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Samskaras in Hinduism are rites of passage that begin with one's birth, celebrates certain early steps in a baby's growth and his or her welcome into the world in the presence of friends and family, then various stages of life (*Ashrama* (stage)) such as first learning day, graduation from school, wedding and honeymoon, pregnancy, raising a family, as well as those related to final rites associated with cremation.^[17] These rites of passage are not uniform, and vary within the diverse traditions of Hinduism. Some may involve formal ceremonies, *yajna* (fire) ceremonies with the chanting of Vedic hymns. Others are simple, private affairs involving a couple, with or without friends, other family families or a religious person such as priest or *pandit*.^[17]

Samskaras are not considered as end in themselves, but are means of social recognition as well as the passage of a person from one significant stage of life to another.^[18] Various elements of *Samskaras* and rituals of life's passage are mentioned in Vedas of Hinduism, one of the oldest known scriptures in the world. The most extensive, but divergent discussions of these rites of passage are found in the numerous *Dharmasutras* and *Grhyasutras* from the 1st millennium BCE.^{[18][19]} Many of these rites of passage include formal ceremonies, with ritual readings of hymns, chants and ethical promises, aiming to orient the individual(s) to that which is considered part of *dharma* (right, good, just, moral, true, spiritual, responsible, duties to family members or society in general), and essential actions such as those associated with last rites and cremation, charitable works, or out of *sraddha* or items of faith.^{[18][20]}

The purpose

Gautama Dharmasutra enumerates a large list of "forty outer *karma* samskaras" and "eight inner karma samskara (good qualities)", all of whom have the purpose of empowering a human being to discover, recognize and reach union with the *Brahma-Atman* (his or her Soul, Self, Highest Being).^[21] The ultimate purpose is to inculcate virtues, and samskaras are viewed in the Hindu tradition as means – not as ends – towards ripening and perfecting the human journey of life.^[21] The eight good qualities listed by Gautama Dharmasutra are emphasized as more important than the forty samskara rituals, in verses 8.21-8.25, as follows,

[...] (8.14-8.20)

These are the forty *sanskara* (sacramentary rites). (8.21)

Next, the eight virtues of the self: (8.22)

Compassion towards all creatures, patience, lack of envy, purity, tranquillity, having a positive disposition, generosity, and lack of possessiveness. (8.23)

A man who has performed the forty *samskaras* but lacks these eight virtues does not obtain union with *Brahman*. (8.24)

A man who may have performed only some of the forty *samskaras* but possesses these eight virtues, on the other hand, is sure to obtain union with *Brahman*. (8.25)

— *Gautama Dharma-sutras, Verses 8.14-8.25, Translated by Patrick Olivelle*^[8]

The *Gautama Dharmasutra* list the following forty rituals as outer samskaras.^{[8][22]}

- Garbhadhana (pregnancy), Pumsavana (rite celebrating the fetus, many translate it as quickening a male fetus), Simantonnayana (parting of pregnant woman's hair in 8th month), Jatakarman (rite celebrating the birth), Namakarana (naming the child), Annaprashana (baby's first feeding of solid food), Choulam (baby's first haircut, tonsure), and Upanayana (entry into school rite);^[23]
- the four vows associated with Vedic study;
- graduation ritual at the conclusion of school;
- marriage sva-dharma rite;
- five sacrifices to gods, ancestors, humans, spirits, and all knowledge;

- seven remembrances and donations (sacrifices) using cooked food, in the form of ancestral offerings
- seven remembrances and donations (sacrifices) in the presence of fire (yajna), to mark harvests, seasons and deities
- seven kinds of Soma sacrifices: agnistoma, atyagnistoma, ukthya, sodasin, vajapeya, atiratra and aptoryama.

To obtain union with Brahman, one must also possess the eight virtues (compassion, patience, non-envy, purity of thought speech and body, inner calm and peace, positive attitude, generosity, and lack of possessiveness).

