



Funeral Ceremony Guidance

(This brochure is prepared by “Association of United Hindu and Jain Temples (UHJT), Washington Metropolitan Area” www.dcunitedtemples.org. Source: HACSI Publication that is based on Extracts from a book published by Hindu Mandir Executives Conference, USA)

Introduction

The purpose of this brochure is to provide a guidance for funeral ceremony (Antyeshti sanskar) in the United States in accordance with Hindu tradition. It varies based on the practices of people from different regions of India; however the core rituals have always been based on procedures outlined in the Vedic sutras and apply to all the individuals. The funeral process is guided by a Hindu priest available from a temple or independently. This process is new to our generation that grew up in US. Efforts should be made to make it practical and easier for them and their families.

Preparation (Social and Legal)

Following points are helpful in preparation during death and after death.

Once it is established that the death is imminent, inform all relatives and friends. Try to fulfill wishes of the individual. Just be with the patient and assure him/her that you will do the best you can to fulfill any wishes. Do prayers every day, eat together, plan your daily routine in such a way that one individual is with the patient at all times. Inform your priest. Delegate a friend or a family member to work on behalf of the family to make arrangements.

Immediately after death, inform the family members and friends first. Contact the funeral home. A limited number of funeral homes have cremation facilities. Some of the funeral homes that have cremation facilities in DC area are listed at the end. Though it is preferred to have cremation ASAP, it may be delayed by 24 to 48 hours (after death) due to legal issues or availability of cremation facility. The death certificate is provided by the funeral home.

The viewing and funeral ceremony can be planned in a dignified manner. Viewing should be optional and should be decided by the family members. The funeral ceremony may be short (up to 2 hours). Some part of the ceremony may be performed privately with the family members prior to other friends joining the funeral ceremony. The cremated ashes/remains of the body can be collected from the funeral home later on. The funeral home should be informed prior to

cremation regarding arrangement of collecting remains and storage if they are to be stored for a longer time. The cost of funeral in USA may range from \$ 3,000 to \$ 7,000 depending upon the location of facilities and services. There are different customs and practices for Hindus regarding funeral based on regional and family traditions. One can take Asti (ashes) to India for Asti visarjan (immersion) in a holy river. The family can lawfully now scatter ashes on the Ocean water in Maryland and anywhere USA. Do not let family members drive by themselves on the funeral day. The family needs support during this tough time.

General Guidelines:

Who should perform Cremation?

Following is the order of vested authority and responsibility for cremation of the deceased:

Deceased Male:

Eldest son, Eldest of the next available son, Grandson (Son's son), Adopted son, Grandson (Daughter's son), Wife, Daughter, Younger brother, Brother's son (eldest to youngest available), Father, Elder brother, Mother, Daughter-in-law, Sister, Sister's son, Son-in-law, Friend.

Deceased Female:

Eldest son, Eldest of the next available son, Grandson (Son's son), Adopted son, Grandson (Daughter's son), Husband, Daughter, Husband's younger brother, Husband's brother's son, eldest to youngest available, Husband's father, Husband's elder brother, Husband's mother, Daughter-in-law, Husband's sister's son, Friend.

Selection of Location, Time of Cremation and Memorial Service

According to Hindu tradition, the body should be cremated ASAP any time between sunrise and sunset. Following are some of the items to be considered in selecting the time and location:

Cremation:

1. Arrival of all the children/spouse of the deceased or the parent(s) in the case of cremation of body of children, to participate in the ceremony is desirable. However, if a delay of more than 2 to 3 days is anticipated in their arrival, it may be advisable to proceed with cremation with the closest relative, who can perform the ceremony.
2. Call several cremation centers and select the one that is available on the day suitable to the family, convenient and affordable. It is preferable to have ceremony and cremation at the same location.
3. Inform friends and well-wishers once the place and time of funeral/cremation are finalized. It is however important to note that the cremation ceremony be completed as early as possible. A memorial service/celebration of life may be arranged at a later date.

Memorial Service/Celebration of Life

The family may arrange for puja/bhajan/pravachan followed by a memorial service on the 4th/10th/13th day or at another time convenient to the family and friends. Refreshments or light meal may be served, although it is not required; it is up-to the family to decide. During this time, close friends, well-wishers and others may want to share their memories.

Activities Prior to Death (When Death is Imminent)

The following activities should be performed when it is certain that the death is likely to occur soon. If patient is in hospital, work with medical staff to see that the activities are performed.

Prokshana (*Sprinkle Ganga or purified water on the body and pour into the mouth*)

Holy river Ganga water should be sprinkled on the body of the person and/or poured into the mouth of the person. Chant divine names (Ram, Krishna, Shiva ...) while feeding the holy Ganga water. If the Ganga water is not available, purified water can be used.

