

SHRAADDHA CHANDRIKA

(पार्वण श्राद्धः - आश्वलायन गृह्य सूत्रम्)

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श्राद्ध चन्द्रिका

This exposition is based on *आश्वलायन पार्वण श्राद्ध चन्द्रिका* a unique treatise in Kannada.

It seamlessly blends modern thoughts with traditional beliefs, customs and traditions and adopts a path-breaking approach in elucidating the underlying philosophy. While unfolding the mystery surrounding the formulae designed by *महर्षि आश्वलायन*, a great sage, it explodes several myths.

Disciples of *महर्षि आपस्तम्ब* and *महर्षि बोधायन* will discover that the basic principles enunciated here are not at variance.

The depiction reconciles the three paths - *कर्म, उपासना, ज्ञान* (worship, meditation and know-how) enabling readers of every stratum transform a protracted ritual (of merely obeying the commands of the family priest) into an awe-inspiring and extremely gratifying act of supreme delight.

This reflects vividly a practitioner's direct cognition and insight cultivated over a period of 53 years.

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IT IS महाविष्णु – ALL-PERVADING

पितृदेवताभ्यो नमः, विष्णुर्विष्णुः

Thus begun, and interspersed often by His memoirs, a श्राद्ध ends with

विष्णवे नमो विष्णवे नमो विष्णवेनमः

एको विष्णुर्महत्भूतं हत् भूतं पृथक् भूतान्यनेकशः। त्रीन् लोकान् व्याप्य
भूतात्मा भुङ्क्तो विश्व भुगव्ययः ॥

विष्णु personifies the Ultimate Truth. Permeating the three worlds, the universal Soul manifests in myriad forms and devours it in its entirety.

‘विष्णोहव्यंरक्षस्व’; ‘विष्णोकव्यंरक्षस्व’; ‘सर्वेषां पापदृष्टीनां चक्षुर्बध्नाति केशवः’; He prevents any evil eye befalling the food served to the विश्वेदेवा and पितृदेवा in a श्राद्ध.

हरिर्दाता हरिर्भोक्ता हरिरन्नं प्रजापतिः हरिर्विप्रशरीरस्थो भुङ्क्तो भोजयते हविः। त्वांयोगिनाश्चिन्तयन्ति त्वांयजन्तिचयज्वनः। हव्यकव्य भुगोक्स्त्वं पितृदेव स्वरूपधृक् ॥

He is an embodiment of food. It is He who bestows food and it is He who savours food. He is the one meditated upon by the adept and adulated by all.

It is He who personifies as विश्वेदेव and पितृदेव and duly apportions oblations offered.

One who meditates upon these divinities performs a यज्ञ which is His worship. (श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 8-23, 24 reaffirms this reality).



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यज्ञो वै विष्णुः

The word 'विष्णु' means expanse, pervasiveness and immanence. He enters, transcends (everything that can be seen and heard) and illuminates the three worlds and those beyond.

यच्च किञ्चित्जगत्सर्वं दृश्यते श्रूयतेऽपि वा । अन्तर्बहिश्च तत्सर्वं व्याप्य
नारायणः स्थितः ॥ (महानारयणोपनिषद्)

A पितृयज्ञ involves several allusions of and pointers to the Lord. Here is a brief contour that can help one to perceive the milieu better.

यज्ञ - *soul of a यज्ञ ; satiates all the gods through यज्ञ.*

यज्ञपति - *presides over every यज्ञ ; protects a यज्ञ.*

यज्वन् - *conducts a यज्ञ.*

यज्ञभृत् - *repository / guardian of a यज्ञ.*

यज्ञकृत् - *performs a यज्ञ to create and annihilate the world.*

यज्ञि - *the residue of a यज्ञ.*

यज्ञांग - *each part of his body represents a यज्ञ.*

यज्ञवाहन - *encourages people to perform a यज्ञ.*

यज्ञभुज् - *protects / devours a यज्ञ.*

यज्ञसाधन - *यज्ञ is a pathway leading to Him.*

यज्ञांतकृत् - *renders finality / decisiveness to a यज्ञ.*

यज्ञगुह्य - *the pith (insight / higher knowledge) of a यज्ञ.*

References to अग्नि, वायु, इन्द्र, वरुण, रुद्र, आदित्य, आपः, पवमान सोमः, पूषन्, सवितृ, विश्वेदेव, पितरः, वैश्वानर and several others are, in fact, references to Him – for all of them are His imageries. एकं सत् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति (ऋग्वेद 6.3.22) see श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (9.15).

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GLOSSARY OF RECURRING WORDS

पितृ - parents, ancestors, descendants (also see page 9).

श्रद्धा - conscientiousness, faith, diligence.

श्राद्ध - adoration of a departed soul with श्रद्धा.

कर्तृ / कर्ता - one who performs the श्राद्ध.

यज्ञ - act of devotion - worship, sacrifice, oblation into fire.

संकल्प - declaration of a solemn vow to perform a virtuous act

तुलसी - holy basil leaf.

भृंगराज - eclipta alba - a herb of the sunflower family.

कुश / दर्भ - a branch of sacred grass (poa cynosuroides).

पवित्र - ring of sacred grass like कुश / दर्भ.

कूर्च - 2 / 3 / 7 / 9 कुश / दर्भ grass bundled together.

अक्षत - duly consecrated whole grains like rice.

तिल - sesamum /sesame.

गन्ध - sandalwood paste.

भस्म - sacred ash, usually residue of a यज्ञ.

विश्वेदेव - Lord's delegate chosen to protect a ritual.

ब्राह्मण - one invited to stand in for a पितृ or विश्वेदेव.

पिण्ड / पिंड - a ball of rice ceremonially offered to the पितृ

कलश - a water-pot duly consecrated for the ritual.

अर्घ्य - water offered in reverence.

पाद्य - washing the feet of a guest/deity in veneration.

आवाहन - invoking/investing divinity unto a person / object

हव्य / कव्य - oblations offered to विश्वेदेव and पितृ respectively.

दक्षिणा - cash offered in a worship/honorarium to the priest.

प्रदक्षिण - clock-wise circumambulation.

क्षण - assuming the role of a deity through the ritual.

अभिघार - sprinkling ghee over the platter & food

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RECURRENT COUPLETS

- देवताभ्यःपितृभ्यश्च महायोगिभ्य एवच । नमःस्वाहायै
स्वधायै नित्यमेव नमोनमः ॥



Divinities, ancestors, saintly persons, स्वाहा and स्वधा merit everyday adoration.

स्वाहा and स्वधा resonates represent the power of अग्नि (His spouses) and precede every oblation into fire.

Perform पंच महायज्ञ.

- चतुर्भिश्च चतुर्भिश्च द्वाभ्यां पंचभि रेवच । हूयते च पुनर्द्वाभ्यां स मे विष्णुः
प्रसीदतु ॥ 17 letters - आश्वावयः (4) अस्तु श्रोषट् (4) यज (2) ये
यजामहे (5) वोषट् (2) articulated while offering oblations
into fire stand for the Lord. In fact, He epitomises a
यज्ञ.
- अमूर्तानांचमूर्तानां पितृणां दीप्ततेजसां । नमस्यामिसदातेषां ध्यायिनां
योगचक्षुषां ॥ We unfailingly contemplate upon and
adore our पितृ. While some of them might have re-
emerged in a physical form (reincarnation) more
fortunate ones would have attained either one-off
luminousness like a star or attained unison with
the Lord. We need a divine vision to visit them – like
one that enabled Arjun to have विश्वरूपदर्शन –
(श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 11-8)

मधुवाता ऋतायते मधु क्षरन्ति सिंधवः। माध्वीर्नःसंत्वोषधीः॥

मधुनक्तमुतोषसो मधुमत्पार्थिवं रजः। मधु द्यौरस्तु नः पिता॥

मधुमान्नोवनस्पतिर्मधुमान् अस्तुसूर्यः । माध्वीर्गावो भवन्तु नः॥ Here is

what a devout person desires: showers, streams, breeze, light, heat, herbs, plants, flowers, fruits and milk are all conducive and supportive. This is critical to the success of every यज्ञ. (ऋ 1-6-18)

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PART I: ASPIRATIONS, CONVICTIONS AND CONVENTIONS

MOTIVATION

An abiding outpour of wholesome parental love, affection, nourishment, purposeful education, initiation into our treasured value systems and adept counselling is what transformed us into matured, civilized citizens.



Recounting, with reverence and a deep sense of gratitude, the memory of our beloved parents (and all those who played a pivotal role in our upbringing) is a part of our illustrious tradition. It is a manifestation of richness of our mind and spirit.

A beautiful portrayal of this can be found in a verse recited in a महालय श्राद्धः आब्राह्मणो ये पितृवंश जाताः मातुस्तथा वंशभवामदीयाः। वर्गद्वयेऽस्मिन् मम दासभूता वृत्यास्तथैवाश्रित सेवकाश्च । मित्राणि सख्यः पशवश्च वृक्षा दृष्टाश्च पृष्टाश्च कृतोपकारः। जन्मान्तरे ये मम संगताश्च तेभ्यः स्वधा पिण्डमहं ददामि ।



Beginning with Lord ब्रह्मा we are indebted to many including those unseen, unknown people whose largesse benefitted us in our present / many of our previous births.

When they are with us, we express these qualities of head and heart by touching their feet, waiting on them and fulfilling their desires. We derive supreme pleasure out of this. Alas! We cannot do any of these when they are not with us. But, we can certainly relish reminiscences of their life, express our gratitude and savour a sense of fulfilment and delight. Revisiting our parents' contributions to our upbringing, cherishing supreme love and affection showered by them and adoring those others (animals,



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flora and fountain included) whose mere presence was blissful would be more meaningful and simpler than spotting divinity in a photo, statue, idol, कलश (pot), मण्डल /चक्र (a diagram).

In Vedic literature the words like 'पितर', 'पितृ', 'पितुः' have very wide connotation. They refer to (a) natural parents (b) one who performed sacrament i.e. उपनयन संस्कार (c) teacher (d) provider of food and (e) one who offered shelter and security. The canvas extends not only to our ancestors but every other conceivable animate and inanimate substance which provides sustenance i.e. water, food, vigour and virtues. The words पशवश्च वृक्षा in the verse cited earlier are only indicative. In a wider context they represent every divine force transcending the three worlds.

