Dissolution

(Set a flame to the picture of the deceased.)

The fire that burns your form
Is the fire of pristine awareness.
Its blue base is the fire of Pure Being,
Its red foundation the fire of Limitless Light,
Its yellow light the fire of Source of Prosperity,
Its white intensity, the fire of Total Brilliance,
And its black tip, the fire of Effective Action.
The five buddhas, with their fires,
Burn away your five aggregates,
Remove forever the five poisons,
And lead you to the five aspects of timeless awareness.

(Read the Heart Sutra.)

Dedication

Wonderful Buddha Limitless Light
With Great Compassion on his right
And Great Power on his left,
All surrounded by innumerable buddhas and bodhisattvas,

In the happy and joyous realm
Called Realm of Joy,
Through the power of the goodness done here today,
As soon as we leave this life,
Without any interruption in other lives,
May we immediately see the face of Limitless Light.

Thus, simply by my giving voice to this wish,
May the buddhas of the ten directions
Inspire in me its fulfillment
Free from impediments and obstacles.

Awaking mind is precious.
May it arise where it has not arisen.
May it not weaken where it has arisen
May it ever grow and flourish.

Notes

When someone close to us dies, our connection with that person is broken and cannot be restored. Yet the web of connections does not disintegrate right away. It gradually unravels — strands releasing one by one. Each strand is a memory or a recollection, arising in no particular order, triggered by a word, a thought, a familiar object, or just arising on its own in the quiet of the night.

Grief can be understood as the pain we experience as those strands unravel. It usually comes in waves, and those waves may continue to roll in for some time, months or even years after the person we were close to has died.

People react to death in different ways. Some go into shock, some become numb, some go about their lives as usual, some feel a release. However death affects us, there comes a time when we begin to let go of what was and to move into the next phase of our own lives.

The purpose of this ceremony is to complete our relationship with the person who has died and, in doing so, to allow the process of letting go to begin.

To this end, we create a sacred space, a small shrine perhaps. We place a picture, if we have one, of Amitabha Buddha, the Buddha of Limitless Light, not as a figure to be worshipped, but as a symbolic representation of mind nature, the clear and unrestricted knowing that is our human heritage. In front of the picture, we set traditional offerings, or offerings of flowers, candles, incense, and food. And then we place a picture of the deceased, arranged in such a way that it can be lit with a candle and it can burn and the ashes can fall without endangering anything else.

The ceremony opens with refuge and awakening mind, traditional reflections that renew our connection with the direction of our practice and our motivation.