

CARING FOR THE DYING

A COLLECTION OF ADVICE
FOR FPMT HOSPICE SERVICES
FROM LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

The purpose of being born as a human being is to eliminate the suffering of others and to bring them happiness.

– Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche

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Introduction

Hospice work should be based on three principles:

1. It is inevitable to die.
2. Every minute so many sentient beings die, so we are not so special (or so alone) dying.
3. It is very important to die with bodhichitta in the mind.

The purpose of our life is not just to solve our own problems, to obtain happiness for ourselves. This is because all of our happiness, our comfort, everything we enjoy in our everyday life, we receive by the kindness of others. Our survival is dependent on the kindness of other beings. So the ultimate goal or purpose of our life is to free all other beings from their problems and to bring them happiness.

It is highly meritorious to offer hospice service as it is an immediate service to the community. He also advised for us to integrate Dharma into our hospice work because ordinary social work (whilst beneficial) is concerned with this life only whereas Dharma deals with all future lives.

During an illness, the main thing is to take care of the dying person's mind. Many others can take care of the body, but we can take care of the mind. In modern culture, there are a lot of questions about death and rebirth because there is a lack of clarity or education about these two things. Among psychologists and doctors, there are many different points of view about these, which indicate that there is a lot to learn about what the mind is. It is only by understanding what the mind is that one can understand what death and rebirth are and what is the best method to help a dying person.

The needs of a person who is experiencing death, who is at this crucial point in life, are unbelievable, and they need support. People commonly find this experience terrifying, but for those who have lived a positive life - a life of being sincere, good hearted, loving and compassionate towards others - death is not something to be afraid of but is actually something to be enjoyed. Such people can die peacefully, happily, and confidently, without fear, worry, or doubt, knowing that they are going to a better place where they can be of more benefit for mankind, for other living beings. For these people death becomes a path for peace, whereby in the life after this they can achieve or experience greater success and happiness.

Those who have maintained a positive mental state, free from negative emotions such as attachment towards one's own body, belongings, the people around them, death is like this. Death is just like taking off an old dress and putting on a new one. We just leave our old body and take another new, healthy, young body. Then by developing our mind again (in the next life) we are able to be of more benefit to others.

But for most people, when death is approaching they find it the hardest and most difficult time in their life. So therefore, this is the time that they really need some refuge or support.

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA GIVES HIS BLESSINGS TO A NEW FPMT HOSPICE SERVICE

Jamyang Buddhist Center in London, UK recently started a new project called Tara Hospice Service, and asked His Holiness the Dalai Lama for a statement of support. His Holiness very quickly wrote a letter of support. (December 2002)

Rinpoche was very very happy reading this letter, and said it is very important for relevant centers to frame the letter and have it on the wall to inspire others - Rinpoche said this is very very good to do.

From His Holiness the Dalai Lama:

“ Illness, suffering and death are part of the reality of human existence. It would be as foolish to pretend that we are not sick when we are, or that we will never die, as it would be to deny the possibility of ever getting well.

As living beings, we all wish for happiness and seek to avoid suffering. However, our basic attitude towards suffering makes a great difference to the way in which we experience it. An important factor in dealing with serious illness, whether we ourselves are sick or caring for someone who is, is to train the mind. On one level this means cultivating a sincere compassionate motivation and performing positive actions serving other sentient beings. At another level it means calming and controlling the mind, which is a more profound way of preparing for the future. Identifying negative states of mind like anger, hatred, frustration, jealousy and pride, we can work to eliminate them. At the same time we can cultivate positive attitudes like compassion and love, tolerance and contentment. Training the mind in this way is both useful and realistic. Love and kindness are not a luxury, but a source of health and happiness for others and ourselves.

Real care of the sick does not begin with costly procedures, but with the simple gift of affection and love. In the practice of healing, a kind heart is as valuable as medical training, because it is the source of happiness for both oneself and others. People respond to kindness even when medicine is ineffective, and in turn cultivating a kind heart is a cause of our own good health.

I am happy to learn that a project to set up a Buddhist Hospice had been launched in conjunction with the Jamyang Buddhist Centre in London. Helping others wherever you can according to their need is the true expression of compassion and I am always encouraged when people take practical steps like this to put such positive motivation in action.”

***NB:** FPMT Hospice Services who would like a copy of this letter on His Holiness' letterhead should contact Center Services at International Office.*

Cultivating Helpers' Minds

Understanding the reasons for helping

There is actually a reason that we need to help others. It is a clean-clear pure reason: it is simply that a sentient being is suffering and needs our help. If a blind person is in danger of falling down a cliff because they cannot see, and you have eyes to see that person's life is in danger and arms to hold them, it does not matter if that person does not ask you to help them. Your help does not depend on their asking you for it. Just having the capacity to help is itself enough reason for us to run to that person and grab them before they fall down the cliff.

We have the same need to help other sentient beings – and it does not depend on them asking for our help. We should help them simply because we have the capacity, or potential, to help them now. And even if we do not have the capacity to help them now, we can develop it by increasing our compassion and wisdom. The more compassion and wisdom we are able to develop, the more it develops our potential to help others, the greater the power we will have to liberate others from all suffering and its cause, which is within them, on their mental continuum.

The cause of their suffering is their karma and delusions, their mistaken ways of thinking, and the negative imprints left by them on their mental continuum. Karma is related to oneself. Therefore one has to pay attention by helping another person cut down his negative karma. That would be the most practical thing to do to help with the dying because at the time of death, negative karma should be lessened or weaker.

You get skies of benefit when you help others sincerely from your heart, by knowing that the meaning of your being born as a human being at this time is to serve others. When we serve others with this knowledge and with compassion, our everyday life brings us so much peace, happiness, and satisfaction. Then our inner life is full rather than empty.

Developing the benefits for our future lives and for the ultimate goal of enlightenment

As far as the karmic results of the work we are doing, serving sick and dying people, there are eight ripening results. Because karma is expandable, we can experience the result of one good karma many times in one life and in many lifetimes – in hundreds or even thousands of lifetimes. So, the one good karma of serving others, making charity, can result in wealth in hundreds or thousands of lifetimes.

Some of the eight ripening results are:

- (1) In all coming future lives when we are born as a human being, we will have a long life.
- (2) We are making charity to others, and this will also become a cause of wealth, both in this life and especially in future lives.
- (3) If we are humble and respectful of those whom we serve, we will be respected by others or achieve power in this life and in future lives. We can bring so much peace and happiness to millions of sentient beings. Consider His Holiness the Dalai Lama, for example. His Holiness brings peace and joy to everybody who sees him. Seeing His Holiness even once is

an unforgettable experience. Just seeing his smile or hearing his voice brings so much peace. By having such power, we can benefit millions of people.

- (4) We will also have a perfect body, wisdom, and be born in a high caste. This is referring specifically to being reborn in countries in the East. In many countries in the East, if we wish to benefit others, we need to be born in a high caste so that everyone respects us. We can then benefit so many sentient beings, although there are cases to the contrary such as the great Tibetan yogi Milarepa. Milarepa was only one of countless meditators who became enlightened in one brief lifetime of this degenerate time and Milarepa is the yogi who is best known in the West. Somehow, perhaps owing to his bodhichitta, Milarepa's name became very famous, even though many other Tibetan lamas and meditators also achieved enlightenment in one lifetime. Milarepa had nothing – not even one dollar. But his mind and his body were very powerful. He lived in the mountains, where he meditated and achieved enlightenment. He was able to endure hardships, and he was then able to conquer all his ignorance, anger, attachment and other delusions and to cease even their negative imprints. He was able to achieve full enlightenment. Because he had a powerful body and mind, Milarepa could achieve enlightenment very quickly.

In a similar way we are also performing a difficult service that many other people cannot perform. By taking upon ourselves the responsibility to do such difficult things, we create the cause to have a powerful body and mind in our future lives, so that we will be able to complete the realizations and achieve enlightenment. In our future lives we will again be able to bring incredible skies of benefit to other sentient beings.

The other four of the eight ripening aspect results are explained very clearly in the lam-rim texts.

The importance of cultivating a good heart

The most important characteristic for a volunteer/helper is to have a good heart. It does not matter if the caregiver is Buddhist or Christian as long as he or she has a good heart.

When we say having a good heart, we mean having an awareness of the purpose of one's own life: "My job, the reason I'm here, the reason I have this precious human body, the purpose of my survival is to bring happiness to others." Any being that we see, try to feel this, try to generate this thought. It is extremely good, very important to practice Dharma, the good heart, and this is the best psychology to stop depression, to stop the unhappy mind.

By changing your attitude, instead of thinking of only oneself, think of others daily. With this, life becomes very joyful, very pleasant, very heart-fulfilling.

So even if there are problems or sickness in this life, by living with this attitude in our daily life, with this awareness, they cannot bother us. Our attitude is thinking about others, a complete switch. There is no emotional mind, no anger arising or retaliation or jealous mind.

The importance of learning the Dharma

There are different levels of how to be useful to other sentient beings, to help them achieve (1) temporary happiness – causing happiness in this life or future lives, and (2) ultimate happiness –

bringing others out of samsara, ceasing their suffering, then bringing them to the highest enlightenment.

Those who have good heart but no understanding of Dharma – the path to liberation and enlightenment – who attempt so sincerely in spite of their lack of dharma wisdom knowledge, can still be useful to others, but only by causing happiness in this life, nothing more than that. Without an understanding of Dharma, what they can do is limited.

Therefore, to learn Dharma becomes extremely important. Why? The purpose is to actualize the meaning of the words, to have the meaning of Dharma, the meaning of the words in our heart. Our heart is transformed into the meaning of the teachings. So one is able to subdue one's own mind. The mind becomes softer, more patient, more tolerant, more compassionate, more loving to others, also kinder to others. These very basic qualities of the human mind give value to human life, make this human body meaningful, worthwhile.