'श्रद्धा' - *ORIGIN and IMPORT*:

श्रद्धा means allegiance, conscientiousness and diligence. It calls for unflinching faith and resolve to perform a dutiful act wholeheartedly, earnestly and with total devotion. Such a pious contemplation is श्रद्धा. An act of performing it truthfully and honourably is श्रद्धा. It is a wonderful mechanism beautifully crafted and gifted to us by men endowed with exceptional wisdom and divine experience. It enables us to orchestrate the implementation.

श्रद्धयाग्निः समिध्यते श्रद्धया हूयते हविः । श्रद्धां भगस्य मूर्धनि वचसा वेदयामसि ॥ प्रियं श्रद्धे ददतः प्रियं श्रद्धे दिदासतः । प्रियं भोजेषु यज्वस्विदं म उदितं कृधि ॥ यथा देवा असुरेषु श्रद्धामुगेषु चक्रिरे । एवं भोजेषु यज्वस्वस्माकमुदितं कृधि ॥ श्रद्धां देवा यजमाना वायुगोपा

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उपासते। श्रद्धां हृदय्ययाकृत्या श्रद्धया विन्दते वसु ॥ श्रद्धां प्रातर्हवामहे
श्रद्धां मध्यंदिनं परि । श्रद्धां सूर्यस्य निमुचि श्रद्धे श्रद्धापयेह नः ॥ ऋग्वेद
८।८।९)

It is *श्रद्धा* - dedication and commitment that ignites the fire. It is with *श्रद्धा* - allegiance that the offerings are to be made into the sacrificial fire. To be accomplished well, a job has to be done with *श्रद्धा* - dutifully, with commitment, believing it to be true, desirable and virtuous. This attribute ensures success in every other pursuit as well.

Let us zealously invoke the supreme energy (*श्रद्धा शक्ति*) of the Lord thrice a day with total allegiance. Let us solicit the same degree of commitment and steadfastness that the Gods demonstrated in defeating all evil spirits. May the Lord be compassionate to us, drive away our ignorance, extricate us from sinful tracks, help us acquire riches and reach higher, blissful strata.

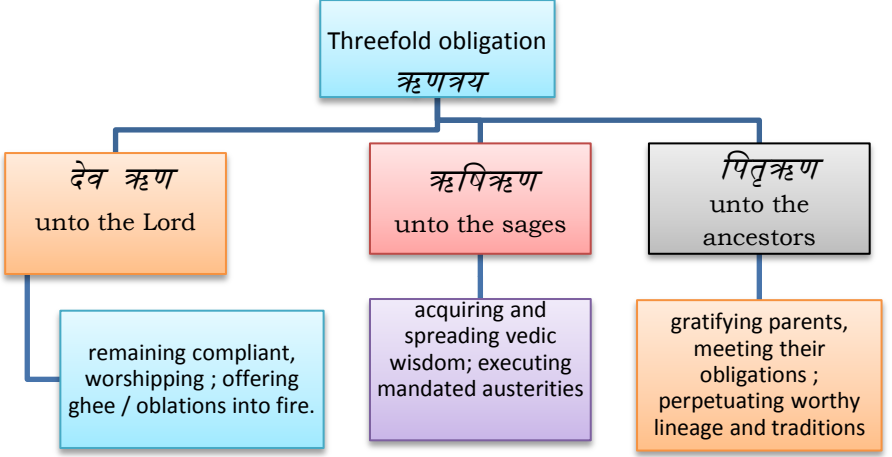
It is widely believed that *श्रद्धा* and *मेधा* (allegiance and providence personified) form a very powerful combine. Reciting these two hymns and internalising ideologies enshrined therein is a sure recipe for success – not only in Vedic education but also in our vocational training and professional life.

RATIONALE:

The scriptures envisage that a departed soul seeks to fulfil desires, meet unresolved obligations, emancipate sins and pursue liberation through his/her delegate i.e. son. As a corollary, a son is duty-bound to perform post-death rituals and accomplish all such tasks which his parent would have normally performed. He

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should also ensure that this tradition is perpetuated by begetting worthy children.



CHARACTERISTICS:

श्राद्ध is a simple, inexpensive form of worship, a Vedic ritual, a यज्ञ as described by the Lord: श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (4-24)

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतं ।

ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्म समाधिना ॥

The Lord represents a यज्ञ – a sacrifice. He creates oblation. It is for His gratification that the oblation is being served. It is He who devours the oblation. The fire, the utensils, gadgets, appliances, the oblation, the act of pouring oblation into the fire and the persons involved in the process are all His imageries. This is the emotion that drives the performer of the यज्ञ - he sees the Lord everywhere and in everything. He is one whose supreme aspiration has been fulfilled. He is one with the Lord in an exclusive blissful state.

A typical श्राद्ध involves

(a) sacrificing cooked rice into the consecrated fire,

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(b) feeding ब्राह्मण – a minimum of two and

(c) offering पितृपिण्ड

Two deities, popularly called विश्वेदेव (पुरूरव, आर्द्रव्) are venerated. It is Brahma's mandate that they arrive at the venue early and guard the ritual – lest evil spirits runaway with the offerings made to the पितृ.

Three generation of forefathers (पार्वण पितृ) father, grandfather, great grandfather (or mother, paternal grandmother, great grandmother) are embodiments of वसु, रुद्र आदित्य. They are satiated by performing annual rites and specifically on the eve of ceremonies like marriage. Their blessings are critical to the perpetuation and well-being of the family. Even when only one ब्राह्मण is invited, it is believed that the trio is in attendance.

This is an exclusive family affair and not a public function. Every member is devotedly committed to the process and hence will have little time to entertain other guests. There is no room for pomp or ostentation either.

PREREQUISITE:

The success of this sacrament hinges upon purity of everyone and everything that is aboard. Mantras, air, water, fire and the divine prowess of the ब्राह्मण are utilised in the process of purification of all these. Vedic texts devote myriad verses extolling their virtues.

ब्राह्मण - a keel

समस्त संपत्समवासिहेतवः समुत्थितापत्कुलधूमकेतवः।

अपारसंसार समुद्र सेतवः पुनंतुमांब्राह्मणपादपांसवः।

आपद्धनध्वांत सहस्र भानवः समीहितार्थापण

कामधेनवः समस्ततीर्थांबु पवित्रमूर्तयो रक्षन्तुमांब्राह्मण पादपांसवः।

विप्रौघदर्शनात्क्षिप्रं



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क्षीयन्ते पापराशयः । वन्दनान्मंगला वाप्तिरर्चनादच्युतंपदं । आधिव्याधिहरं
नृणां मृत्यु दारिद्र्यनाशनं । श्रीपुष्टि कीर्तिदं वंदे विप्रश्री पादपंकजं ।
यावती वैदेवतास्ताः सर्वा वेद विदिब्राह्मणेवसन्ति तस्मात् ब्राह्मणेभ्यो वेदविद्भ्यो
दिवे दिवे नमस्कर्यान्नाक्षीलंकीर्तयेदेता एव देवताः प्रीणाति ॥

Recited while washing the feet of the ब्राह्मण, this verse affirms that (a) he represents entire commune of divinities and holy streams (b) his veneration and blessings lead to (i) emancipation of all sins (ii) banishment of poverty, agony, ailments and premature death (iii) discharge of all debts (iv) fulfilment of all desires – prosperity and happiness and (v) attainment of ‘अच्युतं पदं’ – an unassailable spot.

In view of this, abuse, defamation or censure of an erudite ब्राह्मण is immoral and a hasty, ruinous recipe.

Our esteem for the ब्राह्मण finds an expression in प्रदक्षिण (circumambulation) of the ब्राह्मण and washing of his feet by the कर्ता who sprinkles such water over own self. As an integral part of the drill, approval of the ब्राह्मण is obtained at every stage. His endorsement and ratification (tantamount to the sanction of the Lord) makes good any deficiency that may arise in the quality of the material, process or performance. Feeding him is like feeding the Lord and the पितृ and oblations poured into his palm are close to offering such oblations into duly consecrated fire. His support also boosts the morale of the कर्ता.

A copper pot, a lamp, flowers, sandal paste, a few grains of rice, sesame, beetle leaf and nut and holy ashes (भस्म), भृंगराज, तुलसी, दर्भ and water is all that is required. A meal and an appropriate दक्षिणा would only reinforce the value of this ritual.

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सप्तशुद्धि

देह

चित्त

बुद्धि

ब्राह्मण

भूमि

द्रव्य

मन्त्र

<i>BODY</i>	*bath * आचमन * wearing a पवित्र and कुश / दर्भ grass at waist and tuft * sprinkling consecrated water
<i>MIND</i>	*प्राणायाम *self-restraint * restricting contact with outside world * reciting Lord's name.
<i>THOUGHT</i>	*controlling passions * rejecting evil thoughts.
<i>BRAHMAN</i>	*inviting only learned, virtuous, healthy person voluntarily observing self-restraint and celibacy from the previous day *partaking and sprinkling consecrated water * wearing a पवित्र.
<i>PLACE</i>	*sprinkling sesame * reciting mantras that drive away evil spirits.
<i>MATERIAL</i>	*acquiring wholesome substance through honourable means * ब्राह्मण affirmation * sprinkling consecrated water
<i>MANTRA</i>	*choice of worthy priest *divine chants * seeking ब्राह्मण proclamation.

A RATIONALIST VISTA

श्राद्ध touches our psyche – consciousness, beliefs, emotions, feelings and awareness (distinct from corporal traits that are common to all living beings - hunger, fear, sleep and procreation). Equilibrium between these two facets enables us to keep pace with

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the changing times and render our lives complete and meaningful. This calls for a more radical shift in our thought process and approach to rituals and sacraments:

श्राद्ध संकल्प often envisions liberation of the departed; worthy lineage and progression of the entire family. Perhaps, a more secular approach is to consider these as well intended aspirations and prayers than as a by-product of the ritual. These are noble thoughts that build optimism and confidence in the future, enable us to visit lovely dreams, infuse passion and keep motivating us. Unmistakably, this यज्ञ is a deliberated choice, performed for our own satisfaction. Through this endeavour we seek to reinforce prized qualities of head and heart that we treasure.

