

Shraddh Pitru Tarpanam

Honoring you're Ancestors & the Pancha Maha Yajnyas



(c 2015) guided by

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The essence of Vedic culture is Yajnya. What we mean by Yajnya is most instructively given through the Pancha Maha Yajnya-s, the Five Karmic Debts of Gratitude that everyone is born with. Yes, Yajnya is Fire Sacrifice but that is just the outer garment. The real meaning of Yajnya is an inner Yajnya. A chance to repay Karmic Debts to the Gods, Guru-s and Ancestors as well as living persons whom are meaningful to you.

Yajnya means the auspicious offering of one's egoic lower self - burning off Karma - a sacrifice, an offering, in order to be Lighter, rise above it. Satkarma. Vedasamata Karma. The call to serve & protect humanity & the natural elements fulfills the highest calling. Ask, believe and offer something in good faith, "go higher". This is the secret of Yajnya.

Veda-s recognize that incarnation comes with 5 categories of Karmic debts (Pancha Maha Yajna-s) which are repaid during each lifetime. This is not to be viewed as analogous to 'original sin' - there is no judgmental inference. These Karmic debts are debts of Gratitude to those who came before us and in some cases literally were the cause of our embodiment. These Karmic Debts are responsibilities that we have because we are born into a body within a larger communal & global body. By implication, we are powerful beings. When a person is powerless, they are not able or expected to perform responsibilities. Those who have any power at all, have a responsibility to themselves and others, to maintain the level of life quality. Let's see how Veda-s view our connection and responsibility in the following ways.

Rishi Yajnya : Veda Yajnya :

MahaRishis are the sages who gave us the wisdom of the Vedas which are the original writings of Sanatana Dharma, the root of Vedic culture. Reading the Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, Sutras, and practicing their teachings repays this inherent debt. The human is at the root, a creature bound to the earth-world. Pitar and Guru/Acharya are higher humans,

(parents and spiritual teachers). We can achieve this repayment to the Rishi-s by appreciating and upholding their work - with self-study (Svadhya) and following/ teaching the Veda-s (Vedpath). These include Hatha Yoga, Kriyas, Meditation and all the Ashtang of Patanjali with all the Yogic disciplines as well as Raja, Bhakti, Karma Yoga-s. An interesting thing is that we can also repay this debt by Teaching the Veda-s and Teaching in culture and ethics in general to our children and to students in general. Our Children are in fact owed a debt as they hold the future of the continuation of the culture and human survival in general. By both learning & teaching, the debt of the sages is re-paid. This debt begins to be paid in the Brahmacharya Ashrama stage of life (student life) and is the root of Svadhya in the 5 Fold Path.

Deva Yajnya : Brahmajajnya

Above our ancient Sages are the Five Elemental Energies (Pancha Maha Bhuta-s). This is the debt we owe to the Gods, Brahma means God. They are constantly nurturing us in many subtle ways and we appreciate and repay them by chanting mantras, doing pujas and havan. This Brahma Yajnya is honored by Satsang, performing daily prayer rituals at sunrise and sunset (Sadhyavandan) such as Agnihotra is one also known as Agnihotra Karma. There are many sunrise & sunset ritual involving Sun & Moon, Fire & Water, Earth, Wind & Space.

For Agnihotra, fire is burnt in the havankund or vedi and there is an external representation of what Yajnya really means - a sacrifice. It is also performed with invoking the Vyhruti, Gayatri, MahaMrytunjaya and Devas Surya & Agni. It appears simple, however, there are many disciplines to do it. This pays off the 'Dev Debt'. Havan is called 'Devayagya'. In Large Havan, that go on for hours or days, instead of the daily Cow-dung centered Homa, we offer branches the seven holy trees - Mango, Bad, Peepal, Dhaka, Janti, Jamun and Shami. Havan increases purity and positivity. Diseases and grief disappear. This debt usually begins to be paid in the householder's life and is the root of Yajnya on the 5 Fold Path.

Pitru Yajnya

Now we also have responsibility to honor our ancestors, and that is primarily what this ebook is about - Pitru Yajnya in the form of Pitri Tarpan, paying our debts to them. This can be repaid by remembering them always in daily prayers and performing the throughout the year and especially the rituals during this special fortnight which is kept for them, Mahalaya Pitru Paksha.

