

ECLIPSES

Information from History of Dharamsastra (Dr Pandurang Vaman Kane)

On seeing an eclipse : “They should first bathe and then do their usual duties and should **give up food already cooked** (before the eclipse).” (according to Apastamba)

“The Visnudharmasutra provides : ‘one must **not eat during an eclipse** of the moon or sun; he should eat, after having previously taken a bath, when the eclipse is at an end.’”

“One had to take a bath when the eclipse began, **to perform homa, to worship Gods and shraddha while the eclipse was in progress**, to make gifts when the eclipse was about to end, and to take a **bath again when the sun or moon became free from the eclipse.**”

Satatapa says that “gifts, baths, tapas and shraddha **at the time of eclipse yield inexhaustible merit.**”

“The Panyakala (holy period) in the case of eclipses lasts **only as long as the eclipse is visible to the eye.**”

“The Krtyakalpataru argues that ‘darsana’ (being visible) is declared to be the cause or occasion of the several acts (snana, dana etc) to be performed in an eclipse, that an eclipse is an occasion **only when it is known that it has occurred**, and that **knowledge must be derived from the eye** and that therefore when the sun or moon is screened from view by clouds one need not enter upon bath and the like prescribed in the case of an eclipse.”

“The Smritikaustubha and Samayaprakasa therefore lay down that what is meant by ‘darsana-gocarah’ is that, when one knows from the astronomical science that the eclipse is **capable of being seen with the eye** in a **particular country**, one should at the respective times perform bath and the like (even though one may not actually see it).

“The Samvatsara-pradipa is quite explicit ‘that is said to be an eclipse which can be observed by the eye; one should perform religious acts on such an eclipse, **but not on mere calculation.**’ “