It is, perhaps, with this intent that the venerable sages crafted the ritual introducing several touching situations, hymns, rhymes, epics and couplets through the process. When we understand the import of each of these and perform this pious act in a chorus, we drift into an exotic world, enjoy the ecstasy and reach the zenith of human experience.

OUR CONVICTIONS:

The edifice of श्राद्ध is built on a number of principles, beliefs and attitudes. Codified and enshrined in several scriptures these are based largely on the findings and experiences of illustrious teachers:

There are a number of stories, speculations, and conjectures – that manes enter the body of the ब्राह्मण or take the form of crows and partake the food; that mother सीता saw reflection of king दशरथ while serving food to a ब्राह्मण; that a group of students who stole their guru's cow and had the meat (and reborn several times as animals and birds) could attain liberation

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thanks to the श्राद्ध performed by them. Is there any truth in these? Can these be proved? Should one believe these?

It would only be a misadventure to go into these and shake the foundations of deep rooted beliefs. A healthier approach would be to envision that these were written out to arouse some interest in the subject.

(b) Ardent conformists may often be tempted to warn us that a failure to perform these rites may attract the wrath of the पितृ. The reality, however, is that a feeling of guilt / ungratefulness is sufficient to burn us down. We cannot offer any thing material to those who are no more with us. But, we can certainly express our gratitude at least by remembering them. The real threat to our civilisation arises when we fail to demonstrate them when an opportunity arises.

(c) The trinity arrives at the venue a day before the ritual, gladly accepts the offerings and returns the next day.

(d) The departed souls assume a subtle form. Just as the air takes the shape of a balloon, a पितृ takes the shape of the पिण्ड offered to it. Epic महाभारत echoes this thought: The Lord has mandated that since the departed souls have no physical body, they assume the body of a पिण्ड and receive the offerings. It is none other than the Lord who devours such oblations.

GAYA – AN ELITE SPOT

There is no श्राद्ध without an allusion of Gaya and the presiding deity Lord गदाधर. Mythology versions that it was at this hallowed place that dreaded demon king of Gaya and a great devotee of Lord



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Vishnu, offered his own corpus to build a 'यज्ञकुण्ड'. The proceedings are laced with utterings like; 'गयायां धर्मपृष्ठेषु सदसिब्रह्मणस्पतेः' 'गया गदाधरः प्रीयतां'; 'भोक्ता गदधरः'; गयायां विष्णुपादादि (रुद्रपदादि) चतुर्दश पदेषु दत्तमन्नमक्षय्यमस्तु । गयाशीर्षेवटेचैव पितृणां दत्तमक्षयं । गयायां पितृ रूपेण स्वयमेव जनार्दनः । तद्दृष्ट्वा पुंडरीकाक्षं मुच्यतेच ऋण त्रयात् ।

A श्राद्ध is performed in the shade of a banyan tree to gratify the Supreme Lord who presides over this holy commune and accepts the oblations manifesting as सर्व पितृ. A glimpse of his image is sufficient to satiate our three-fold indebtedness.

शमीपत्र प्रमाणेन पिंडं दद्यात् गयाशिरे उद्धरेत्सप्तगोत्राणि कुलमेकोत्तरंशतं । Even tiny पिंड offered in a श्राद्ध on the banks of river फाल्गुनी, it is believed, has lasting value leading to the progress of 101 families of 7 गोत्र - that of the father, mother, paternal and maternal aunts, sister, spouse, and daughter.

Of the several divine footprints at this sacred place 14



are of special significance - ईशान, विष्णु, ब्रह्मा, कार्तिकेय, त्रेताग्नि (गार्हपत्य, आहवनीय, दक्षिण) सूर्य, चन्द्र, गणेश, क्रौंच, इन्द्र, अगस्त्य and काश्यप.

(e) 'Agni' manifests in a human body in three forms - गार्हपत्य at heart, दक्षिणाग्नि in the mind and आहवनीय in the mouth. This belief supports the practice of offering oblations on the palm of a ब्राह्मण. The Lord affirms this in श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता-15-14. अहं वैश्वानरोभूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः । प्राणापानसमायुक्तः पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम् ॥ He dwells in the body of every organism and digests the food which it partakes.

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(f) There is an interesting story of how Gods attending a यज्ञ escaped the fury of रावण by masquerading as birds. Lord Yama, who had chosen a crow, was pleased with this gene and granted a boon to the crows: they will have a privilege to share the offerings made at a श्राद्ध. This, perhaps, forms the genesis of a practice of offering a पिंड to the crows.

OUR CUSTOMS:

These are diligently guarded practices that as multi-layered shield preserving the sanctity and pristine format. These are not rigid, nasty or harsh imposts. They support the intent and dexterous performance of a solemn vow voluntarily undertaken to uphold and observe religious injunctions.

(a) The ritual is performed on the anniversary day (Indian calendar - तिथि) - an internal control system to avoid postponement on frivolous grounds. If there is any embargo (अशुद्धि i.e. birth/death in the family), it is performed at the end of stipulated period.

(b) The ब्राह्मण representing पितृ sits facing north. Silver, ash, odd numbers, circular diagrams through anti-clockwise moves and sesame are used in his service. विश्वेदेव sits facing east and rice, sandal paste, square diagram, even numbers, clock-wise movement and gold are used to greet him. These rules are framed to differentiate the two.

(c) To remain agile and alert, restraint is advocated in our routine starting with the previous day. Hospitality of others is not accepted. After the ritual, a sumptuous meal is taken so that an evening meal becomes



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redundant. This underscores the need to maintain proper physic and psyche.

(d) To remain focussed, contact with outside world is avoided – lest passionate moments (e.g. arising from mercantile transactions) disturb mental peace.

(e) Obviously, aforesaid norms are applicable even to the invited ब्राह्मण as well.

(f) It is customary to kneel down to serve the विश्वेदेव and पितृदेवता. This practice has its origin in a mythological event. In the court of Supreme Lord all the Gods squatted on the right knee while all the पितृदेवता squatted on the left knee to seek His dispensation.



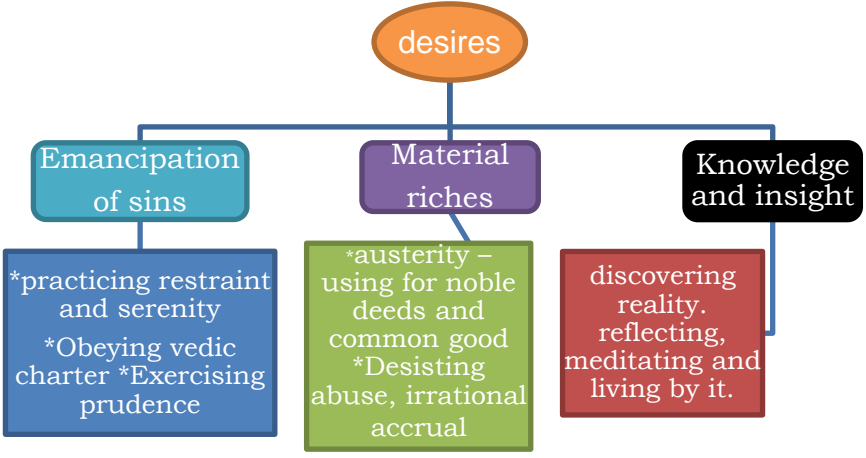
(g) A constant dialogue with the ब्राह्मण may often seem unusual and unnatural. It is akin to a well-orchestrated musical performance. The singer and accompanying artists continually communicate with the other i.e. encourage, motivate, approve, throw challenges, correct and appreciate with a smile. Thus, they churn out a brilliant, captivating, memorable event through cohesion.

In our context, such interactions sustain the interest of everyone, help remain focussed, the ब्राह्मण remain conscious of the mantle they wear till the very end and ensure that the श्राद्ध is completed meticulously. (note exchanges like देवाः पितरः समाध्वं > < सुसमास्महे; प्रवर्तये > < प्रवर्तया;

प्राप्तोतु भवान > < प्राप्तुवानि; करिष्ये > < कुरुष्व; अत्रास्यतां > < धर्मोसि)

ASPIRATIONS: Human dreams are myriad. There is no limit to the forms they assume.

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दातारोनोभिवर्धतां वेदाःसंततिरेवः । श्रद्धाचनोमाव्यगमद्वहुदेयंचनोस्तु ॥
अन्नंचनोबहुभवेदतिथींश्चलभेमही । याचितारश्चनःसंतुमाचयाचिष्मकंचन ॥

The aspirations articulated here are noteworthy:

- May the number of family members engaged in munificent and philanthropic deeds proliferate.
- May no one family in the family be pushed to unfortunate begging or soliciting.
- May the treasure of Vedic knowledge, commune of learned and diligent practitioners grow.
- May allegiance and perseverance (श्रद्धा) grow.
- May food and other resources flow profusely and support devout fulfilment of Vedic mandate i.e.

पंचमहायज्ञ.

Perhaps, nothing can be more intense, pertinent and sophisticated than this - पुत्रसमृद्धि, वेदसमृद्धि, कर्मसमृद्धि.

धर्मसमृद्धि, शास्त्रसमृद्धि, धन-धान्य समृद्धि and शांति-पुष्टि-तुष्टि,

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TAKEAWAYS:

It would be futile to assign a cause and effect relation and expect material benefits to flow instantaneously. To envision that this planet is not merely a platform for rejoicing the riches that befall but also serves as a *यज्ञभूमि* and a *कर्मभूमि* would be a far superior approach. The farsightedness, value systems and doctrines presented to us through this beautifully designed ritual can certainly foster and sustain a spiritual fervour and open up several conduits of exceptional wisdom leading to refinement and sophistication. Thus it can turn out to be a *ज्ञानयज्ञ*. Other spinoffs include:

- (a) an excellent drill in *आतिथ्य* i.e. on how to effectively play host in our day to day life,
- (b) a preview of perseverance and hard work that our progression demands,
- (c) incubation of a desire to up the scale, see fulfilment and contentment in life,
- (d) a deep perception of goodness and godhood around us - virtues of every gift of nature i.e. ether, air, water, plants and trees, birds, animals etc. – this underscores our dependence on (and the need to safeguard) each of them,
- (e) portrayal of our noble aspirations and dreams and
- (f) splendid poetry, brilliant imagery, amazing dreams etc. for one with an aesthetic taste.

