

Next of Kin Guide

Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism



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Introduction

Because we do not know the time of our death, it is important that we clarify our thoughts and wishes and write these down in the form of a testament.

It is our hope that this end of life guide will help you to do this, and help your loved ones fulfill your wishes.

This guide was also created to provide help to those of us who have non-Buddhist family members who will be responsible for carrying out our wishes. This will provide clarity regarding what should and should not be done at the time of death. Also, this is to help those who either have no family or their family is too far away to help.

We would like to help you to make the connections and get the support you need to have these end of life wishes fulfilled.

This booklet is meant to be used in a workshop setting or with the assistance of a facilitator. **Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism can guide you with your next of kin wishes, however we cannot act as your next of kin and cannot take responsibility for your end of life preferences. This guide is meant only for informational purposes.** We offer many religious services and prayers for people living and dead, and will provide those requested by your next of kin as best we can. Further clarification is available if needed. Please contact the Next of Kin committee if you are interested in any of the prayers or services listed.

Contact Information

Next of Kin Guide Committee
C/O Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism
108 NW 83rd St
Seattle, WA 98117 USA
Tel: (206) 789-2573
Fax: (206) 789-3994
Email: monastery@sakya.org

Dedication of Merit at the Monastery

What is a dedication of merit?

When one does spiritual practices, they accumulate merit from having done that practice. Every spiritual practice concludes with a dedication of merit. One can choose to dedicate that merit to a specific individual for that individual's benefit and the benefit of all sentient beings.

Why do you do dedication of merit?

It can also be done as a mourning practice to help those who have passed away to accomplish a quick and successful re-birth (for other mourning practices, please see the Shitro or Sur practices).

Who do you do dedication of merit for?

Dedication of merit can be done for anyone! You can dedicate merit to your loved ones, friends, and pets or other animals.

When is dedication of merit done?

Dedication of merit prayer requests for an individual can be done during Chenrezi or at any of our other monthly practices.

What is the suggested donation and what items are suggested for dedication of merit?

According to Tibetan Buddhist tradition, in order for a blessing to be complete, one must make an offering to establish a personal connection with the Three Jewels and the recipient of the merit.

1. Offering to altar (any amount) with a katag
2. Offering to the lama (any amount) with a katag
3. Optional: \$25 for rack of 100 candles to be lit for the removal of obstacles. Candles are symbolic of the removal of the "darkness of ignorance" and lead one to a speedy and auspicious rebirth.
4. Optional: Flowers or incense (symbolic of the removal of defilements)
5. Optional: Photograph of your loved one

When you arrive, inform a greeter that you wish to dedicate merit. He/she will let you know toward the end of the practice when it is time for you to take your offerings to the altar.

How to dedicate merit

- You will do three prostrations to the Buddha
- Place a katag and offerings on the altar table
- Make your katag and monetary offering to the lama & show the picture of your loved one
- Make an incense offering provided by an ordained

- State who we are dedicating our merit to and pass the picture around for the congregation to view
- Return to your seat to partake in the prayers that will follow

What should I do if I cannot come to Sakya Monastery in person, but still want to dedicate merit?

You may make an out-of-area dedication of merit request. The prayers will be done at the conclusion of one of the meditational practices within a week from the time we receive your offerings. In lieu of your presence, a monastery representative will make your dedication of merit request according to the in-person procedure. If you send a photograph (optional), please send a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning the photograph to you. Please include a note with your donation to explain what or who the donation is for.

The Aspiration of Samantabhadra Prayer

The meditational prayer that H.H. Jigdal Dagchen Sakya Rinpoche, The Head Lama of Sakya Monastery, who advises on all aspects of our meditational practices, recommends for anyone who is ill, dying, or deceased is called the Aspiration of Samantabhadra Prayer.

At Sakya Monastery, the Aspiration of Samantabhadra Prayer can be added as a prayer in the Dedication of Merit at the end of regular practices. It is also especially beneficial to be read to the person directly over and over by family members or Sakya Monastery volunteers while the person is sick and especially while they lay dying.

