

Solah Sanskars

Sanskaars (Sacraments)

Garbhadhaan Punsavanam Seemanto jaatkarm cha, Naamkiiyaa
Nishkramane annaashanam wapanakriyaa Karnavedho Brataadesho
Vedaarambhakriyaavidhih Keshaantam snaanmuddaho
Vivaahagniparigraha Tretaagnishangrahacheti Sanskaaraa Shodasha
smritaah

1. **Grabhaadhan:** Conception
2. **Punsavana:** Fetus protection
3. **Simanta:** Satisfying wishes of the pregnant Mother
4. **Jaat-Karmaa:** Child Birth
5. **Naamkarma:** Naming Child
6. **Nishkramana:** Taking the child outdoors
7. **Annaprashana:** Giving the child solid food.
8. **Mundan or Choula:** Hair cutting.
9. **Karnavedh:** Ear piercing
10. **Yagyopaveet:** Sacred thread
11. **Vedarambh:** Study of Vedas and Scriptures
12. **Samaavartana:** Completing education
13. **Vivaah:** Marriage
14. **Sarvasanskaar:** Preparing for Renouncing
15. **Sanyas (Awasthadhyan):** Renouncing
16. **Antyeshti:** Last rite, or funeral rites

1. Garbhaadhan

(Conception) To produce a good child, its mother and father should have pure thoughts and observe the rules of Shastras. God characterizing parents are necessary for bringing up a good child in the world.

2. Punsavana

Brahaspati says that the rite should be performed before the baby begins to grow and move in the womb. The word Punsavana occurs in Atharvaveda, where it is used in the literal sense of "giving birth to a male child". The word "male" means soul. The Punsavana is used for welcoming the great soul. This is also called "Garbharakshan". Garbharakshana is performed to assure that the infant is not miscarried.

3. Simanta

This ceremony should be performed in the fourth month of pregnancy, in the fortnight of waxing moon, when the moon is in conjunction with a Nakshatra that is regarded as "male" or auspicious. A Puja is performed for purification of the atmosphere and as an offering to God for the peace of mother and infant, for giving birth to a peaceful and holy child. This rite is primarily social and festival in nature, intended to keep the pregnant woman in good spirits. The pregnant woman gets gifts of rice and fruits from seven ladies. Kumkum is applied on her cheek to keep her happy so that the child will be affected by her happiness.

At the time of pregnancy, due to harmonic fluctuation / changes, a woman has to go through the discomfort stage of life, which may cause emotional imbalance. She should have patience and try to increase her power of moral understanding. She will have a child reflecting the same kind of thoughts she had during pregnancy. After becoming a mother, she is responsible for assuring that her child will be mentally and physically healthy and vigorous. Ashtabakra and Abhinamy heard stories about truth from their father when they were in the womb of mother.

A future mother should have good thoughts at all times. She should place Picture of 'Balgopal' or 'Laddu Gopal' in her home. She should read the Gita and other scriptures in addition to performing her daily work and should avoid thrilling books and movies.

During Solar and lunar eclipses, a woman should not use any kind of weapons. During normal times, she should avoid violent thoughts. Her husband should help keep her peaceful and cheerful.

4. Jaat-Karm

Jaat-karma performed on six or after 11 days from the birth of a child, is for the purification of the house. This is done in order to keep a child in a clean atmosphere where he may not incur any physical or mental problems. It is also called Shashthi. Goddess Shashthi is the protector of children. Jaat-karma is followed with Grah Puja, Homa.

5. Naamkarn

(Naming) Soemtime Jaatkarma and Naamkarma are performed together. This ceremony is performed to give a sacred name to the child, assigned according to the 212 divisions of 27 Nakshatra and the position of the moon at the time of child's birth. An appropriate name is given to the child according to the star of birth, and the first letter of the name is taken from the Hora Shatra.

6. Nishkraman

(Taking the child out of the house) This ceremony is performed on or after 40 days, but some scriptures allow it at the time of naming ceremony. The child must be blessed with the holy water and Surya Darshan, with the prayer, "salutation to you, Oh divine Sun, who has hundreds of rays and who dispels darkness, may you bring the brightness in the life of the child".

7. Annaprashana

(Making a child eat cooked food for the first time) Most of the Smritis prescribe it the sixth month from birth, when the child first develops teeth. Anna is considered as one of the main reasons to make a person commence the good or bad things. The body is made of chemicals, therefore, the kinds of chemical, we put in our bodies will bring out their effect. Sweet porridge or rice pudding can be given to the child if parents are desirous of nourishment, holy luster, swiftness, or splendor. One of them with curd, honey and ghee is given to the child while reciting Prasad Mantras.