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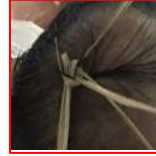
PART II: PREPARATORY

A rundown of a common and universally adopted process of श्राद्ध is presented here incorporating the directions of great teachers like आश्वलायन, आपस्तम्ब and बोधायन. The details have seen transformation over the years. The spirit, however, has been admirably guarded.

Note: Rigvedic hymns are cited as per अष्टक, अध्याय, वर्ग classification - details of such citations are chronicled in annexure - pages 48-51 in sequential order now on starting with (R.1).

PREPARATORY:

- A bath, आचमन, प्राणायाम and पवित्र धारण to promote internal and external purity. पवित्रधारण is propitious – (R.1)



- Three pieces of कुश / दर्भ are placed on the seat and worn around waist, यज्ञोपवीत and on the crown
- A narrative of time and space - year, month, date, day, time etc. as per the Indian calendar. This देश-काल संकीर्तन draws our attention to the expanse of Lord's creation. It helps us to (a) migrate to a realm free from our ego, arrogance etc. and focus, with all humility and devoutness, on the virtuous act on hand and (b) affirm that day and time are appropriate with due regard to prohibitions, if any.

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पूर्व

गोप्रास



देवब्राह्मण /
मुवासिनी भोजनभक्षण



उच्छिष्ट पिण्ड



लेप



पिण्ड विरलास

उत्तर



दर्भानस



पिण्ड नैवेद्य



जलकुम्भ



पश्चिम

पितृ देवता

हृद्या-कव्या

पाणिशेभ

धम्म रेखा

प्रकिर, तिलोदक



उच्छिष्ट अन्नपानीय



विप्रपूजाद्रव्य



दक्षिण



विकिर, यवोदक

उच्छिष्ट अन्नपानीय

धम्म रेखा



विकिरवेवता

दर्भानस

विप्रपूजाद्रव्य

धर्मदीप



रक्षा

पश्चिम

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संकल्प – AVOWAL OF INTENT:

- A resolve is made consciously with purity of head and heart, in quietness, to perform a virtuous act. The purpose of the mission, the chosen process and the action plan for the event are pronounced in the presence of virtuous ब्राह्मण. Stated objectives are (a) appeasement, progression and liberation of the departed souls and (b) wellbeing of the entire family. *These are our aspirations and not necessarily the end result of the ritual.*
- The chosen format involves (a) venerating विश्वेदेव duos named पुरुरव and आर्द्रव and three generations (पार्वण) - father, grandfather and great grandfather in the case of father's anniversary (mother, father's mother and father's grandmother on mother's anniversary) (b) oblations into fire (c) a feast and (d) offering पिण्ड.

CONSECRATION OF WATER:



- Water required for the यज्ञ is poured into a copper pot imploring flow of holy waters. (R.2) Sandal paste (गन्धा) (R.3), कुश /दर्भ (R.4), a few grains of rice (R.5), beetle nut (R.6) and दक्षिणा (gift in cash - R.7). It is hoped that the sacrificial post is firm and well enclosed (R.8) गन्धा, अक्षत and पुष्प are offered to round up the worship.

- तिलोदक is prepared in a separate pot following the same process. तिल (R.9) and भृंगराज are added (R.10). This consecrated water is used through the ceremony.



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OPENING PRAYERS:

In order to disengage from mundane chores and focus on divine reflections several hymns are recited. They are aimed at internal purification and building rectitude. This is also a *ज्ञान यज्ञ*. The mantras provide both fuel and fuel sticks required. The feelings that emerge, cues that spring out, excitement that it generates, the human values it stimulates, lessons it provides create a humbling delight. To profit from them, appreciation of the context and import of the *मन्त्र* becomes critical. The *मन्त्र* narrate, in an awe-inspiring manner, the expanse and magnificence of His creation as also His supreme command over the entire universe. An appreciation of this reality mollifies our ego, false pride and arrogance and instils dignity and humility in us.

The *मन्त्र* vindicate divinity in earth, air, water, light, firmament, trees and vegetation that provide shelter, nourishment and medication for the good of all living organisms. In fact, they endorse goodness in every aspect of His creations. They convincingly underscore the interdependence of man and his environment and stir up our admiration and love for the nature. All these have been crafted by Him for our sustenance. Here is a couched but, incisive counsel - to abstain from pollution, misuse or destruction and to protect and conserve them for the future generation.

(Annexe 2 - pages 48-51).

PURIFICATION:

Consecrated water is splashed all-over - including the material set aside for the *यज्ञ*. Prayers are addressed to *मरुतः अग्नि* and *इन्द्र*. Mere recall of *पुण्डरीकाक्ष* induces the serenity and tranquillity. (R.11, 12 &13).

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ब्रह्मदण्डः



To be successful the कर्ता has to remain pure - untainted and sin free. As a safeguard, an expiatory measure is built into the ritual - on payment of an appropriate penalty (described as ब्रह्मदण्ड) to the ब्राह्मण assembly that would condone deficiencies, if any, affirm atonement and his admissibility to perform the ritual.

RECEPTION and ENTREATY:



With तिल, कुश and कलश in hand, the कर्ता would make a प्रदक्षिण of the ब्राह्मण. (clockwise circumambulation)

(R.14 also see page 12&13).

Each one of them is distinctly greeted and an appeal is made to: (a) remain focussed through the ceremony calmly and dutifully alongside the कर्ता (b) affirm that the कर्ता is eligible and competent to complete the task (c) endorse that the time and place are appropriate for the ritual (d) testify that the material procured is befitting and (e) authorise the कर्ता to move on.

This demonstrates (a) our respect for them (b) and belief that their approval will eradicate inadequacies, if any. The ब्राह्मण would positively respond to each of the requests. The proceedings would continue under their stewardship.

ENTRUSTMENT:

The कर्ता would individually request them to represent and appear on behalf of specified deities - specifying their name and गोत्र. This is called 'क्षण' - a request to



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co-operate with the कर्ता by accepting to play roles assigned till the end of the ritual. The ब्राह्मण visualise and assimilate the attributes of the deity to be represented by them and articulate their consent to embark on this joint mission in perfect harmony.

पादः



A circular मण्डल is made on the floor, ब्राह्मण is requested to place his feet thereon and the कर्ता would wash the feet



envisioning that respective deity is being venerated (R.15). The कर्ता would then sprinkle that water (तीर्थ) on the self. (R.16). कर्ता would clasp the hand of each of the ब्राह्मण to formally invite them once again and seek their approval to proceed with the ritual.

CHASING THE EVIL:



Sesame seeds are sprinkled on the floor to create a protective shield. (R.17). A few pieces of तिल कुश are placed in the south-western direction envisioning that 8 वसु 11 रुद्र and 12 आदित्य will shield कर्ता and the यज्ञ. The ब्राह्मण confirm that all these are conforming.

It is customary to evoke holy place Gaya and the presiding deity Lord गदाधर in every श्राद्ध. The aspiration is that one currently underway assumes the same significance as the one performed at hallowed Gaya. (see page 16-17)

पाक प्रोक्षण :

Duly consecrated water is sprayed over the food cooked for the ritual. This is intended to wipe out impurities caused by any evil glare or accidental inhalation of the food. (R.18).



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ब्राह्मण आराधनः



ब्राह्मण are requested to remain composed and accept the seat. It is customary to kneel down before ब्राह्मण for veneration. Appropriate objects



(अर्घ्य, वस्त्र, गन्ध, पुष्प, दक्षिण) are used and the service is offered twice -there are विश्वेदेव (R.19).



The ब्राह्मण representing पितृ is adulated in the same manner. (R.20&21) The contemplation is that they are our पितृ in the form वसु, रुद्र, आदित्य. If only one ब्राह्मण is

invited to represent them service is offered thrice, each time mentioning the name and गोत्र.

Since an elaborate worship is not feasible at this juncture, their pardon is sought for the shortfalls.



It is customary for the ब्राह्मण to (a) affirm that they have, indeed, assumed the role assigned to them and (b) approve, acknowledge and appreciate each of the offerings. (expressions like सुस्वागतम्, सुआसनम्, सुपाद्यम्, सुपुष्पः, सुगन्धः)

Note: if suitable candidates are not available, deities are invoke into a bundle of कुश/दर्भ. This is a कूर्च श्राद्ध.



पवित्र



भृंगराज



तुलसी



कुश / दर्भ



अर्घ्य कूर्च



कलश कूर्च

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PART III: THE NUCLEUS

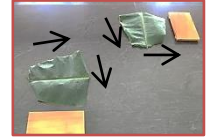
A. पाणि होमः

- There is no अग्निकुण्ड (pan, crater, depression or enclosed place) for this यज्ञ. It is performed in the fire imbedded on the palm of the ब्राह्मण. The belief is that अग्नि, the Supreme Lord, is omnipresent and manifests in myriad forms (vide R.V.1-5-14)

It is widely believed that deities prefer to accept the offerings through proxies. Cooked food is offered through the medium of Agni. He is हव्य। कव्यवाहन i.e. one who apportions and transmits offerings to those for whom it is meant.

Disciples of आश्वलायन (ऋग्वेद) school prefer to make the offerings on the palm of the designated ब्राह्मण – this is called ‘पाणि होम’. Adherents of यजुर्वेद (आपस्तम्ब/बोधायन) schools make offerings into duly consecrated fire.

- A भस्म मण्डल is drawn on the floor to create a protective shield on which a banana leaf (or any appropriate substitute) is laid. (R.22 to 25).



- The palm of the ब्राह्मण who stands for the पितृ is cleaned and अभिघार is done. Fistful cooked rice is duly consecrated. One half of this is for सोम and the other half is for अग्नि (R.26).



