

## MOURNING

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A period of mourning for thirteen days is observed in India with rituals for the well-being for the soul before soul assumes another body. This period of mourning, certain rituals such as shaving of the head by sons, and purificatory rites for the family, may be impractical outside India. On the third day, ashes and bones (called flowers) are collected from the crematorium or the funeral home in a brass pot. This ritual is called *asthisanchaya*. These are floated in running water as soon as possible (traditionally, the Ganga River). The family is obligated to perform these ceremonies for the well-being and spiritual progress of the soul on its onward journey.

The following extracts from “Manu Smriti” are the guidelines to be observed by the sons, daughters, and immediate family members during the first thirteen days after the death of an individual:

- Eat one vegetarian meal a day without onions and garlic; no alcohol also.
- Perform daily ‘*Sraddha Karmas*’ and prayers to the departed soul according to family traditions.
- Chant the holy scriptures such as the *Bhagavadgita*, *Garuda Purana*, *Bhajans*.
- Go to the temple after performing 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> day ceremonies along with appropriate *dana & dharma kriyas* (*Godan*, *Bhudan*, *Vastradan*, *Bhojan dan* etc.) according to family traditions
- Do not spread the family ‘*Asuchi*’ to others by refraining from going to temples and other religious places for twelve days.
- Sponsor but do not perform any major rituals except *Kanyadan* (wedding of daughter) for one year.

### Memorial Service at the Temple:

We offer temple prayer hall to members on a Saturday afternoon or any weekday evening. Please consult with Temple staff for open times to conduct *bhajans* etc.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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Michigan Funeral Directors Association

[www.mfda.org](http://www.mfda.org)

Cremation Society of Michigan

[cremationmichigan.com](http://cremationmichigan.com)

Cremation Services Guide for Indo-American Community (Greater Bay Area)

<http://www.gcabayarea.com/cremation/body.htm>

Death and Dying (Hinduism Today):

<http://www.hinduismtoday.com/archives/1997/1/1997-1-03.shtml>

Temple Bereavement Support (Regina, Canada) :

<http://www.reginahindutemple.ca/HinduTemplesupportgroup-3D.htm>

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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Temple Office: (248) 879-2552

Temple Priest information:

Pt. Janaki Rama Sastry: (248) 322-8718

Pt. Rama Chandra Bhat: (248) 526-1620

Pt. Gopala Krishna Bhat: (248) 853-0884 Funeral Homes by area:

Troy:

Desmond Funeral Home: (248) 362-2500

White Chapel Cemetery: (248) 362-7670

Southfield:

Kaufman Funeral Home(248)569-0020

Royal Oak:

Auburn Crematory (248)435-5566

Farmington Hills:

Dorfman Chapel (248) 406-6000



**THE BHARATIYA TEMPLE**  
OF METROPOLITAN DETROIT

## ANTYESHTI

EMBRACING THE END OF  
LIFE

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*“Sanskara is a seed of sacredness sown in the depths of man’s consciousness.”*

*Swami Satyananda*

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Bharatiya Temple of Metropolitan Detroit  
6850 N ADAMS RD.  
TROY, MI

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*Death is not extinguishing the light;*

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

- Rabindranath Tagore

Anyone faced with sad and terrifying event of losing one's near and dear one hardly has the time and nor the wits to think clearly. It becomes even harder outside India being alone and without any supportive relatives. Performing Antyeshti, sanskara of last rites, according to Hindu rituals becomes a daunting task.

This information guide is prepared to assist and briefly explain Hindu last rites that are practical outside India. This is the last of the Hindu sixteen sanskaras and meant to assist the journey of the soul to a more auspicious next life and treat death of the body with honor, respect and sacredness.

In India, once end of the life is ascertained, the funeral and mourning is spread out to thirteen days following tradition prescribed in Hindu scriptures. But such a long period is neither practical nor permissible outside India.

## VIGIL

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When determined by the hospital authorities that the end of life is near, a vigil by holy chants, hymns and prayers may be performed by family and friends (with approval from authorities). This should be accompanied by placing a leaf or two of Tulsi dipped in holy (Ganges) water on the lips of the patient. Services of a priest will be available when there are Hindu chaplains.

Suitable chants and prayers that can be offered during this vigil are:

- *Raghupati raghav raja ram...*
- *Nirvanasatkam*
- *Readings from Kathopnishad V.5-8; Brhadarnayakopnishad, IV. 3-5*
- *Bhagavadgita 2/11-30, Chap. 15.*

Upon death, an individual's soul enters another incarnation. The reincarnation depends on the individual's karma, which is determined by his actions in his present life as well as his past lives. Once an individual realizes the true nature of reality, the soul will become one with Brahman, the One, All-Encompassing soul. The funeral ceremony serves as a purification process to cleanse the soul for a possible union with Brahman.

## FUNERAL/CREMATION

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A funeral home must be contacted; a funeral director takes over the body. The hospital may have a preferred list of funeral homes. The family has a choice of working with a funeral home or taking the body to India.

Generally, the body cannot be brought home, even though a funeral home may bring the body by request to a religious place. After certification confirming death, hospital authorities release the body to the funeral home. One can also take the body directly to the crematorium.

Every funeral home has facilities to provide viewing and final services by a priest and eulogies by family and friends. These services and cremation are dependent on the schedule of the funeral home and not on astrological configuration.

Readings from scriptures and other mandated services by the priest are performed here at this time in the funeral home.

Desmond Funeral Home in Troy offers preferred cost and services to the Bharatiya Temple community. They have three level of cost depending on the nature of services, the least expensive being a simple and direct cremation. Costs of cremation and funeral services range from about \$1000 to \$4000.

White Chapel Cemetery in Troy is the most easily accessible crematorium with separate services and cost arrangements. A simple ceremony bidding farewell to the soul is performed in the crematorium.

Cremation Services of Michigan, Generations Services and other such organizations have prepaid or membership arrangements for direct and simple cremation

Hindu rituals and ceremonies largely focus on this stage, but these have to be compressed into the time available in the funeral home. It is at this stage that focus is on destined rebirth and reincarnation of the soul and its return to a newer life. Rituals are directed to enhance further the spirituality of the soul, negating its Karma, to achieve Moksha, to get release from samsara, or the perpetual cycle birth and death of life.

The list of items used in the ceremony may vary because of one's state of origin in India but the broad list is as follows:

- Two mud pots (one small, one big) with covers
- One kg. of rice
- Black Gingelly (about 20 cents worth)
- A few packets of camphor, agarbathi and an oil lamp if one is not available at home.
- 2.5 metres of white cloth
- Betel leaf and nut
- Flowers or garland and tulasi leaves
- A few pieces of dry wood and charcoal, match box.; one sandal wood splinter if available.
- Turmeric, kumkum, if deceased is female (non-widow); vibhuthi and sandalwood paste, if deceased is male
- One packet of milk, if deceased is a child
- \$10 worth of coins and Ganges water
- Small wood splinters for torches (pandham)
- Abishegam materials for bathing (depending on family custom)
- One tin of ghee for torch