The importance of preparing for our own death, future lives, and ultimate enlightenment

Helping to look after people who are sick and dying is itself the best preparation for our own death. Fear of death does not come from outside, but from within our own mind, because of our delusions and negative karma. Fear is the result of attachment and other negative emotional thoughts and of the negative karma collected in the past. By serving others with a sincere mind in our everyday life, we purify so much of those negative karmas and develop a good heart.

Serving others with a sincere heart brings us peace and satisfaction every day. We feel happy, and we see our life as meaningful. It fills our life with happiness and fulfillment now and also ensures that we have the best future. Creating so much merit is also the best preparation for our own death. It will ensure that we have a peaceful, happy death, with no anxiety or frightening karmic appearances. Our consciousness will then have a good journey to the next life, so this will result in a good rebirth. Like changing our clothes, we will leave this old body and take a new one in the pure land of Buddha or take another perfect human body.

What we are doing creates so many causes to achieve a powerful perfect human body with the eight ripening qualities. Lama Tsongkhapa explained that it is by having such a body that we can really achieve realizations of the path to enlightenment. Since what we are doing here is creating so many causes for such a body, it is something about which we should rejoice. We will receive incredible benefit now at the time of our death, and in all our future lives up to enlightenment. The ultimate benefit will be that after we achieve enlightenment we will be able to liberate numberless sentient beings from all their suffering and bring them to enlightenment. Even without any expectation of receiving benefits by serving others, we will naturally achieve all these results.

In other words, serving others is the project for future lives. We cannot be sure about our plans for this life. Everything is uncertain; whether we can finish what we are doing or what our lives will be. We cannot put our signature to the fact that we will be alive tomorrow, that we will definitely be able to complete our works.

What is definite to happen is death. The time when death will occur is very uncertain. It can happen any time, any day, any hour, any minute. So as Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned, for the time being, until one reaches a certain level of the path, one cannot stop death.

Even plans such as helping others, sincerely benefiting others, or liberating one's own mind from delusions, no matter how big our projects are, if they are not for Dharma, if they are just for the happiness of this life, then they are nothing. They are just like other big non-virtuous projects. So our project or work for future lives' happiness is to stop, to cease, the causes of the bad migrations. That means two things: first, to purify the negative karma already created in this life and past lives. And second, to create the causes for higher rebirth, for liberation from samsara, the definite goodness, and for the ultimate happiness up to enlightenment, which means the happiness of all future lives. We must immediately start this work for happiness, for obtaining happiness beyond this life up to enlightenment.

So then we are well prepared even before death comes. The work for all future happiness is done.

The importance of daily practice and prayers

His Holiness the Dalai Lama says that it is difficult at the time of death to really meditate as we did in life. If during our life we could not meditate well, then we will not be able to meditate at death; we will not be able to hold our concentration.

Meditating on the lam-rim is one of the best preparations for death. One should do those specific practices that are explained in the lam-rim, in the teachings of the stages of the path to enlightenment, those preliminary purification practices of making offerings to the guru–Triple Gem, doing prostrations, or recitation of mantra. These transform the mind into the path to the enlightened state, or the three principles of the path to enlightenment, and the tantric paths, the two stages. The lam-rim explains the four ways to accumulate powerful, extensive merit.

One can also do meditation on the Four Noble Truths, the very fundamental Buddhadharma, to achieve liberation from samsara. One very important meditation is on suffering, impermanence and death. This is extremely easy to meditate on and extremely powerful to cut the delusions – our true enemies.

It is also important to integrate the five powers* into our life and to learn the five powers to be practiced at death. These are very special practices to achieve enlightenment quickly. They involve *powa*, the transference of consciousness at the time of death into a pure land. In the pure land one receives teachings on the Vajrayana, which enable one to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime. The effectiveness of *powa* depends on how well one practices the five powers at death (determination, white seed, repudiation, prayer, familiarity). And this depends on how well one does the general practices in life.

Besides that, in our daily life we should keep the mind as much as possible in the good heart, the thought of benefiting others, keeping it alive twenty-four hours a day, keeping the mind in the attitude of the good heart. So generate the thought, remember that the purpose of one's own life is to free every living being from all the sufferings and to cause the happiness of all numberless beings.

It is extremely good to practice mindfulness of the meaning of life in our daily lives. That means to have the constant awareness everywhere – in the office, at home, on the street, that “I'm here to bring happiness to others.” And likewise with animals we think like this: “I'm here to bring happiness to these insects, to these animals, to these fish, to this people.”

Practicing the good heart, that is, bodhichitta, during your life purifies so much negative karma, including very heavy karma, and it stops one from creating more. It is negative karma that makes the mind experience fear of death. And it is bodhichitta especially that stops the immeasurable suffering and the suffering rebirths that arise later from these negative actions. Therefore, we should live in morality and take the precepts from a spiritual master or in front of holy objects.

It is good to dedicate the merit in the following way in the morning after our meditation practice and especially at the end of the day, when we dedicate the merit from whatever good actions we have done that day.

Due to all the past, present, and future merits collected by me and the merits of the three times collected by all the buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other sentient beings, may any sentient being just by seeing me, touching me, talking about me, remembering me, or dreaming about me never ever be reborn in the lower realms from that time forward. May they immediately be liberated from all disease, spirit harms, negative karma, and defilements.

“Talking about me” can refer to praise or criticism – even someone making fun of us. “Seeing me” can include seeing our photo. We pray that any connection with us prevents that being’s rebirth in the lower realms – the hell, hungry ghost, or animal realms.

Also make the following strong prayer:

May anyone who sees me, touches me, talks about me, or remembers me immediately be cured of cancer, AIDS, coma, arthritis, migraine, and other heavy diseases. May those possessed by spirits be immediately released from the harm of those spirits. May anyone who is dying immediately stop experiencing terrifying emotions and karmic appearances and feel incredible bliss in their heart. May they then be born in a pure land of Buddha, where there is no suffering of rebirth, old age, sickness, or emotional problems. Totally free from all suffering and its causes, may they become enlightened there.

If we generate such a thought to benefit others every day, we become meaningful to behold. This means that everything about us becomes healing: hearing our voice, seeing us, touching us, remembering us.

The sutra teachings mention that “all dharmas** exist in dependence upon the wish.” Whether harmful or beneficial, phenomena are actualized from our intention, our wish. All happiness comes from our wish, from our positive intention. Enlightenment, total liberation from samsara, is a creation of mind; it comes from our wish. All phenomena exist in dependence upon the wish.

(**Here, the term *dharmas* simply means phenomena.)

Thus, so much can happen from the power of our mind generating such a wish, by praying in this way. That is the benefit of prayer. Prayer can grant wishes due to the power of mind.

The power of prayers can also be seen from how negative prayers to harm others can also be actualized. Wrong prayers can harm many people and even destroy the world. Kirti Tsenshab

Rinpoche, a guru from whom I have received many initiations, is a great yogi and scholar with limitless skies of qualities and realizations, yet who is extremely humble with respect for everybody, rich or poor, young or old. Rinpoche explained that the destruction of the temples and monasteries (in Tibet) came about in the following way. A long time ago in a Buddhist monastery there was a monk who was naughty and didn't follow the monastic rules. The disciplinary monk scolded him very heavily, and possibly beat him. The monk who was disciplined got very angry and made many negative prayers wishing to destroy monasteries. Rinpoche explained that the problem started from there. Later, I think perhaps in his next life, he destroyed many, many monasteries.

So it is important to generate beneficial thoughts, thoughts of benefiting others, and to have faith and trust in the power of prayers.

Understanding the cycle of death and rebirth

It was explained by the kind and compassionate omniscient Guru Shakyamuni Buddha that even though this body disintegrates (at death), there is still a continuation of consciousness. In the Mahayana (great vehicle) path there are five levels or stages to achieve full enlightenment: the path of merit or accumulation, the path of preparation, the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and the path of no more learning. Until a person achieves the third of these bodhisattva paths, the path of right seeing (wisdom directly perceiving emptiness), that person will have to keep experiencing the cycle of death and rebirth, including old age and sickness, etc. In relation to us, this means that until we achieve this level or path, we will have to keep experiencing this cycle of death and rebirth, and so on.

In the highest yoga tantra system of Buddhism, there are two stages: the generation stage and the completion stage. The completion stage itself has five stages: isolation of body, isolation of speech, clear light, the illusory body, and the unification of the clear light and illusory body. When a tantric practitioner achieves the clear light stage, he/she has complete control over death and rebirth. Even in the Hinayana path, one has to experience the cycle of death and rebirth until its cause is stopped.

So until we achieve one of these levels or stages that gives us control over death and rebirth, we have to go through the cycle of death and rebirth. The kind of rebirth that we will take after this life, after death, is dependent on the nearest cause, the state of mind at the time of death. Whether the state of mind at the time of death is peaceful or disturbed determines whether one will have a happy or suffering type of mind. It is crucial because it is this that determines the next life's (situation) and the person's long-term happiness.

If one is able to achieve a fortunate rebirth, one will have more opportunity to develop the mind and be able to be of more benefit to others. So in this way, from life to life one can develop the mind more and more and in this way experience more and more happiness until one ultimately achieves full enlightenment. By eradicating all mistakes from the mind and completing all positive qualities (realizations), in particular, complete and perfect wisdom, perfect compassion, and perfect power, one will be able to free everyone from all their sufferings and to bring them the perfect happiness of full enlightenment. One gains the power to understand all the different qualities of the minds of others and to reveal to them the means of eradicating suffering and developing happiness.

So much of this is dependent on one's state of mind before death, so by understanding this we can see now that our service is unbelievably important and crucial, the best gift. This is what we are offering people through our compassion and wisdom. This is what makes our life meaningful, satisfying, and enjoyable, because what we are offering them is the chance to enjoy happiness from life to life right up to full enlightenment, and this is the best and most important gift.

