

# Sixteen Saṃskāras (Sacraments)

*Recipe of a noble human being*



- Samskāra is a process of purification and transformation.
- It is an activity that alter the nature of an object and give it a new shape.
- It is to improve upon something while removing its undesirable attributes.

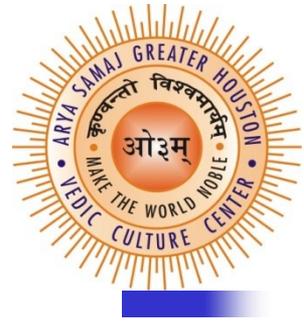


The process of saṃskāra has three components, namely

1. **Doṣāpanayana** (purification),
2. **Hīnānga-pūr̥ti** (making up deficiency),
3. **Guṇādhāna** (Value enrichment).



- The Saṃskāras are intended not only to develop further human qualities but also to eliminate all remnants of animal nature in man.
- It is a system of practices by which the bad tendencies in man are got rid of and good tendencies are inculcated.



Samskāras (Sacraments) are also done to celebrate various stages and journey of a human life such as pregnancy, first outing, first learning, etc..



- These ceremonies are indicative of an individual's growth and development, and also the acknowledgement by the family and the society.
- The acknowledgement of this unique individualization process at every step of growth helps enrich the person's life.



- ❖ Since each saṁskāra makes the individual the focus of the occasion, he/she is psychologically boosted.
- ❖ The saṁskāras bring together family members, close relatives and friends.
- ❖ The consequence of this is a healthy society with a strong cultural identity which easily refines, boosts and perpetuates its traditions, customs, morals and values.



The detailed explanation about saṃskāras is found in various Dharma śāstras.

- ✓ There are diverse number of Saṃskāras, varying by texts between 12 and 18 in deferent texts.
- ✓ Of these 16 are referred to as "Śoḍaṣa Saṃskāra).



# Prenatal ceremonies



- 1. Garbhādhāna** (*The ritual of conception*): this is the first sacrament. It is marking the intent of a couple to have a child.
- 2. Puṁsavana** (*Fetus protection*): it is performed in the third month of pregnancy for welcoming the soul. The mother has to take precautions for the protection, growth and development of the womb.
- 3. Sīmantonayana**: This ceremony is performed in the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy. It is conducted for the protection of the mother at the critical period of gestation.



# After birth Ceremonies



- 4. Jātakarma:** It is a sacrament that celebrates the birth of the baby. It is also for the purification of the house.
- 5. Nāma-karaṇa** (*Naming*): this ceremony is performed to give a name to the child, on the 11th day after birth.
- 6. Niskramaṇa** (*Baby's first outing*) :
- 7. Anna prāśana** (*a baby's first intake of solid food*): it takes place when a child is six months old or when the child shows the first teeth.



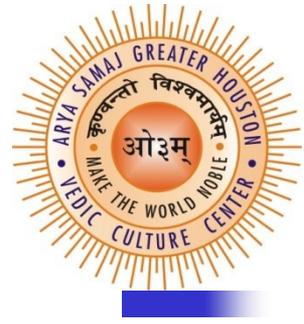
**8. Mundana** (*Baby's first haircut*): It is also called Choula or Chūdākarma. The ceremony is to be performed between the ages of 1-3 years old. After one year, the bones of the skull is getting joined, so the hairs of the time of pregnancy should be removed.

**9. Karṇa vedha** (Piercing the child's ear lobes): The purpose of this ritual is primarily an ornamentation of the body, and is part of the baby's socialization process and culture emersion.



**10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta:** It is the ceremony of wearing the sacred thread called Yajñopavīta. It is done for initiation of child's formal education. Through this initiation rite, a person is said to be reborn ( Dwija)

**11. Vedārambha:** This saṁskāra is done immediately after the Upanayana saṁskāra to observe the disciplines and to commence and undertake the studies of the Vedas and other texts.



**12. Samāvartana; (Graduation ceremony)** it is the ceremony associated with the end of formal education and the Brahmacharya āśrama (student phase) of life. She/he is now eligible to enter into the household- stage.

**13. Vivāha; (Wedding ceremony)** with the completion of the life of studentship, the next stage of life begins which is called Gṛhastha āśrama or the life of a householder. This stage starts with this Wedding ceremony.



**14. Vānaprastha;** with the commencement of this ceremony, a man completes his or her duties of Household life and enters in to Vānaprastha-āśrama (retirement life).

In this āśrama (stage of life), a person gradually withdraws himself from his family matters to discharge his duties towards society and prepares himself for the next stage of life of absolute renunciation (Saṃ-nyāsa).



**15. Saṃ-nyāsa;** (The ritual of renunciation) in this saṃskāra a person forsakes all material things and starts to lead a life of meditation and contemplation onto the Almighty. The Saṃ-nyāsa āśrama is the final stage of life.

**16. Antyeṣṭi;** (Last/funeral rites) are the rituals associated with funeral. It is sometimes referred to as Antima Saṃskāra, Naramedha or Puruṣa yāga. The last rites are usually completed within a day of death.



# Mundana

These hair that had been protecting the skull and consequently the brain till this point, have to be removed for the following reasons.

- Removal of dirty hair: While in the womb, the baby's hairs remain in a foul fluid. It is essential to shave off these dirty hairs. These hairs have utility until the conjugated bones of the skull get properly joined; after that it is useless to keep these hairs.
- Safeguarding from itchiness, ringworm etc :
- Protection against heaviness etc:
- Facilitates growing new hair: