

Centre for
Death & Society
(CDAS)



UNIVERSITY OF
BATH

Centre for Death & Society

November 2021 Newsletter

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Director's Note

Welcome to the November issue of the CDAS newsletter! The theme of this month's issue is events, new publications and funding success, showcasing the ongoing popularity of our field and its potential for the future. Well done to Dr Ruth McManus in Canterbury NZ who has been awarded a significant grant to explore environmental issues and death. We're also really pleased to listen to and promote the second podcast created by CDAS alum Dr Renske Visser and CDAS Visiting Research Fellow Dr Bethan Michael-Fox, talking with Dr Khyati Tripathi about her work (see page 2). Renske is speaking at the in-person CDAS seminar on 30th November about her current study on end-of-life care and practice in prisons in the UK, full sign up details are on page 5.

The future of death studies is looking very bright, with new studies, writing, networks and grants being developed around the world. Here in CDAS we are entering the next phase of the Centre's evolution and we will continue to build and nurture our international community of scholars and practitioners to share knowledge, experience and opportunities. In the New Year we will be asking you to share your thoughts via a survey on the direction of the Centre as it heads towards its 20th anniversary but don't hold back if you want to let us know what you think before then. All feedback on the Centre is welcome, and will be treated in confidence and anonymized. Please email cdas@bath.ac.uk if you'd like to tell us what you think.

Please continue to share your events, successes and opportunities with us and we will endeavor to promote them through our social media and this newsletter. With over 2000 actively engaged subscribers this newsletter has a tremendous reach.

Finally, as a reminder we have several CDAS events this month so please sign up and log on, or even come and visit us in Bath if you can! The full list of events can be found on pages 5-7. We hope to see you at one or more of them in the next few weeks.



Recent Publications

Carr, Sam & Fang, Chao (2021) “We are good neighbours, but we are not carers!”: Lived experiences of conflicting (in)dependence needs in retirement villages across the United Kingdom and Australia, *The Gerontologist*, gnab164, <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnab164>

This study sought to qualitatively explore the lived experiences of 80 older people living in retirement villages across the UK and Australia. We focused on residents’ narratives around the themes of independence/dependence.

Postdoc Research funding

For UK based PhD students, the annual competition for ESRC funded postdoc fellowships to conduct further work while at CDAS as part of the SouthWest Doctoral Training Partnership (SWDTP) has just been announced. The deadline is 23 March 2022. Eligible applicants must have

- been awarded a PhD or have passed their viva voce with minor amendments by 23rd March 2022 and have been awarded their PhD by the fellowship start date of 1st October 2022;
- no more than 12 months active postdoctoral experience since passing their viva (allowing for career breaks) by 23rd March 2022.

The SWDTP will be holding an online information event at 2 pm on 11 January 2022.

For further details please visit our website: <https://www.swdtp.ac.uk/prospective-students-and-fellows/esrc-postdoctoral-fellowships/>

Other News

The 2nd episode of the Death Studies Podcast created by CDAS alumni Renske Classje Visser and CDAS Visiting Research Fellow Bethan Michael-Fox is now available! This month they talked to Dr Khyati Tripathi about death anxiety, death studies in India, Covid-19, death, and diversity and much, much more...

Listen wherever you get your podcasts from, and do let us know the Death Studies podcast what you think!

<https://www.thedeathstudiespodcast.com/>



CDAS EVENTS

In Conversation Event

Title: *'Data, Deaths, and COVID-19: Why delays in UK Government action led to unnecessary lives lost at the start of the pandemic'.*

Date: November 25th

Time: 19:00 BST

Location: ZOOM

To sign up click [here](#)

In this next CDAS In Conversation event, Dr. Kit Yates from the University of Bath's Department of Mathematics discusses making sense of the deluge of data surrounding UK mortality rates and COVID-19, how aspects of that data informed (and didn't inform) public health policy, and most importantly why UK Government delays in taking action at the start of the pandemic led to significantly higher numbers of deaths.

Come prepared to ask all your COVID-19 data, modelling, and numbers questions.

Bio:

Dr. Kit Yates is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mathematical Sciences and co-director of the Centre for Mathematical Biology at the University of Bath. Alongside his academic position, Kit is also an author and science communicator. His first book, *The Maths of Life and Death*, is about the places where maths can have an impact on our everyday lives without us even realising it.

His research demonstrates that mathematics can be used to describe all sorts of real-world phenomena: from embryo formation to locust swarming and from sleeping sickness to egg-shell patterning. He is particularly interested in the role that randomness plays in Biology. His research into Mathematical Biology has been covered by the BBC, the Guardian, the Telegraph, RTE, Scientific American and Reuters amongst others.