In addition to cultivating our minds, the most important is our own practice. When one does one's own practice, then other people start to feel your mind. They can feel the vibration of your mind – warm, good hearted, generous, sincere. And that makes other people respect you, listen to you, want to follow you to practice. Even if one does not practice Dharma, just to be around is very beneficial for other people and for their problems and mind. It brings happiness and peace to their mind. One becomes an example for them.

The story of Asanga: a powerful story of compassion and sacrifice

I would like to mention the story of the pandit Asanga. Those of you who have heard Dharma teachings will know this story very well. Asanga did retreat in a hermitage for twelve years trying to achieve Maitreya Buddha. After a few initial years of retreat, when he hadn't seen Maitreya Buddha, he left the hermitage. As he came down the road he saw a bird flying into its nest inside a hole in a rock. Asanga saw that the rock had been worn down by the wings of the bird touching it as it went in and out. Even though the bird's feathers were very soft and the rock was very hard, it was still able to wear down the rock. This inspired him, and he thought, "If even feathers can wear down a rock, why can't I persevere in my practice to see Maitreya Buddha?" So he went back to the hermitage for another three years of retreat.

After another three years of meditating, he still had not seen Maitreya Buddha. So he left his retreat again. As he was coming down the road, he saw somebody cutting a rock with a thread. Asanga saw that the rock was being worn through by the movement of the thread. This inspired him again, and he thought, "If even a thread can wear through a rock, why can't I persevere in my practice to see Maitreya Buddha?" So he returned to the hermitage and did another three years of retreat. Again he didn't see Maitreya Buddha.

Once again, Asanga became discouraged and left the hermitage again. Along the way he saw that water dripping onto a rock had made a hole in it. Water is soft and rock is hard, but by dropping continuously the water had made a hole. This again inspired Asanga, and he thought, "If even drops of water can make a hole, why can't I persevere in my practice to see Maitreya Buddha?" He then went back and again spent another three years in retreat.

After twelve years of retreat, he still hadn't seen Maitreya Buddha. He then decided to leave definitively. When he came down from the hermitage, he saw a wounded dog in the road. The dog's lower body was an open wound filled with maggots. Asanga felt unbearable compassion for the dog. He cut some flesh from his calf and spread it out on the ground. He then closed his eyes and went to pick up the maggots from the infected wound with the tip of his tongue. But he found that he could not touch the maggots. When he opened his eyes, he saw in front of him not a dog but Maitreya Buddha.

It was Maitreya Buddha all along. There was no wounded dog and no maggots. Before Asanga generated unbearable compassion for the dog and sacrificed himself, thus purifying his mind, he

had seen just a dog. When his mind was impure and obscured by karmic obscurations, instead of seeing Maitreya Buddha he simply saw a wounded dog crawling with maggots. By generating unbelievable compassion and sacrificing himself to serve that living being, Asanga purified all the defilements that blocked his seeing Maitreya Buddha. His impure karma had projected a pitiful wounded dog covered with maggots. Asanga completely purified all these defilements, and when this impure karma had been purified, he could then see Maitreya Buddha.

Asanga immediately grabbed onto Maitreya Buddha and said, "I have been meditating for a long time, why didn't I see you earlier?" Maitreya Buddha replied, "I was there in the hermitage, but you didn't see me." Maitreya Buddha then showed Asanga the marks on his robes from Asanga's spit. Asanga used to spit in his cave, and the spit went on Maitreya Buddha's robes. Maitreya Buddha showed Asanga the marks to prove that he was always in the hermitage – it was just that Asanga hadn't been able to see him.

Maitreya Buddha then asked Asanga, "What do you want?" Asanga asked Maitreya to give teachings. Maitreya Buddha then took him to the pure land of Tushita, where in one morning, which is equivalent to fifty human years, Maitreya taught him the entire *Abhisamayalamkara*, which explains the whole path to enlightenment, the eighth chapter of which talks in detail about the four kayas, or Buddha's holy body and mind. This text is studied for many years in Sera, Ganden, and Drepung, the largest monasteries in Lhasa and now India, and in the branches of those monasteries. All five divisions of Maitreya Buddha's teachings are studied for many years. After receiving these teachings Asanga brought them down to the human world and wrote them down.

On the basis of these teachings Lama Atisha wrote *Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment* and Lama Tsongkhapa then wrote extensive commentaries. Many other enlightened lamas also wrote commentaries. Countless meditators in Tibet actualized the path and became enlightened by studying these teachings and their essence, the lam-rim. Nowadays these great teachings have even spread to the Western world, where every year tens of thousands of people are able to make their lives meaningful by following the path to enlightenment. All this came from the teachings that Maitreya Buddha gave to Asanga. Those teachings are the basis. All these things happened because Asanga generated intense compassion and was willing to sacrifice himself for one living being, a wounded dog.

With all these teachings, so many beings inside and outside of Tibet have been able to make their lives beneficial, and many beings have been able to achieve enlightenment. Now we can also receive these teachings, which make our life meaningful. All this came from Asanga's great compassion, his bodhichitta, in sacrificing himself to help what he saw as a wounded dog. All this came from one person offering service to one sentient being, from one person generating compassion for a wounded dog. So, the benefits are unbelievable. All these benefits that we receive came from Asanga's compassion. During his twelve years of retreat nothing happened; it was only after he sacrificed himself to take care of a wounded dog that he was able to see Maitreya Buddha. That is the point I wanted to make.

Helping the Sick and the Dying

During an illness, the main thing is to take care of the dying person's mind. Others can take care of the body, but as helpers you can take care of the mind. I think that being able to help a dying person's mind is even more important than being able to cure diseases such as cancer and AIDS. If you are a healer and you are able to heal many people from diseases such as cancer and AIDS, it is miraculous, unbelievable. Compare that to helping somebody who is dying, who is at the most terrifying point of his or her life. I think that in this case your service is more crucial and important. This is because by offering psychological advice to the dying person, showing how to look at death as positive, it brings a state of peace and happiness to the mind.

The religious tradition of the patient depends on their prior practice in daily life. The advice you give them depends on what you have been doing yourself – the lam-rim, thought transformation, and so on – beyond mere sitting meditation.

The most worthwhile thing to do is to inspire the person to think of others with loving kindness and compassion, to wish others to be happy and free from suffering. If a person dies with the thought of benefiting others, their mind is naturally happy, and this makes their death meaningful.

It is very important to know a person's mind. You can teach according to their capacity. Check at the time, use your own wisdom, and judge how profound a method to present to them. It would be best if you could give the dying person some idea of the death process according to tantra: the evolution of the dissolution of the elements, the senses, the consciousness, all the way to the subtle consciousness.

For a person who has lost their capacity to understand because of coma, dementia, and so forth, there is not much possibility for them to understand. You should aim to help them get at least a precious human rebirth. This should be your aim, not that the person must necessarily believe in karma, for example, but that they die with a positive, happy mind, with loving kindness and compassion. This is our precious gift. Your main aim in taking care of the physical body is so that you can take care of the mind, to transform their state of mind to the positive so that at least the dying person can die without anger, desire, and so forth.

Understanding the fear of death

When a person actually reaches these states when dying, you should help and guide. It is more difficult to help because it is very difficult for the person to meditate or understand and think at that time and, therefore, difficult to put your advice into practice. This is because there is a mental fear (even for a person without physical problems or pain), worries, a heavy torture, strong karma at the time of death. So even if there is no physical pain, due to karma there is much fear. The fear of separating from one's relatives and friends, separating from one's possessions, leaving all of these things, separating from the body – many mental problems arise from such fears.

One thinks, "I'm going to lose all my belongings, my money, my beautiful house and swimming pool, my car, my friends, my children, my parents ...," on and on. So the fear comes. Why is our

mind afraid? Why are we afraid to be separated from them? Because we are attached to these things. What makes it difficult is not being able to let go, is having strong and constant attachment.

Generally speaking, especially for a person who is not used to practicing renunciation, it is quite difficult to cut clinging. One spends a whole lifetime with the mind habituated and trained and developed in one thing – clinging. And in addition, for those close to actual death, there is also pain and illness. So it is very difficult to help when a person has reached that state. It is difficult to explain meditation to that person, to teach them, and it is difficult for that person to practice.

Therefore, while the person is alive and while they have the capacity to understand, it is important to practice. During those times, if we are able to help them, then there is a lot of opportunity for them to be able to understand and put our advice into practice. The healthy times are important. On the other hand, for some people it is not easy during their lifetime, but when they start to experience the body collapsing and they feel they are dying, then maybe the mind is a little more open to renunciation at that time.

Reciting mantras

You can help a person to recite whatever mantras he or she is familiar with from the past: Vajrasattva, Medicine Buddha, Compassion Buddha, or Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Even if the person can't recite the mantras himself or herself, the caregiver can recite the mantras to purify and leave imprints. If the mantras are recited nicely, like the Chinese do in their temples, it can inspire the sick person and elevate their spirit. It can make them feel that Buddha is the only refuge, that there is nothing else left in the world that is meaningful, and help to free their mind from problems from attachment, anger, and confusion.

Mantra helps one to eventually attain a higher rebirth even if one's positive karma is used up. Even if a person does not want to hear mantra, it leaves a positive imprint on the mind, so that sooner or later that person will meet the path and have the ability to practice the teachings, and thus to clear obscurations and attain enlightenment. Even if someone gets angry hearing mantras and dies with an angry mind, it's still better than not hearing any mantras at all and staying peaceful. In this way, step by step, a person's karma will bring them to the Mahayana path and to enlightenment.

If one is going to undergo surgery, before having the operation, if possible, the person should listen to tapes of the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama or to tapes of chanted mantras such as OM MANI PADME HUM. When the person is anaesthetized, he or she will then become unconscious with positive thoughts of devotion to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The main point is to try to help the person to have a last thought that is positive, or virtuous. Then even if the operation doesn't succeed, the person has had the most important protection that saves them from the lower realms. In this way, there is no regret. In this way, the most important help and guidance for the person is given.