Copies of the prayer are available in the Sakya Monastery Dharma Shop.

Elaborate Dedication of Merit at the Monastery with Samanthabhadra Prayer and Food Offering (Mang-cha)

One week advance notice required.

What is an Elaborate Dedication of Merit ceremony?

An elaborate dedication of merit ceremony includes elements from a standard dedication of merit, as well as the recitation of the Aspiration of Samantabhadra prayer and a Mang-cha.

What is a Mang-cha?

A Mang-cha is a food offering to the Three Jewels for their blessings and to the entire congregation in appreciation for their prayers.

When and where does the Mang-cha take place?

After Sunday Chenrezi service, everyone is welcome to come downstairs to our cultural hall and enjoy the food offering (Mang-cha).

Note: If you are bringing your own food for the Mang-cha, please contact Sakya Monastery Office.

What is the suggested donation?

1. Offering to altar (any amount) with a katag
2. Offering to the lama (any amount) with a katag
3. \$200 for food offering (food for Mang-cha purchased by the Monastery). Please give this donation to Adrienne Chan. Alternatively, you may bring your own food, but please ensure that there is enough for 75 – 100 people.
4. (Optional) \$25 for rack of 100 candles to be lit on the day of the dedication of merit
5. (Optional) Flowers or incense (symbolic of the removal of defilements)

What should I do if I cannot come to Sakya Monastery in person, but still want to do an Elaborate Dedication of Merit ceremony?

You may make an out-of-area Elaborate Dedication of Merit ceremony request. The prayers will be done at the conclusion of one of the meditational practices within a week from the time we receive your offerings. In lieu of your presence, a Monastery representative will make your dedication of merit request according to the in-person procedure. If you send a photograph (optional), please send a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning the photograph to you. Please include a note with your donation to explain what or who the donation is for.

Shitro Practice: Prayers for the Deceased

What is Shitro practice?

Shitro is meditation and practice for those that have passed away.

Why request Shitro practice?

In Buddhism, helping someone to die well is one of the most important gifts we can give another person. If you have a loved one who has passed away, you can help them (even if it has been many years since their death), by having the Sunday morning Shitro group do prayers on their behalf.

Who does Shitro and when does it take place?

Shitro is done on Sunday mornings at 7:00 a.m. by a group of lay practitioners who have received the Shitro initiation. A Buddhist practitioner requesting the practice for a loved one can participate in the Shitro practice without the initiation.

How long are Shitro prayers done for?

The Shitro prayers are held for 8 consecutive Sundays. When the practice is concluded, the pictures or cards with the name and date of passing are burned and the ashes are placed in a stream.

What is the procedure for requesting a Shitro practice?

E-mail the person's full name, their date of passing, your name, and a photograph (optional) so the group can visualize your loved one. Send your request to: monastery@sakya.org. Put "Shitro Prayer" in the subject line.

Suggested Donation

Shitro prayers are a service freely given by the lay members as part of their practice. You are welcome to make a small donation to the Monastery on your loved one's behalf. In Tibetan Buddhist tradition, making an offering establishes a beneficial connection between oneself and the three jewels, making the prayers more effective.

Vigil of Volunteers

Vigil services are available with recitation of The Aspiration of Samantabhadra and other prayers by the Sakya Monastery members and volunteers at the bedside or offsite. Volunteers can perform continuous recitations in shifts for as long as necessary. The vigil services will also have a portable shrine available that can be transported to an offsite location in the event appropriate Buddhist representations are not available in the home or other location.

Phowa

This Meditation practice is designed to help the consciousness naturally leave the body. This practice is performed as quickly as possible after the person has passed (preferably before being touched.)

Phowa is done by a qualified practitioner. Prior connection can be cultivated by sending pictures, names, etc. to the Lama, Monk or qualified practitioner who will be performing the practice. Special no-touch instructions may be needed and immediate practitioner contact instructions are available so that this request can be honored.

