

One who has taken
his birth is sure to die,
and after death, one
is sure to take ...

[Life](#), [Death](#)



One who has taken his birth is sure to die, and after death, one is sure to take birth again. —Bhagwad Gita The Hindu tradition is one of the oldest living religious traditions of the world. Through spiritual practice Hindus try to establish contact with the divine reality and then manifest that divinity in all their actions. Family and community interconnectedness, karma, and reincarnation are major beliefs of Hinduism. The healthcare decisions are made by the most senior family member or the eldest son. Hinduism encourages family members to take a role in the care of family members; especially emphasizes respect for all older people, with children having special responsibility towards their parents. It is considered a family obligation to care for the elderly and the sick. Health care provider must take this into consideration when developing care plans or suggesting nursing or residential care. Karma is a combination of cosmic and moral cause and effect that can cross lifetimes and life lessons learned for spiritual growth. The belief in reincarnation gives great comfort to the dying and their families' because they know their loved one will be reborn into a new life and that they are not gone forever. Enduring physical suffering may lead to spiritual growth and more fortunate rebirth. Death is a universal experience. It doesn't matter what our culture, our religion, our race, or our country of origin, we will all die. How we approach death, how we think about suffering and grief, and what we believe happens after we die vary based on our culture, religion, and spiritual beliefs. Spiritual beliefs ground our thinking about end-of-life concepts. Hindu teachings place great importance on the state of mind at death, as a main determinant of the soul's destination either in taking another body or in achieving final liberation. According to the

Bhagwad Gita, “ One’s thoughts during the course of one’s life accumulate to influence one’s thoughts at the moment of death. Hindus believe that all living beings possess a soul which passes through successive cycles of birth and rebirth. They believe the body is a vehicle for the soul through which it can experience the world and progress in its journey to God. When the body has served its purpose, it is discarded and the soul takes on another body until it finds union with God. Although Hindus believe in preserving the body until its natural end, they recognize that death is a part of life and that the true self is immortal and do not die when the body dies. As per the general beliefs and practices; assisted suicide and euthanasia are not encouraged, male infants are not circumcised, abortion is not advised excepts for medical indications, and maintaining a terminal patient on artificial life support for a prolonged period in a vegetative state is not encouraged. Hindus traditionally cremate their dead, for swifter, more complete release of the soul. Death’s anniversary is called Liberation Day. Hindu patients may wish to dies at home. But, nowadays the dying is increasingly occurring in hospitals, even when recovery is clearly not possible. Knowing the merits of dying at home among loved ones, Hindus bring ill home. For example, a dying patient may wish to have religious paraphernalia around the bed to help prepare for departure—getting common items including sacred images (usually pictures) of deities or saints, sacred flowers and garlands, rosary and prayer beads, holy water and religious scriptures. In hospital, the visitors may get offended if they are not allowed to see their dear friends or relatives in the final stages of their life. Priest may also come to give blessings. Chanting of mantras, singing of hymns and recitation of scriptures are

common practices to help nurture an appropriately spiritual frame of mind. On the other hand some patients may require time and privacy for silent prayers and meditation, especially during the early hours of the morning. At the moment of the death–A deceased Hindu’s body is usually washed by close family members, with the eldest son taking a lead role. A patient may request for a priest to be present to perform certain rituals, including: tying a sacred thread around the neck or wrist, a few drops of holy water from the River Ganges is trickled into patient’s mouth, placing a sacred tulsi leaf (holy basil) in the patient’s mouth. The person is placed in his room or in the hallway of the house, with the head facing east. The priest keeps chanting sacred mantras until the great departure, singing hymns, praying and reading scripture. If the death occurs in the hospital then the family gets the death certificate signed immediately and transports the body home. Therefore, the nurse must consider this while performing care for the Hindu patient. The family lights a small candle or incense stick near the body. If possible, all jewelry, sacred threads and religious objects should be left in place. The thumbs are tied together, as are the big toes. Under no circumstances should the body be embalmed or organs removed for the use by others. The Homa Fire ritual is performed in a shelter built by the family to bless nine brass kumbhas (water pots) and one clay pot. The chief mourner leads the rites. He is the eldest son in the case of the father’s death and the youngest son in the case of the mother’s. The chief mourner now performs aarti, passing an oil lamp over the remains, and then offering flowers. The women then walk around the body and offer puffed rice into the mouth to nourish the deceased for the journey ahead. A widow places her

wedding pendant around her husband's neck, signifying her enduring tie to him. Only men go to the cremation site, led by the chief mourner. The body is covered with the wood and offered incense and ghee (traditional butter). With the clay pot on the chief mourner's left shoulder, he circles the pyre while holding a fire brand. At each turn around the pyre, a relative knocks a hole in the pot with a knife, letting the water out signifying that life's leaving its vessel. At the end of three turns, the chief mourner drops the pot and then without turning towards the body, he lights the pyre and leaves the site. On return everyone takes shower and share in cleaning the house. The shrine room is closed with white cloth draping all icons. During these days of ritual impurity, family and close relative do not visit other's homes, though neighbors and relatives bring daily meals to relieve the burdens during mourning. Neither do they attend festivals, and temples, nor attend any marriages. About twelve hours after cremation, family men return to the cremation site to collect the remains. Water is sprinkled on the ash and collected on a large tray. The ashes are then disposed in the Ganges—a holy river along with garlands and flowers. For the next ten days, family members are considered ritually impure and normally remain in the home. By the end of that time, the soul of the deceased is believed to have acquired a new body, and the consequences of the last life, its rewards, and punishments are unfolded. At the yearly anniversary of the death (according to moon calendar) a priest conducts the shraadh rites at home. This ceremony is done yearly as long as the children of the deceased are alive. It is now common in India to observe shraadh for ancestors just prior to the yearly Navratri

festival. References <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/11/01/world/hindu-funeral-traditions-hindu-belief->

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