There are many mantras that can be recited. There are several collections of powerful mantras that can be recited that are available from the FPMT Education Department.

See the Hope packet within "Practices not Requiring Empowerment" within the FPMT e-shop for a complete collection of practice materials to help the dying and those who have die. if it is an

emergency situation or if you have no money to purchase this packet then log in to www.fpmt.org/hope/ to download these practices for free.

Listening to or reading teachings

If the person is a Buddhist student, she can listen to tapes of any teacher she has met or with whom she feels a connection, of guru devotion or of the lam-rim. Those who are not Buddhist can still listen to the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Lama Yeshe, especially something inspiring on the subject of bodhichitta. This is a very good thing to do.

Patients can either read books themselves on certain subjects from Dharma texts or you can read to them. It is also good to read teachings on the qualities of the pure lands, such as Amitabha's pure land. The person will then admire the qualities of pure lands, where there is no suffering and every enjoyment. This is one psychological method that becomes a cause for the person to reincarnate in a pure land rather than having them cling to this life and this world. It switches the object of their mind so they become detached from this life and this world.

Helping someone to die with a virtuous thought is more important than being able to help their mind to be equanimous, than protecting them from attachment and anger.

Chanting Prayers

People can gather and chant prayers together, such as the following list of short prayers:

- Refuge and bodhichitta
- The four immeasurables
- Special bodhichitta motivation
- Names of the Thirty-five Confession Buddhas
- Mantras of the five deities normally used in Jangwa puja* that liberate those dying and the dead and that purify living ones and liberate those in the lower realms.
- The text *Giving Breath to the Wretched** has powerful mantras and is a text one can use to help.
- The seven-limb prayer and short mandala offering

*For more information, contact FPMT Education Services (materials@fpmt.org)

Practices

There are many practices that can be performed either by the caregiver, if the person is unable to do so or has already died, or by the persons who are themselves dying. Please see the section entitled Available Practice Materials for Helping the Dying and Those Who Have Died, as well as the Hope packet available from FPMT Education Department. For more details regarding all these mantras and practices, please contact FPMT Education Services (materials@fpmt.org).

Stupas

A stupa is a Buddhist reliquary monument, symbolic of the Buddha's omniscient mind. Stupas usually contain many blessed objects and mantras and have the power to heal and purify

When somebody is dying, take a stupa to their place and each day encourage them to hold it as often as possible, or if they are not able to hold it, then put it on their chest or head. Each time the stupa touches them, some of their negative karma is purified.

Even if the consciousness has already left the body, it can still be of benefit to touch the body with the stupa. You can leave the stupa with the dying person and instruct the caregivers that when the person dies, to bless them by putting it on their head or their chest. This is also good to do with babies or with people who don't understand.

For someone who is dying (even a non-Buddhist) you can explain that the stupa is for peace, or for healing or purification. It is also good to have a few stupas on hand for healing or to dispel spirit harms. But if the person is not comfortable with visualizing stupas or other holy objects, then other objects can be used such as crystals or universal healing energy.

The person can visualize light rays coming from the stupa/holy object, as follows:

First breathe in slowly, then breathe out. As you breathe out, visualize that all your disease, spirit harms, unskillful actions and thoughts, and the imprints left by these on your consciousness are purified. These all come out of your body as black smoke, or pollution, and disappear beyond this earth.

Now, as you breathe in, visualize that strong light beams are emitted from the stupa [or whatever object you are visualising], which symbolizes the perfect, pure mind of full enlightenment. This white light illuminates your body, completely purifying you of all disease, spirit harms, unskillful actions and thoughts, and the imprints left on your consciousness. Feel that your whole body is in the nature of white light. You have no suffering or problems at all. Your mind and body are completely free. From the top of your head down to your toes, your entire body is filled with great joy, with great bliss.

After experiencing this great bliss, think that your life has been prolonged, and that your positive energy, the cause of your happiness and success, has been increased. All your qualities of wisdom and compassion have also been developed, as well as your understandings of the path. Everything is fully developed within you.

Repeat this meditation over and over again. Breathe out and purify; breathe in and receive light and healing from the holy objects. Feel that your whole body is in the nature of light and filled with great joy.

Also, a sheet of paper with the ten great mantras written on it can be put on the dying person's body while reciting the dedication prayers at the end of this meditation. This mantra can be found within the booklet "Powerful Practices for The Dying" within the Hope packet.

Meditations

1) Taking and Giving Meditation (*tong-len*)

Whether one knows or has done the practice of *powa*, transference of consciousness, or not, the best way to die, as His Holiness [the Dalai Lama] advises, is with the altruistic thought of equalizing and exchanging oneself for others, cherishing other sentient beings. If one is able to die with that thought, then that is the best way to die and one is a self-supporting person. This means that the person is guided by him or herself and doesn't need to rely on somebody else to help. This is the best fundamental practice in order to be born in a pure realm and to save oneself from the lower realms.

It is especially important to give advice on how to experience death on behalf of all other countless living beings who are dying, to experience death on behalf of others; how to use the experience of death to free others from death and to obtain happiness for them, especially ultimate everlasting happiness. In this way, the death experience becomes very positive and useful, not terrifying, because it helps to bring peace and happiness within the dying person's mind. Thinking in this way also purifies from the mind all the negative energy and imprints left on the mental continuum by the person's previous negative or mistaken thoughts and actions. These unhealthy mental states are obstacles for present and future happiness, not only temporary but especially ultimate happiness.

If the dying person dedicates this experience for others, it will bring the cause of happiness to countless others. I think that this meditation or psychology is the key to transform the death experience into the spiritual path, bringing not only temporary but ultimate peace and happiness for oneself and for others.

You can teach the person the meditation of taking and giving (*tong-len*; taking upon oneself the sufferings of others and giving to others one's own happiness) or loving kindness meditation (*metta*) according to the capacity of his or her mind. If the person has a more compassionate nature, a 'brave mind,' they will be able to do *tong-len*, taking and giving. If the person can do *tong-len*, it's the very best way to die, as it means dying with *bodhichitta*. His Holiness the Dalai Lama calls this a 'self-supporting death.' For those who don't think others are more important than themselves, wishing others happiness and to be free of suffering is easier.

So the stronger your loving kindness and compassion, the stronger is your thought of benefiting others, to that degree problems won't bother you, no matter how serious they become; whatever diseases and so forth you experience in your own life, they will not seem so important. They will not bother you so much. When you have the thought of benefiting others, this good heart, when you have loving kindness and compassion, if there is this attitude, then even if you have these problems, they become enjoyable, instead of upsetting the mind or making the mind depressed and unhappy. Even if you have these problems, they become enjoyable, such as relationship problems – when your friend, your companion, husband, or wife leaves you, and so forth. Due to this positive attitude, then your main focus becomes causing happiness for others. Then these problems become enjoyable rather than making you upset, because with this positive attitude, with this good heart, you use these problems, diseases, relationship problems, and so forth for your spiritual development. You experience these problems on behalf of numberless sentient beings who have the same problems or who have the karma to experience the same problems in the future. Therefore, the problems that you have – relationship problems, diseases, business failure in your work, losing your job or so forth – they become enjoyable just like the sense objects that we enjoy, such as good music for the ear, or beautiful forms for the eye, or delicious food for the taste.

2) Visualization

If one visualizes Buddha in the mind or outside or watches the conventional nature of mind, its clarity, other thoughts such as anger and attachment do not arise. Explain to the person that the nature of their mind, their heart, is completely pure; that the fully enlightened one, Buddha or God, is compassionate to everyone, including them. (Rinpoche advised the Center for Bevidst Liv og Dod to meditate on God and then explain what God is. In doing so, they are actually taking refuge in Buddha. He recommended meditation for sick people and their relatives twice a month.) Help them to think that their loving heart is oneness with God, that the kingdom of God is within. This frees people from guilt and anger, from their negative thoughts.

3) Lam-rim***

To practice meditation with other sentient beings becomes purification and the accumulation of extensive merits. Leading others to practice meditations on the lam-rim and teaching the lam-rim and explaining it are in themselves consultations to help others to solve their problems.

***For more detailed lam-rim texts, please contact FPMT Education Services (materials@fpmt.org).

4) Powa

If the person is skillful at the time of death and able to practice, able to do the practice of powa, that person may be reborn in a pure realm and in that next life be able to attain enlightenment. However, all these things depend on individual karma.

If the obstacles, such as degenerated samaya, vows and so on, are not purified, and the obstacles are stronger than the karma to be able to transfer the consciousness, then powa cannot work. In degenerate times, obstacles are often greater than the individual's karma for transference of consciousness, but if the karma to take rebirth in a pure realm is stronger, then things may succeed. So the success of powa and the possibility of attaining a better rebirth are dependent on purifying and abandoning the causes of rebirth in the lower realms (what has already been accumulated and accumulating virtue and the causes for rebirth in the higher realms (of happy migratory beings).

In terms of healing, by practicing altruism, cherishing other sentient beings, the practice of powa purifies past negative karmas and also helps to avoid committing negative karma again, which is the cause of sickness. So it becomes a great solution. Then on top of that, if one can take vows or precepts, of whatever number, that is of course excellent. But practicing altruism, cherishing other sentient beings as much as possible, is itself a purification and helps one to avoid creating the causes of disease or any problem again. So to experience the disease on behalf of other sentient beings, one should do the 'taking and giving' practice (*tong-len*).

On the basis of these practices, as an ornament or decoration, those people with life-threatening illnesses should practice powa, the transference of consciousness at the time of death, when the specific signs of death appear. The right time to do powa is when there is freedom, when there is bodhichitta, that is, based on what is beneficial to all sentient beings. It should not be done because of being jealous of somebody or because of some family problem and so forth. It must be done with

the renunciation of all of samsara. One needs to have practiced and trained in powa in order to do it without any harm to oneself.

