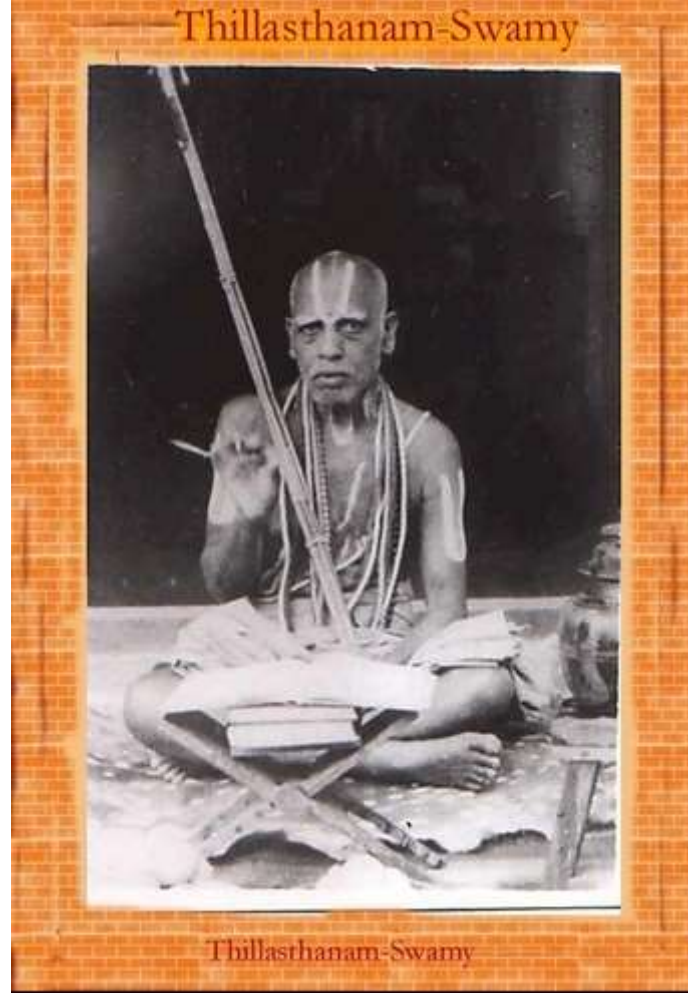


# Upanayanam

( An extract from the Web Site )



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## Upanayanam

Frank J. Tipler, a Professor of Mathematical Physics, in his book 'The Physics of Immortality' discusses the various theories of Cosmology (Omega Point Theory) and Points out that that the Present Observations are based on visible Universe which is only a small fraction of the total total universe. By defining the universe as the totality of all that exists (including invisible portion of the universe), he points out the existence of a person or force that is omnipotent (unlimited power), power), omniscient (knowing everything) omnipresent (present everywhere). Extending his theory he he brings out that concept of God in Theology, concept of rebirth, cyclic character of time, are meaningful. Many other cosmic research scientists have also echoed similar views. Present day cosmic research has narrowed down the gap between Science and Theology.

Vedic concept is that Para Brahman, Creates (Shristi), Sustains (Stithi) and Destroys (Laya) universe and this process goes on cyclically. Para Brahman is an infinite source of infinite forms of energy. His influence (energy) spreads all over Universe. Our sages through meditation have found out the great influence the Cosmic Energy has on humans – Particularly health and personality. They have also found out that human body is equipped for intake of Cosmic Energy (just as a radio receiver can receive radio signals present in air) but this calls for some discipline. This discipline is referred to as "samskaras" and there are 16 Samskaras in all covering the full range of human life – from mothers womb to death. Sages Parasara, Manu, Yagnavalkya and Gautama in their Smrithis have brought out the relevance of Samskaras. All of them had one main aim – namely to create a society of noble persons. A boulder lying in the street is treaded by all. If out of this rock, an artisan carves an image of God, it becomes worthy of worship. In the same way Samskaras help to give nobility to individuals and mould them to respect worthiness. "Aksharabhyasa" and "Upanayana" are two Samskaras devoted to education. Upanayanam has a unique place amongst Samskaras. It is to be performed between age 7 and 10 as per various sages. (Some margin is given to Kshatriyas and Vysyas).