This Yajnya is of 2 types: Shraddha & Tarpan, The deeds performed with truth and reverence are Shraddha and the deed that satisfies mother, father and Acharya is Tarna

Shraddha: That by which Truth is accepted as Faith is called Shraddha. That which is practiced with True Faith is also called Shraddha.

Tarpan: Means service done for one's living parents and other elders. There are 3 types:

- *Brahma Tarpan* : Learned men and women should be respected, honored and served with respect.
- *Rishi Tarpan* : Serving and honoring Teachers and their lineages.
- *Pitri Tarpan* : In this case, we must thoroughly satisfy the living Pitra-s, by offering them food, clothes, sweets, etc. The pitra-s include parents, grand parents, learned people who promote knowledge, keep peace, ecology and who further the cause of truth and righteousness, among the living. For the close family members to honor the deceased, there are specific times of year including now, the Pitru Paksha fortnight set aside to honor our Ancestors which is ending right now with this Amavasya - the day to honor All the Ancestors.

According to Vedana, this Shraddha-Tarpan is a feeling of respect for our ancestors, parents and Guru/Acharya. This Yajnya is performed by the children or the chela/devotee. This is also called 'Pitru Debt'. In the Purana-

s, performing it is called Shraddha Karma. As the parents usually exit this incarnation after their children are middle-aged, this debt becomes more accessible to be paid in the later years of Vanaprastha Ashrama of Life and is the root of Tapas on the 5 Fold Path.

Bhuta Yajnya : Vaishvadeva Yajnya

This is the debt we owe to Nature and everything in it – the soil, the air, the rivers, the water we drink, the plants including those that we consume for food, and every aspect of Nature. We owe a great debt to Nature since our very existence depends on Her. This we repay by looking after the land, the trees, the atmosphere, the rivers, birds and other animals. In the daily routine we incorporate to water a plant, give food and water to the birds and feed some animal before taking one's own food. There is honor in offering food to persons who are distressed, disabled and cannot earn their living, as well as to help stray dogs and cows who are distressed and need food.

It is also called Pancha Bhuta Yajnya because there are 5 Elements present in the human body microcosm and in every part of the macrocosm. Understanding compassion and duty towards all beings is integral to our very survival. That is, whatever is prepared for food, some portion of it should be given to the same fire from which the food has been cooked. Then give the leftovers to cows, dogs and crows. All Ashrama-s or stages of Life are active in this debt repayment at all times, even smallest children can learn to return the debt at meal-time, offering food to the fire and to the altar in the home and is the root of Karma on the 5 Fold Path.

Manushya Yajnya : Athithi Yajnya

Once our more basic survival debts are paid, comes the debt we owe to humanity. We are a part of the social milieu and we are bound by societal karma-s to give charity, to help as many people as we can at all times. The service to guests not only means to provide food and water to guests in our home. Also help anyone you meet who is less advantaged or in need,

ie: the handicapped, women, students, ascetics, doctors and religious Asthetics such as Parikramavasi and Monks.

Since ancient days, Sannyasin, virtuous scholarly elders and preachers of the Dharma used to move around preaching knowledge freely for the public. Before days of modern communication, they would visit households without any prior information of the householder. It is the duty of the householder to offer them water, food, clothes, resting place, and to serve them hand and foot, to make them feel comfortable after their journeying and serving large masses of people. The Sannyasi should be one who imparts proper knowledge publicly and offers Jyotish or other good advice to the householder while in the home, for only a short day or 3 before embarking again on the journey.

This debt to serving guests begins to be more important as we reach the Sannyas Ashrama of Life as the householder who is working to support the home may not have time to devote to the hand and foot waiting on an unexpected guest. But this practice can be started at any time that one is of age to be of service, even children can entertain and serve guests. This is the root of Daana on the 5 Fold Path

In the Purana-s of the above five Yajnas, there are many types and sub-types. Different communities call them by different names and methods of doing them are also different, but mainly these five Yajnyas are considered universal. I have already mentioned how they are the Root of the 5 Fold Path of Agnihotri-s.