The transference of consciousness to a pure realm is an instruction that provides for [even] an evil being to quickly achieve enlightenment with force. Not only is there no harm to oneself but it has infinite benefits for others because it is a quick way to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. If the different meditations and pujas for long life are done and the signs of death are still occurring, indicating that impending death is definite, then a person can do the transference of consciousness.

According to Lama Tsongkhapa, as long as the transference of consciousness is not harmful to oneself by doing it at the wrong time, it can be done up to six months before the expected time of death, while one can still concentrate and meditate. This is especially so if one has [the prospect of] very heavy disease or pain or bad conditions, or if death is going to be experienced in a very heavy way. So if the signs of death are constantly happening and every possible method has been used [to prevent death], then it can help one to pass away before the time of expected death, when there are no heavy conditions and one has the opportunity to meditate, by using the transference of consciousness.

*For a text on this practice, please contact FPMT Education Services (materials@fpmt.org).

Practical advice

a) It is exceptionally important for the one near death to avoid seeing objects that cause attachment or anger to arise strongly. This includes such things as material possessions, relatives, persons to whom they are strongly attached, as well as enemies and so forth.

When the patient doesn't like some of the people who are caring for him, it may not be a good idea for those people to keep coming to see the person, because the patient will create more negative karma and imprints of anger again and again. It is possible, however, for either the patient or the caregiver to change. You have to be aware of the situation. If it is not possible for either side to change, it is better in terms of the process of dying that the patient be cared for by people that the patient is happy to meet. All this depends on the individual person's karma and it might not be easy, but you should try to do the best thing possible.

The main thing is to help the patient to have a peaceful mind. Even if the patient's mind is not virtuous, it should at least be peaceful, particularly without anger, which is more violent and heavy.

You could also help the patient look at the people who are caring for him positively. He or she can be encouraged to appreciate them and to think in different ways of their kindness.

b) Make the place as beautiful as possible: a calm, peaceful, serene, holy environment is so important. There should be beautiful views, beautiful art, flowers. Flowers give a very special spiritual feeling. The point is to make a positive imprint on the person's mind. Due to being in that place, every person's mind should become elevated, so that they can start to lose their fear of dying. When families come, they will see it is a nice place, a place that makes one feel there's no need to be afraid of death, and they will want to come.

c) It is better if the family members do not cry within hearing distance of the patient, as this creates clinging in the mind of the dying person. There are sounds to help the consciousness at the time of death, sounds that benefit, such as mantras, and so on. Other than this, it is best to keep quiet and not make any sounds. You should teach the family how to create this atmosphere.

d) It is all right to medicate pain in order to help the person to be able to think. But medicating for mental anguish is not okay. Sedation before death prevents working out bad karma. Anguish becomes fruitful if the person can experience it. It is hard to tell the difference. Often families want the patient medicated, but it is more for their own comfort than the patient's comfort.

e) You should learn various methods to benefit and calm the mind. For example, if a person has anxiety, then lay him down in Buddha's lion position, that is, lying on the right side with the cheek supported in the right palm and the ring finger closing the right nostril.

f) If it is possible, put up pictures of different buddhas like Chenrezig, Tara, Shakyamuni Buddha, Medicine Buddha, and so forth so that when the patients are sitting or lying down, they see these images. The pictures will leave good imprints and plant the seeds of enlightenment and the path to enlightenment, including a good rebirth in the next life. Their minds will be peaceful and happy.

More general practice advice (given at the Shakyamuni Buddha Destitute Home, Bodhgaya)

We should remember the original aim of the destitute home or clinic. Since it is run by Buddhists we should have buddha pictures in the hospital rooms, a shrine - Buddha, Chenrezig - in the dispensary, in all the doctors' rooms, in-patient rooms, so that each time they look their minds are pleased and happy, it plants the seed of enlightenment and liberation from samsara, the path to enlightenment including a good rebirth in the next life. You should not have pictures just of anatomy, medical posters, etc. This doesn't make the patients minds peaceful. Pictures of anatomy are what one has in retreat, when one meditates on suffering and impermanence - that is good. But in a hospital there should be pictures of buddhas all around so that when the patients are sitting or lying down, they see pictures of the buddhas. This is very peaceful for their minds and leaves a good imprint. The pictures should be framed very nicely, and the deity should be large and clear to see. This will give rise to devotion.

Just by being able to see these pictures, through the power of the Buddha's compassion both the patients and workers benefit. By affecting their mind they will also have a better physical future life.

Inside and outside the clinic you should play the OM MANI PADME HUM tape. This leaves an imprint that sooner or later will help people to meet the Dharma and gain an understanding of the path.

In the courtyard there should be many statues of Buddha, Tara, and other deities. This is very essential.

We want to make the destitute home distinct from other destitute homes. Others might have better physical conditions, facilities etc., but our destitute home is very special because we try to create as much as possible a very positive peaceful and loving environment, loving compassion. This is a

very special fundamental thing, this way people experience peace of mind, become happy and maybe it helps to generate positive thoughts.

On top of that the Buddhist students who are running the clinic can give advice, can give consultations in a Dharma way.

Having many peaceful, beautiful pictures of different buddhas like Chenrezig, Tara, Shakyamuni Buddha, Medicine Buddha and so forth, makes a huge difference by giving richness and a warm compassionate feeling. On top of this one more very important benefit is that just by seeing Buddha's picture or statue, oceans of clouds of merit are collected (*this needs the quotation*).

Chanting mantras and sometimes prayers (any lam rim prayer) or, in this case because we are in India and most people don't speak English, you can have the prayers chanted in Hindi, but otherwise Tibetan. (*Rinpoche sang the Eight Verses of Thought Transformation to show how prayers can also sound very melodious*). This leaves a positive imprint on their minds, not only the patients, but also in the minds of the family members who accompany them to the hospital, they will go back home with that precious gift.

For example, Buddha gave teachings to 500 swans and in the next life they were all born as human beings and they all became monks and achieved arhatship, the arya path. There is a Tibetan story of one monk who kept a dog. The monk recited prayers daily that the dog could hear. The dog died and was reborn a human being and became a monk in the next life.

Then, Vasubandhu used to recite the Abhidharmakosha text and a pigeon living on his roof heard him. One day the pigeon died and the great pandita Vasubandhu checked with his clairvoyance and discovered that the pigeon was born way down in the valley as a child. Vasubandhu then went there and asked for the child, the family accepted what he said and the child became a monk named Lodro Tenpa. He became expert in the Abhidharmakosha and wrote four commentaries on that.

So this is the difference it makes to just hear prayers, Dharma texts and mantras – it leads to a good rebirth.

The positive imprint left on the mental continuum of the sick people sooner or later brings experiences out like a sprout from a seed. They will be able to meet the Buddhadharma and understand the words and their meanings and be able to generate realizations of the path: method and wisdom, the complete path that ceases defilements, both gross and subtle, that allows the mind to become omniscient. That's how they become Buddha. Then each of them will liberate numberless sentient beings from the ocean of sufferings, samsara, and lead them to enlightenment.

It is also very good for the other people waiting in the clinic. This is a precious gift they receive while they are waiting and they go back home with that. The medicines and food help in this life, but hearing just one time a mantra or verse of teachings – that benefit continues through so many future lives until they achieve ultimate enlightenment. From that they achieve so much happiness in all those future lives, whatever they need and want.

So you can see for the sick people, coming to this Buddhist destitute home makes a huge difference in their lives, like the sky and earth, as different from other destitute homes as the sky and the

earth. The others do not have this great meaning even though they may be serving with a good heart.

There are three points. The Buddhist students give consultation, are able to talk nicely and lovingly, with affection and help the patients look at their lives and try to make their minds happy, content, and especially to think of others. For example, the man completely burned by fire: I tried to advise him that this sickness is due to his past negative karma. This is acceptance, the first thing, to think it is the result of past negative karma created by oneself. But I am thinking that I should have used the word *God*, not *bhagavan*, when I spoke to the man with the burns.

The second thing to think is that God has given me this to experience; it is the blessing of God to help me quickly finish my past negative karma by making me experience this sickness.

The third is the best way to make the mind happy and the most important one; that by my experiencing this sickness may all other sentient beings be free from all sufferings and its causes and have all happiness. Praying and thinking this way is using the experience of difficulty and pain as a path to achieve enlightenment and therefore becomes incredibly beneficial and also the cause of happiness for all sentient beings.

These three points; acceptance, receiving blessings and generating compassion give some basic idea as examples on how to give consultations, how to give help. All these three bring peace of mind:

Buddhist Euthanasia and Compassion

There is a topic related in the book *The Door to Satisfaction*, one of the books on teachings that I did that needs further clarification. The subject is, if the motivation is good, if it is done out of a good heart, then no negative karma is created (in killing someone).

A more specific definition of a positive or virtuous action is one that results in great benefit, in greater peace and happiness in the life after this, not in suffering. Since we do not have either the omniscient mind nor even the clairvoyance, we have to rely on the omniscient ones who have completed the mind training in compassion toward all sentient beings without discrimination and who also have perfect power to reveal the methods and to guide. We need to rely on such perfect beings' wisdom and on their perfect explanations.

The case in *The Door to Satisfaction* was related to someone who asked to be killed. There can also be cases of those who do not want to die, do not want to be killed, even though they have much pain.

It is not enough to act from a motivation that is positive, from a good heart. If that being will have more happiness, more peace after this life, then it is good. But the result of your action could be that the person's present suffering is stopped, but the person ends up going to hell or to the animal realms where the suffering is many hundreds of thousands of millions of times heavier than their suffering as a human.

My concern is more on the outcome. How is that person's life going to turn out – with more peace and happiness or more suffering? If one can help on the basis of that, then one's help can be given with wisdom as well as with compassion.

So the conclusion is that we also need to develop wisdom, not only the good heart. In case the person is going to reincarnate in a hell realm, then in some cases it is better to keep the person alive even one day or one hour longer. Of course, the best would be to purify the karma of that being, whether that person is still alive or already dead. This help must come from his or her friends or family members. That means they need to have an open heart and to develop wisdom in these phenomena, to be educated in this field of life.