Upanayana means 'taken near' meaning that the boy is taken near a teacher for education. After upanayanam the boy becomes a Brahmachari and is eligible to learn Vedas and chant them. In other words, his education in Gurukula starts after Upanayanam. The significance of of Upanayanam is far beyond this meaning (applicable even today). It is a Samskara to provide the the boy with faculties to meet the change from childhood to boyhood. (many religions recognize and and observe the event of change from childhood to boyhood). The rituals such as mother feeding food for the boy, the boytaking food with other boys, etc. signifies bidding farewell to childhood habits (in those days all the children in the house sit around the mother and she gives each one of of them a morsel of food by rotation. After Upanayanam, the food is served exclusively to the boy and and he should purify it before eating.

Some of the important and significant rituals in Upanayanam are :

Mekala or Maunji – Acharya ties a thread made out of grass (Dharba) around the waist of the boy, chanting hymns. The significance is that this thread protects the boy against evil forces. It also helps helps him to understand and absorb essence of Mantras. Even scientific studies have shown that grass like Dharba are good energy collectors.

Next is Yagnopavita Dharanam. Here the boy wears the Sacred thread chanting hymns. Yagnopavita is a thread going round the body from left shoulder to navel and back to left left shoulder via our back. Thus, it symbolizes a thread going round our 'Antaryami' or Vishnu seated our 'Antaryami' or Vishnu seated in our heart. Yagnopavita is a thread with three strands, each strand containing three threads. Thus, there are nine threads, joined together. Nine deities – namely Prithvi, Aap Tejas, Vayu, Akash (ether), Prana, Atman, Antaratman, Paramatman - are installed corresponding to the nine threads. At the joint 'Grantithraya devatas' namely Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra are installed. There is a prescribed procedure for the installation of deities and this this is done only once. Subsequently the Yagnopavita is charged by Gayathri Japam during Sandhyavandanam. The installation of deities is done by Purohit or Vadyar before giving it to the boy.

The Brahmachari is later given a Danda or a Stick (of Palasa tree) this is also for protection against evil forces. Trees such as Aswatha, Palasa and a few others are known to be good collectors of Pranic Energy or Cosmic Energy.

Mantropadesa is the most important constituent of Upanayanam. First, the Acharya purifies the Brahmachari through water, seeing Sun, etc. This will be followed by a question – answer session between Brahmachari and Acharya. Later Acharya accepts Brahmachari as a disciple and teaches him Gayathri Mantra. (For Gayathri Mantra, boy's father himself will be Acharya. Prior to imparting Mantra to his son, the father should have chanted Gayathri Japam atleast 24,000 times. This is from Bio-energy considerations).

After Mantropadesha the Brahmachari performs Homam with Samit and prays to Agni to give him lustre, intellect, knowledge, etc. The studies by Institute of Vedic Sciences on 'Agnihotra', have shown release of beneficial energies and reduction of atmospheric pollution during homam with samit.

The Biksha ritual symbolizes that a Brahmachari should live on Biksha till he gets married.

The post-upanayanam period is very important. Apart from learning, his daily routines should include (a) Sandhyavandanam (b) Purification of food before eating.

### **Sandhyavandanam**

Sandhyavandanam or Sandhyavandana means prayers performed at Sandhya periods to avail energies released at Sandhya time and consists of three parts - i) purification ii) worship through Arghyam iii) Meditation through Gayathri Mantram or Gayathri Japam. Arghyam and Gayathri Japam are detailed in all books. Gayathri Mantra is a very powerful mantra and benefits are immense. This mantra protects those who recite it. It should be chanted in Gayathri Chandas "Tatsaviturvarenyam – Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi – Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayat" is the Gayathri Mantra "OM" (Pranava) and "Bhur Bhuvah Suvah" are prefixed for chanting. Gayathri is considered as mother of all mantras and is said to be equivalent to Vedas. It has power to improve Tejas, Physical and Mental strength and ward off all sins. When chanted correctly with devotion at Sandhya times, the benefits are immense. This is chanted 10 or 28 or 108 times during Sandhyavandanam depending on time availability. In the purification aspect, Achamanam and Pranayamam are very important. Achamanam balances Bioenergy in our body and helps in efficient functioning of organs. This should be done to the specification though it may take some time. Pranayamam is a very powerful one. It has influence on endocrine glands and also helps in energy supply to all organs. According to Sage Hamsa Yogi, Pranayamam not only cures all ailments but also eradicates them. An important aspect of Pranayamam is that it helps to build immune system against infection and environment (pollution). This should be done to specification though it may be difficult in the beginning.

