

Saṃskāra
(Rite of passage)
The act of refinement

Part-3

Surya Nanda
Acharya, Arya Samaj Houston

By Acharya Suryanarayan Nanda
for Arya Samaj Greater Houston

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Prenatal ceremonies

1. **Garbhādhāna saṃskāra** (The rite of passage of conception)
2. **Puṃsavana** (Rite of passage of fetus protection)
3. **Sīmantonayana** (Rite of passage for the mental development)

After birth Ceremonies

4. **Jātakarma**: Rite of a new-born infant
5. **Nāma-karaṇa**: Ceremony of naming a child
6. **Niṣkrāmaṇa** :Baby's first outing
7. **Anna prāśana** :a baby's first intake of solid food
8. **Mundana** :Shaving the child's head for the first time
9. **Karṇa vedha** :Piercing the child's ear lobes

Educational Ceremonies

10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta

- It is the ceremony of wearing the sacred thread (**Yajñopavīta**).
- It is done for **initiation of child's formal education**. Wearing the sacred thread used to be considered a mark of commencement of education.
- Upanayana literally means "**the act of leading to or near**".



Educational Ceremonies

10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta

- Upanayana was an **elaborate ceremony**. Amongst all the foregoing samskaras this is regarded as supreme.
- It is the dawn of a new life, hence **dvija** - twice born.



Educational Ceremonies

10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta

आचार्य उपनयमानो ब्रह्मचारिणं कर्णुते गर्भमन्तः ।

Atharva Veda XI.7.3

The teacher leading the boy near him makes the brahmachārī like unto a fetus’.

He leaves the guardianship of his parents to be looked after by the acharya.

The child enters studentship and a life of perfect discipline which involves brahmacharya (celibacy).

Educational Ceremonies

10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta

The Yajñopavīta consists of **three strands** of cotton.

The three strings are tied by a knot known as the **brahma granthi**.



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Educational Ceremonies

10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta

These three strings of the thread remind the wearer that he has to pay off the three debts he owes to the seers, parents and divinity.

- **R̥ṣi R̥ṇa** (Owed to sages)
- **Pitr̥ R̥ṇa** (Owed to parents)
- **Deva R̥ṇa** (Divine debt).



Educational Ceremonies

10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta

They are reminders to the wearer
that he should pursue the
Knowledge, Action and devotion.

The three states-

wakefulness, dream, and deep sleep.

They denote the purification of thoughts (**Mana-śuddhi**),
words (**Vāk-śuddhi**) and actions (**Kāya-śuddhi**).



10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta



These three strings also denote that :

- This world is tri-attributed Viz, **Satva**, **Rajas**, and **Tamas**, and because of them everything is entangled.
- They are also symbol of three eternal entities i.e. God, the Prakṛti (the primordial source of matter) and individual souls.
- They symbolize three states of universe- Creation, preservation and destruction.
- The three unit of time-Past, present and the future.

Educational Ceremonies

10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta

The three strings also symbolize **Brahmacharya**, **Gr̥hastha** and **Vānaprastha āśramas** respectively.

This is why when a person is clear of all these debts and after he has traversed all the three āśramas, he is instructed to surrender the sacred thread to the sacred fire of Yajña.

He is no longer required to wear it and is deemed ready to take up the life of an ascetic.

10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta

In each thread, there exist three tiny fibers, in total there are nine tiny threads [fibers] that indicate the nine gates of human body- two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth and two genitals.



Educational Ceremonies

10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta

It is 98 fingers long, because an average human body is 98 fingers long with five knots that make the thread round.

Ancient Indian texts assert that the number of the arts is unlimited, but each deploy elements of **sixty four** “kalā” (techniques) and **thirty two** “Vidyā” (fields of knowledge).



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Educational Ceremonies

10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta

The upavita is worn over the left shoulder and below the right arm and falls on to the right hip.

The Sacred thread which is worn on the left shoulders to the right of the waist touches the heart indicating that the resolutions that accompany this thread are taken heartily for their action.



