APARA KRIYAS AND SRAADDHAM

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Vedas and Smritis are the roots of Sanatana Dharma. Many are the Samskaras (purificatory rituals) prescribed in Smritis for the upliftment of human being to Godhood, which is the sole purpose of the rare and invaluable human birth. Of them, Antyeshti, the last Samskara performed for the person, who has departed from his body and subsequent Sraaddha performed for his comfortable journey to the afterworld and settling down in an agreeable environment, play a very important and decisive role.

Sri Vaidyanatha Dikshitar, who lived in Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu some four centuries ago, performed the extremely tough task of sifting a very large number of Smriti texts on ‘Dharma Sastram’ authored by several Rishis and presenting them clearly and analytically in the form of Nibandhana text, known as ‘Smritimuktaphalam’ (also called Sri Vaidyanatha Dikshtiyam). He has in many places resolved the seeming contradiction among the different Smritis and covered the entire gamut of ‘Dharma Sastram’ in six Kandas (cantos): Varnasrama Dharma, Aahnika, Aasoucha, Sraaddha, Tithinirnya and Prayaschitta. Following ‘Smritimuktaphalam’, various abbreviated books on ‘Dharma Sastram’ in Tamil and other languages came to be published for easy reference. As instructed by Jagadguru Sankaracharya Swamiji of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, ‘Smritimuktaphalam’ was published by Veda Dharma sastra Paripalana Sabha recently in seven bound volumes with original Sanskrit slokas and Tamil translation.

‘Sraddha’ (faith) in Dharma Sastram laid down in such great detail by Rishis out of compassion solely for the benefit of mankind, in teachings of Guru and in good practices adopted by elders is the fundamental anchor of the rituals explained in the texts. The extent of rigorous detailing, specially while dealing with emergency situations, explored by the Rishis beats one’s imagination. Fast materialistic life of modern day has contributed to erosion in this Sraddha. Unfortunately many undesirable practices have crept in.

As instructed by Jagadguru Sankaracharya Swamiji of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, in order to apprise the present generation of the various essential aspects of the rituals connected with Apara Kriyas and Sraaddhas in their authoritative perspective, a brief summary in English of the same is attempted in the following pages to serve as an introductory guide. Brief sections
on ‘Aasoucha Sangraham’ and ‘Gaya Sraaddha’ have been added, in view of commonality of interest. The following are the primary reference books used in this compilation.


I place this little book reverentially in all humility at the lotus feet of Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharyas of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.

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CONTENTS

APARA KRIYAS

Duty to Parents

Last Moments of Person about to die

Sarva Prayashchittam (Major Expiation)

Karta

Prayashchitta for Doshas (defects) in death

Burial and Cremation

Start of Kritya

Vapanam

Nagna Prachhadana Sraaddham

Tilodaka danam, Vasodaka danam and Pinda danam

Evolution of Preta body

Ekottara Vriddhi Sraaddham

Nava Sraaddham

Sanchayanam

Darbha Samskaram

Case of change of Karta in between ten days

Tenth day Rituals

Tenth day – Other Rules

Eleventh day – Ekadasaaham

Various Emergencies arising before Sapindikaranam
Twelfth day - Sapindikaranam
Sapindikaranam – More Aspects
Sodakumbha Sraaddham
General Notes
Narayanabali
Grihayagnam – Thirteenth day
Diksha during the year
Masikam etc.
Darsa Sraaddham etc.

AASOUCHA SANGRAHAM

SRAADDHAM
Importance of Sraaddham
Categories of Sraaddham
Mahalaya Sraaddham
Naandi Sraaddham
Sraaddha Devatas
Time for Sraaddham
Sraaddha Tithi
Brahmanas invoked in Sraaddham
Restrictions for Karta and Brahmanas invoked
Cooking of Food
Sraaddha Procedure – Preliminaries
Serving of food to Brahmanas
Vikirannam
Pindapradanam
Pitru Sesham – Eating with Relatives
Some more Rules
Sraaddham by Sons together
Puranic Stories

GAYA SRAADDHA

Gaya
Prayag – Triveni Sangamam
Kashi
General
APARA KRIYAS
The human birth is hailed as the most important as it can lead to permanent release from the cycle of births and deaths. Sastras prescribe forty samskaras (purificatory rites) for rendering the three human bodies, the sthula, sukshma and karana (gross, subtle and causal), pure and fit for redemption by God’s grace. Apara kriyas (post death ceremonies) and Sraaddham performed for one’s parents are some of the most essential samskaras.

पुन्नामनरकाद्-यस्मात्पतरंत्रायतेसुतीः।
तस्मापपुत्रइितप्रोक्तीःइहचािपपरत्रच॥
(Garuda Puranam 21.32)
“The son saves his parents from the hell called ‘Put’ and is therefore called ‘Putra’ in this world as well as the next.”

अिनपयािनशरीरािणििभिोनैिशाश्वतीः।
िनपयंसिन्निहतोमृपयुीःकततव्योधमतसङ्ग्रहीः॥
(Garuda Puranam 47:24,25)
“Bodies are transient; wealth is fleeting. Death is ever hovering; Dharma (virtue) alone should be accumulated.” It is true that unless the jiva has attained mukti, he carries his accumulated load of punya and papa when he leaves the human body and departs for his next birth. Depending on Yama Dharmaraja’s verdict on the basis of his karmic load, the jiva is left to enjoy the pleasures of swarga, suffer the misery of naraka or is born into fresh bodies on the earth- man, animal, bird, worm, tree, grass etc. Here the Apara kriya and Sraaddha performed by his son play a very helpful and positive role. These ceremonies, if properly performed, are efficacious in mitigating the misery of the jiva, increasing his happiness and even obtaining his permanent union with the Lord. Apara Kriya is the last of the samskaras (purificatory rituals) prescribed by Vedas and Smritis for the human body. Sri Vaidyanatha Dikshitar in his celebrated Nibandhana grantha ‘Smritimuktapalham’ (also known as Vaidyanatha Dikshitiyam) has established that this is divine samskara, through which the dead person attains the state of Deva. Limitless merit (Punya) and Swarga and even Moksha are attained through proper performance of Apara Kriyas, says Dikshitar. Sastras emphasise that these are obligatory duties for the son. He will be rid of Pitru-run (debt) only by performing these ceremonies properly. If he omits to perform them with sraddha, ie.faith, he and his descendants will suffer untold misery. As the ceremony is to be performed with sraddha, it is called Sraaddham. Sraddha means faith and the resulting keenness to perform all rituals as per procedure.
Nobody should think that the mantras in Apara Kriyas are inauspicious. They are very majestic. Many of the mantras pray for Brahma Sayujyam (Merger with Brahman) of the dead person. There are prayers for the welfare, peace and joy of the village, cattle etc. Hence it is essential for everyone to perform this Karma for the welfare of himself, his family and even his village and town.

The body of a person becomes ‘Sava’ on his death. The jiva departs from the body for taking a new form. He is ‘Preta’ (one who travels). The vasanas (tendencies) in him owing to the long time connection with the body kindle intolerable hunger and thirst and feelings of sorrow on severance of relationship with those he leaves behind. His son or Karta gives him water and Pindam (food); he cremates (or buries) the body with mantras, thus taking it back to the five Mahabhutas (Akasa, Vayu, Agni, Water and Prithvi) and helps in cutting off the jiva’s relation with the body. This is Apara Kriya, extending over 12 days. The Karta removes the Preta state of the jiva, raises him to ‘Pitru’ state and unites him with his Sapinda ancestors, Pitha (father), Pitamaha (grandfather) and Prapitamaha (greatgrandfather). This is Sapindikaranam, performed usually on the 12th day. Though the ‘Pitru’ state can really be attained only at the end of one whole year, Sastras permit the Karta to ‘attract’ in advance the various Sraaddhas performed during the year and do them prior to Sapindikaranam on the 12th day. This provision in Sastras is given for two reasons. One is, if the Karta dies during that year, the jiva will have no chance to get released from ‘Preta’ state to the ‘Pitru’ state, with terrible consequences. The second reason is, if not done on the 12th day, the Karta loses the eligibility to celebrate auspicious functions like marriage, Seemantham etc. of his children; he does not have the necessary purity to perform ‘Naandi’ Sraaddham on such auspicious occasions. However, it must be borne in mind that though the various Sraaddhas of the year are attracted and performed in advance on 12th day, it is essential to perform all of them on the prescribed days during the year without fail. Apara Kriyas are essential for helping the dead person to get released from impure ‘Sava’ or ‘Preta’ state and to attain higher state. Sastras define Kartas and describe procedures to be adopted in various situations.

उपरागसहस्त्राणि व्यतीपातायुताति च।अमालक्षंतु द्वादशया: कलां नाहिन्ति पोढशीम्॥
एवं विधाया द्वादशया: तिम: कोठ्यकथकोटय:।मातापित्रोऽत्माहस्य कलां नाहिन्ति पोढशीम्॥
“Sraaddha rituals observed during a thousand eclipses, ten thousand Vyatipata Punyakalas and a lakh of Amavasyas do not equal 1/16\textsuperscript{th} part of Dvadasi. Three and a half crores of Dvadasis of such merit do not equal 1/16\textsuperscript{th} part of the Apara Kriyas performed for mother and father.” Hence Karta should perform Apara Kriyas with total commitment and without delay. As Kanchi Maha Swamiji has emphasised, the merit of performing ‘Anatha Preta Samskara’ (Apara Kriyas for orphaned, unknown dead persons) is equal to that of Asvamedha yaga.
The person about to die should take bath and perform Sarva prayaschitha (Major Expiation). If health does not permit bath, seven types of Snana are mentioned in Dharma Sastra. They are: 1) Maantram- Snana with only mantras like “Apohishta” 2) Paarthiva or bhauma- Snana with soil, 3) Agneya- Snana with Vibhuti 4) Vaayavya- Snana with the dust from cow’s feet 5) Divya- Snana in rain water when sun is bright 6) Maanasa- Meditating on Atma 7) Yougika- Meditating on Vishnu. Only after bath, one gets the right to perform any Vaideeka karma.

After bath, he should wear on his forehead and other parts of the body Tripundram (Vibhuthi as Smarta practice), Urdhva pundram (Naamam as Vaishnava practice), or both or Gopi chandanam, as per family practice. Sastras say that one who wears Urdhva pundram, even if he is Patita (fallen from Vedic path) and wherever he dies, he will shine in Vishnu loka. Similarly, one who wears Vibhuti and Rudraksham, whoever he is, attains Parameswara’s Sarupyam. Hence, this is a must. Next he should partake of Ganga jalam or tulasi jalam which is hailed as “Sri Padodakam”. Sastra says if one drinks Ganga jalam with Tulasi - only one mustard quantity- he saves twenty one generations of ancestors from sin. Wetting the body with Ganga Jalam also purifies the jiva.
Sarva Prayaschitham (Major Expiation)

Dharma Sastra describes very detailed Sarva Prayaschitham in terms of what is defined as Praajapatyā Kruchram. If the prescribed Prayaschitta cannot be performed, he can authorize Brahmanas to perform the same. Brahmanas can undertake upavasa (fast), vrata, homam etc. on his behalf.

“Brahmanas are walking Tirthas. Sinful people are cleansed with the tirtha of mere words of brahmanas. Whatever they speak is accepted by Devatas because brahmana is the form of all Vedas.” Hence, one should speak out whatever sins he has committed before the brahmanas and give Danam. Go danam (gift of cow) is considered as an effective substitute for Praajapatyā Kruchram. One, who gifts a cow, which gives plenty of milk, at the time of death, attains Brahmaloka. Sastra adds that if the dying person is unable to do this, his son who is the karta or other relatives may do the danam. Other substitutes are: chanting Gayatri mantra 10,000 times; feeding 12, 24 or 60 brahmanas; performing Tila homam 1000 times.

During the last moments, it is important for the dying person to chant the name of Bhagawan-Govinda, Siva Siva etc., Stotras, portions of Veda, Gayatri etc., and pray to Bhagawan for forgiveness for the sins committed, with the sense of complete surrender. Sastras declare unequivocally that the final thoughts of the dying person form the basis of his next birth. Hence it is important for the relatives to create a divine and peaceful atmosphere, chant Bhagavad Gita, Srimad Bhagavatham, stotrams like Vishnu Sahsranamam and, most importantly, avoid mundane discussions and quarrels. If a yogi comes and gives darshan to the dying person, he attains to the Supreme state, even if he is a great sinner. Many Danams are stipulated in Sastra.

“Panditas mention Dasa (ten) danas, namely cow, land, til, gold, ghee, cloth, food grains, jaggery, silver, salt.” One can also give seat, bed, Dipam, boat etc. in Danam.
“Knowledge is the friend of one who goes abroad. Wife is the friend at home. Doctor is the friend for the sick person. Danam is the friend for the dying person.” Danam should be given with faith. This danam helps the soul to travel the long distance of 86000 yojanas (one yojana = 13kms) between this world and Yama loka. This route is extremely tough where sun is very hot, the soil on the ground is scorching, there are no trees, water bodies etc., on the way and Yama bhutas keep torturing continuously.

The dying person’s son should keep his father’s head on his right thigh and chant in his right ear sacred mantras including Panchaksharam, Ashtaksharam, Rama Shadakshram etc. Once the life departs the son should spread Darbha grass on the floor and lay the body on it with head in south direction. The son and the other relatives can wear Utthariyam now and wear the yagnopaveetha on the right shoulder (Prachinaveeti) and perform Namaskaram to the dead person. Women should leave the hair open and perform Namaskaram.
The one who performs the Uttara kriya or Apara kriya is known as Karta. Karta is of two categories- the Prime or Mukhya Karta, and Secondary or Gauna Karta. Dharma Sastra describes the order of priority of various persons who can be Kartas:

1) Aurasa putra - own son
2) Poutra - Son’s son
3) Prapoutra - Son’s son’s son
4) Datta putra - adopted son
5) Dattaputra’s putra - Son of adopted son
6) Son who has been given to others in adoption
7) Douhitra - Daughter’s son who will inherit property
8) Douhitra in general
9) Wife in the case of dead husband; Husband in the case of dead wife
10) Daughter
11) Younger brother
12) Eldest of sons of brother
13) Step mother’s son
14) Son of step mother’s son
15) Father
16) Elder brother
17) Mother
18) Daughter-in-law
19) Daughter of son
20) Daughter of daughter
21) Wife of grandson (son’s son)
22) Daughter of Poutra
23) Wife of Datta putra
24) Sister
25) Sister’s son
26) Sapinda (One who has Asoucha - impurity for ten days)
27) Samanodaka (One who has Asoucha for three days)
28) Gnaati on mother’s side having 10 days’ Asoucha
29) Gnaati on mother’s side having 3 days’ Asoucha
30) Son-in-law
31) Friend.

If the dead person is a woman, persons mentioned at the S.No. 1 to 10 above remain the same. In S.No. 11 to 17 it should be interpreted as brother of husband, son of husband’s brother etc. For S.No. 24 and 25, the interpretation should be the sister of husband followed by the dead woman’s sister’s son. If the Primary Karta in the above order of priority is not available, the next available karta in the list will perform the Apara kriya as Gauna karta. He will hand over the charge to the Primary Karta once he arrives.

If the son or Douhitra is less than two years of age, the next karta in the order of priority should take authority from him through Darbha and perform the kriya. If he is 3-7 years of the age he should do kriya up to Agni Pradanam and the rest by the Gauna karta. If it is wife, she should do up to Agni Pradanam and the rest by others. In case of many sons, the eldest should do Agni Pradanam. If he is not available, the next elder should perform. When there is no division of property in the family, if the elder brother dies without a son, then the younger brother becomes the Karta. If the division has happened, then the wife is the Karta. In the case of twins, the son who is born later is the elder. A Brahmachari can perform Apara kriya for mother, father, elder brother, mother’s father, mother’s mother, mother’s brother, mother’s brother’s wife, father’s brother, in case there is no other Karta. When one is in the middle of a Yaga, having taken Yaga Diksha, and in case his father or mother dies and he is the only son,
then he should do the Apara kriya upto Dahanam (Cremation), then take bath, complete the balance of the Yaga and then complete the rest of the Apara kriya. If there is another son, that son should do the Apara kriya and the son in Yaga diksha can join after the Yaga is over.

Apara kriyas should be performed in accordance with the sutra of the dead person. There are many Rishis who have blessed us with Sutras - Aswalayana for Rig veda; Apastamba and Bodhayana for Yajurveda; Dravyayana and Gauthama for Sama veda. If Purohita of the applicable sutra is not available, then the kriya can be performed as per another sutra of the same Veda. Once Apara kriya is started as per a particular sutra, it should be continued as per the same sutra for 11 days even if the Purohita of the correct sutra becomes available in between. Sapindikaranam on the 12th day may be performed as per the correct sutra, in that case.
Prayaschitta for Doshas (defects) in death

Dharma Sastra lists many Doshas (defects) at the time of death for which Prayaschitta has to be performed. Dying on Ekadashi day at noon time, either in Sukla or Krishna Paksha, is very meritorious. It is also noble to die during Uttarayanam and Sukla paksham and day time. For all the negative aspects differing from the above, Prayaschitta is to be performed. Dying on a cot is dosha. Similarly, dying on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, stars of Punarvasu, Visaka, Shravishta (Avittam), Satabhishak (Sathayam), Poorva proshtapada(Poorattadhi), Uttara proshtapada (Uthrattadhi) and Revati is also fraught with dosha, for which Prayaschitta is required. Similarly many other doshas, for which prayaschitta is required, are listed in Dharma Sastra- vomiting, oozing of blood, passing of urine and stools while dying or afterwards, wearing dirty dress, failure to perform Nitya karmas in state of unconsciousness etc., dying in night, in case of women- impurity of delivery or menses, dying of thunder, rain, flood, fire, poison etc., and failure to cremate within twenty five nazhigais (10 hours). Prayaschitta is generally considered as Praajapatya Kruchram in Dharma Sastra. This is equivalent to performing Gayatri japa 10000 times and Pranayama with mantra a hundred times. This Prayaschitta has to be performed separately for each item of doshas mentioned above. As time and resources for these Prayaschittas are not available nowadays, it is the practice to give Danam and Dakshina.
**Burial and cremation**

If the dead person is a child of age less than 24 months, the body should be buried. Otherwise, it should be cremated.

