

Dahana Adhikaari (Claimant to the last rites)

There seems to be a lot of confusion with regards to who should be a claimant (the person who performs the funeral rites) for a deceased person (e.g. one's parents) in South Africa. We hope that this article will satisfy those who have any doubts. This article is meant to stop this speculation. We only follow what our revered shastras say and not mindless traditions.

There is a specific order of precedence of the person who should perform the last rites including burning of the body according to the Sat Kriya Sara Dipika.

The order for a deceased male is as follows:-

The son, from the eldest to the youngest, their sons, sons of their sons,
The wife, either childless or with children
Unmarried daughter, betrothed daughter, married daughter,
Daughter's son,
Youngest to the eldest brother
Youngest to eldest half-brother,
Youngest brother's son, oldest brother's son,
Youngest half-brothers son to oldest half-brothers son,
Daughter-in-law
Granddaughter, married granddaughter (through the son)
Wife of great grandson,
Great granddaughter
Other relatives including uncles, cousins,
Disciple, priest, friend, friend of the father,
Resident of the town
King (or in these days the President)

The order for a deceased female is as follows:-

Eldest son, to the youngest son,
Son's son
Great grandson through male lineage
Unmarried daughter, betrothed daughter, married daughter
Daughter's son,
Husband
Daughter-in-law
Disciple or student of husband.

Garuda Purana Preta Khanda 8.3-4, 10

Lord Vishnu replied to Shree Garudaji: "If both families are male-less, the women should perform the obsequies. Or the King may perform all the rites."

The Garuda Purana (11.19) states, "A father should neither light the pyre, nor himself perform the Antyesthi Samskara (Funeral rites) or any ceremony related to the death of his son."

References:- Sat Kriya Sara Dipika by Gopala Bhatta Goswami
Garuda Purana

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