

Etiquette for a Buddhist Funeral – Lastingpost.com

Introduction

For Buddhists death marks the deceased person's transition from this life to rebirth in a subsequent life. Although Buddhist customs will vary depending on the particular tradition, the rituals involved in a Buddhist funeral remain similar.

On the day of the funeral

The funeral will usually take place within a week after death. If the funeral service takes place in a temple, footwear should be removed.

The service is usually a simple dignified ceremony. It will consist of chanting sacred words and individual offerings of incense. Non Buddhist guests are not expected to join either part of the ceremony, but should sit quietly and observe the rituals.

The casket is open and guests are expected to view it and make a simple bow towards it honouring the impermanence of life.

Usually Buddhists cremate their dead. However, there are traditions of burial.

Mourning period

On the day following the cremation, the ashes are collected and sprinkled over a river or interred in a cemetery.

On the sixth day after the person's death, a sermon is delivered by a Buddhist monk at the home of the departed.

On the seventh day the family and friends will gather at the temple for the first memorial service to remember and commemorate the deceased.

The family of the deceased will then gather after the first year anniversary and again after the third year anniversary to pay tribute to the deceased. This then marks the end of the official mourning period.

Sending flowers

Those attending Buddhist memorial services should usually make donations to a designated charity in the name of the deceased. Gifts of vegetarian food are usually welcomed but you should check beforehand.

You should also check before sending flowers. In any event you should avoid sending red flowers as red is the Buddhist colour for joy. White flowers are the traditional Buddhist flower of mourning.

Modest attire

While the family will usually dress in white, guests should wear dark conservative clothing. Loose clothing is advisable as guests will usually sit on the floor to meditate.

The colour red should be avoided. Women should also avoid wearing jewellery.

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