There are five types of Agnis. 1) Tushaa agni- Here fire is produced from husk in a frying pan which is heated. Cremation with this fire is specified for a boy for whom upanayanam is not complete, and girl not married and not attained puberty. 2) Kapala agni- Here fire is produced from husk or charcoal in a kapala (skull). This is specified for brahmachari. 3) Uttapana Agni- Here fire is produced from darbha grass in fire followed by burning darbha grass two times successively from the previously burnt darbha. This is specified for husband who has lost wife earlier and wife who has lost husband earlier, or boy who has not married yet but has completed Veda vrata. 4) Oupasana agni- If the person has been performing Oupasanam, the son should should do Agni Sandhanam as per Oupasana practice and take agni. This is specified for husband whose wife is alive and wife whose husband is alive. If Oupasanam has been discontinued, this Agni can be produced with due prayaschitta. If the dead person’s wife is not present, Koorcham can be placed in her place and Agni produced. If the wife dies after the husband dies, but before sanchayanam (collection of asthi-bones) she should be cremated in the same agni from the husband’s Chita (Pyre). If the pyre is already put out, then Uttapana agni is to be used. If the wife of a Sanyasi in his purvashrama dies, when Sanyasi is alive, this Agni is to be used. 5) Nirmathana agni- Here fire is produced by the churning of arani sticks. This is prescribed for Aahitaagni (person who does Agnihotram and yaga).
Start of Kritya

The Karta should take bath and purify himself. Whenever he goes out during these twelve days of Kritya, the youngest one will go first with the eldest at the last. While returning home after completing the Kritya, the eldest will come first with the youngest at the last. At the start of the Kritya, women also should take bath and bring water for bathing the dead body. If it is time for the Sandhyavandanam, the Karta should complete the Sandhyavandanam and then only start the Kritya. Snana and Sandhyavandana should be performed with the Upavita in the normal Upaveethi (left shoulder) position. Further Achamana, Pradakshinam, Namaskaram and Pranayamam should also be performed with Upaveethi. Pitru Karyas should be generally performed with Prachinavithi i.e., Yagnopaveetha on the right shoulder. Those who carry the dead body should have their yagnopaveetham in Niveethi position i.e., around the neck like a garland.

Prayaschitta should be performed for all the doshas and impurities mentioned earlier and then the applicable Agni should be lit. Paryushita Prayaschittam should be performed, if cremation is delayed after death. ‘Paryushita’ means stale, insipid. Sastra prescribes a maximum of delay of 25 nazhigais (10 hours), if death occurs during day time and similarly in the night but before 9 nazhigais (i.e. before 9:45 p.m). If cremation takes place during the night for one who died in daytime and similarly, during day for one who died in night, Paryushita Prayaschittam should be performed.

The current practice of postponing cremation long after death occurs has no sanction in Sastras. It is cruel to the dead person as the Jiva has already left the body and he is made to experience severe suffering of not only hunger and thirst but also of separation from the body he loves which is still on the ground. Hence, cremation should not be postponed for flimsy reasons like the son is abroad and has to come etc. It is only for such emergencies that the order of priority of Kartas has been clearly spelt out in the Sastras. Hence, cremation should be performed immediately after death occurs, at the hands of the available Karta in the order of priority. This is very important.

The appropriate Agni should be lit by the Karta. The kriyas are done as laid down for Pitrumedha Samskara. (The exception in the case of Srotiyas desiring Moksha is that
Brahmamedha Samskara is specified.) On the western side of the Agni with Darbhas facing south, the body should be laid with head in the south direction on the Darbha. If the Agni is at a distance from the body, contact between the two should be established through a Darbha rope in such a way that nobody passes in between. Homam should be performed for Preta samskara. After bathing the dead body, it is decorated with sandal paste and garlands after applying Pundram as per family tradition. Sastra says that if the body is decorated with sandal paste, garland etc. offered to Lord Vishnu, the jiva attains to meritorious world. The thumbs of hands and feet should be tied with white thread. Then the body should be laid on stretcher (‘Paadai’ in Tamil) built for the purpose from bamboo etc., with head in the southern direction slightly lifted and the body should be covered completely in new cloth with chanting of mantra. For Rigvedi, the cloth should be a cut one and for a Yajurvedi, it should be an uncut cloth. The dress worn by the dead person earlier should be removed before covering with new cloth. Raw rice should be cooked in Agni and made into ‘Charu’ and kept ready.

When the body is carried to the cremation yard from the home, grandsons (Poutras) hold fire stick (‘Theevetti’ in Tamil) burning in ghee. Karta will carry Agni in a mud pot in hand, followed by Gnaatis carrying the body. No one should come between the Agni and the body. When the body departs, the dead man’s wives and other women will apply the dust on their shoulders or head with their hair untied. On the way to the cremation ground, at three places Agni should be kept and the body is kept on the north side of the Agni with head in southern direction. The Karta will wear only one Vastra, no Uttariyam. He should divide the hair on the head into two parts with the right part tied and the left part untied. Tapping the right thigh with right hand and fanning the dead body with the end of the dhoti held with left hand, he should go round the body three times in Apradakshina manner with the youngest first. Again, the Kartas should tie the hair on the left side with the right side left open and tapping the left thigh with left hand and fanning the dead body with the end of the Dhoti held with right hand, they should go round the body three times in Pradakshina manner. The Charu in the unfired mud pot should be offered as bali to Bhutas on the way and the pot broken. The body should be carried silently and kept down in the cremation ground. Then everybody should walk a few steps towards north and come back. The actual place of cremation should be cleaned with the branch of a tree of ‘Sami’ or ‘Kimsuka’ (Purasam or Vanni); a coin should be placed at the centre; firewood should be placed with tips in southern direction and purified with chanting of Mantras; the body should be placed on the pyre with the head in southern direction. Wood of
Tulasi tree should not be used in cremation. The seven Prana Sthalas (life centres) of the body viz., mouth, two eyes, two ears and two nostrils should be purified with ghee; Gnaatis and Karta should feed raw rice in the mouth through thumb. Then the Karta should take Agni and stand at the eastern side of the body facing west and place the Agni in the chest area. Then he chants mantras offering the body as Ahuti in Agni and praying for the Jiva’s attainment of good state and the Indriya Devatas to get back to their abodes leaving the body and seeking help of people on the way travelled by the Preta. Karta performs Homa and prays to Surya with Upaveethi; then he leaves the place with Pracheenaveethi without turning back to look at the burning pyre. Women who are present should also take bath. Karta should offer dakshina for making good any deficiencies in the Kritya and then take bath after shave. Karta returns home, stands at the entrance, washes his feet, puts a little bit of ghee in his mouth, touches Agni; after purification, he should do Nagna Prachchadana Sraaddham.

In the case of person who has committed suicide, or has died unnatural death, cremation should be done without chant of Mantra. The rest of the Karmas maybe done after 45 days, three months or six months. No Sanchayanam and Udaka danam should be performed or, in the alternative, after proper Prayaschitta and Narayana Bali, karma can be started immediately. If the husband dies when his wife is in menses period and if they have no son, the wife should not perform Apara kriyas. Cremation should be done without chanting mantras on the day of death. After the wife takes second bath on the fourth day, or on fifth day, she can do Apara kriyas

Those who carried or touched the body should take bath and wear new yagnopavitam; they can perform normal karmas only then.
Vapanam

The Karta should do Vapanam (shave) after cremation is over. He chants this mantra at that time:

मेरुमतदर तुल्यिन पापािन विविधानि च।
केशानाथित्य तिष्ठन्ति तस्मात् केशान् वपाम्यहम्।

“Various types of sins, massive as the Meru and Mandara mountains, abide in my hairs. Hence I shave off the hairs.” For Gnatis, Vapanam is on the tenth day. In the case of death of father or mother, even if it is Friday, and even if cremation occurs in the night, Vapanam and Pindodaka danam by Karta should be done immediately. In the case of death of others, the Vapanam should be done the next day. Even if the Karta’s wife is pregnant, he should still do Vapanam in case of death of father or mother. Further, for Karta Vapanam should be done on tenth day even if it is Friday. For Gnatis, if tenth day happens to be Friday, Vapanam should be done on ninth day.

Nagna Prachchadana Sraaddham

As the dress of the Preta has been burnt, he feels naked and shy. In order to avert that feeling, the Karta gives dress required for ten days with dakshina, ghee, Til, Urid dal, food grains, vegetables and bronze vessel as Danam to Brahmanas. This is called Nagna Prachchadana Sraaddham. This should be done immediately after the cremation, if cremation is done in daytime. If cremation is done in night time, in the case of father or the mother this Sraaddham should be done immediately; in the case of others, the next day. After the Sraaddham, Karta will enter the home along with Gnatis carrying Deepam. The house should have been purified before the return of the Karta with cow dung and water and Punyahavachananam.
**Tilodaka danam, Vasodaka danam, and Pinda danam**

Though the body has been burnt, the Preta undergoes burning sensation in its subtle body, severe hunger, thirst and dryness of mouth. For offering relief from this suffering, Tarpanam with tilodaka (offering of til and water) and vasodaka (offering of water from squeezed cloth with three folds) and offering of coconut water etc., is done in two specially erected Kundams, one in the home and the other on the bank of the river. The two Kundas are known as Nadi teera Kundam and Griha dwara Kundam. In these two places, Pashana sthapapanam is done; here Preta is invoked in a piece of stone over which a thread is tied. The house in which the Pashana stapanam has been done retains Aasoucham (impurity) till the Pashana, stone is taken away and disposed of. Tilodakam is offered three times on the first day, four times on the second day and so on, increasing by one everyday, to 12 times on tenth day. Vasodakam is three times every day. The youngest Karta will do the Tarpanam first and eldest at the last. Til (gingelly seed), kusa (darbha) and Tulasi are held to be very sacred and dear to Vishnu. Til originated from the sweat and kusa from the hair of Vishnu.

दभतमूले स्थितो ब्रह्मा मध्ये देिो जनादतनीः। दभातरे शंकरं िििद्यात् त्रयो देिाीः कुशे स्मृता:॥

“At the base of Darbha grass is Brahma, Vishnu in the middle and Siva in the top; all the three Devas are present in Darbha.” Hence the use of these three articles in the various Sraaddhas is prescribed. Along with Tilodakam and Vasodakam, Pinda pradanaam is done every day at the Griha dwara kundam. The rice for the Pindam is generally cooked by the daughter of the dead person wearing wet clothes after bath. Cooking should be done in a mud pot or brass vessel. Pindam should not break till Pinda danam is completed. If it breaks, fresh rice should be cooked and Pindam should be prepared. The stove, the vessel etc., should not be changed during the ten days. Similarly, the vessel for Udaka danam and the cloth for Vasodakam should be protected carefully during the ten days and should not be changed. The Pindam should be dissolved in river and Karta should return home after bath again.

Sastra says in this context that the relatives of Karta should console him by mentioning the unsteady and death-driven nature of human life with citations from Itihasas like Ramayanam, Puranas etc. Death is certain for one who is born; hence one should not grieve on occurrence of the unavoidable death. Shedding tears by Karta is prohibited in Sastra; tears will be consumed by the Preta if shed.
It is necessary for the Karta to perform Sandhyavandanam during all the impure (Asoucha) days of Apara Kriya. Sandhyavandanam is Nitya karma, not to be missed. When the karta sits for Sandhyavandanam and performs achamanam, the aasoucha (impurity) leaves him temporarily and returns at the close of the ritual. This happens three times in a day and in all the ten days.
**Evolution of Preta body**

The jiva, on departing from the human body, assumes the body of air (vayaviya sarira). The pinda (rice ball) offered and the food fed to brahmanas during Sraaddhams help in the formation of Pindaja (more solid) sarira. Vayaviya sarira’s suffering is mitigated by the formation of Pindaja sarira. If Pindadan is delayed, Vayavya sarira would continue and the jiva’s hardship would become unbearable. This development is the reason for making earnest offerings of Pinda and water in time every day without postponing to ninth day. The offered Pinda gets divided into four parts. Two parts go into the formation of the Pindasarira, one part goes to Yamadutas and the fourth part satisfies the hunger of the Preta. Gnatis (blood relatives of seven generations) also join in the offering of Tilodaka and Vasodaka every day in the Naitira (riverbank) kunda.

Preta body develops owing to Pindadanam performed during the ten days in the following manner.

प्रथमेऽहिन यः पिण्डः तेन मूर्धा प्रजायते ॥
चक्षुः श्रोते नासिका च द्वितीयेऽहिनि जायते ॥
भूजोऽवस्थया चैव तृतीयेऽहिनि जायते ॥
नामिस्थानं गुदं लिङ्गं चतुथेऽहिनि जायते ॥
ऊरूतु पक्षमेः जेयं पषे चरं प्रजायते ॥
सप्तमेः तु सिरा सर्वं जायते नात्र संथयः ॥
अष्टमेः तु कृते पिण्डे सर्वरोमाण्यन्तरम् ॥
नवमेः वैयसम्पत्तिर्दशमेः खुरु-परिशयः ॥
दशमेन तु पिण्डेन तृसमः प्रेरतः जयते ॥

Pindam offered on the first day enables the Preta to develop head; second day- eyes, ears and nose; third day- hands, chest and neck; fourth day- navel, Gudam and lingam; fifth day –
thighs; sixth day- skin; seventh day- nerves; eighth day- hair; ninth day- virya; Tenth day- with full body the hunger is very severe; with the Pindam offered on tenth day, Preta becomes satisfied. Pindadanam gets completed on tenth day. Sraaddha follows later. With Ekoddhista Sraaddha on eleventh day, Preta attains the next state of Pisaachatwa (state of ghost). Sapindikaranam bestows Pitrutwa on the Jiva (State of Pitru).

Pashana Sthapanam and offer of Tilodakam, Vasodakam and Pindam should be done immediately after cremation and continued for ten days. Sastra is very clear on this requirement. The current practice of postponing this activity to fifth day or ninth day has no sanction in Sastras. It is cruel to the dead person as he is suffering from severe hunger and thirst in the form of Preta. Hence, this activity should be started immediately after cremation without fail. If Pashana sthapanam is not possible at home, there are special Apara kriya centres in towns where this can be done comfortably.
Ekottara Vridhhi Sraaddham

On day one, after Pinda danam is over, Ekottara Vridhhi Sraaddham should be performed. Rice and vegetables, suitable for three persons' requirement, should be given in danam on day one. Rice and vegetables should be increased everyday, like Tilo daka danam, by one person's requirement while giving danam. This is called Ekottara Vridhhi Sraaddham.

Nava Sraaddham

Nava Sraaddham is performed on odd days - 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11. This consists of giving rice in danam. If not done on the specified days, it can be done on 11th day together. After Nava Sraaddham is completed, the Karta should carry the Pindam in the cloth used for Vasodakam, tied properly. He should get down into the river and facing south and holding the Pindam cloth above, throw it in the water backwards. He should then take bath and return home with the eldest son first. On the day of cremation no cooking will be done in the home of the dead person.

Restrictions should be observed during the entire period by eating only once, sleeping on floor, avoidance of union with woman etc.
If cremation takes place on the day of death, Sanchayanam (collection of Asthi - bones) can be done next day. If cremation is not done the same day, Sanchayanam can be done on the day after cremation. If there is difficulty, Sanchayanam can be done later, on odd days. It is preferable to do Sanchayanam in the morning in Sangava kalam before 10 a.m. Sanchayanam during noon time is considered to be of average merit; in afternoon time, it is still worse. If it is not done the next day, then it should be avoided on Sunday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday.

Procedure for Sanchayanam: Karta goes to cremation ground, picks up the burning remnants of the body, develops the Agni in a nearby spot, performs homam and then prays for Agni to subdue. If Agni had already been put off completely, different Loukikaagni should be kindled and homam performed. Agni is then put out gradually by sprinkling diluted milk with a bunch of ‘Athi’ (Udumbara) leaves. Prayers are chanted for the jiva (Preta) to take on a new body and proceed to Pitru-loka and for Devas to take the jiva on a comfortable path to Pitru-loka. Water brought in odd number of pots is now poured by Karta on the remnants and the heat is put out completely. Karta now sits facing west with ‘kandankattirikkai’ tied with black and red threads on his left wrist. Closing his eyes, he picks up with his left hand, bones in the order of teeth, head, shoulder, hand, waist, thigh, knee and foot. He picks up the right side parts first, followed by the left. Chanting mantras and opening his eyes, he drops the bones on a cloth or in a pot. The ashes are then put together and shaped into a human form with head on the south side. For the satisfaction of Bhutas and Preta, offerings of five snacks, chana, Appam, Murukku, coconut water etc. are made. After giving leave to Preta to depart by chanting mantras, Karta walks away carrying the covered pot of bones. He reaches the spot where the bones are to be immersed. He does Abhishekom to the pot with milk, sandal water, Panchagavyam etc. He then immerses the bones in sacred waters.