8. Mundan or Choul

Also known as 'Mundan'. The first time cutting of hair on the child's head. Chura means the lock of tuft of hair, kept on the head when the remaining part is shaved (i.e. the Shikha). The ceremony is to be performed on an auspicious day after the age of one year. This ceremony is performed for the development of power better understanding, and for long life. The hair must be disposed of at holy places where no one can find the.

9. Karnavedh

(Piercing the child's ear lobes). With the commencement of Surya Puja; the father should first address the right ear of the child with the mantra "Oh God may we hear bliss with our ears", performed so that child may listen to good things and to have a good education.

10. Yagyopaveet (Sacred Thread)

The sacred thread ceremony is very significant in the life of a Hindu man. This ceremony initiates the child into an intellectual and spiritual journey. The mother gives birth to the child; this is natural birth. However, when the Guru initiates him by giving Gayatri mantra, this prayer for Buddhi is considered a second birth of the child. This ceremony is known also as Upnayan, 'the sacred vision' or 'new vision',

the vision to see things in a proper way and to know 'wrong' and 'right'. Therefore, Upnayan is essential to handle household life.

'Yagyopaveet' (sacred thread) indicates that the child is qualified to perform all the traditional Vedic rites including Pitra Kriya and Tarpan for his forefathers.

Yagyopaveet symbolizes three forms of one supreme being, Satoguna Brahma (the creator), Rajoguna Vishnu (the sustained) and Rajoguna Shiva (the destroyer). The knot is called Brahma-Knot, the Lord who controls these three faces of nature. It also symbolizes the three duties for three debts.

- (i) Pitra: Debt of parents and ancestors,
- (ii) Manushya: Debt of society and humanity,
- (iii) Dev: Debt of Nature and God. The twist in the thread symbolizes strength and honesty.

Gayatri Mantra is given to the child who promises to lead a good human life as per the rules of Dharmashastra.

O! God Fiver of birth and life, the dispeller of ignorance, and bestower of light, we meditate upon thee. O creator of ours! The most worthy and acceptable almighty, nay you inspire and lead our mind and intellect.

Gayatri Mantra is simple prayer to the Sun God to brighten the intellect. The sun represents the creator of the Earth, God. Just as we bathe our body to keep clean every day, so must we bathe our mind with the Gayatri prayer, to keep our mind ever pure, ever inspired. Gayatri Mantra is so powerful that it can destroy all negative forces.

The ceremony has six parts: -

Puja: worshipping the Gods,

Havan: sacrifice,

Shiksha: teaching the morality and duties in life,

Bhiksha: begging as a renounced Brahmchari of Gurukula. Teacher's teaching has made him renounced minded that he has accepted a life of Vairagee,

Diksha: giving the most sacred Gayatri Mantra to the child, and

Blessings: child is bless by all Gods, Goddesses, ancestors, and elders

11. Vidhyaarambha

(Commencement of learning of the alphabet) On the third or fifth year, when Choula is performed, this important ceremony can take place. the

Brahman or teacher should start teaching the first lesson after worshipping Saraswati, the Goddess of learning.

12. Samavartan

(Taking the ceremonial bath after finishing Vedic study and returning from the teacher's house) After learning the rules of life he returns home from his Teacher's Ashram. When he completes his education about and religion the law of life, his first Ashram Brahmacharya is complete. He is now eligible to enter into the householder stage, and considered a qualified man to get married.

13. Vivah (the marriage)

Vedic Hindu marriage is viewed as sacramental, which is a lifelong commitment of one wife and one husband. It is the strongest bond between a man and a woman, which takes place in the presence of their parents, relatives, and friends. This an irrevocable commitment for a lifetime.

For a Hindu, marriage is the only way to continue the family, and thereby repay, his debt to his ancestors. The most important thing is that all the Hindu God and Goddesses are also united in this. Marriage is for spiritual growth and a way of learning many things in life through experience. In other words, it is a perfect way of following the holy law of the Creator. There are eight ways of getting married. They are:

1. Brahmaa: Kanyadan performed by holy parents
2. Daiva: Kanyadan by God-fearing parents
3. Aarsha: Kanyadan by parents with five other gifts
4. Prajaapatya: Kanyadan by honor and respect
5. Asur: Love Marriage
6. Gandharv: Marrying for money
7. Raakshas: Forceful abduction of a maiden.
8. Paishaach: Intercourse in asleep, intoxicated situation

Steps to follow for the ceremony: -

Vaag-daan, Tilak & Sagun (Engagement): It is a commitment by the bride's parents to complete the marriage of a future date acceptance by the parents of bridegroom.

