

After the shave, butter or cream of curd should be applied to the head with a very soft massage. Then the child should be given a bath. Give him beautiful clothes—since he/she is the V.I.P. centre of all attention. Let the father take the child into his lap, sit on an asana with his face to the east and chant Sama mantras (Mahavamidevya hymns p.....) as an appropriate close to the auspicious ceremony.

After the sacred music, the parents of the child should entertain the guests. Before the gathering disperses. They should all pray for and bless the child with the following mantra :—

ओ३म् त्वं जीव शरदः शतं वर्षमानः (this for a male child),  
ओ३म् त्वं जीव शरदः शतं वर्षमाना (for the girl child).

**Meaning :—**All those present bless the child : "Dear child, may you live for a hundred years growing and prospering in health of body, mind and soul."

The sanskara (ceremony) should close with the chanting of santi-patha, the prayer for universal peace, prosperity and happiness.

#### Special Note :—

1. Why do we say "Namah" (salutation!) to a material substance or object? The material object is not an object of worship. It is an object of value, and must not be wasted or neglected. Hence 'Namah' is a mark of value.
2. This ceremony should be performed when the sun is in the northern hemisphere, in the bright half of the month on any auspicious day. There are two important operations in this ceremony : shaving the child's head and applying cream to the head. The application of cream or curd cream or butter protects the skin, nourishes the roots of the hair and does good to the eyes.
3. The qualities of the four grains are :—  
i) Rice : Nourishing, health giving by maintaining the balance of the humours in the body, good to the eyes and to the urinary system.

ii) Barley : Good to the blood and skin, brain tonic, beneficial to the discharge of wind and urine.

iii) Beans : Nourishing, strength giving, beneficial to vital energy, helps the excretory system and adds to the formation of protein (milk) in the body, so good to the nursing mother.

iv) Tila : (seeds of sesamum). Nourishing, hair tonic, protects the skin, builds up, tonic to lactation, purifies blood and prevents skin disease, protects and strengthens teeth.

## 9

### Karna-Vedha Sanskara (Ear-piercing Ceremony)

The time for the piercing of the ears is the third or the fifth year of the child's life. The purpose of the ceremony is (i) to help the child to wear some form ornaments, and (ii) to prevent certain diseases and disorders and thus help the child keep good health.

Susruta says that piercing the ears protects the child. How? Some people say that this piercing cuts a certain nerve, and this cut prevents hernia. Hernia is a disorder of the intestines. A part of the intestines sags down into the testicles. At the time of birth, the child's testicles lie close under the intestines, they do not hang down in this bag as in the case of the grown up. They descend at a later stage through a certain passage. If a part of the intestines too descends through that passage, the same is called 'hernia'. According to Susruta, piercing the ears prevents this, and, in Cikitsa Sthana (19, 21), he clearly says that the purpose of piercing the ears is prevention of hernia. These days any non-medical man, a goldsmith or any one else also, performs this task, but according to Susruta, the person should be well read in medicine and anatomy and expert in surgery. He says :—

“भिषक् वामहस्तेनाकृष्य कर्णं देवकृते छिद्रे आदित्यकरावभास्विते

शनैः शनैः ऋजुविद्धयेत्” ॥

**Bhisak vāmahaste nākṛṣya kaṛṇam daivakṛte chidre ādityakarāvabhāsvite śanaḥ śanaḥ ṛjuviddayet ॥**

Let the surgeon stretch the child's ear with his left hand and see where he can see the light of the sun through. Let him carefully pierce there in the daivakṛt hole. Hence the piercing of the ear is a specialized job which ought to be performed by an expert. Karna-vedha, this is not a matter of fashion, it is a matter of health and life.

