

DSHS Grand Rounds

Sept. 30

**Eastern Perspectives on
Death and Dying and
Concept of "Self"**

**Presenter: Rajendra Parikh, MD,
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Logistics

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Additional Readings

- Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End by Atul Gawande
- Advaita Vedanta: An Introduction by Arvind Sharma
- Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda by Swami Vivekananda
- How We Die: Reflections of Life's Final Chapter by Sherwin B. Nuland
- The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching: Transforming Suffering into Peace, Joy, and Liberation by Thich Nhat Hanh
- The Essence of Vedanta: The Ancient Wisdom of Indian Philosophy by Brian Hodgkinson
- A Guide to Hindu Spirituality (Perennial Philosophy) by Arvind Sharma

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Introductions



Kirk Cole

DSHS Interim Commissioner is pleased
to introduce our DSHS Grand Rounds speaker

Eastern Perspectives on Death and Dying and Concept of “Self”



Rajendra C. Parikh, MD, MBA, CPE
Medical Director
Texas Medicaid and CHIP Division
Texas Health & Human Services
Commission

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Understanding the Metaphysical and Cultural implications of **Death and Dying** and its **impact on Health Care Delivery** in the society.

Matrix and An Illusion

“If you had a dream that seemed so real, what if you were unable to wake from that dream, how would you know the difference between the real and the dream?”

Morpheus questions Neo

Imagine a Scenario of Life

- ❖ A *Dream* Sequence!
- ❖ A Script in a *Movie*!
- ❖ A *Wave* in the Ocean!
- ❖ The *Space* in a Pot!

Key Issues for End of Life

- ❖ Foundational Beliefs based on:
 - **M**etaphysics — Jivatman/Atman/Yoga/Karma/Reincarnation
 - **E**thics
 - **T**heology
- ❖ Socio Economic, Cultural factors influencing Providers and Members of Society
- ❖ Organization of Health Care Delivery Systems

Ambivalence and Death

“The hour of **departure** has arrived and we go our own ways. **I to die, and you to live.**

Which is better God only knows”

Socrates (Plato's Apology).

Tenets of Christianity

- ❖ Death is an **enemy** and a consequence of a **sin**.
- ❖ When someone dies, their body goes into the grave and their spirit goes into an afterlife **to face judgment**.
- ❖ “Whoever does **not obey the Son** shall not see life, but the **wrath of God** remains on him”.
- ❖ The Bible is clear that one day there will be **a bodily resurrection** for everyone to either **eternal salvation in heaven or eternal condemnation in hell**.

Mark Driscoll - founding pastor of Mars Hill Church, Seattle.
CNN Debate on concept of Hell

Death, Metaphysics and Science

- ❖ “For the wages of sin is death,” *(Romans 6:23)*
- ❖ “By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”
(Romans 5:12).
- ❖ Eastern view: (Buddha - A Role of a Physician not a Judge)
 - Refusal results in continuing suffering in life cycles
 - No punishment of a hell!
- ❖ I am the all devouring death, and also the origin of future beings.
- ❖ I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all creation.
Lord Krishna in Gita
- ❖ Science has found that nothing can disappear without trace.
Nature does not know extinction.
All it knows is transformation! *Dr. Von Braun – National Space Institute*

Eastern View Points

❖ Death is **not extinguishing the light.**

It is **putting out the lamp** because **dawn has come.**

Ravindranath Tagore

❖ Death is but **changing of our robes** to wait in
wedding garments at the **Eternal's gate.**

Sri Aurobindo

❖ Death is not the end. Death can never be the end.

Death is the road. Life is the traveler.

The Soul (!) is the Guide.

Sri Chinmoy

Upanishad

- ❖ Where one sees something else, hears something else, recognizes something else, that is the finite.
- ❖ That which is **finite is mortal and cannot escape death.** (*Finite is one that has a Name and a Form*).
- ❖ Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, recognizes nothing else, that is the Infinite.
- ❖ That which is **Infinite is Immortal and deathless.**

A Hindu Scripture

- ❖ Just as a **tidal-wave** brings together two logs in a boundless ocean and **another wave separates them**, even so wives and children, relatives and wealth hold us and **separate themselves to meet no more**.
- ❖ No one can avoid the common lot of all.
The separation of these is certain.

Lord Krishna in Gita - Central Tenet

- ❖ Of that which is **born, death is sure; Of that which is dead, birth is sure.** Over the unavoidable, therefore you never should grieve.
- ❖ This **indweller** in all bodies is ever **indestructible.** Therefore you should not ever mourn for any creature.

A Hindu Perspective of Death

- ❖ A **Temporary Cessation** of physical activity.
- ❖ A **Necessary Means** of recycling the resources and energy.
- ❖ An opportunity for the *“Jivatman”* to review its programs and policies.
- ❖ What is *Jivatman*? We will come to that!

A Buddhist Framework

- ❖ To be considered free in life, we must also be free from the fear of death. Fear only comes to those who are not able to comprehend the laws of Nature. Whenever fear arises, it arises in the fool, not in the wise man.
- ❖ What is born will die
- ❖ What has been gathered will be dispersed,
- ❖ What has been accumulated will be exhausted,
- ❖ What has been built up will collapse,
- ❖ And what has been high will be brought low.

Buddhism - Nothing is Permanent

- ❖ **Death** is as **impermanent** as life itself is.
- ❖ **Sanghāta** - Everything in this universe is a **coming together**.
- ❖ **Vighāta** - Death is an inevitable change or **going apart of** what had come together.

Reincarnation in Taoism (Chuang Tzu 23)

- ❖ Birth is **not a beginning**. Death is **not an end**.
- ❖ There is **existence without limitation**. Existence without limitation **is space**.
- ❖ There is **continuity without a starting point**. Continuity without a starting point is **time**.
- ❖ There is birth, there is **death**, there is issuing forth, there is entering in.
- ❖ That through which one passes in and out **without seeing its form**, that is the **Portal of God**.

Reincarnation

As a caterpillar, having come to the end of one blade of grass, draws itself together and reaches out for the next, so the self, having come to an end of one life and shed all ignorance, gathers its faculties and reaches out from the old body to a new one.

Brihadaranyka Upanishad

Sufism - A Minority View in Islam

- ❖ I died as a mineral and became a plant,
- ❖ I died as a plant and rose to animal,
- ❖ I died as animal and I was man.
- ❖ Why should I fear death?
- ❖ When was I less by dying?

Jalaluddin Rumi, A Sufi poet

Death and Medicine

- ❖ The necessity of **nature's final victory** was expected and accepted in generations before our own. Doctors were far more willing to recognize the **signs of defeat** and far less arrogant about denying them.

Sherwin Nuland, M.D. (How We Die)

- ❖ There is no escaping from the tragedy of life which is that we are all **aging from the day we are born.**
- ❖ Death, of course, is **not a failure.** Death may be an **enemy** but it is also the **natural order** of things.

Atul Gawande, M.D.

Being Mortal: Medicine and What matters in the End.

Is Death a Defeat?