Chanting of Divine Names: 1. Chant names of Bhagwaan. 2. If desired and possible, play appropriate Bhajans, Chant the names of God on the right ear Vishnu Sahasranama stotra etc. Chant the names of Ram, Krishna or other. Close family members should perform the chanting. All can join if they want. Chant at least a 108 times or more.

*Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna
Krishna Hare Hare*

Shiva Shiva Shiva Shiva Shivaya Nama Om Hara Hara Hara Hara Haraya Nama Om

Om Namō Narayanaya ! Om Namō Narayanaya !

One may also wish to read the 7th, 12th and 15th chapter or entire Bhagavad Gita or any selected chapter(s) of Ramayana or any sacred scripture.

Prior to Cremation Activities

If the death occurs at home or away from home, call 911. The body is normally taken away in an ambulance for medical examination by the local county 911 emergency personnel. If the death occurs at a hospital, an examination is performed. Once the death is pronounced, the body is taken to a funeral home. The county laws vary. Normally the body is not allowed to be taken to home.

Activities at Funeral Home:

The following activities are normally performed at the funeral home. The funeral home personnel help and accommodate the religious and emotional needs of the families.

Alankaram of the Dead Body: follow the guidance of priest, here is general description

On the forehead of the body, Tilak should be applied in accordance with the tradition. It is

customary to apply Chandan/Kumkum/Bhasma on the forehead. A garland containing Tulsi should be offered if available. More than one garland may also be offered if available. Any Maalas typically worn by the person or other Maalas may also be offered, if desired.

Sanchayana (Collection of Ashes)

The crematoriums offer the ashes, generally the day following cremation. Use container that dissolves in water within few hours after immersion. The container should be carefully carried and safely stored at a location outside of home (such as a garage). According to Hindu tradition, the container should not be taken inside home, including puja room. The container should not be taken to any temple.

Immersion of ashes in India

Some families may want to take the ashes to India, to immerse in the Holy Ganga at pilgrimage centers such as Haridwar. Check with Airlines, Embassy of India, Indian customs, and TSA for laws and guidance. It is recommended that immersion of ashes should be performed before 10th day after death or as soon as possible. Immersion should be performed preferably by the person who performed cremation. A close relative or friend can also perform this ritual.

Immersion of cremated ashes on ocean water in USA

According to our scriptures, flowing water from all these sources is considered sacred, no matter where we live. Scattering of ashes on the ocean water is **lawfully allowed in USA**. The eastern states including Maryland follow the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) law. Information on MD state law on the following: http://dhhm.maryland.gov/bom/pdf/cremated_remains.pdf

The EPA has a **general permit** for those wishing to place their loved ones' crematory ashes or whole bodies out to sea. "Out to sea" is defined as placing the ashes equal to or greater than 3 nautical miles away from the shore. This is for the Atlantic Ocean only and does not include any inland waters, such as the Chesapeake Bay or any other local streams or tributaries. Here is a link to website which provides more specifics and lists the information needed to report back to EPA once the ceremony is complete. There is no fine or advanced permission needed for this type of permit: <http://www.epa.gov/reg3esd1/coast/burial.htm>

Neither the EPA nor the states have any information or permits for placing ashes in the inland waters, so technically that means scattering ashes in inland waters is not permitted or allowed.

In State of Maryland 38% bodies are cremated. In California more than 50 % bodies are cremated. State of California requires ashes be scattered 500 yards away from shore. This makes easy for boating company to operate and bring down the cost for service.

Soon, UHJT will start working with IFC and MD State to assign a place on the bank of local river for scattering cremated ashes. This process will be easier than going to Ocean City and then in ocean by boat.

Immersion Procedure (use a container and flowers that dissolve in Ocean within 4 hours)

Pour milk and Ganga Jal in container. The container along with the ashes should be immersed in sea. The immersion should be performed prior to noon time if possible. Perform immersion on day 2, 3, 5, 7 or 9th day, but not on Friday. While immersing, chant the name “Naarayana.... Naarayana.... Naarayana”. After immersion, person(s) who performed immersion should take shower.

UHJT Temples: For more information, visit: www.dcunitedtemples.org

Maryland

BAPS Shri Swaminarayana Mandir

4320 Ammendale Road, Beltsville, MD 20705

Phone: 301-931-3135; Fax: 301-931-3136

Greater Baltimore Temple: www.baltimoretemple.org

2909 Bloom Road, P.O. Box 690, Finksburg, MD 21048

Phone: 410-861-8387

Hindu Temple of Metropolitan Washington: www.hindutemplemd.org

10001, Riggs Road, Adelphi, MD 20783

Phone: 301-445-2165; 301-434-1000

Hare Krishna Temple: www.iskcondc.com

10310, Oaklyn Dr, Potomac, MD 20854

Phone: 301-299-2100

Sri Siva Vishnu Temple: www.ssvt.org

6905 Cipriano Road, Lanham, MD 20706

Phone: (301)-552-3335

e-mail: ssvt@ssvt.org

Shri Mangal Mandir: www.mangalmandir.org

17110, New Hampshire Avenue Silver Spring, MD 20905;