## Karna Vedha Sanskara

The ritual with mantras :—

Appointment of priest (p.31); acamana with "Om amrito-pastaranamas i.....etc. (p.32); anga-sparsa or touching the body limbs with "Om varima-Asye astu..... etc. (p.33); Isvara-stuti prarthana-upasana, Stuti-vacana, Santi prakarana (p.1); agnyadhana or starting the fire with "Om bhur-bhuvah svaha Om bhurbhuvah svadyauriva bhumna.....etc. (p.39); agnifradipana or raising the fire with "Om udbudhyasvagne.....etc. (p.35); Samidadhana or offering of samidhas with "om ayanta idhma atma" and "Om samidhagnim".....etc. (p.35); five ahutis of ghee with "Om ayanta idhma atma" and "Om samidhagnim".....etc., (p.35); five ahutis of ghee with "Om ayante idhma atma".....etc. (p.38); sprinkling the water around the yajna kunda with "Om adite anumanyasva".....etc. (p.38); four agharavajya ahitis with "Om agnaye svaha".....etc. (p.39); four vyahrti ahuti with "Om yadasya karmano....." etc. (p.40); One silent prajapati ahuti (p.41); four Pavamani ahutis with "Om bhurbhuvah svaha agna ayunsi....." etc. (p.42); and eight astajyahutis with "Om tvanno agne...." etc. (p.43). This general procedure should be first completed.

The ceremony is closed with purnahutis and Mahavamidevya gana.

## Special part of Karna Vedha Sanskara

The special part consists of the piercing of the child's ears. For this purpose, the child's attention is to be diverted. Put some toys and somethings to eat before the child. Then chant the following mantra to pierce the right ear :

ओम् भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।  
स्थिरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवांसस्तनूभिर्व्यशेमहि देवहितं यदायुः ॥

यजु० 275, 21.

**Om bhadram karnebhīṣ śṛṇuyāma deva bhadram paśyem-  
aksabhir-yajatrāḥ ।  
sthirangaistuṣṭuvam sastaṇūbhīr-vyśemahi devahitam  
yadāyuh ।।**

Yaj. 25, 21.

With this mantra, the right ear has to be pierced by an expert who knows the structure of the ear according to Charaka and Susruta.

**Meaning :—**Lord Almighty/or, ye learned and the wise, may we always hear the auspicious and the good with our ears, May we see the good and the auspicious with our eyes, May we live a full life with good health of

the body while we pass our days in praise of you and in the service of the wise. May we do the good and the right always praising God; May we always avoid wrong, false hood and vice and sin! May we, living thus a pious life, live long!

Now let the left ear be pierced with the following mantras :—

ओम् वक्ष्यन्तीवेदा गनीगन्ति कर्ण प्रियं सखायं पस्विस्वजाना ।  
गोवेन शिङ्खले विल्लाधि धञ्ज्या इयं समने पारयन्ती ॥

ऋ० 6, 75, 3.

**Om vakṣyantivedā ganiganti karṇam priyam sakḥāyam  
parisasyajānā ।**

yoṣeva śinkṣa vīlādhi dhanvañjyā iyam samane parayanā ॥  
Rg. 6, 75, 3.

**M-aning :—**Just as a learned woman speaks words of wisdom and knowledge, or just as a woman, while embracing her darling husband seems to say something into his ear, similarly this bow-string, strained on the bow seems to say something again and again into the ears of the brave. May this bow string give us victory. The significance of this mantra is that for a living dynamic nation, action is pursued on a war footing, and the twang of the bow is symbolic of victory and success. The child is supposed to grow up to be a brave hero of the motherland.

After this, all should bless the child :

हे बालक ! त्वं जीव शरदः, शतं वर्धमानः ॥

**He bālaka! tvam jīva śaradaḥ śatam vardhamanah ।।**  
(for the male child)

हे बालिके! त्वं जीव शरदः शतं वर्धमाना ॥

**He bālike! tvam jīva śaradaḥ śatam vardhamāna ।।**

(for the female child).

**Meaning :—**Dear child, live for a hundred years, going higher and ever higher.

Then the hosts should thank the guests, offer hospitality and see them off.

Svami ji was very liberal in his social, academic and religious views. He has prescribed the Upanayana ceremony for all children, whatever the class or varna of their birth. Svamiji prescribes upanayana for boys as well as girls.

