



Wellingborough District Hindu Association

Asthi Visarjan Hindu Ceremony of Immersing the Ashes



Introduction

Hindu last rites, also known as Antyesti or Antim Sanskar, are a series of rituals performed for a deceased person. It's important to note that these practices may vary, and some families may choose alternative methods based on personal beliefs and circumstances.

Our Hindu Mandir is able to provide support to families who need scriptural guidance during this period on all aspects of undertaking last rites. For the purpose of this guidance we are focusing on Asthi Visarjan, and hope families may find the information helpful in planning their ceremony.

Asthi Visarjan

Historically, Hindu families living overseas have undertaken this ceremony by taking the ashes back to India and performing the last rites at the sacred river, the Ganges. However, it is becoming a common practice for families to choose immersing the ashes of their loved ones nearer to home. There are now a number of sites across UK providing this service for Hindu families.

In Hindu Religion Asthi Visarjan is an important religious process. After the last rites are performed the ashes of the dead person are immersed in a flowing river. This final ceremony of immersion is called "Asthi Visarjan". The term itself is derived from Sanskrit, where "asthi" means bone or ashes, and "visarjan" means immersion or scattering.

During asthi visarjan, the ashes of a cremated individual are respectfully released into a body of water, often a river or the sea. This ritual is symbolic and holds cultural and religious significance in various traditions, including Hinduism. It represents the idea of returning the physical remains of the deceased to nature, completing the cycle of life and death.

The ceremony is often accompanied by prayers, rituals, and moments of reflection. Family and friends gather to bid farewell to their loved one and to honour their memory. The specific practices and customs associated with asthi visarjan can vary based on cultural and religious traditions. According to the holy scriptures, immersing the ashes in water releases the person's soul from bondage. This allows their spirit to progress towards its final liberation. It is, therefore, the desire of every family to perform this final sacred rite of releasing ashes into rivers for their loved ones.

Helpful Guidance

We are aware ashes can be scattered at sea or a river, you don't need a permit, but you should follow the Environment Agency's guidance. We fully understand the need to protect controlled waters from the impact of funeral practices and according to EA, there is no evidence to suggest that either the disposal of human ashes in rivers and streams have a negative impact on the environment. However, careful considerations need to be given to other aspects of this practice and the harm it could do to the environment and other river users. The guidance states:

- ❖ The place you choose to scatter the ashes shouldn't be near any buildings, marinas or people bathing or fishing
- ❖ The place you choose should also be more than 1km upstream of anywhere water is pumped or collected (also known as water abstraction)
- ❖ The ashes should be spread as close to the water's surface as possible.
- ❖ You shouldn't place anything else in the river.

Access to suitable river sites within Northamptonshire

We have been working closely with River Nene Trust to identify suitable sites for families to perform this final sacred act for their loved one by accessing a suitable site along river Nene. This will provide local support and access, thereby removing the need for families to liaise and plan the event with individuals/organisations at a distance. We have identified two suitable sites for families to consider. Families can contact the sites directly and work with them in making the necessary arrangements. We hope this information is helpful and if you require additional information please contact our Mandir team on 01933 222250.

Chester House

Contact Name	Lisa Hurst - General Manager
Address	Chester House Estate, Higham Road, Little Irchester, Wellingborough, NN29 7EZ Parking - Chester House Estate, Claudius Way, Little Irchester, Wellingborough, NN8 2DH
Telephone	01933 59 44 00
Website/Email	info@chesterhouseestate.org https://chesterhouseestate.org
Site Availability	All year (with the exception of flood incidents, typically Jan/Feb)

Map



<https://chesterhouseestate.org/plan-your-visit/>

Stanwick Lakes

Contact Name	Vickie Laughton
Address	Stanwick lakes, Stanwick, Northants, NN9 6GY
Telephone	01933 625522
Website/Email	Home Stanwick Lakes Nature, Heritage, Adventure info@rftrust.org.uk
Site Availability	From 7am to 7pm April to November From 7am to 5.30pm November to April. Please check the website to update dates.

Map



We have many quiet areas that are accessible to the river Nene. We have noted two areas on the map 1 and 2 that are quiet and have easy access to the river. Advice is always available at our reception desk or with onsite Rangers. Parking is chargeable on site. Please check with the website for parking charges.

WDHA: 5th February 2024