

“As a person puts on new garments giving up the old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies giving up the old and useless ones.”

Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2:22

Scientific and medical treatises (Charaka and Sushruta Samhita) form an important part of the Vedas. Sage Charaka deals with internal medicine while Sage Sushruta includes features of organ and limb transplants:

“Organ donation is in keeping with Hindu beliefs as it can help to save the life of others.”

The Late Mr Om Parkash Sharma MBE, President, National Council of Hindu Temples

“I always carry my donor card with me. It says that my whole body can be used for organ donation and medical purposes after my death. I would like to encourage as many people as possible to do the same.”

The Late Dr Bal Mukund Bhala, Co-ordinator Hindu International Medical Mission, Former President Hindu Council UK

“I believe in organ donation. If my body can help someone else live a better quality of life after my soul has vacated it then it is good Seva.”

Mr Arjan Vekaria JP, President Hindu Forum of Britain

Information on Hinduism is available from: www.bbc.co.uk/religion



How do I become a donor?

If you decide you would like to become a donor on your death, you need to join the NHS Organ Donor Register to ensure your wishes are recorded. Discuss your decision with those closest to you so that they are aware of your wishes. Adding your name to the register is simple and quick:

You can register online at organdonation.nhs.uk

Or call **0300 123 23 23**

Organ donation and religious beliefs

To find out more about organ and tissue donation, visit organdonation.nhs.uk

A guide to organ donation and Hindu beliefs

Hinduism and organ donation

Organ donation

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to help someone else who needs a transplant. Hundreds of people's lives are saved or improved each year by organ transplants.

Organs that can be donated by people who have died include the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, pancreas and small bowel. Tissue such as skin, bone, heart valves and corneas can also be used to help others.

Donation is an individual choice and views differ even within the same religious groups.

Why is it important to think about donating organs?

With medical advances it is now possible to use transplanted organs and tissues to enhance the life chances of those suffering from a range of terminal conditions such as renal, liver and heart failure. More people than before now suffer from these conditions and some ethnic groups seem to be more affected than others.

The person in need of an organ today may be a stranger, but tomorrow that person could be someone you know and love dearly. So please take the time to think about becoming an organ donor and discuss your thoughts with loved ones.

Consent

The consent or permission of those closest to the potential donor is always sought before organs can be donated. This is why it is so important to discuss your wishes with your loved ones should you decide to become a donor. Many families who agree to organ donation have said that it helps to know some good has come from their loss.

When can organ donation take place?

Doctors and their colleagues are committed to doing everything possible to save life. Organs are only removed for transplantation once all attempts to save life have failed and after death has been certified by doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

Most donated organs in the UK come from people who die from a severe brain injury, and who are on a ventilator in an Intensive Care Unit. The brain injury will have damaged the vital centres in the brain stem which are essential to maintain life. Doctors call this 'brain stem death'. This is not the same as being in a coma or 'persistent vegetative state'. Tests are carried out to strict guidelines to show conclusively when this has happened. When brain stem death is pronounced the patient may still be on a ventilator, and have a heart beat which continues to circulate blood around the body. This prevents the organs from losing the oxygen-rich blood supply which is necessary for a healthier transplanted outcome.

Organs can also be donated from people whose death has been certified because their heart has stopped. Certification in these 'non-heart beating' donors is also by doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

Care and respect

The removal of organs and tissues is carried out with the greatest care and

respect. The family can see the body afterwards and staff can contact a chaplain or local religious leader if the family wishes.

Hinduism and organ donation

There are many references that support the concept of organ donation in Hindu scriptures. Daan is the original word in Sanskrit for donation meaning selfless giving. In the list of the ten Niyamas (virtuous acts) Daan comes third.

"Of all the things that it is possible to donate, to donate your own body is infinitely more worthwhile."

The Manusmriti

"In the joy of others lies our own."

His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj,
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha

Life after death is a strong belief of Hindus and is an ongoing process of rebirth. The law of Karma decides which way the soul will go in the next life. The Bhagavad Gita describes the mortal body and the immortal soul in a simple way like the relationship of clothes to a body:

"Vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya navani grhnati naro 'parani tatha sarirani vihaya jirnany anyani samyati navandi dehi"

Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2:22

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