It is always better late than never so Phowa may be performed anytime after death but the preference is as soon after death as reasonably possible. Correct Phowa prevents the person from being stuck in a lower realm.

Special Kun Rik Puja Services for the Deceased

Kun Rik Puja services greatly benefit the deceased. In Tibet, Nepal and India, the Kun Rik Puja is the #1 puja requested for those who've died. This is a very elaborate three-hour practice that includes 37 deities and mudras. *Note: The Kun Rik ceremonies can be prepaid so that one's loved ones don't need to worry about the Kun Rik costs.*

Option One:

- a. The Kun Rik puja can be done on the 4th week of the loved one's passing. The 4th week is significant because it is at this time when the soul realizes that the body has died.
 - Suggested donation for participation by all monks: \$1,000
 - Suggested donation for Sakya Monastery: \$500
- b. The Kun Rik ceremony can also be done on the 49th day of the loved one's passing, when the soul is reborn. Ideally, Kun Rik is done both on the 4th week and on the 49th day of one's passing.
 - Suggested donation for H.H. J.D. Sakya and monks: \$2,000
 - Suggested donation for Sakya Monastery: \$500

Option Two

- a. The Kun Rik puja can be done on the 4th week of the loved one's passing. The 4th week is significant because it is at this time when the soul realizes that the body has died.
 - Suggested donation for one ordained monk or nun: \$200
 - Suggested donation for Sakya Monastery: \$200
- b. The Kun Rik ceremony can also be done on the 49th day of the loved one's passing, when the soul is reborn. Ideally, Kun Rik is done both on the 4th week and on the 49th day of one's passing.
 - Suggested donation for one ordained monk or nun: \$200
 - Suggested donation for Sakya Monastery: \$200

Sur: The Complete 49-Day Spiritual Practice as Described in "The Tibetan Book of the Dead" (Bardo Thodol) For Loved Ones Who Have Passed

What is "Sur" and why does one request these prayers?

Sur is the complete 49-day spiritual practice as described in "The Tibetan Book of the Dead." Having Sur prayers done for someone who has passed away can be very beneficial for them in the following ways;

1. Facilitates person's passage through the bardo.
2. Purges attachment to objects.
3. Helps to achieve harmony with local deities, nagas, formless spirits, and the spirits of your loved ones, including pets.

Who performs this practice?

Monk or nun

Where do the prayers take place?

The prayers take place at Sakya Monastery.

What do I need to provide?

When making your request for this practice, please provide the deceased individual's full name, age, date of passing, and a photograph. In addition, please provide 1 stick (¼ pound) of butter and a ½ pound bag of barley flour which will be used as an aromatic offering during the prayers.

Suggested donation

\$150 minimum to the Monastery

Next of Kin Information

Please complete this form and make sure all persons listed below have copies of the final document.

Your Contact Information

Full Legal Name	Home Phone
Address	Cell Phone
City, State, Zip	Business Phone
Email	

Spouse or significant other designated as responsible for your end of life wishes.

Full Legal Name	Home Phone
Address	Cell Phone
City, State, Zip	
Email	

Sangha Member or friend to contact to assist legal next of kin with your end of life wishes.

Full Legal Name	Home Phone
Address	Cell Phone
City, State, Zip	
Email Address	

Acknowledgement of Family to Next of Kin

This signed document certifies that as a family member, I have read and understood _____'s end of life wishes document and will honor his/her request that certain ceremonies and prayers be performed by members of Sakya Monastery at the time of death. I understand that the family is welcome to attend certain prayers and ceremonies and I will do my best to uphold these requests on behalf of said person.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____ Relationship _____

Next of Kin Guide Acknowledgment Document

The importance of having a signed acknowledgment document from a family member who may or may not be the assigned next of kin executor is to inform Sakya Monastery that the person's family is aware that they have made certain requests for services to be performed. It also facilitates a means of verbal and written agreement between that person and their family if they were to pass away suddenly. For many of us Westerners, our religious backgrounds are commonly something other than Buddhist, so informing our families of our wishes in this way serves to clear any barriers that need to be clarified and to eliminate the element of surprise to the family and aid them in accepting their loved one's wishes. However, Sakya Monastery will not go against the family's wishes if they decide not to have these services performed.