CDAS Seminar: 30th November (in person)

Our first CDAS seminar of the year will IN PERSON on the University of Bath campus, and we hope to provide opportunities for learning during the talks and networking at lunchtime and during coffee breaks. We can't wait to see you in person and talk!

If you would like to attend sign up [here](#).

We will send out details about transport, lateral flow testing and meals nearer the time to those who've signed up, along with confirming the exact timings. *The times below are provisional.*

Time	Activity	Location
12pm – 1pm	Lunch (provided)	Chancellors Building 4.5
1pm – 2pm	PhD seminar: Sam Hooker “Caring for the body at home after death”	CB 5.5
2pm – 2.30pm	Coffee break (provided)	CB 4.5
2.30pm – 3.30pm	CDAS seminar: Renske Visser ‘Collaboration with people with lived experience of prison: reflections on researching cancer care in custodial settings’	CB 4.5
3.30pm – 4.30pm	CDAS Seminar: Su Chard and Emily Willis “Written in Stone”	CB 4.5

Abstracts

Sam Hooker: Caring for the body at home after death

The current response when a person dies tends towards quick removal of the body from the location of death. Few people in the UK now spend any considerable length of time with the body after death has occurred, yet anecdotal evidence suggests spending time with the body could help the bereaved to adjust to and accept the death. In this seminar I will present the findings from my master's research examining professional opinions on the subject and looking at how much information is available to the public on how to care for the body at home.

Renske Visser: Collaboration with people with lived experience of prison: reflections on researching cancer care in custodial settings

Patient and public involvement is increasingly considered important in health research. This paper reflects on involving people with lived experience in a study exploring cancer care in prison and how by doing this it enriched the research process. Prison research is challenging, but collaboration between lived experience and academic researchers can help to better prepare for the field, to ask more meaningful questions and to create rapport with participants. These types of collaborations can be powerful avenues for skill development for both academic and lived experience researchers, but they require an investment of time and a willingness for shared learning.

Su Chard and Emily Willis: Written in Stone

Su Chard and Emily Willis spent a year looking at the words brought to and used at Gloucester Crematoria. They recorded their findings in new poetry, photography and by listening to and responding to conversations with staff and visitors. This seminar will cover Su and Emily's experience of that nine months and consider the uses of Crematoria other than just the honouring of the dead and the disposal of bodies. Crematoria are rich, underused sites and the hope is this seminar will cause you to look differently at them.

Emily Willis is a poet and GP in Gloucestershire. Poet in resident at DDD14 University of Bath. Su Chard is an independent funeral celebrant and a CDAS Associate.

Department Seminar - 7th December (online, open to all)

CDAS is hosting a Department Research Seminar by CDAS Associate Dr Ori Katz on the 7th of December. The seminar will take place online at 11:00 to 12:30pm BST; to sign up click [here](#).

Dr Ori Katz, CDAS Associate

'My Mother Is Not Newsworthy': Framing Missingness in Israel'

In this talk, I explore the processes of framing civilian (as opposed to military-related) 'missingness' in Israel. In the absence of cultural scripts relating to civilian missingness, I argue, those left behind must use accepted meta-narratives to assert the newsworthiness of these stories. I explore two kinds of framings that are used, both reflecting an acceptance of the life/death dichotomy: a collective framing ('the child of us all'), and an individual one ('it can happen to anyone'). Ultimately, both framings generally fail to achieve wide resonance in Israel. Missingness might then be constructed as a stable category, challenging the distinction between life and death.

CDAS COMMUNITY NEWS

Recent Publications

Compassionate community structure and function: a standardised micro-model for end-of-life doulas and community members supporting those who wish to die at home

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/26323524211052569>

Dr Anneta Mallon's original research published with the SAGE journal Palliative Care and Social Practice for a micro-model of compassionate communities for those who wish to die at home. The model works for both assisted dying and non-assisted dying events, completing the Abel model of compassionate community which informs public policy internationally.

The Future of the Corpse: changing ecologies of death and disposition (Rothstein and Staudt, eds., 2021)

This edited collection outlines the past, present and future of death care rituals, looking at new practices and innovative projects that show how we can better integrate the dying and dead with the living. Find out more [here](#).

Death and Events: international perspectives on events marking the end of life (Lamond and Dowson, eds., 2021)

In a first of its kind, this international edited collection looks at dying, dying, memorialisation and their mediation from an events orientation. It features a chapter by the Death Studies Podcast contributor this month, Dr Khyati Tripathi! Find out more [here](#).

