

Sraddha Kriya

To ensure that the soul does not remain in a subtle body hovering on this earth planet but will attain a comfortable body for enjoyment on pitr loka, offerings are made to the departed person and the pitrs. During the asauca period daily offerings of sesame and water, and pinda (rice mixed with sesame, ghee and honey) are given to the departed person. On the eleventh day (for a close relative of a brahmana) the house is purified, eleven brahmanas are fed and offerings are made to the deceased. Beginning on that day, for the first year, monthly sraddha ceremonies should be held. As well, in the sixth and twelfth month additional sraddhas should be conducted. Then every year, on the tithi of the decease, annual sraddhas should be conducted.

According to Vaisnava scripture, the sraddha rites may be performed, but the priest performing the rites should be Vaisnavas and the offerings to the pitrs should be Visnu prasada.

The inhabitants of Pitrloka are generally men of the karma kandiya or fruitive activities category, who have been transferred there because of their pious activities. They can stay there as long as their descendants offer them Visnu prasada.

SB 5.2.2 purport

The sraddha ceremony of oblations to the forefathers should not be performed on ekadasi tithi. When the tithi of the death anniversary falls on the ekadasi day, the sraddha ceremony should be held not on ekadasi but on the next day.

THE RITUAL OF SHRAADDH

**From the Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva,
Section LXXXIV + Sec.XCII**

Bhishma said: When my father Santanu of great energy departed from this world, I proceeded to Gangadwara for performing his Shraaddh. My mother, Jahnvi, coming there, rendered great help. Having with a concentrated mind performed all

preliminary rites as laid down in the scriptures, I set myself to duly offer the obsequial cake.

Reflecting then, by the light of the scriptures, the conviction soon came upon me that the ordinance does occur in the Vedas that the cake should not be presented into the hand of him whose Shraaddh is performed. The Pitris do not come in their visible forms for taking the cake.

On the other hand, the ordinance provides that it should be presented on the blades of Kusa grass spread on the earth for the purpose. What I did was perfectly consistent with the scriptural ordinance.

In making offerings at Shraaddhs a share is first offered to the deity of fire (Agni). If a portion of the offerings be first made to the deity of fire at a Shraaddh, Rakshasas of regenerate origin cannot then do any injury to such a Shraaddh. Beholding the deity of fire at a Shraaddh Rakshasas fly away from it.

The ritual of Shraaddh is that the cake should first be offered to the deceased father. Next, one should be offered to the grandfather. Next should one be offered to the great-grandfather. Even this is the ordinance in respect of the Shraaddh. Over every cake that is offered, the offerer should with concentrated attention utter the Savitri Mantra. This other Mantra also should be uttered, viz., unto Soma who is fond of the Pitris.

A woman that has become impure in consequence of the advent of her season, or one whose ears have been cut off, should not be allowed to remain where a Shraaddh is being performed. Nor should a woman (for cooking the rice to be offered in the Shraaddh) be brought from a Gotra other than that of the person who is performing the Shraaddh.

While crossing a river, one should offer oblations of water unto one's Pitris, naming them all. One should next offer such oblations of water to one's deceased friends or relatives. From them that cross a river on boats, the Pitris expect oblations of water. Those that know this always offer oblations of water with concentrated attention unto the Pitris. Every fortnight, on the day of the new moon, one should make offerings unto one's deceased ancestors. growth, longevity, energy, and prosperity become all attainable through devotion to the Pitris.

Even this is the high ritual in respect of the Shraaddh. Through Shraaddhs performed on earth the deceased members of one's race become freed from a position of misery. I have thus, O prince of Kuru's race, expounded to thee agreeably with the scriptures, the ordinances in respect of Shraaddhs.

From Other sources

Shraddh & Tarpan / Pitr-Paksha

Funeral rites and Shraddh must be distinguished from each other. Funeral rites (antyeshti) are amangal (inauspicious) while Shraddh are mangal (auspicious).

To understand this, it should be borne in mind that when a person dies, his or her gross body (sthula sharira) is burnt. This being in fact the 'Antya ishti' (antyeshti) the last sacrifice offered in fire, but the soul cannot quit the gross body without a vehicle of some kind. This vehicle is the Linga-sharira or subtle body, sometimes described as angushtha-matra (of the size of a thumb), invested in which the deceased person remains hovering near the burning ground or crematorium.

He or she is then in the condition of a simple individual soul invested with a subtle body, and is called a PRETA, i.e., a departed spirit or ghost. Thus, an embodied soul (jiva) who has departed from the physical body at death is called a Preta. He or she has no real body capable of enjoying or suffering anything, and is consequently in a restless, uncomfortable plight.

Moreover, while in this condition he or she is held to be an impure being, and all the relations who participate in his or her funeral rites are held to be impure until the first Shraddh is performed. Furthermore, if a person dies away from kindred (relations), who alone can perform the funeral ceremonies, and who are perhaps unaware of his or her death, and unable therefore to perform them, he or she becomes a 'pishach', a foul wandering ghost, disposed to take revenge for its misery upon all living creatures by a variety of malignant acts.

The object then, of the antyeshti or funeral rites, which are carried out for twelve days after death, is not only to soothe or give shanti (peace) by libations of consecrated water to the troubled spirit, but to furnish the preta with an intermediate body, between the 'linga' or subtle and the 'sthula' or gross body- with a body, that is

to say, which is capable of enjoying or suffering, and which is composed of gross particles, though not of the same kind as the earthly gross body. In this manner only can the preta obtain gati or progress onwards.