

Hindu death rituals

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



There is one thing that is certain in this lifetime that eventually we all must die. A belief in the cyclical reincarnation of the soul is one of the foundations of the Hindu religion. Death is viewed as a natural aspect of life, and there are numerous epic tales, sacred scriptures, and vedic guidance that describe the reason for death's existence, the rituals that should be performed surrounding it, and the many possible destinations of the soul after departure from its earthly existence (Retrieved from <http://mailerindia.com/hindu/veda/index.php?death> on 18th January, 2012).

this essay will discuss the rituals performed for the soul of the dead body so it reaches heaven peacefully. Traditionally, a Hindu dies at home. Nowadays the dying is increasingly kept in hospitals, even when recovery is clearly not possible. Once family is certain that a person is taking his last breath, they start to chant mantras such as “ om namoh narayana”. This helps the soul to leave the body peacefully. They also put holy ash or sandal paste on the forehead and put few drops of Ganga or holy water in the mouth so that the soul goes to heaven. The first mortal to meet his fate with Death was named Yama.

Yama is aided by his two killer guide dogs who keep an eye as to whose life has come to an end. so they take the last breath of that person and take the soul to yama who directs them to their destiny . after the person dies the family member calls a chief priest who performs the rituals of” Homa” which is making a fire and chanting mantras and doing offering to the “ Agni Dewata” or fire god. The family gather together to cremate the body. Cremation is a ritual designed to do much more than dispose of the body; it is intended to release the soul from its earthly existence.

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" Hindus believe that cremation (compared to burial or outside disintegration) is most spiritually beneficial to the departed soul. " This is based on the belief that the " astral body" will linger " as long as the physical body remains visible. " If the body is not cremated, " the soul remains nearby for days or months"(Retrieved from [http://mailerindia.com/hindu/veda/index.php? death](http://mailerindia.com/hindu/veda/index.php?death) on 18th January, 2012). The standard cremation ceremony begins with the ritual cleansing, dressing and adorning of the body. The body is then carried to the cremation ground as prayers are chanted to Yama, invoking his aid.

It is usually the chief mourner and the eldest son who perform the “ Agni” or fire ceremony. He circumambulates the pyre counterclockwise- for everything is backward at the time of death and lights the pyre. The death now is an offering to Agni. After burning the corpse the chief mourner cracks the skull with a bamboo , thus releasing the soul from entrapment in the body. After cremation a thirteen day ritual is done for the safety of the soul till it reaches heaven. Family read a holy book called Bhagwat Geeta every afternoon for the deceased person.

. Twelve hours after the cremation, the ashes are thrown into a river, ideally the Ganges river, and the mourners walk away without looking back. On the 3rd, 5th, 7th or 9th day, relatives gather for a meal of the deceased's favorite foods. A portion is offered before his photo and later ceremonially left at an abandoned place, along with some lit camphor. On the 31st day, a memorial service is held. In some traditions it is a repetition of the funeral rites. At home, all thoroughly clean the house. the chief priest then prays for the deceased and his ancestors so their souls can reunite in the next world.

This ritual is called sapindikarana. Similar rituals are done after six months and then the last one is an year after death. a priest conducts the shraddha rites in the home, offering pinda to the ancestors. This ceremony is done yearly as long as the sons of the deceased are alive (or for a specified period) Retrieved from <http://mailerindia.com/hindu/veda/index.php?death> on 18th January, 2012).. In conclusion we can say that Hindu funeral rites can be simple or exceedingly complex. These steps devotedly completed according to the customs, means, and ability of the family, will properly conclude one earthly sojourn of any Hindu soul.

Religions such as Hinduism offer our own immortal souls satisfying answers to questions of life and death. Their ancient mythic texts provide real reasons for our existence here on earth. They also demonstrate that death is something that can be prepared for instead of being feared. In addition, they offer the possibility of something to look forward to, so we need not dread our last days on this planet. A true Hindu shall love death as he loves this life (Retrieved from <http://mailerindia.com/hindu> on 18th January, 2012).