Rituals of Death: Halloween, Dia de los Muertos, and Shraddha

Professor Aditi Samart article, published in the local Dallas newspaper, discusses differing death rituals and their significance in the way we internalize and process death.

Paragraph 1:

Winter is nature's metaphor for death. Impending signs of "aging" appear, such as the transition to cold weather, shifting of outdoor bustle of the summer to quieter indoor life, completion of harvest, slumber of the earth, burrowing and hibernation of animals, shedding of tree leaves, fallow branches, grey and dark sky, shorter days, and longer nights. Just as the universe is governed by the rhythms of seasons, transitions, inactivity, and pauses, so also is human life. The time between October end and early November is a period of "in-between" - summer and winter, neither hot nor cold, halfway between the autumn equinox and winter solstice - a gateway between this world and another, the world of spirits.

To read the full article see the bottom of the [newsletter](#).

Other News

Research Grant

University of Canterbury NZ Associate Professor Ruth McManus and Dr Denise Blake have been awarded \$824,000 over three years for the Marsden project “The Greening of Death in Aotearoa: Co-designing sustainability adaptations in body disposal.” The team will be on the lookout for a death studies postdoc in the following months, so watch this space for details of the job advert.

Project outline

One thing certain about life is that we all die. The climate emergency is now official in Aotearoa, but when it comes to death, our current funeral, burial, and cremation systems are polluting, environmentally unsustainable and reaching capacity. While some death industry individuals, businesses, organisations and branches of local government in Aotearoa are investigating and investing in more environmentally sustainable options, they are limited in reach and impact because, as ad hoc initiatives, the focus is on the specific concerns of the individual, business or organisation and it is usually beyond their scope to engage with longer term processes that share, connect, scale up, plan and roll out more effective practices, protocols and procedures. Using a methodologically innovative combination of a materiality matrix with ANT analysis, the aim of this project is to integrate local knowledges to accelerate synergistic pathways to the greening of death, which is about finding forms of body disposal that can facilitate effective connecting up of existing and new practices, processes and infrastructure that can move us to a reduction in carbon footprint.

More details about the project can be found [here](#).

SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT UK (SBUK)

SBUK has significantly revised PABBS suicide bereavement training and has been informed by:

- Findings and recommendations from the ‘Grief to Hope’ Report (McDonnell, Hunt et al 2020), which I led
- Analysis of over 2,500 evaluation forms completed by PABBS attendees (2016-2021)
- Other relevant and recently published studies/policies

SBUK predominantly deliver PABBS in-house suicide bereavement training. As part of our re-launch, we are currently providing an opportunity for INDIVIDUALS to attend PABBS FACE TO FACE suicide bereavement training in:

- Manchester Nov 16th

- Belfast Dec 6th
- Cardiff Jan 18th
- Edinburgh Feb 15th
- Exeter March 8th
- London March 15th

For more info: <https://suicidebereavementuk.com/pabbs-training/>

Research Opportunity

Alex Wray is a nurse by background currently undertaking a PhD at Hull York Medical School seeking to explore how children and surviving parents can best be supported following a parental death. Alex developed and managed an ICU family support service, is currently working in the Hull University Teaching Hospitals bereavement support group 'Dawn' and is chair of the Hull Child Bereavement Advisory Group.

The PhD project has been designed with a group of bereaved children and families. Alex plans to speak to around 30 children (aged 10-18) and 30 parents to explore their experiences of support following a parental death, alongside a systematic review of the literature. These findings will be synthesised, and Alex plans to work with families and experts to use these findings and together develop a model and resources to support bereaved families.

The project has been granted ethical approval from Hull York Medical School Ethics Committee, beginning the search for participants.

Why: Your experience is extremely valuable and will help us to improve the support we give to children and families following the death of a parent.

Who: We would like to speak to parents whose partner has died and their children aged between 10 and 18. Families must live in the UK.

If you think you can help or you would like to find out more, please contact me:
alexandra.wray@hyms.ac.uk
or phone 07423508088
You can also visit the HYMS website for further information www.hyms.ac.uk

Share your story



What: We would like to invite each of you to take part in an interview to hear about how you were supported during this time. It will take around one hour.

When and where: Online using Zoom or the telephone and at a time that is convenient for you.



EVENTS

Supporting bereaved older people: Evaluation of the Bereavement Supporter project

Date: Thursday 18th November 2021

Time: 14:30 to 16:00 pm

Location: Online, admission is free.

