

Funeral Ceremony

Since many of us have never faced making funeral and cremation arrangements for a death in the family, IAWW Senior Support Services Group thought it would be prudent to provide some guidance to our community members, if they have to face such a difficult situation.

Having been involved in several funerals we feel that many times we duplicate and lengthen the process and make it more difficult for the grieving family. For a Hindu funeral, we suggest the following process. A *Prarthana Sabha*, followed by a simple *Agni-Sanskara vidhi* at a crematory. The *Prarthana Sabha* can be arranged at the home of the family of deceased or at an appropriate hall rented for that purpose.

Arrangements for the Cremation are little more involved. Also, death in the family can happen in different circumstances complicating the process. There are special permit requirements for cremation and in most cases it takes about two days to get the permit. A death on a weekend or close to it can further delay cremation.

If the death occurred due to an accident, the deceased has to be taken to the Medical Examiner's office for the county where the death occurred, and a court may be involved in granting permission for cremation. The Funeral home director normally assists with the process from beginning to the end. However, you have to select the Funeral Home and give permission to the care facility to release the deceased.

Next of Kin (surviving spouse or adult child) has to go to the Funeral Home and sign required papers and must carry a photo ID to identify him or herself. Information required on the Death Certificate has to be correctly and completely provided before the funeral home can secure permit.

The Cremation Ceremony

Hindus from different parts of India follow different rituals for cremation process. Since the Indian community in Western Washington has a lot of diversity, it is

difficult to recommend one process. However, our suggestion is to use the simplest procedure that involves minimum agni-sanskara ceremony at the crematory. Part of the ceremony can be performed at home.

The basic *Agni-Sanskara vidhi* can be performed in about 20 minutes at the crematory. Most people attending the funeral opt to pay respect to the deceased and considering all other needs, the funeral service and cremation can take up to an hour.