

# Death: A Sacred Ritual

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The transition of death from a deeply personal and spiritual event to an institutionalized and clinical one reflects profound changes in societal priorities, advancements in medical science, and our evolving relationship with mortality.

## DEATH IN EARLIER TIMES: A SACRED RITUAL

Historically, death occurred at home, surrounded by family, community, and familiar surroundings. It was marked by rituals, prayers, and practices rooted in the culture and faith of the individual. The presence of loved ones and the environment of prayer provided comfort to the dying person and those left behind. Death was seen not as an end, but as a passage to another realm—a sacred moment of transition. Earlier societies had a closer relationship with death, seeing it as a natural part of life. The rituals helped the bereaved cope and ensured the communion of the departing soul with the Almighty<sup>1-3</sup>.

## MODERN ERA: DEATH IN HOSPITALS

With the advancement of medical technology, the focus has shifted to prolonging life at all costs. Death is no longer seen as inevitable but as something to be delayed, even if it means invasive procedures. Hospitals, with their sterile environments, often isolate the dying from their loved ones. The cacophony of machines and glaring lights depersonalize the experience. Death, therefore, has become medicalized. The monetization of health care has introduced bureaucracy into the process of dying. Legal formalities, bills, and the handing over of mortal remains have made death seem like a transaction rather than a sacred event.

## THE SOUL'S PERSPECTIVE

Spiritual traditions often emphasize that the soul's liberation is its ultimate goal. Perhaps the worldly setting—home or hospital—is less important than the inner state of acceptance and peace. If the departing soul could reveal its feelings, it might express discontent at the lack of familiar faces or gratitude for efforts to sustain life. The soul's journey, however, transcends

the physical and may be indifferent to the setting. Detachment, however, may not come so easily to the family members of the departing soul.

## A BALANCED VIEWPOINT

Modern health care does save lives, and many find solace in knowing everything possible was done to help their loved ones. For some, the hospital's clinical setting provides a sense of security and hope. However, the very advancements meant to improve life have, in some cases, robbed death of its sanctity. The soul's departure, an event of profound significance, is often reduced to clinical parameters and legal formalities. Efforts should be made to bring the personal and spiritual back into modern health care. Palliative care and hospice services are examples where the focus shifts from curing to comforting. Families and caregivers can strive to incorporate rituals and prayers even in a hospital setting, creating a sacred space for the departing soul. Strengthening the role of community and family in the process of death can restore some of the intimacy and sanctity of earlier times.

## CONCLUSION

The modern era demands a balance between the benefits of medical advancements and the timeless need for spiritual and emotional connection at the time of death. While hospitals may have become the new "homes" for death, the essence of a meaningful departure lies in the love, prayers, and presence of those who matter—regardless of the setting. Ultimately, the way we handle death reflects the way we value life. By reclaiming the sacredness of this inevitable event, we honor not just the departing soul but also the humanity in all of us. The human touch must be brought back into health care.

## REFERENCES

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