Thus, Sandhyavandanam has not only great influence on the health of the individuals but also on his personality, intellectual ability, etc. This should be performed at 6.00 a.m. + 2 hours and 6.00 p.m. + 2 hrs preferably as close to 6 am or 6 pm (or atleast first thing in the morning). It is a time oriented ritual. Hence the procedure starts with Mantra Snanam to cover all exigencies. Even if one is not performing Sandhyavandanam the past, it is no disqualification and he can start.

The above points have been discussed in detail in the books 'Sandhyavandanam', 'Srivaishnavism' and 'Vedic Pranayamam' by our Sabha.

These days performance of Upanayanam involves a substantial expenditure. Having spent the money, one should avail the benefits. Hence, the post-Upanayanam period is very important. It is said that performance of Sandhyavandanam not only helps individual (performer) but also other members of his family, neighbourhood, village, etc.

## Upanayanam - Book Preview

Sri Thillasthanam Swamy Kainkarya Sabha's book on 'Upanayanam - Significance and importance' is modelled as a handbook with lots of useful information .

Well wishers of the sabha after the success of the books on Srivaishnavism , Sandhyavandanam and Vedic Pranayanam requested the sabha to bring out a small 4 page pamphlet for distribution during Upanayanam function which was very well received . The present book was conceived as an elaboration of the 4 page pamphlet in detail alongwith several other useful information brought together to serve the needs as a handbook for Upanayanam .

Accordingly , the book titled 'Upanayanam ' was conceived and modelled as a handbook covering all aspects of the ritual including importance and significance.

Great Sages like Manu , Parasara , Yagnavalka , Gautama and others , with a view to establish a society of nobility , have prescribed a few Samskaras or rituals. These Samskaras are integral part of Hindu Dharma and are meant to improve the quality of humans. Aksharabhyasa & Upanayanam are two such Samskaras devoted to education . Upanayanam means 'taken near' meaning that the boy is taken near a teacher for education. It is a Samskara to provide the boy with faculties to meet the change from childhood to boyhood.

The discussion in this book covers all aspects of the ritual including importance and significance . The book is of approx 80 pages covering comprehensively the Upanayanam ritual and serves as a guide to those performing the ritual .After explaining the 'Suthras" on the subject the book discusses in detail (i) Preliminaries Activities (ii) Main Upanayanam ritual (iii) Post Upanayanam activities .For better appreciation of the subject , appendices are included covering use of Panchangam , significance of Darbha grass , list of items required for Upanayanam and a few exercises recommended .

- Chapter-1 is a General Introduction
- Chapter-2 discusses about various Suthras
- Chapter-3 discusses about Preliminary activities like selection of date and time (muhurtham) , invitation , Pandal in front of the house etc
- Chapter-4 discusses about the dais or mantap , Udakashanti ,Palighe ,Raksha Kankana , Nandhi and then about the main Upanayanam ritual.
- Chapter-5 covers the Post Upanayanam activities with stress on Sandhyavandanam , Gayathri Japam etc
- Chapter-6 is the Conclusion . For better appreciation some Appendices have been introduced .
- Appendix-1 covers a guide to use Panchangam
- Appendix-2 covers Kolam or Rangoli .
- Appendix-3 covers Dharbha ( Kusa or holy grass )
- Appendix-4 covers the list of items required for Upanayanam
- Appendix-5 covers some physical exercises that are recommended like Stretching of Spinal Cord ,Deep breathing or Diaphragmatic breathing ,Cleaning of respiratory track Massage of feet during feet cleansing

This books on Sandhyavandanam , Vedic Pranayamam and Srivaishnavism have proved a good success and many have even taken the book to present it to others on the occasion of " Upananyam" - Sacred thread ceremony. As a supplement for these books it is expected that the above book on Upanayanam will also prove to be a big success . The book is nominally priced at Rs 50/- in India and US\$ 5 abroad. Copies available at Sri.Thillasthanam Swamy Kainkarya Sabha , e-Mail : [tsksabha@yahoo.com](mailto:tsksabha@yahoo.com) / [tsksabha@thillasthanam-swamy-sabha.in](mailto:tsksabha@thillasthanam-swamy-sabha.in)