End-of-Life Instructions Checklist

This is an exercise to help you think about your end-of-life wishes. Your wishes should also be listed in your end-of-life wishes document.

End of Life Instructions/ Will and Testament

_____ Notarized End of Life Buddhist Will and Testament Completed

_____ Copy deposited with family/friends

Deathbed and Interment Instructions

_____ I wish that a Buddhist lama/monk/layperson be present at my deathbed.

_____ I wish that Sakya Monastery be informed immediately upon my death.

_____ I wish the following monk/lama be informed of my death:

Name	Phone
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Support and Distribution of Remains

_____ Ground Burial

_____ Cremation

_____ I am choosing a ground burial and would like my hair clippings saved in order to be taken to pilgrimage sites.

_____ I am choosing cremation and all of my ashes can be stored in my predetermined wooden box for distribution at pilgrimage sites, or

_____ A portion of ashes will go to pilgrimage sites and a portion will go to next of kin

_____ I wish the following person to be given my ashes (or hair clippings, if applicable) for distribution at pilgrimage sites:

Name	Phone
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_____ Other: _____

Support and Distribution of Remains (continued)

_____ Please remove these jewelry items, etc.: _____

_____ Buddhist ceremony to be performed at interment

Description:

_____ Special prayers at cremation

Description:

Prayers and Ceremonies Performed by Lamas and Monks

_____ Sur (The complete 49 day spiritual practice as described in “The Tibetan Book of the Dead”)

_____ Phowa

_____ KunRik

Prayers and Ceremonies Performed by Monks and Monastery Members

_____ Shitro Practice

_____ Dedication of Merit

_____ Samanthabhadra Prayer

_____ Vigil Services

Life Testament

_____ Life prolonging treatment if I am terminally ill

_____ Living will

_____ Use of sleeping pills or pain management immediately before dying

_____ Post Mortem

Transfer of Dharma Objects

_____ The following Buddhist objects should be given to:

* Please do not donate to Sakya Monastery without prior permission.

Funeral Home Arrangements

Funeral Home

Name Phone

Preferred Funeral Director to transport body

Name

Special Instructions

Alternatives:

_____ Neptune Society

_____ People's Memorial Funeral Cooperative

_____ Other: _____

Additional Instructions

Signature

Printed Name

You may wish to attach to this document any agreement or special instructions you have given to the person whom you have chosen to handle your funeral arrangements. Please make sure your legal next of kin has the monastery contact information below.

Next of Kin Committee

C/O Sakya Monastery of Tibetan Buddhism
108 NW 83rd Street
Seattle, WA 98117 USA
Tel: (206) 789-2573
Fax: (206) 789-3994
Email: monastery@sakya.org

Checklist of Documents

- _____ Will
- _____ Living Will
- _____ Durable Power of Attorney
- _____ Durable Power of Attorney for health care
- _____ Funeral home arrangements
- _____ Sakya Next of Kin Guide
- _____ Contact list of relatives, friends and co-workers

These documents should be kept in a place safe from fire, flood, rodents, sunlight and theft. You must let your Executor and/or attorney know of the location(s) of these documents.

If you keep these documents on a CD/DVD, please know that disks have a shelf life of about 7 – 10 years and may not be readable by next generation software. A hardcopy is recommended.

Helpful URLs:

www.agingwithdignity.org
www.legalzoom.com
www.lawdepot.com
www.findlaw.com
www.freewillforms.com
www.medlawplus.com
www.makeyourwill.com