गंगायां यमुनायां वा कावेरि वा शतदृतौः ।
सरस्वत्यां विशेषेण त्रयस्तीनि विसृज्जेत् सुः ॥

“The son (Karta) shall immerse the Asthis (bones) specially in river Ganga, Yamuna, Kaveri, Satadrutu or Sarasvati.” Or, he may dig a pit at the foot of a Kimsuka (Vanni) or jackfruit tree and deposit the pot and cover with soil properly.
In case the bones have been washed away in a flood at the cremation yard, the balance of ashes or soil should be collected and Prayashchitta homam etc. performed for the Agni having been extinguished. Sanchayanam is done symbolically and the soil is placed in a pot, which is deposited in a pit.

In case of death of one’s father or mother, if the Karta could not be present during cremation and cremation is done by someone else, Karta, who comes the next day, should collect the Asthis (bones) and cremate it again (Punar dahanam) as if it were the body. Sanchayanam is done later. This Punar dahanam is only in case of father or mother and not for others.
**Darbha Samskaram**

If it is not possible to collect Asthis, darbhas are tied together to conform to the body shape, cremation is done for it and then Sanchayanam is done. Sanchayanam is done immediately after cremation in case of Darbha samskaram and Punar dahanam.

If Gauna karta had completed cremation and sanchayanam, with proper Mantras and procedure, the Mukhya Karta who comes later need not perform cremation and Sanchayanam again. In case these rituals had not been performed properly by Gauna Karta, it is necessary for Mukhya Karta to perform Darbha Samskaram before proceeding ahead.

In case the body of the dead person is not fully available, and if certain limbs are missing, then also Darbha Samskaram is required. It may be noted that in Darbha Samskaram the following are not done: Preparation of Pindam, Offering of Pindam at three places on the way to cremation yard, tying the thumbs together, application of ghee in nine openings in the body, covering with dhoti. If cremation had been done and Sanchayanam not done and Adya Sraaddham on eleventh day not done, Mukhya karta should necessarily perform Darbha Samskaram before proceeding ahead.

Asthi should be preserved such that dog, fox etc., do not come and smell them. Sanchayanam for persons other than father and mother should not be done on Friday. In case death happens in an outside place, Sanchayanam as well as starting of Karmas should not be done on Sunday, Tuesday, Friday, Saturday, Chaturdashi, the three janmaanujanma stars of Karta, Pushyam, Ashlelsha(Ayilyam), Muppooram (Poorvaphalguni, Poorvashada, Poorvaproshtapada), three Utharam stars (Uthraphalguni, Uthrashadha and Uthraproshtapada), Chitra, Panchami, Dashami and Pournami.

In case death occurs on Chaturdashi day or Amavasya with Chaturdashi present, then, for persons other than father and mother, all Krityas- Cremation, Sanchayanam, Udakadanam, Ekkottaravruddhi Sraaddham, Pindabalipradanam- all these to be done over a ten day period should be done on Amavasya day. Upto tenth day, Karta should take bath and perform Udakadanam in Kundas without Mantra. Prabhutabali and Pashana Uthapanam (removal of stones) are to be done on tenth day. In case, Amavasya or Masa sankramana occurs in between, then all Krityas can be completed on that day. Or all Krityas can be started after that day. Nava Sraaddhams can be performed on eleventh day together. These rules are not to be
followed for father and mother; for them, closing in between and starting again are not permissible.

After Sanchayanam is over, Karta should bathe and perform Udakadanam in the Kundas like on the previous day and dispose of Pindam in the same place as on the previous day, take bath and return home.
Case of change of Karta in between ten days

In case Cremation etc. has been performed by the younger son and Udakadanam etc. started by him and if other sons or the eldest son arrive before Sanchayanam, then they will do Vapanam (shave), perform Sanchayanam and Udakadanam etc. for all the days due and then only perform Udakadanam of that day. In case they arrive after Sanchayanam, they should perform Udakadanam etc. of previous days and observe Aasoucham for ten days from the day they heard about death and perform the eleventh day rituals and then perform Sapindikaranam on proper day. These rules do not apply in case of Karta who is not the son.

In case Mukhya Karta does not come and the person who cremates is not a Gnati, then, if Karta arrives before Sanchaynam, the original person who cremated need not observe any Aasoucham and need not perform Udakadanam. If Mukhya Karta arrives after Sanchayanam, and if the non-Gnati who cremated stays in the same place and eats food with Aasoucham, then he should observe Aasoucham for ten days and perform Udakadanam.

In case the person who cremates is relative with one and half days’ Aasoucham, and if Mukhya Karta arrives before Sanchayanam, the person who cremates will have Aasoucham for three days. If Mukhya Karta arrives after Sanchayanam, then the person who cremates will observe ten days’ Aasoucham and perform Udakadanam.

In case Cremation is done by relative with three days’ Aasoucham, whenever Mukhya Karta arrives, the person who cremates will observe ten days’ Aasoucham and perform Udakadanam. In case the Mukhya Karta does not arrive he will continue and perform Sanchayanam, Udakadanam, Pindapradanam, and EkodhishthaSraaddha on eleventh day; then only he attains purity.

In case the younger son performs all Krityas and Mukhya Karta arrives on tenth day during day time, then he will do Vapanam, Udakadanam, Pindadanam, Prabhutabali and Shanti homam that day and also Ekoddishta Sraaddham on eleventh day and observe Aasoucham for ten days from the day he heard the news of death. Then he will perform Avrutta Adya Masikam etc. Kartas other than son attain purity on eleventh day.
**Tenth day rituals**

Tenth day is called Dasaaham. On this day, all Gnatis do Vapanam, take bath; with hair untied and single Vastra, they sit against NaditeeraKundam facing south and offer 75 Tilodakadanam and 30 Vasodakadanam (this is only for Gnatis who had not been performing Tarpanam in the first nine days). If Gnatis do not know of death at this point, even after ten days, they should perform Vapanam and Tarpanam, whenever they hear the news. In respect of GnatiTarpanam, the youngest will do first and perform in the order of increasing age.

After Gnatis have completed Tarpanam, Karta will bathe three times and offer twelve Tilodakadanam and three Vasodakadanam in Naditeera Kundam and similar in Grihadvara Kundam; he will then perform twelve Ekottaravridhdhi Sraaddham and then offer Prabhutabali.

**Prabhutabalidanam**

On the floor, as per the family practice, Kolam with odd number of lines is drawn; Vastra (cloth) is spread with tip facing south; Darbha laid tip facing south again; til with water is offered silently through the thumb; Annam, appam, and other snacks are spread. A large ball of rice kept in the middle over which ghee, honey and curd, are poured and Til with water is offered again. Prayer is offered to the PretaJiva to accept all these foods and to bless for the family to grow. With hair untied everyone performs Namaskaram facing south. Women also join in this.

Karta comes to GrihadwaraKundam and prays to the Pashanam (stone) for the Preta to depart to his place. Closing his eyes he removes the stone and places it on the cloth with eyes open, washes his hand, performs Achamanam with Upavithi; he takes Yava or paddy with cowdung and praying for the family’s growth, he drops it in the Kundam and covers it with soil. He then proceeds with Prachinavithi taking the Pindam and the stone and reaches the river bank. Heretoo, he prays to the Preta to depart from the stone, removes the stone and covers the Kundam with paddy and cow dung. He then deposits the Pindam and the stones at the same location where he was disposing off the Pindam all these days. He then tears off the Vastram, which was used all along for Vasodakadanam and then takes bath. Then he pays
obeisance to Brahmanas and prays for successful fruition of the Karmas. He does Vapanam and takes bath.

**Shanti homam**

After completing Madhyahnikam, Karta performs Shanti homam and thus gets rid of Aasoucham. He wears garland of `Nochi'. Gnatis sit by his side. After Shanti homam is completed, Karta follows Gnatis and women and then plants a stone on the south side, Sumangali women will take handful of water and drop on the ground. Karta also will do the same and apply ‘anjana’ on the eyes along with Gnatis and then plant sapling nearby. All of them will remove the garland of ‘Nochi’ now.

**Ananda homam**

After Aasoucham is gone, Anandahomam is performed for attainment of happiness. Then Punyahavachanam is done. Karta takes the Anandahomaagni home and protects the Agni (this agni is used for lighting lamp).

That night snacks like pori and appam are offered to relatives. It was the practice in earlier times to ask brahmanas to read Garuda Puranam in the evenings during these ten days. Owing to paucity of brahmanas this has become rare now.
Tenth day - other rules

On tenth day, Vapanam is required for all those who are younger than the person who is dead. In case, father dies before Dasaaham of mother, Vapanam is to be done only on Dasaaham of father. In case, mother dies before Dasaaham of father, vapanam should be done on father's Dasaaham only.

In case the person who died is younger but happens to be father's brother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, elder brother's wife, father's sister, step mother, mother's brother or his wife, then Vapanam is required. For Samanodaka (of three day's Aasoucham) there is no Vapanam on tenth day. If he happens to do the Apara Samskaram, then Vapanam is required.
Eleventh day-Ekadasaaham

On eleventh day, the house is purified with application of cowdung, clothes are washed through Dhobi. Karta and relatives take bath during sangavakalam and Karta performs Punyahavachanam and sprinkles water. Then he performs NavaSraaddham and Vrushabsarjanam.

Vrushabhotsarjanam

Agni is lit with proper Sandhaanam; Homam is performed with Gosuktam; a bull is bathed and Puja is offered to the bull with the respect due for Devata. The bull is made to drink water mixed with Til with chanting of Mantras; then the bull is left among cows. The bull is left free with the prayer for grazing of grass and go about as it pleases in places other than temple and houses of Brahmans. The bull is given in danam to a Siva temple. Karta prays to the bull:

धर्म लं बृहपूर्तेन ब्रह्मणा निर्मितः पुरा।
तवोत्सर्य-प्रभावान्त-मां-उद्दरस्व भवार्णवाल॥

धर्मस्तवबुधपूर्तेनजगदानन्तदायकः॥विष्णुर्तर-अधिन्यान-अतःशास्तिग्रन्थम॥

गुङ्गा-यमुनयोऽपेयंअतर्तेददतृणंचर॥धर्मराजस्यपुरोतिि्णच्छुः$ेकुः॥

"You are the form of Dharma, created by Brahma in ancient times. By the merit of gifting you free for grazing, you please lift me from this ocean of Samsara. In the form of dharma you bestow happiness on the entire world. You are the support of Ashtamurthi (Siva). Please provide me peace. You freely drink the waters of Ganga and Yamuna; you graze on the grass in Antarvedi (the tract of land between Ganga and Yamuna). O bull, you tell good things about me in front of Dharmaraja." Vrushabhotsarjanam helps in the attainment of auspicious worlds by the jiva. Prayers are offered to Brahmanas for the Jiva to be relieved of the Preta state; Danams are given.

Ekoddishta Sraaddham

Ekoddishta Sraaddham is Eka-Uddishta Sraaddham, where the Uddesyas, the intended person, is only one (eka). This is to distinguish it from the normal Paarvana Sraaddham, in which the Uddesyas are three ancestors- father, grandfather and great grandfather; or mother, grandmother and great grandmother. Pavitram is of one darbha; there is only one Argya Patram in this. Aavahanam and Agnoukaranam are done without mantra chanting. In
case suitable Brahmana is available for Ekoddishta Sraaddham, Sraaddham shall be performed invoking the Brahmana. In case Brahmana is not available, Homam in Agni shall be performed.

This is called Adya Masikam. Sixteen Sraaddhas starting from this Sraaddha on eleventh day are performed for the Jiva to get relief from Preta state and also from the state of Pisacha, and to enable the Jiva to attain the state of Pitru.

There are totally 16 Ekoddishta Sraaddhas to be performed during the year. They are:

"Adya Masikam" on 11th day, "Unamasikam" between 27th and 30th days, Trai Pakshikam between 40 and 45 days, Una Shaaanmasikam between 170 and 180 days and Unaabdikam between 340 and 355 days; 11 Anu Masikas (which occur in the Tithi of death every month).

As per correct procedure, Sapindikaranam is required to be done only after Unaabdikam. But it is not certain that the Mukhya Karta shall be alive till that point of time. In case karta dies before Sapindikaranam, the karma done till then shall remain incomplete with the departed jiva not getting released from Preta to Pitru state. Hence it has become the practice to attract 15 Masikas and Una Masikas and perform them as Aama Sraaddham (offer of rice and vegetable), immediately after performing Adyamasikam, on 11th day itself. Sapindikaranam is done on 12th day and it completes the kriyas. This helps the departed Jiva to rise from Preta state and attain Pitru state and reach Pitru Lokam. As Ekoddishta Sraaddham is done before Sapindikaranam, it is performed for only one, namely the departed Jiva. Masikam and Una Masikam Sraaddhas shall be performed during the year at the appropriate times, even though they might have been done on 11th day has Aama Sraaddhas. This is very important for helping the Jiva on his long travel to Yama Loka on the tough route. However as Preta state has gone away after Sapindikaranam on 12th day, all these Sraaddhas shall be performed, not as Ekoddishtam, but as Paarvana Sraaddham for not one, but three ancestors, namely father, grandfather and great grandfather; or mother, grandmother and great grandmother. Abhisravanam should not be done during Ekoddishta Sraaddham, Masikam, Sapindikaranam, Anumasikam, Naandi Sraaddham, Gaya Sraaddham etc.
In the case of sanyasi, there is no Preta state for him. Hence there is no Ekoddishtam or Sapindikaranam for him. On the day of Sapindikarnam, Sraaddham is done in Paarvana manner.

Ekoddishta Sraaddha Homam is performed in Agni. Pindapradanam is done. Pindam is disposed in water. Karta should then take bath, perform Punyahavachanam and purify himself. Aasoucham is contracted by Karta during this Karma. After the Karma is over, with bath and Punyahavachanam, purity is attained.
Various Emergencies arising before Sapindikaranam

In the absence of the Mukhya Karta if the younger brother or other relative performs the ten days’ kriyas and if the Mukhya Karta arrives on 11th day morning, he should do vapanam and Udakadanam of 10 days and then perform EkoddishtaSraaddham. He should observe Aasoucham for 10 days from the day he got the news of death. Thereafter he should perform Sapindikaranam.

In case the 10 days’ kriyas have not been performed at all, when the Mukhya Karta arrives, he should observe Aasoucham for 10 days from the day he got the news of death, perform all the 10 days’ Kriyas from beginning, and then Ekoddhishtam on 11th day. He should then perform Sapindikaranam on 45th day or later. In case Mukhya Karta arrives on 10th day night, the same procedure shall be followed.

In case the younger brother or some other relative has performed Sapindikaranam also, then the Mukhya Karta should perform Sapindikaranam again on his arrival. In case the eldest brother, Mukhya Karta has performed Sapindikaranam and the younger brother arrives later, he need not do it again. Sastra says that if the eldest brother was not present, or if brothers do not normally live together and property is divided, the younger brothers should perform Sapindikaranam separately. However if all brothers are together at this point and even if property has been separated and if the eldest brother permits, Sapindikaranam can be done commonly with common property. Each brother need not do separately.

In case the eldest son who is abroad gets to know the news of death of father or mother after one year, then he should do Vapanam, observe 10 days’ Aasoucham and do all the days’ Udakadanam and then perform Sapindikaranam. He need not perform Masikam etc.; he should perform Abdika Sraaddham on the Annual Tithi Day. In case the son abroad is younger he needs to observe only 3 days’ Aasoucham and Udakadanam. If the son abroad gets the news before the year end, he should complete balance Masikam and then Abdika Sraaddham.

In case the Tithi or the month of death is not known, all rituals may be observed on the basis of the month and Tithi in which the news of death was received.
In case a son gets the news of step mother’s death before the yearend, he should observe 10 days’ Aasoucham and do Udakadanam. If he gets the news after one year, then Aasoucham only for 3 days. In case the step mother’s son was not present and another mother’s son has performed the kriyas, and the rightful son arrives later, he should perform the balance rituals and complete the same. In case Sapindikaranam has also been completed, he should do it again.

In case Mukhya Karta gets the news of death of Sapinda Gnati after 11 days, he should do Darbha Samskaram, Udakadanam for 3 days, Ekoddishtam the next day and Sapindikaranam on the day after. If Ekoddishtam had also been completed already, he should perform Udakadanam and then Sapindikaranam. In case Sapindikaranam has also been completed already, then Mukhya karta should do Sapindikaranam again.

In case the eldest son comes to know of the death of father or mother on 11th day, he should do Udakadanam till Aasoucham period is over. He need not do Pinda Danam.

In case cremation has been performed as per right procedure and if Sanchayanam, Udakadanam and Ekoddishtam have not been performed yet, the Mukhya Karta should do Darbhasamskaram and complete all the karmas.

In case the father or mother has gone abroad and there is no contact or news of them for fifteen years, then the Karta should assume that they are dead, perform Narayanabali and Darbhasamskaram, followed by Uttra kriyas in 3 days. If this happens with other relatives with no news or contact for 12 years, then karmas should be done as just mentioned.

If the Tithi, Paksham and month of death abroad are not known, Uttara kriyas should be performed in the month of Aadi (Aashadha), Purattasi (Proshtapada), Margazhi (Margasirsha), Maasi (Magha) and in Krishnapaksham and tithi of Ekadasi or Amavasya. For purpose of Annual Sraaddham, the tithi and month can be taken as the tithi and month when the person departed from India, or the tithi on which the news of death was known.