The 16 Sanskaras

There are diverse number of Sanskaras in Hinduism, varying by texts between 12 and 18 in the Grhyasutras (Kalpa sastras). Of these, 16 are referred to as "Shodasha Samskaras" (*Ṣoḍaśa Saṃskāra*).^[9]

The wedding rituals, Vivaha[\[edit\]](#)

Vivaha (IAST: Vivāha, Sanskrit: विवाह) is the rite of passage and rituals associated with marriage.^{[24][25]} While there are many rituals in Hinduism, *vivaha* (wedding) is the most extensive personal ritual an adult Hindu undertakes in his or her life.^{[26][27]}

The wedding rites and ceremonies begin with the engagement of a couple, and extend to rites of passage after the completion of wedding. They are typically very colorful, and celebrations may extend for several days.^[28] The detailed rituals and process in a Hindu wedding vary. Nevertheless, there are a few key rituals common in Hindu weddings - *Kanyadaan*, *Panigrahana*, and *Saptapadi*, which are respectively, giving away of daughter by the father, voluntarily holding hand near the fire to signify union, and taking seven steps with each step includes a vow/promise to each other before fire. The Vivaha sanskara is essentially a Vedic yajna ritual, with recitation of Vedic hymns. The primary witness of a Hindu marriage is the Vedic fire-deity (or the Sacred Fire) Agni, in the presence of family and friends.^[29]

Post-wedding rites of passage include *Grihapravesa* – the welcoming of the bride to her new home by groom's mother, father, brother(s), or sister(s), and other relatives. *Chaturthikarma* – literally, "the rite performed on the fourth day after wedding", is the rite where the first domestic fire is lit marking the food-related householder life of the new couple.^[30]

Honeymoon, or the act of first sexual intercourse after the wedding is known as Nishekam (Sanskrit: निषेक).^{[31][32]}

Intent to have a child ritual, Garbhadhana

Garbhadhana (IAST: Garbhādhāna, Sanskrit: गर्भाधान), also called *Garbhalambhanam*, literally means attaining the wealth of the womb.^[33] It is a private rite of passage, marking the intent of a couple to have a child. It is a ceremony performed before conception and impregnation.^[34] In some ancient texts, the word simply refers to the rite of passage where the couple have sex to have a child, and no ceremonies are mentioned.^[7] Scholars trace this rite to Vedic hymns, such as those in sections 8.35.10 through 8.35.12 of the Rigveda, where repeated prayers for progeny and prosperity are solemnized,^[33]

The Vedic texts have many passages, where the hymn solemnizes the desire for having a child, without specifying the gender of the child. For example, the Rigveda in section 10.184 states,^[33]

May Vishnu construct the womb, may Twashtri fabricate the member, may Prajapati sprinkle the seed, may Dhatri cherish thy embryo;

Sustain the embryo Sinivali, sustain the embryo Saraswati, may the divine Aswins, garlanded with

lotuses, sustain thy embryo;

We invoke thy embryo which the Aswins have churned with the golden pieces of Arani (firewood), that thou mayest bring it forth in the tenth month.

The desire for progeny, without mentioning gender, is in many other books of the Rigveda, such as the hymn 10.85.37. The Atharva Veda, similarly in verse 14.2.2, states a ritual invitation to the wife, by her husband to mount the bed for conception, "being happy in mind, here mount the bed; give birth to children for me, your husband".^[33] Later texts, such as the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, in the last chapter detailing the education of a student, include lessons for his Grihastha stage of life.^[37] There, the student is taught, that as a husband, he should cook rice for the wife, and they together eat the food in certain way depending on whether they wish for the birth of a daughter or a son, as follows,^[37]

And if a man wishes that a learned daughter should be born to him, and that she should live to her full age, then after having prepared boiled rice with sesamum and butter, they should both eat, being fit to have offspring.

And if a man wishes that a learned son should be born to him, and that he should live his full age, then after having prepared boiled rice with meat and butter, they should both eat, being fit to have offspring.