Consider also somebody who is in a coma, who is going to stay in a coma for years. Thousands of dollars are going to be spent everyday. It would be good to use that money to purify that person's negative karma, which causes that person to go to the suffering hell realms for an incredible length of time. The best would be to purify that person's negative karma even before he or she takes rebirth in the lower realms.

Instead of spending all that money on one person's happiness, all those thousands and thousands of dollars, it would be better to spend it for years of happiness and peace for many hundreds, thousands, millions of people, and then dedicate the merits for this person. Not only for their temporal happiness, but also for their ultimate happiness, for them to be liberated from all suffering and to achieve the peerless happiness of full enlightenment.

This practice of making vast charity, spending the money on a good cause, is best. Such a practice of giving can be performed on behalf of a friend, husband, wife, child, or even your enemy, the one who helped you purify your mind to develop your mind in the path.

This is very satisfying, fulfilling. This can help relieve feelings of guilt.

At the Time of Death

Definition of death

According to Buddhism, a person is not considered dead after the breath has stopped and the heart and brain do not function any more. Even if the gross mind is not properly functioning, it may be that the subtle mind/consciousness is functioning. In Tibet, when the breath stops, the body is not touched until the consciousness has left the body, such as after a lama in the village had done powa. The question is: how to define as certain that the subtle mind is not functioning and has left the physical body.

Here are some of the signs that the consciousness has left the body:

1. The heat of the heart has stopped.
2. Smell starts emanating from the body.
3. When one presses the skin, it does not return to its proper place.
4. The white drop, like pus or water, leaves from the nostril; or for a woman, blood and water from the lower part.

When these signs occur, it means that death has occurred.

When the breath has stopped

While a person is dying and immediately afterwards as well, it is important to refrain from saying or doing anything that might disturb the dying person's equilibrium. Therefore, within the range of his/her hearing, one should not talk about such things as the possessions he/she left behind and how they are going to be distributed, nor should one make disturbing noises, such as screaming, wailing, or engaging in loud talk.

The winds that move the non-virtuous superstitions run through the right channel. Therefore, place the dying person on his right side and block his right nostril with cotton or the like. Then if possible, place before his eyes holy objects representing the sublime precious ones together with offerings – images of his guru, the mind-bound deities for which he has devotion, the pure realm of the victorious Amitabha, and so forth.

(*For more information, see *Giving Breath to the Wretched*, translated by Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, within the Hope Packet.)

After this, one should leave the body untouched. At this point also, you can invite a lama to perform powa for the dying person.

Doing the powa for another person can only be done after the breath has stopped. If a lama is available, doing powa sends the consciousness of the dying person to the pure land of the buddhas. In the pure land one receives teachings on the Mahayana Vajrayana, thus enabling one to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime. Then the person will not take rebirth in the lower realms.

If you have the following items, you can put them on the crown of the deceased:

- Kalachakra sand blessed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, mixed with honey
- powa pills

Powa pills can transform the consciousness of the person to the pure land of Buddha. Put the pill on the crown of the dying person and leave it there as long as possible. When removing it (after the person has died), pull the hair on the crown to help the consciousness exit from there. The pill can be re-used on other occasions. Powa pills blessed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama contain relics of Pabongkha Rinpoche and dust from inside the Buddha statue in the Ramoche temple.

As a group or individually, it is helpful if you can do various prayers and practices, including the following ones described briefly below. (For the complete practices, contact FPMT Education Services [materials@fpmt.org].)

The very first thing you can do after the breath has stopped is Medicine Buddha practice. Medicine Buddha made a promise that for whoever chants his name and mantra, all their prayers and wishes will succeed. The power of the prayer has been achieved by Medicine Buddha, so it is a very powerful practice to help make their prayers succeed. One of the ten powers is prayer, so pray as if you are the Medicine Buddha's agent, on behalf of the being who has died.

You can then do the Amitabha powa (transference of consciousness to a pure land), and then other practices, such as recitation of *Sang chö*, The Prayer of Good Deeds (commonly known as the King of Prayers) and recitation of the Namgyalma (Ushnishavijaya) mantra. The Namgyalma mantra is very powerful for purifying. If this mantra is written on cloth or paper and placed on a mountaintop or roof where the wind can blow it, whoever is touched by the wind receives blessings and their karma is purified. Circumambulating a stupa that contains the mantra purifies all the karma to be reborn in the hot hells.

Examples of Helpful Practices

Medicine Buddha Practice

Visualise all seven Medicine Buddhas above the person's crown. Recite the name of each Medicine Buddha seven times as in the Medicine Buddha sadhana. In the sadhana it also says to absorb each Medicine Buddha into the one below after reciting the request prayer. Then recite: May all the prayers you made in the past be actualized right now.

Nectar flows, purifying negative karma and obscurations. After reciting the name of the last Medicine Buddha and making the request to him, recite the mantra:

TADYATHA OM BHEKHANDZYE BHEKHANDZYE MAHA BHEKHANDZYE [BHEKHANDZYE] RAJA
SAMUDGATE SVAHA

(COMMON PRONUNCIATION: TA YA TA OM BEKANZAY BEKANZAY MAHA BEKANZAY
[BEKANZEY] RADZA SAMUDGATAY SOHA)

Amitabha Powa

Visualize the last Medicine Buddha transforming into Amitabha Buddha on the person's crown. Visualize the central channel of the person, but closed, without a hole at the lower end. The person's subtle consciousness is at the heart, like a mustard seed made of light. Amitabha sends a compassionate hook of red light to the person's heart. The person's consciousness is about to jump up. Good karmic energy pushes it from below and Amitabha's light draws it from above. The mind suddenly jumps up to Amitabha's heart and becomes non-dual with Amitabha's mind. (You can also mix your mind with the dying person's mind.)

Recite Amitabha's name seven times:

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ GÖN
PO Ö PAG TU ME PA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO (7x)

Chenrezig practice

For [beings of] this world or continent, it is much easier to be reborn, to reincarnate, in the pure realm of Amitabha, if one practices the compassion Buddha (Chenrezig). For those who recite [the mantra of Chenrezig] OM MANI PADME HUM and do the meditation retreat it is generally easier to be reborn in Amitabha's pure realm. [In one of his previous lives], when Guru Shakyamuni Buddha was a bodhisattva (I think with the name Damtsig datse du), he visualised all the pure realms and all of their qualities in front of his guru who was a buddha, and then dedicated much merit and made many prayers that sentient beings could be reborn easily in this pure realm.

Guru Puja

Perform the Guru Puja for the dying person, integrated with Vajrasattva and the Thirty-five Confession Buddhas.

Shakyamuni Buddha meditation

If you know no other practice, you can visualize Shakyamuni Buddha, take refuge and visualize light and nectar flowing.

Namgyalma Mantra

You can recite the Namgyalma mantra twenty-one times, then blow on water, sesame seeds, perfume, or talcum powder, blessing it with the mantra, and then sprinkle that over the dead body. It is best to recite the long mantra if possible, but the short mantra can also be recited.

Mantra of Buddha Saving Beings from Lower Realms

This mantra can be recited to people who are dying and who can still hear.

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ RIN
CHHEN TSUG TOR CHHEN PO LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

Dedications

For dedicating the merits, you can recite the King of Prayers. Dedicate the merit that the person not be born in the lower realms but attains a perfect human rebirth or is reborn in Amitabha's pure land. (In some pure lands, one can practice tantra. Other pure lands are very pleasurable, like deva realms, and one can fall back from them to an ordinary rebirth.)

After Death Has Occurred

Funerals

- One can blow blessing mantras on talcum powder, sesame seeds, etc. and put on the dead body
- Recite manis (OM MANI PADME HUM) while visualizing the dead person being purified with nectar from the mantra.
- In the place where the funeral is being held, it is good to hang a thangka of Chenrezig (with the pure realms).
- It is extremely good to sponsor Medicine Buddha pujas, for example, getting a local Dharma center to do these pujas. It is very inspiring for other people to hear this. [They can do either the short or the medium version]
- At the funeral parlor, it is good for everyone to have a copy of the King of Prayers and to read this together. It is common for all four Tibetan sects to recite this. It can be combined with the recitation of OM MANI PADME HUM and the mantra of Amitabha. [Comment by Ven. Pende Hawter: At a recent funeral I conducted, everybody was given a copy of the King of Prayers as they entered the funeral home. We did not have time during the service to recite all or even a part of the prayer, but at least everybody had a copy to take home to keep and to read later.]
- It is good to circumambulate holy objects with the body.
- It is good to arrange extensive offerings and to dedicate the merits to the dead person and their family. For this purpose, many (100, 1,000, or as many as possible) light offerings of candles or electric lights are especially good.

After cremation, what to do with the ashes

It is very important to purify the bones, ashes, hair, or nails with the skillful Vajrayana meditation called Jangwa. Jangwa is a skillful Vajrayana practice for purifying the negative karma of those who have died and for transferring their consciousnesses to a pure land. This practice can liberate beings from the lower realms and can benefit those who have died recently and are in the intermediate state on their way to a lower rebirth, by changing their rebirth to the human realm or a pure land. In that way, those beings have a chance once again to meet the Dharma and meet a fully qualified virtuous friend.

This skillful practice benefiting the dead originated with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. The son of one deva died and was reborn in a lower realm. The devas perceived this and requested Shakyamuni Buddha to help him. The Buddha manifested in the form of a deity named Kunrig and then taught all of the practices associated with this deity, including the Jangwa practice. The practice of this deity is specifically to liberate sentient beings from the lower realms. Later, the Jangwa practice was combined with the practices of other deities such as Amitabha.

This puja is normally performed by highly qualified lamas. When the center has a resident geshe, the geshe can be asked to do the puja. The karma of the deceased person is purified and the Buddha's wisdom is invoked into their ashes and bones so that those substances are consecrated by Jangwa and consequently become relics or holy objects. The person's consciousness can be transferred into a pure land.