Before the ceremony, the child has to be on fast for one day or there days. This fast is kept with the purpose of inner purification. During this fast, when the child feels hungry, he is given milk or barley pudding srikhand, a curd preparation, because these foods are of a sacredly pure quality.

The yajnopavita (The sacred thread) that is given to the child is of three threads. Three threads symbolise the Veda Trayi (i.e., Stuti or hymns of praise and qualities of various things of reality including the nature of God, Prarthana or prayers, and Upasana or attainment of the objects of life including the attainment of God). They symbolise Loka Trayi also, the Values in the existential world (Satyam, or Truth, Yasa or honour and glory, and Sre or wealth). They also symbolise Jnana or knowledge, karma or action/application and practice, and upasana or attainment of the values for which the human being lives and acts. They also symbolise the three basic obligation of life—obligation to God, the Creator, obligation to the teachers and the academic tradition, and obligations to the parents and the social tradition. The threads are a constant reminder of these obligations so that a man or woman lives in natural piety. They remind us of the Brahmacarya, Grhastha and Vanaprastha asrams also.

Since every child, boy or girl, or of whatever class by birth, has the right to education, he/she is given the Yajnopavita. One who wears it is a Dvija or twice born. A child gets the first birth by its parents. That is the natural birth. The second birth he gets in the Teacher's home. That is the academic birth into the world of education and culture. In other words, a Dvija is a man/woman of nature and nurture both. Without education, a person exists, at the best, only as a noble savage and lives only on the natural level. This idea of twice born has reached other religious folds as well. "Put off the old man and put on the new", says the same thing.

There are certain symbolic acts which need explanation. One is that the child is made to hold water in his hands. The teacher then holds water in his hands, and puts it into the child's hands where it mixes with the water held by the child. The child then leaves the water into a pot. The water held by the child means his own virtue and knowledge. The water added by the teacher from his hands is the teacher's contribution to the child's knowledge, virtue and culture. And leaving the entire water into a pot means passing on this common heritage to tradition through proper and deserving recipients.

## 10

### उपनयन संस्कार

#### Upanayana Sanskara

##### (The Sacred Thread Ceremony)

The Upanayana Sanskara is the child's preliminary initiation into Vaidic studies. In today's language, we can say that it is the first formal step in the child's education. It is the door for the child's entry into the temple of learning. After this entry, what the child starts is 'Vedarambha', i.e., the beginning of Vaidic studies. When the study actually is to start, then another Sanskara takes place, and that is the Vedarambha Sanskara. That Sanskara is performed in the Teacher's home i.e., The School. The Upanayana can be performed in the parent's home also.

In this Sanskara so the child is given the Sacred thread (Yajnopavita) to wear. That is the main purpose. According to the Grhya Sutras, the time for this ceremony is the eighth year for a Brahmana child, eleventh years for the Ksatriya child, and the twelfth year for a Vaisya child. According to Manu, the Upanayana time for intelligent children is the fifth, sixth and eighth year for Brahmanas, Ksatriyas and Vaisyas. Svami Dayananda has taken a reasonably commonsense view of the time for this ceremony. He says that a child should be given the sacred thread when he is physically and mentally developed enough so that he is ripe enough to enter the school.

Here one thing should be carefully noted : On the authority of ancient writers, Svami Dayananda has prescribed the Upanayana ceremony for the Brahmana, Ksatriya and Vaisya children. But in the Satyarthi Prakasa he says that this ceremony has to be performed in the parent's home as well as in the Teacher's home. In the parent's home, only children of the three varnas, Brahmana, ksatriya and vaisya are given the sacred thread, but in the teacher's home, the children of the Sudra Varna also are to be given the sacred thread.

The teacher makes the child see the sun. This means the child sees the light with the help of the teacher. Then the child goes round the teacher in reverence and oblation. This means that the child knows the teacher wholly and respectfully so that, on his path from darkness and ignorance to light and knowledge, he receives the virtues of the teacher and none of his limitation.

Then the teacher covers his hand with a cloth and touches heart and the stomach of the child. This means that the teacher would know the physical and mental life of the child in a personal manner and try to remove his weakness and difficulties in the same manner. The child's relation to the teacher is that of a child to enlightened parent for growth and development.