The different Grhyasutras differ in their point of view, whether the garbhadhana is to be performed only once, before the first conception, or every time before the couple plan to have additional children.^[39] To answer this question, the medieval era texts of various schools discussed and offered diverse views on whether the ritual is a rite of passage for the baby's anticipation in the womb (*garbha*), or for the wife (*kshetra*).^[39] A rite of passage of the baby would imply that *Garbhadhana* sanskara is necessary for each baby and therefore every time the couple intend to have a new baby, while a rite of passage of the wife would imply a one time ritual suffices.^[39]

Quickening the fetus rite, Pumsavana

Pumsavana (IAST: pumsavana, Sanskrit: पुंसवन) is a composite word of *Pums* + *savana*. *Pums* means "to grind, a man, a human being, a soul or spirit", while *savana* means "ceremony, rite, oblation, festival".^[40] Pumsavana literally means "quickening a being or male", usually translated as "quickening a male fetus, bringing forth a male baby".^[41] It is a ritual conducted when the pregnancy begins to show, typically in or after the third month of pregnancy and usually before the fetus starts moving in the womb. The ceremony celebrates the rite of passage of the developing fetus, marking the stage where the baby begins to kick as a milestone in a baby's development.

The roots of the *pumsavana* ritual are found in section 4.3.23 and 4.6.2 of the Atharva Veda, wherein charms are recited for a baby boy.^[42] The Atharva Veda also contains charms to be recited for the birth of a child of either gender and the prevention of miscarriages, such as in section 4.6.17.^[42]

The ritual is performed in diverse ways, but all involve the husband serving something to the expectant wife. In one version, she is fed a paste mixture of yoghurt, milk and *ghee* (clarified butter) by him.^[43] In another version, the *pumsavana* ritual is more elaborate, done in the presence of yajna fire and vedic chants, where the husband places a drop of Banyan leaf extract in the wife's right nostril for a son, and her left nostril for a daughter, followed by a feast for all present.^{[44][45]}

The time prescribed for the *pumsavana* differs in different Grhyasutras, and can be extended up to the eighth month of pregnancy, according to some.^[citation needed]

Parting hair and baby shower, Simantonnayana[edit]

Simantonnayana (IAST: Sīmantonnayana, Sanskrit: सीमन्तोन्नयन), also called *Simanta* or *Simantakarana*, literally means "parting the hair upwards".^{[46][47]} The significance of the ritual is to wish a healthy development of the baby and safe delivery to the mother.^[48]

Simantonnayana ritual is described in many Gryhasutra texts, but Kane states that there is great divergence in details, which may be because the rite of passage emerged in more a recent era, before it receded into the background.^[46] The texts do not agree on whether this rite of passage was to be celebrated before or after *pumsavana*, early or late stage of pregnancy, or the nature of ritual celebrations.^[46] The texts also disagree whether *Simantonnayana* was a rite of passage of the baby or of the pregnant woman, the former implying it must be repeated for every baby while the latter implying it was to be observed once for the woman with her first pregnancy.^{[46][47]}

The common element was the husband and wife getting together, with friends and family, then he parts her hair upwards at least three times. In modern times, the "parting hair" rite of passage is rarely observed, and when observed it is called *Atha-gulem* and done in the 8th month, with flowers and fruits, to cheer the woman in the late stages of her pregnancy.^[49] The ritual has more commonly evolved into a ritual that shares characteristics of a baby shower, where the friends and relatives of the woman meet, acknowledge and satisfy the food cravings of the expectant woman, and give gifts to the mother and the baby in 7th or 8th month of pregnancy.^{[48][50]} Yājñavalkya Smṛiti verse 3.79 asserts that the desires of the pregnant woman should be satisfied for healthy development of the baby, to prevent miscarriage and her health.^[48] After the *Simantonnayana* ritual or in the last months of the pregnancy, the woman is expected to not overexert herself, her husband is expected to be by her and not to travel to distant lands.^[48] This rite of passage is regionally called by various names, such as *Seemant*, *Godh bharaī*, *Seemantham* or *Valaikaapu*.^[51]