There is the ordinary view that the ashes of a normal person shouldn't be put in a holy object, but according to Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche, if the powerful tantric puja of Jangwa is done well by a qualified lama, then the ashes of the deceased become blessed, and then it is beneficial to put them inside a holy object such as a stupa.

Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche quotes a number of sources where Buddha explains this as being appropriate to do. Also, in the very extensive commentary by Desi Sangye Gyatso (who organized the building of the Potala), he explains the extensive benefits of various actions done with holy objects. He also quotes sources from the sutras.

So it is quite clearly established that it is good to put the ashes of an ordinary sentient being into a holy object once they are blessed properly.

The ashes can then be used in one of the following highly beneficial ways:

1. Sprinkled into the wind from a high mountain. Whichever beings are touched by the ashes are purified of their obscurations and negative karma.
2. Thrown into water. Any fish or other beings touched by that water are purified.
3. Made into a statue of a deity according to the karma of that sentient being, i.e., whichever deity would have strongest effect in liberating that person from the lower realms. For example, into a statue of Medicine Buddha, Amitabha, Chenrezig, and so on. Such a statue can be approximately 6' tall or any size the family wants.
4. Made into a stupa. Any of the eight types of stupa are suitable to use for this purpose; the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha passing-away stupa (or Kadampa stupa) is good. The size depends on the size of mold available.

Just having unblessed ashes in the gompa will have no benefit for the dead or the living. But if the ashes are consecrated and made into stupas or statues, this will have great benefit for both the dead person and as well for the living. The dead person can be liberated from the lower realms, and for the family members just to see the stupa creates merit. When paying respect and making offerings to the holy object containing the remains of the deceased person, the person can make prayers and dedicate merit for the deceased to receive a perfect human rebirth and attain the path to enlightenment.

In the *Sutra of King Salgyal* there is an abbreviated list of the benefits of making or sponsoring holy objects:

1. The number of atoms in the statue or stupa equals the number of lives one will take birth as a wheel-turning king. For example, making a statue the size of your thumb creates the merit to be born as a wheel-turning king in the human or god realms. As a Dharma king you can help hundreds of thousands of people and bring them to Dharma.
2. The number of atoms equals the number of causes created to achieve perfect concentration.
3. The number of atoms equals the number of causes created to achieve perfect enlightenment, for both oneself and one's family members.

Making the ashes into a stupa or statue is also a very practical method. The family of the dead person can keep the purified ashes, stupas, tsa-tsas, or statue and put them in the room in the hall of a central place like the local Dharma center. They can also keep the stupa/holy object at home. One can have the person's name on a plaque, and above the plaque one can have a stupa, statue, or

picture of the person. Holy objects can be sponsored by someone before they die or by the family of a deceased person.

How to make stupas and statues from the consecrated ashes

The procedure advised by Rinpoche is that ashes must first receive the Jangwa blessing from a qualified lama (a good practitioner or great meditator). Once blessed, the ashes can be placed in a stupa or a tsa-tsa, together with the four powerful mantras and any other holy objects. Rinpoche has advised that the ashes should go in the base of the stupa.

It is suitable to put more than one person's ashes in one stupa. For example, if a couple sponsor a stupa and pass away at different times, it is acceptable to put the other person's ashes in the stupa at a later date; however, the space left for their ashes must be filled with incense in the meantime.

Not all of a person's ashes have to go in a stupa; a small amount is sufficient. The remainder can be distributed to family members, but they should know how to treat the ashes respectfully, once they have been consecrated.

How to use holy objects to liberate animals

To liberate means to save the life of an animal that would otherwise have died.

If liberating animals into the sea, take a stupa or other holy objects to the beach and set up an altar. First, circumambulate the animals around the holy object(s). Then do the meditation to purify them. Then bless some water and pour it over the animals. Perform the seven-limb prayer and mandala offering and then recite a short lam-rim prayer. Dedicate the merits for the animals. Again circumambulate the holy objects with the animals, and then liberate them. The first circumambulation is done so that if any of the animals die their life has been made meaningful because their negative karma has been purified. Don't liberate animals that are enemies of each other in the same place.

An alternative is first to take the animals to the gompa to circumambulate and bless them and then to take them to the ocean and liberate them.

An animal liberation service

Fred Cheong and Amitabha Buddhist Centre (ABC), Singapore, have perfected the practice of animal liberation, and are willing to liberate animals on your behalf.

If you would like to request animal liberation, please follow these steps:

1. Send details of the number of animals you wish to liberate and the amount you wish to contribute (minimum donation Singapore \$20), together with your dedication to: fpmtsing@singnet.com.sg
2. With a copy to: fredcheong@pacific.net.sg
3. Send your bank draft in Singapore dollars, payable to Amitabha Buddhist Centre, for the amount of your donation to: Amitabha Buddhist Centre, 494 D Geylang Road, Singapore 389452

ABC will confirm to you when the liberation was performed on your behalf.
[NB: S\$20 will liberate about 2000 clams, 12 crabs, or 1000 crickets.]

Advice For Centers Who Wish to Offer the Service of Consecrating Ashes into Stupas or Statues

Centers who wish to offer this service should notify people of the service and have them send the ashes to the center. Then, whenever a high lama comes to the center, the center should request them to purify and bless these ashes. This can also be done by the resident geshe. After consecrating, arrange for the ashes to be made into a stupa or statue.

There could also be a suggested donation for different sized stupas. This could also cover the cost of making the stupas, including some pocket money for the stupa-makers (although people could do it voluntarily if they wished). The center offering the service to consecrate ashes into stupas or statues needs to have a group of people who know how to make the stupas properly, etc. If there is only one person who knows how to do it, if the person leaves the center, the service cannot take place again in the future.

The family can decide on the size of the stupa or stupas that they want, depending on the molds available and what the family wants to sponsor. Try to have three sizes available, e.g., the smallest one about 20 cm high, the second about 60 cm, and a larger size about 90 cm.

The stupas or tsa-tsas should have the normal statue mantras inside. Making a stupa containing one of these particular mantras (*jangchub gyenbum*) creates the same merit as making 100,000 stupas without putting the mantra into it.

The big stupas should have a life tree (*tsog shing*) put in them with the specified mantras written on it or wrapped around the life tree on paper. Place a Namgyalma mantra on top of the life tree, then OM AH HUM should be written on it below that. Then another mantra is written around the heart, then another one below that, then a double vajra at the bottom. The other mantras are wrapped around.

Put the name (and perhaps a photo) of the dead person at the bottom of the stupa or statue.

For more information regarding stupas, how to make them, their benefits, mantras for inserting inside, etc., please contact FPMT Center Services (claire@fpmt.org) and FPMT Education Services (materials@fpmt.org).

Creating a memorial shrine

Where there is sufficient land, the center should build a special temple (or a stupa) to hold the statues and stupas. It should be in a separate area and have a roof but does not necessarily have to have doors. Two sides can be shelves to hold the holy objects. The area should be beautified and maintained and have areas where people can sit to meditate. If desired, the walls could be made of glass so that people can see inside.

Alternatively, the larger stupas can be placed in a selected area of the center, and the area can be made into a stupa memorial garden. The stupa should be made of a strong material that is able to

withstand the elements; it should have a concrete base to stand on, about the height of a chair seat or arm. Make sure that all the stupas are the same height and that the layout of the area is well designed – for example, in a square, triangular, or circular shape, etc.

People can plant flowers or put potted plants around the stupas, as well as making other offerings or circumambulating. Relatives, friends, and other living people can come and make flower offerings to the holy object and/or circumambulate the temple that holds these many holy objects. There should be a sign which explains how to make offerings to the holy objects or statue, that the offerings are not made to the person who died – which would be a cause of lower realm rebirth and suffering. Otherwise such offerings will not be a positive action and will not accumulate merit.

Benefits of making offerings to a blessed stupa

Offerings to the stupa become the cause for inconceivable benefits and happiness up to the highest, full enlightenment, the perfected peace of mind. Then, the benefits can be dedicated to the deceased for him or her to immediately have a good rebirth and to be liberated from the heaviest suffering of the lower realms – the hell realm, hungry ghost realm, and so on. The benefits can also be dedicated so that person receives the perfect body of a happy migratory being, meets the holy Dharma, the unmistakable path to full enlightenment, the state of peerless happiness, by meeting the perfectly qualified virtuous friend (spiritual friend), and quickly achieves full enlightenment. Also, dedicate the merits to the living family to have a most beneficial life, to actualize bodhichitta in this life. In this way, there is great benefit also for the living. Every prostration, circumambulation, or offering purifies their obstacles, and they create merits and the cause of highest enlightenment.

Additionally, you can hold an annual puja for the deceased persons whose ashes are being kept at your center. The puja should be based on a deity common to all traditions, for example Mitrugpa, Medicine Buddha, or Amitabha.

[Please note: These are not the same as Jangwa pujas.]

Students can meditate on impermanence and death at this place; in such a location, one's meditation becomes very powerful and effective. It can cut down immediately on all the emotional problems, such as anger, desire, and so forth, and make one practice Dharma from the heart.

Although merely keeping unblessed ashes in the temple has no benefit for the dead or the living, if advertising in this way may hurt other temples, it is best not to mention this in public.

Specifically for FPMT hospices

The following advice is for FPMT hospice services:

1. A lama should perform Jangwa for everyone taken care of by the hospice service who passes away.
2. A stupa should be given to the family of every person who passes away, whether they are Buddhist or not. The hospice service should make an offering for each stupa and this can become income for the people who make the stupas. Each stupa should be inscribed in

gold with something similar to: “This stupa is dedicated to dear _____ for all temporary and ultimate happiness.”

3. You can have a special day for this called Stupa Day, and when the mantras are inserted into the stupas on Stupa Day, the name of a particular person can be mentioned aloud as the mantra roll is inserted.
4. When the lama consecrates the stupas, dedications can be made for every sick person as well as for those who have already passed away.

