`GREEN LIVING TO GREEN GOOD BYE'

THIYAGARAJ .V.*

KEYWORDS: Burning, emissions, tree, biodegradable, deforestation and suggestions.

ABSTRACT

Cremation causes nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, heavy metals and particulates to be released into the atmosphere when a body is cremated.Talking about what sort of funeral arrangements you or those close to you would want can be hard.Cremation is very energy-intensive and can lead to pollutants entering the atmosphere, with over 70 per cent of people who die in Britain being cremated even using clothing made from natural materials, removing shoes, plastic and metal will help reduce emissions.. Worldwide, more than 50,000,000 people pass away each year.Modern crematoriums often have 'clean smokestacks' that ameliorate the associated emissions, at least to some degree, and the cremation industry has claimed that reports of pollution have been greatly exaggerated.

* PG & Research Dept. Of Commerce, Chikkanna Government College, Tiruppur ,India.

"… Nothing can be certain but death and taxes"

- Benjamin Franklin

INTRODUCTION

Death and dying are not subjects that many of us like to discuss or think about. The Dying Matters Coalition works to break this taboo, and support the knowledge and attitudes towards death, dying and bereavement. Worldwide, more than 50,000,000 people pass away each year. Traditional burial and cremation practices can have significant negative environmental impact, but green funerals and eco-burials are one way to lessen the impact. While death can be a difficult subject, keeping ethical beliefs and environmental convictions in mind while tending to end-of-life arrangements can create a meaningful send-off--not to mention a lower-impact one. Talking about what sort of funeral arrangements you or those close to you would want can be hard. ***Embalming*** became popular in the United States during the Civil War and is still a significant source of groundwater pollution today. Arsenic gave way to the less toxic formaldehyde as the favored embalming solution around the turn of the last century. However, formaldehyde poisoning can still be fatal and it is classified as a human carcinogen by the US Environmental Protection Agency. Some estimates say that ***one million gallons of formaldehyde*** are buried in embalmed bodies each year in the United States. Almost all of this will eventually make its way into our water supplies. Efforts are underway to gradually replace formaldehyde with glutaraldehyde, which is considered less toxic.

Yet for those who have lived a life caring about their impact on the environment, planning an environmentally friendly funeral is a natural ending. Cremation is very energy-intensive and can lead to pollutants entering the atmosphere, with over 70 per cent of people who die in Britain being cremated even using clothing made from natural materials, removing shoes, plastic and metal will help reduce emissions.

DATA OF BURIALS AND CREMATION ABROAD

- **56.5 million:** The approximate number of people that die each year around the globe.
- **50 million:** Trees that are cut down in India each year for funeral pyres. This releases 8 million tons of carbon dioxide.
- **270:** The number of green and woodland burial sites in the U.K.
- **Up to 16 percent:** Mercury emissions in the U.K. that come from crematoria because of the fillings in teeth. This percentage is expected to increase to 25 percent by 2020.
- **1.6 million:** Tons of reinforced concrete buried in the U.S. each year.

CONSTRUCTION OF VAULTS

Cremation causes nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, heavy metals and particulates to be released into the atmosphere when a body is cremated. If a body has mercury-amalgam fillings, the mercury will almost certainly become air pollution unless the fillings are removed first. Burning a body inside a coffin also creates significantly more pollution than burning the body by itself. Modern crematoriums often have 'clean smokestacks' that ameliorate the associated emissions, at least to some degree, and the cremation industry has claimed that reports of pollution have been greatly exaggerated. NGO: Eight million tons of greenhouse gases emitted from Hindu funeral pyres a year.

FIG.1 CREMATION CEREMONIES IN VARANASI, INDIA

Traditional Hindu funeral pyre

Burning is an ancient ritual that goes back thousands of years in which devotees cremate bodies by burning firewood in an open ground. There is a lot of consumption of wood, and it's because of this that these ceremonies, designed to release the soul from mortal flesh, pose a threat to the living, according to some environmentalists.

- Fifty to 60 million trees are burned during cremations every year in India, according to Mokshda, a Delhi-based NGO working to reduce the environmental impact of funeral pyres.
- "When you are burning those trees, you are emitting about eight million tonnes of carbon dioxide or greenhouse gas emissions," said Mokshda director AnshulGarg.
- Air pollution and deforestation are not the only environmental threats caused by cremation: They also generate large quantities of ash, which are later thrown into rivers, adding to the toxicity of their waters, according to Mokshda.
- More than seven million Hindus die each year in India and the sight of corpses surrendering to the flames of traditional funeral pyres is part of the country's daily cycle of life.
- New Delhi has about 400 traditional cremation grounds, while Mumbai has around 300, according to Mokshda.
- In order to tackle the environmental problems stemming from these sites, the Indian government and environmental groups have, over the years, promoted the use of electric systems as an alternate way of cremation.