Apart from this, the proper category of Agnihotra is that of a Homa or Havan. When we call these extrapolated rituals with fire Yajnya, it is perfunctory compared to the inner-Yajnya of these five Pancha Maha Yajnyas. Apart from doing the Agnihotra Yajnya as it is recommended and written here, it can be just a superficial action and perhaps even egoic. Remember 'Sacrifice' is the definition of Yajnya. Although these rituals do have powerful purposeful reasons for doing, the sacrificial part is mainly

that of the devotee's time and resources toward maintaining such a practice with many purification requirements before and after doing the Agnihotra (or any Sandhyavandhanan) as written above in the Deva Yajnya category. The teachings on this can be found [HERE](#)>.

Now that we know the context, let's get on with the Sadhana & Ceremonies to Honor our Departed Ancestors. The following has been simplified enough for a non-Sanskriti or beginner = or for anyone new to Vedic Cultural & Religious forms.

Pitru Tharpanam

There are many spiritual debts that each one of us must pay. One of these is our debt to our ancestral beings known as *Pitrus*. To pay off this debt (karma), what we do is the puja known as *Pitru Tharpanam*. This puja is quite easy. You can do it in about 10 minutes once you have learned how. It can be done on any New Moon (*Amavasya*). Most Auspicious is the New Moon of the Autumnal Equinox – the Shraddh Amavasya. These times are also favorable to hire a pandit and do a more complex Shraddh Puja with you. Normally this New Moon is directly followed by Navaratri. This year 2020, the Adhik Maas, (additional month) is added in this part of the zodiac to balance out the luni-solar dynamic. Many people do the short practice daily during Adhik Maas since it is a particularly auspicious time to take on this Debt of Gratitude. The very devout do it daily through the year. Other auspicious times are the Solstices - Aadi Amavasya when the Sun enters Dakshinayana as well as when the Sun enters Uttanayana on the Makra Sankranti and the Vernal Equinox on Vedic New Year.

Pitru = one's ancestors.

Tharpanam = to satisfy, to please.

So ***Pitru Tharpanam*** = pleasing one's ancestors.

The Pitru Tharpanam Puja can be done in front of photos of your beloved ancestors or with them in your memory.



Materials needed: (short version)

1. Akshat = unbroken raw rice
2. Kala Tilli = black sesame seeds (most health food stores carry this)
3. Gold or any coin
4. Copper kailash with water (spoon optional) copper is preferred.

Drops of holy water or holy river water can be added to the kailash if available.

5. If this puja is not being done in flowing water, you will need an appropriate container such as a large copper or stainless steel thali or bowl to carry the offerings to water.

If all the materials are not available, the most essential are black sesame seeds and water. If you can't get black sesame seeds, white seeds will do.

Note: Pitru Tharpanam Puja origins come from those bathing in the rivers. If you are able to do it in a river, stream or any moving fresh water, it is especially powerful for you. If not, and if you can not carry the water/offerings to a river later in the day, you may do the puja in a garden and let the offerings fall to the growing plant life. We do not however, want our offerings to end up in a septic tank or sewage system.

THE OFFERING

1. Place a tablespoon of black sesame seeds, akshat (unbroken grains of raw whole rice) and a coin in the palm of your right hand.

2. Pour the water over the offerings. Do not put your hand into the kailash.

3. Make a heartfelt prayer to your ancestors as you pour the water over your hand so that it falls into moving water or into a container, bowl or plate that can be carried to the nearest flowing water that same day.



* the correct way to pour the water over your hand is to place the right hand with the pinky finger near to your heart if you are kneeling at the photo of your ancestor, or just below it if you are standing. With the left hand holding the kailash, pour the water over the offerings so that the water and offerings exit the palm between the thumb and index finger. Tilt the hand downwards in the direction to facilitate this flow.

This is a simple mantra meaning – i am honoring the ancestors of my family line. I am offering these things to them.