Incase Uttara kriyas have been performed for a person and he returns alive thereafter, ghee should be applied on his body and he should take bath. All karmas right from Jathakarma upto Vivaha (marriage) should be performed again.
In case it has not been possible to perform Uttara kriyas soon after death, karmas may be started in the months of Aadi (Aashadha), Purattasi (Proshtapada), Margazhi (Margasarsha), Maasi (Magha) and in stars of Ashwini, Poosam, Magam, Mrigaseersham, Hastam, Chitrai, Swathi, Anusham, Moolam, Thiruvonam or Avittam. Karmas should not be started on Tuesday, Friday or the three Janmanu Janma stars of the karta. If kriyas are started within 45 days, then there is no need to observe this restriction.

In case father dies during the period of Aasoucham following mother’s death, Karta should perform Udakadanam from the day of mother’s death including Ekoddishtam on 11th day. Further he should perform Kriyas for his father for 10 days from the day of his death including Ekoddishtam on 11th day.

In case mother dies during the period of Aasoucham following father’s death, Karta should complete Udakadanam, Pindadanam etc., for mother on Dasaaham day of father. On 11th day of father’s kriyas he should perform Adya Sraaddham and then observe Aasoucham for 1½ days for mother and then perform Adya Sraaddham for mother on 11th day of mother’s Kriyas.

In case father dies during the period of Aasoucham following mother’s death, Karta should perform Sapindikaranam for father on 12th day and Sapindikarnam for mother on 45th day or later. In case mother dies during the period of Aasoucham due to father’s death, Karta should perform Sapindikaranam for mother on 12th day and then Sapindikaranam for father on 45th day or later.

In case mother and father die together, or one dies before cremation of the other, or mother undergoes Anumaranam (dying together - sati) along with father, kriyas should be performed for both together; the pyre is only one. The pot for Udakadanam shall be the same. The Pashanas (stones), Vasodakam and Tilodakam shall be different for father and mother. Shanti Homam and Vishnu Bhagam shall be the same. Nimitha Varanam, Sodakumbha Sraaddham, Nava Sraaddham, Ekottaravridhi Sraaddham, Vrishabhotsarjanam, Preta Homam, Argyam, Bhojanam, Pindam and Dakshina shall be separate.

In case relatives other than father and mother die together, kriyas shall be performed in the order of their death, or if order of their death is not known, then, in accordance with the order of relation. The order of relation shall be wife or husband, brother, son, grandson, brother’s
son, daughter in law, sister. In case death occurs of Sapindas beyond the order of relation mentioned above and if the order of death is not known, kriyas may be performed in the order of age.

In case death occurs of pregnant woman and pregnancy is beyond 7 months, then the uterus shall be opened and baby brought out. In case baby is alive, he shall be given bath and protected. In case baby is dead, he shall be buried at the foot of his mother and kriya should be performed for the mother. Prayashchittam should be performed. In case husband and son are alive and the wife dies, Vrishabhotsarjanam shall be done along with release of a cow for grazing and offering to temple.
Twelfth day - Sapindikaranam

The departed jivas attain the Pitru state on getting relieved from the Preta state and then live in Pitru Lokam. They are in three forms, Vasu, Rudra and Aditya. When a person dies his father and mother are both Vasus in Pitru Lokam; Grandfather and grandmother are Rudras; Great Grandfather and Great grandmother are Adityas. The person who is dead now joins these three Pitrus in Pitru Lokam. The existing Vasu in Pitru Lokam becomes Rudra, after granting the status of Vasu to the newly joined jiva. The earlier Rudra becomes Aditya. The earlier Aditya merges with Pitru Devatas. The kriya which enables the departed Jiva to join his or her Sapindas, ancestors is called Sapindikaranam.

In case Mukhya karta is Vidhura (without wife), and if his younger brother has his wife living, that brother shall perform the homams in Oupasana Agni.

Ekoddishtam for the dead person and Paarvana Sraaddham for his three ancestors are performed together. Visve Devas called Kala and Kama, Maha Vishnu the protector of the Sraaddha, the dead person and his three ancestors - these are invoked in Brahmanas and Sraaddham is performed in Ekoddishtam and Paarvana systems. After the Sraaddha Brahmana Bhojanam is over, permission is taken from Brahmanas for continuing the rituals. The Preta Pitha Brahmana is allowed to leave, followed by Brahmana in whom the three ancestors were invoked. Then Pindapradanam is done for three ancestors followed by Pindapradanam for the dead person. The Argyam kept in the Ekoddishtam Sraaddham for the dead person is now mixed with the Argyam kept in the Paarvana Sraaddham for the ancestors with chanting of appropriate mantras. Now the dead person joins his ancestors and they have all become Samanodakas -this is the principle. The Pindam kept for the dead person is now divided into three parts and mixed with Pindas of the three ancestors, thus making all of them Sapindas. It is at this point that the departed jiva leaves Preta State and attains Pitru state. Before doing this joining of pindas, many Danams are done.

Danams

The Yamadutas tie ropes on the thirteenth day and drag the Pindaja sariraka jiva of the size of only a thumb (angushta matra) on the long path towards the abode of Yama, the city of
Samyamini. The distance is 86000 yojanas (one yojana is about thirteen kilometres). This journey takes one human year, equal to one day for Devas. The virtuous cross this path with comfort. But the sinners suffer various types of miseries like extremes of cold, heat, rain and other agonies caused by various surroundings and inhabitants. The jiva experiences unbearable hunger and thirst continuously. The path is full of stones and thorns; there is no shade or water available throughout the path. The jiva is dragged day and night without any rest. He travels 247 yojanas every day. He passes sixteen cities on the way, which are both sources of different types of torture as well as places for some rest. The cities are:

1. Yamyapuri: Here the jiva compares the suffering undergone by him now amidst the taunts of Yamabhatas and hordes of Pretas with the pleasures of family life enjoyed earlier; he becomes more distressed.

2. Souripuri: On the way the jiva grabs the pinda and water offered by the karta during Anumasikasradham. Seeing the terrific form of the king Jangam in this city, he becomes mortally afraid. He takes the food offered during the traipakshikasradham.

3. Nagendra bhavan: The jiva passes through a frightening forest. After reaching this city the jiva takes the food offered during the next Masikam.

4. Gandharvanagar: After another bout of distressing travel, the jiva reaches this city in the third month where he consumes the food offered during the next Masikam.

5. Sailagam: In the fourth month the jiva takes the food offered by the karta. He faces here a shower of stones.

6. Kraunchapuri: The jiva takes the food offered during the fifth Masikam.

7. Krurapuri: The sixth month Masika offering reaches the jiva here; he is thoroughly shaken by the terrible suffering he continuously goes through.

8. Vichitra bhavan: Unashanmasika sradha offering now becomes the food for the very hungry and tired jiva. In the middle of this journey, towards the close of six months, the dreadful Vaitarana river comes in between Vichitra bhavan and Bahvapad. This river is full of foul smelling blood, bones, flesh and terrible fish and surrounded by ferocious birds. The danas (gifts) made specially on the twelfth day go a long way in mitigating the severe hardships faced by the jiva. These danas are given prior to Sapindikaranam. Gift of a kapila (tawny coloured) cow helps in easy and quick crossing of the dreaded Vaitarani river. The sixth month Masikam offering is now fed to the jiva on the other bank of the river. It is
therefore necessary to pay special attention to choose a good Brahmana and make suitable offerings in this Masikam.


10. Dukhad: The suffering continues.

11. Nanakrandapuri: As the name indicates, this place is full of cries of distress of Pretas. The frightened jiva weeps inconsolably. The eighth month Masikam offering is fed now to him.

12. Sutapta bhavan: Here the jiva experiences extreme heat. The ninth month Masikam offering reaches him now.

13. Roudra nagar: Further terrible experiences await the jiva here. He takes the tenth month Masikam offering.

14. Payovarshan: Torrential rain and hailstorm are the features of this place. The jiva takes the eleventh month Masikam offering.

15. Sithadhypuri: The jiva reaches here after eleven and a half months. He is exposed now to extreme cold. He also experiences severe hunger.

16. Bahudharma bhitipuri: In this last city, there are twelve devatas called Sravanas. They are the powerful sons of Brahma and they report all the good and bad actions of the jiva to Yamaraja and Chitragupta.

Dasa (ten items) danams on the twelfth day are considered very important. The ten items in Dasa danam are: cow, land, til, gold, ghee, clothes, grains, jaggery, silver and salt. In addition Deepa (lamp), Nouka (boat), saiya (bed), kambala (blanket), chatra (umbrella), chappal (padaraksha) etc. are all gifted on this day. If danams are not given, the Yamabhatas taunt the jiva saying that no help has come from the karta to mitigate his suffering. Sastras give a lot of details of the Danams:

लितलोहसंलिणंतथा सप्तधातयं गाएकैकं नमुनं स्मृतम्॥
एतातयष्टौ महादानायुिमायः।

“Til, iron, gold, cotton, salt, seven foodgrains, land and cow – these are more and more purifying in this order. These eight danams are known as Mahadanams; these should be given to the best brahmanas.”

छत्रोपानहि स्त्राणं मुदिकाकं कमण्डलुः। आसनं भाजनं भोज्यं पदं चाष्टििधं स्मृतम्॥
“Umbrella, footwear, clothes, ring, kamandalu (water pot), seat, vessel, food articles – these are eight ‘Padas’.

One who has done Prayaschittam (expiation) with Dasa Danam (described earlier), Go danam for crossing Vaitarani river, eight danams (Maha danam- eight articles just mentioned), vessel of til, vessel of ghee, bed, Padadanam (eight Padas, just mentioned), – all given as per Sastras, will not encounter rebirth, which is in the form of Naraka.” Go danam is eulogised:

नदी वैतरणी नाम दुर्गन्धर्षिग्रावहा। कृष्णतोया महाविशिष्ठिन्यस्थिः-केश-तरिङ्गणी।
दत्ता गौर्येन सापिण्डो ततां तरं नेतरः॥

“Vaitarani river (which is on the way to Yamaloka) is very foul-smelling, flowing with black water and waves full of blood, bones, hairs. One, for whom cow is given in danam during Sapindikaranam, crosses this river easily (holding the cow’s tail in his hand); not others.” Sastra recommends danam of a ‘Kapila’ (tawny coloured) cow.

Karta chants this mantra during Go danam:

यमद्वारेमहाघोरेशुपि वैतरणीं नदीम।
ततुं प्रदस्यािपतुमुतदे॥

“I hear that the extremely frightful Vaitarani river is close to Yamaloka. I am giving you this cow in Danam, desirous of crossing that river.” “O cow, please await me at the entrance to the very frightful Yama’s abode, so that you may help me cross the Vaitarani river; prostrations to Vaitarani cow.” While giving danam of boat, Karta says:

इक्षुणा निर्मितां नान्व उपस्करण-संयुताम। नदीं उपस्करणं ततुः प्रदस्यामि पितुः॥

“I am giving this boat made of sugarcane (also) with all accompaniments for my Pitru’s happiness to enable him to cross the Vaitarani river.”
The Pindas are now immersed in river by the karta. Karta takes bath, returns home and performs Punyahavachanam for purity.
Sapindikaranam – More Aspects

In case it is not possible to do Sapindikaranam on 12th day owing to prohibition of Sraaddham due to occurrence of Eclipse or Aasoucham arising out of some other birth or death, then Sapindikarnam should be postponed to 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th or 23rd day, or 3rd paksham, or 3rd, 4th, 6th, 11th or 12th month. In case an auspicious function has to be celebrated and Naandi Sraaddham has to be performed, then Sapindikarnaam should be performed on the day previous to that day. If it occurs after Unaabdikam, Sapindikarananam may be done on the day previous to Aabdikam. If that is also not possible, Sapindikaranam should be done on the Aabdikam day. If Sapindikaranam is performed on first Aabdikam day (generally called Varsha Aabdikam), Aabdika Sraaddham is not to be performed separately.

If there has been break in Oupasanam, Agni Sandhanam should be performed in the morning, followed by Oupasanam. At noon time, after performing Madhyahnikam, Sapindikaranam should be performed.

In case karta performs kriyas for his elder brother with father being alive, then three ancestors invoked in the Sraaddham will be father’s father, father’s grandfather and father’s great grandfather. In case father is not alive, but grandfather is alive, then three ancestors starting from father excluding grandfather should be invoked. In case kriyas are being done for a relative other than father or mother, the three ancestors for the dead person should be invoked properly. When the name of dead person or his ancestors is mentioned, care should be taken to mention only that name which was given to that person during Namakaranam and ending with ‘Sarma’. While performing kriyas for mother’s father and his ancestors, their Gothra should be mentioned while invoking them. Hence it is essential that male and female ancestors on father’s side as well as mother’s side should all be clearly known with their proper Sarma name and Gothra. Karmas performed without mentioning the proper Sarma name or Gothra will not bear any fruit.

In case Sapindikaranam is not done, Mukhya karta cannot perform any auspicious activity. If Sapindikaranam is not done at the right time then suitable date has to be selected for it. Panchami, Ashtami, and Ekadasi of Krishna Paksha, Amavasya and Mahalaya Paksham are suitable. In the order of kartas, namely son, Datta Putra, Poutra (Grandson), wife (or husband), brother, if first mentioned karta is not available then the next succeeding karta...
should perform. In case the elder son has no wife, the younger son who has wife should perform. If karta has no younger brother, the Vidhura, who has no wife, may perform; Brahmachari can also perform. In case karta’s wife is in menstrual period, Sapindikaranam should be performed on the day she becomes pure i.e the day after her bath. In case the wife is not favourable and lives in separation, karta should try to seek her cooperation and wait till then. Having waited for a whole year if the wife is still not favourable, karta may do Sapindikaranam before Aabdikam. If wife is favourable and if the husband has kept her separate, then he loses eligibility to perform Sapindikaranam.

If the dead person has sons, but not available, the Gouna Karta may perform kriyas upto Ekoddishtam on 11th day. He cannot perform Sapindikaranam. In case the wife is the karta and no Gouna karta is available, Sapindikarnam may be performed through Ritwik. Ritwik will perform with Upaviti.

If Sapindikaranam is performed on 12th day for father or mother, then karta is not to do Vapanam. If Sapindikaranam is done after 45 days, Vapanam is required. If wife is pregnant, Vapanam is not to be done.
**Sodakumbha Sraaddham**

This Sraaddham is performed without invoking Viswe Devas and Maha Vishnu, and invoking only the dead person and two ancestors. As Udaakumbham (pot filled with water) is given as Danam, this Sraaddham is known as Sodakumbha Sraaddham. Coconut water is also given. This Sraaddham should be done on 12th day after Sapindikarnam is completed and continued everyday throughout the year till Abdikam. In this Sraaddham, special Sraaddha restrictions for Karta and Bhokta shall not apply. Karta may do this Sraaddham after Brahma Yagnam and Deva Pooja etc. In case it is not possible to perform Sodakumbha Sraaddham every day, it should be done on the day before Masikam and Unamasikam. It may also be done on Amavasya day.
**General Notes**

If the dead person is a child of 1 to 24 months then burial is to done; no Udakadanam.

If the child is 25 to 36 months of age then cremation is to be done in Tushagni; Sanchayanam, Tilodakam and Pindadanam are required.

If child is 37 to 48 months of age then in addition to above, Narayanabali is required.

If the child is 49 to 90 months of age, Sanchayanam without chanting of mantra is required.

If the child is 61 to 90 month of age, then Nagna Sraaddham, Nava Sraaddham, Ekottara Vridhi Sraaddham, Vrishotsarjanam, Adya Sraaddham are all to be done without mantra.

From 91 months onwards all kriyas from Pashana Sthapanam onwards are required with chanting of mantra.

If the dead person is a boy for whom Upanayanam has been completed, but upto 12 years of age, all kriyas except Sapindikaranam are required.

If the boy or the girl is married, irrespective of age, Sapindikaranam is required.

From 25th month onwards for boy for whom Upanayanam has not been done and for girl for whom marriage has not been done, irrespective of age, cremation is done with Ekarchavidhi. Narayanabali is required. Sapindikaranam and Abdika and Pratyabdika Sraaddhas are not to be done.

For Sanyasi, Narayanabali alone is done. Sapindikaranam is not done. Different procedures are to be followed for the various cases.
Narayanabali

For Sanyasi, child, and one who has died abnormal death and in cases where Punar Dahanam is done, Narayanabali is required.

If it is not possible to perform Avritta Adya Masikam on 11th day, it can be done on 12th, 13th or 17th day.

In the case of Srotriya who is master of Vedas, the procedure for Krityam is separate from the time of death till completion of cremation. It is performed as per Brahmamedha Samskaram.
Griha Yagnam: 13th day

This is the occasion when auspiciousness is invoked in the family after 12 days of Krityam are over. This occasion is also called Subha Sweekaram. After performing Udaka Santi, Navagraha Homam etc., there is now atmosphere of relief and catching up with normal routine on this day. All auspicious articles are used. Kolam, sandal paste, kumkum, etc., are used like in a normal Deva Pooja; the auspicious bell is rung. New clothes are worn. The Acharya prepares Charma Sloka and reads it. This sloka mentions the Tithi, Paksham, month, year, etc. of the demise of the deceased and prays that departed soul may attain Siva Loka. The Acharya delivers a brief lecture in which he refers to the illusory nature of man’s life on earth. He describes the importance of Apara Kriyas including the rituals to be conducted during the year. He utters words of encouragement to karta praising his Sraddha in performing Apara kriyas, giving Danams, etc. The Acharya then hands over to karta the Charma Sloka and asks him to preserve it and perform the balance rituals during the year with keenness. This sloka acts as permanent reminder to the karta and his brothers to keenly perform the Pratyabdika Sraaddha every year. This sloka reading ceremony used to be done on the night of tenth day in earlier times; however the present day practice is to do it on 13th day in the morning. After the Brahmans bestow their blessings on the karta and his family, they take their food. The family prays at the temple in the evening on this day.