Jangwa Ceremony

In the publicity for the *Jang-chog*, first explain the qualities of the high lama who will be performing the ceremony. After that, provide some information about the *Jang-chog* ceremony. Have the ceremony in a large place so that many people can come. The names of the dead people should be written on a large sheet of paper (use thin paper, that can easily be burned), and on the reverse side of the paper, write the first letter of the name of each person (e.g., ‘A’ for Alice Smith). Make offerings of food, flowers, light, etc. to the Three Jewels on behalf of the dead people, to accumulate merit for them. The food can later be distributed.

Pujas

In general, it would be good to do the elaborate Medicine Buddha puja once a week; it is very good for success for dying. Also, you can recite the *Medicine Buddha Sutra* once a month. The special text with 100,000 Buddha’s names by Pabongkha Rinpoche can also be recited at death. Ribur Rinpoche got the text recently from Lhasa; it is at Tushita Meditation Center in Delhi and Tibetan monks can read it. The text is very rare.

How to Charge

Rinpoche mentioned several different ways in which money could be raised through these pujas. One way is to just collect all the offerings made to the lama, if it is clearly explained to the lama that these pujas are to benefit people, but by the way they will raise funds for the center, for example to pay off the loan on the building. So every offering made to the lama at the time of the pujas should be given to the center. However, the center should make a specific offering to the lama on those days.

Another way would be to have registration tables at the entrance to the hall. Before entering, people would have to register and obtain tickets. Have a large sign hanging outside, explaining that the center has debts to pay in order to buy the building and in order to meet regular ongoing costs. Explain that the purpose of the center is to benefit sentient beings by organizing Dharma activities. Therefore, we are requesting donations. You can let people pay whatever they like – no specific amount is specified on the sign. With this way, people have two opportunities to make an offering—once at the table, and a second time by donating to the lama.

Another way would be as above, but you mention a minimum amount of money for the donation.

Still, anyone who cannot afford the minimum would still be welcome to attend.

It might be helpful to write on the sign the amount of money still owing on the building loan, as well as the monthly running costs of the center. This might inspire some people to donate even more.

From the organization's side, the motivation for holding these fundraising projects should be mainly to benefit sentient beings, because sentient beings have a great need for these methods. Then, the money received from the participants is for the center so that the center's facilities can be developed. These facilities provide the conditions in which people can hear, reflect on, and meditate on the Dharma, the unmistakable Buddhadharma. The funds raised are to develop the Dharma activities of the center, which in return help sentient beings.

Supporting Helpers

It is very important to make the volunteers happy so they can practice with a good heart – that is, for them to be inspired.

If you have a base, robed Sangha can live in the hospice for several months at a time, to distinguish the level of practice that each patient can relate to, and to create a holy environment.

The new people just joining, who haven't done this service before, need to learn from the people who have been doing service for a long time. Those who are experienced in how peoples' minds are should study different books, different teachings from different sources, and from their experience come to know the different states of mind of people who are dying.

You should meet together once or twice a month; everyone should read what has been compiled. People with more skill and wisdom can then edit this research, and it can become a book. There is no need to rush. In the long run, this book will become a guide for the organization, and to benefit other organizations.

The group should practice powa. Each year you should take powa teachings and do a powa retreat so that you can practice. It is very important to do powa retreat every year.

If one becomes accomplished at powa and receives the signs of accomplishment, then this can be the best public service – liberating others and helping them at the time of death.

It is okay to ask other lamas to do powa; one can ask any Tibetan lama who is a good practitioner. You can bring in high lamas to do powa and to do Jangwa purification. If it is difficult to invite the lama to the hospice, then the lama can do powa wherever they are, from a distance. You will need to inform the lama which direction the head is facing.

List of FPMT Hospice Services

FPMT Hospice Services:

Amitabha Hospice Service, Auckland, New Zealand
The Center for Conscious Living and Dying, Denmark
Cittamani Hospice Service, Australia
Karuna Hospice Service, Australia
Hospice of Mother Tara, Australia
Shakyamuni Buddha Community Health Care Centre, India

Centers with hospice service projects:

Amitabha Buddhist Center, Singapore
Jamyang Buddhist Center, London, UK
Land of Medicine Buddha - Tara Home Hospice, California, USA
Losang Dragpa Center, Malaysia
Nagarjuna Madrid - Potala Hospice, Spain

For contact information, please go to www.fpmt.org

Available Practice Materials for the Dying and for Helping Those Who Have Died

How to Help the Dying and the Dead: Three Articles of Instructions by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Giving Breath to the Wretched: The Method of Benefiting Sentient Beings at the Time of Death

Amitabha Powa

Dedication Prayers I and II

The King of Prayers

The Bodhisattva's Confession of Moral Downfalls

The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra

Powerful Mantras for the Time of Death

Medicine Buddha Sadhana

The Concise Essence Sutra Ritual of Bhagavan Medicine Buddha called 'The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel'

Morning Prayers (a collection of prayers for all occasions)

Mahayana Prayers for Teaching Occasions (a collection of prayers for teaching and other occasions)

All of the above materials are available from FPMT Education Services.

FPMT Education Department
P. O. Box 888
Taos, New Mexico 87571
Tel: 1 (505) 758-7766, ext. 125
Fax: 1 (505) 758-7765
Email: materials@fpmt.org
www.fpmt.org/education/materials.asp

About Lama Zopa Rinpoche and the FPMT

Lama Zopa Rinpoche was born in 1946 in the Solu Khumbu (Mount Everest) region of Nepal, and was recognized at the age of three as the reincarnation of the Lawudo Lama, a great meditator from that area. Rinpoche became a monk at a tender age and was educated in monasteries in Nepal and Tibet under the tutelage of his main teacher, Lama Thubten Yeshe, and many other high lamas from Sera Monastery. In the late 1960s and early 70s, Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche established Kopan Monastery in Nepal, primarily to provide monastic education for young monks from the Himalayan areas, especially those from the Lawudo area of Solu Khumbu. They also began teaching Buddhism and meditation to Western travelers, and thus initiated the now-famous one-month meditation courses at Kopan Monastery.

In 1974, the two lamas visited Australia, New Zealand, and America, on the invitation of some of their Western students, in order to further spread the teachings of Buddhism. This was the first of numerous overseas trips that lead eventually to the establishment of an international organization of Buddhist centers: The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), which currently has over 130 study and retreat centers, monasteries, hospices, and project offices around the world, as well as publishing houses, including Wisdom Publications and Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive. When Lama Yeshe passed away in 1984, Lama Zopa Rinpoche became the spiritual head of the FPMT, which has continued to flourish and grow under his peerless leadership. Rinpoche is also the author of a number of books, including:

From Wisdom Publications (www.wisdompubs.org):

Wisdom Energy

Wisdom Energy 2 (with Lama Thubten Yeshe)

Transforming Problems

The Door to Satisfaction

From the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive (www.LamaYeshe.com):

Virtue and Reality

Making Life Meaningful

Teachings from the Mani Retreat

A Chat on Heruka

A Chat on Yamantaka

More details of Rinpoche's life and work may be found on the FPMT website, www.fpmt.org.

Sources Of Kyabje Thubten Zopa Rinpoche's Talks, Advice, Teachings

- 1) Talk given at Cittamani Hospice, Palmwoods, Queensland, Australia, 19 April 2000 (Cittamani Hospice 19-4-00)
- 2) Heruka Lung Talk - Additional Teachings on Working with the Dying - at Taushita Retreat Centre, Dharamsala, 13 May 1990 (HERUADLZ)
- 3) An explanation of the Practice of 'Jang Wa' and other practices to benefit sentient beings (JANGPC)
- 4) Talk on Meditation and Practices to benefit the dying and the dead (compilation and edited by Ven Pende July 2000) (ASHES 2 LZ 2)
- 5) Po-wa Teaching from Nyung-nay commentary at Chenrezig Institute, 13 Sept 1991 (POWA-LZR)
- 6) Extract of Teachings on Death and Impermanence, Kopan November course 1996 (DEATH-LZR KOPAN 96)
- 7) Instructions on 'How to help a Dying or Dead Person, May 1993 (DEAT-AD 2)
- 8) Article 'How to Benefit the Dying and the Dead', Sept/Oct 1997 Mandala
- 9) Advice to Tara Home, California 'Creating a conducive environment for the dying'— additional editing by Ven Constance Millier, 1997 to Mandala Sept/Oct 1997 article (LZR)
- 10) Advice given at Root Institute, 9 Jan 2002 (Clinic advice at Root 2002)
- 11) Advice regarding Hospice Work, 10 Jan 2002 (LZR adv LDC)
- 12) Advice to Center for Bevidst Liv og Dod, 1 Feb 2002 (Advice from Bevidst)
- 13) Advice to Ven Marcel 18 Jan 1997 (DEATH-LTTR 2)
- 14) Advice to Karuna Hospice Service, Caloundra, Sept 1996 (LZR adv to Karuna)
- 15) Advice on Caring for the Dying, 11 Sept 1996 (DEATH-AD)
- 16) Advice at New Delhi, India, 15 Oct 1995 (DEAD)
- 17) Advice on How to Benefit the Death, last revised Jan 1995 (ASHES-LZ)
- 18) Advice on Caring for Terminally Ill at Karuna Hospice Service, Brisbane, Australia, 5 Oct 1994 (LZR adv to Karuna Oct 94)
- 19) Advice about Funerals, 14 Sept 1994 (FUNELZ)
- 20) Advice to William Hursthouse (ASH-BEN)
- 21) Advice to Anila Anne (LZR recommend prayers)
- 22) Advice on People who die (ASH-AD)
- 23) Advice to Ven Pende (DEATH-LTTR)
- 24) Correspondence from Ecie Hursthouse, 14 Jan 2002 (LZR adv to Amitabha Hospice)
- 25) Correspondence with Owen Cole, 7 Feb 1996 (EUTH-3T)