The child and the teacher then chant a mantra of Vrta, i.e., hymns of mutual and common commitment and avowal. They bind themselves in steadfastness together for the pursuit of knowledge, virtue and service in proper discipline and seriousness.

The teacher asks the child a question : Whose disciple are you? The child replies: "Yours". This means that the relation between the two is filial and parental. During the period of education, the teacher has the precedence of relation over the natural parents. Then the teacher invokes the Lord in the form of Indra, Agni, says that they are the real teachers of the child while he is only an instrument of the Lord and assures the child that he will give him the knowledge of the Lord and of nature and of social obligations, so that equipped with comprehensive knowledge of the spirit, the Sun, water, vegetation, earth, sky and space and natural powers, he may serve the Lord and the society with full confidence and humility.

There are five vows given unto themselves by the child and the teacher. They bind themselves to move from untruth to truth in word, thought and deed. For these vows they invoke the Lord in the various manifestations—Agni, Vayu, Surya, Candra, and the Lord of the Vows. All these (Fire, Wind, Sun, Moon, and the Lord of Vows) are various names of God. The child and the teacher bind themselves in service to the Lord and pray that He give them strength to remain steadfast in their discipline of truth, knowledge and virtue. However, sons of these are objects of nature also. They maintain their virtue and never fail in their duty. They are symbols of inviolable virtue and steadfastness. Hence the child and the teacher seek inspiration from these too. Fire stands for light, heat and upward movement. It also stands for honour and glory and magnificence. Wind is known for speed and movement, and it is a life giver—so is fire too, a giver of life of energy. Hence the Fire and wind give inspiration for heat, light, speed, upward progress and the service of life and humanity. A person who prays to the Love for life and energy can never take

away the life of others. A child of God and mother nature can never kill. He will save. Such a person cannot eat flesh or fish. He will be a strict vegetarian too. May God give us light, life virtue glory, this is the prayer!

The third prayer is to the Sun, the Lord as well as the star. The Sun wakes up the world from sleep, removes the darkness, holds the worlds of planets and keeps in motion ever and anon. The disciple seeks inspiration from the Sun for knowledge, virtue, life, movement and stability, progress and balance, etc. from the Sun and binds himself with the teacher, in vow, to be a mainstay of society.

The fourth prayer and vow is to the moon. The moon receives the light from the sun, converts it into a very soothing light reflection and passes it on to the earth. The child seeks inspiration to be sweet and soft in speech and behaviour, lovable in manners and decent and cultured in his entire life and conduct. He binds himself never to hurt anybody in conversation, never feel angry and never result anybody. In short, while he will be gloriously shining in life with honour and virtue like the sun, he will maintain his cool in peace and decency and beauty like the moon. The last and the fifth vow is binding will the invocation of the Lord of vows/vow-keepers, the Lord God supreme. The Lord is just and kind, he creates and maintains the entire universe. He is good to all and evil to none. The disciple too will be fair, just and kind, never hurt or deceive. He will keep away from evil, do service unto all Lord's creation and human society.

In short, the life of an educated and cultured person ought to be a life full of energy, vitality, knowledge, action and service, honour, glory and humility, sweetness and light, speed, progress and stability, and it has to be constant, steadfast and unrelenting. It has to be a human variations of the virtues enjoined by the Lord and Nature, For this the prayers are said, For this the vows are taken as an inviolable discipline, For this, confidence, humility and prayers are needed. No one can succeed all alone or by oneself. One needs the teacher, the human society, Nature, and the Lord of Nature and humanity.

### Explanation of the three threads

No one is alone. We are bound in natural piety to God the creator, the long line of teachers, saints and scholars (Risis) and to Nature and our parents (Pitras). We ought to maintain our position and repay the debt we owe to God, the Risis and the parents. These three aspects of spiritual, social and familial obligation are highly symbolised by the sacred thread.

Let us explain these obligations. We need to know these to-day more than ever before, now when the society is drifting, the family is breaking and the individual is disintegrating under the pressure of power, freedom and competition.