This Griha Yagnam is performed again on the day next to Aabdika Sraaddham.
**Diksha during the Year**

Sastra prescribes that after the death of father or mother, the karta should refrain from shaving, Abhyanga Snanam (oil bath), Tambulam, union with woman etc. This is the diksha to be observed throughout the year till Aabdkam. Some people are of the opinion that this rule applies only to the eldest son. In the case of death of elder brother, father’s brother, mother’s father and these persons’ wives, Diksha should be observed for six months. After the period of Diksha is over, Vapanam etc. can be undertaken on a good day. Diksha Nivritti (observing completion of diksha) should not be done in the month of Aadi (Ashadha), Purattasi (Proshtapada), Margazhi (Margasirsha) and Maasi (Magha).

If karta is Aahitagni, he should observe all restrictions other than vapanam during the year after the death of father or mother. He should do vapanam on Parva day.
As noted earlier it takes one year for the departed Jiva to move from the state of Preta to Pitru. One human year on earth is one day for Devas. Pitrus are also Devas. Hence the Jiva attains to Pitru State on the Deva Day next to the day of his death. As Preta Jiva undergoes many changes during this period and suffers from severe thirst and hunger owing to memories of association with his earlier body, Sastra prescribes that Anumasika, Unamasika and Sodakumba Sraaddhas should be performed during this period. The days on which the sixteen Anumasika and Unamasika Sraaddhas are to be performed have been mentioned earlier. As regards Sodakumbha Sraaddham, Sastra prescribes that it should be performed every day in the year other than the days of Anumasika and Unamasika Sraaddhas. This is called Nitya Sraaddham. In Sodakumbha Sraaddham, a pot filled with water is given as Danam along with coconut water. If not every day, this should be done at least on the day before the Masika Sraaddhas.

In Anumaskam, Unamaskam, Ekoddishtam and Sapindikaranam, Abhisravana mantras are not chanted.

It was noted earlier that all though all the twelve Anumaskas and four Unamaskas are attracted in advance and performed on 11th day itself, it is necessary that they should be performed again on the due dates during the year. If by chance something happens to the karta during the year, as Sapindikarnam is already over for his departed father or mother, the rise of the departed Jiva from Preta state to Pitru State is not obstructed; this is the purpose of performing the Anumasikams and Unumasikams in advance. Further, as mentioned earlier, performing Sapindikarnam on 12th day and attracting Anumaskas and Unumasikas in advance and performing them on 11th day enables the karta to perform Naandi Sraaddham on occasions of marriage etc. during the year.

As these Sraaddhas are performed after completing Sapindikaranam, the two ancestors in addition to the dead person are invoked in them. While choosing the days for Unamaskam, Tithi of Pratham, Shashti, Chaturdasi and Amavasya, and Friday, and stars of Kritika, Jyestha (Kettai), Aslesha (Aayilyam) and three Pooras (Pooram, Pooradam and Poorattadi – Purvaphalguni, Purvashadha and Purvaproshtapada) should be avoided. Further, in case
three of the following occur together, it is called Tri-Pushkaram and if two occur together, it is Dvi-Pushkaram. Unamasiukam should be avoided on such days also:

Tithis of Dvitiya, Sapthami, Dvadasi; stars of Krittika, Punarvasu, Uthiram (Uttiralphalguni), Visakam, Uthiradam (Uthrashadha), Poorattadi (Purva Proshtapada); Sunday, Tuesday and Saturday.

For all these Sraaddhas it is preferable to get Brahmanas well versed in Vedas. However as Preta state is assumed to continue, it has become necessary to invoke Brahmanas who are less qualified. For Brahmanas invoked in Aabdika and Pratyabdika Sraaddhas also, there are restrictions and Prayaschitta to be observed. But in the case of these Masika and Unamasika Sraaddhas there is need for greater Prayaschitta. More of Gayatri Japam will have to be performed.

While performing Anumasiukas, in case some other Aasoucham occurs, the Sraaddham should be performed on the day of relief from Aasoucham.

In case auspicious functions like marriage have to be performed in between, the Mukhya karta should attract all the balance Anumasiukas and perform them along with the Anumasiuka occurring before the function. After marriage etc., it is not necessary to perform them again. However Unamasiukas cannot be attracted in advance and performed in this manner. Further if the departed soul is father or mother, the Anamasiukas cannot be attracted in advance and should be performed on due dates.

This type of attracting in advance is not practised for function like Jatha karma, Namakaranam and Annaprasanam and in Pumsavana Seemantham performed by brother etc.

**Darsa Sraaddham etc.**

After completion of Aabdikam, Pitrukaryas on days of Amavasya, Mahalaya and Sankramanam can be performed as Sraaddhas. In case eclipse occurs during the first year, Tarpanam can be performed starting from that day; Sraaddha is not done during the year. Deva Pooja, Homam, Danam, Japam etc. may be done without much elaboration during the first year.
**Aasoucha Sangraham**

Aasoucham is the impurity caused in an individual owing to birth (Janana Aasoucham) or death (Marana Aasoucham) among close relatives. Aasoucham goes away on expiry of the prescribed period of time and taking bath.

**Gnati – Sapinda; Samanodaka**

The seventh generation ancestor of a person on his father’s side is called ‘Kutastha’. He is Prapitamaha’s Prapitamaha. The male successors of this Kutastha in 7 succeeding generations are called ‘Dasaratra Gnatis’ or ‘Sapindas’. Imagine a pyramid with Kutastha at the zenith and the 7 downward male generations. They observe Aasoucham for 10 days and hence are called ‘Dasaratra Gnatis’.

Forefathers in father’s side, above the 7th generation, are called Samanodakas. Similarly, consider a downward pyramid with the person concerned as Kutastha and 7 downward male generations. Members in this pyramid are also Samanodakas. They observe 3 days’ Aasoucham and hence are called ‘Triratra Gnatis’.

**Aasoucham for 10 days**

1. In the case of death of Dasaratra Gnati, 10 days’ Aasoucham (impurity) should be observed.

2. In cases where male child dies after 10 days, or female child dies before marriage, 10 days’ Aasoucham should be observed by mother, father, brother and step-brother.

3. In case of male child of less than 7 years of age with upanayanam not performed, or male child above 7 years of age, even if upanayanam not done, 10 days’ Aasoucham for Gnatis is prescribed.

Note:
If a male child is born, the Dasaratra Gnatis shall observe 10 days’ Jananaasoucham. If a female child is born, then the child’s parents, parents of father, brothers of father and grandfather and their sons shall have 10 days’ Aasoucham; for other Gnatis no Aasoucham.

**Aasoucham for 3 days for Men**

1. Mother’s father  
2. Mother’s mother  
3. Mother’s brother  
4. Wife of mother’s brother  
5. Father-in-law  
6. Mother-in-law  
7. Mother’s sister  
8. Father’s sister  
9. Sister’s son, upanayanam completed  
10. Daughter’s son, upanayanam completed  
11. Samanodaka, upanayanam completed  
12. Married daughter  
13. Married sister  
14. Biological father (self having been given in Dattam - Sweekaram)  
15. Biological mother (self having been given in Dattam - Sweekaram)  
16. Son, given in Dattam (Sweekaram)  
17. Gnati’s son, age over 24 months and less than 7 years, upanayanam not completed  
18. Gnati’s daughter, above 7 years of age, not married (Gnati within 3 generations, not 7 like Sapinda)  
19. Gnati’s son, less than 25 months of age, Chowlam completed.

Notes:

1. For a Samanodaka, in case of death of a Samanodaka boy, less than 7 years of age, with upanayanam completed and Samanodaka boy, above 7 years of age, even without upanayanam, 3 days’ Aasoucham is prescribed. In the case of Samanodaka birth also, 3 days’ Aasoucham should be observed.

2. If a woman gives birth in the home of her mother’s father or mother’s brother, then they will have Jananaasoucham for 3 days.

**Aasoucham for Pakshini for Men**

Pakshini means a period of 90 Nazhigas, i.e. 36 hours. This includes one night and the preceding and succeeding days.
1. Daughter of father’s sister  
2. Son/ daughter of mother’s brother  
3. Son/ daughter of mother’s sister  
4. Sister’s daughter  
5. Daughter of father’s brother  
6. Son’s daughter  
7. Daughter’s daughter  
8. Daughter’s son  
9. Sister’s son, less than 7 years, upanayanam not completed.

**Aasoucham for 1 day for Men**

1. Step-mother’s brother, sister, daughter  
2. Son/ daughter of the above three (Sl.No.1)  
3. Wife’s brother  
4. Daughter of father’s step-brother  
5. Daughter of step-brother  
6. Father’s step-sister  
7. Son/ daughter of the above (Sl.No.6)  
8. Father/ mother of step-mother  
9. Gnatí’s daughter, above 25 months, less than 6 years of age, not married (Gnatí within 3 generations, not 7 like Sapinda)  
10. Biological brother (self having been given in Dattam - Sweekaram)  
11. Biological Sapinda (self having been given in Dattam - Sweekaram)  
12. Father-in-law/ mother-in-law, if wife and progeny are not there  
13. Gnatí’s son, more than 6 months and less than 25 months of age, Chowlam not completed.

Note:

If a woman gives birth in her parents’ home, then her parents and her siblings will have Jananaasoucham for 1 day.

**Aasoucham for 3 days for Women**

1. Brother, upanayanam completed  
2. Brother’s son, upanayanam completed  
3. Sister’s son, upanayanam completed  
4. Step-mother
Aasoucham for Pakshini for Women

1. Father’s brother       2. Mother’s sister       3. Mother’s brother       4. Father’s sister
5. Son/ daughter of the above four       6. Father’s father       7. Father’s mother
11. Sister’s son

Aasoucham for 1 day for Women

1. Step-mother’s son/ daughter/ brother/ sister       2. Son/ daughter of the above four
3. Father’s step-brother       4. Father’s step-sister       5. Son/ daughter of the above two
6. Step-mother’s father/ mother

Notes:

1. Wife shall observe Aasoucham of husband along with him always.

2. Aasoucham specified only for woman shall not be observed by husband.

3. Even during the period of Aasoucham, Sandhyavandnam should be performed. Mantras should be chanted mentally. Pranayamam should be done without mantra. If the person is Agnihotri, Agnihotram should be performed. If the person performs Oupasanam regularly, homam should not be stopped; Oupasanam should be got done by someone else.

4. Deva Puja, Homam, Danam, acceptance of danam, Pitrukaryas and Veda chanting should not be done.

5. As soon as one hears the news causing Aasoucham, he should take bath with the clothes he is wearing.

6. Those, who do not have Aasoucham, should not touch or eat in the home of one who has Aasoucham. Aasoucham applies to food cooked in his house, clothes etc. Aasoucham does not apply to curd, milk, ghee, vegetables, salt, flower, til, medicine, firewood, fruits, honey and well water.
7. In case eclipse occurs during the period of Aasoucham, Aasoucham is not there during the period of eclipse. After eclipse is over, Aasoucham would continue.
SRAADDHAM
Importance of Sraaddha

श्राद्धातु-परतरं नात्यश्रेयस्करं-उदाहतम्।
तस्मात्-सर्वप्रयजेन श्राद्धं कुर्यादु-विचक्षणं॥
ये यजनि पितृ-देवान्नन्तां नात्यश्रेयस्करं-उदाहतम्।
सर्वभूतान्तरात्मानं विषुमेव यजनि ते॥
कुर्वैत समये श्राद्धं कुर्ले कश्चिं नस्वीदित।
आयुः-पुत्राययः-स्वर्ग कीर्तिकिर्तिश्वलंश्यम्॥
पशुनुसभूतंश्राद्धं कुले नात्यश्रेयस्करं-उदाहतम्॥
देवकार्यादिपि सदा पितृकार्यं विशिष्यते॥
देवताभ्यः-पितृणां हि पूर्व-आप्यवनंश्रुभम्॥

“No karma has been reckoned to be more meritorious than Sraaddha karma. The wise man should therefore make all efforts to perform Sraaddha. Those, who worship Pitrus, Devas and Agnihotri Brahmanas, indeed worship Vishnu, the in-dweller of all beings. Sraaddham should be performed in due time; thereby no one in the lineage will undergo any suffering. By worshipping Pitrus, one attains long life, sons, glory, Swarga, fame, power, strength, majesty, cattle, comforts, wealth and foodgrains. Pitrukarya is more important than Devakarya. To please Pitrus before pleasing Devas is more auspicious.” Dharmasastra goes on to say that one who performs Sraaddha properly attains Brahma Sayujya (Merger with Brahman).

Sraaddhas benefit us in many ways. Many of the forces that become favourable to us:

1. Our own Pitrus who come eager to bless us.
2. Visvedevas who come accompanying the Pitrus.
3. Mahavishnu who protects the karma and gives us the good fruit.
4. Devas like Agni participating in Homam.
5. Devas in Swarga who are pleased with Brahmana Bhojanam.
6. Ancestors who live in Naraka, who are unable to reach Pitruloka get satisfaction from special Pindadanam and Vikirannam (food which is spread in front of the leaf in which the Pitru Brahmana takes food).
7. Our own relatives who join us for food
8. Vayasapindam (offering to crow) brings satisfaction to unknown Pitrus
9. As Oupasanam, which is supposed to be performed twice in a day in the morning and evening, is not being performed nowadays, Sraaddham provides an opportunity for performing it at least once a year, thus keeping this great Agni Upasana alive.

Pitrus in Pitruloka are permitted by Yama to visit their descendant family on earth on many specified occasions every year. They expect their hunger and thirst to be relieved by offerings of food, water and clothes by the son by way of Sraaddham on all these occasions. The pinda, til and water offered in remembrance and food and clothes given to the appointed brahmanas in the Sraaddham are transformed by Agni and Pitrudevatas like Agnishvatta into items suitable for consumption of the Pitrus and sent to them wherever they are and in whichever bodies they might be living. In Sraaddham, three categories of Pitrudevatas are associated with Pitrus- Vasu or Pitha, Rudra or Pitamaha and Aaditya or Prapitamaha. Pitrus who are in the form of Vasus, Rudras and Aadityyas are capable of blessing the performer of Sraaddham here on Earth. On the appointed day of Sraaddham they visit the homes of the descendants and expect to receive offerings. If Sraaddham is not performed properly, they get irritated. The irritation acts like a curse on the family resulting in loss of wealth, absence of progeny and many other miseries. One who neglects to perform Sraaddha fails to attain good fortune of children, long life, good health, etc. Aadityapurana says that in the case of one who does not perform Sraaddha on the assumption that there are no Pitrus, his blood is drunk by the Pitrus. There is no reason to doubt whether the offerings of food etc. given during Sraaddham reach in fact the Pitrus. Sage Vyasa clearly says that just as a calf which has lost its way identifies its mother cow in a crowd of several cows, in the same way the offerings given during Sraaddham here are made to reach the respective Pitrus through Vedic mantras. The name and Gotra of the Pitrus are enough to reach the offerings to the Pitrus. In whichever birth the Pitrus may be, the food reaches them in a manner appropriate to that birth and pleases them immensely. If the ancestor had become a Deva, the food offered here goes to him in the form of Amrita. If he has become a cow, the food turns into grass. If he has become a serpent, it becomes air. If he has become a human being, it becomes suitable food and drink.
Categories of Sraaddham

1. Nithyam – Darsa Sraaddham performed on Amavasya day, Mahalaya Sraaddham performed in Mahalaya Paksham, Aabdika Sraaddham, Praptyaabdika Sraaddham, Pitruyagnam as part of Brahma Yagnam performed daily- these are the Sraaddhas of Nithya category.

2. Naimithikam – Sraaddham on first day of the month, Punyakalas like Grahanam (eclipse), Naandi Sraaddham performed on auspicious occasions like marriage, Seemantham, Upanayanam, etc.

   Further, Sraaddhas performed during the twelve days after a person’s death and during the first year- Nagna, Nava, Ekottara Vriddhi, Ekoddishta Sraaddhas performed in the first eleven days, Ekottara, Paarvana Sraaddham performed on the twelfth day of Sapindikaranam, Unamasika, Anumasika Sraaddhas, Sodakumbha Sraaddhas.

3. Kaamyam – Sraaddhas performed on days of Manvadi, Yugadi, and Teertha Sraaddhas performed in holy places and rivers like Ganga, Yamuna, etc.

The Sraaddha, which, if neglected, results in sin and need for Prayashchitta (expiation), is of Nithya category. Pratyaabdika (Abda-year; Pratyaabdika- annual) Sraaddham for father and mother on the days (tithis) of their death is Nithya and must be performed without fail. As said in Smriti ‘मृताहं समितक्रम्य चण्डालीः कोरटजतमसु’ etc., the sin of neglect will be very serious.

One who commits this sin is ‘Patita’ (fallen from his normal state; outcaste); no one will maintain contact with him.