But these systems, which burn no wood and generate no smoke, have by-and-large failed, mainly due to financial and religious reasons.

GREEN CREMATION SYSTEM IN INDIA

In India people illegally cutting down trees to sell for funeral pyres.Mokshda, however, claims it has created an alternative system that addresses these problems: It says it’s affordable, energy-efficient "Green Cremation System" generates minimum air and water pollution, while taking

into consideration the religious needs of Hindus. The wood-based system consists of a man-sized grate beneath a roof and a chimney, which reduces heat loss. The wood is placed on the metal base, which enables better air circulation around the flames. says the benefits are manifold: It takes up to two hours and 150-200 kilograms of wood to burn a body completely, while a traditional pyre takes six hours and burns 500-600 kilograms of wood. As a result, he says, the cost is reduced significantly and emissions are cut by up to 60%."There are many such institutions in India that are trying to be environmental-friendly and also of course if you can do it in a more economical way it will be cheaper for the families, so it benefits everybody."

EFFICIENT AND GREEN CREMATION

Main stipulation for the use of concrete vaults, coffins, and other such requirements that use significant resources and space, becoming one with nature isn't as straightforward and simple (or quick) as it may seem. Cremation, therefore, may make more sense from a green perspective, after all.Another option that has been explored in Sweden involves ***freezing the body with liquid nitroge*n**, which breaks the remains down more rapidly. This method has been very controversial.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key points to think about include:

- **Funeral Director(Head of the Family):** funeral director may suggest about more sustainable options, or seek out a funeral home that offer green practices.
- **Green Burial:** Likewise, green burial specialists can help to explore greening the final resting options.
- **Read books on Green Funerals:** Read one of the books that can guide through the process.
- Getting suggestions from an environmental enthusiast.
- Cremation doesn't seem like a particularly green idea. Burning anything creates pollution, especially if there are toxic substances present (via

embalming, for example), and returning nutrients to the ecosystem via decomposing matter is a core tenet of environmental thinking. These modern crematoriums have made significant reductions in emissions.

- Unfortunately, many of the trappings of modern burial--such as embalming, hardwood coffins, and concrete vaults--are designed to delay the natural process of decomposition. Though these ideas have become modern standards, the truth is that anything we can do to return to the earth more easily will lessen our impact on the environment.

KEY ECOLOGICAL POINTS

These include:

- **Preservation:** Embalming slows the decomposition process. For those whose tradition does not designate embalming as part of the burial practice, consider skipping this step, and opt for a closed casket and rapid burial.
- **Coffins:** Cardboard, bamboo, or jute coffins, shrouds, or biodegradable urns are all dignified ways to unite with nature more rapidly.
- **Green Burial Grounds:** The environmentalist and other governmentorganizations should take strides to develop and identify sustainable burial and cremation practices, locations and companies.
- **Leave a Living Marker** It can be important for mourners to have somewhere to go to remember their loved ones long after the funeral is over. Natural or living memorials can be wonderful alternatives to quarried headstones or marble mausoleums. Consider planting a tree or a bush that will carry on in honor of the deceased. Online memorials are also becoming increasingly popular.
- **Give Gifts of Sympathy** Cut flowers have a short shelf-life; besides, flower-farming can be a resource-intensive endeavor. It's already common practice to ask for donations to charity in lieu of flowers; after all, what better way to remember the dead than to create a better world for the living?

- **Deliver a Just Tribute** So much of what we hold dear about a person includes their ideals and convictions.
- **Programs:** Use recycled paper for programs or hymn sheets.
- **Flowers:** Source any flowers from organic, local growers.
- **Procession:** Make arrangements for carpooling from location to location during the funeral.
- **Refreshments:** If the deceased was an environmentalist, the chances are they enjoyed local, organic food.
- **The Ultimate Recycling** We've already suggested that using biodegradable coffins or urns, and avoiding concrete vaults, can help reduce our impact by returning our remains to the earth.
- **Return to the Woods** The woodland burial movement, which started in the UK, is widely credited with the birth of interest in natural funerals in general. Not only do woodland burials involve low impact ceremonies, they also aid in the return of a piece of land to a natural forest. Trees and native wildflowers are often planted above a grave, and because the location becomes dear to the families of the deceased, chances are good that the site will remain protected for years to come.

REFERENCES

Sami Grover (2014) ,Leave a lighter footprint: green funeral and burial tips.HTGG,July,2014

Books

Caring for the Dead: Your Final Act of Love.

Exit Strategy: Thinking outside the Box.

Grave Matters: A Journey through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial.

The Natural Death Handbook.