Ganesh, Navagrah Puja and 'Chura' Sait or Shantipath: Lord Ganesh is worshipped for success of the ceremony. Chura is given by the brides' maternal uncle Mama as a blessing and well wishing for her married life.

Offering Chunni to the bride to signify that from this time onwards she is the breater of the respect fo the groom's family.

Sehra and Badhu Grahaagaman: Groom's dressing with Sehra and Garland and proceeding to the bride's house.

Milani: A warm welcome and greeting of the groom's parents by bride's parents and other close family members with garlands and gifts mostly cash. Aarati offered to the groom.

Jaimala: Formal acceptance of each other by bride and bridegroom with garlands.

Madhupark: Reception of bridegroom by bride's father with yogurt and honey.

Sarva Dev Poojan: Lord Ganesh, nine planets, sixteen Matrikas, sixty-four Yoginies, seven ghee Matrikas are Varuna, Main Kalash, Sun and Kula Devatas are invited and worshipped. In their presence Kanyadan is performed.

Kanyadan: (giving away of dauther)

Paanigrahan: (Taking the hand of the bride) Seven sentences are pronounced by both.

Gathbandhan: (Sacred Union of two souls)

Aashirvaad: (Blessings)

Homa and Laja Hom: (Baked rice grains into the fire) Establishing the fire and offering of Samagri into the fire. In the first four rounds graings are offered in the fire by the bride and bridegroom which are given to her by her brother. That signifies that she is leaing her family to join husband's family.

Parikrama: Mostly when all the rituals i.e. Ashmarohan (Shilarohan), feras, gathagan and Saptpadi are performed together they take seven rounds around the fire. If all of these are performed separately they take the only four rounds. First four rounds are dedicated for four aims of life i.e. Dharma (righteousness to follow the rules of religion, duty, morality and spirituality) Artha (wealth for livelihood, sharing with poor and misfortuante, to work hard and to earn money with right means) Kaam (love, physical and mental support and satisfaction, dedication between husband and wife throughout life Moksha (liberation from this world of suffering by abiding the law of household life).

Saptpadi (Main part of the wedding ceremony):

1. In your grief, I shall fill your heart with courage and strength. In your happiness, I shall rejoice, and I promise you that I will please you always with sweet words and take care of the family and children.
2. We promise that we shall discharge all responsibilities of the household life.
3. You shall be the only person to whom I shall love and respect as my life partner. I will love you with single-minded devotion.
4. I will decorate your life.
5. I will share both in your joys and sorrows. Your love will make me trust and honor you. I will carry out your wishes.
6. In all acts of righteousness, in every form of enjoyment and divine acts, we promise that we shall participate.
7. As per God and Holy Scriptures, I have become yours. Whatever promises we gave, we have spoken in pure mind. We will be truthful to each other in all things. We will love, respect and honor each other and our marriage will be forever and ever.

Hridaya Sparsha: Groom touches the shoulder of bride. Sindur, Mangalsutra, Suhag, symbolizing her as a married woman and joining of the groom's family.

Blessings: Bride and bridegroom are blessed and congratulated by all the participants.

Shanti Path:

May there be peace in the heavenly region. May there be peace in the atmosphere. May peace reign on the Earth. May the water be soothing and plants be the source of peace to all. May all the enlightened persons bring peace to us. May the Vedas spread peace throughout the Universe. May all other objects give us peace and may peace even bring peace to all. May that peace come to us. Om Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

14. Sarvasanskar & 15. Sanyas (Mahavakyaparisampti):

This ceremony is performed at the age of 50, in some cases at the age of 60. With the commencement of his ceremony, a man completes his Grahastha Dharma and enters into Vanprastha Ashram (forest hermit).

Ganesh Puja havan and Gayatri Yajna is performed. The Priest gives the new uniform and the rules are explained. Yajaman should agree to follow the rules of Banprastha life. There are 17 rules for a Vanaprasthi.

1. No attachments with wife and children.
2. Take bath three times a day and remain peaceful all times.
3. Be satisfied with simplest food.
4. Eat fresh food, which keep mind and body pure.
5. Use cheapest clothing just to cover the body.
6. Accept the heat in summer and cold in winter.
7. Do not do any hair dressing or unreal show.
8. Love in forest or in most simple way.
9. Sleep on a simplest bed or on the floor.
10. Think before consuming the things where from they are, and by which mean they came.
11. Stay away from violence and the food earned by violent means.
12. Follow the system of sacrifice, Full Moon day fasting, and other montly observance.
13. Become weak by acceptance of hard penance.
14. Weak body should start shaking with hard penance.
15. Always keep the Lord in the mind.
16. To become a Sanyasi one should perform Prajapatya Yajna and the eight kinds of Shradh before death.

