

MahALayam

Basics

The MahALayam is the period that occurs for 16 days, under the ChAndramAna procedure, from BAdrapadha BahuLa (Krishna Paksham) PrathamA thithi to Aaswayuja Sukla PrathamA thithi.

Many of us in Tamil Nadu correlate this to the SouramAna procedure and call it as – 'PurattAsi MahALayam'. It is not correct. It can happen / start in the Tamil month of AavaNi also - as it did in the native year 'Kara'.

Vruththa Manu

When 'Sooryan' (Sun) enters 'Kanya rAsi' [BAdrapadha BahuLa Paksham] – that period is known as MahALayam.

Bruhan Manu

One shall perform Pithru srAdham / TharpaNam in that paksham which is fifth from – AashAda PoorNima [In other words - BAdrapadha BahuLa Paksham].

KAIAdharsakArar

Since the 'Sooryan' (Sun) has entered 'Kanya RAsi' [BAdrapadha BahuLa Paksham] this is a 'PuNya Paksham'.

The belief

Aadhitya PurANam / Mathsya PurANam / KAIAdharsakArar

The lord of death – Yamadharmarajan, during the 'Varsha Ruthu' [in the month of AavaNi / PurattAsi as per Tamil native calendar] vacates his domain of 'Yama Patnam' by deputing the prethAs & the Pithrus to 'Manushya Lokam'.

This is the time when the Pithrus reach their PuthrAs. They stay till the end of Aaswayuja month when Sooryan (Sun) enters / stays in Thula rAsi.

In this period these pithrus long for Annam, PAyasam, Thilam (Ellu) etc.

When this is offered by the PuthrAs / karthAs, the Pithrus and the Pithru DevathAs bless the PuthrAs and their progenies.

If not offered, they get back to Yama Patnam with utmost disappointment.

Performing MahALaya TharpaNam on the day of MahA BaraNi / MadhyAshtami / Thriyodhasi - is equivalent to performing GayA SrAdham.

Duration of performance

Paksha MahALayam and Sakrun MahALayam

Paksha MahALayam

Pithrumedha SAram & KAAdharsakArar

If performed for more than a day, without break, during the MahALayam period:

- a) From BAdrapadha Bahula PrathamA to Aaswayuja Sukla PrathamA;
or
- b) From BAdrapadha Bahula PrathamA to BAdrapadha AmAvAsya; or
- c) From BAdrapadha Bahula Panchami to BAdrapadha AmAvAsya; or
- d) From BAdrapadha Bahula Ashtami to BAdrapadha AmAvAsya; or
- e) From BAdrapadha Bahula Dhasami to BAdrapadha AmAvAsya.

It is known as Paksha MahALayam.

If not possible, one shall do it at least once, after BAdrapadha Bahula Chathurthi during the MahALayam period. This is known as *Sakrun MahALayam*.

The prevailing scenario

Many are anxious and keen to perform MahALaya TharpaNam. Most of us are doing also – but not correctly due to wrong guidance / in the name of their own way of doing things for generations (DesAchAram / SishtAchAram / segmented sampradhAyam etc).

The solid example of a misnomer is in performing MahALaya TharpaNam on the same thithi of the forefathers – ignoring the paksham. This is not prescribed in the pramANams.

Some perform the MahALaya TharpaNam to the deceased mother on 'AvithavA Navami' day, if the mother when died happened to be a Sumangali (Mother predeceasing father). This is also not correct. AvithavA Navami basically comes under 'Vratha' kramam and not 'SrAdha' kramam. Further, it is also suggested that this 'AvithavA Navami' vratham is to be performed by the women folk of the deceased Sumangali.

Some guidelines

- 1) Days / MahALaya Paksha SrAdha Thithis, such as Panchami / MahA BaraNi / MadhyAshtami / MahAvyatheepAdham / Thriyodhasi (Gaja ChchAyai) / AmAvAsya are deemed to be flawless days.
- 2) If a kartha desires to do the MahALaya TharpaNam on days other than the above, then the compatibility / suitability of that day, in relation to his, his wife's & his eldest son's birth stars, must be ensured.
- 3) If the deceased (Pithru) is a SanyAsi then the tharpaNam is to be performed only on DwAdhasi thithi (Sanyastha MahALayam).
- 4) If the death of the pithru was unnatural or under unnatural circumstances then the tharpaNam must be performed only on Chathurdhasi thithi (Sasthrathatha MahALayam). Deaths like suicide / murder / war killings / animal killings etc will be under this type.
- 5) TharpaNam shall not be performed on MahALaya Chathurdhasi thithi, to persons (pithrus) who die a natural / peaceful death.
- 6) If a kartha performs the MahALaya TharpaNam on the basis of 'Paksha MahALayam' [mentioned earlier for a period of frequency], then the MahALaya TharpaNam can be performed to that pithru (deceased) even on a Chathurdhasi thithi date – even if the cause of death is normal / natural.
- 7) Bachelors / Persons without male issues / Widowers / SanyAsis – shall perform MahALaya TharpaNam only on AmAvAsya thithi.
- 8) Persons blessed with son / children shall NOT perform MahALaya TharpaNam on AmAvAsya thithi. They can do so on any one of the flawless days.
- 9) If the pithru's (deceased's) prathyAbdheeka (Annual) srAdham falls due for performance during MahALaya paksham, then it must be performed first. The following day is meant to perform **Parehni** TharpaNam. Only after this day, a suitable / available day must be chosen to perform the MahALaya TharpaNam for the same Pithru.
- 10) If the pithru's (deceased's) prathyAbdheeka (Annual) srAdham falls due for performance during MahALaya paksham say on Chathurdhasi or AmAvAsya srAdha thithi – then the MahALaya TharpaNam for the same pithru shall be performed only on the ensuing Aaswayuja / Sukla / Panchami thithi.

MahALaya TharpaNam / SrAdham – which is to be performed

The tradition has it that during MahALaya paksham, it must be performed as a full-fledged 'PARvaNa SrAdham', which permits Pinda PradhAnam – only to the departed souls falling under 'Pithru vargam'.

In MahALaya TharpaNa kramam, one can perform tharpaNam & Pinda PradhAnam to both the Pithru vargam (Father's genealogy) & MATHru vargam (mother's genealogy – MATHa mahar – only if the mother's father is not alive).

Specialty

It is only during MahALaya paksham, that a kartha (person willing to perform MahALaya TharpaNam) can convey the obeisance to any pithru held in esteem regardless of the relationship / gender / caste – known as KaruNya pithru.