- ❖ USA is a **death denying/defying** society where even the idiom of expression is that of resistance.
- ❖ People vow **not to go** gently into the good night (Blake, 1988) or conjure images of fighting illness, or **fighting the enemy, Death.**

(Kalish & Reynolds, 1981)

Death in USA

- ❖ 90% of respondents to NHO Gallup survey **want to die at home.**
- ❖ 1949 – **50%** of deaths in institutions
- ❖ 1958 – **61%** of deaths in institutions
- ❖ 1980 – **74%** (57% hospitals, 17% nursing homes, 20% home)
- ❖ 2000 – **75%** (50% in hospitals, 25% in nursing homes)

Dilemma of Death

- ❖ 30 % of Medicare payments in last year of life.
- ❖ 12 % of Medicare spending covers in the last two months.
- ❖ 10 % of Medicare beneficiaries - 70 % of program spending.
- ❖ Differences in medical expenditures vary greatly by gender, race and income among patients two and three years before they die, those differences narrow or disappear during the last year of life

RAND Health Research 2004.

Uniform Definition of Death Act -1980

- ❖ An individual who has sustained either/or
 - Irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions
 - Irreversible cessation of **all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem, is dead.**
- ❖ Dilemma of "**purgatory status**" - the brain itself can be very badly damaged but the **brain stem can still function.**
- ❖ People with **no "cognitive"** powers can continue to breathe, their hearts can pump blood throughout their bodies, and they can maintain sleep-wake cycles for as long as you force nutritional fluids into them intravenously. e.g. **Karen Ann Quinlan**

Question

- ❖ Is **consciousness extinguished** at death?
- ❖ Is **consciousness changing?** - Can those changes can be **influenced by the circumstances of the dying process?**

Death Anxiety

- ❖ Hindus tested lowest in death anxiety (greatest belief in life after death) followed by the Muslims, while the Christians showed the highest death anxiety. (One life to live!).

Parsuram and Sharma (1992)

- ❖ A strong negative correlation between death anxiety and belief in afterlife. That is, as the degree of certainty in afterlife increased, levels of death anxiety decreased.

Alvarado, Templer, Bresler, and Thomson-Dobson (1995)

End of Life Dilemma-Science and Spirituality

- ❖ Medical Science comes with “technical solutions to human problems. Spirituality searches for “Human Solutions to intractable technical problems for End of Life”.
- ❖ Science actively promotes increased and Unrealistic Expectations for a Transitory Version of satisfaction. Spirituality prepares one for a State of Serenity by curbing those Desires and Unrealistic Expectations.

Distribution of Medical Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 2011

	TX #	US #
White	670	10,783
Black	81	1,129
Asian	308	3,767
Hispanic	201	1,336
American Indian and Alaska Native	9	135
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	2	49
Other Non-Hispanic	13	33
Foreign	14	292
No Response/Unknown	15	321
Total Graduates	1296	17364

Total Physicians by Race/Ethnicity - 2008
(total physicians = 954,224)

Source: *Physician Characteristics and Distribution in the US, 2010 Edition.*
American Medical Association.

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
White	519,840	54.5
Black	33,781	3.5
Hispanic	46,507	4.9
Asian	116,412	12.2
American Native/Alaska Native	1,594	.16
Other	13,019	1.3
Unknown	223,071	23.4

The Economics and Health Care Delivery

- ❖ 22% of the current medical students in American medical schools are of Asian origin.
- ❖ 10% of current students are Indian origin.
- ❖ 7% of the current physicians are from India.
- ❖ Rapidly changing demographics and Multi-Cultural society (especially physicians).
- ❖ Economic Hierarchy drives Value systems, Morality and Ethics!

Religious Diversity

- ❖ Religious variables - Euthanasia /Physician-assisted suicides, “Do not resuscitate” orders, Initiation and Withdrawal of Life-sustaining therapies, Prescription of birth control and Abortion. *J Gen Intern Med. July,2005.*
- ❖ Physicians are more likely to belong to religious traditions that are under represented in the United States.
- ❖ US Women physicians were less likely to be Christian (61% versus 85% of the general population) Jewish (13% vs. 2.0%), Buddhist (1.4% vs. 0.3%), Hindu (4% vs. 0.4%), Atheist/Agnostic (6% vs. 0.6%).
- ❖ Physicians of under represented traditions take pains to limit the overt influence of their religious commitments in recognition of the discordance between their own religions and those of their patients. *Social Science & Medicine December 1999*

Definition of Ethics

- ❖ It is a careful analysis of the **ways** in which an individual's **state of mind** and motivations can affect his **Perceptions, Experiences and Interpretations of Himself and the World.**
- ❖ Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a **right to do and what is right to do.**

Potter Stewart

- ❖ East is east, west is west and **twain shell never meet**

Rudyard Kipling

Metaphysics and Meta-Ethics

- ❖ **Philosophy:** The discipline comprising logic, **ethics**, aesthetics, **metaphysics** and **epistemology**.
- ❖ **Metaphysics:** **A priori speculation** upon questions that is **unanswerable to scientific observation**, analysis, or experiment.
- ❖ **Ontology:** The branch of metaphysics that deals with the **nature of being**.
- ❖ **Epistemology:** Studies the nature of knowledge, its **presuppositions and foundations**, and its extent and validity.
- ❖ **Axiology:** The study of **value or goodness**, in its widest sense.
- ❖ **Theology:** Study of the **nature of God** and the relationship of the **human and divine**.

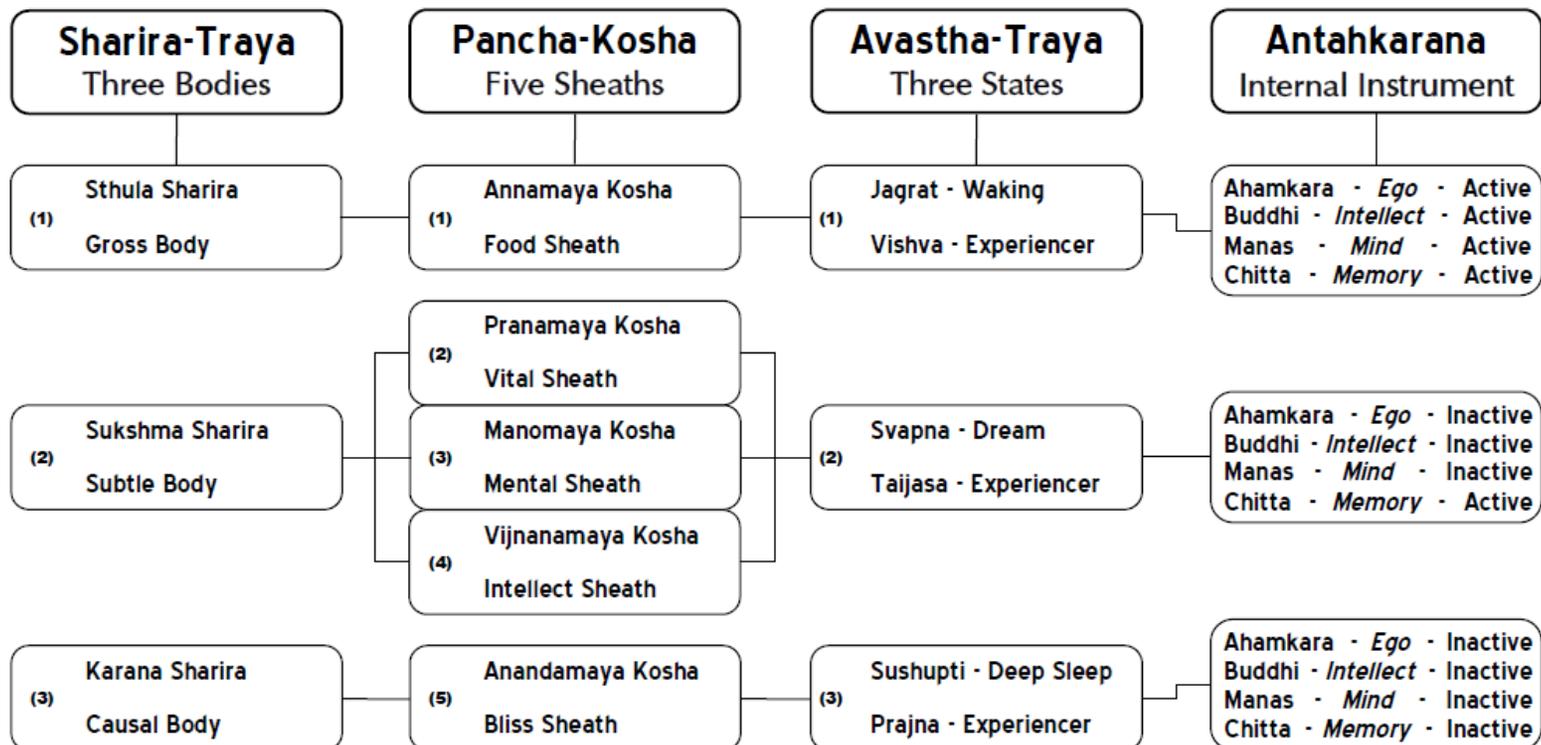
Word of God!

