

## **Gaya Shraddha** **The Universal offering for the Dead**

Every year two weeks of the Hindu calendar are set aside for the honouring of one's deceased forebears. This fortnight is known as Pitru Paksha of Mahalaya Paksham. This year culminates on the 18<sup>th</sup> September.

This fortnight is considered to be the most important period of the year to offer our respects to all our deceased ancestors. According to the Dharma Shastra there are three debts with which we are born and which must be discharged by every Hindu. These debts are: Debt to the gods (Deva-runa), debt to the sages (Rishi-runa) and debt to the ancestors (Pitra-runa). Of these three the most important is the debt we owe to our ancestors. Every person alive is indebted to his/her parents for his/her existence. Anyone who lives without discharging this debt is an ingrate. To obey and care for our parents while they are alive and to perform memorial rites (shraddhas) for them when they are dead is the means whereby this debt is discharged.

There is a story associated with the fortnight of *Pitru Paksha* also known as *Mahalayam* because this is the day that the deceased leave the physical realm and enter into the realm of the ancestors. Karna of Mahabharata fame was a renowned philanthropist, he would give anything to whoever asked him for it. One day Indra asked him for his golden ear-rings and armour with which he was born, he gave them, knowing that without them he would be killed in battle! When he was eventually killed by Arjuna and entered into the realm of the ancestors, he was given every possible luxury except food. When he protested, he was reminded by Lord Yama (the god of death) that during his life he gave away everything except food. He was then given a reprieve of two weeks whereby to redress this failure. He returned to this realm and distributed food for two weeks. So during these two weeks we follow the example of Karma and give food and clothing etc to worthy recipients.

It is customary to observe a shraddha for the father and mother on the anniversary Tithi (Lunar date) of their death. During Pitru Paksha a shraddha is offered on the corresponding Tithi. If the Tithi is not known

then the shraddha is offered for the father on the New Moon (Amavasya) of Ashvini and for the mother on the 9th day of the fortnight .

### Proposition

It is proposed this year to have a public festival and make a universal offering (Gaya Shraddha) for all those who have died in tragic circumstances as well as to our own deceased ancestors. This year the "All Souls Day" (Sarva Pitru Shraddha) falls on 18<sup>th</sup> September).

According to the Scriptures all those who die in tragic circumstances such as murder, war, disease, famine etc become earth-bound and cannot leave the physical realm in order to reincarnate. They become locked into their personal tragedy and take the form of Pretas (Hungry Ghosts). The Gaya Shraddha ceremony is designed to help them to be released from their earth-bound state. We as a community have a duty towards all other beings and thus should do whatever we can for the living and the dead. Our bond of duty does not dissolve at death.

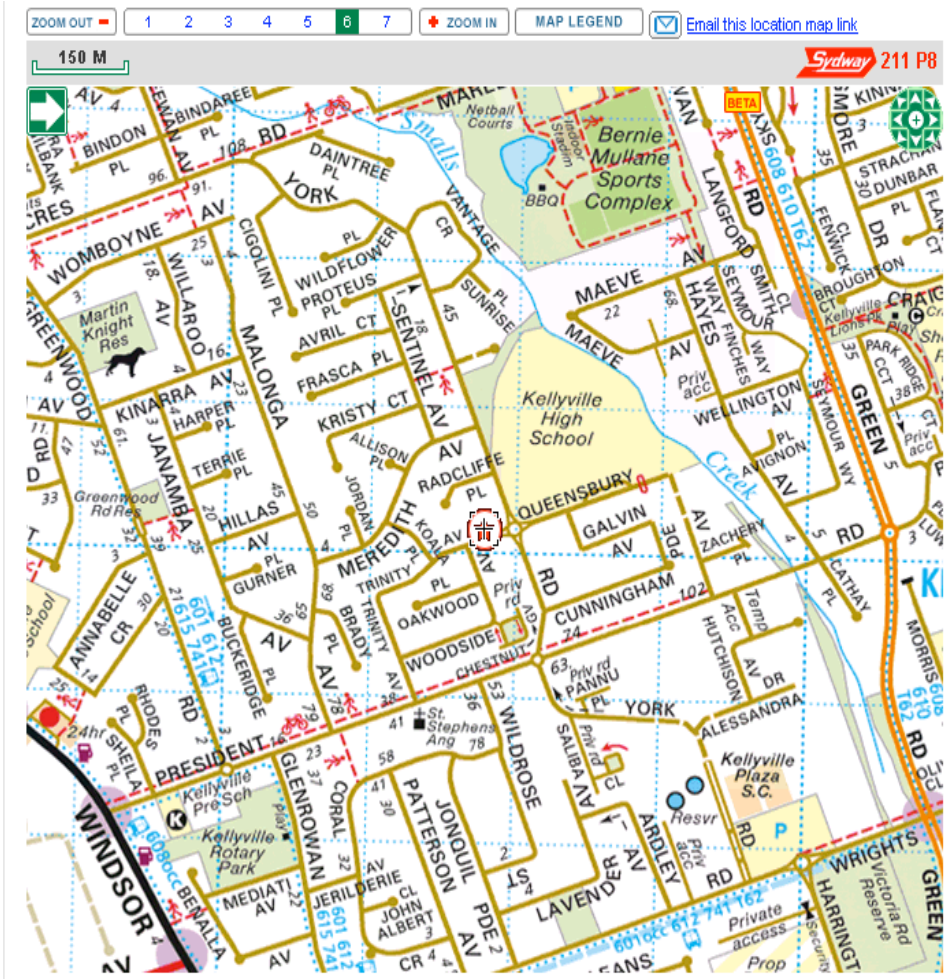
*Text of Offering will be provided on the day of the event.*

**\$ 25 per family (Additional Donations Welcome)**  
(All proceeds to go to Charity)

Please bring along with you:

- A Mat to sit
- Match box
- A Plate/Tray and a small cup+spoon
- Incense sticks
- A Tea light Candle
- Flowers

Rice for offering will be supplied by Srimatham.



# Gaya Shraddha

## The Universal Offering

### for the Dead

Coordinated by Shri Ramanujacharya  
Sri Ramanuja Matham  
Australian Branch of Sri Yatiraja Jeeyar Matham of  
Sri Perumbudur

**FRIDAY 18<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009**

**TIME:  
7.00 P.M. SHARP TO 8.30 P.M.  
(TO BE SEATED AT 6.30 – 6.45 PM)**

**VENUE:  
46, TRINITY AVENUE, KELLYVILLE  
NSW 2155**

RSVP by 11.9.09: [srmatham@yahoo.com.au](mailto:srmatham@yahoo.com.au) or  
contact: 0407 069 768