

THE DHARMA RITE TO ASSIST THE DECEASED

LIVING BUDDHA DECHAN JUEREN, MAY 31, 2000. [DARI RULAI TEMPLE](#), LOS ANGELES, CA

TRANSLATOR: KUO. TRANSCRIBER: JIM STEWART

Today we will talk about the dharma rite to assist the deceased and what effect it has on someone who receives this service. Some of the questions are:

1. What is the service to assist the deceased?
2. What does the service do, what effect does it have when someone who has passed away receives this service?
3. What is the purpose of someone asking for this service for others?
4. What are the results after receiving this service?
5. If someone passes away without receiving this service, what karmas does that bring to their relatives?

In Chinese, we talk about Chau Du, what it means is to "go beyond," or in Sanskrit, "para." "Du" means to embark on the journey from this side to the other shore.

According to Buddhism, when a person leaves this world they will always have done some bad things, whether intended or not, that are connected with bad karma.

So whether you are conscious of it or not, you have hurt others.

Many Buddhist schools today are cheating people, because they do not really know what Buddhism is about. Even if they are vegetarian, make bows, and chant the Buddha's name every day, they can never attain enlightenment, because they do not really understand the teachings and knowledge of Buddhism.

The origination of Buddhism began with Buddha Shakyamuni. But Buddha-dharma existed long before Buddha Shakyamuni. People want to seek Buddha-dharma because they have discovered they face many problems and disasters in their life. As human beings, people face the pain of birth and death, old age and sickness, plus many things they are not satisfied with. There are a lot of hardships to overcome.

People have a hard time overcoming their own destinies, so the ancient ones wanted to find a way of light for others to follow. They gradually developed this way of practicing dharma through many different experiences. People discovered the most difficult thing to conquer is their own heart and mind. The mind often changes, and as a result they hurt both others and themselves. The practitioners provide many different methods to overcome their mind, and to strengthen their will power.

Many types of teaching schools have sprung up. Some teach hardship, such as piercing their body with needles, or taking a stick or whip to beat themselves, or

having a poisonous snake bite them. Others teach the ascetic way which involves only eating raw food.

The practitioners through history experimented with many different ways, but eventually they found a way so that humans would never get sick at all. They found that diseases emerge when the heart and mind are not in harmony. If they are in harmony, people will be healthy, for they have realized their shortcomings. Everyone wants to forgive themselves, but criticize others. People always seem to find a way to win a contest over others, but find it hard to overcome themselves. They are not able to accept criticisms or opinions of others. Because people have these kinds of problems, they keep raising their desires higher and higher. But the more unsatisfied desires they have, the more they will be disappointed in the reality of their lives.

Because they are emotionally unbalanced with their disappointments, they will not sleep well because they can never relax. Because when the mind is occupied, one can never get a good sleep and their physical body will react. A fire in the stomach will rise up, the next day they will have a poor appetite, they cannot eat and will not digest food well. The next morning they go to work, but they cannot get nourishment from food. Now they will expend their reserve energy. If this continues day after day, eventually it will result in hormone imbalances. People have lower backaches, or their heart is racing, and they worry about minor things.

Why can they not overcome themselves? Because they have never come to know themselves in a fundamental way. Once they know themselves truthfully, overcoming themselves is easy.

Many masters through time have discovered ways of knowing the self and overcoming the self. People have a tyrannical ego fixation in their head. They are egotistical. They want to keep what they have discovered to themselves and not to reveal it to the people. They only let people know there are dharmas existing in this world. Long before Buddhism, there was Brahmanism in India. Buddha Shakyamuni learned the dhyani meditations and samadhi techniques from the Brahmins. Shakyamuni learned a variety of methods, including the ascetic way. Wearing only a thin fabric coat, he spent six years in the Himalayan snows, eating only one grain of wheat a day.

Shakyamuni eventually realized he could not save people with this approach, so he decided to leave the mountains. As he descended, he met a shepherd girl who offered him some milk. With that nourishment, he recovered physically, and eventually he traveled to the bodhi tree, sat under it and attained enlightenment.