Childbirth ceremony, Jatakarman

Jātakarman literally means "rite of a new-born infant".^{[52][53]} It is a rite of passage that celebrates the birth of the baby.^[54] It is the first post-natal rite of passage of the new born baby. It signifies the baby's birth, as well as the bonding of the father with the baby.^[55] In Hindu traditions, a human being is born at least twice – one at physical birth through mother's womb, and second at intellectual birth through teacher's care, the first is marked through *Jatakarman* sanskara ritual, the second is marked through *Vidyarambha* or *Upanayana* sanskara ritual.^[20] During a traditional *Jātakarman* ritual, the father welcomes the baby by touching the baby's lips with honey and ghee (clarified butter), as Vedic hymns are recited. The first significance of the hymns is *medhajanana* (Sanskrit: मेधाजनन), or to initiate the baby's mind and intellect in the womb of the world, after the baby's body formation has completed in the womb of the mother. The second part of the hymns wish the baby a long life.^[55]

When a child is born, he prepares the fire, places the child on his lap, and having poured *Prishadajya* of *Dahi* (yoghurt) and *Ghrita* (clarified butter), into a metal jug, he sacrifices the mix into the fire, saying:

"May I, as I prosper in this my house, nourish a thousand ! May fortune never fail in its race, with offspring and cattle, Svah !

I offer to thee [the baby] in my mind the vital breaths which are in me, Svah !

Whatever in my work I have done too much, or whatever I have done too little, may the wise Agni make it right, make it proper, Svah !"

The Upanishad includes prayer to deity Saraswati during this rite of passage, the goddess of knowledge and wisdom in Hindu tradition. It also includes the threefold repetition of "Speech Speech" with the assertion to the baby, "You are the Vedas! so, live a hundred autumns", into the baby's ear by the father.^{[55][56]} At the end of the ritual pronouncements by the father, he gives the baby to the mother's breast for feeding.^{[37][56]}

While the earliest Dharmasutras list Jatakarma and Namakarama as two different sanskara, they evolve into one in many Gryhasutra texts. By Pantanjali's time, these two rites of passage had merged into one, and completed within the first two weeks of the baby's birth, usually about the tenth day.^[57]

Naming the baby ritual, Namakarana[

Namakarana (IAST: Nāmakarāṇa, Sanskrit: नामकरण) literally means "ceremony of naming a child".^[58] This rite of passage is usually done on the eleventh or twelfth day after birth, and sometimes the first new moon or full moon day after the 10th day of birth.^[59] On the day of this samskara, the infant is bathed and dressed in new garments.^[60] His or her formal name, selected by the parents, is announced. The naming ritual solemnizes the child as an individual, marking the process by which a child is accepted and socialized by people around him or her. The Satapatha Brahmana verse 6.1.3.9 asserts that the naming ceremony is a cleansing ceremony for the baby. The rite of passage also includes a gathering of friends and relatives of the new parents, where gifts are presented, and a feast follows.^[60]

The ancient Sanskrit texts provide numerous and divergent guidelines to the parents for choosing names.^[59] Most recommend that the boy's name be two or four syllables, starting with a sonant, a semivowel in the middle, and ending in a visarga. A girl's name is recommended to be an odd number of syllables, ending in a long *ā* or *ī*, resonant and easy to pronounce.^[59] Unpleasant, inauspicious, or words that easily transform into bad or evil words must be avoided, state the Gryhasutras, while the preferred names are those affiliated with a deity, virtues, good qualities, lucky stars, constellation, derivatives of the name of the father, or mother, or the place of birth, or beautiful elements of nature (trees, flowers, birds).

Baby's first outing, Nishkramana

Nishkramana (IAST: Niṣkrāmaṇa, Sanskrit: निष्क्रम) literally means "going out, coming forth",^[61] is the rite of passage where the parents take the baby outside the home and the baby formally meets the world for the first time.^{[60][62]} It is usually observed during the fourth month after birth. On this ritual occasion the newborn is taken out and shown the sun at sunrise or sunset, or the moon, or both. Alternatively, some families take the baby to a temple for the first time.^[60] The rite of passage involves bathing the baby and dressing him or her in new clothes. The baby's outing is accompanied by both the mother and the father, siblings if any, as well some near family members such as grandparents and friends.^{[62][63]}

