



## **THE PERFORMANCE OF LAST RITES FOR A TAMIL FUNERAL**

Preparation of the Deceased:

- The Deceased must be bathed.
- Three kinds of oils must be placed on to the Deceased hands, feet and forehead.

When the Deceased is brought to the home:

- Light camphor at the entrance and pray. Camphor is turned three times before the casket is removed from the hearse.
- Once the casket is removed from the hearse, water is dropped and a camphor lit to escort the casket to the appropriate spot within the house.
- Once the casket has been placed, Ganesha prayers are conducted. This involves the invoking of Lord Ganesha by offerings fruits and milk, camphor and coconut. Once completed, the fruits, milk and coconut are placed at the head of the casket.
- Viewing may then commence on the inside of the home. Generally, only the children, spouses and siblings view and pay their respects on the inside of the house.
- After an appropriate amount of time, take the Deceased outside for public viewing.
- Place the casket in front of the laid-out prayer table. Two kuthuvelu lamps must be placed on either side of the casket. These lamps must be adorned with garlands.
- The casket must also be draped with garlands along the sides.
- The public can now view the Deceased.

Saaingam (Rituals and Procedures)

- Terminating matrimonial existence. Exchange garlands, placing sandhanam and the cutting of the garlands (like a nellangu).
- Place Thali (if taken out the same day) and place or if agreed by the bereaved to place in the casket in a container of milk.
- White sari to be placed by the brother on the shoulder of the sister.
- She now has a bath and comes back dressed in white.

Kolli Prayer

- Starting from the side of the deceased feet commence with the prayer.
- Mothers brother assists in placing the god lamp, on a ball of turmeric, on a saucer, over a lota of water.
- The Kolli person and other members of the family gather around.
- A clay pot is prepared with saambraani, camphor and little sticks with white cloth (dipped in ghee) wrapped at the end of each stick.
- Remove the sticks, light the camphor in the clay pot, slightly dip the sticks into the fire and offer one to each person performing the rites.
- Offer prayer and the person doing last rites, using a flower, blows off the burning god lamp.
- The lamp is now placed on the left shoulder of the person doing last rites by the mother's brother with the blown lamp facing backwards.
- Lighting the camphor around the casket the mourners go around three times.
- One coconut with camphor burning on it must be placed. This coconut must be placed in the casket before leaving.
- In the last round, the turmeric ball is touched on the right foot first or both feet starting with the right foot and then placed on the wall at the designated place in the house.

This ends the ritual at home.

Leaving for the crematorium.



- A Muharram containing 16 betel leaves, betel nuts, copper coins and puffed rice mixed with sesame seeds to lead the hearse. The Muharram must be broken at the end of the offering and thrown aside.

#### Harichandra Kovil

- Cleansing payer for the deceased is performed.
- Abishegam requisites are as follows-
  - Three small containers oil (250 ml).
  - One container of turmeric water.
  - One container with a mixture of milk, sour milk, honey, water, rosewater, ground sika and patcha payir.
  - One container of clean water.
- When Abishegam is done, place the rice offering from the claypot, fruits and milk and offer prayer on betel leaf, place a silver coin and offer Dhan into the casket.
- The coconut from inside the casket must be broken. (Can be broken at the burial site or by the furnace).

#### Cremation:

- Havan is performed on the body of the Deceased.
- Fires to be started in the casket, preferably with the Kolli sticks used at the house. This is done by the Kolli persons and family members.

#### Disposal of the Ashes

- This can be done at a ghat or the river.

#### On returning home:

- Water must be sprinkled on the head and the ash dot placed on the forehead and enter.
- Offer prayer at the lamp.

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