the children and grandchildren. According to the teaching of the Buddha, the peace and joy of the children and grandchildren are the peace and joy of the parents, grandparents and all ancestors. With a feeling of calm, clarity and peace we will make possible the calm, clarity and peace of those who have left this life.

Please will the children, grandchildren and close relatives of [*name of deceased*] stand before the Three Jewels, join your palms and touch the Earth to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

5. Touching the Earth 🎵

[Recited by head of ceremony as relatives touch the Earth]

Offering light in the Ten directions,
the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

[bell]

Teaching and living the way of awareness
in the very midst of suffering and confusion,
Shakyamuni Buddha, the Fully Enlightened One,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

[bell]

Cutting through ignorance, awakening our hearts and our minds,
Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Great Understanding,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

[bell]

Working mindfully, working joyfully for the sake of all beings,
Samantabhadra, the Bodhisattva of Great Action,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

[bell]

Seed of awakening and loving kindness
in children and all beings,
Maitreya, the Buddha to-be-born,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

[bell]

Seeing the Buddha in everyone,
Sadaparibhuta, the Bodhisattva of Constant Respect,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

[bell]

Mother of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and all beings,
nourishing, holding and healing all,
Bodhisattva Gaia, Great Mother Earth, precious jewel of the cosmos,
to whom we bow in gratitude.

[bell]

Showing the way fearlessly and compassionately,
the stream of all our Ancestral Teachers,
to whom we bow in gratitude. [bell x 2]

6. Contemplation on No-Coming, 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]

7. Invocation of the Buddhas and Bodishattvas

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 Shakyamunaya 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]

8. Beginning Anew

With great respect, we turn towards the conqueror of all afflictions,
offering heartfelt words of repentance.

We have lived in forgetfulness for a long time.

As we have not had the opportunity to encounter the Dharma,
our habit energies have led us into suffering.

We have made many mistakes out of unskillfulness.

We have been blinded by our wrong perceptions
for a very long time.

Our heart's garden is sown with attachment, hatred and pride.

In us are seeds of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and lies.

Our everyday deeds and words do damage.

All these wrong actions are obstacles to our peace and joy.

Let us begin anew.

[bell]

We see that we have been thoughtless,
straying from the path of mindfulness.

We have stored up afflictions and ignorance,
which have brought about so much aversion and sorrow.

There are times we have been weary of life
because we are so full of anxiety.

Because we do not understand others,
we are angry and resentful.

First we try to reason with each other, then we blame.

Every day the suffering increases, making the rift greater.

There are days when we are unwilling to speak to each other,
unwilling to look each other in the face.

And we create internal formations, which last for a long time.
Now we turn to the Three Jewels.
Sincerely recognising our errors, we bow our heads.
[bell]

We know so well that in our consciousness
are buried all the wholesome seeds -
seeds of love and understanding and seeds of peace and joy
But because we do not know how to water them,
the wholesome seeds do not sprout fresh and green.
We continue to allow sorrow to overwhelm us
until there is no light in our lives.
When we chase after a distant happiness,
life becomes but a shadow of the reality.
Our mind is occupied by the past,
or worrying about this or that in the future.
We cannot let go of our anger,
and we consider of no value the precious gifts of life
which are already in our hands,
thereby trampling on real happiness.
As month follows month, we are sunk in sorrow.
So now in the precious presence of the Buddha,
fragrant with sandalwood incense,
we recognise our errors and begin anew.
[bell]

With all our heart we go for refuge,
turning to the Buddhas in the Ten Directions
and all the Bodhisattvas, noble disciples, and self-achieved Buddhas.
Very sincerely we recognise our errors
and the mistakes of our wrong judgments.
Please bring the balm of clear water
to pour on the roots of our afflictions.
Please bring the raft of the true teachings
to carry us over the ocean of sorrows.
We vow to live an awakened life,
to practise smiling and conscious breathing,
and to study the teachings, authentically transmitted.
Diligently we shall live in mindfulness.
[bell]

We come back to live in the wonderful present,
to plant our heart's garden with good seeds,
and to make strong foundations of understanding and love.
We vow to train ourselves in mindfulness and concentration,

practising to look and understand deeply
to be able to see the nature of all that is,
and so to be free of the bonds of birth and death.
We learn to speak lovingly, to be affectionate,
to care for others whether it is early morn or late afternoon,
to bring the roots of joy to many places,
helping people to abandon sorrow,
to respond with deep gratitude
to the kindness of parents, teachers and friends.
With deep faith we light up the incense of our heart.
We ask the Lord of Compassion to be our protector
on the wonderful path of practice.
We vow to practise diligently,
cultivating the fruits of this path.
[bell x 2]

9. The Refuge Chant

Incense perfumes the atmosphere.
A lotus blooms and the Buddha appears.
The world of suffering and discrimination
is filled with the light of the rising sun.
As the dust of fear and anxiety settles,
with open heart, one-pointed mind,
I turn to the Three Jewels.
[bell]

The Fully Enlightened One, beautifully seated, peaceful and smiling,
a living source of understanding and compassion,
to the Buddha I go for refuge.
[bell]

The path of mindful living,
leading to healing , joy and enlightenment, the way of peace,
to the Dharma I go for refuge.
[bell]

The loving an supportive community of practice,
realising harmony, awareness and liberation,
to the Sangha I go for refuge.
[bell]

I am aware that the Three Gems are within my heart.
I vow to realise them,
practising mindful breathing and smiling,

looking deeply into things.

I vow to understand living beings and their suffering,
to cultivate compassion and living kindness,
to practise joy and equanimity.

[bell]

I vow to offer joy to one person in the morning,
to help relieve the grief of one person in the afternoon,
living simply and sanely with few possessions,
keeping my body healthy.

I vow to let go of all worries and anxiety
in order to be light and free.

[bell]

I am aware that I owe so much
to my parents, teachers, friends and all beings.
I vow to be worthy of their trust, to practise wholeheartedly
so that understanding and compassion will flower,
helping living beings be free from their suffering.
May the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha
support my efforts.

[bell x 2]

10. 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]

11. Mindfulness of the Deceased

Brothers and Sisters, it is time to bring to mind [*name of deceased*] and to send the energy of loving kindness and compassion to him/her. Let us sit and enjoy our breathing for a moment, allowing [*name of deceased*] to be present with us now.

[Enjoy ten breaths in silence.]

Brothers and Sisters, please listen. The peace and joy of the entire world, including the worlds of the living and the dead, depend upon our own peace and joy in this moment. With all our heart and one-pointed mind, let us begin anew for the benefit of ourselves and our beloved ones.

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 remember the virtues and achievements of the deceased and to offer a few words of gratitude to everyone who participated in the ceremony.]