The significance of *Nishkramana* and showing the baby heavenly bodies is derived from their significance of Sun, Moon and nature in the Vedic literature.^[62] At the time the baby is present before the sunrise or moon, it is the father who holds the baby and recites a hymn that means, "the brilliant sun has risen in the east, he is like the *hamsa* (swan) of the pure worlds, let us salute him, because he dispels darkness".^[62] When the baby is in presence of the moon, the father says, "O Moon, thou whose hair is well parted, let this child come to no harm, nor torn from the mother".^[62]

Baby's first solid food, Annaprashana

Annaprashana (IAST: Annaprāśana, Sanskrit: अन्नप्राशन) literally means "feeding of food", and the rite of passage marks the first time a baby eats solid food, typically containing cooked rice.^[60] Most Gryhasutras recommend this ritual in the sixth month, or when the child shows the first teeth, with slow weaning of the baby from breast feeding to other sources food.^{[60][64]} Some texts recommend continued breast feeding of the child, as the child adapts to the various foods. The ritual is usually celebrated with cooked rice, in a paste of honey, ghee and curd.^{[64][65]} Sankhyayana Gryhasutra recommends that fish, goat or partridge meat gravy be added to the solid food that baby tastes for the

first time, while Manava Gryhasutra is silent about the use of meat.^[64] The mother eats with the baby, the same food. The father sits with them and participates in the rite of passage. The rite of passage, in some texts, include charity and feeding of the poor, and ceremonial prayers by both parents.^[64]

Baby's first haircut, Chudakarana

Chudakarana (IAST: Cūḍākarāṇa, Sanskrit: चूडाकरण) (literally, rite of tonsure), also known as *choulam*, *caula*, *chudakarma*, *mundana* or "mundan sanskar" is the rite of passage that marks the child's first haircut, typically the shaving of the head.^[60] The mother dresses up, sometimes in her wedding *sari*, and with the father present, the baby's hair is cut and the nails are trimmed.^[66] Sometimes, a tuft of hair is left to cover the soft spot near the top of baby's head.^{[60][66]}

The significance of this rite of passage is the baby's cyclical step to hygiene and cleanliness.^[67] The ritual is seen as a passage of purity. It is typically done about the first birthday, but some texts recommend that it be completed before the third or the seventh year.^[66] Sometimes, this ritual is combined with the rite of passage of Upanayana, initiation to formal schooling.^[60] The ritual may include recitation of prayers for the child's long life and happiness.^[66]

Baby's earlobe piercing rite, Karnavedha

Karnavedha (IAST: Karnavedha, Sanskrit: कर्णवेध) literally means "ear-piercing".^[68] This is a minor rite of passage, that is not mentioned in most Gryha-sutras.^{[60][69]} Those that mention it state different schedules, with some suggesting that the ritual within the first four weeks after birth, others suggesting within the first year.^{[60][70]} The purpose of this optional ritual is primarily an ornamentation of the body, and is part of the baby's socialization process and culture emersion. The piercing is usually done with a clean gold thread, or silver needle.^{[60][70]}

For a baby boy, the right earlobe is pierced first.^[60] For a baby girl, the left earlobe is. In case of girls, the left nostril may also be pierced during this ritual.^{[60][70]} The piercing of the earlobes symbolically reminds the child, as he or she grows up, of beauty and social presence, of the importance of hearing and speech in the wisdom of the Vedas.^[60]

Child's commencement to knowledge, Vidyarambha[

Vidyarambha (IAST: Vidyārambha, Sanskrit: विद्यारम्भ) literally means "beginning of study". It is also known as *Akshararambha*, *Aksharaabhyaasa*, or *Aksharasvikara*. It is a ritual that celebrates as a milestone, the child's formal attempt to learn means of knowledge.^[71] This includes steps where the child, helped by the parents and other family members, does one or more of the following: writes letters of the mother-tongue, draws mathematical numbers or shapes, and plays a musical instrument.^[72]

