

English translation:

A: Could you talk about the rituals you would do after a person has died?

B: We have systems of rituals when someone has died. Since we are Buddhist, the funeral ceremonies are of course closely linked with Buddhism. Tibetans are Buddhist; we follow the teachings of the lord Buddha. In Tibet, the land of snow, I would say almost all people are Buddhists, and the funeral rituals are all Buddhism based. All human beings have to die eventually, some people die when they are very old and no longer able to do much, like those in their sixties and seventies. Likewise, there are also people who die when they are still a child. It is all different, depends on individuals. People die at all ages, depends on your past life. When you die and how long you will live all depend on the how much merit you have from past lives. This is the case for every individual, there are no other options. Let's say someone in your family dies, either a parent or a child, *dharma* is the only thing that helps when someone is dead. We Tibetans believe in the next life and *dharma* is what benefits you for next life. Practicing *Dharma* is to worship the three jewels (Buddha, *dharma* and *sangha*). Those are the three things you can rely on as a refuge. Buddha, *Dharma* and *sangha* are the only places you can take refuge. So, what happens when someone dies? But of course at first, the person will be sick and you would take the person to the hospital or get him medicines. In the old Tibetan society, there were no Chinese medicines, people only used Tibetan medicines. Second, you would not ask a high lama about whether or not the person will die, and ask rituals and prayers we can do to prevent the person from dying. You can do a prayer of longevity that will likely extend the person's life. The lord of longevity or the lord *Amitabha* is all the same, however if it is in the face of lord longevity, he will save you from dying if it is only an obstacle you have to go through in life and [you are] not meant to die. If it is a negation or an accident in life, *Guru Rinpoche* ("precious master") will save you. However, if no medicine, prayer and rituals can help the person to stay alive, then it must be the time when the person has to die. There is nothing we can do about it, even if the Buddha is not able to save him. After the person is dead, the family has to invite monks and lamas to chant the scripture called "Liberation from hearing the *dharma*" at home for 49 days. Other than that, you can chant *Gun Druk*, and the scripture of deity. There are so many things you can chant and rituals you can do. In order to do a 49-day chant, first you have to have a great lama. Second, the rituals have to be perfect. You cannot miss any of the two. If you are a rich family, you can invite many monks to come over and chant. If you are a middle class family, you have invited some, however you are a poor family, and you can invite two to three people to chant. In any case, you have to have monks to chant at home for at least 49 days. The monks will chant non-stop for 49 days.

About CultureTalk: CultureTalk is produced by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages and housed on the LangMedia Website. The project provides students of language and culture with samples of people talking about their lives in the languages they use every day. The participants in CultureTalk interviews and discussions are of many different ages and walks of life. They are free to express themselves as they wish. The ideas and opinions presented here are those of the participants. Inclusion in CultureTalk does not represent endorsement of these ideas or opinions by the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, Five Colleges, Incorporated, or any of its member institutions: Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.