Guest Speakers: Karen West and Eve Wilson

The presentation will focus on the project's evaluation findings, from the project's peer support approach. The evaluation is based on data collected from ExtraCare residents, staff, Bereavement Supporter volunteers and diaries kept during the pandemic.


For more information visit the official event [webpage](#).

Social Aspects of Death, Dying and Bereavement Study Group Virtual Symposium - Death and Sociology, Thu 2nd Dec 2021

The academic study of death, dying and bereavement has become typically associated with disciplines beyond sociology, such as medicine, psychology and psychiatry. Consequently, knowledge about death, dying and bereavement has often focused more on individuals, symptoms or treatments, and less on a holistic lived experience, the social contexts in which life is lived, and the context(s) in which loss occurs. Yet there is much to be gained from developing a more contextual understanding of DDB. For example, the prevailing assumption that grief is a negative emotion to be addressed can overlook the potential value of this emotion and how death can also mean liberation, economic change and (possibly welcomed) relational shifts. What is more, over the past year with Covid-19 we have been reminded of the limitations of individualistic discourses on death and witnessed the value and meaning of shared experiences of funeral rites and bereavement.

In celebration of the study group entering its third decade, in this year's annual symposium we aim to revisit the group's origins with a focus on what sociology can uniquely offer the study of death, dying and bereavement.

Further details about the group and event can be found [here](#).



Good Grief in the Workplace

Providing your team with the right support- CEDAR EDUCATION CIC

A full-day workshop for professionals to improve communications around grief and loss in the workplace. Speaking and listening to someone in the right way at the right time will make a positive difference in the workplace and help employees to support one another in times of distress and loss. But saying the wrong thing, or nothing at all, can set a course for low productivity, increased absenteeism and loss of engagement across a workplace team and their projects.



Date: Wed, 24 November 2021

Time: 09:30 – 16:00 GMT

Location: Elite Centre for Manufacturing Skills,
University of Wolverhampton, Springfield Campus,
Cambridge Street, Wolverhampton, WV10 0JR

Full details and booking here:

<https://cedareducation.org.uk/eventbrite-event/>

CALLS FOR PAPERS

Cultures of Lament, Exile, and Oblivion: A Symposium - Fri 28th Jan 2022

Call for Papers - Deadline 26th Nov 2021

The Fellows of St John's College, Durham University, in collaboration with the Department of Theology and Religion, warmly invite your interest in this one-day symposium on Cultures of Lament, Exile, and Oblivion. While papers on each theme in relation to specific data, texts, or research questions will structure our proceedings, the Symposium Committee particularly encourages proposals on the nuances and opportunities of their thematic relationship by teasing out expressions of their mutual configuration in the complexity of human lives.

What might lament, exile, or oblivion – and their venerable histories of experience – convey to us today? What are their hermeneutical and ethical implications for our grasp of the human

condition? These great themes of existence lie at the heart of our Call for Research and how, across diverse cultures and eras, they are experimentally pursued in the rhyme and reason of ritual-symbolism, narrative, myth, art and architecture, and the dramatic textures of politics and poetry, faith, music, identity, and ethics not least. Why, then, do some human cultures, religious or otherwise, persist in depictions of a world of ultimate oblivion for its mortal inhabitants? What might this declare about our epistemologies, our cultural classifications, our emotional or psychological adjudications of the world into which we are thrown? How might oblivion illuminate discussions in our contemporary age, so often diagnosed with social fracture, amnesia, and malaise, and spring forth the hope of their opposite in belonging, memory, and rootedness?

What kind of truth might exile speak to the human condition at large as well as to the displaced of our own day, the marginalised, those in flight from their homeland? And how or why do these experiences often issue in songs of lament, in ritual weeping, in social action and petition, and in philosophic schemes that bid to reveal or conceal the depth of our vulnerable exposure? In short, how have these brute facts of mortal life aided the pinch or push of intellectual, artistic, architectural, and musical creativity? Wherein lies the longevity of these forms in communicating what so often seems to trouble our words in the throes of lament, exile, or oblivion?

It is, therefore, of particular interest to the Symposium Committee to invite ongoing comment on the definitional and experiential variance of these vast force-fields of thought and practice through a series of worked examples, historical or ethnographic cases, thematic experimentations, or first-hand accounts of personal or professional experience. For they, too, constitute arenas of play and improvisation, challenge, pain, and exhortation – all as part of the ongoing creative challenge of humanity's self-knowing.