Once he attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree, he left the teachings of Brahmanism and began the teachings that later became to be called Buddhism, for he

felt that the dharma truth of the universe ought to be known to every person, not just the Brahman caste only. (At that time only the Brahmans knew the dharmas.)

He advocated salvation for every sentient being. If you have faith, and practice according to the instructions, everyone will grasp the methods to know themselves and overcome their ego. Once you can overcome yourself, you will never suffer the pains of diseases. Once you know the environment, and overcome your conditioning, then you will no longer feel insufficient, for you will have everything. (This is because) for the true practitioner of Buddhism ("buddha" means 'knower') will never trifle with what to eat or wear, or where to live. A person should place importance mainly on what they do and think.

In the beginning, the transmission of Buddhist dharma began with only the techniques of how to practice dharmas. There were no strict disciplines or ways to live, such as vegetarianism. Whatever you eat, there will always be good and bad elements in any food. How healthy you are does not depend on what you eat. More important is your own internal system, how your body regulates itself to digest food and turn it into nutrients.

Many rules that the temple monks currently follow were set down in the Tang Dynasty by the Emperor Tang Wu Zong. The monks chant Buddha's name, but cannot attain Buddhahood, because the popular schools today advocate chanting,

such as the Amitabha, but they do not really understand the sutras. If you only chant the name, but never understand it, and don't follow and practice the techniques, you can never attain Buddhahood. For example, if you buy equipment but do not read or cannot understand the handbook, you cannot use the equipment.

When I gave some dharma lectures in the thousand year old Long Kwan temple, I asked the monks, "Why are you vegetarians?"

They answered, "We have compassion for living beings, so we do not want to kill and eat them."

I asked them, "Do you eat rice?" I said, "There is animal life in rice. Vegetables are alive. Do you drink water? For Buddha said in the sutras, 'In a mouthful of water there are 84,000 living beings.' (And this was before the discovery of microscopes.) Do you breathe? There are uncountable numbers of living beings in the dust in the air we breathe in and out. So in this life, whether we are conscious of it or not, we have killed many living beings. Every time we drive we hit bugs with our windshield, or we may step on ants when we walk, whether we intend it or not." Some monks don't understand this kind of reasoning. But whether we have intended it or not, we have committed many karmas we are not even aware of.

So we chant the mantras with magic powers to assist the deceased, to assist the consciousnesses that we have unintentionally killed or harmed. When those

consciousnesses reach a higher stage, we will not owe them anything, because we have helped them to attain to a higher level of existence. When we owe them nothing, we feel much lighter.

When a person dies and goes to Hades, they will come to a river. They need to cross a bridge that is like a stairs, they have to climb one step at a time. This is the Great Judgement or the Great Accounting. They will face judgement on this life. Whatever they have done, whether they owe someone else or others owe them, everything will be counted. They will have to climb the bridge with their hands and feet, stair by stair. Now all those other souls that they have harmed will come and get them. They will see exactly what they have done. They will be shaking as they climb the bridge. If they have committed heavy crimes, they will be dragged into the river. There are gods and goddesses who protect the river and will use a fork to poke into the river and pick up the soul and return it to this shore.

So on this side of the river there are many wandering ghosts who do not dare to cross the river, because they know the crimes they have committed. What do they do on this side of the shore? They will begin to plunder all their living relatives and friends, especially those that passed away with few friends or relatives who do not go to their burial place with flowers and incense, nor do they burn paper money as offerings to help the deceased. In the Eastern tradition, relatives burn paper money as a symbol for the deceased to use to pay those they owe, so they can cross the river.

If they do not have that money, they do not dare to cross the bridge. In order to get the money they need, the deceased will bother their living relatives and friends. That is why living people with a dead relative, that they have done nothing for, may have backaches, worries, etc.

Once the deceased receive help, they can pay off the other souls and once they have no more debts, they can cross the bridge easily. Those who receive the dharma rite called Assisting the Deceased, by the blessings of the powers of Buddha's merits, will not climb that bridge alone. The guardian protectors or angels of Buddha will guide that soul across the bridge. The soul will not be attached to the illusion of the bridge and will transcend it and cross the river.

Once the ghosts of your relatives who have passed away, receive the help from the rite, they will no longer bother living relatives and friends, and all kinds of minor problems in current times will disappear.