His pardon is sought for shortcomings, if any, in veneration. He is beseeched to bestow श्रद्धां मेधां यशः प्रज्ञां विद्यां बुद्धिं श्रियं बलं आयुष्यं तेज आरोग्यं देहि मे कव्यवाहन - virtuous qualities, a healthy and meaningful life

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Transmission of oblations

Offer of cooked food into fire	For 1. सोम 2. अग्नि
Meal	For those who are not entitled to share the offerings into the fire
Leftover meal	For those in slavery/captivity eagerly awaiting feed.
Leftover water	For those in a tormented world and are awfully thirsty
पिंड - rice balls	For पार्वण पितृ - three generations.
Particles of cooked food	For those forefathers not entitled to a पिंड - 4 th / or earlier generation.
Part of cooked food	Sniffed by the कर्ता to satiate parental genes in him.
Smearing	For relatives who accompany पितृ - ones not satisfied with what they get.
Littering- विकिर	For such विश्वेदेव who do not partake the meal.
Littering- प्रकीर	For those who departed before (or without) being duly consecrated.

B. ब्राह्मण भोजनः

- In this भोजन यज्ञ the mouth of the ब्राह्मण serves as the अग्निकुण्ड. A number of prayers are made to preserve pristine nature of the यज्ञ. These include त्रिसुपर्ण, श्रद्धासूक्त, राक्षोघ्नसूक्त, अन्नसूक्त intended to (a) avoid earthly distractions and ensure that ब्राह्मण remain focused (b) drive away all those evil spirits who await opportunities to snatch the offerings made to the deities (c) isolate hidden impurities in the food, if any, and (d) ensure that the food offered promotes

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the development of a healthy body and mind to perpetuate a healthy tradition. (annexe 4)

- After the food is served (items without salt are served first) reciting श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (verse 4-24) ब्रह्मार्पण is done i.e. it is dedicated to the Lord.

It is customary to mix cooked food well before being offered into duly consecrated fire. In this case, however, the कर्ता symbolically touches (अभिमर्शन) the palm of the ब्राह्मण who, in turn, mixes the food served.

- The aspirations expressed here are that (a) यज्ञ under progress is alike the one performed under a banyan tree at गया and appeases गदाधर (b) the mother Earth is the platter on which meal is served and the sky is the lid (c) mouth of the ब्राह्मण acts as a conduit for the offerings made to the commune of deities (d) the Lord shields this यज्ञ (e) all the deities accept the offerings made and that (f) the offerings be abundant and enduring.
- It is customary to request ब्राह्मण to dine peacefully, keep aside what they do not like and call for what they relish most and ensure that they do not feel hungry at night.
- Noticing the glee on the face of the ब्राह्मण the कर्ता would seek their confirmation that they are fully satisfied with the meal. A prayer follows. (R.31).
- At the end of the meal the ब्राह्मण is requested to set apart a small portion of the food and water on the floor. This is for those who are destined to live on another's food/prefer or relish only leftover food -



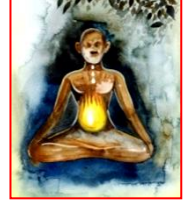
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उच्छिष्ट अन्न पानीय and those living in a deprived or tormented world i.e. hell and the ones who are not eligible for offerings in other forms.

प्राणाग्निहोत्र

This यज्ञ begins with offerings devotedly made to satiate पञ्चप्राण – 5 vital airs. प्राण (in the heart purifying blood) अपान (in the rectum exuding impurities out) समान (in the abdomen regulating digestive power) व्यान (in the neckline attuning the voice) and उदान (circulating all around and fine-tuning the flow of blood) First five offerings follow this line : श्रद्धायां प्राणे निविष्टोमृतं जुहोमि शिवो मा विशाप्रदाहाय स्वाहा. This is अमृतं – nectar. Auspicious

because it is यज्ञ शिष्ट – what is left after being first offered to the Lord. It is now being offered with conscientiousness, faith and diligence. May it enter the system gently to serve a noble cause i.e. gratifying of the Lord by soothing the blaze of hunger. It is He who manifests as वैश्वानर



/जाठराग्नि in every organism to devour every type of food – eat, drink, lick and chew.

The sixth one is for the ब्रह्मन्. The intent is clear – there is an urge to conjoin and be one with the Eternity.

The कर्ता serves water (known as आपोशान) at the start (this nectar serves as a foundation for the food and soothes and wets the food pipe) and at the end (this avoids nudity of the अन्नब्रह्मन्)

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C. पिण्डप्रदानः

- After an appropriate संकल्प is made, a bed of कुश- दर्भा grass is made for laying पिण्ड - this is a दर्भासिन for the पितृ. Three (some schools advocate six i.e. including their spouses) balls of rice mixed with a few grains of sesame are placed on this bed mentioning the गोत्र and name of each of the पितृ in succession. A few grains of loose rice are also placed just behind each पिण्ड - these are meant for those others who follow the पितृ, like a family of bees.



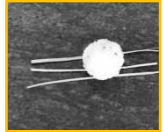


This is a wish affirmed by every कर्ता : This यज्ञ be as effective as the one performed on the banks of holy river फल्गुनी at गया under the shade of a banyan tree and the offering be plentiful.

- It is believed that the पितृ have no physical body and after accepting the offerings they emerge in the shape of पिण्ड (just as the air in a balloon takes the shape of the balloon).
- Cooked rice stuck to the palm of the कर्ता while making पिण्ड is smeared (rubbed) on the दर्भासिन. This is for those who are not entitled to receive food in the form of a पिण्ड.
- A fistful of cooked rice is sniffed by the कर्ता - an offer made to the genes of the पितृ which he carries.



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- पिण्ड पूजा is performed offering ghee for अभ्यंग followed by a full service including अर्घ्य, गन्ध, पुष्प, वस्त्र, धूप, दीप, ताम्बूल, दक्षिणा, नैवेद्य, प्रदक्षिण and नमस्कार. Decor is a feminine vocation and hence adornment of the पिण्ड is done of the by wife of the कर्ता. 
- उपस्थान (recollecting with gratitude the memory of the पितृ, remaining close to them – venerating and doing what they would like one to do) would follow. The belief is that we adore none other than Lord जनार्दन – the one who answers prayers of all devotees and banishes their troubles.
- As an expression of our esteem, we tender तिलोदक on the पिण्ड (flow between thumb and index finger) to complete the offering. 
- Prayers are offered recollecting the time spent with the forefathers, (R.32, 33).
- There are three other groups to whom cooked rice is to be offered: (a) some विश्वेदेव prefer to wait until the others complete their meal. A few grains of rice are littered (विकिर) on the floor for them (b) पितृ who departed before they were born or before their sacrament and those alienated or estranged ones. A few grains of rice are strewn (प्रकिर) on the floor for them (c) a पिण्ड is offered for those who attained celestial status thanks to their noble deeds - regardless of consecration of their corpus in fire. (R.34). 

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PART IV: THE FINISH

स्वस्तिवाचन, स्वधावाचन:

After ब्राह्मण भोजन and पिण्डप्रदान, the place is cleaned. दक्षिण is respectfully tendered – gold coin to विश्वेदेव and silver coin to the पितृदेवता. However, circumstances will determine the form and the extent of the remuneration offered. The stipulations suggest that one should be generous in doing so.

The ब्राह्मण are requested to pronounce that: (a) the यज्ञ has been completed meticulously (b) they are delighted by the earnestness on display (c) the desires of the कर्ता be fulfilled (d) all the deities are satisfied with this worship (e) the food offered is bountiful and (f) the family members would attain greater heights and live long in good health. The ब्राह्मण would affirm all these. This is, indeed, a reaffirmation by the Lord. (R.35)



गोत्राशिषः:

Aspirations of the family are now voiced. The ब्राह्मण would pronounce that they are noble desires and will be realised (details on page 20).

पिंडोद्धारणः:

The cluster of पिंड including the दर्भासन is moved out and released into a pond or river. This is to ensure that its sanctity is preserved and it does not fall into wrong hands. Mantras recited at this juncture portray one's life ambitions. (R.36)



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तद्विष्णोः परमं पदं

The ultimate aspiration of every devout person is to attain His lotus feet. It is an exalted world of matchless joy with no signs of distress or grief. This world is a brimming, bristling and recoiling fountain of boundless supreme bliss and paramount kinship.

This supremely delightful spot refers to the freedom from the shackles of illusory perceptions about the Manifest and experiencing the spiritual, transcendent nature of what is not manifest - Consciousness or the Truth.

Wise men unfailingly cast their eye on this unique spot and pursue their goal assiduously.

While the headway to this incomprehensible, ineffable world may elude even the strongest ascetic practicing hardest of austerities, once conquered, no one falters i.e. returns to this mundane world.

Also see श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 8.21&15.6 कठ 3.8.9 मुण्डक 3.1.6 बृहत् 4.3.32 तै 4.1.6

श्राद्ध विमोकः

It is time for the dispersal of deities (including विश्वेदेव and पितृदेवता) invoked earlier and to rejoice in a moment of fulfilment. As a symbol, दर्भकूर्च (to which leadership of this यज्ञ was assigned) is released. (R.37)



Blessings:



ब्राह्मण who delightfully spent the day with the कर्ता conducting this noble deed ought to be thanked profusely. They are images of great sages like वसिष्ठ and वामदेव. It is with their benevolence that the ritual is completed accurately and the कर्ता could appease his पितृ. R.38,39

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Seeking pardon:

One should also plead pardon for the inconveniences caused to them, inadequacies in the hospitality or any indifference shown to them. (R.40)



They respond by saying that they have disregarded all pains and that the ritual has been completed in a healthy and comprehensive manner. It is believed that these words coming from learned and devout ब्राह्मण would offset any fault and greatly enhance the value of this यज्ञ.

