



PITRU PAKSHA 2024



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Pitru Paksha, also known as **Shraddha**, is a significant period in the Hindu calendar dedicated to honoring and paying homage to one's ancestors. This sacred time lasts for **16 lunar days** during the month of **Ashwin** (usually falling in September to October). It is particularly important for performing rituals that ensure the peace and liberation of the souls of deceased ancestors.

The Importance of Gaya in Pitru Paksha

Gaya holds a special significance during Pitru Paksha as it is considered one of the most auspicious places for performing **Shraddha** rites. The rituals conducted here are believed to be highly beneficial for the souls of ancestors, providing them with peace and liberation (moksha).

1. **Sacred Rituals:** In Gaya, many families travel to perform **pind daan**, a ritual where offerings of rice balls (pind) are made to their ancestors. This act is believed to nourish the souls and help them attain peace. The city is renowned for its sacred sites along the **Phalgu River**, where these rites are traditionally performed.
2. **Legend of Karna:** According to Hindu mythology, the legendary figure **Karna**, from the epic *Mahabharata*, faced severe hunger after his death because he had never offered food to his ancestors. To rectify this, he was granted permission to return to earth for 15 days during Pitru Paksha, allowing him to perform Shraddha rites for his forefathers. This story emphasizes the importance of honoring one's ancestors during this period, linking it directly to the practices observed in Gaya.
3. **Spiritual Beliefs:** It is widely believed that performing Shraddha in Gaya can absolve individuals from ancestral debts and curses, ensuring that their ancestors find peace in the afterlife. Many pilgrims visit Gaya specifically for this purpose during Pitru Paksha, reinforcing the city's status as a vital pilgrimage site.

Ritual Practices During Pitru Paksha

- **Tarpan and Offerings:** Families typically wake up early, take a holy bath, and prepare sattvik food offerings for their ancestors. The male member often performs the **Pitru Tarpan**, offering water and food items either directly or through Brahmins (priests).
- **Feeding Animals:** Feeding animals, particularly crows (considered messengers of ancestors), cows, and dogs, is an essential part of the rituals during Pitru Paksha. This act symbolizes respect for all living beings and is believed to enhance the spiritual merit of the offerings made.
- **Visiting Sacred Sites:** Many devotees travel to Gaya's sacred sites, such as the Vishnupad Temple and other nearby locations along the Phalgu River, to perform their ancestral rites.

Conclusion

Pitru Paksha serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of honoring one's ancestors in Hindu culture. The connection between Gaya and Pitru Paksha highlights the city's spiritual significance as a place where individuals can seek blessings for their deceased loved ones while reinforcing familial bonds through shared rituals and traditions. By participating in these observances, devotees express gratitude and ensure that their ancestors receive peace in their spiritual journey.

