

# The Fourth Ashrama: *Sannyasa*

Sonu looked at the funeral pyre before him. He had built it beside the river with his own two hands. Today, however, there was no body to be put to the flames. This day, Sonu would take the vows of a Sanyasi and become a Hindu monk, a renunciate or ascetic. This part of the ceremony included building and symbolically lighting his own funeral pyre to mark his renunciation.

The word Sanyasi literally describes someone who has “put down everything, all of it”. This includes material possessions, relational ties, titles and status. Some Sanyasi’s are homeless, some live in a monastery and some even travel with other Sanyasis on pilgrimage.

As he stood and watched the fire burn, Sonu reflected upon his

new name, “Muktananda” which was given by his Guru. The name, Muktananda, translates as “the joy of being set free” or “bliss of spiritual liberation”. He would no longer be known by his old name, for Sonu stepped aside today, and Muktananda had been born.

Most Hindus who enter the fourth and final ashrama do not take the extreme step of becoming a Sanyasi. However, the model of retreat, renunciation of worldly pleasures and pursuit of spiritual activities is a hugely powerful force, an ideal, which influences many of the choices that elderly Hindus make regarding how they will spend their remaining years.

## *How can we pray*

**Pray for elderly Hindus, who often spend a great deal of time and money on spiritual pursuits, that they will discover Jesus, the giver of eternal life and source of true peace.**

JOHN 10:28-30

**Pray for those who have taken on their vows, and died to their old life, that they will experience new life in Christ.**

MATTHEW 6:19-21

**Pray for the bridge of understanding that a high value on names and naming ceremonies creates between Hindus and biblical stories where names matter.**

1 JOHN 2:15-17