Dharmasastra prescribes ninety-six (Shannavati) Sraaddhas to be performed in a year. They are:-

1. Darsa Sraaddhas, performed on Amavasya days: 12
2. Maasa Sankramana Sraaddhas (1st of each month- transit of Surya in the next Raasi): 12
3. Ashtaka Sraaddhas – 12. These are performed on Saptami, Ashtami and Navami tithis in the months of Margazhi (Margasirsha), Thai (Pousha), Maasi (Magha) and Panguni (Phalguni). The three consecutive Sraaddhas are known as Tisroshtaka, Ashtaka and Anvashtaka.
4. Vaidhruti Sraaddhas: 13
5. Vyatipata Sraaddhas: 13

There are totally 27 yogas. A cycle of these 27 yogas takes 27 days. The 17th yoga is Vyatipatam and 27th yoga is Vaidhruti. These Vyatipatam and Vaidhruti yogas occur 13 times each in a year.

6. Manvadi Sraaddhas: 14

In Brahma’s daytime, there are 14 Manvantaras. The start day of the reign of each Manu, known as Manvadi day, is shown in Panchang. These are defined tithis in Pakshas in Chaandramaana months.

7. Yugadi Sraaddhas: 4

The start day of each of the four yugas, known as Yugadi day, is shown in Panchanga. These are, again, defined tithis in Pakshas in Chaandramaana months.

8. Mahalaya Sraaddhas: 16

The Krishna Paksham when Surya enters Kanya Raasi is known as Mahalaya Paksham. The 16 days from Krishna Paksha Prathama to Sukla paksha Prathama are the 16 consecutive days on which Mahalaya Sraaddham is to be performed.

**Total Sraaddhas in a year thus: 96.**

If one’s father is alive and mother is no more, there is no need to perform any of the ninety-six prescribed Sraaddhas other than the Pratyaaabdika (annual) Sraaddham of his mother. If mother is alive and father is no more, one shall perform all the ninety-six Sraaddhas. If Matamaha (mother’s father) is alive and mother is not alive, there is no Tarpanam for Matamaha Vargam.

It is recommended that at least once in the lifetime, all the 96 Sraaddhas be performed during the period between two Pratyaaabdika Pitru Sraaddhas. These Sraaddhas can be done as Paarvana or Aama or at least Hiranya Sraaddham. Out of the 96, further, a minimum of 30 occasions have been singled out for observance of minimum of Hiranya Sraaddham and Tarpanam: Darsam (Amavasya): 12;

Sankramanam (monthly): 12;
In Mahalaya Paksham, the three days of Mahabharani, Madhyashtami and Gajachaya (Trayodashi): 3;

In the month of Maasi (Magha), the three days of Tisroshtaka, Ashtaka and Anvashtaka: 3. Total: 30.

If on a Sunday, Amavasya occurs and star Asvini, Tiruvadrai (Aardra), Ayilyam (Aaslesha), Tiruvonam (Sravanam) or Avittam (Sravishta) also occurs, that Punya kalam is called Vyatipatham. If, in the months of Thai (Pousha) and Maasi (Magha), on Amavasya day, Sunday, Vyatipatam and Tiruvonam (Sravanam) jointly occur, that special Punya kalam is called Ardhodayam. Instead of Sunday, if this union occurs on a Monday, it is even more special and is called Mahodayam. Darsa Sraaddham and Tarpanam on such Punyakalam days is said to bestow fruit many times that on a normal Amavasya day.

If Darsa (Amavasya) and Sankramana (1st of Soura month) occur on the same day, It is enough if Sankramana Sraaddham alone is done. The former is Nitya, the latter is Naimittika; Naimittika is stronger than Nitya, hence Sankramana Tarpanam is enough.
**Mahalaya Sraaddham**

Dharmasastra says that during Mahalaya Paksham, the ancestors in Pitru-loka take Yama Dharmaraja’s permission, come to earth and accept the Sraaddham offered by their descendants with satisfaction. Out of the specified 16 days, the days of Mahabharani, Madhyashtami, Gajachaya and Mahavyatipatam are the most important. If one were to perform Mahalaya Sraaddham on a day other than these four, Dwadasi and the tithi of father and mother’s Sraaddham, then he should avoid his own birth star, his eldest son’s birth star, Friday, and Rohini, Magham and Revati stars. For Sanyasi, this Sraaddham should be performed on Dwadasi day. If the Pratyaabdika Sraaddham of father or mother occurs during Mahalaya Paksham, Mahalaya Sraaddham should be performed after completing it. If Mahalaya Sraaddham is performed on Amavasya day, Darsa Tarpanam should be completed first, followed by Mahalaya Sraaddham. It is recommended that Hiranya Sraaddham and Tarpanam be performed every day during Mahalaya Paksham and that Mahalaya Sraaddham be performed as Paarvana Sraaddham at least on one day. In Mahalaya Sraaddham, Matru vargam, Pitru vargam, Sapatnika Matamaha vargam, Karunika Pitru vargam, Visvedevas (who are Dhuri and Ruchi) and Vishnu are invoked. Karunika Pitrus, who are specially included in Mahalaya Sraaddham, are relatives from father’s and mother’s sides, like uncle, aunt, their spouses et al. The general term ‘Tattat Gotran, tattat Sarmanah’ covers all such persons.
**Naandi Sraaddham**

This is also called Naandimukha Sraaddham, Abhyudaya Sraaddham, and Vriddhi Sraaddham. It must be borne in mind that Pitrus are full of love and compassion. They feel very happy on occasions of auspicious celebrations in the family. They come with auspicious materials and bless their descendants. Naandi refers to auspicious sound or material like pot filled with water, etc. As the Pitrus bring auspicious articles, they are called Naandimukhas. When they arrive, the eldest comes first followed by the other Pitrus in turn. Dharmasastra mentions that the Naandimukha Pitrus come on various auspicious occasions including Garbhaadhaanam, Pumsavanam, Seemantham, Jatakarma, Namakaranam, Annaprasanam, Choulam, Upanayanam, Vratham, Vivaham, Grihapravesham etc. It is therefore necessary to perform Naandi Sraaddham on these occasions, preferably as Aama Sraaddham. Only in exceptional cases, it may be performed as Hiranya Sraaddham. The Naandimukha Pitrus come accompanied by two Visvedevas called Satya and Vasu. Welcoming and extending hospitality to them is Naandi Sraaddham. It is called Vriddhi Sraaddham as it aids in further growth of the family and Abhyudaya Sraaddham as it helps in material advancement of the family. While performing Naandi Sraaddham as Aama Sraaddham (rice and plantain offering), it is usual to invoke 9 brahmanas –

Matru vargam – 2, Pitru vargam – 2, Matamaha vargam – 2, Visvedevas - 2, Vishnu – 1.

Normally a set of dhoti and angavastram is offered to each. **Some people refrain from performing Naandi Sraaddham citing unacceptable reasons like ‘this has not been the practice in the family’, ‘once it has been performed for Upanayanam, it is not necessary to do it again on the occasion of Vivaham’ etc. This is not correct. Dharmasastram is clear and should be followed.**
Sraaddha Devatas

As per Vedas there are eight Vasus, eleven Rudras and twelve Aadityas. Ancestors of the immediate previous three generations come in the form of these Vasus, Rudras and Aadityas. If it is Sraaddham for father, the three ancestors are father, grandfather and great grandfather (Pitha, Pitamaha and Prapitamaha) who come in the form of Vasu, Rudra and Aaditya respectively. In case Pitamaha is alive, the three ancestors in question will be Pita, Pituh Pitamaha and Pituh Prapitamaha. If it is Sraaddham for mother, the three Poorvajas are Matha, Pitamahi, and Prapitamahi. The three together are invoked in the brahmana who takes the place of Pitrus.

Visvedevas are a category of Devas, twelve in number. In the case of Aabdika (known popularly as Varshaabdkam) and Prtyaabdika Sraaddhas the Visvedevas who come accompanying the Pitrus are known by the name of Pururava and Aardrava. In the case of Mahalaya Sraaddham, they are Dhuru and Ruchi. In Naandimukha Sraaddham, they are Satya and Vasu. In Sapindikarana Sraaddham, they are Kala and Kama.

Mahavishnu protects the Sraaddham and gives us the complete fruit. It is normal practice to invite three brahmanas in the place of Pitrus, Vishwedevas and Mahavishnu. They are informed well in advance so that they can observe the necessary restrictions. In earlier times they used to be invited home on the day previous to the Sraaddham. Some people invoke Mahavishnu in a Salagrama Shila and feed a Brahmachari in that leaf later.
Time for Sraaddham

Sastra divides the day time into five parts. Each part lasts six Nazhigais (Ghatikas); each Nazhigai is two hours and twenty four minutes. The first part is known as Prathahkala. If sunrise is at 6 a.m., Prathahkala is from 6 a.m. to 8.24 a.m. These time parts should be calculated based on the actual time of sunrise. The second part is Sangava Kala, which is from 8.24 to 10.48 a.m. The third part is Madhyanhakala, which is from 10.48 a.m. to 1.12 pm. The fourth part is Apanaha Kala which is from 1.12 to 3.36 p.m. The fifth and last part is Sayanahakalam or Sayankalam which is from 3.36 to 6 p.m. Prathah Kala is suitable for Gayatri Japam, Oupasanam, etc. Madhyanha Kala is suitable for Maadhyahnikam, Brahmayagnam, Vaisvadevam, Devapuja, Pitru Tarpanam, Sraaddham, etc. If we subdivide the Madhyanha Kalam into three parts known as Gandharva Kala, Kutapa Kala and Rouhina Kala, each consisting of two Nazhigais (48 minutes), the middle part namely Kutapakala, i.e. 11.36 a.m. to 12.24 p.m. is most recommended for performing Sraaddha and Tarpanam.
**Sraaddha Tithi**

Aabdika Sraaddham (Abda-year) is performed on the Tithi in the Paksham in the month of death at the end of the first year from the date of death of one’s father, mother or other relative. Pratyaabdika (annual) Sraaddham is performed on the same Tithi in the Paksham in the month of death from the second year onwards every year till the Karta dies. Whether Soura month or Chaandra month is to be taken has to be decided based on one’s family practice.

If the Tithi occurs on two days consecutively, the Tithi in which it occupies greater period of time in afternoon (Aparahna kalam) is to be considered. If the period of time in afternoon is equal, the first day of occurrence should be taken. If the Tithi occurs on two days in a month in the appropriate Paksha, the latter day should only be considered. If there is Sankramana dosha in that Tithi, the first Tithi should be taken. If there is Sankramana dosha in both Tithis, the latter should be taken. If there is only one Tithi in the month and that Tithi has Sankramana dosha, still that Tithi should be taken.

If there is no Tithi in that month, the previous month’s Tithi should be taken. In case Sraaddham has been missed on the appointed Tithi owing to forgetfulness, it should be performed in the following Krishna Paksha Ashtami, Ekadasi or Amavasya. If there is Aasoucha, impurity on the Tithi day, Sraaddham may be performed on the day the Karta is relieved of Aasoucham.
Brahmanas invoked in Sraaddham

Two or three brahmanas, as per family practice, should be invited in advance. The elder brahmana will be in the position of Visvedevas and the younger one as Pitrus. They should not be father and son, or brothers. Sastras describe elaborately the qualifications of such brahmanas. The brahmanas should not be:

- Ignorant of Vedas, sick, husband of woman in menses period, one without wife and son (if wife is not there and son is there, that brahmana is ok), one who has been brahmana in Sraaddham in previous three days, one who asks to be invited, husband of woman pregnant over three months, one whose parents died within the last one year, one who is to perform Sraaddham the next day, one who shaved that day, one who suffers from leprosy, bad teeth and nails, one who belongs to the same gotra as the Karta or Pitrus.

It is recommended to invite brahmanas who are: well versed in Vedas, yogi, Gnani, Samavedi, daughter’s son. If one grihastha and one brahmachari are available, the grihastha may be Pitru and the brahmachari, Visvedevas. Brother or relative should not be invited to be brahmana for Sraaddham. If suitable persons are not available, mother’s father, mother’s brother, sister’s son, father-in-law, Guru, son-in-law and relative of gotra different from Karta’s may be called.

If brahmanas well versed in Vedas are not available, Sri Vaidyanatha Dikshitiyam accepts those who perform chanting of Gayatri mantra.
Restrictions for Karta and Brahmanas invoked

Karta should observe restrictions during the Sraaddha month, or Sraaddha Paksham, or at least for five days, or, in the least, three days before Sraaddham. He should not eat in others' homes. He can eat in homes of Guru, uncle, father-in-law and brother. He should desist from shave, oil bath and union with woman. Some people perform Kushmanda homam on the day before Sraaddham for purity. In this homam mantras are chanted for removal of sin and attainment of purity. If Oupasanam has been discontinued, Karta should perform the same in the morning and evening for three previous days. Sraaddha homam is performed in Oupasana Agni. In case of brahmachari, he should do Samidhadhanam and perform Sraaddha in that Agni. Agni should be protected for three days with husk in the homakundam. If not possible, Oupasanam should be started the previous evening. Karta should treat the brahmanas invited for Sraaddham as gods. He should do nothing to humiliate, make fun of, order about or show anger to them. On Sraaddha day, he should totally avoid anger and restlessness. He should wear dress wetted and dried that morning. He should not take any danam or give any other danam that day. (Some people think that they can do Annadanam instead of Sraaddham on that day. This is clearly prohibited in Sastras.) Karta should not do study or teaching of Vedas that day. Oupasanam should be done in the morning in proper time.

Brahmanas invited as Visvedevas and Pitrus should not engage in union with woman the previous day, that day and the next day. Study of Veda and accepting danam should be avoided. Having accepted to act in Sraaddham, they should not back out. They should not shave that day.
Cooking of food

Urid dal with skin, wheat, til, ghee, cow’s milk, curd, buttermilk, honey and Ganga water are suitable for use in Sraaddham. Moong dal (mudga), karela, jack, mango, brown sugar, jiggery, sea salt, karana kizhangu, arbi, ginger, jira, elaichi, papdi (nishpava- avarai), pirandai, dooduvalai, sweet potato, kapitham (vilam fruit), minnakkeerai, tippili, soont (dried ginger), pachai karpuram, saffron, kakdi (vellari) - these are suitable as Sraaddha food. Sastra clearly says that Sraaddha performed without Urid dal is as good as not performed. Coconut, mustard, asafoetida (hing), safed bopla (poosani), chilli, lemon, gingelly oil, coconut oil, buffalo milk, curd from buffalo milk and ghee from buffalo milk are used by some people. One should follow the family practice. Karamani (chowla), kollu, drumstick, brinjal, tur dal, doodhi (surai kai) - these are items to be avoided by those who follow discipline in food. These should not be used. The idea is that the food offered for Pitrus should definitely be Satvic. Salt, jiggery, ghee, curd and milk may be used by sprinkling water for purification; items that can be washed should be purified by washing.

The person who is cooking the food should take bath and cook with wet clothes on, wearing traditional dress. One who does not maintain achaara should not do the cooking. The cook should chant Panchakshari or Ashtakshari mantra while cooking. A sick person or one, who has already taken food, should not cook. While cooking, the cook should not indulge in chatting, or engage in any other work, or weep, or remain with hair untied or in an angry and restless mood. The cooking vessel should be new or well cleaned. Iron and steel should not be used for cooking or serving food, as they will drive away Pitrus. Silver pleases Pitrus. Brass and bronze vessels are faultless. The house should be purified with cow dung. There should be no ringing of bell or Kolam (rangoli).
Sraaddha procedure- Preliminaries

Sraaddham should be performed by inviting suitable Brahmanas and serving food prepared with purity and with the help of wife or others who maintain purity. Silver and brass vessels are recommended. Stainless steel vessels should not be used for preparing food, for serving food or for other Sraaddha purposes. Sraaddham should be performed in one’s own house or rented house, but not in someone else’s house. Sraaddham should be performed with complete involvement and not in any hurry. Sraddha or faith is most important and there is no substitute for Sraddha.

One who cannot perform Sraaddham in detail as per rules laid down may perform the same with Sankalpa Vidhi in emergency. In this process, Aavahanan, Agnounkaranam, Swadhaninayanam, Vikiram, and Pindadanam - these five are not done.

In cases where it is not possible to prepare food, or while living abroad, or in emergency, or wife and others being unable to help, or during Tirtha yatra or eclipse of Chandra or Surya, one can perform Aama Sraaddham instead of Paarvana Sraaddham. Aama Sraaddham consists of Sankalpam and Danam of rice, dal, and vegetables of four times the required quantity alongwith Dakshina.

If it is not possible to do Aama Sraaddham also, one may do Hiranya Sraaddham, in which adequate cash may be given as Dakshina. If that is also not possible, Pindadanam may be done. Cow may be fed with grass. After taking bath, one can do Tarpanam. Karta can chant Sraaddha mantras, but he must observe fast the whole day. But if one who has the ability, resorts to these alternatives which are lower in merit, he will reap grave sin. It is essential to perform both Aabdikam and Pratyaabdika Sraaddham with observance of complete procedures as per Paarvana Vidhanam.

As the Karta invokes the Pitrus in a good Brahmana and feeds him the food strengthened with mantras, it will be converted into suitable form and reach the Pitrus in whichever state they are and will give them full satisfaction. Food offered during Aabdikam and Pratyaabdikam will provide satisfaction to Pitrus for one year.