ब्रह्मार्पणः

This यज्ञ is dedicated to Him. कर्ता beseeches Him to accord finality (disregarding all the shortcomings /excesses that might have inadvertently crept in on account of his ignorance or folly) to this यज्ञ. (R.41)



The reckoning is that it was made possible only by His munificence (all the inputs – desire, devotion, drive and substance were bestowed by Him). It was He who manifested in the form of पितृ. This यज्ञ rightfully belongs to Him. Hence, it is only appropriate that all of it is tendered at His feet. He knows how to apportion the fruits. His three names – अच्युत, अनन्त, गोविंद are voiced thrice. This, it is believed, will (a) redeem all inadequacies in the performance of the ritual and (b) ward off fear of toxicity, disease, death, fire, theft etc.

Send-off:

As the learned ब्राह्मण take leave, accompany them up to the gateway as a mark of respect. At the end, what a magnificent feeling it is! It is much like a devout painter or sculptor rejoicing a product of his labour of love.



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PART V: THE CONCLUSIVE EPISTLE

The value system arrayed here convincingly establishes 'परम पद' as a definitive goal and guides us through aptness of various strategic tools and lays a well-defined road map enabling us to capitalise glorious opportunities we are endowed with and see fulfilment in life.

This thought process induces and seduces us to convert our daily chores into an inexpensive and heart-warming, extremely gratifying यज्ञ. It is also fulfilling – because we are vindicating our existence by not being a burden on this earth, earnestly pursuing धर्म, fulfilling Lord's mandate, funnelling all that we are endowed with unto where it rightfully belongs.

As we approach the finale, this is the counsel: follow the footsteps of the पितृ who have attained वसिष्ठत्व (eminence, grace). The legendary पुरुष सूक्त echoes this: (also see श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 4-15 note the word मुमुक्षु)

यज्ञेन यज्ञमयजन्त देवास्थानि धर्माणि प्रथमान्यासन् ।

ते ह नाकं महिमानः सचन्त यत्र पूर्वे साध्याः सन्ति देवाः ॥

The origin as also the end of this universe is a यज्ञ. What emerges in the intermission is also a यज्ञ. It is the act of a यज्ञ that transforms one into a साध्य (one who is rejoicing supreme bliss savouring ज्ञानामृत /attaining godhood by performing ज्ञानयज्ञ) and a देवता. It is यज्ञ that brought them महिमा – supremacy/fame and guided them to the exalted परमपद of the यज्ञपुरुष. Now it is our turn!

The message enshrined in every scripture is loud and clear. One who fails to seize this opportunity subsists like an animal, fails, falls and perishes like any other animal. (ईशावास्य 3 labels this as a आत्महनन - suicide)

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PART VI श्राद्ध – A ज्ञान यज्ञ WORKSHOP

परम पद, the exalted status, is the ultimate goal. ज्ञान, knowing the truth about it, is the vessel that can ferry unto it. The process of acquiring or building this boat is यज्ञ. Thus, ज्ञानयज्ञ represents collective efforts aimed at gaining the wisdom dispelling ignorance and doubts.

Repeatedly reciting the couplets or tunefully rendering Vedic chants does not take us anywhere. To profit from them we have to comprehend the purport of each of those, internalise them, turn them into our eulogies and prayers. We have to systematically and relentlessly contemplate on them. More importantly, we have to live in conformity with them. Stop not (as long as we are sheltered in this physical body) even if we sight our goal – there could be slippages even at this stage!



ज्ञानयज्ञ implies leading a lifestyle under the pious tutelage of the Lord. सर्वस्य तपसो मूलमाचारं ; आचारः प्रथमो धर्मः

This is an exclusive club. Only those with (a) unflinching devotion (b) absolute faith in Vedic literature (c) conviction in the existence of other world and (d) highest reverence for the preceptors (the handbook is not self-instructive and the nectar springs only with the benediction of an enlightened soul - see श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 4-36) qualify to be its members.



And, there are potholes, landmines and stormy weather to reckon with on this long treacherous journey. While कठ likens the path to a sharp knife मण्डक clarifies that study of scriptures,



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discourses, intellectual exercises are not sufficient and alerts that this is not for the faint hearted. In श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (7-3) the Lord muses that while hardly one among thousands of those who are eligible makes an honest attempt and seldom one such diligent practitioner succeeds.

This is not a one-off drill. To tread on a path where most dread and others sweat and fume, one has to muster extra-ordinary perseverance, courage, vigour, devotion and chiefly, spiritual divine intermediation.

Tread we must on this track. For a human being, there is no other corridor - short or circuitous (कर्मन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीवितेच्छतंगं समाः ईशावास्य -2). The forewarnings should only add to our resolve and commitment. This is a stride taken by great men in discharge of their duties (determined by वर्णाश्रम धर्म - the status in the society, stage of life and circumstances). Even a आत्मज्ञानि, a realised soul, a आसकाम, one who has no desires left, follows this dictum. They do so to maintain the world order as also to guide others.

Frustrations and failures often arise from disconnect with the reality. Accidents can often be avoided by tightening the bolts and nuts and keeping the vehicle fit. We tend to habitually ignore such small measures that can make big differences in life.

Not complying with स्वधर्म is tantamount to disregarding the mandate of the Lord (to cultivate gods who, in turn, foster the mankind - श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 3-11). This renders one ineligible even for an entrance test. And more significantly, causes a major disconnect. The best way to begin, therefore, is to fine-tune one's lifestyle. And, turn it into a silky way to परम पदः.

Count on what Lord says: (श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 6-17)

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युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।

युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥

Adherence to स्वधर्म removes the smog masking the अन्तरात्मन्. The resultant rub off is the best way of removing all obstacles and vanquishing enemies. Often



they refer to a group of six - काम (lust, perverse, desire, irrational longing) क्रोध (fury, passion, anger) लोभ (cupidity, greed, lust) मोह (delusion, perplexity indiscrimination) मद (pride,

arrogance, insolence and मत्सर (intoxication jealousy, envy). The Lord describes desire and anger as insatiable fire and innate, invariable enemies (श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 3-37, 38).

Internal enemies have the propensity to (a) push one to a self-destructive mode and (b) breed external enemies. Uprooting these forces from within - अभ्यन्तर शुद्धि or शौच (श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 2.63) is a prerequisite for our evolution. To attain this systematically नित्य विधि (daily task) has built-in mechanisms like - मार्जन, मन्त्राचमन and अघमर्षण.

In a नित्य विधि the संकल्प clearly sets 'appeasing the Lord' as the objective: If these are (a) uninterruptedly (b) efficiently and (c) consciously performed with a pure intent, a unique rapport is established with the Lord. This matures into unanimity of objectives, thoughts and actions and realisation of all aspirations. धन-धान्य समृद्धि, वेदसमृद्धि, तन्तुवर्धन, कर्मसमृद्धि (see page 20).

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The divine spirit sparked by this process displaces all evil forces. The time is now ripe to strengthen divine qualities (a list of these can be seen in श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 16-1 to 3 & 18-42 श्रीमद्भागवतम् 7-11).

Vacillating and dithering nature of the senses pose real challenges. Mind is their master. The way it directs other sense organs (influenced by the people around or swayed by experiences of the past determines) the progression or regression of a person. Mastering the mind is a very arduous task and at a time when सत्त्वगुण is dominant one has to seize the opportunity and plug every conceivable duct promptly lest these adversaries reappear in a guise and spoil the party. This drill has to be repeated relentlessly.

- Wealth (physical, intellectual, spiritual & divine assets included) is to be acquired by and expended for noble cause. Creation of wealth is never spurned – provided there is यज्ञता – nobility at all times. In fact, a ग्रहस्थ is duty-bound to remain gainfully employed - he is obliged to support all others in different stages of life.
- Maintaining good health and longevity is a part of शरीरवृत्ति व्रतम्: अन्तरुल्लसित स्वच्छशक्ति पीयूषपोषितम् । भवत्वृजोपभोगाय शरीरमिदमस्तु मे ॥ The objective is pious – to remain agile and alert so as to be able to perform a यज्ञ effectively and fulfil Vedic mandates. It is also required to devour fruits surfacing therefrom or affluence conferred by the Lord.
- Pursuit of acquittal from sins should be seen in this context – accumulated sins distort our vision and frustrate all our efforts (secular education and development of professional skills included) and

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hinder our progress in every walk of life. Moral turpitudes (विकर्म) and accumulated sins (संचित पाप) create a long chain of hunger, fear, grief, diseases, mishaps, premature death etc. Described as दुःस्वप्न they denote inextricable miseries of secular (earthly) life and worldly illusions. They render noble deed ineffective. Like a small seed growing into a huge tree yielding plentiful fruits, minor slippages often cause infinite misery. To overcome these, timely and decisive atonement and relief measures have to be enforced.

Measures like ब्रह्मदण्ड in a श्राद्ध should not be seen as



a quick gate-pass. It is an opportunity to introspect, confess, repent, accept an open-house reprimand, ungrudgingly undergo expiation and swear not to repeat. This is an inestimably mighty, destructive weapon and has to be viewed

as a deterrent not reparatory. Taking a cue from the सप्त व्याधा story (page 55) one can surmise that a noble deed is often not enough to undo an amiss.

- Approach food (water, vegetation, medicinal herbs, fruits included) with respect. It has to be adored, protected and diligently used - अन्नं न निंद्यात् तत् व्रतम्, अन्नं न परिचक्षीत्, तत् व्रतम्. Desire and ability to produce more has to be generated - अन्नं बहुकुर्वीत् तत् व्रतम्. These concepts have been mirrored in several scriptures (श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 17, तैत्तिरीय 3.7.8-9, छान्दोग्य 7.26.2). This will be a reality only when adequate and timely heat, light and water are bestowed by the Lord at appropriate places. The धन-धान्य समृद्धि works as a supportive pillar to कर्मसमृद्धि.