- ❖ Literal Interpretation of Scripture **Mainline Churches***
 - **22%** **Word of God**, literally true word for word
 - **38%** Word of God, but not literally true word for word
 - **28%** **Book written by men**, not the word of God
- ❖ Literal Interpretation of Scripture Among **Hindus***
 - **12%** **Word of God**, literally true word for word
 - **25%** Word of God, but not literally true word for word
 - **47%** **Book written by men**, not the word of God

*Pew foundation Research, 2008

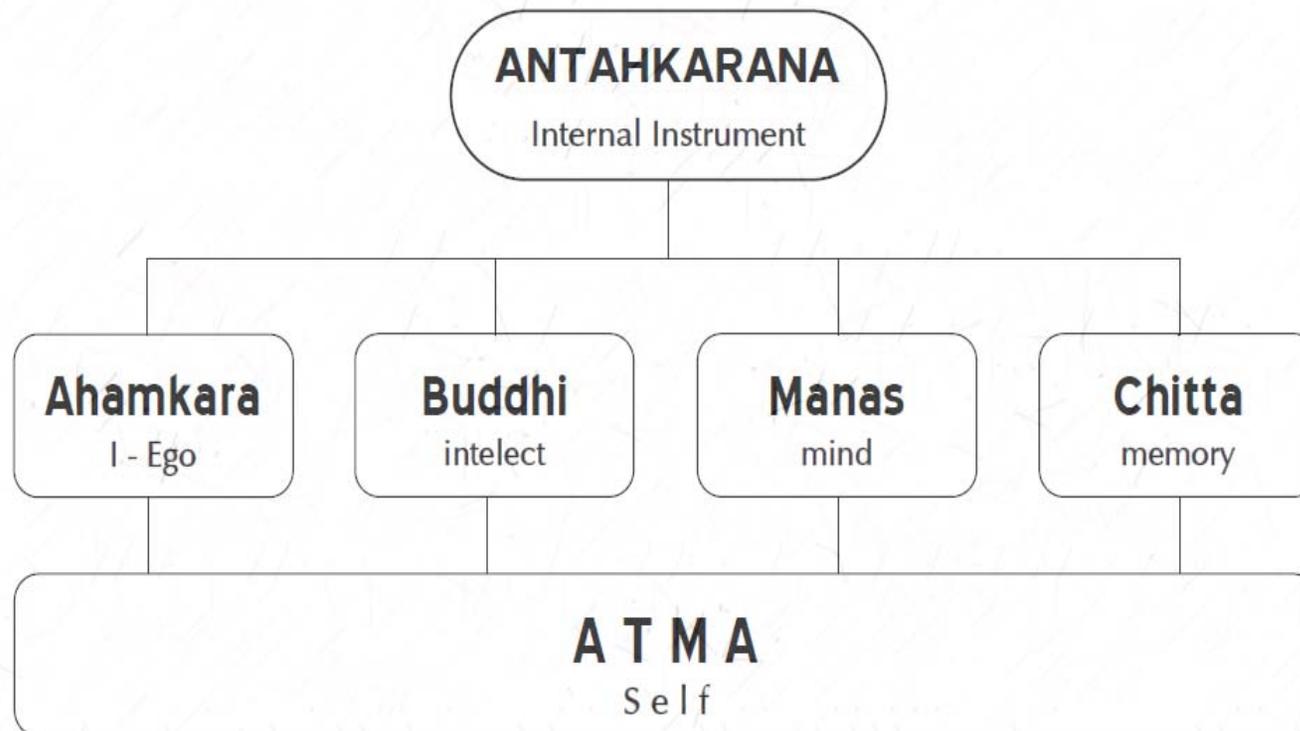
Who am I?

Bodies, Sheaths, States and Internal Instrument



What is Atman and Jivatman?