The oldest texts that describe rites of passage, such as the Dharmasutras, make no mention of *Vidyarambha* and go direct to *Upanayana* ritual at the 8th year.^[71] The later texts, such as the *Samskara Prakasha*, from the first centuries of 1st millennium CE, mention *Vidyarambha* as a rite of passage in the 5th year of a child's life, suggesting that the process of learning started shifting to an earlier age of a child with time. The ceremony is observed on the same day for all children in their 5th year, on the day of Vijayadasami which is on the tenth of the Hindu month Ashvin (September–October).^{[71][72]} It includes a prayer to goddess Saraswati and deity Ganesh,^[71] a teacher is invited or the parents themselves work with the child to write *Lipi* (letters of the alphabet), draw *Samkhya* (numbers) or pictures, and sometimes play with an instrument.^{[72][73]} In modern times, parents mark this rite of passage in the third year of the child.^[74]

Child's entrance into school, Upanayana

Upanayana (IAST:Upanayana, Sanskrit: उपनयन) literally means "the act of leading to or near".^[76] It is an important and widely discussed samskara in ancient Sanskrit text.^[77] The rite of passage symbolizes the leading or drawing towards the self of a child, in a school, by a teacher.^[76] It is a ceremony in which a Guru (teacher) accepts and draws a child towards knowledge and initiates the second birth that is of the young mind and spirit.^[77]

Upanayana was an elaborate ceremony, that included rituals involving the family, the child and the teacher. During this ceremony, a boy receives a sacred thread called *Yajñopaveetam*, that he wears. *Yajñopavita* ceremony announced that the child had entered into formal education.^{[78][79]} In the modern era, the Upanayana rite of passage is open to anyone at any age.^[75]

Rajbali Pandey compares the Upanayana rite of passage to Baptism in Christianity where the person is born again unto spiritual knowledge, in addition to it being the ancient Indian rite of passage for the start of formal education of writing, numbers, reading, Vedangas, arts and other skills.^[80] The *Upanayana* rite of passage was also important to the teacher, as the student would therefrom begin to live in the *Gurukul* (school).^[77] Many medieval era texts discuss Upanayana in the context of three *Varnas* (caste, class) - Brahmins, Kshtriyas and Vaishyas.^[80] Several texts such as *Sushruta Sutrasthana*, however, also include Sudras entering schools and the formal education process,^[81] stating that the Upanayana samskara was open to everyone.^{[78][82]} The upanayana ceremony extended to women, in ancient Sanskrit texts, and the girls who underwent this rite of passage then pursued studies were called *Brahmavadini*.^[83] Those who didn't, performed upanayana ceremony at the time of their wedding. Instead of sacred thread, girls would wear their robe (now called sari or saree) in the manner of the sacred thread, that is over her left shoulder during this rite of passage.^{[83][84]}

The education of a student was not limited to ritual and philosophical speculations found in the Vedas and the Upanishads. They extended to many arts and crafts, which had their own but similar rites of passages.^[85] Aitareya Brahmana, Agamas and Puranas literature of Hinduism describe these as *Shilpa Sastras*, and they extend to all practical aspects of culture, such as the sculptor, the potter, the perfumer, the wheelwright, the painter, the weaver, the architect, the dancer, and the musician. Ancient Indian texts assert that the number of the arts is unlimited, but each deploy elements of sixty four "kala" (कला, techniques) and thirty two "vidyas" (विद्या, fields of knowledge).^[85] The training of these began from childhood, and included studies about dharma, culture, reading, writing, mathematics, geometry, colors, tools, as well as traditions (trade secrets). The rites of passage during apprentice education varied in the respective guilds.^{[86][87]}

Vedarambha

Praishartha (or Vedarambha) is the rite of passage that marked the start of learning the Vedas and Upanishads in *Gurukulam* or *Pathashala* (school). It was a fire ritual (*yajna*), where the teacher and the student sat together, with the teacher reciting initiation hymns and the student following. This ritual is missing in older texts, and Pandey suggests that the later tradition recognized the difference between getting accepted in a school, and the actual start of Veda studies when the student is ready to learn those texts.^[88] In ancient India, the student's preparation involved helping with school chores, living a simple life, going to villages and towns to seek donations of food (*Bhiksha*), collect and bring water, collect fuel sticks for cooking, general maintenance of the school and share the food he and others collect with his teacher and the student community. These were on-going rituals of living at living, and not considered as a distinct rite of passage.^[89] Prior to the initiation of the Veda study, the student learnt the vocabulary, grammar and other basic studies. The emphasis of the stage where the student started Veda study was both the memorization and know the meaning of each hymn, verse or mantra.^[90] Vedarambha marked the actual start of the Veda study.^[91]

Some texts describes two rituals each academic period (school year), one marking the start of Vedic studies each year, called Upakarma or *Upakarana*. The other ceremony was held at the end of each academic period, called *Utsarjanam* or *Utsarga* or *Samapana*, and marked the suspension of the

Veda studies for a certain period of the year.^[92] The start of school ceremony, the Upakarma was observed in the month of Sravana (August) every year.^[92] It was held in the morning, and attended by the students, the teacher, people in the Grihasta stage (householders, parents) and Vanaprastha stage of life (retired, grandparents).^[92] The *Utsarga*, closing the study year, was held in the month of Magha (about February).^[93]

Keshanta and Ritusuddhi

Keshanta (IAST: Keśānta) (literally, getting rid of hairs) is the first shave of a youth's facial hair. This was typically observed about age sixteen, and the emerging beard and moustache were shaved. The ceremony included gift giving such as to the barber and the teacher at his school.^[94] The coming of age ceremony ended with the student reciting his vow of chastity and the code of Brahmacharya.^[94]

Ritusuddhi, also called as *Ritu Kala Samskara*, is the corresponding coming of age ceremony for girls, after menarche or first menstruation. This milestone in a girl's life is observed by her family and friends, with gifts and her wearing a sari for the ritual.^{[95][96]} The rite of passage is celebrated, in modern times, as a "half-saree party" where the female relatives and friends of the girl gather, and she receives and wears a half-saree and other gifts. Thereafter, at ceremonious events, she wears the half-sarees, until her marriage when she puts on a full *Sari*.^[97]

Graduation ceremony, Samavartana, Samadhi, Mahasamadhi

Samavartana (IAST: Samāvartana), or *Snana*, is the ceremony associated with the end of formal education and the Brahmacharya asrama of life. This rite of passage includes a ceremonial bath.^[98] This ceremony marked the end of school, but did not imply immediate start of married life. Typically, significant time elapsed between exiting the Brahmacharya stage of life and the entering of Grihasta stage of life.^[99]

Anyone who had complete this rite of passage was considered a *Vidyasnataka* (literally, bathed in knowledge, or showered with learning), and symbolized as one who had crossed the ocean of learning.^[100] This ceremony was a gathering of students and teacher. The student asked the teacher for any gift (*guru-dakshina*) he desired, which if specified was the student's responsibility to deliver over his lifetime.^[101] Then, after a recitation of a graduate's dharma (snataka-dharma)^[102] and a fire ritual, the graduate took a bath. The ceremony occurred after completion of at least 12 years of school, that is either about age 21 or later.

Taittiriya Upanishad describes, in the eleventh anuvaka of Shiksha Valli, the *snataka-dharma* recitation emphasized by the teacher to a graduate at this rite of passage.^{[103][104]} The verses ask the graduate to take care of themselves and pursue Dharma, Artha and Kama to the best of their abilities. Parts of the verses in section 1.11.1, for example, state^[103]

Never err from Truth,
Never err from Dharma,
Never neglect your well-being,
Never neglect your health,
Never neglect your prosperity,
Never neglect *Svādhyāya* (study of oneself) and *Pravacana* (exposition of Vedas).

— *Taittirīya Upanishad*, 1.11.1^{[103][104]}

The eleventh anuvaka of *Shiksha Valli* list behavioral guidelines for the graduating students from a *gurukul*,^{[105][106]}

Be one to whom a mother is as god, be one to whom a father is as god,
Be one to whom an *Acharya* (spiritual guide, scholars you learn from) is as god,
Be one to whom a guest is as god.^[105]
Let your actions be uncensurable, none else.
Those acts that you consider good when done to you, do those to others, none else.