THE DHARMA RITE TO ASSIST THE DECEASED, CONTINUED

LIVING BUDDHA DECHAN JUEREN, JUNE 1, 2000. [DARI RULAI TEMPLE](#), LOS ANGELES, CA

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The second question is, what is the effect of the dharma rite to assist the deceased?

Sometimes you may feel your house is dark or cold. Or you may be in your office, and feel it is not bright even though there are many lights on. Then there are those who take on a task and they will have energy at the beginning, but as time goes on they lose that energy and cannot finish the task. Sometimes your ears will hum with a buzzing sound. Some people experience a hum sound in their head. Then there are those who have nightmares while sleeping. Others have problems and aches all over their body. Some feel tense all the time, they feel unhappy, they are always in a bad mood. There are those who feel their health is not good, and go to the doctor, but there is nothing physically wrong with them.

Some families are always in conflict, or unexplained bad events happen. The sons and daughters do not listen to their parents. The parents try hard but their child is always getting sick. Some children cry in the middle of the night. Or your career is not successful. You lose money trying to fix problems. Then there are those who are trying hard and are just about to accomplish a task, but something goes wrong and they do not succeed. Some people are struck by lightning. Some people are born deaf, dumb, blind or with a bad leg. Some people have a bad car accident and are paralyzed for life. Some people don't know how to swim and drown. Some people are accidentally killed or murdered. Some people want to commit suicide.

What is the cause for all these problems? Mostly they are the result of things you have done in previous lives, the effect of your root nature, rather than your self nature. Your root nature is like the root of your family tree, in which your ancestors' merits and karmas are passed down to you. On the other hand, your self nature is your own consciousness, your soul.

Many people say you cannot change your life. But even if you don't think you can change it, you can. Every circumstance is caused by other circumstances. Some of your prosperity in this life, or your long life, or your happiness is the result of your own merit. But you can waste it. You may have done a lot of good deeds and accumulate merits, especially if you do those good deeds without expecting

gratitude from others or expecting anything for yourself. If you do this, you will gain greater and greater merit. Whether you intend it or not, if you do something to harm your merit, it will gradually decrease and be wasted. You must follow the path of the truth. If you do something with bad motives, you are putting an obstacle in your path.

The other path is your root nature. Your root nature means all your ancestors, parents, grandparents and all other relatives before you. What your parents have done has an effect on you. When they have done good deeds or merits, their offspring will live a path of light. If they have done crimes, it will have a negative effect on their offspring. Those before you, whether they were conscious of it or not, everything they did when they were alive becomes a debt for you to carry. This is the debt of darkness that must be repaid by the living. That is what leads to all the negative circumstances I listed above.

If you have a heavy debt from the darkness, your house will feel dark and it will cause bad moods in your heart. According to Buddhism, those who do not have selfish motives treat one another with a straight heart. A sutra says, "With a straight heart you will go right into the truth." Some people give others the impression they are straight, they are loyal to others. Other people seem always to have double meanings to their actions, which are based on selfish motives, and they hurt others.

Some of those who have taken advantage of you try make you feel a need to thank and appreciate them. That increases their debt. Everyone has made many mistakes, whether intended or not. Eventually these mistakes will bring disasters to our offspring. There is a Chinese saying: "Don't use too much of your own smartness, leave some for your sons and daughters." So, whether we have intended it or not, we have all made mistakes in our lives. We have done things that have caused obstacles in our path. We have created our own hindrances. It is not that heaven created this life for us, we have created it ourselves. Even those born deaf or blind, or with a deformed leg, are experiencing karmas from past lives.

No parents want their child deformed when born. Yet, what is the relation of this child to their parents? A child who was born blind was, in their previous fifth past life, the grandparent of their current parents. So we have three persons involved, grandfather, father and granddaughter. There is a Chinese saying, "The grandfather went into the bed of the granddaughter." It is like, you skip a generation and the result is the child is born without eyesight.

Those who are born with deformed leg or arm were, in a previous life, executioners or prison guards, doctors, midwives, or butchers of large animals, such as cattle. They were doing bad things to those under their control. That way you can accumulate ten lifetimes of crimes in one, and you are born into a lifetime of

death. I don't know about in the USA, but in China there are people with nothing to do. They are nosey and check on their neighbors and gossip.

