

**The Dharma Rite to Assist the Deceased**  
**Living Buddha Dechan Jueren, May 31, 2000**  
**Dari Rulai Temple, Los Angeles, CA**

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

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

In Chinese, we talk about Chau Du, what it means to "go beyond," or in Sanskrit, "para." "Du" means to embark on the journey from this side to the other shore. According to Buddhism, when a person leaves this world, they will always have done some bad things, whether intended or not, that are connected with bad karma. So whether you are conscious of it or not, you have hurt others.

Many Buddhist schools today are cheating people, because they do not really know what Buddhism is about. Even if they are vegetarian, make bows, and chant the Buddha's name every day, they can never attain enlightenment, because they do not really understand the teachings and knowledge of Buddhism. The origination of Buddhism began with Buddha Shakyamuni. But Buddha-dharma existed long before Buddha Shakyamuni. People want to seek Buddha-dharma because they have discovered they face many problems and disasters in their life. As human beings, people face the pain of birth and death, old age and sickness, plus many things they are not satisfied with. There are a lot of hardships to overcome.

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

Many types of teaching schools have sprung up. Some teach hardship, such as piercing their body with needles, or taking a stick or whip to beat themselves, or having a poisonous snake bite them. Others teach the ascetic way which involves only eating raw food.

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

Because they are emotionally unbalanced with their disappointments, they will not sleep well because they can never relax. Because when the mind is occupied, one can never get a good sleep and their physical body will react. A fire in the stomach will rise up, the next day they will have a poor appetite,

they cannot eat and will not digest food well. The next morning, they go to work but they cannot get nourishment from food. Now they will expend their reserve energy. If this continues day after day, eventually it will result in hormone imbalances. People have lower backaches, or their heart is racing, and they worry about minor things.

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

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

Shakyamuni eventually realized he could not save people with this approach, so he decided to leave the mountains. As he descended, he met a shepherd girl who offered him some milk. With that nourishment, he recovered physically, and eventually he travelled to the bodhi tree, sat under it and attained enlightenment. Once he attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree, he left the teachings of Brahmanism and began the teachings that later became to be called Buddhism. For he felt that the dharma truth of the universe ought to be known to every person, not just the Brahmin caste only. (At that time, only the Brahmins knew the dharmas.)

He advocated salvation for every sentient being. If you have faith, and practice according to the instructions, everyone will grasp the methods to know themselves and overcome their ego. Once you can overcome yourself, you will never suffer the pains of diseases. Once you know the environment, and overcome your conditioning, then you will no longer feel insufficient, for you will have everything. For the true practitioner of Buddhism ("buddha" means 'knower') will never trifle with what to eat or wear, or where to live. A person should place importance mainly on what they do and think. In the beginning, the transmission of Buddhist dharma began with only the techniques of how to practice dharmas. There were no strict disciplines or ways to live, such as vegetarianism. Whatever you eat, there will always be good and bad elements in any food. How healthy you are does not depend on what you eat. More important is your own internal system, how your body regulates itself to digest food and turn it into nutrients.

Many rules that the temple monks currently follow were set down in the Tang Dynasty by the Emperor Tang Wu Zong. The monks chant Buddha's name, but cannot attain Buddhahood, because the popular schools today advocate chanting, such as the Amitayus, but they do not really understand the sutras. If you only chant the name, but never understand it, and don't follow and practice the techniques, you can never attain Buddhahood. For example, if you buy equipment but do not read or cannot understand the handbook, you cannot use the equipment.

When I gave some dharma lectures in the thousand year old Long Kwan temple, I asked the monks, "Why are you vegetarians?" They answered, "We have compassion for living beings, so we do not want to kill and eat them. I asked them, "Do you eat rice?" I said, "There is animal life in rice. Vegetables are alive. Do you drink water? For Buddha said in the sutras, "In a mouthful of water there are 84,000 living beings." (And this was before the discovery of microscopes.) Do you breathe? There are uncountable numbers of living beings in the dust in the air we breathe in and out. So in this life, whether we are conscious of it or not, we have killed many living beings. Every time we drive we hit bugs with our windshield, or we may step on ants when we walk, whether we intend it or not. Some

monks don't understand this kind of reasoning. But whether we have intended it or not, we have committed many karmas we are not even aware of.

So we chant the mantras with magic powers to assist the deceased, to assist the consciousnesses that we have unintentionally killed or harmed. When those consciousnesses reach a higher stage, we will not owe them anything, because we have helped them to attain to a higher level of existence. When we owe them nothing, we feel much lighter.

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

So on this side of the river there are many wandering ghosts who do not dare to cross the river, because they know the crimes they have committed. What do they do on this side of the shore? They will begin to plunder all their living relatives and friends, especially those that passed away with few friends or relatives who do not go to their burial place with flowers and incense, nor do they burn paper money as offerings to help the deceased. In the Eastern tradition, relatives burn paper money as a symbol for the deceased to use to pay those they owe, so they can cross the river. If they do not have that money, they do not dare to cross the bridge. In order to get the money they need, the deceased will bother their living relatives and friends. That is why living people with a dead relative, that they have done nothing for, may have backaches, worries, etc.

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

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