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Practice & Preserve for Posterity

UpAkarmA

WHAT?

The word upAkarmA उपाकर्मा can be better understood from the term adhyAyOpAkarmA अध्यायोपाकर्मा which means “preparation for the commencement of vEdic lessons.” The shAshtras have prescribed a time for the studying of vedas (अध्ययनं) during a year.

“yAgyavalkya smriti ,AchAra adhyAy, chapter 1, verse 142, says:

अध्यायानामुपाकर्म श्रावण्यां श्रवणेन वा। हस्तेनौषधिभावे वा पञ्चम्यां श्रावणस्य तु॥

One should begin the study of the vEdas on the asterism of “shravana”in the shrAvaNa month. (ShrAvan/Avani/july-aug) or when medicinal herbs begin to grow (i.e.) the full moon day (pourNami) of the month, or on the fifth day (panchami) or under the “hasta” asterism.

And verse 143 says:

सौरमासस्य रौहिण्यामष्टकायामथापि वा। जलान्तेच्छन्दसां कुर्य्यात्तदुत्सर्ग विधिवद्बहि :॥

One should suspend the vEdic studies (utsarga/utsarjana) in the saura month of “pausha/tai/jan-feb” on the asterism of “rOhiNi” or on an ashTakA tithi (8th day), sitting near the water at the outskirts of a village.

Sage tittiree says : (nirNaya sindhu)

तैष्याम् पौर्णमास्यां रौहिण्यां वा विरमेत्. taishyAm pourNamAsyAm rOhiniNyAm vA viramEt.

He prescribes the pourNami day of pausha/tai month for utsarjana/utsarga i.e.

suspension of the studies.

So vedic studies under a guru used to prolong for around 6 months during the year and then a gap of 6 months to read and understand the other branches/aspects of the vEdAs. Some Rushis have prescribed the study for 4 1/2 months. The day of commencement of the vEdic studies is called upAkarmA. 1. On this day, the old “yagyOpaveetam” is removed and the new one is worn according to prescribed procedures. The yagyOpaveetam has many other names. “poonal” alias “sacred thread” alias “janvE” alias “janEyu”. 2. Offerings are made to Rushis, DevatAs, and pitrus. 3. Then the new vEdic lessons are started.

* Synonyms for vEdArambham/commencement of studies:

upAkarmA, adhyayOpAkarmA, adhyAyOpAkaraNam, upakaraNam. उपाकर्मा, अध्ययोपाकर्मा, अध्यायोपाकरणम्, उपकरणम्.

* Synonyms for suspension or completion of a term:

utsarjanam, samApanam, उत्सर्जनम्, उत्सर्गः, समापनम्,

WHY?

It is astrologically a wholesome day in the shrAvana month. Vedic lessons are resumed on this day after a gap of 6 months. So it is actually a new session/semester for the vEdic schools

WHO?

All dwijas (twice born), both brahmachAris (bachelors) and gruhastas (married men), who have had the “upanayana samskAra” must do this “upAkarmA” once every year.

1. You may invite your pandit/vAdyAr to your house to conduct the upAkarmA hOma/havan and do it under his guidance and duly honour him.

2. If that does’nt work out, you may go to the pandit/priest/vAdyAr’s house or a place comfortable to him where he conducts this function for a group of many

eligible people together.

3. If that is also not possible, you may do it on your own according to the prescribed procedure given in “My upAkarmA” tab .

HOW?

As said earlier, it is best to do this karmA under the guidance of a priest. If not possible then please click on “My upAkarMA” tab to get your personalized upAkarmA home procedure. Kindly update your profile with your respective caste/sub-caste completely.

The outline of the procedure is as follows:-

1. Morning sandhyAvandanam, samidAdhAnam (for bachelors) 2. utsarjana karmA for not having suspended the vEdic studies in the month of pausha or for not having followed the rules of the vedic studies. 3. mAdhyAhnikam 4. yagyOpaveeta dhAraNam/ (for bachelors – maunji, ajina, daNDa dhAraNam) 5. kANda Rushi tarpaNam, deva tarpaNam, pitru tarpaNam (for those who have lost their parents) 6. vEdArambam

THINGS REQUIRED.