1. **Rissi Rina** (obligation to the Risis) : The Risis obtained knowledge by the grace of God and by virtue of their own thinking and research. This fund of knowledge they handed down to us. Similarly we too should obtain knowledge, pass it on to others, serve the tradition and take it forward. This is how we can repay the debt we know to the teachers of the past and present. One thread of the yajnopavita reminds us of this debt. During our student life (Brahmacary), we receive knowledge from the teachers and we are sustained by the academic institutions. Let us remember this obligation and feel grateful to the teachers and the Risis we have to repay this debt.

2. **Pitri Rina** (Obligation to parents) : Our parents brought us into the world, nursed and brought us up. We are beholden to them. When we complete our education, i.e., the period of Brhmacary asram, let us enter family life, produce children, nurse them and bring them up as healthy and intelligent children. Let us help the social and educational institutions as well through liberal charity. Let us remember the debt of our parents and repay it by rearing a good family and maintaining the family traditions. The second thread of the yajnopavita reminds us of this duty.

3. **Deva Rina** (Obligation of God) : While we live through different stages of life—student life, family life, and then retired life—the movement is from involvement to renunciation. During family life, in the midst of our social problems, we are so engaged that we find it difficult to be free. All thinkers, teachers and philosophers have taught us that we should progress from bondage to freedom. They too tried to do so. They retired from family life into Vanaprastha, forest abodes like the present day centres for elderly people. But the ancient centres of elderly people were centres of learning and teaching, they were not mere centres of dependence. They were centres of learning, research and meditation. The third thread reminds us of freedom in retirement, meditation on God and social service.

There is the fourth stage as well, **Sanyasa**, a life of total freedom. A person gives up all involvement formally, gives up even the sacred thread, gives up his name even, and lives only for God and service.

The three obligations are to be remembered throughout life, in fact. They mean not anything mutually exclusive, nor strictly sequential, they are indeed

simultaneous. But adjustment is always there in the light of one's situation, capacity and opportunity. What is important is that the yajnopavita is a symbol of a total scheme and plan of life, intelligent, full and balanced—between commitment, movement, progress, stability and freedom.

**Anjali Water** : The desciple takes water in his anjali (hollow of the hands), and holds it. The Acarya (teacher) too takes water in his anjali. The teacher leaves the water into the child's anjali, and the child then leaves on the grounds, as if an offering to the earth, the water in the child's anjali stands for his innate and natural qualities, virtues and competence. The water in the teacher's anjali stands for his knowledge, experience and wisdom. The teacher adds his knowledge, experience and wisdom to the child's and augments his natural attainments. The child then leaves the water on the earth. The child, when he grows up, does not keep the knowledge to himself selfishly. He spreads it all around among the society, all the children of mother earth. Water stands for peace and cool. The knowledge of the disciple and the teacher is for peace and cool and for all. This is repeated thrice, which means that the young man will serve God and society with knowledge in thought, word and deed. The commitment and the vow shall be kept in a spirit of dedication.

### Touching the disciple's body

When the child has gone round the teacher in obeisance, then he sits before him. Then the teacher touches the right shoulder, navel, stomach, heart, left shoulder and then again the heart of the child. The meaning is : "My heart may be in unison with yours, may your mind be in unison with mine, listen with full attention to me, the Lord Vrhaspati, teacher of the gods, has joined you with me in this teacher-taught relation." This relation of the teacher and the disciple is most personal.

### Upanayan Ceremony (The ritual with mantras and meaning)

On the day of the ceremony let the child rise early. Let him be shaved, take bath in fresh water, wear good clothes, take a good breakfast, and be seated on the west side of the vedi facing east. Let the father also sit with the child, facing east. Let the Brahma, the presiding priest sit on the south side, facing north. Then the following is to be done :

### Appointment of Priest, acamana (sipping water) and anga-sparsa (touching organs of the body)

Appointment of Priest, p.31

Three acamans with

ओम् अमृतोपस्तरणमसि.....32

Om Amṛtopastāraṇamasi.....p.32

Touching organs of the body.....p.33

Then the Acharya (teacher) should make the child say

ब्रह्मचर्यमगाम् ब्रह्मचार्यसानि

पार 2, 2, 6.

