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## SHODASHA SANSKARA – PRINCIPLED CODE OF CONDUCT

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### ABSTRACT

The Sanskara are ornaments that decorate the personality. Various Sanskaras are believed to be meticulously linked to the purification of their sins, immoralities, mistakes and even the correction of physical malformations. Upanishads refer to Sanskaras as a means of growth and prosperity in all the four aspects of human pursuit, Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desires), and Moksha (salvation). However, the Sixteen Sanskara proposed by Rishi Veda Vyas are considered to be the most important rites of passage in the life. These Sanskara connect individuals to a community that fosters a sense of brotherhood. The lack of Sanskara leads to indulging in individual physical joy and stimulating the animal's instincts. Benefits of Sanskara provides physical and mental health and confidence to face life challenges. They are believed to purify the body and increase blood circulation by sending more oxygen to each organ. They give moral and physical balance throughout life. Sanskaragives you the confidence to courageously face death through a life of satisfaction and righteousness.

**Keywords:** *Shodasha Sanskaras, Sanskara, Culture, Veda, Smriti, Purana*

### INTRODUCTION

The rite of passage of Sanskara according to the ancient sage Panini is a decoration that decorates individuality.

They represent important stages of life and enable a fulfilling life full of contentment and gratification. They overlay the way for corporeal and spiritual journeys in this life.

Various Sanskara are believed to pay close attention to purifying sins, vices, mistakes, and even correcting physical malformations. Upanishads call Sanskara a means of progression and prosperity for all four aspects of human pursuit: Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desires), and Moksha (salvation). A detailed description of Sanskaras can be found in the ancient scriptures Smritis and Grihasutra. However, all the different Grihasutra have different names and numbers of Sanskara. The Sages Hayana, Paraska and Varaha explain 13, and Sage Aswalayana 11. However, the 16 Sanskaras proposed by Rishi Veda Vyas are considered to be the most important rites of passage in human life.

1 - Garbhadhanam Sanskara - According to Vaidik tradition, a child is brought into this world with love. Bringing the soul to this world and nurturing it in such a way that it is a blessing to the community is considered a great service to humanity. The best way to bring another soul to this planet is a process well described in the Vedas. The process begins with Garbhadhanam Sanskara. Garbha means womb and Dhan means to establish. It was done to welcome the transformed man of the planet Garbhadhanam Sanskara. It is a ritual performed before pregnancy to ensure healthy and sacred offspring. Here,

a husband and wife agree to have a child and to raise a family together and make Garbhadhanam Sanskara.

2 - Punsavanam Sanskara - This is the second Sanskara from 16 Sanskaras. Punsavanam is a Pun compound word meaning movement and soul, while Savana means festival. Contrary to popular belief, Punsavanam was not designed to have only a male child. The ceremony is performed to ensure that the foetus is safe during pregnancy and that it does not miscarry, regardless of the gender of the foetus. Punsavanam is performed when pregnancy first appears, usually in the second month of pregnancy and usually before the embryo begins to move in the womb (1). To this day, the foetus is just a ball. As the embryo develops and develops, Punsavanam is formed as a guarantee of safety and well-being for the foetus. It is performed to celebrate the consciousness present in the foetus. The significance of this Sanskara is to raise the spiritual and exceptional potentials in the child. This will brace the relation of husband and wife, and bound them together by a common desire for offspring.

3 - Seemantonayanam Sanskara - Seemantonayanam Sanskara is the third well-performed Sanskara in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy. The importance of culture is to ensure a safe birth and to keep

the mother happy. As the day of birth approaches, many physical and hormonal changes begin to take place in the mother's body. A child who is almost fully grown is also experiencing changes. The name Seemantonayanam suggests the same thing. Seema means boundary, Anta means end & *unn* means to open while *Nayan* means eyes. Therefore, the exact meaning of Seemantonayanam is to open your eyes and cross boundaries. The ceremony is to clean the air when the mother will be with the baby after birth. Family members, invited friends and relatives of the woman gather. They meet, acknowledge and satisfy all the desires of the pregnant woman. They give blessings & gifts to the mother and baby. The purpose of this is to ensure that the mother is satisfied in every way.

4 - Jatakarma Sanskara - Jatakarma is the fourth Sanskara from 16 Sanskaras and the first Sanskara after the birth of a child. The word Jata means creation and the word Karma means action. The compound word, Jatakarma, thus signifies the customs to be followed immediately after birth. These are designed not only to celebrate the birth of a child but also to create a bond between father and child. The tradition has been marked by the repetition of Vaidik hymns praying to Devi Saraswati, the Goddess of knowledge and wisdom.

5 - Namakaranam Sanskara - Namakarana literally means naming, is a process of naming in the Vaidik culture. An audible name is given to the child. The first letter is selected from the Vaidik child horoscope. The horoscope contains one letter from which the child's name will be selected. The names chosen are those related to the deity, good qualities, lucky stars, constellations, the progeny of the father or mother name, place of birth or beautiful natural features such as trees, flowers, birds etc. Each of us is born with a command. Each constellation is familiar with a specific sound. That sound is raised in an individual Vaidik horoscope to name a child. It is not a Vaidik way to name a child before it is born. Sometimes Jatakarma and Namakarana are performed together. According to Ayurveda this ceremony should be performed on the 10th day or 12th day or 100th day or after 1 year (2) (3).

6 - Nishkramana Sanskara - Nishkramana means the first exit. It is the 6th of 16 Sanskara. As per Vyasa Smriti, on Nishkramana Day, a square area in the yard where the sun can be seen is covered with cow dung and clay and a Swastika sign is inscribed on it. The baby's mother spreads rice over it. The baby is brought to the scene and the event begins. At the end of the ceremony the father makes the child

look at the sun with the sound of a conch-shell and the singing of Vaidik hymns. The child is also shown the beautiful symbols, taken to the Temple and to any place where the family has faith. Nishkramana is best done in the fourth month after birth (4).

7 - Annaprashanam Sanskara - Annaprashanam is the seventh Sanskara in the Vaidik Tradition which marks the baby's first food without mother's milk. The name Annaprashanam means to eat food. The ceremony is usually held in honour of the priest who decides what is best for the child. It is usually done between six and eight months after the baby is born or when teeth begin to appear (5). This day is special as, till this day the baby eats only the mother's food. In the womb, the baby receives nourishment from its mother. After birth, it will be nourished only by its mother's milk. Annaprashanam Sanskara is made to celebrate the day and reassure the child that the mother of the world will now be raising you. It is a celebration event. The family members, friends and neighbours are invited to attend this remarkable event. Appropriately, the rice dessert is served to the child while repeating the words of Prasad as part of the Annaprashanam Sanskara. According to Ayurveda, 7<sup>th</sup> month onward, solid food should be given

to the child gradually as much as he or she requires and breast feeding should be gradually discontinued(6)(7)(8).

8 - Chudakarma Sanskara - Chudakarma Sanskara is also known as the Mundan - hairdresser. It symbolizes cleansing, renewal and new growth. Mantras are sung and the child is given the blessings of long life, prosperity and fame. According to tradition, hair from birth is associated with undesirable traits in past lives. So, during the mundana, the baby has just shaved to show relief in the past and move on to the future. The festival is held as a special event in many homes, for little girls and boys.

9 - Karnavedhan Sanskara - Karnavedhan is the ninth of the 16 Sanskaras of the Vaidik Tradition. Karna means ear and Vedhan means piercing. It is an ear-piercing event. In some places it is believed that the performance of Karnavedhan is as important as the Upanayanam, a sacred rite ceremony. Ear piercings are believed to help improve memory. It has a unique value when applied to both male and female child.

10 - Vidyarambham Sanskara (Aksharabhyas) - Vidya means knowledge and Arambha means beginning. Vidyarambham Sanskara is the 10<sup>th</sup> Sanskara of the 16 Sanskara of the Vaidik Tradition. The child is introduced

to the world of knowledge during this Sanskara. Vidyarambham is traditionally observed on the day of Vijayadashami, the last day of Navratri. Children are officially introduced to learning music, dance, languages and other traditional arts. Includes syllabary alphabet launch event. Introduction into the world of written language usually begins with the writing of a mantra or OM symbol. The child writes on the sand or on a plate of rice under the direction of the elderly in home & a priest conducting the ceremony, usually the Guru.

11 – Upanayana Sanskara - One of the most important aspects of one's life is education. Before entering the field of education, one needs to make a commitment, and Upanayana is one such commitment. Upanayana means to be close to the teacher. When a child is ready to go to Gurukul, or starts learning in today's world, the child's parents and teachers pass on the first lesson. This event is called Upanayana. Upanayana is also called Brahmopadeshm - meaning "commands for Brahman". The supreme knowledge of the "Brahman (deity)" is that it is the child's first learning. It is a common tendency to want to know more. To get this knowledge one needs to go through a process. The word nayan in Upanayanam means to lead. The child is

first shown the truth, "you are a Brahman." Then Guru teaches him how to understand and implement the same. Without a vision, life can be wasted on many unnecessary things. Guru offers the wisdom by giving the direction to the child. One great feature in Upanayanam is to give the baby Janeu also called Yajnopavitam or sacred cord. This yarn is made of knitting three threads, has one knot and is worn on left shoulder. Three strings signify three major bonds that a child must make in this life. These three obligations are directed to the person's parents, in relation to the information he or she receives and the community. Once a person has completed these tasks, they can remove Janeu. It is then that one enters the next phase of life called Sanya, discarding all activities because they have completed all of them. In Upanayanam, the child is re-introduced to the Gayatri Mantra. The Gayatri Mantra is a mantra that prays for sharp wisdom. Intelligence that can not only process information but also have intelligent skills. Simply collecting information can lead to confusion, but being known is always the right thing to do and the right direction. The prayer of sharp intellect that shines with emotion is Gayatri Mantra. Contrary to popular belief, girls and women can sing Gayatri Mantra. Vaidik culture has never prevented women from this practice. In

fact, Upanayana used to be a common practice among girls and in ancient times. There is no age bar, gender, characters, colour or permission to start in Upanayana and learn Gayatri Mantra. As per Ayurvedic classics the time of starting the education as soon as child fit for it (9).