See guidelines portrayed on page 30 and 54-57

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- There is an onus to ensure वेद समृद्धि by undertaking स्वाध्याय, प्रवचन and प्रचारण. No यज्ञ can be undertaken sans Vedic education. Veda is described as यज्ञिनी - one that carries us to virtuous deeds. Therefore, we seek an environment that is congenial to Vedic education - erudite teachers with noble intent, affable association (total unanimity and absence of enmity) invigorating weather (extremity hampers learning process) and tranquillity all around. Successful completion of the यज्ञ calls for ability to comprehend, to retain and recall when it is required. This comes as His grace.
- It is also obligatory to pursue तन्तुवर्धन - leave a trail of worthy traditions behind by begetting worthy children - of course with the blessings of पितृदेव now appearing as वसु, रुद्र and आदित्य. Words like वीर, सुवीर, प्रजा etc. have been used in this context. Here a वीर, सुवीर is one who is erudite in Vedic scriptures and proficient in devotedly adhering to Vedic dictates, one who stands out in (and adds sheen to) a commune of scholars. He is the one who upsurges his parents and teachers into limelight. For a teacher प्रजा means generations of meritorious and worthy शिष्य, शिष्य of शिष्य and so on. The lineage paves the way for वेद समृद्धि and कर्म समृद्धि.

Thus, श्राद्ध touches our psyche at several points. This presents an opportunity to introspect and to tweak our ways. It also acts as a soft reminder to fall in line and motivates us to stay with the good work. While the course of this यज्ञ remains unaltered, an unremitting pursuer will, each time, discover new ideas out of the same recitals. Vedas have always more to be explored.

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Persistence with a lifestyle outlined hitherto would gradually but certainly burn all sins and purify one completely enabling him to see the light – Absolute Truth (श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 4-38). Freeing him from the slough of transmigration this light will lead him (in this life and with this body) comfortably on to परम पद – the ultimate summit. One thus becomes his own friend. One, who dithers, however, completely misses a God sent opportunity (मनुष्य जन्म) and turns into his own foe.

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।

आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव रिपुरात्मनः ॥

श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता 6-5

1 - Introductory prayers

The legendary पुरुष-सूक् (Rigved 8.4.17-19) occupies a place of pride in all the four Vedas, epics and other scriptures. Employed in daily rituals it beautifully eulogizes the eternity, virtuosity, pervasiveness and infinite prowess of the Lord portraying an excellent intellectual imagery of creation of the universe. 'पुरुष' is not a person in human form and hence the description of various limbs persisted only in a realm of imagination of illustrious poets.

- He is omnipresent. His boundless expanse has no beginning and no end. He has thousand (countless, immeasurable in this context) heads, eyes, arms and limbs. He is the creator. He is the one who presides over the entire universe. Manifesting in myriad forms, He is immanent - in every object, animate or inanimate. The entire creation took only a fraction of his inestimable potency - the rest is illuminating in the firmament. He is the architect of the earth, the cities, days and nights, seasons and originator of all organisms - birds, cows, goats, horses etc. Out of Him mouth, arm, lap and feet emerged a social system of division of labour (should not be mistaken for the manmade caste system). So did, sun from eyes, moon from the mind, fire and respire (प्राणवायु) from the mouth, sky from the navel, heaven from the head, earth from the feet and the directions from the ear. The Vedic systems, metrical forms are His designs. In an intellectual imagery of worship and यज्ञ undertaken by the gods, metrical system formed the periphery, पुरुष served as the sacrificial animal, seasons formed the fuel, months, sun, moon and the three worlds

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were fuel sticks. Even a contemplation of His worship lends holiness and godhood. Such a deliberation places mortals on a path of evolution.

- An adulation of विश्वेदेव follows (8.7.15-16). It is believed that one who meditates on them fervently and peacefully will attain strong will, riches and will be free from all hardships. The wishes embedded therein are: may अग्नि to whom we make offerings and worship bless us with eminence and success in our यज्ञ ; may these divinities shield us from sins and grant good health, affluence and fame; may the environment be conducive to us; may our desires be fulfilled; may six all powerful goddesses bestow upon us riches and worthy lineage; may अग्नि and सोम guard us, wipe out our enemies; may सवितृ safe guard both the यज्ञ and its performer; may the mighty इन्द्र facilitate completion of the यज्ञ and grant all round progress; may 8 वसु 11 रुद्र and 12 आदित्य make us more resilient and erudite.
- Another set of prayers begin with पवमान सोम (7.1.15). He is very generous in rewarding his wards, permeating happiness and swaying them away from misdeeds. May मित्रा, वरुण and आर्यमा (children of अदिति) fortify every direction, shield us from the enemies and navigate us comfortably to a world free from hurdles, sins, misery and struggle (8.7.13). We beseech splendidly brilliant अग्नि, रुद्र and इन्द्र to guard us and bestow painless transmigration into a world free from all maladies. Just as He liberated a white coloured cow from the clutches of विश्वावसु may विश्वेदेव hold disentangle us from all wrongdoings and may अग्नि bless us with long life (3.7.14). We

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eulogize the One who manifests in many forms, the One who represents the ultimate 'reality' and the One who provides light, air and water. We seek acquittal from our transgression (caused by our ignorance) (5.6.11).

Chronicle of mantras

R.	Mantra	Deity	Eulogy / Supplication
1	7.3.8	पवमान सोमः	May He purify every material and everyone involved in this यज्ञ.
2	8.3.6	नद्यः	Extolling their virtues, we implore waters from holy rivers, tributaries and lakes to flow.
3	4.4.34	भूदेवी	Let us exalt the One who protects, nourishes and enriches.
4	2.5.14	सूर्यः	Aroma of these plants would banish seen/unseen creatures, protect us from all diseases.
5	-	वरुण	May He banish all our sins
6	8.5.11	ओषधी	Munificence of बृहस्पति would yield fruits that will annihilate all ailments caused by our sinful deeds.
7	2.7.23	अग्नि	He dazzles in a golden spot i.e. in the sky manifesting as Sun.
8	3.1.3	यूपः	In a ज्ञान यज्ञ, a clean heart is a post to which Lord is secured.
9	-	सोम	A special gift that appeases पितृ
10	4.8.4	पूषन्	Protect us from our enemies who cast their net far and wide. Like the trees that provide shelter to the birds, provide fruits, flowers and shade to a passer-by, we provide shelter and sustenance to many.
11	5.4.23	मरुतः	A virtuous act is being performed by

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			making offerings that are wholesome. He represents enlightenment, purity and the ultimate 'reality'
12	6.3.39	अग्नि	Astute, honourable Agni accepts oblation, blazes brilliantly and spreads lustre all around.
13	6.6.31	इन्द्र	Let us sing in a chorus praising Him May wholesome soma juice satiate Him. May riches be showered on us & demonic enemies desolated.
14	-	ब्राह्मण	A repository of all wealth, a boon giver and a cruiser in a turbulent ocean of life – annihilate poverty, banish all darkness, disease, fear, and death.
15	7.6.5	आपः	May the water be propitious and congenial
16	7.6.17	पितरः	Beseeching पितृ (they are insightful) from all the three worlds to be generous and devour the offerings.
17	8.4.5	अग्नि रक्षोहा	Pleading to drive-away all the evil spirits brutes, beasts etc.
18	7.2.18	अग्नि इन्द्र सोमन्	May अग्नि manifesting as fire, air and sun, controlling and cleansing all purify us; may इन्द्र and other heavenly forces purify us; may सोमन् flourish and pour all the virtuous juices into this यज्ञ.
19	4.8.15- 16	विश्वेदेव	Imploring विश्वेदेवा to arrive from all directions, accept दभसिन rejoice soma drink and be favourably disposed.
20	7.6.22	अग्नि	We implore अग्नि to escort पितृदेवाता
21	7.6.17	पितरः	Salutations to all our पितृ who await oblations to be made at this यज्ञ
22	-	विष्णु	Shield this यज्ञ from wicked eyes and

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			पंक्ति दोष i.e. discrimination in serving.
23	2.1.22	इन्द्र	An appeal to destroy the terrible ghost and protect this यज्ञ
24	3.4.22	अग्नि	May He blaze intensely to burn away our sins and destroy opponents
25	7.5.32	अग्नि	May He safeguard this यज्ञ and everyone in the family
26	6.5.9	वैश्वानर	Omnipresent Lord who is in full blaze, presides over all the three worlds now accepts our offerings through the ब्राह्मण
27	1.2.7	विष्णु	May the One who conquered the entire earth with his three giant steps ensure the success of this यज्ञ
28	1.2.7	विष्णु	The dust of His feet that fell as He was traversing consecrated the three worlds. We seek His pardon for our digression, if any, during this यज्ञ
29	2.2.4	विश्वेदेव	We entreat Gods (11 in each of the 3 worlds. 33 or 33000 in all) to arrive in unison and accept our offerings
30	7.6.19	पितरः	We implore जातवेद अग्नि to lead this यज्ञ. He knows all our ancestors wherever they may be – even unknown to us.
31	1.6.3	इन्द्र	A plea to grant new fortitude and rejuvenate us after this long drill.
32	8.1.19	विश्वेदेव	An appeal to grant us longevity and guide through noble deeds.
33	-	पितरः	May the ancestors bless us with riches and worthy children. We vow to follow their valuable directions.
34	7.6.19	पितरः	May the Lord grant an appropriate status to them as per His resolve.
35	7.2.29	पवमान सोमः	May वरुण provide essentials for our यज्ञ and may सोम protect it.

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36	1.2.7	विष्णु	The purpose of our life is to attain His lotus feet
37	5.4.5	सविता	May the divinities satisfied with our acclaim, tribute and adoration grant us sustenance and protection and traverse back comfortably.
38	5.1.20	रथगोपा	May the erudite, generous and mighty पितृ, ब्राह्मण and पूषन् be generous, caring and be kind. So be heaven and earth.
39	8.3.28	सूर्या	May this inbred, delightful affiliation perpetuate.
40	8.2.14	विश्वेदेव	Toeing the path of venerable sages like वसिष्ठ (prayers composed by them earned them the benevolence of the Lord) we sing in praise of the Lord and seek sustenance and protection.
41	5.6.24	विष्णु	Every syllable voiced and every oblation made here is aimed at Him. May He accept them and be kind to secure our welfare

3: Esoteric Overtones

Prayers and recitations have, thus far, been seen only in a limited functional ritualistic context. But those who are inquisitive and diligent would notice several veiled but focal messages and spiritual overtones.