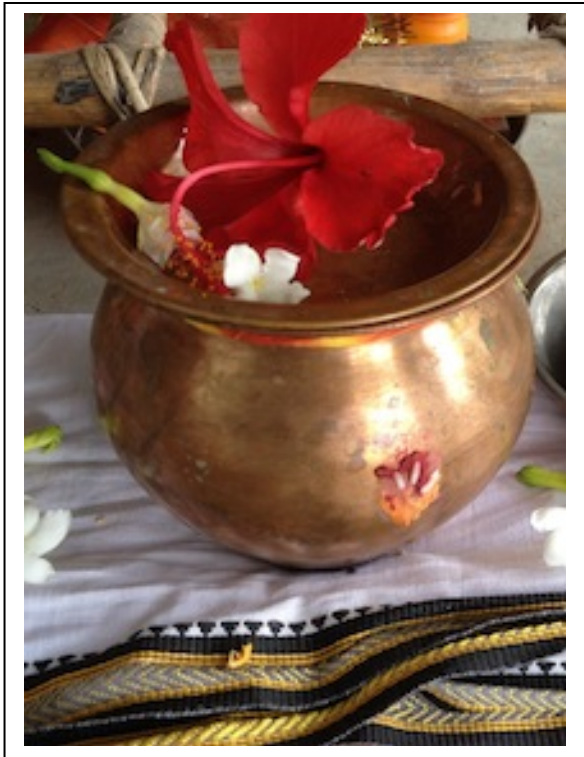
MAMA VARGADH-DOYA PITURBHYO NAMAH

THILODAGAM SAMARPAYAMI

OR You may say something to this effect while you pour the offering:

"I invite you to take this offering, 6 generations of ancestors on my mother's side and 6 generations of ancestors on my father's side. Take this energy. Be healed, be at peace, cross into the light, and please don't forget to bless me."

You or any living parent are the 7th generation, not to be named. If you are able, you may name those family members that have passed on. You may include up to 12 generations in each side.



4. Then pour the rest of the water over right hand and let the offerings wash off completely.

Note: You should donate the coin or give it to a beggar, you may reuse a gold coin, just rinse it off in water each time before using again. However, each year (on the day after Kal Bhairav Jayanti), you should donate that coin, or its equivalent value).

5. Immerse all the puja perishables in a river or onto a garden by flowing water. Say this mantra.

Idam Ahuti Gayaar-pitho Asthu

(I immerse this offering).

ANOTHER METHOD: Longer Version

Materials needed:

1. Sandalwood powder (you can buy at any Indian market)
2. Akshat - raw unbroken grains of rice
3. Kala Tilli - Black sesame seeds (most health food stores carry this)
4. Dharba / Kusha grass - long grasses

5. Flowers or petals

6. 18 coins

7. $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ c of rice cooked with rice flour to form balls for the Pindadaan (which are then rolled in the black sesame seeds).

8. Copper kailash of water - spoon optional. Drops of holy water or holy river water can be added to the kailash if available.

9. If this puja is not being done in flowing water, you will need an appropriate platter, tray or large leaf to carry the offerings to water after.

Note: Pitru Tharpanam Puja origins come from those bathing in the rivers. If you are able to do it in a river, stream or any moving fresh water, it is especially powerful for you.

If not, and if you can not carry the water/ offerings to a river later in the day, you may do the puja in a garden and let the offerings fall to the growing plant life. We do not however, want our offerings to end up in a septic tank or sewage system

Pitru Tharpanam Pujas can be done at the beach so that the ocean washes the materials away. Check if the

tide is coming in or out before you perform the Puja. Timing is up to tides, but mornings just after bathing is best.



Prepare the Dharba / Kusha Offering:

1. Cut the Dharba / Kusha grass into 6 equal pieces, around 4 inches long. (This represents 6 generations on both sides of your family). If you know up to 12 generations names, you may do additional Dharba pieces.
2. Line up vertically the 6 pieces of grass on a platter, tray, or large leaf, leaving a little space between each.
3. Make a paste with sandalwood powder by adding water to it, spread the paste onto the dharba grass.
4. Place 3 coins on each piece of grass at the top, middle and bottom.
5. you can also make a ring of the grass to wear for the Puja
6. Sprinkle flowers over these items.