16. ANTYESTI (the Last Rite):

Sabhaar: Professor G. C. Asnani

1. By and large, Hindus adopt "Cremation", i.e. burning at some specified place. Christians bury the body under belief that on the "Day of Judgement", the dead body will be brought to life and given judgement whether the person will go to eternal Heaven or to eternal Hell.

2. Hindus believe that the dead body is like a piece of cloth or dress which has been given up; that dead body is not going to be revived. There is no particular Day of Judgement: there is no eternal Heaven and no eternal Hell: Left to itself, the dead body will decompose and pollute the environment. It has to be disposed of in a manner which has following ingredients:

- (a) Respect.
- (b) Hygienic principles of life.
- (c) Socially acceptable and beneficial system.

3. Keeping these principles in view, Hindus give ceremonial bath (cleaning) to the dead body, wrap the body in clean cloth or dress, put garlands and sprinkle scents and respectfully take the body to the

cremation ground in the company of relatives and friends. Very close and sensitive relatives who cannot stand the sight of confining the body to flames do not accompany the body to the cremation ground. On the way, the accompanying persons chant the slogan: "God is the companion of the departed one. He will take care of the person".

4. At the cremation ground, some ceremonies are performed with the help of professional family priests and the body is respectfully placed on the fire place. Fire is ignited among holy chantings and prayers, bowing down before fire. Fire is worshipped as a manifestation of God to whom the body is given as the last offering of the human birth.

5. Those who have been to the cremation ground are advised to take bath and change their clothes before getting back to normal work. This is a part of hygiene. In the process of touching the dead body or being close to it, the person might be tainted by harmful bacteria, etc. Also, in the cremation ground, we have dead bodies who are afflicted by various types of diseases or the bodies which have undergone decomposition due to delay in cremation. Fire and Water are the cleaning and purifying Agents of Nature.

6. Ashes (bones) are respectfully collected from the cremation place after 3 days and immersed in holy places at suitable times, with appropriate respect.

7. There are ceremonies for 12 to 13 days, Garud Puran Path, Sapindi, Pind Dan, Kriya Shiv Puja, Narayan Bali for the peaceful journey of the departed soul and with chanting of God's Names and singing of holy songs to create an atmosphere of soft and soothing adjustment of family members and friends to the new situation with loss of their close relative/friend.

8. There are monthly and annual ceremonies with memories of respect, affection and prayers for the welfare of the departed person.

9. Hindus believe that broadly an individual is composed of:

(a) Soul never gets destroyed: It is immortal. It witnesses birth and death in various bodies.

(b) Subtle Body accompanies the Soul, birth after birth, till subtle body gets completely purified and soul merges into the total Universal Consciousness. This subtle body goes out of the gross body, in company of the soul at the time of "death". This (soul + subtle body) takes rebirth of a type depending on the actions of the individual. A person with good record of actions in the past takes birth in a beautiful, healthy human

body, in the family of pious and prosperous persons. A person with record of evil and cruel actions in the past takes birth in one of 84,00,000 types of bodies, including animals, insects, etc. In each body, the person learns to do good in its own capacity and progresses upward to take birth again in human body, learns lessons of Nature and lives a life of nobleness, to be one with God, the Universal Consciousness.

10. Hindus avoid converting the whole or major part of our land surface on the earth into a wide graveyard and to dump one dead body over the other at one place. Cremation as the best method of disposal of a dead body, with due respect, honour and affection

Main Methods of Disposal of Dead Body:

1. Bhoo Samadhi (burial underground)
2. Jala Samadhi (water burial)
3. Agni Dah (cremation)

Apart from the above three exposures of body for being consumed by vultures and other birds or beasts, being preserved in caves, and mummifying are the three methods which have been used since the ancient times.

To bury a holy body (according to Shastras) one should go to the east or north of the village, dig a pit about eight feet deep, then water thereon thrice, spread the Darbha grass on the bottom of the pit, Deck the dead body with garlands, sandalwood paste and salt, deposit the body in the it with prayer, and put a water pot next to the body while reciting the mantras.

What the state of things was before the composition of the Rigved cannot be said with certainty. There is no general agreement as to the age of Rigved and of the ruins found at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. Some scholars refer to complete burials. The excavation at Lauriya Nandgarh has brought to light supposed Vedic burial pounds in which, has been found a small golden plaque bearing the figure of a nude female, the Earth Goddess, Mahakali.