परोक्ष प्रिया इव हि देवाः (ऐतरेय 1.3.14). Divinities cherish indirect or implicit ways (e.g. receive oblations through an agent i.e. अग्नी) Thus, sages veritably communicate through codes, symbols, numbers, simile and rhetoric. There are puzzles and mysteries. A few thoughts emerging from the foregoing are being considered for further breakdown of the narration:

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- पुरुष सूक्त is a beautiful imagery of a यज्ञ occurring only in the mind and spirit of the sages. It is a peaceful exercise diligently pursued in discharge of duties assigned by the Creator. Asceticism is the fire while jealousy, desires, hate, anger serve as fuel in this यज्ञ and realisation of the Truth is the यज्ञशिष्ट. This unique experience is what is portrayed in these verses (a) पुरुष is not a terrible-looking entity with countless limbs. It describes His immanence. He enables us to breathe, our eyes to see, our ears to hear. Thus, He operates through every object of His creation. (b) यज्ञ refers to the dynamics of creation; fires to the divine Spirit and trending upward; ghee to the lustre and vital energy. (c) The depiction that the universe emerged out of His corpus is ingenious. The emergence of Sun from His eyes is significant for, it is He who drives away our ignorance and enlightens us. Likewise reference to moon affirms the correlation between our mood swings and the passage of the moon. Further, it is He who knows our mind best. Again, it is the breath of the Lord that has filled the universe with vital air. Imbedded in every living organism as पञ्चप्राण, He regulates our health and determines our life span (d) Emergence of a ब्राह्मण from the mouth is symbolic. Verbal communication is critical for one whose primary occupation is learning and propagation of Vedic knowledge. Analogy of राजन्य (warrior) to the forearms of the Lord should also be seen in the context of skill sets which performance specific duties demand in a well-defined social system (e) साध्य, सन्त and देवता represent क्रियाशक्ति, ज्ञानशक्ति and



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इच्छाशक्ति – combination of resolve, physical and intellectual powers (f) *सप्त परिधि* implies that there is no world sans the *ब्रह्मन्*. Each of the seven worlds is under His command.

- There is a reference to *यूपः* (see page 48–R8). This mantra is recited while consecrating and adorning a sacrificial post. Vedic literature describes *यूप* as an 8 angled device as powerful as *वज्रायुध* - a thunder bolt. One can construe that *यूप* is a *अस्त्र* and is intended to destroy enemies who have plagued our heart. A worshipper ties down *विष्णु* (known as *धर्मयूप*) to it, leaving no room for any evil thoughts.
- *त्रिसुपर्ण* which literally means 3 beautiful wings refers to the Trinity. Their Creator is *सुपर्ण*. *सुपर्ण* also means a pool abounding with lotuses. The reckonings are: (a)He, like the wings of the bird, averts our downfall (b)He is surrounded by seven sages (lotuses) who can expiate sins (c)our lotus heart is His divine seat and that (d) this earth has myriad pools with His imageries bedecked in innumerable lotuses.
- Numbers 4, 4, 2, 5, 2 symbolise Lord Vishnu – see page 7.

Esoteric expressions like these can be cracked and deciphered only by an adept preceptor (note the counsel in *श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता* 2.63)

4.अभिष्ववण मन्त्र

It is customary to recite *त्रिसुपर्ण* (*तैत्तिरीय आरण्यक*) to reinforce the *भोजन यज्ञ*. The three supplications are: (a) grant us intellectual powers and an environment that is conducive to build such prowess,

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- (b) hold us free from heinous turpitudes - killing the foetus, virtuous and the brave and
(c) enable us to understand the self, the purpose of our life and ways and means of obtaining liberation from दुःस्वप्न i.e. desolations of material life and the cycle of rebirth. See प्राणान्निहोत्र & अन्न प्रक्रिय sections.

The word मधु is repeatedly used as a part of त्रिसुपर्ण chant and अभिश्रवण.

A student expects (a) enchanting मेधाशक्ति (b)captivating तेजस् and ओजस् – brilliance and vivacity (c) mellifluous relations with his guru and (d) brotherhood with fellows.

A कर्ता desires that (a) he remains engrossed in adorable यज्ञ (b) oblations remain clean, pure and delicious (c) ब्राह्मण finds the food delightful (d) the mantras are recited tunefully and melodically and (e) the ब्राह्मण is put in comfort while eating.

A devout जिज्ञासु pursues (a) enchanting मधु विद्या that can carry him closer to माधव (b) ability to make enchanting स्तुति and lovely offerings into fire and (c) मधुरवाणि - persistently pleasing newscast, polite and amiable speech.

- श्रद्धासूक्त see page 9-10
- राक्षोघ्नसूक्त has assailing enemies as the central theme.
- अन्नसूक्त – recitation of an assemblage from various sections of ऋग्वेद is intended to drive home the significance of virtuous deeds.
- References to the Lord, hallowed centres like Ganges (पुण्यक्षेत्र, तीर्थक्षेत्र) are made. They banish all

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miseries, satiate thirst for knowledge and pave the way to 'liberation'.

- A few couplets are recited and restated (see page 6).
- A story (हरिवंश, पद्मपुराण, गरुड पुराण) of seven children who being unable to bear starvation during famine, killed their guru's cow and ate the meat is recalled. These children presumed that they will be pardoned if they perform a श्राद्ध and offer the meat to पितृदेवता before partaking it. Yet, they had to endure the anguish on three scores – stealing guru's cow, falsification and eating forbidden food. In the subsequent rebirths, their immense faith in and adherence to Vedic mandates wiped out their sins and earned them Lord's munificence.

5 अन्न प्रक्रिया:

One can discern repeated references to 'अन्न' (it includes everything that we eat, sip, lick and chew) in different contexts. Put on a broad canvas of a ज्ञान यज्ञ, The Lord is immanent in everything created by Him. He is both 'अन्न' (one that is eaten) and अन्नाद (one who eats). This astonishing and adept creator has His own way of ensuring food security. The universe is thus replete with this 'अन्न' – 'अन्नाद' relation. One serves as food to the other - water is food for the vegetation which, in turn, is the food for an animal and so on.

Like every other living organism, eat we should and live we should. However, in Lord's dispensation human beings are endowed with unique attributes, faculties and mission to be accomplished. These present wonderful opportunities – to live like a noble man,

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experience delight and permeate joy all around. On this pathway, food serves as a vehicle.

The implication for one born as a ब्राह्मण is that (a) it should be सात्त्विक - one that strengthens physical abilities as well as mental faculties (कर्मेन्द्रिय and ज्ञानेन्द्रिय) (b) one should be gifted with भोज्याभोज्य विवेक i.e. cognitive faculty - know what to eat, when to eat, where to eat, how much to eat, in whose comradeship to eat. While excessive restraint would be tormenting अन्तरात्मन् i.e. inner soul, overindulgence would impact functionality (c) one should ideally partake only यज्ञशिष्ट - nectar left-over after performing पञ्च महायज्ञ - a reference to स्वाहा and स्वधा is indicative of this (see page 6) (d) one should have the desire as well as the ability to eat, relish and digest (good health and peace of mind).

The course which it takes is presented in the diagram:

1. Food supports प्राणधारण - reinforcing, maintaining and prolonging life.
2. प्राणधारण helps build energy level (बल) required for the rigorous, long journey.
3. Stamina (बल) or vigour renders तपस् - self-restraint, endurance, atonement and penance possible.
4. Penance (तपस्) and asceticism generates allegiance, conscientiousness and diligence (श्रद्धा) required to pursue Vedic education.
5. Absolute belief breeds मेधा - ability to assimilate the doctrines presented by the preceptor in a right perspective.
6. Grasp develops मनीष - ability to discriminate (right and wrong, good and bad, real and unreal, eternal

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and ephemeral) making one wise and prudent Providence helps *मनन* - reflection and meditation.

7. Meditation and constant deliberation leads to *शान्ति* - peace, firmness, tranquillity and serenity. Composure and equanimity (*शान्ति*) trains *चित्त* - clarity of thought, ideas and vision - a conduit for the flow of knowledge.
8. *चित्त* leads to *स्मृति* - regular recollection of precepts and firmness of thoughts and beliefs



9. *स्मृति* keeps propelling and recoiling causing *स्मार* - a cascade.

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10. The gush ripens into know-how i.e. विज्ञान – gateway to the world of enlightenment
11. Know-how (विज्ञान) empowers one to conquer and experience a state of ecstasy and eternal joy (आत्मज्ञान).

6 महालय श्राद्धः

Following changes are to be incorporated while performing महालय श्राद्ध during the पितृपक्षः.

- धूरि विलोचन are the विश्वेदेवता
- 12 paternal and maternal forefathers (द्वादश पितृ) are offered पिण्ड as per पार्वण system i.e. group of three in the hierarchy (e.g. father, fathers' father and father's grandfather) mentioning the गोत्र and name of each of them.
 1. father, paternal grandfather and great grandfather (3) and mother, paternal grandmother and great grandmother (3)
 2. Mother's father, her paternal grandfather, great grandfather (3) and mother's mother, her mother's paternal grandmother and great-grandmother (3).
- In the case of all others, एकोद्धिष्ट (directed at one) system is followed. पिण्ड is offered to a person specifying his/her name and गोत्र. His or her spouse and children are conjoined. This group includes :
 1. Step mother and her male children.
 2. Spouse
 3. Children along with their spouses.
 4. Brothers of the father, mother and the self along with their spouses.

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5. Sisters of the father, mother and the self along with their spouses.
6. Father and mother of the spouse.
7. Teacher, disciple, close friend, well-wisher and others along with their spouses.

A 'धर्म पिण्ड' is dedicated in each of the four corners for those who died before taking birth; those who departed without descendants or spurned, discarded by the children; those inhabitants of the three worlds who have no access to food or water; those unfortunate ones bereft of Vedic refinement during their lifetime and/or upon their death; all those others in distress or deprivation and labouring to attain liberation. To all of them offerings are made affectionately and gratefully this day with a wish that it may last long and proliferate profusely.

There is no trace of selfishness or egoism here. There is a musing of (सर्वार्थ चिन्तन, विशाल बुद्धि) common good (see page 8-9) dominating every thought, speech and action.