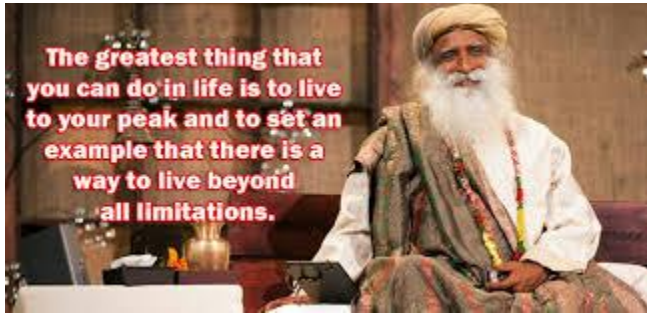


MAHALAYA AMAVASYA



Sadhguru explains the significance of Mahalaya Amavasya or Pitru Paksha (September 30, 2016), and why the tradition of honoring our ancestors is significant.

Sadhguru: The new moon day known as the Mahalaya Amavasya is the beginning of Dussehra. It is a special day dedicated to making an offering to express our gratitude to all the previous generations of people who have contributed to our life.

Scientists say that human beings and their ancestors have existed on this planet for 20 million years. That is a lot of time. All these hundreds of thousands of generations that lived on this planet before us have given us something or the other. The language that we speak, the way we sit, our clothes, our buildings – almost everything that we know today has come to us from generations before us.

Pitru Paksha: The Legacy of Past Generations Mahalaya Amavasya is a special day dedicated to making an offering to express our gratitude to all the previous generations of people who have contributed to our life.

When only animals existed on this planet, it was all about survival, eating, sleeping, reproduction and dying one day. Then slowly, this animal which knew only survival started evolving. From being horizontal, it started standing up; the brain started growing, and this animal's ability to do things suddenly started multiplying. The significant thing about being human is that we can use tools. This simple ability of using tools, we multiplied or made it grow into technologies. The day an ape picked up a thighbone of an animal and started fighting with that bone instead of with just his hands; when, apart from his own body, he had the necessary intelligence to start using tools to make his life, in some way that was the beginning of human life on the planet.

Now, human beings started structuring lives so that we could live a little better than animals. Shelters came up, buildings came up, clothes came – so many things happened on this planet because of human beings. From simple things like making fire to discovering the wheel and innumerable other things, this legacy has been passed on from generation to generation. We are who we are today only because of all the things that have been given to us. Let us say, human beings had never worn clothes, and suppose you were the first person who had to stitch a shirt, it would not be easy; it would take many years to figure out how to stitch a shirt.

Pitru Paksha: Expressing Gratitude

We have taken all the things that we have today for granted. But without the generations that came before us, firstly we would not exist here; secondly, without their contribution we would not have all the things that we have today. So instead of taking them for granted, today is a day when we express our gratitude to all of them. It is done as a ritual to pay homage to one's dead parents, but is actually an expression of gratitude for all those generations of ancestors who lived before us.

During this time, in the Indian subcontinent, new crops would have just begun to bear yield. So their first produce is offered to the ancestors as a mark of respect and thankfulness, by way of *pinda*, before the whole population breaks into celebration in the form of other festivals like Navratri, Vijayadashami and Diwali.