During noon time after completing Maadhyanhikam, the Karta should do Sankalpam and invoke Visvedevas first followed by Pitrus and offer Aasanam, Paadyam, Argyam, Krusaram
and Tambulam and enable them to take oil bath (Krusaram is a mix of til and jaggery). Karta should also take bath and wear clothes, wetted and dried in the morning, wash feet and do Aachamanam. The brahmanas will also wear new clothes wetted and dried in the morning and handed over by the Karta and perform Aachamanam. The clothes should not have black border. Taking Anugna (permission) from the Parishad (assembly), Karta will go round the Brahmanas three times with teertha patram in hand, offer obeisance and again request them to function as Visvedevas and Pitrus. While invoking the ancestors, mentioning their Namakarana name, with Sarma added if male and Da added if female, and mentioning the gothra is essential. If gothra is not known, Kasyapa gothra may be mentioned. If names are not known, the Pitrus will be called Prithvisad, Antarikshasad and Divishad corresponding to Vasu, Rudra and Aaditya Swarupas. The upacharam for Visvedevas and Vishnu should be done with Upaviti and through straight tips of the hand and with Akshata. For Pitrus, Upachara should be done with Prachinaviti and through the thumb of the hand with til. After Aasanam, Paadyam is given. For washing the feet of the Brahmanas, the place should be purified with cow dung and marking should be done in square pattern for Visvedevas and circular pattern for Pitrus (if Brahmana as Vishnu is present, square pattern for him also should be done). The wash water of the feet of one person should not mix with that of the other person. A wet cloth or sand may be used as a barrier. The northern portion will be used for washing the feet of Visvedevas and the southern part for Pitrus. Pooja is done initially at the washing place with Darbha, sandal paste, Akshata, til etc. and washing the feet should be done for Visvedevas first, followed by Pitrus. While washing the feet, Pavitram should be kept in the right ear. The feet should be washed well upto ankle after application of cow’s ghee. The wife or brother can pour water for washing. The feet of the Vishnu-brahmana can be washed in the same place as Visvedevas. Karta should take care to remove the Pavitram from his hand before washing the feet of the brahmanas. He should also observe this rule while doing Achamanam.

The mantras chanted while washing the feet of Brahmanas and praying to them are extremely significant.

“समस्त-संपत्-समवाति-हेतवः समुल्खितापत्तुल-धूमकेतवः ।
अपारसंसार-समुद्र-सेतवः पुनर्तु मां व्राद्धपाद-पांसवः ॥

Page 77 of 99
The mantras say: “May this dust of the feet of the Brahmanas, which will bestow on me all wealth, relieve me of all dangers like a thunderbolt would and enable me to cross the ocean of Samsara like a bridge, purify me. I worship the holy lotus feet of the Brahmanas, which remove bodily diseases as well as mental miseries of people and destroy all depletion and poverty and bestow wealth, nourishment and fame. Darshan of holy Brahmanas drives away hordes of sins instantly. By paying obeisance to them we will get all auspiciousness. By doing puja to them we will attain the deathless state.” After chanting the mantras, puja should be done with Akshata for Visvedevas with Upaviti and with til for Pitrus with Prachinaviti.

Karta and his wife should sprinkle the wash water on their heads and feel purified. After Aachamanam the Brahmanas will take their seats in the Sraaddha place and Aavahanam(invoking) should be done. Arghya water purified with mantras should be given followed by dhoti and Angavastra. White silk or cotton dhoti, uttariyam and trithiya vastram-these three, (or dhoti and uttariyam alone) wetted and dried in the morning, should be offered. Those who are unable to do this will offer Yagnopavita. Then permission will be taken from the Pitru - Brahmana for taking Annam for Homam from the rice cooked and kept ready for Sraaddham. Karta who is Grihasta should perform Homam in Oupasana Agni. If he is a widower, he should do it in Vidhuragni with Sandhana procedure. If he is Brahmachari, Homam should be done in Samidhadhana Agni.

After doing Upacharam for Agni, Annam is shown to Agni. Ghee is sprinkled and Homam is performed for Pitha, Pitamaha and Prapitamaha. After Uttaranga Homam, Agni is worshipped. This is Pitru Karma performed in Agni.
Serving of Food to Brahmanas

The place where food will be served to Brahmanas should be cleaned with til and sprinkling of water and Darbha. Banana leaves should be laid for serving food. The tip of the leaves should not be torn and it should be in the left side of the person who eats. Two leaves, one on top of the other, are spread. Aasanas for Brahmanas and Patrasanas under the leaves (Darbhas are used) are laid. After sprinkling of water and purifying with ghee, Annam, left over after Homam, is served in the Pitrus' leaf with Upaviti by the Karta. Rakshoghna Suktam is chanted and all items except Annam are served. Then Karta sits in front of the Visvedeva Brahmana.

Annam is served on this leaf, purified with ghee and Parishechanam is done with chant of mantra. After dattam and giving Bhukta dakshina and asking the Brahmana to do Parishechanam himself, Karta shifts to the leaf of the Pitru Brahmana. Again Annam is served, purified with ghee, Parishechanam is done with chant of mantra and dattam with Bhukta Dakshina is offered and thinking of Gaya, the Pitru Brahmana is asked to do Parishechanam. After Annam is served in the Vishnu leaf and dattam is done, Karta will take til, Akshata, Tulasi and water in hand and saying "May Vishwedevas, Pitrus and Bhagavan Janardhana Sri Hari (sitting as Vishnu) be satisfied", Karta drops the water on Darbha as Pitru teertham. After saying ‘Gaya Sraaddham’ and ‘Akshaya vatam’ three times and thinking of them and offering water for Amritopastaranam and after Pranahutis are over, Hastodakam is offered and Brahmanas are requested to eat. Karta says:

स्वामिन: देशकालातिक्रमो जात: रात्रौ यथा कुच भवेत् तथा आतृप्तेीः मौनेन भोक्तव्यम् ।

"Respected Devatas, the prescribed place and time have been transgressed. I request you to eat in silence such that you will not feel any hunger in the night and till you are satisfied.”

They are also requested to ask for desired items and reject items not desired, through gestures. When the Brahmanas eat the food, in order to avert trouble from Rakshasas, it is necessary to chant Rakshogna Suktam, Purusha Suktam, Abhisravana Sukitas, portions from Itihasas and Puranas which are pleasing to Pitrus like Gangavataram, Vamanavatara Charitam, etc.

There are some restrictions to be observed when the Sraaddha Brahmanas eat. They should not touch each other. They should not leave behind ghee and payasam; they should leave behind all the rest of the items in some quantity. In case food, water etc. of one Brahmana
who has started eating, gets mixed by chance with the food in the adjacent Brahmana's leaf, both of them should keep their hands raised without touching the leaves; the leaves should be removed, the place should be cleaned, new leaves should be placed, food served and then the Brahmanas should do Parishechanam and eat.
Vikirannam

After the Brahmanas finish eating, Karta should enquire whether they are satisfied. After the Brahmanas express satisfaction, the Karta should sit opposite the leaf of Visvedeva Brahmana. His wife shall bring a small quantity of loose cooked rice and also a Pindam of cooked rice. With Upaviti, Karta draws a line on the floor with water from south to north and sprinkle the loose rice from south to north on this line and say the mantra:

असोमपाि ये देवा यज्ञभाग-विवर्जिता: । तेषामस्वं प्रदास्यामि विकिरिं वैश्वेदविकम् ॥

“May Devas who have not been able to partake of Soma juice and offerings in Yagas, be satisfied with this rice (Vikirannam) offered in front of Visvdevas.” Saying this mantra Karta sprinkles water on the rice.

Karta then rises and sits in front of the leaf of Pitru Brahmana and with Prachinaviti, draws a line with water on the floor from east to west and sprinkle the loose rice along that line and say the mantra:

असंस्कृत-प्रसीता ये त्यागिन्यो या: कुलखियः । दास्यामि तेभ्यो विकिरस्यं ताव्यद्र वैन्दकम् ॥

“May the women in our family, for whom proper Uttarakriyas were not performed, be satisfied with this rice (Vikirannam) offered in front of Pitrus.” Saying this mantra Karta sprinkles water on the rice.

With Prachinaviti, Karta then spreads a few Darbhas on the floor between the leaves of the Visvedevas and Pitru Brahmanas, with the tip of the Darbhas facing south. Karta sits with folded left knee on the floor and places the Pindam on the Darbhas saying the mantra

ये त्वग्रीद्रध्या जीवा येक्ष्यद्रध्या: कुले मम । भूमः दलेन तुष्यवन्तु तृसा यान्तु परां गतिम् ॥

“May Pitrus in my family who were cremated with proper Agni and those not cremated properly, be satisfied with this rice offered on earth and attain supreme state”. Saying this mantra Karta offers til and water on the Pindam. He then rises and Uttaraposanam is served to the Brahmanas. Pindam is offered to crow. Karta calls for the crow with upaviti. The Pindam should be placed at a spot where dogs etc. will not come. After the crow starts eating, the Pitru Brahmana is asked to rise first, followed by the Visvedeva Brahmana. The
Brahmanas wash and do Achamanam and sit in their places. Their satisfaction is enquired by
the Karta, who offers them Dakshina and Tambulam and goes round them with family three
times and prostrates to them. Karta then prays to them “May the Sraaddham performed today
be treated as done following all procedures, bear fruit and offer undiminished satisfaction to
Pitrus. On the Brahmanas offering their blessings, Karta asks for permission to eat the
balance food with his relatives. He says:

दातारो नोजभिवर्धन्तां बेदः: सन्ततिरव न: । श्रद्धा च नो मा व्यपगात् बहु देर च नोस्तु ॥
अरवं च नो बहु भवेत् अतिरिीत्र लभेमहि: । याचितारखश्न: न: सन्तु मा च व्याचिष्प्र कंचन ॥

“May those who shower wealth on us, Veda and our lineage grow without any break. May our
Sraddha (faith) never leave us. May we obtain articles for giving and food in large quantities.
May Atithis (guests) come to our home in large numbers. May we not seek anything from any
one. May we get a number of persons who seek something from us.” Karta offers sandal
paste, flowers etc. to the Brahmanas and obtains their blessings (Swastivachanam). Karta
then places his Angavastram on the floor with tip facing east or north. After the Brahmanas
place their feet on their Angavastram, Karta applies the dust of their feet on his head. He then
says:

पत्र-शाकाददि-दानोन क्लेशितां यूः-ईदृशः: । तत्-क्लेशजातं चित्तेषु विस्मृत्य धन्तु-अहर्थ ॥

“You have been troubled by my offer of leaves and vegetables. Please do not keep that
feeling of trouble in mind and forget it and forgive me.” Karta then sees the Brahmanas off.
Pindapradanam

The Agni in which Sraaddha Homam was performed should be maintained without extinguishing until Brahmana Bhojanam is over and Pindam is offered to the crow. In case the Agni is extinguished, Karta should observe fast that day and perform Sraaddham again the next day. In case the Pindam offered to the crow is touched by a monkey or a dog, the Sraaddham is totally lost. It has to be done again. There is a belief in some people related to the direction in which the crow starts eating the Pindam. If the crow picks up from the east side, wealth will grow; from south side, disease; from west side, outstation travel; from north side, loss of longevity.

After the Brahmana leaves, Pindapradanam is done with the leaves in their places (Uchchishta-sannidhou). Karta spreads Darbhas in two groups with tip facing south. He then places three Pindas for Pitruvargam on one group of Darbhas and three Pindas for Matruvargam on the second group. He offers til and water and Upacharas. He then offers Parishechanam with the Argya water in the two vessels in anti clockwise direction and prays for the growth of his lineage. If the karta does not have progeny, he offers the central Pitamaha Pindam to his wife with Niviti and asks her to eat it. Karta then requests the Pitrudevatas to go back to their places. He then smells the balance loose rice in the Pinda Patram. With Upaviti, he does Achamanam. After removing the Pindas properly, Karta collects the Darbhas below and offers them with til and water, chanting a mantra for satisfaction of the ancestors in the family who had died without close relatives like mother, father, brother, etc. With Upaviti he performs Achamanam and wears the Bhasma from the Homam as Raksha. Karta then offers the entire Karmas to the Lord as Brahmarpanam. The Pindas are disposed of in a water body.

The leaves in which food was eaten by the brahmanas should be removed before Swastivachanam blessings are given. After Pindapradanam is over, the place is cleaned. The leaves in which Brahmanas had eaten should be buried in a pit in the ground. It should be ensured that dog, rat, etc. do not touch the leaves. Some people dispose of the leaves in a water body. Some offer the leaves to cow; however, it is not correct. The vessels in which food was cooked should be cleaned only by brahmanas.
Karta then offers Dakshina to the Brahmanas who chanted Abhisravanam and also to the Acharya. With Niviti, karta squeezes the cloth he wore during bath saying, “May this water give satisfaction to my ancestors born in my lineage and Gotra and who died without progeny.” With Upaviti, Karta then does Achamanam and Brahma Yagnam. In case Parehani Tarpanam is done that day itself, then Brahma Yagnam is done after completing this tarpanam.

Parehani Tarpanam, as the name indicates is to be done the day after the Sraaddham day. If father is alive and Sraaddham is done for mother, then this Tarpanam is not to be done. With Darbha and til left over from Sraaddham, this Tarpanam is done the next day early in the morning during Brahma Muhurtam. If done after sunrise, Karta should take bath, perform Sandhyavandanam and then this Tarpanam. If Parehani Tarpanam cannot be done the next day, it may be done on Sraaddham day after Pindapradanam. But this is not the best practice. This Tarpanam should be done like Darsa (Amavasya) Tarpanam. This Tarpanam is offered only for Pitruvargam and not for Matamahavargam. Parehani Tarpanam is not to be done during Naandi Sraaddham, Abdikam, Sapindikaranam and Anumasikam.

Some general precautions should be scrupulously observed. The Brahmanas - Pitru and Visvedeva- should not vomit. Pindam should never break. Extreme care is required in preparation of food, choice of healthy brahmanas free from disease, preparation of Pindam, protection of Agni and cleanliness and purity.
Pitru Sesham - Eating with relatives

There are specific guidelines as to who can eat Pitru Sesham (food left after the Pitru and Visvedeva brahmanas have eaten). Karta, his brothers, sister, daughter, son, grandsons (Poutra and Douhitra) and Sapinda Gnatis (relatives from father’s ancestral side) can all partake of Pitru Sesham. They can eat this food even on Ekadashi day. Gnatis wishing to observe Ekadashi fast may only smell the food and still reap the benefit of both eating Pitru Sesham and observing Ekadashi fast.

Even if the Sraaddham has been performed for a person who is younger than the Karta, his wife etc., he should still partake of Pitru Sesham as the dead persons have attained the state of Pitrus. Daughter who is married and has switched to another Gotram can partake of Sraaddha Sesham of her mother, father and brother. If she is a widow, she does not eat. There is no harm in eating the Sesham of one’s father-in-law or uncle. As a general rule, there is no dosham (defect) attached to partaking of fruit, vegetable, milk, curd, ghee and honey. Gnatis of three days’ Aasoucham shall not partake of Pitru Sesham. Such people, relatives who are not Gnatis, the Acharya and the brahmanas who chanted Abhisravana mantras may partake of food prepared separately. This is called Ishtapandhi. However no elaborate Annadanam to outsiders should be done on Sraaddham day.
Some more Rules

Salt should not be served directly. Curd, ghee, milk and buttermilk kept in copper vessels should not be served. An enemy or a good friend is not eligible for choice as Sraaddha Brahmana. On days when Abhyangam (oil bath) is not permitted, aamla (nellu) juice may be given instead of oil. On Amavasya, Saptami Tithi and Sunday, aamla should also be avoided. Bronze, silver, copper cups and cups made of leaf (donna) are good for Argyam and Bhojanam. Kimsuka (Purasu) leaves are suitable for use.

White flowers, lotus, Alli, Jaati, Champaka (Senbagam), Mallika, Tulasai, Ketaki (Taazhai), Kunda (Mullai), Maru- these are suitable. Flowers, others than lotus, should not be of red colour.

Food should not be served with one hand. All food other than fruits should not be served directly with hand; they should be served with a spoon. Dal, payasam and ghee should be served on the right side of the person who eats and the balance items on the left side. Food should not be cold. It should always be served hot, suitable for eating.

If suitable Brahmana for chanting Abhisravana mantram is not available, then Karta can himself read Itihasas and Puranas and chant Purusha Suktam. If Karta performs Oupasanam every day, he should do it that evening also. Karta can get Oupasanam done through somebody else also. **It is very important that Karta and the Sraaddha Brahmanas should not eat anything that day after the noon food. (Many people these days partake of the Sraaddha Bhakshanam (snacks) in the night. This is totally wrong. They can at the most have some fruit and milk.)**

It is considered essential to use black til in Sraaddham as it is capable of driving away Rakshasas and offer satisfaction to Pitrus.

It is necessary to follow the practice adopted in the family by the forefathers of the Karta. Sishtacharam (practice of the cultured), Kulacharam (practice adopted in the family by the forefathers) and Desacharam (practice adopted in a particular place) may differ. However, one can accept a practice which does not go against Kulacharam. One should learn practices adopted in the family properly from elders in the home or outsiders, well versed in the practices of that family. It is essential to know the names of all ancestors on father’s and
mother's side- names which were given to them during Namakaranam, names ending with Sarma for males and Da for females.

Karta shall not do anything that might cause oozing of blood in the body. Brushing the teeth with wooden stick on that day and the previous day should also be avoided.

Til should not be taken with index finger and thumb. Darbha should not be taken with left hand. Brahmana who participated in Sraaddha should do chanting of the Gayatri Mantra ten times in the evening that day and take the sanctified water; then he will be freed from dosham and be fit to do Sandhyavandanam.