Educational Ceremonies

10. Upanayana or Yajñopavīta



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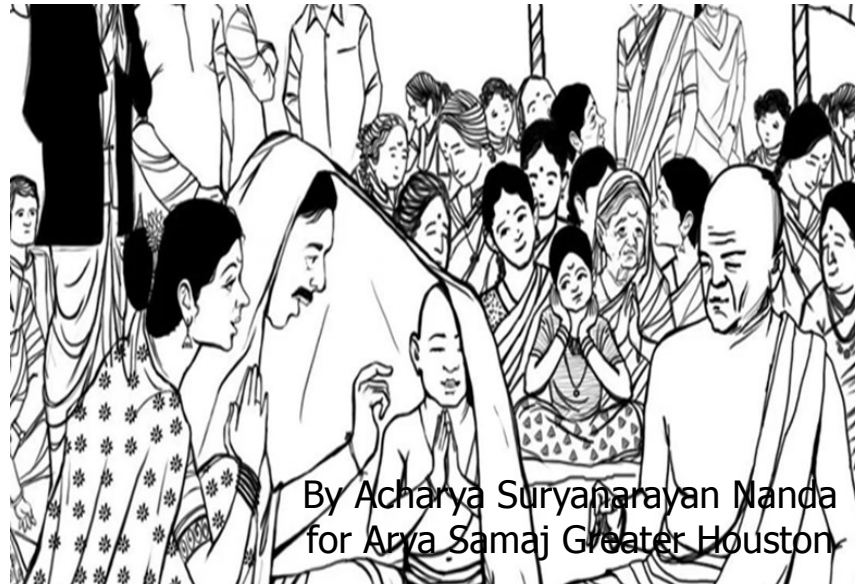
- Upanayana samskara was open to everyone. Both the boy and girl used to receive this saṃskāra .
- There is enough direct evidence to show that there was a time when both **women** and **Shudras** had the right to Upanayana and did have it performed.
- During the course of time this samskara ceased to be given to girls, who thus **failed to be formally educated.**

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11. Vedārambha: (the beginning of formal learning.)

Vedārambha is the rite of passage that marked the start of education in Gurukula (school).

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.



Educational Ceremonies

11. Vedārambha: *(the beginning of formal learning.)*

During the performance of this ceremony, the student is told,
“From this point on, you are a Brahmacharī (a celibate student)
to stay pure, keep helping yourself with lots of water. Never sit
idle, always remain busy with work. Don't be lethargic, don't
sleep during the day. Never disobey the teacher.

If even the teacher says something wrong, disregard it.
Shun anger and falsehood.

Don't let the mind wander towards the eight types of sexual
allurements.

Don't shave. Don't partake of meat, stale food or liquor.

Educational Ceremonies

11. Vedārambha: *(the beginning of formal learning.)*

Sleep on hard floor. Dancing, singing, applying oil – these are restricted for you.

Don't indulge in excess of anything: excessive bathing, excessive food, excessive sleep, excessive waking up.

Quit abusive criticism, greed, attachment, fear, mourning etc.

Wake up early morning, cleanse yourself and brush, take a bath, perform Sandhyā, remember the Lord, pray and practice Yoga.

Continue striving to gain knowledge.

Be well-behaved, civilized and a minimal talker.

12. Samāvartana

(The ceremony
of completion of
education

/

Graduation
Ceremony)

Samāvartana is the ceremony associated with the end of formal education and the Brahmacharya asrama of life.

It marks the end of student phase.

12. Samāvartana

(The ceremony of completion of education / Graduation Ceremony)

This rite of passage includes a ceremonial bath known as Avabhruth Snāna.

It symbolises the crossing of the ocean of learning by the student - hence snātaka (*literally, bathed in knowledge, or showered with learning*), and symbolized as one who had crossed the ocean of learning.

(The ceremony of completion of education / Graduation Ceremony)

Speak the Truth. Practice Virtue. Do not neglect your daily Study. Offer to the Teacher whatever pleases him, Do not cut off the line of progeny.

Do not neglect Truth. Do not neglect Virtue. Do not neglect Welfare. Do not neglect Prosperity. Do not neglect Study and Teaching . Do not neglect your duty to the God and the parents.

(The ceremony of completion of education / Graduation Ceremony)

Regard the Mother as your Devata. Regard the Father as your Devata. Regard the Teacher as your Devata. Regard the Guest as your Devata.

(The ceremony of completion of education / Graduation Ceremony)

Whatever deeds are good, they are to be practiced, not others.

Whatever good conduct you find among us (teachers), that alone should be practiced, not others. 2

Those wise people, who are superior to us, they should be honored by you by offering a seat.

(The ceremony of completion of education / Graduation Ceremony)

Give with sincerity, give even without sincerity, Give in Plenty, Give with Modesty, Give with Awe, Give with Sympathy.

(The ceremony of completion of education / Graduation Ceremony)

Then if there is any doubt regarding any duties, or doubt concerning professions,

You should conduct yourself in such and such manner as those wise people who are competent to judge, who can discern the right from the wrong, who are not cruel, who are interested in performing actions for the sake of dharma would behave in such situations.

Now with regard to those who have been accused, you should conduct yourself in such and such manner as those wise people who are competent to judge, who can discern the right from the wrong, who are not cruel, who are interested in performing actions for the sake of dharma would behave in such situations.

(The ceremony of completion of education / Graduation Ceremony)

This is the Command. This is the Teaching. This is the secret wisdom of the Veda. This is the Instruction. This one should be followed. This alone should be followed.

Taittirīyopaniṣad // śīkṣā vallī // 1.11.