The Self and the Functions of the Internal Instrument



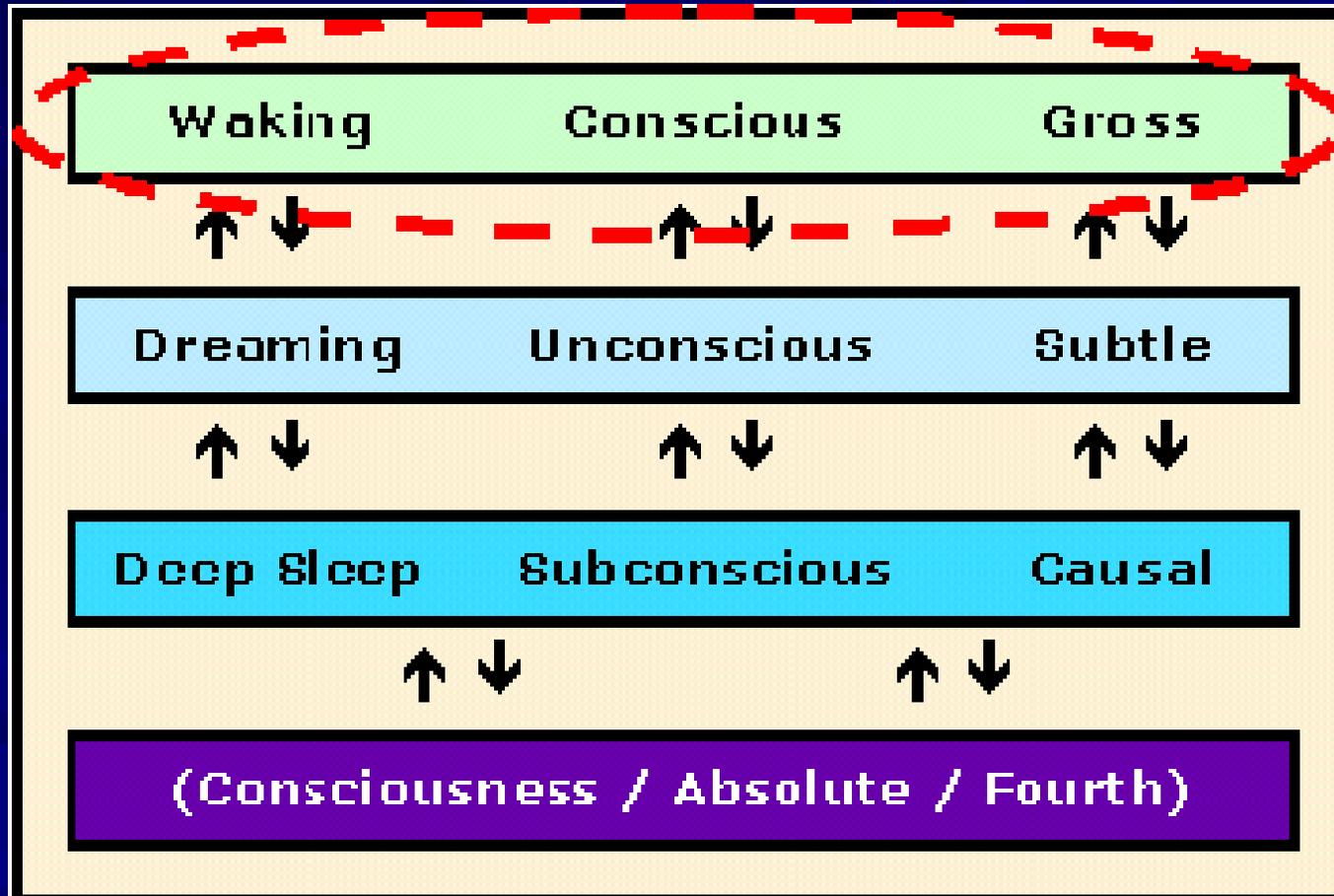
Transformation of a Form!

Six Stages of Transformation

SHAD BHAVAVIKARAH
Six Stages of Transformation



Synthesis of Consciousness



Modern Analogy - The Driver in the Vehicle

- ❖ A car cannot run without a driver. Similarly, the body will not work without the presence of the “ATMAN.”
- ❖ The driver develops a deep attachment to and identifies with the car. The soul i.e. Jivatman identifies with the body in the same way.
- ❖ Although the driver is not the vehicle, he will move according to the nature of the car, namely fast, slow, etc.
- ❖ The same driver can get out of one vehicle and drive another. Similarly, the soul leaves one body and enters another.

Dilemma of Western Society

Fears

- ❖ Die on a machine
- ❖ Die in discomfort
- ❖ Be a burden
- ❖ Die in institution

Desires

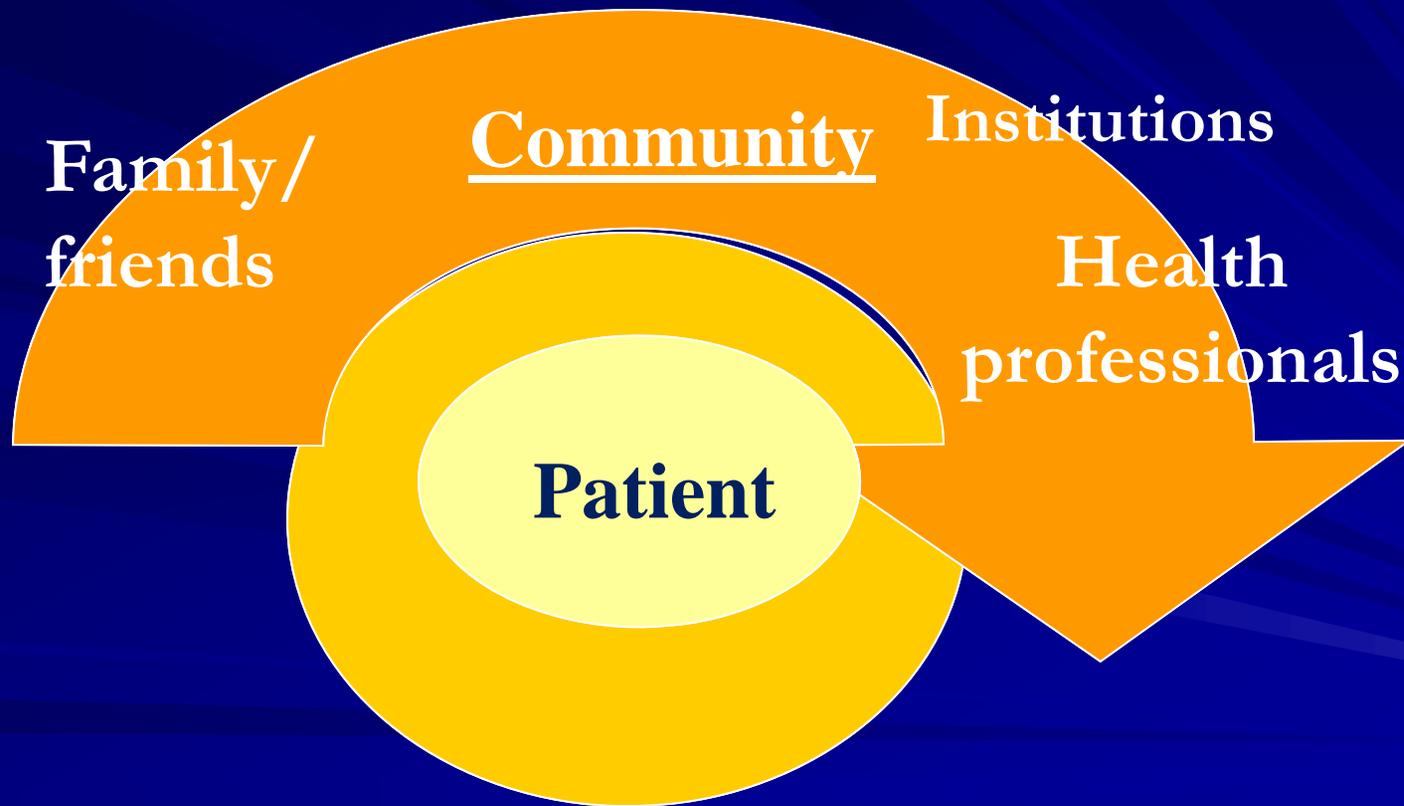
- ❖ Die **not** on a ventilator
- ❖ Die in **comfort**
- ❖ Die with **family/friends**
- ❖ Die at **home**