Phone: 301-421-0985/0986

Murugan Temple of North America: www.murugantemple.org

6300 Princess Garden Parkway, Lanham, MD 20706

Phone: 301-552-4889

Email: info@murugantemple.org

Washington Kali Temple: www.kalitemple-washington.org

16126 New Columbia Pike, Burtonsville, MD 20866

Phone: 301-476-8152

VIRGINIA

Durga Temple: www.durgatemple.org
8400 Durga Place, Fairfax Station, VA 22039
Phone: 703-690-9355

Rajadhani Mandir: www.RajadhaniMandir.org
4525, Pleasant valley Road, Chantilly, VA 20151
Phone: 703-378-8401

Sri Venkateswara Lotus Temple: www.svlotustemple.org
12501, Braddock Road, Fairfax, VA 22030
Phone: 703-815-4850

Funeral Homes with Cremation Facilities and Sea Services for Immersion of ashes on Ocean Water.

As a community service, UHJT has listed the following funeral homes that have been commonly used by the community. Sea Services company has given discounted prices for UHJT members, use the form that follows. Please feel free to find other services that meet your needs.

Pumphreys
7557 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814
Phone: 301-652-2200

Donaldson Funeral Home & Crematory
1411 Annapolis Road, Route 175 East, Odenton, MD 21113
Phone: (410) 672-2200
<http://www.donaldsonfuneralhome.com>

Arlington Funeral Home
3901 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA
Phone: 703-522-1441

Cremation & Funeral Center
14014 Sullyfield Circle, Suite F, Chantilly, VA 20151
Phone: 703-449-8288

Sea Services.Com providing Burial at Sea for over twenty years and accredited by the Better Business Bureau with an A+ Rating.

Scattering of Ashes is permitted by the United States authorities and reported to the Environmental Protection Agency, known as the EPA. Sea Services provide all of the necessary reporting to the EPA.

Burial at Sea – Two Types of Service – Discounted Pricing for Temple Members Only

UNATTENDED SERVICE – Also known as a “Captain’s Service”.

	Mailing Remains To Sea Services	By Appointment Receipt Service (Hand Delivered by Family)
<u>VIRGINIA</u>		
Virginia Beach -	\$150.00	\$250.00
Norfolk	\$150.00	\$250.00
<u>MARYLAND</u>		
Ocean City	\$175.00	\$275.00
<u>NEW JERSEY</u>		
Atlantic City	\$150.00	\$275.00

ATTENDED FAMILY SERVICE

VIRGINIA

Virginia Beach	6 passengers \$575.00	15 passengers \$599.00	20 Passengers \$625.00
Norfolk	Up to 39 passengers \$650.00	40-60 passengers \$750.00	

MARYLAND

Ocean City	6 passengers \$ 550.00	30 passengers \$850.00
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NEW JERSEY

Atlantic City	Up to 30 passengers \$750.00
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Both services provide one (1) Memorial Certificate. Attended Family Services – Free Scattering Urn. Please note – the above vessel pricing is for different vessels, contracts are with one individual carriers and can not be switched or changed.

WHAT'S THE NEXT STEP?

Call Sea Services at 888-551-1277 or email us at seaservicescom@aol.com to arrange the service you want. Please identify yourself as being referred by **Association of United Hindu and Jain Temples (UHJT), Washington Metropolitan** to receive the discounted price.

Important Things to Know About Family Attended Services:

We make every attempt to accommodate the requested date and time, however all services are based on current availability at the time of your first inquiry. The only way to hold a date or time is with a 50% deposit. Weekdays generally have better availability than weekends. All of the above ports are very popular, plan for traffic, especially holiday weekends.

We provide Free of Charge – a scattering tube – this can be mailed to your funeral provider – please allow 5 business days. Express or Over Night Shipping Charges Apply.

Advise your guest to dress comfortably with an extra sweater or jacket. Shoes with flat rubber soles or sneakers are best.

Flowers, flower petals or anything that is biodegradable may be tossed into the ocean water after the scattering. You may bring music, food & beverages on board.

Contact: If you have any suggestions/comments, please feel free to contact, Dr. Shyam Bajpai, Leader of the project and, Director of the UHJT Board. Email: sbajpai@rocketmail.com

Disclaimer: The information compiled in this report is provided to you as a guide. UHJT shall not be responsible for the content, accuracy, changes in pricing, laws and updates in regulations and policies. Please consult your local regulatory agencies and service providers for the latest updates.

Approved by UHJT Board: May 2014.