— *Taittirīya Upanishad*, I.11.2^{[103][104]}

The third section of the eleventh anuvaka lists charity and giving, with faith, sympathy, modesty and cheerfulness, as ethical precept for the graduating students at the *Samavartana* rite of passage.^[104]

Vratas

Vrata literally means a vow or practice, any pious observance, act of devotion or austerity such as fasting.^[107] These were cyclical rites of passage of those in Grihastha (householder) stage of life, typically as reminder of some pious action, reflective, spiritual side of life. Most Gryhasutras and several Smritis include four Veda-vratas as samskara after graduation, as means of continuing self-education.^[108] The four *Vratas* includes Sukriya (study Rigveda), Sakvara, Vratika and Upanishad Vrata. The rite of passage ceremony for each of these marked the start of the self study by the householder, which lasted between 1, 3, 6 or 9 year each.^[108]

Cremation ritual, Antyeshti

Antyesti (IAST: Antayestī, Sanskrit: अन्त्येष्टि) (literally, last rites or last sacrifice), sometimes referred to as *Antima Samskaram*, *Antya-kriya*, *Anvarohanyya*, or *Vahni Samskara*, are the rituals associated with funeral.^[109] This samskara is not mentioned in the lists of samskaras in most of the grhyasutras and other texts that discuss samskaras. The details and procedures of this rite are given in separate texts,^[which?] dealing only with this topic.

A dead adult Hindu is mourned with a cremation, while a dead child is typically buried.^{[110][111]} The rite of passage is performed in harmony with the sacred premise that the microcosm of all living beings is a reflection of a macrocosm of the universe.^[112] The soul (Atman, Brahman) is the essence and immortal that is released at the *Antyeshti* ritual, but both the body and the universe are vehicles and transitory in various schools of Hinduism. They consist of five elements - air, water, fire, earth and space.^[112] The last rite of passage returns the body to the five elements and origins.^{[110][112]} The roots of this belief are found in the Vedas, for example in the hymns of Rigveda in section 10.16, as follows,

Burn him not up, nor quite consume him, Agni: let not his body or his skin be scattered,
O all possessing Fire, when thou hast matured him, then send him on his way unto the Fathers.
When thou hast made him ready, all possessing Fire, then do thou give him over to the Fathers,
When he attains unto the life that waits him, he shall become subject to the will of gods.
The Sun receive thine eye, the Wind thy *Prana* (life-principle, breathe); go, as thy merit is, to earth or heaven.
Go, if it be thy lot, unto the waters; go, make thine home in plants with all thy members.

— *Rigveda* 10.16^[113]

The final rites of a burial, in case of untimely death of a child, is rooted in Rig Veda's section 10.18, where the hymns mourn the death of the child, praying to deity Mrityu to "neither harm our girls nor our boys", and pleads the earth to cover, protect the deceased child as a soft wool.^[114]

The last rites are usually completed within a day of death. His or her body is washed, wrapped in white cloth if the dead is a man or a widow (red if her husband is still alive),^[111] the two toes tied together with a string, a *Tilak* (red mark) placed on the forehead.^[110] The dead adult's body is carried to the cremation ground near a river or water, by family and friends, and placed on a pyre with feet facing south.^[111] The eldest son, or a male mourner, or a priest then bathes before leading the

cremation ceremonial function.^{[110][115]} He circumambulates the dry wood pyre with the body, says a eulogy or recites a hymn in some cases, places sesame seed in the dead person's mouth, sprinkles the body and the pyre with ghee (clarified butter), then draws three lines signifying *Yama* (deity of the dead), *Kala* (time, deity of cremation) and the dead.^[110] The pyre is then set ablaze, while the mourners mourn. The ash from the cremation is consecrated to the nearest river or sea.^[115] After the cremation, in some regions, the immediate male relatives of the deceased shave their head and invite all friends and relatives, on the tenth or twelfth day, to eat a simple meal together in remembrance of the deceased. This day, in some communities, also marks a day when the poor and needy are offered food in memory of the dead.^[116]