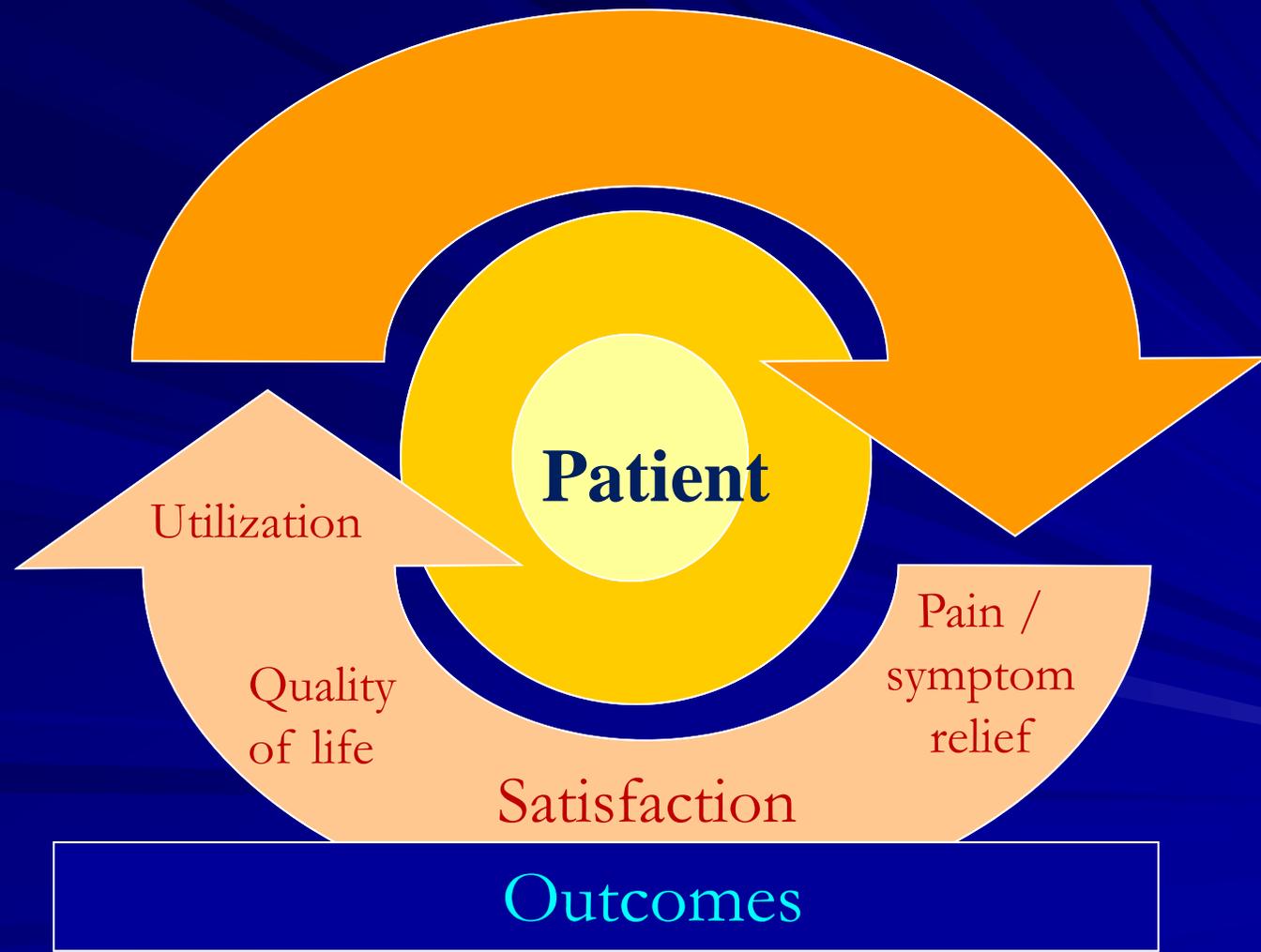
Dying Process and Theology

Five stages: Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

- ❖ Denial
- ❖ Anger (Karma Theory)!
- ❖ Bargaining
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Acceptance (Reincarnation)!

Health System Interventions





Fixed Characteristics of the Patient

Diagnosis, Prognosis

**Race, ethnicity
and Culture**

Religion

**Socioeconomic
class**

Modifiable Dimensions



How do we Apply Ethics?

- ❖ Systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior.
- ❖ Three general subject areas
 - Meta Ethics - Study of core source and the will of God, Issues of universal truths, the role of reason in ethical judgments.
 - Normative Ethics - Practical task to arrive at moral standards, regulates right and wrong conduct.
 - Applied Ethics - Examination of specific controversial issues, such as abortion, Euthanasia, pain and suffering, dying process, etc.

Death with Dignity-Liverpool Care Pathway

“Advocates of such programs have been **demonized**. They have been criticized by the Catholic Church in the name of “life,” and **vilified** by Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann in the pursuit of cheap political gain.....Anything that looks like an official protocol, or guideline — you’re going to get **death-paneled**,”

“There are lots of reasons to believe you could save money,”I just think we **can’t do it for the reason of saving money.**”

Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel

Bioethicist and expert on end-of-life care

Manifestations of Karma

- ❖ **Logical principle:** Karma stands for strict causal necessity between **actions and resulting effects**.
- ❖ **Metaphysical principle:** it espouses **immortality of Atman**.
- ❖ **Ethical principle:** it explains the **diversity in destiny** of men regarding their birth and fortunes. (R. K. Garg)
 - *“Man reaps what he sows”* Apostle Paul
 - *“If you do good things, good things will happen to you. If you do bad things, bad things will happen to you”*

Karma

- ❖ The moral and physical law of **cause and effect** by which each individual creates one's own future destiny.
- ❖ An interaction (**A chain reaction**) of actions and reactions.
- ❖ It is a **predisposition** and not **Fatalism**.
- ❖ It can be **“influenced”** but not be fundamentally altered*.

What is "KARMA"?

Three kinds:

- ❖ **Sanchita** (Accumulated)
- ❖ **Prarabdha** (Fruit-bearing)
- ❖ **Kriyamana** (Current)

All *Kriyamana karmas* become *Sanchita karma* upon completion of act.

Three elements:

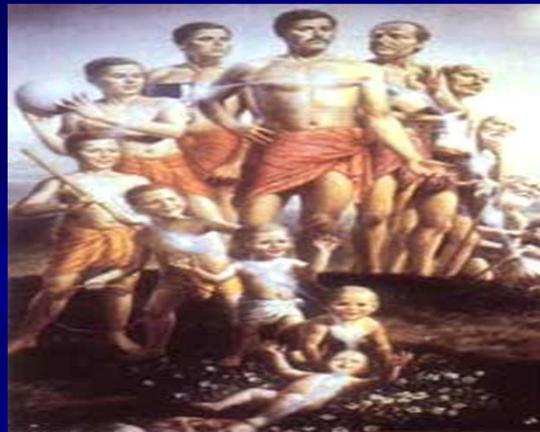
- ❖ **The thought**, which conceives the action
- ❖ **The will**, which finds the means of accomplishment.
- ❖ **The union** of thought and will, which brings the action to **fruition**.

A natural, impersonal law of moral cause and effect and has **no connection** with the idea of a supreme power that **decrees punishment or forgiveness of sins***.