Themes of Interest

We welcome creative interpretations of the following topics in relation to our principal themes (N.B. this is not an exclusive or comprehensive list):

- Identity and/or narratives of belonging and resistance
- Worldviews
- Memory and/or loss
- Tragedy and trauma and/or healing
- Protest and/or prophecy
- Expression/catharsis in literary, artistic, or musical form
- Environmentalism
- Sectarianism
- Ritual-Symbolism
- Diaspora, migration, refugee crisis

- Force
- Therapy and clinical approaches/experiences
- Theories of knowledge
- Escapism
- Desire
- Language, crisis, paradox; meaning making/breaking
- Technology, consumerism, and the periodization of being
- Existential angst/fear, philosophies of extinction
- War and peace; terror and offensive death
- The attention economy
- Qualities of relation, perception, and action
- Networked identities and the opacity of the self
- Mythic genesis and/or rupture
- Traditional-Secular spiritualities
- Scriptural and theological approaches
- Pastoral contexts
- Embodiment and/or emotion
- Time, temporality, tenses, and tonalities
- Altered states of consciousness
- Theories of culture and the human person
- Ethics, pain, suffering; theodicy and threnody
- Death, mortality, and grief
- Tangibility and material culture

We strongly welcome presentations across a range of textual, historical, philosophical, musical, literary, artistic, and social-scientific disciplines as well as experience-led practitioners in the therapeutic and clinical sciences. Cultures of Lament, Exile, and Oblivion is, then, open for presentations seeking to pinpoint one of our themes in particular (perhaps drawing on specific research data or work-in-progress) or to explore their interplay in any number of experimental combinations and directions. The style and format of delivery for those exhibiting musical or artistic creations is flexible. We are very interested in these kinds of ‘interactive’ proposals, but we stress that consideration should be given to online logistics: a brief statement of intent in your proposals will suffice.

Conference Format

The symposium will be conducted online. We do not wish to exclude scholars and practitioners in the UK or abroad who may not be able to travel due to varying Covid-19 restrictions across the world. We welcome contributions from academic and service-practitioners at any career stage. The hope, then, is that (a) such arrangements might encourage a greater diversity of participation across cultural borders, enriching the conference’s measure of the themes at hand; and that (b) an online meeting might prove advantageous to early-career scholars in particular who might otherwise be unable to attend in person owing to financial or logistical challenges. There is no event fee.

Individual presentations of 15 minutes will be followed by 10 minutes of open discussion. Successful applicants are encouraged to see their work as a potential contribution towards a formal publication of our proceedings, subject to further consultation, selection, and review processes.

Abstract Proposals

Please submit your abstract (max. 250 words) to r.n.whitefield@durham.ac.uk. Proposals should be submitted no later than 6pm on Friday 26th November 2021 and the Assessment Panel will notify their decision by mid-December. The Conference Programme will be published on 14th December 2021.

This symposium is convened by the project's Co-Principal Investigator, Ricky Whitefield, an anthropologist and theologian currently serving as Junior Research Fellow at St John's College and part-time Tutor in the Department of Theology and Religion. For all enquiries, or to make any suggestions and provide feedback, please contact r.n.whitefield@durham.ac.uk.

To register, follow this link and complete the form [here](#).

Contact Us

Visit the CDAS [website](#) for more information.


Email: cdas@bath.ac.uk

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Rituals of Death: Halloween, Dia de los Muertos, and Shraddha

Professor Aditi Samart

Winter is nature's metaphor for death. Impending signs of "aging" appear, such as the transition to cold weather, shifting of outdoor bustle of the summer to quieter indoor life, completion of harvest, slumber of the earth, burrowing and hibernation of animals, shedding of tree leaves, fallow branches, grey and dark sky, shorter days, and longer nights. Just as the universe is governed by the rhythms of seasons, transitions, inactivity, and pauses, so also is human life. The time between October end and early November is a period of "in-between" - summer and winter, neither hot nor cold, halfway between the autumn equinox and winter solstice - a gateway between this world and another, the world of spirits.

Spirits are departed souls, who play the role of beneficent ancestors when appeased and malefic demons when dishonored. The traditions of Halloween, *Dia de los Muertos*, and *Shraddha* are three different rituals that honor the dead during this transitional time period.