**Sraaddham by sons together**

In case property has been divided, brothers should perform Sraaddham separately. Even if the property is not divided and brothers are running their family separately, then also they should perform Sraaddham separately. If brothers live together and there is no property to be divided then no separate Sraaddham is required. Brothers living separately but joining on the day of Sraaddham is not good. In case brothers perform Sraaddham together they should have separate brahmanas, perform Homam separately and prepare Annam and Payasam also separately; rest of the food can be common. If Sraaddham is done separately, Pitrus will become very happy. It must be noted that Pitrus, being Devas, can be present in different places at the same time.
Puranic Stories

In ancient times there was a brahmana called Ruchi. He did not marry. He was roaming around like a vanaprastha. He became a true Gnani, no doubt. One day Pitrus of his lineage met him on the way. They asked him to marry and produce sons and rid himself of Pitru-debt. Ruchi engaged in a long debate with them. He expatiated on the dangers of downfall for one who is attached to his family. The Pitrus finally told him that he would only go to hell after his death and undergo great suffering on account of the sin he is committing by way of neglect of Pitrus. Now Ruchi felt that none would offer him a girl in marriage. He decided to please Brahma. After penance lasting a hundred years, Brahma appeared and expressed his complete concurrence with the advice tendered by the Pitrus. He asked Ruchi to worship Pitrus themselves for blessing him with a suitable girl for marriage. Brahma blessed that Ruchi would become a Prajapati. Ruchi made ceremonial offerings to Pitrus in a river and sang the praise of Pitrus. His Pitru-stotras appearing in Garuda Purana have unparalleled beauty and are greatly devotional and elevating. The Pitrus appeared and happily blessed that he would immediately marry a beautiful girl and become a Prajapati. An Apsara named Pramlocha approached Ruchi with marriage proposal for her daughter Manini. Ruchi married Manini. His son Rouchya became a Manu and was responsible for spread of human race in his manvantara. Pitrus' blessings and curses are indeed extremely powerful.

Sage Jaratkaru's story is better known. Like Ruchi, he also was a Gnani who abhorred marriage. One day he happened to see his ancestors shouting with pain from inside a well. On enquiry, the Pitrus informed him that someone called Jaratkaru in their family, who did not marry, was responsible for their piteous plight. Jaratkaru was shocked. He argued with the Pitrus about the dangers of marriage. But when he was convinced that marriage was necessary for the redemption of the Pitrus, he agreed. He laid down a strange condition that his wife-to-be should also bear the same name as his, ie. Jaratkaru. Devi fulfilled that condition also. Manasa Devi, amsa of Parasakthi, herself became Jaratkaru and married him. Their son was Sage Astika, who later stopped king Janamejaya from mass killing of innocent snakes in the Sarpayagna organised by the king in revenge for serpent Takshaka biting his father Parikshit to death.

Devi Bhagavatham states:
“When parents are alive, their words should be implicitly obeyed. After death, on their death anniversary, Sraaddham with offering of lots of food should be performed. At least once in lifetime, Sraaddham (Pinda danam) should be performed in Gaya. These three actions alone make a son worthy of being called a true son.”
GAYA SRAADDHA
Gaya

It is every son’s duty to go to Gaya after demise of his parents to perform Gaya Sraaddha. Gaya is in the state of Bihar. It is located on the Kolahaala Mountain in a beautiful place called Champaka. Bhagavan Vishnu gives darshan in Gaya as Gadadhara. As per Sastras one will require at least six days to complete all the Sraaddhas required to be performed in Gaya. But over the years the rituals have been reduced to two Hiranya Sraaddhas and one Paarvana Sraaddha, completed in just one day.

1. At Phalguni River: Here the river is subterranean; so karta has to dig the sand slightly and bring out the water. On the banks of the river karta’s wife will prepare cooked rice. Out of one part of this she will make 17 pindams. Karta will do Pindapradanam of the 17 pindams with mantras right there on the bank of the river. After the rituals the karta gives the pindams to cows there.

2. At Vishnu Pada: With reminder of the cooked rice prepared at Phalguni river bank, karta shall make 64 pindas and do Pindapradanam with mantras. When karta offers these 64 pindams directly at Vishnu Pada (Feet of Vishnu) karta derives immense satisfaction. He remembers how in every Pratyabdika Sraaddha he performs at home, he offers the food at Vishnu Pada.

3. Paarvana Sraaddha: This may be done in the place in which one stays. People often stay at Karnataka Bhavan; it offers all facilities. Karta should do Paarvana Sraaddha here with Homam with 5 brahmanas present. At the end of Sraaddham karta makes 64 pindams out of the rice cooked there and takes them to Akshayavata (Large Banyan Tree).

4. Akshayavata: Karta offers the 64 pindams in the shade of this tree. The special feature of the Pindapradanam here is that 16 of the 64 pindams offered are for the karta’s mother; they are referred to as ‘Matru Shodashi’. The 16 verses chanted while offering the 16 Pindas, together with their meanings, are given below. It is bound to cause shedding of tears in the Karta for his departed mother. The other special feature is that karta can offer pindams not only for the forefathers of his gothra, but even for other outsiders including relatives and friends. Karta has thus got a chance to pray for these people’s meritorious journey to Pitru Loka. Hence karta should prepare a list of all such people in advance, for whom he wishes to do Pindapradanam; this list should include preferably Gothra, Sarma name etc. Offering
Pindam at the age-old Akshayavata is a unique, rare, momentous and satisfying experience. It is a matter of great significance that Rama and Sita offered pindas at this place for King Dasaratha.

5. Dropping of things liked, at the Akshyavata: Karta takes the pledge to drop a vegetable, a fruit and a leaf from his diet; he will not eat them for the rest of his life. When karta decides the names of these three items and informs the Purohit, he does the sankalpa for him. At end of sankalpa, karta offers a brahmana the tirtham, which he takes confirming the pledge.

All the above rituals are completed during the course of one day. Sastra says that Vishnu gave a boon to Gayasura, as per which those who perform Sraaddha in the sacred place of Gaya will not only help their Pitrus to attain Liberation but also enable themselves to get liberated. It is because of the special sanctity of the Pitrukshetra Gaya and Akshayavata that in any Pratyabdika Sraaddham performed anywhere, Gaya and Akshyavata are repeatedly invoked with reverence.

People generally also visit the nearby Bodh Gaya.

**Matru Shodashi Mantras**

गर्भस्य-उद्गमने दुःख विपमे भूसि वर्तमि ।
तस्य नित्यः मातृपिण्डं ददाम्यहम् ॥ (१)
“Carrying me in her womb, my mother walked on uneven ground, experiencing suffering. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

मातृमि मातृमि कृतं कष्टं वेदना प्रसंवे तथा ।
तस्य नित्यः मातृपिण्डं ददाम्यहम् ॥ (२)
“During every month of pregnancy and during delivery, I have caused untold suffering to my mother. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

पद्धां प्रजायते पुत्रो जन्यया: परिवेदनसः ।
तस्य नित्यः मातृपिण्डं ददाम्यहम् ॥ (३)
“I have caused untold suffering to my mother by kicking her with my feet. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”
तस्य निष्क्रमार्थ्यो मातृपीडण्ड ददाम्यहम् ॥ (४)
“Towards the close of ten months of pregnancy, I have caused untold suffering to my mother. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

तस्य निष्क्रमार्थ्यो मातृपीडण्ड ददाम्यहम् ॥ (५)
“During pregnancy I have caused extreme exhaustion and breathlessness to my mother. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

तस्य निष्क्रमार्थ्यो मातृपीडण्ड ददाम्यहम् ॥ (६)
“In order to protect me, my mother suffered by consuming bitter medicines and different types of regulated foods. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

तस्य निष्क्रमार्थ्यो मातृपीडण्ड ददाम्यहम् ॥ (७)
“When I was born, my mother fasted and suffered from the pains of Jaathara-Agni (Agni in stomach) for three days. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

तस्य निष्क्रमार्थ्यो मातृपीडण्ड ददाम्यहम् ॥ (८)
“I used to cause misery to my mother by dirtying her clothes with urine and faeces during nights. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

तस्य निष्क्रमार्थ्यो मातृपीडण्ड ददाम्यहम् ॥ (९)
“When I suffered from hunger, my mother fed me (though she did not have food for herself). I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

तस्य निष्क्रमार्थ्यो मातृपीडण्ड ददाम्यहम् ॥ (१०)
“During night and day, my mother gave me breast milk always. I thus caused her trouble. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”
माघे मासि निदागे च शिशिरेःस्य त्यन्त दुःखिता ।
तस्य निन्त्रमणायाय मातृपिण्डं ददाम्यहम् ॥ (११)
“In the month of Maagh (Maas) in winter, and in summer, my mother suffered very much because of me. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

पुत्रे व्यापि समायुक्ते माता हा कन्दकारिणी ।
तस्य निन्त्रमणायाय मातृपिण्डं ददाम्यहम् ॥ (१२)
“When her son was afflicted with from some disease, my mother cried in sorrow. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

यमद्वारे महाघोरे माता शोचित सन्ततम् ।
तस्य निन्त्रमणायाय मातृपिण्डं ददाम्यहम् ॥ (१३)
“My mother is miserable while passing through terrible experiences in Yamaloka. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

यावत-पुत्रो न भवति तावनमातृशोचनम् ।
तस्य निन्त्रमणायाय मातृपिण्डं ददाम्यहम् ॥ (१४)
“Before pregnancy, my mother was miserable for want of a son. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

स्वल्पाहारस्य करणी यावत-पुत्रश्च बालकः ।
तस्य निन्त्रमणायाय मातृपिण्डं ददाम्यहम् ॥ (१५)
“My mother prepared a small quantity of food for giving me, even while she herself went without food. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”

गात्रभङ्ग्गा भवेन-माता मृत्यु एव न संशयः ।
तस्य निन्त्रमणायाय मातृपिण्डं ददाम्यहम् ॥ (१६)
“While I was in my mother’s womb and during delivery, she suffered death-like misery without doubt. I offer this Matru Pindam for expiation from that sin.”
Prayag-Triveni Sangamam

Prayag (Allahabad) is the sacred kshetra where Brahma performed many magnificent Yagas. This is the place of confluence or Sangamam of three rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. Saraswati River is not visible and it flows as undercurrent. Here karta takes bath in Triveni after shave and performs Hiranya Sraaddham. Karta and his wife perform the Pooja at Triveni with assistance of the local Panda. As per tradition the karta is personified as Madhava by his wife. He treats his wife as Veni, combs and pleats her hair, cuts off an inch at tail of the pleat and offers it to the Panda with sandal paste, kumkum and akshata, which panda offers to the river. This is called Veni Danam. While all the other things float, the hair piece alone gets sucked into the water and disappears. All the rituals here are performed with Karta and his wife sitting in a boat along with the Panda. Even the barber travels in the boat.

The word Veni refers to Triveni as well as the pleat of hair. Just like Triveni Sangamam where one of the three merging rivers is not seen, one of the three strands of the pleat of hair is also not visible. Bathing in Triveni Sangamam is a thrilling experience. As everything is well organised, there is no cause for concern. One can also collect Gangajal from here. It is believed that after the bath one should discard the dhoti, sari, blouse etc. that he and his wife had worn.

Dampathi Pooja:

It is usual practice to perform Dampathi Pooja towards the close of the stay in Prayag or Kashi. It is said to be highly meritorious to perform Dampathi Pooja in such a sacred place.

"Whatever fruit man desires, of this world or the hereafter, he certainly attains all of it by performing Dampati Puja in Triveni."

Sastra says that mere setting of foot on the soil of Prayag, the Tirtha Raja confers on one the merit of Asvamedha Yaga. There is a sloka listing the important Devatas of Prayag:

"नमः अक्षय्यिटं शेषं प्रयागं तीथतानायकम्॥

triveṃśaḥ mahāṃ sāṁ bhaṅgarājan ca vāsūkīm

Page 95 of 99
“I pray to Triveni, Veni Madhava, Soma, Bharadvaja, Vasuki, Akshaya Vata, Sesha and Tirtharaja Prayag.”

A convenient place to stay at Prayag is Sivamutt and Sankaramutt, Mori, Daraganj, Allahabad. Places to visit include Veni Madhava temple, Hanuman temple, Akshaya Vata, Bharadvaja Ashram and Kanchi Sankara temple.
Kashi

Gangasnana:

The very first bath in Ganga that the karta takes is preceded by a very elaborate ritual including Maha Sankalpa and danams. Many brahmanas join in this and bless the couple. Karta and his wife then take bath in Ganga as guided by the Acharya with Pavithram in his finger. After bath karta collects the Ganga water in pot and goes over to the place where he stays.

Tirtha Sraaddha:

This Sraaddha is like any Pratyabdika Sraaddha. Except for a slightly different sankalpa the procedures are similar. Five Brahmanas are invited in this Sraaddha.

Pancha Ganga Sraaddha:

This Sraaddha involves Pindapradanam at 5 ghats in Ganga with karta and his wife travelling in the boat along with the Purohit. Rice is cooked on stove in the boat itself by the karta’s wife, who then prepares the pindams. 17 pindams are offered at each of the 5 ghats with mantras. Tilatarpana is done for the families of both the husband and wife, Udbhavamsa Tilatarpana. The five ghats are: Assi Ghat, Dasaswamedha Ghat, Varana Ghat, Pancha Ganga Ghat and Manikarnika Ghat. This Sraaddham is peculiar to Kashi, inducing high thrill and Sraddhain the performer. The name of Varanasi for the city of Kashi is derived from the names of the two rivers, Varana and Assi, which merge with Ganga at this place.

Ganga Pooja :

After the Sraaddhas are completed, Ganga Pooja is performed the next day in the morning. This is again a moving experience. Ganga’s greatness overwhelms everyone. Siva himself praises Ganga’s greatness:

सेयं सुरधुनी पुण्या महापातकनाशिनी।
स्पर्शनाद-दर्शनाध्य निर्वाण-फलदायिनी॥(Devipuranam, 72:1)

“This meritorious Ganga from Devaloka destroys the greatest of sins just by touching and having darshan; Ganga bestows the fruit of Liberation.”
Adi Sankara prays:

तब चेन्मात: स्रोतः स्रातः पुतरपि जठरे सोपपि न जातः।
नरकनिवारिणि जातन्वि गङ्गे कलुषविनाशिनि महिमोत्सृष्णे। (Ganga Stotram, 7)

“O Mother, he who has bathed in the flow of your pure water, he will not again take birth from the womb of a mother (i.e. have rebirth). O Jahnavi (Daughter of Jahnu Maharishi), Ganga, you save people from falling in naraka and destroy their impurities; O Mother Ganga, your greatness stands high.”

Abhisheka is done by pouring Ganga water and milk in the river. Archana is performed to Ganga Devi.

Places to visit:

There is a sloka listing the important Devatas of Kashi:

विश्वेशं माध्वं ढुँढन ढंडपाणिः भैरवम्।
बन्दे काशीं गुहां गङ्गाः भवानीं मणिपुष्कलां॥

“I pray to Viswanatha, Bindu Madhava, Dundhi Ganapathi, Dandapani, Bhairava, Kashi kshetra, Guha (cave), Ganga, Devi Bhavani and Manikarnika Ghat.”

It is usual practice to have Darshan of the above Devatas in Kashi. People also visit temples of Annapoorna, Visalakshi, Durga Devi, Kamakotiswara, Kedareswara, Sozhi Matha and Sankat Mochak Hanuman. There are many ghats in Ganga and taking bath in as many of these ghats as possible is recommended. Some of the important Ghats are Manikarnika Ghat, Dasaswamedha Ghat and Harischandra Ghat. The term ‘Kashi’ means brilliant place; it is also called Avimukta Kshetra as Siva never leaves this place. It is here that Siva chants the Taraka Mantra of Ramanama in the right ear of those who die here and grants them Mukti. People normally take bath in Manikarnika Ghat and have darshan of Dundhi Ganapathi and Viswanatha nearby. Viswanatha Temple is one of the twelve Jyotir Lingas. At Kala Bhairava Temple people take ‘Kasi Kairu’ (black thread) and wear it on the wrist to ward off ‘drishti dosham’. Another important sight not to be missed is the Ganga Aarthi, celebrated with gaiety and splendour at Manikarnika Ghat every evening. If one has the time, the famed Benares Hindu University is worth a visit.
**General**

The traditional procedure of performing this yatra is as follows. One goes to Rameswaram initially and performs Tirtha Sraaddham. Bath in Agni Tirtham in the sea together as husband and wife and in the 22 wells in the famed Ramanathaswamy Temple are completed. Sand is collected from the Agni Tirtham.

At Prayag the sand brought from Rameswaram is formed into Sivalingam and dissolved in Ganga after Pooja. Ganga water is collected from Prayag. After the Kashi/Gaya trip is over, one has return to Rameswaram again and perform Abhishekaam with Ganga Jal to Sri Ramanathaswamy. After this the karta returns home, performs Ganga Pooja and Samaradhana followed by Brahmana Bhojana.

Prior to going on Gaya/Kashi/Prayag trip, one can carry dhotis (9*5) for danam- 12 Nos., other danam materials like Panchapatra etc., materials for Dampati Pooja like sari, blouse piece etc.

Some people think that once Gaya Sraaddha is performed, it is not necessary to perform Pratyabdika Sraaddha annually any more. This is not correct. **Performing Gaya Sraaddha is no doubt highly meritorious, but Pratyabdika Sraaddha is a compulsory karma which should be continued all through one’s life.**