Karma and Newton

- ❖ The theory of Newton states that “every action produces an equal and opposite reaction.”
- ❖ *“Sum of person's actions in one of his successive states of existence, viewed as deciding his fate for the next.”* (Oxford Dictionary).
- ❖ It is “a volitional action that is undertaken deliberately or knowingly.”
- ❖ Every time we think or do something, we create a cause, which in time will bear its corresponding effects. And this cyclical cause and effect generates the concepts of birth/death and reincarnation.

Just as the “Self” advances through childhood, youth and old age in its physical body, so it advances to another body after death. The wise person is not confused by this change called death.



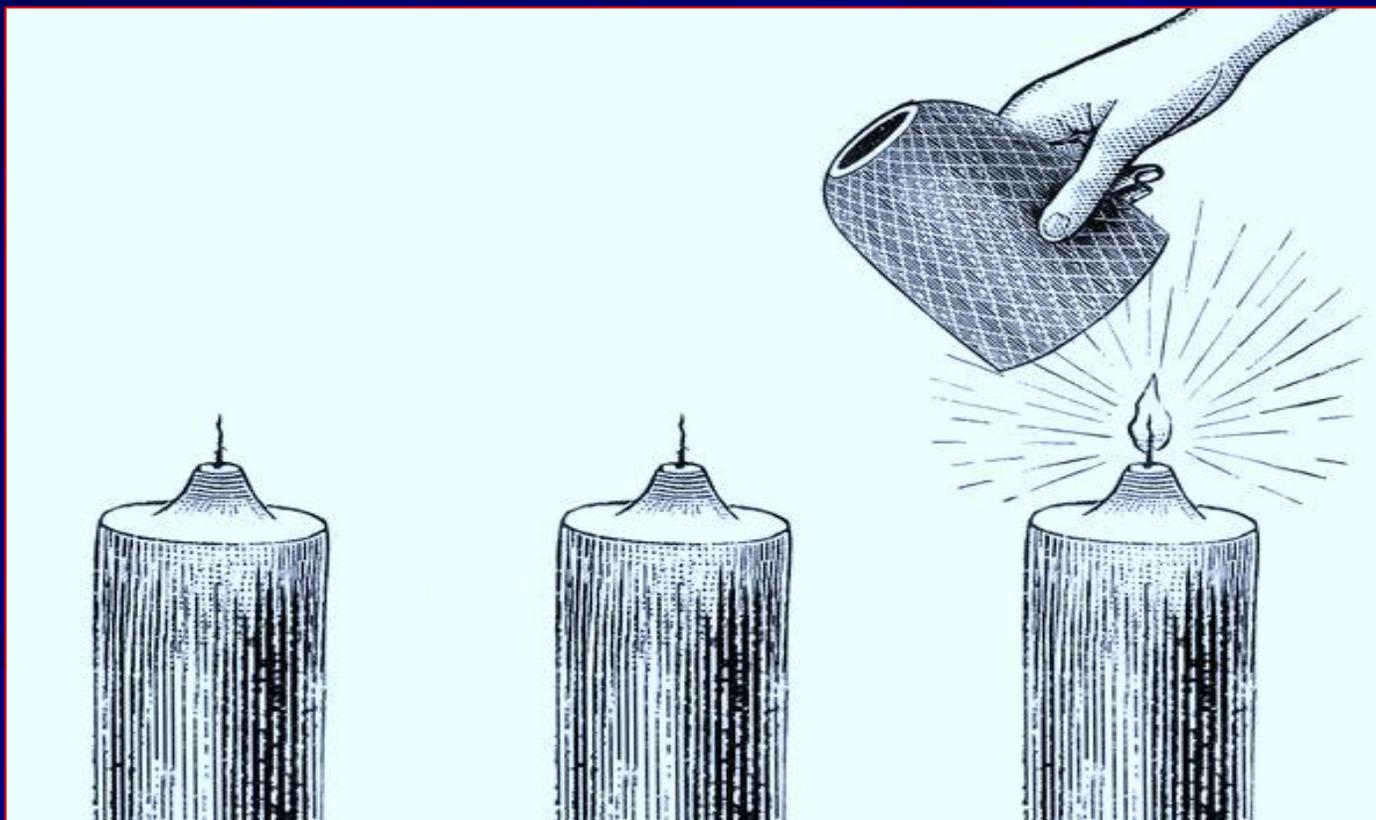
Just as the body casts off worn out clothes and puts on new ones, so the infinite, immortal self casts off worn out bodies and enters into new ones.

