

Importance of Shrāddha and its underlying science

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(An asterisk (*) sign has been placed alongside important points)

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Preface

The term 'shrāddha' (Special rites for the departed ancestors) conjures up an incorrect impression, one of unscientific and ostentatious ritualistic activity in the minds of the younger generation in the modern scientific age. This is a result of absence of any formal education on Dharma (Righteousness), indifference towards understanding Spirituality, influence of the western culture, anti-Dharma organisations targeting traditions and customs in Hindu Dharma with a continuous barrage of hate-filled criticism. A line of thinking, as given ahead, is also prevalent in the society about shrāddha. People who lack faith in ritualistic worship or shrāddha, and consider social service superior, have very naive views. They say that instead of performing shrāddha for the pitars, they would rather donate food to the poor or provide help to schools and many of these people do actually put their views into practice. This is as

absurd as saying, 'Instead of performing surgery to treat a particular disease, we will donate food to the poor or provide help to schools'. Since the spiritually potent mantrās (See Glossary) recited during the shrāddha rites have the subtle power of providing momentum to the subtle-bodies of pitars, they can progress to a higher subtle-region of existence after the rites have been performed. This reveals the folly in the abovementioned views. Therefore, the objective of this Holy text is to eliminate the veil of ignorance and blind-faith of the people who have this line of thinking, and to change their thinking so that they develop a positive and spiritual perspective towards sacred shrāddha rites prescribed by Hindu Dharma.

Bharatiya culture says that, just as we serve our parents and close relatives when they are alive as part of abiding by our Dharma, we have certain duties unto them after their death. The shrāddha rites provide us with an excellent opportunity to fulfil these duties and repay our debts unto the pitars. The shrāddha rites are necessary so that the journey of our parents (after death), who have cared for us so much during our childhood, becomes comfortable and without any distress, and they acquire sadgati (Momentum for moving to the next higher region). If shrāddha is not performed, the desires of the pitars remain unfulfilled. Negative energies very easily control such desire-riddled pitars and then, enslave them. In all likelihood, they use the pitars to cause distress to their own family members. By performing shrāddha, we get relieved from the distress caused by the pitars, and our life on earth becomes comfortable. If shrāddha is performed on a particular day, tithī (Date as per the Hindu lunar almanac) and as per the position of the lunar asterisms, then, besides the duty unto the pitars getting fulfilled, some specific benefit can also be obtained. Through such aspects, the importance and benefits of shrāddha have been elaborated in this Holy text.

This Holy text also includes valuable information on various types of shrāddha rites such as Nāndī, Mahālaya, Bharani and Tripindī, who should perform these rites, the time and place for shrāddha, what if appropriate Brāhmans (Hindu priests) are not available to perform the rite, necessary food items cooked for the rites, do's and don'ts for the individual performing shrāddha and the individual consuming the food of shrāddha, process of performing shrāddha, method of offering food to the pitars and Deities, ways and means to overcome obstacles faced while performing shrāddha etc. This Holy text also clarifies common doubts such as how do the pitars gain further momentum due to shrāddha, how does the food offered to the Brāhmans actually reach the pitars, what is the science underlying a crow pecking at the pinḍa (Rice balls used during shrāddha) etc.

We pray unto the Holy feet of Shrī Guru that by studying this Holy text, may everyone attain a virtuous intellect to preserve the cultural wealth in the form of 'shrāddha', inherited by us from our great Sages, may shrāddha be performed with faith, and may the spiritual progress of the pitars and the self be achieved. - **Compilers**