Various arising circumstances and accumulating causes lead to the result that everyone alive today has some disasters heading their way. Everyone feels something bad is happening or about to happen. Every day there are unexpected accidents waiting to happen.

If you want to walk away from all this suffering, first you need to take care of all the spirits of darkness, and make them pass away. You need to pay back all the debt of the darkness you are carrying, so your past will be cleared. Then you will succeed in your careers and so will your children. This is the result of the dharma service to assist the deceased.

Why do we say that everyone who passes away should have this service done for them? Why would a good person need this service? Because we live in a world of conflict between heaven and earth. Whether you have intended it or not, you have hurt many lives and your own life. There are many problems and you have bad moods and worries. Whether you are conscious of it or not, you have said things that have hurt other's feelings. You have committed crimes, whether intended or unintended.

The service for the deceased will wash clean all these things and prove you have paid them back. It will help those who pass away, the ghosts of darkness, to relieve them of their burdens, so they can march toward enlightenment. Those of you who have seen the light can help your relatives to have a good path. If your ancestors who pass away do not see this light, they don't know where to go and they cannot help you. That is why it is difficult for the living to receive the merit of their ancestors from the other side. Most people have a hard time receiving help from the other side. Thus every day they run into problems, worries and accidents.

Questions and Answers

Q: Can we use this ritual for the deceased to help someone we know, just visualizing them as we chant in the rite?

A: No, you do not know that dharma yet. We will announce before the service the name of the person this service is for.

Q: Are there some people who owe things to others, but who can cross the bridge easily because of much dharma?

A: There are those who can cross the bridge without help because of their own merits. They may have some karmas, but their merits will weigh much more.

Those with many merits will not even cross the bridge, they take a different path.

My disciples with dharma names do not need to cross the bridge.

Q: What color is the light when you cross the bridge?

A: You will know it when you see it yourself. It is different for everyone.

Q: How do you know that deceased people are helping you or asking you for help?

A: You need to help them first, before they can help you.

Q: By participating in this ceremony for someone else, will that help my relatives or do we need to do a special service for them?

A: I will answer this question in a few days when I cover the subject of Buddha's root natures. When you are sitting here doing a service for others and you pray the name of Buddha, you represent the merits of that Buddha. Tonight we chant Amitabha's homeward heart mantra. The more you do this service for others, the more merits you accumulate for yourself. So when you chant, chant earnestly and with sincerity, and you will help them. And you will receive measureless, boundless merits. Once my disciple receives a dharma name, he will never have to cross that bridge. When you are doing service for others, you are accumulating merit.

When you chant the Ksitigarbha heart mantra, you are also overcoming the ten rulers of Hell. You are meeting them spiritually and they understand you are helping others, and they will have respect for you. When the day comes that you have to go yourself, the ten rulers of Hell, the Yama Lords, will come and bow to you, because you are representing a Buddha or Bodhisatva.

Q: Can you help someone who doesn't want to be helped?

A: No, when you eat, can you satisfy other's hunger? If your brothers and sisters don't do anything, there is little you can do for them.

Q: How will you know your deceased relatives have made it across?

A: You are just beginning to learn the esoteric dharmas, but once you attain to a certain stage, you can see it with your own eyes. When all of you attain that stage, everyone here can also see it.

Q: Should we do the ritual for my relatives? Should I bring you the names?

A: Yes, bring their picture, name and birth date.

Q: When someone is dealing with a lot of negative karma, such as suicide, can they go across if they get help?

A: Everyone who commits suicide goes to Hell, even if they have great merits. They will not return to this world again. If they do return, it will be 57 great kalpas later (1 kalpas = 5.7 billion years). Some people may think suicide is liberation, but that is not so. When you achieve a certain stage, you will see Hell with your own eyes. When you see Hell, you will see the door we call the Door of Martial Prison. Once they enter that door they cannot get out.

Q: There were some monks in Asia who committed suicide to protest something, such as in the Vietnam war. What about them?

A: They will go to Hell. They will regret their action as they are burning up. They will understand they should not have done it. Courage without wisdom and compassion is stupidity.

