

Importance of Shraddha and its underlying science

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 due to the absence of any formal education on *Dharma* (Righteousness), indifference towards understanding Spirituality, the influence of western culture, anti-*Dharma* organisations targeting traditions and customs in Hindu *Dharma* with a continuous barrage of hate-filled criticism. The following line of thinking is also prevalent in society about *shraddha*. People who lack faith in ritualistic worship or *shrāddha*, and consider social service superior, have very naive views. They say that instead of performing *shraddha* for the ancestors, 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 *mantras* recited during the *shrāddha* rites have the subtle power of providing momentum to the subtle bodies of ancestors, 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 Spiritual text is to remove the veil of ignorance and blind faith of the people who have such thinking, and to change their thinking so that they develop a positive and spiritual perspective towards sacred *shrāddha* rites prescribed by Hindu *Dharma*.

Indian 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 ancestors. The *shrāddha* rites are necessary so that the journey of our parents (after death), who have cared for us so much since our birth, becomes comfortable and without any distress, and they attain *sadgati* (Momentum for moving to the next higher region). If *shrāddha* is not performed, the desires of the ancestors remain unfulfilled. Negative energies very easily control such desire-riddled ancestors and then, enslave them. In all likelihood, they use the ancestors to cause distress to their own family members. By performing *shrāddha*, we get relieved from the distress caused by the ancestors, 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 ancestors getting fulfilled, some specific benefit can also be obtained. Through such various aspects, the importance and benefits of *shrāddha* have been elucidated in this Spiritual text.

This Spiritual text also includes valuable information on various types of *shrāddha* rites such as *Nāndī*, *Mahālaya*, *Bharaṇī* and *Tripinḍī*, who should perform these rites, the time and place for *shrāddha*, what if appropriate *Brāhmaṇs* (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 ancestors and Deities, ways and means to overcome obstacles faced while performing *shrāddha*, etc. This Spiritual text also clarifies common doubts such as how do the ancestors gain further momentum due to *shrāddha*, how does the food offered to the *Brāhmaṇs* actually reach the ancestors, what is the science underlying a crow pecking the *pinḍa* (Rice balls used during *shrāddha*).

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

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