Lord Krishna in Gita

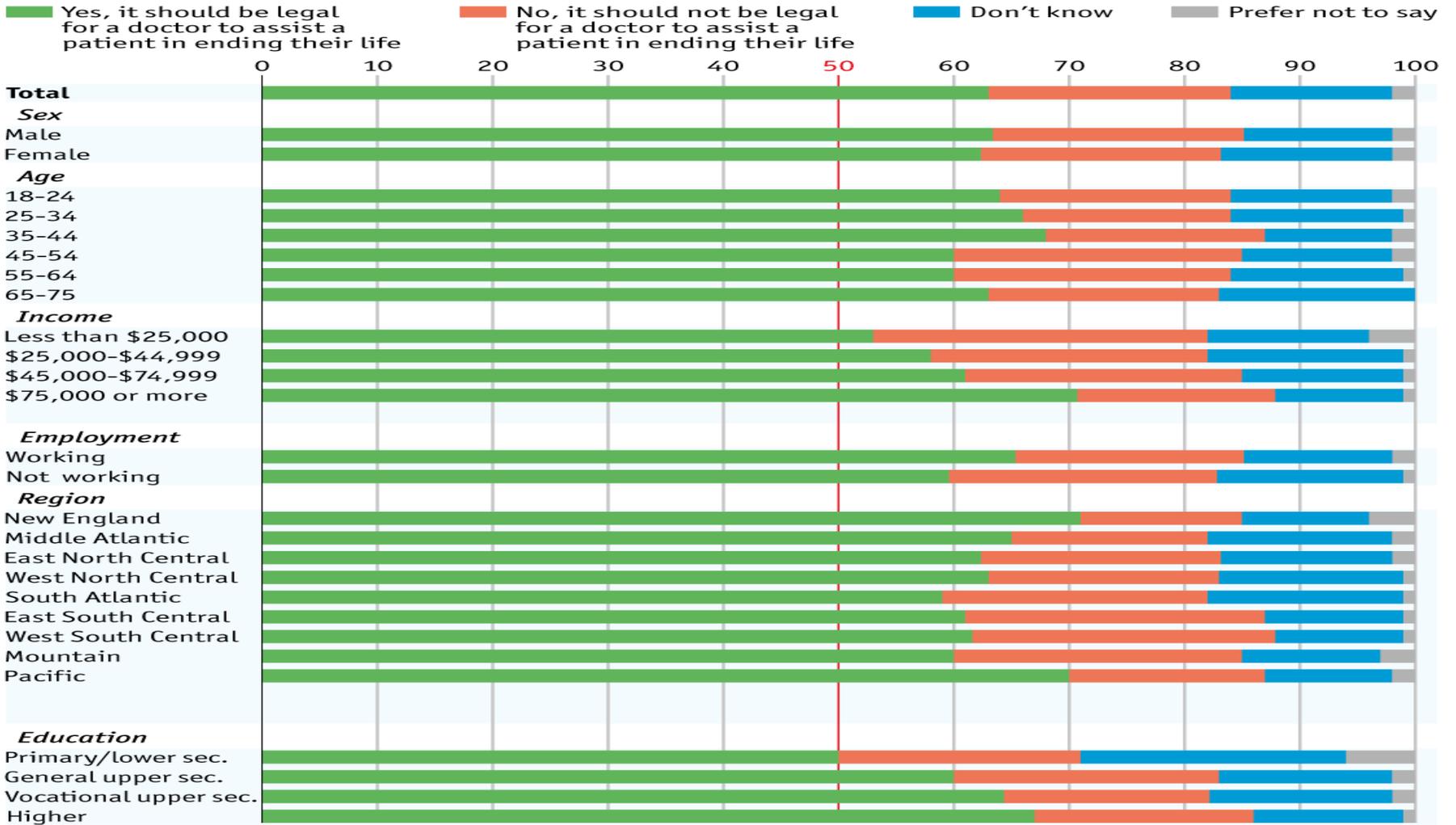
Buddha on Death

- ❖ I am of the nature to age, I have **not gone beyond ageing**.
- ❖ I am of the nature to sicken, I have **not gone beyond sickness**.
- ❖ I am **subjected to my own karma**, I am **not free from karmic effects**.
- ❖ I am of **the nature to die**, I have **not gone beyond dying**.
- ❖ All that is mine, beloved and pleasing, will change, will become otherwise, will become **separated from me**.

Right to Die!



United States, % of respondents



Key Cultural and Ethical issues

- ❖ A dying person can refuse medication **to die with a clear and unclouded mind**, and view pain as a way of **expurgating sin***.
- ❖ This belief can cause problems for **non-Asian professionals** whose training makes them want to **maintain life and relieve suffering**.

Voluntary Dissolution of Life (Prayopavesa)

- ❖ Inability to perform normal **bodily purification**.
- ❖ Death appears **imminent** or life's pleasures are nil.
- ❖ The decision is **publicly declared**.
- ❖ The action is made under **community regulation**.

Fasting for the Terminally Ill (Santhara)

- ❖ **A spiritual purification** - A holy fast unto death, rids the soul of negative karma and brings about death with dignity and dispassion.
- ❖ **Promote detachment** - Not an act of suicide - Recommended only for a few spiritually fit persons and under strict supervision, usually in a public forum, with the approval of the family and spiritual superiors.
- ❖ **People who die in this "death of the wise" (*Pandita-marana*)** are considered to be only a few births removed from final liberation from the painful cycle of death and rebirth.

Fasting for the Terminally Ill (continued)

- ❖ Abstention from food - **Death through renunciation** (*Sannyasana marana*)
Death through meditation (*Samaadhi marana*).
- ❖ Ensure that there are **no signs of bad death** (feces, vomit, or urine).
- ❖ "When a wise man, in whatever way, comes to know that the apportioned space of his life draws towards its end, he should in the meantime quickly learn the method of **dying a religious death.**"

Suicide and Voluntary Withdrawal

- ❖ **Fasting to death:** An acceptable way for a Hindu to end life in **certain circumstances**. (e.g. **Non-violent** and uses **natural means**).
- ❖ When it is the right time for this life to end – (this body has **served its purpose** and become a burden).
- ❖ **A Gradual process**, giving ample time for the patient to prepare himself in a **thoughtful manner** and (those around him) for his death.
- ❖ Feelings of **serenity and fulfillment of desires** vs. suicide is associated with feelings of despair.

Life support and Euthanasia

A Hindu Perspective

- ❖ By helping to end a painful life a person is performing a good deed and so fulfilling their **moral obligations**.

Counter point

- ❖ By helping to end a life, even one filled with suffering, a person is **disturbing the timing of the cycle of death and rebirth**.
- ❖ Those involved in the euthanasia will take on the **remaining karma of the patient**.
- ❖ Use of a **temporary life-support machine** as part of healing is acceptable but keeping a person artificially alive on a **life-support machines** disturbs his/her **Karmic consequences**.

Euthanasia

- ❖ **Active Euthanasia:** Causing death directly by some active means (administration of a lethal injection).
- ❖ **Passive Euthanasia:** Allowing "nature to take its course" even though the means to intervene are available. Allowing death to occur or causing death to occur by Removal or refusal of life-sustaining treatment,

A Point of controversy:

- ❖ Any chance of healing or rehabilitation, treatment becomes a painful invasion making the last days before death a nightmare of suffering.
- ❖ Role of living wills and medical proxy legislation, physician assisted suicide, legalize euthanasia or mercy killing

Eastern Perspective

- ❖ Buddhism teaches that the very **attempt to avoid suffering creates ever more suffering...Death is not the end**, suffering does not cease thereupon, but continues until the **karma that created the suffering has played itself out**

Philip Kapleau Roshi

- ❖ The Buddhist masters speak of the need to **die consciously with as lucid, un-blurred, and serene a mental mastery** as possible. Keeping pain under control **without clouding the dying person's consciousness is the first prerequisite.**

Sogyal Rinpoche

(The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying)

- ❖ If a dying person has any chance of having **positive, virtuous thoughts**, it is important—and there is a purpose—for them to live even just a few minutes longer. If there is no such chance for positive thoughtsthen there seems to be no point. Dalai Lama

Lord Krishna in GITA

Whoever, at the time of death, gives up his body and **departs, thinking of Me alone, he comes to Me;** of that there is no doubt.

Coping with Pain – An Indic Perspective

Let me not beg for the stilling
of my pain but for the
heart to conquer it.

Ravindranath Tagore

(Poet, philosopher, first Hindu Nobel laureate)

Pain/Suffering and Karma

- ❖ A part of the unfolding of karma.
- ❖ A consequence of past inappropriate action (mental, verbal or physical) that occurred in either one's current life or in a past life
- ❖ A natural consequence of the moral laws of the universe in response to past negative behavior and not a punishment.

Where do you draw a line?

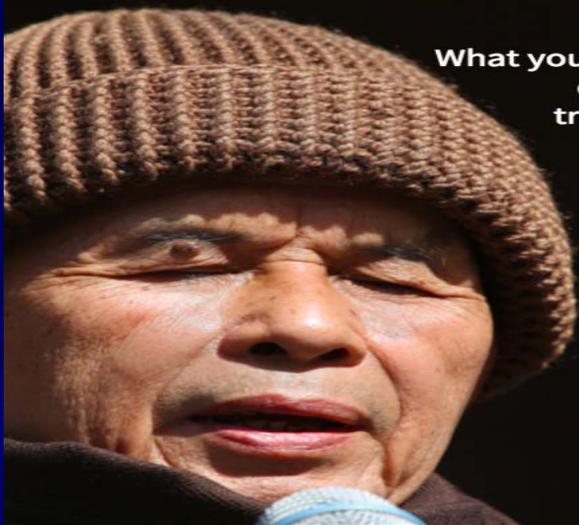
- ❖ Famous case of **Karen Quinlan/Schivo** and Western Dilemma.
 - What is the role of food and hydration? Ventilator?
 - What is a difference between letting one die and killing one?
 - Scientific issue or a cultural variation?
- ❖ Bhishma in Mahabharata (voluntary withdrawal of intake acceptable to **societal beliefs**).
- ❖ Hinduism states that **natural death** helps to lead towards **Moksha** (Salvation) or liberation from **birth-death cycle**.