ANTYESTI CREMATION:

The main steps to be followed are as,

1. Bhumi Shuddhi: Purifying place with sesame seeds, Shaligram, Tulasi, Gangajal and Kusha.
2. Kshor Karma: Eldest son with shaved hair. Place on the Yagyopaveet (Janeu).

3. Earthee (casket): Under the open sky.
4. Deep Daan: Lighting a lamp near the head of the deceased.
5. Bhuumi Shuddhi: Keeping the floor clean.
6. Shav Sthapan: Deceased's head should be facing to the North.
7. Snan: Sprinkling the holy water.
8. Alankar: Offering kumkum, sandal wood paste, basil leaves, gold, Ganga water, flowers.
9. Pind Daan: Offering anna balls with sesame seed and Gangajal.

FIRST PIND: The first Pind is given in the hand of the deceased at the place of death by the name of Pret, to please the Devas of that place.

SECOND PIND: At the door of the place of death, the second pInd should be offered by the name Paanth to avoid the disturbance caused by the Bhoots and Prets.

The wife then takes four rounds with a coconut in her hand, followed by the four hush carriers. The son first to follow her.

THIRD PIND: Half way to crematorium the third Pind should be offered to avoid the disturbances coming from Pishach, Yakshas, Khechars and Devils. At the crematorium the dead body should have his head facing north. After doing a small havan in crematorium, O fire God, you are in the five elements and preserver of the world, may you take this soul to heaven.

FOURTH PIND AND FIFTH: After keeping the dead body on the cremation pyre two Pinds should be offered by the name of the deceased, one in the pyre by the name of Bhoot, Rudra daivato and another by the name of Sadhak in the hand.

PANCHAK: If a body is being cremated in the Pnachak (last five Nakshatras in the almanac) another four pieces of grass must be kept beside the dead body. Holding a fire lamp in his hand, the son should walk around the fire and light the pyre.

FOOD: Food is not cooked at home between death and cremation, that can be brought from outside. However, that depends upon individuals situation. After cremation all the family members should take bath and home cooked food must be offered to a cow. This system is repeated for ten days.

SUTAK NIVRITTI: Condolence should be observed for nine nights, hence tenth day is Sutak Nirvitti day. On that day Shiva Puja, Pipal Puja, is considered.

SAPINDI: (on the twelfth day) Pagadi is another important ceremony. By that the rights are transferred to the son and he then onwards performs the ceremony till the 12th day, with 52 Pinds.

CHAUTHA: (collection of ashes): also known as Marka, Parchawani, and Rasma Pagari. Usually performed on or after the third day of the death. The eldest son along with the hush carrier declares they have cremated the body and therefore are responsible for the good deeds on his behalf. Eldest son or the next of the kin is declared for being responsible in all the financial and other business matters of the deceased. Eldest son is declared the successor. There is a Kriya for thirteen days with daily mourning, Pind-dan, ten days Sutak observance, eleventh day Narayan Bali, twelfth day Dwadashah, and the final part on thirteenth day known as Uthawala and Brahman Bhojan. However, in modern days, lack of time, people are completing everything in one day.

KRIYA: Three Sodashies (52 Pinds)

16 MALIN PINDS:

1st, At the place of death,
2nd, At the door,
3rd, Half the way to the crematorium,
4th & 5th, At the pyre before lighting the pyre,
6th, On the third day at the time of the ashes collection and
10th to 16th, Pinds of ten days given from the first day of funeral rites for each day.

MADHYAM PINDS: (On the eleventh day 11 Pindas and 5 for Sapindi) 1. Vishnu, 2. Shiva, 3. Yama, 4. Chandrama, 5. Agni, 6. Kaavya, 7. Kaal, 8. Rudra, 9. Purush Parameshwar, 10. Preta, 11. Vishnu, 12. Brahma, 13. Vishnu, 14. Shiva, 15. Yama, 16. Deceased.

UTTAM SHODASHI: Twelve Pinds for twelve months, and fifteenth day (Pakshik), one and half month (tripaakshik), five and a half months (nyun shanmaashik), and eleven and half month's (nyunabdhik). These sixteen Pinds are offered to the deceased. Also 4 Pinds for Sapindi, 3 for Pret and one for 1 Adhik mas if that come within one year after death.

CCHILD DEATH: Under the age of 27 months a child must be buried under the ground. Milk is donated in the name of the child. However, if a child is dead in the womb, no rituals are performed.

The more Vasana one has while living mind about the material things, more they need for proper way of Antyesti.

SANYASI: A Sanyasi (one who has renounced) needs no Pinda Dan Kriyas. This rite is already performed for him at the time of renouncement ceremony.