12 - Vedarambha Sanskara - Vedarambha belongs to the twelfth of sixteen Sanskara in the Vaidik tradition. Veda is to know, while arambha means beginning. Therefore, the Vedarambha literally means 'the beginning of the study of the Vedas. This event is held on any auspicious day after Upanayanam. Before the holy fire, the student is made a vow to dedicate himself to his Guru and to live a virtuous life. The student follows the path of Brahmcharya and focuses on education only. The disciple should learn the right living and politeness (10).

13 - Keshant Sanskara - Keshant is the next season of Sanskara for boys. Keshant meaning 'haircut' is the thirteenth part of the 16 Sanskaras in the Vaidik Tradition. This Sanskara is associated with a student's first shaving when he is about 16 years old or when the first facial hair grows. Coming to the counterpart i.e., for girls this Sanskara is differently performed after the first menstruation of the girl. She is well dressed and is given sweets and fruits, while the women sing pleasant

songs to make the girl happy. Up to this day, all Sanskaras are made to look alike for boys and girls. From this Sanskara it is marked that now the method will be different for men and women.

14 - Samavartan Sanskara - Samavartan is a literary tradition in ancient literature practiced at the end of the Brahmacharya period and marked the graduation of a student at Gurukul. It is the 14th of the 16th Sanskara of the Vaidik Tradition. Before leaving Gurukul, the student gives Guru, Gurudakshina meaning funds or offerings. Sama means equality and Vartan means morality. Samavartan therefore translates, "now, you are equal to me (Guru)." Or "now, you will behave like me (Guru)." It also indicates one's readiness to enter Grihastha Ashrama which means the life of the host or marital life. Although this celebration is marked by the end of the school year, it does not mean the beginning of the marriage. Anyone who has completed this passing practice is considered to be an expert on the meaning of Vidya-snataka.

15 - Vivaha Sanskara - Vivaha Sanskara is one of the most important and detailed Sanskara in the 16 Sanskaras in the Vaidik Tradition. Vivaha means marriage. According to Vaidik tradition, the only way for a man and a woman to come together is to start a family. It is the bond

of everlasting friendship between a man and a woman. According to the Vedas, a marriage may begin after a person has completed Brahmacharya Ashram, a student's life reserved for celibacy. One of the major festivals in Vivaha Sanskara is the Saptapadi or seven sacred vows. These are vows that the bride and groom have promised to keep. They are a guide for a couple to remain committed to each other and to live a happy marriage. Vivaha occurs between two people, who are equal partners in this relationship. Each commits himself and his partner. So, this Sanskara is made when the bride and groom are old enough to understand each other. Vaidik culture does not endorse the child marriage.

16 - Antyeshti Sanskara - Antyeshti is the last Sanskara for the soul journey to earth. The word Antyeshti literally means 'the last sacrifice'. Refers to the funeral rites of the deceased. It is widely known as Antim Sanskara, Antya Kriya or Vahni Sanskara. According to Vaidik tradition, when the body is burned, the Vaidik words are sung and rituals are performed. The human body and the universe consist of five elements - air, water, fire, earth and atmosphere. The final process of passing returns the body to these five elements and its origins. The body is offered in fire as a final sacrifice that is a reminder that the

body perishes but the soul or Brahman does not die.

## **DISCUSSION**

These Sanskara connect individuals with communities that stand in a sense of brotherhood. People who act in a way that is related to those around them will definitely think twice before committing a sin. The absence of Sanskara may lead to the physical joy of the individual and stimulate the animal's instincts. The inner devil awakens, leading to the degeneration of oneself and ultimately the devastation of the society as a whole, as the society is formed by the individuals. If you do not realize that you are firmly established in society & you are connected to the society, the desire to compete with the world and prioritize yourself over others will destroy not only you but the entire human society.

Therefore, Sanskara are must and they acts as a moral code of conduct for society. The benefits of Sanskara provide physical and mental health and self-confidence to face the challenges of life. These help rejuvenate the mind and improve concentration & intellectual ability. Sanskara can give a sense of belonging, culture and sympathy. They send energy for humanitarian purposes and thus build a strong personality. These help to get rid of pride, selfishness, anger, jealousy, greed, desire, laziness, and fear.

They provide a lifelong moral and physical balance. Most importantly, the Sanskara give you the confidence to face the death with courage (11).

### CONCLUSION

The Sixteen Sanskara proposed by Rishi Veda Vyas are considered to be the most important rites of passage in life. According to Ayurveda, Sanskara acts as a moral code of conduct for the society. The benefits of Sanskara provide physical and mental health and self-confidence to face the challenges of the life.

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