Hinduism - Hospice/Palliative Care

- ❖ Accepts death as part of a cosmic cycle or order of things. Terminal illness with time for preparation is preferred to a sudden death.
- ❖ The state of the mind at the time of death influences their rebirth.
- ❖ Physical pain may be attributed to harmful actions carried during their own lifetime. Patient may refuse medication that would cause loss of consciousness.
- ❖ For the elderly, many medical interventions available may be viewed as “futile” because aging process seen as natural.
- ❖ A an elderly terminally ill patient’s detachment from treatment decisions or withdrawal into spiritual preparation should not be mistaken for depression.
- ❖ Lack of acceptance of life-threatening disease by loved ones, may cause dying person to become “attached” and increase spiritual distress.

End of life - Key Points

- ❖ Hinduism embraces a **diversity of traditions**.
- ❖ **Life** is a **transition** between the previous one and the next one.
- ❖ **Karma** explains **inequity and suffering** in this life and affects the next life.
- ❖ A good death is **timely**, in the **right place**, conscious and prepared, with **the mind on God**. A bad death is **untimely**, violent, and **unprepared**.
- ❖ Religious grounds exists for **voluntary euthanasia** for **spiritually advanced individuals**. The family has a **sacred duty** to assist the dying before and after death.
- ❖ Involuntary euthanasia may be justified to **prevent extreme suffering**.*



What you call birth and death are only transformation.

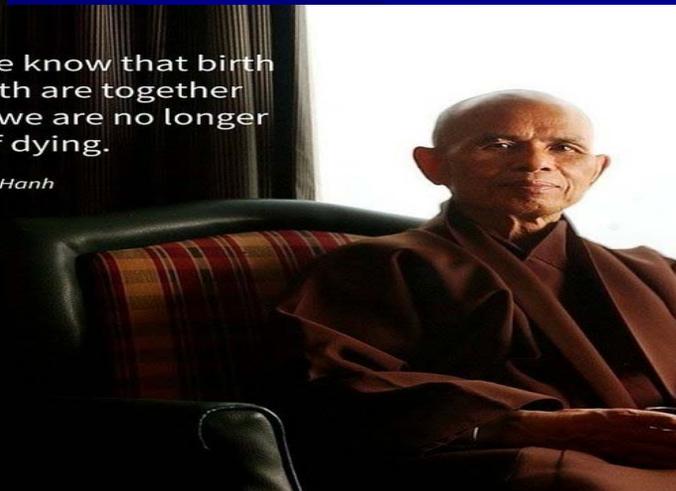
--Thich Nhat Hanh

HUFF
POST

When we know that birth and death are together always, we are no longer afraid of dying.

--Thich Nhat Hanh

HUFF
POST



Buddhism Diamond Sutra and Life

- ❖ A star at dawn
- ❖ A bubble in a stream
- ❖ A Flash of light in a summer cloud
- ❖ A flickering lamp
- ❖ A phantom
- ❖ A dream

Birth and Death Cycle

- ❖ He who is born begins to die.
- ❖ He who dies begins to live.
- ❖ Birth and death are merely doors of entry and exit on the stage of this world.

Swami Shivananda

A Hymn with Profound Meaning

- ❖ Take me away **from the Unreality** (of the bondage of the Phenomenal World), but lead me **towards the Reality** (of the **Eternal Self**).
- ❖ Take me **away from the Darkness** (of Ignorance) and lead me **towards the Light** (of Spiritual Knowledge).
- ❖ Take me **away from the (Fear of) Death** (due to the bondage of the Mortal World) and lead me **towards the state of deathlessness** (i.e. Knowledge of the Immortal Self beyond Death).

Who Am I?

- ❖ Neither am I bound by Death and its Fear, nor by the rules of Caste and its Distinctions.
- ❖ Neither do I have Father and Mother, nor do I have Birth.
- ❖ I am the Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness.
- ❖ I am Shiva, I am Shiva, The Ever Pure Blissful Consciousness.

Shankaracharya

Lord Krishna in Gita – Central Tenet

- ❖ No weapon can **cleave** him; Nor the fire **burn** him,
- ❖ No waters can make him **wet**, Nor the wind **dry** him up.
- ❖ **Un-cleavable** is he; He is not burnt;
- ❖ Nor be wetted And neither be dried;
- ❖ **Eternal, all-pervading**, stable and immovable is he from everlasting time.

Lord Krishna in Gita – A Conclusion

- ❖ Never is he (Atman) born, nor does he die at any time, he has never been brought into being, nor shall come hereafter; unborn, eternal, permanent and ancient (primeval). When the body is slain, he is not slain.
- ❖ Truly there never was a time when I was not, nor you, nor these Lords of men, nor in the future a time when we shall cease to be.

An Analogy from Gita and Upanishad



Key Questions and Implications

- ❖ Who AM I?
- ❖ What is Bondage?
- ❖ What is Jivatman / Atman Relationship?
- ❖ Who Dies?
- ❖ Who/How/What Survives?

Abortion in Hindu Scriptures

- ❖ From the earliest times, the scriptures condemn the practice, **except when the mother's life is in danger**. An act against Rita (Natural order) and ahimsa.
- ❖ The **fetus is a living, conscious person**, needing and deserving protection (a Rig Vedic hymn for protection of the fetus).
- ❖ The Kaushitaki Upanishad describes abortion as equivalent to **killing one's parents**.
- ❖ The Atharva Veda lists the **fetus slayer among the greatest sinners**.

(Hinduism's Online Lexicon)

Reincarnation, Karma and Abortion

- ❖ The soul in the womb not a new soul.
- ❖ It contemplates its previous births.
- ❖ The purpose of life is to make progress toward liberation from rebirth.
- ❖ Abortion condemned as it obstructs this unfolding of its karmic destiny toward this goal.

Abortion and Buddhism

- ❖ Transmigration of consciousness occurs **at conception**, that all abortion incurs the karmic burden of killing.
- ❖ A **minority** tradition as in Hindu embryology hold that incarnation does not occur till **seventh month**.

Buddhism – Is it ever Justified?

- ❖ **Absolutist:** Bad karma is incurred from any act of murder, regardless of justifications.
- ❖ **Utilitarian:** Can be a compassionate act with positive karmic consequences, taking into account factors such as the health of the fetus or mother, the population crisis, and the readiness of the parents to raise a child.
- ❖ **Virtue-oriented:** The attitude and motivations of the pregnant woman and her collaborators would determine the ethics of an abortion. Aborting a fetus conceived without an effort at contraception would be more karmically significant than an abortion necessitated in spite of contraception.

Questions and Answers



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Remote sites can send in questions by typing in the *GoToWebinar* chat box or email GrandRounds@dshs.state.tx.us.

For those in the auditorium, please come to the microphone to ask your question.

DSHS Grand Rounds Spring Semester 2016

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