Q: In India some wives practice sati, they burn themselves to death when their husband dies. What about them?

A: They also go to Hell.

Q: Is there particular service when someone is cremated?

A: Yes, the Six-Path Vajra mantra. Ya Ah Sat Sa Ma Ha.

Q: Master Yu said when we started, he said he wanted us to surpass him. I want to explore the esoteric teachings to the fullest level. When he gave us the

chant, "Aum Mani Padme Houm," he said it would be beneficial to chant it. Today I started using that chant before I got in my car. I said I wanted to experience effortless traffic and I chanted it 6 times. When I got on the freeway the traffic was continuously flowing. When it got congested, I chanted 6 more times and the traffic began to flow and never stopped. I want to share that experience about the power of this chant.

Master Yu: This chant is not for you to use whenever you feel you want to for something trifle. For example, if I give you a gun that can hit a distant target, then you can practice with a distant target. But if you only shoot at a very close target, you are wasting your bullets. So you need to save this chant for something much more important. Don't use it for trifles.

Q: When can we meditate with the master?

A: Until the end of June, we will try to learn dharma and how to chant the mantras. In July and August, you will sit and meditate for an hour. After initiation, if you chant every day, memorize the mantras, and practice the dharmas, then in 3-6 months, you will feel a fundamental change in yourself.

PURPOSE OF THE SERVICE FOR THE DECEASED

MASTER YU TIAN JIAN, JUNE 8, 2000. [DARI RULAI TEMPLE](http://www.darirulai.org), LOS ANGELES, CA

TRANSLATOR: KUO. TRANSCRIBER: JIM STEWART

The purpose of a service for the deceased is because we are always reincarnating in this wheel of rebirth. Everyone is on a journey. We have a lot of karmic ties stringing us together. We all owe someone something. Your greatest debt is if you owe someone a favor. Or if you kill someone, you owe them a life. Or if you hurt someone and cause bleeding, you owe a debt of blood. Or, if you take something from someone and do not return it, you owe them. If you do not respect your parents, you owe a moral debt. If you cheat your brother or sister, you also owe a moral debt.

If you think that this will pass away, it will not. The debt will follow the soul wherever it goes and you will have to repay it in the next life. Sometimes you feel

happy meeting others. But sometimes you meet someone and feel you are mortal enemies. That is because you owe them a debt in a past life and you will be repaying it in this life.

Every day you have your own worries and disasters, yet every day you have a moment of joy. All of these arising circumstances are cause for the present moment.

Sometimes we think this world is hell. For in this life we live in a kind of muddiness. We experience life with conflicts. Every moment of our life, things come up and disturb us, often it is "small" stuff.

When any relatives pass away, we can ask help through the power of Buddha to assist those who have passed away. We can ask to clean all the debt they owe since before they passed away. Then all this debt will become purified once again.

Then when they reincarnate again, they will owe nothing this time. Their soul can reincarnate in a pure state and avoid all these disasters and the probability for good luck will be much higher this time. When you have received this service, the more you give, the more you get. That is why we see some people with such good luck in this lifetime.

But in this world, only some small percentage of people are wealthy. The majority of us simply lead life day to day. Every day, your life or work you live

according to your will. Every day you are constrained by the conditions around you. Why is it like that for us? Because when we previously passed away, our relatives didn't do a service for us, so you are still carrying a debt from a past life.

But you can overcome this, if you practice dharma. And you want to serve all people and never expect any gratitude from them. The more you practice dharma, the more merit you accumulate. That is how you can change your debts to merits. Otherwise our mind is always in a doubtful state, we not know our direction, and every day we live a life struggling in the darkness.

So we can ask the help of Buddha to assist our relatives who have passed away. It is just like we are lampposts lighting the path we will take later. When you do a service for assisting someone else, you are also doing a service for your own heart.

You here are very lucky to have run into a Buddha and there is a speck of light in your heart. Studying this light will cause it to become brighter in your heart. Then you can truly walk away from the darkness into the light. You will know everything truthfully for yourself. Whatever you need, nature will provide. You will no longer be consumed running around taking care of business in an everyday kind of life.