

## **FORMAL RESPONSE FROM THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT TO SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS**

Clare Estate Umgeni Hindu Crematorium Society

Dear Community Members,

We have seen unprecedented social media posts from unnamed individuals who expressing concerns. To those who have the interest of preserving our sacred traditions, your concerns are acknowledged. However, after careful consideration of the numerous posts that are misleading and defamatory, the Board of Management must respectfully disagree and respond with several of the recommendations put forward, as they are impractical, not feasible within our operational realities, and in some instances not in accordance with scriptural norms or the principles under which a private crematorium must function for public benefit. The Society is run to provide crematorium services as its primary function based on its licence conditions. The Crematorium serves thousands of families every year and must balance dignity, safety, order, sanitation, and religious freedom without compromising the functioning of the institution.

Below are our considered responses

### **1. FOOD SERVICE AND ANNADAAN INSIDE THE CREMATORIUM**

The crematorium is not a family home, temple, or private ritual hall. It is a high-traffic public facility serving multiple families per day. Allowing outside-cooked meals, buffet setups, or large-scale food distribution inside or around the premises is not permitted in terms of Health Regulations and Licence Conditions and introduces:

- serious hygiene challenges, littering, crowding, delays for other families, pest and stray-animal issues, health and safety risks

#### **Scriptural Clarification**

While “*annadaan*” is a noble act, Hindu scriptures do not mandate that food distribution must occur inside or at the site of cremation. In fact, many Gr̥hya Sutras recommend performing feeding as a home-based ritual, usually after the cremation, on the 10th, 12th, or 13th day. Therefore, feeding can occur:

- at home, at temples, at community halls, at any appropriate location and it does not need to occur at a public crematorium.
- Homemade snacks, rolls, sandwiches are allowed together with refreshments. A small tuckshop which is privately operated is also available and has vegetarian savouries.

## **Conclusion**

For health, dignity, and operational reasons, the Board cannot permit outside food catering on the premises.

## **2. LIVESTREAMING BY OUTSIDE PROVIDERS**

### **Our Position**

Livestreaming inside a public crematorium requires regulation and law:

- controlled equipment, data security, respect for other families, prevention of unauthorised filming, compliance with privacy law and Popi Act.

Unauthorised external operators who are unfamiliar with the rules have previously:

- filmed other families without consent, obstructed staff and mourners, interfered with rituals, caused disputes, created unsafe wiring setups

### **Scriptural Clarification**

Livestreaming is not a scriptural requirement for **antyeesti** rites. It is purely a modern convenience and cannot supersede safety and privacy. We do appreciate that it is necessary under circumstances and arrangements can be made with the Undertaker or a Registered Service Provider. The Society is committed to this but is simply regulating the process through registration.

## **Conclusion**

Only authorised service providers trained in our protocols will be allowed. This protects the sanctity of the space and decorum and the rights of all users.

## **3. DECOR AND RITUAL ARRANGEMENTS**

We respect all Hindu traditions. However, this is a multi-faith, high-use public crematorium, not a private mandir. Excessive decor and elaborate setups:

- delay turnover between funerals, create fire hazards, impede staff movement, obstruct emergency access, cause disputes when families exceed their time slots

### **Scriptural Clarification**

The essential Hindu requirements for antyeesti are simple:

- the body, fire, ghee or camphor, priestly guidance, offerings such as sesame seeds, basic floral tributes

The **śāstras** do not prescribe elaborate décor, rangoli, arches, or symbolic displays inside a public cremation facility.

#### **Conclusion**

The Board must enforce simple, safe, standardised arrangements that uphold dignity and protect all users.

### **4. CROWD MANAGEMENT AND “LOITERING”**

#### **Our Clarification**

The term “loitering” was not meant to insult mourners but to prevent:

- groups blocking entrances, crowds gathering in walkways, disorderly behaviour, disruption to other families, vehicle movement

The crematorium is a shared sacred space, and families must not be inconvenienced by congestion or noise.

#### **Scriptural Perspective**

Hindu rites emphasise:

- solemnity, restraint, orderliness (yama and niyama), respect for other yajnas occurring simultaneously

We must maintain this discipline on the premises.

### **5. LITTERING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT**

#### **Our Position**

While the Board has increased bins, litter continues due to:

- food packaging, disposable plates, flowers, plastic bags, improper disposal of ritual materials

The crematorium cannot accommodate waste volumes associated with catering and extended gatherings.

#### **Scriptural Clarification**

Holy spaces must be kept clean and uncluttered (shaucha).

The Manusmriti and Yajnavalkya Smriti emphasise maintaining sacred sites free from impurity.

Families share this responsibility.

## **6. OPERATIONAL LIMITATIONS**

The crematorium is run by a small team of elected members as an NPO, a handful of paid staff, with no government subsidy and operated on strict municipal by-laws, health and fire regulations and Atmospheric Emission Licences which have various stringent conditions and penalties.

Some of the proposed recommendations disregard:

- staffing capacity, safety laws, maintenance and operational costs, public-facility regulations, the need for quick transitions between services and we cannot jeopardise safety, legality, or operational flow.

## **7. FINAL POSITION OF THE BOARD**

With full respect to our community and our ancestors who built this institution, the Board has to be compliant with new stringent legislation and must maintain dignity, safety, order, scriptural alignment and operational feasibility

For these reasons:

**We cannot accept the proposed recommendations**

as they are not in keeping with the practical, legal, logistical, or scriptural requirements of a public crematorium.

We remain committed to preserving:

- the sanctity of the cremation rites
- fairness to all families
- efficient, reliable and cost-effective service
- respect for Hindu dharma and all faiths

We welcome constructive dialogue but not in the manner of bringing the Society into disrepute by spreading false information. The Society has prioritised, safety, sustainability, legal compliance and scriptural correctness. It is an independent facility and has no affiliation to any Body.

Respectfully,

Board of Management

Clare Estate Umgeni Hindu Crematorium Society