THE OFFERING

1. Face South. If you have made the ring, wear it
2. Pray to Lord Ganesha and to your Guru. invoke the water of the seven Holy rivers of Bharat (India) for performing this Ancestor worship. Chant:

***Gange cha Yamune chaiva Godaavari Saraswati Narmade Sindhu
Kaaveri Jalesmin Sannidhim kuru***

3. Invoke the Aadi-Pitroos (Ancient Ancestors of whom Kaal Bhairav is the Original Ancestor) Take small pieces of the grass, Sandal paste and Black Sesame Seeds equally in both the hands. Raise the hands towards the sky and look up and slowly bring down both the hands down with the intention of inviting the ancestors down to earth. Now transfer the contents from left to right hand and then with the right hand place the

contents on the top (south end) of the Kusha grass, by chanting the mantra.

***AAdhi Pitrunaam Aavaahayaami (I invoke the first ancestor),
Sthaapayaami (I offer seat), poojayaami (I offer worship)***

4. Making the PINDADAAN. Take a handful of cooked rice and mix with black sesame seeds and shape into a ball. With Devotion offer (place) in the center of the grass, leaf or copper plate. Touch on the rice ball (pinda) remember and meditate on your ancestors – chant:

***Maatur-vamsae Mritha-yaesnjae Pitur-vamsae thadaiva chaGuru
syasura Bandoonaam ye cha anyae Baandava MrithaThilodakam
cha pindam cha pithurnaam parithushtayaeSamarpayaami Bakthya
Aham Prarthayaami Praseedhamae***

5. Place a tablespoon of Black Sesame Seeds, Akshat and a coin in the palm of your right hand. Chant –"

Mama vargadh-doya piturbyo namaha (I am honoring the ancestors of my family line).

6. Take the water and sprinkle a few drops over the offerings in your hand. Do not put your hand into the kailash, instead, sprinkle with a copper spoon or pour a bit directly from the kailash onto the right hand.

7. Chant this mantra which means I perform this Pithru Tharpanam remembering seven holy cities of Bharat)

***Ayodhya Madhura Maaya Kasi Kanchi Avanthika Puri Dwaraavati
chaiva saptha ethey moksha daayaka***

6. Make a heartfelt prayer to your ancestors. You may chant:

Thilodagam Samarpayaami (I offer these to you)

Or something to this effect while you pour the offering:

"I invite you to take this offering, (x) generations of ancestors on my mother's side and (x) generations of ancestors on my father's side."

If you are able, you may name those family members that have passed on. You may include up to 12 generations in each side. By doing this we intend to invoke our ancestors on black sesame seeds placed on the center of the kusha grass.

7. Take the kailash of water with left hand and pour it over the mixture in your right hand, and let everything fall onto the Dharba grass, coins and flowers which are placed on a large leaf or platter that can be carried to the nearest flowing water that same day.

* the correct way to pour the water over your hand is to place the right hand with the pinky finger near to your heart if you are kneeling at the photo of your ancestor, or just below it if you are standing. With the left hand holding the kailash, pour the water over the offerings so that the water and offerings exit the palm between the thumb and index finger. Tilt the hand downwards in the direction to facilitate this flow.

Say with a sincere heart:

"Use this energy and be healed, be at peace, cross into the light and please don't forget to bless me."

8. devotion touch the grass along with the sesame seeds with the feeling that they are seated on the grass seat and chant with devotion.

9. Then pour the rest of the water over right hand and let the offerings wash off completely.

10. Remove the grass ring. Put all the contents of the puja into the large leaf or platter and carry on your head to immerse yourself with it in a lake or pond or sea with chanting

Idam Pindam Gayaar-pitho Asthu (I immerse this Pinda in the River).

Again, If no river or appropriate water is there, then you can offer this in a place where birds or animals can eat it such as a garden.

Some instructions may be followed:

- Pour water in a circle on ground. Place the leaf and all the contents on the ground, and tear the leaf into two and place it either sides of the remaining rice contents. Then place your ring finger on top of it. Take water in right hand and wave it in front of the offering up in the air three times and on the last time, clap your hands three times. Wash hands and face (best is to take complete bath drenching the clothes also).

With this the Pitru Puja is completed.

Note: You should donate the coins or give them to a beggar, you may reuse gold coins, just rinse them off in water each time before using again. However, each year (on the day after Kal Bhairav Jayanti), you should donate those coins, or equivalent value).

OM TAT SAT

Compiled by Niradhara Amma for SwAr Ashram