1. pavitram made of 2 darbhas, pavitram made of 3 darbhas, yagyOpaveetam, darbhas (You may procure these from your priest/pandit). 2. for bachelors – मौञ्जी maunjee, अजिन ajina and दण्ड danDa

(maunji is a cord made of munjA grass or darba grass which is tied around the waist. ajina is a piece of deerskin used to be worn over the yagyOpaveetam in the days of yore. But these days a very small piece of ajinam is tied to the yagyOpaveetam. daNDa is the branch of a palAsha tree which is held in the right hand. If palAsha is not available, the next option is the ashvattA tree)

3. some uncooked rice – for tarpaNam 4. sesame seeds/til – for tarpaNam 5. arka leaves (for sAma vedis) 6. water. 7. copper plate/basin for offering water. (optional)

danDam

ajinam
yagyOpaveetam

Synonyms for पलाश palAsha :

1. purasam 2. Butea Monosperma or Butea Frondosa – Flame of the forest 3. किंशुक kinshuka 4. dhAk

Synonyms for अश्वत्थ ashvattha :

1. arasam 2. Ficus Religosa 3. Peepal/pipal

Synonyms for Arka आर्क :

1. Calotrpis gigantea 2. Crown flower 3. erukkam (tamil) 4. ruyee (marATee) 5. madAr (hindi)

WHEN?

WHICH DAY?

Many Rushis like hEmadri, yAgyavalkya, gObhila, tittri, gArgya, etc. have prescribed different dates depending on the vEda shAkhAs.

1. The yajur vEda upAkarmA is performed on the shrAvaNa month pourNamee tithi. (19.08.2024)

2. The sAma vEda upAkarmA is performed on the bhAdrapada month shukla paksha hasta nakshatra. (05.09.2024)

3. The rig vEda upAkarmA is on the shrAvan month shravana nakshatra. (19.08.2024)

4. The atharva vEda upAkarmA is when the shrAvaN month pourNami tithi is present during sunrise.(19.08.2024)

WHICH TIME?

There are 2 parts to this upAkarmA procedure.

1. snAnam, sandhyAvandanam, samidAdhAnam and prAyaschitta japam/tarpaNam to be done in “prAta: kAla” before 8.00/8.30 a.m.

2. Then those who wish to shave may do so and take a bath and do mAdhyAhnikam around 11.30, then bhagavat arAdhanA, brahma yagyam and then start the upAkarmA procedure.

EXCEPTIONS?

1. upAkarmA should not be done in the year in which the father or the mother has died. However, “gAyatree japam” should be observed.

2. If for any reason the upAkarmA has been ommitted, then one can do it in any of the following pourNamees after the shrAvan month but before the start of the puShya month (January-February), not after.

3. If upAkarma day falls on the annual shrAddha day, or any other tarpaNam day, then the upAkarmA should be done first and then the tarpaNam/shrAddh should be done. The reason being the upAkarmA is a Rushi kAryam, so they should be honoured first and then the pitrUs.

Some schools of thought differ in this regard that the shrAddh/tarpaNam should be done first and then the upAkarmA. You may consult your pandit/guru for this purpose.

4. The first “upAkarmA” after the “upanayanam samskAra” is called “prathamOpAkarmA” प्रथमोपाकर्मा. It should be checked whether upAkarmA day is without any dOshA like having grahaNam or sankramaNam. If so, then the prathamOpAkarmA should be performed either on AshAdh pourNamee day or on BhadrapAd pourNamee day.

Some schools of thought consider this dOshA even for annual upAkarmA. You may consult your priest/ pandit/guru for this purpose.

DHARMA SPEAKS

The “upAkarmA” day is in fact a day of celebration for the dvijas (the twice born), where the dEvAs, the rishIs and the pitrUs are remembered with reverence, oblations are made to them with sacred mantras in acknowledgement of the endless knowledge they revealed to us. Relatives and friends are invited for a feast that ensues. In lighter vein it is indeed a “gents’ day” in the life of a dvija.

It is easy to say that today we rarely find children learning the vEdas. But it would be responsible of us if we can take one small step forward and approach a pandit/vAdyAr and start vEdic lessons for our children if not full time, but atleast in their free time. This small step will slowly show the way to preserve the sacred vEdic knowledge.


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