Brahmacaryamaḡām Brahmācāryāsani

पार. 2, 2, 6.

**Meaning :** I have come for Brahmacharya. May I be admitted as a Brahmachara. In response, the Acarya says :

ओम् येनेन्द्राय वृहस्पतिर्वीसः पर्यदधादमृतम्।

तेन त्वा परिदधामि आयुषे दीर्घयुत्वाय बलाय वर्चसे।। पार० 2, 2, 7.

Om yenendrāya Vṛhaspatir-vāśhaḥ paryadadhādamṛtam।

Tena tvā paridadhāmi āyuṣa dirghāyutvāya leatāya varcase।।

पार. 2, 2, 7.

**Meaning :** Just as in the days of yore, Vṛhaspati, the teacher of the gods, invested Indra with immortal knowledge, so, keeping Lord Vṛhaspati and the disciple Indra in mind, I invest you with this yajnopavita, the sacred thread, for the attainment of a long life of strength, honour and glory.

Having recited this, let the teacher offer the child good clothes and upper gorment.

### Wearing the Yojnopavita

Then the teacher should give the child the yajnopavita, the sacred thread with the chanting of the following mantras (He should hold it in his hand and them give it on the left shoulder of the child, across his head and right shoulder and below the right arm. The thread resting on the left shoulder and flowing freely on the right side below the arm) :

ओम् यज्ञोपवीतं परमं पवित्रं प्रजापतेर्यत्सहजं पुरस्तात्।

आयुष्यममयं प्रतिमुञ्च शुभ्रं यज्ञोपवीतं बलमस्तु तेजः।

यज्ञोपवीतमसि यज्ञस्य त्वा यज्ञोपवीतेनो पन्त्यामि।। पार० 2, 2, 11.

पन्त्यामि

Om yajnopavitam paramam pavitram prajāpateryat-sahajam purastat।

Ayūṣyamagram pratimūṇca śubhram yajnopavitam bala mastu tajaḥ।

yajnopavitamasi yajnasya tva yajnopavitēnopanahyamि।।

Par. 2, 2, 11.

**Meaning :** This yajnopavita (The ceremonial thread) is extremely sacred. It has been so from the time of Prajapati, the Lord of creation. It has been worn since then. It blesses man with long life, it takes you ever on and on in life. Wear it on the left shoulder. It is free of all blemish. It gives you strength and lustre. Dear child, you are yajnopavita itself. You are sacred and holy. I take you unto me by this yajnopavita.

The Significance : The sacred thread is a symbol of the close and personal relationship of the teacher and the disciple. Hence it is called 'that which brings together in close personal ties.' It binds them as one growing personality. The thread is sacred, so is the relationship sacred. The thread as the relationship ought to be loved and honoured.

### The Beginning of the Yajña

Let the child be seated on the right of the teacher. The yajña is to be started. The hymns of prayer (Om Visvāni deva..... to Om Agnaye supatha.....etc.). Svastivacana, Santi-prakarana, agnyadhana (starting the sacred fire), Samidhadhana (placement of Samidhas), jala-prasecana (sprinkling of water around the yajnakunda), four agharavajyabhaga ahutis, four Vyahrti ahutis, eight astajyahutis—these sixteen ahutis have to be offered in ghee (p.....)

### The main Yajna by the child

Then starts the main horna of this Sanskara. The child should offer 15 ahutis in Sakalya (something special cooked for the day). These are :

#### 4. Pavamani ahutis

ओम् भूर्भुवः स्वः। अग्न आयुषि पवस आसुवोर्जमिष च नः।

आरे वाधस्य दुच्छुनां स्वाहा।। इदमग्नये पवमानाय इदन्न मम।।

ओम् भूर्भुवः स्वः। अन्त्रिषिः पवमानः पाञ्चजन्यः पुरोहितः।

तमीमह महागयं स्वाहा।। इदमग्नये पवमानाय इदन्न मम।।