Halloween - Celebrated on October 31, Halloween is the day to welcome spirits to earth. With origins in Ireland and Scotland, the tradition was brought to North America in the 19th century by Irish and Scottish immigrants and then through American influence, Halloween spread to many other countries. Halloween traditions are a mix of *Samhain* - a Celtic pagan festival marking the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the "darker-half" of the year known as winter - and medieval Christian beliefs and practices. In the 9th century, the Church pronounced November 1 as All Saints' Day, while November 2 later became All Souls' Day, a time for honoring the saints and praying for recently-departed souls. Over time, *Samhain* and All Saints' and All Souls' Days influenced each other, and took on the present form of Halloween.

Punkie, an old English name for a lantern, is celebrated in Somerset on the last Thursday of October. Children march around with a jack-o'-lantern, singing, and asking for candles and playing a "trick" if none were given. In earlier times, farmers would put a traditional "*Punkie*" on their gates to ward off evil spirits at this time of year. In Ireland there is a similar Halloween tradition called *Pooky Night*. *Pwca* in Welsh and *Bucca* in Cornish, *Pooky* is a Celtic name for fairies and spirits; children dress up in costumes going door to door asking for treats for the pooky.

Common Halloween traditions signify blurring of life and death through the rituals of souling and Trick or treating, disguising in costumes as witches, ghosts, goblins and skeletons, carving pumpkins into jack-o'-lanterns or hollowed-out turnip lanterns for guidance, lighting bonfires to ward off evil spirits, visiting haunted attractions, telling scary stories and watching horror movies.

Dia de los Muertos - Day of the Dead is a celebratory reunion of family members, living and deceased. It draws on indigenous, Catholic, and European traditions, and is

celebrated on November 1 and 2 in Mexico, and several Latin countries like Colombia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, among others.

On these two days, families visit the deceased' graves, clean and decorate them with flowers, and provide *atole*, a traditional non-alcoholic beverage made of corn, cinnamon, and vanilla. Served hot, it is considered a comfort drink during the festival. In pre-Columbian times, *pulque*, a beverage made from sap of agave plant was reserved for spiritual ceremonies, although today, any alcoholic beverage favored by the dead can be used to toast. *Mariachi* band play music by the graveside.

The cornerstone of the celebration is the *ofrenda*, an offering altar of the dead. It signifies the belief that the spirit of the deceased return from the world of the dead to spend time with their families. Trails of smells and fragrances that come from flowers, incense and copal are used to receive the souls of the dead. The *ofrenda* includes water, the source of life, which quenches the souls' thirst. Salt is offered as an element of purification to preserve the body. Candles are placed on the altar to guide the souls to see familiar places. Copal and incense are offered to sublimate prayer and to cleanse the place of evil spirits. The bright *cempasuchil* (marigold) flowers (*Zempoalxóchitl* in *Nahuatl*) are customary to guide the deceased to the offering. Bread represents the "Body of Christ." Additional altar items are a portrait of the loved one whose soul will visit, favorite dishes reminiscent of a banquet for the soul, sugar skull in folk art style that represents the departed soul, and liquor. Other traditional elements placed on the offering are crosses, canes, the *izcuintle* dog to guide the souls to cross the *Chiconauhuapan* river, which is the last step to reach *Mictlán* (Land of the Dead). The offering encapsulates a scene in which the dead participate in food, drink, rest, and life with their relatives. *Feliz Dia de los Muertos* "Happy Day of the Dead" is a perfectly valid greeting.

Shraddha - Hindus hold the annual *Shraddha* ritual in remembrance of their collective ancestors during the time when the sun is between the zodiac signs of Libra and Scorpio. It is believed that the souls leave ancestors' land and reside in their descendants' homes during this time. The living family are expected to propitiate the ancestors in the first half of the month, as the waning moon is an allegory for descending time.

A shared family meal is an integral component of *Shraddha*. Sharing of a meal is a rite of incorporation, because the deceased was separated at death. Partaking in a meal is a symbolic act of reconciliation, in the same way that a chain which has been broken by the disappearance of one of its links must be rejoined. An essential dessert containing milk must be served at this meal. The symbolism of milk is akin to ghee (clarified butter), which is a pure substance and from a cow, sacred in the Indian Hindu culture. Desserts or sweets indicate happy occasions, so when a family consumes the sweet, the ancestors are satisfied through their living descendants. They can see the family is together, they have enough to eat, and are in good stead.

Death is inevitable; it is the way of the universe. Within this cosmological framework, rituals serve the purpose of acknowledging the inherent cosmic order and sustaining the rhythm of the cosmic concert without compromising on the human spirit. Any individual is only a temporary member of a culture, but traditions such as Halloween, *Dia de los Muertos*, and *Shraddha* ensure continuity through community.

