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Samskaras: Their Significance and Benefits

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Abstract: *Samskara* is a process of purifying the human person and adding goodness as well in various times of life. It is not only making oneself good but also making others even good. It is a way to happy living. It is also known as a well-planned action. *Samskara* helps one to grow spiritually in life at the same it helps in the physical growth of the human person as well. *Samskara* also has to play a key role in moulding every society. Along with this purpose, there are also various other purposes for *samskara* on earth. *Samskara* also motivates our thoughts, communication, actions etc. Also, *Samskara* can take the negative to positive. The *Samskara* were a conscious effort to meet this need in life. From birth to death, it is a series of incidents from the desire to live, to enjoy, to think and ultimately to retire.

Keywords: Samskara, Hostile Influences, Favourable Influence, Significance of Samskaras

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Introduction

SAMSKARAS CAN BE defined as the process of increasing the potential and the refining step towards inner and outer progress. Each *Samskaras* lead one to a better, healthier and righteous way of life. Panini defines *Samskaras* as it decorates one's personality. Another definition for *Samskaras* is that it is absorbing other good quality or characteristics.

The word *Samskaras* has been used in many ways; the first is that *Uttarakshasadhanam Samskaras*, this *samaskara* gives prosperity, the second one is that *Samawaya* this *Samskaras* says that a thing happens at the *same* time as something else, the third is that *Abhushana*, this *Samskara* is used as a purifier. *Samskara* has a meaning, by adding the prefix 'sam' to the verb 'kri' and adding these suffix *ghanz* the word *Samskara* is formed (Shrikant, 2010).

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Samskara means rubbing the dust, dirt and impurities from the self and soul. Such a soul could be purified by ideas and deeds. Only they can be called *Sanskrit*, All the lasting impression on our mind due to our *Samskaras*. Thus *Samskara* means to be good and also make others to be good, to get purified and purify others, to be healthy and aesthetically satisfying and to provide health and beauty to others, to purge the inner and outer self and to purge others for greater attraction and better. *Samskara* is processes that add value to life.

Samskara is really important as they ensure progress, prosperity, wisdom, moral character and ethical deeds, thus guarantee a better and prosperous social set-up and continuity of life. *Samskaras* are performed to add confidence to faith, to purge the body and mind and to gain health, to refine the sensibility and to define culture, and to free one from complexes and the fear of death. *Samskaras* are ways of natural and happy living, collective effort to strengthen an individual being which helps to be able to store energy, wisdom for doing the things more worthy (Kalus, 1987). *Samskaras* are scientifically checked and tested for individuals and it is said to be as that, *Samskaras* are the ultimate outcome of centuries of medical research and also study of natural phenomenon and man's regular celestial search; it is also performed to give stability and control. Early *Samskaras* pave the way to give pleasure, power, and vision. They were empowered with dedication, devotion and discipline. *Samskaras* is a process of increasing potential, acquiring qualities, knowing and behaving in a broader sense and also helps in improving and purifying the existing and removing shortcomings. *Samskaras* also help us to develop positive values and capabilities.

In Indian Philosophy *Samskaras* are the mental impressions, recollection or psychological imprints. In Hindu Philosophies, *Samskaras* are a basis for the development of the *Karma* theory.

Etymology

The *Sanskrit* word *Samskara* has a various context-driven meaning that broadly refers to “putting together, accomplishing well, making perfect, form recognition and getting ready and impression. The *Samskara* is a *Sanskrit* term derived from the root word ‘*sam*’ which means ‘well planned’ and ‘*kara*’ which means the action undertaken. The word *Samskara* comes from *Sanskrit* ‘*Sam*’ means complete or well planned and ‘*Kara*’

means action or the action undertaken. The first context is at the etymological foundation of *Samskara* term for rites of passage. The concept of *Samskara* is also discussed as *Vasana*. *Vasana* also means impression, the inclination of anything remaining unconsciously in the mind (Singh, 2002).

The Samskaras is essential for better, healthier, happier and blissful life. Samskaras is the purifying sacraments from the impurities.

Virtues of *Samskaras*

Physical faults and deformities, dirt and sins, impious attitude and vices are washed out by the *Samskaras* and the person is able to achieve spirituality. *Samskaras* are the elements of obedience to scriptures and classical behaviour. The person can achieve better and higher aims easily when he is enriched by his ideas and deeds. Purity, piety, compassion and other virtues are found in the *Samskaripurush* will lead a disciplined, balanced life by following the moral rules. Indian cultural heritage has always given priority to *Samskaras*, the cultivation of greater qualities that a man required. *Samskaras* starts from a man's beginning to the end of his life which make to grow more inside, and also help him to absorb the good qualities of around also the divine qualities. *Samskaras* are essential and must be performed to alert ourselves and to remain pious throughout life. *Samskaras* are the processes that add values to your life (Singh, 2002).

Physical and Spiritual Growth in *Samskaras*

Samskaras can be good and bad but only the good ones are taken as *Samskara* and the rest are rejected as *KuSamskara*. Hindus have been trying to improve the existing refinements by performing different acts, teaching, rites and rituals called *Samskaras*.

They can be divided into the physical and spiritual. With the help of *Samskaras* they tried to achieve a balance between the two. They work towards the healthy growth of both the physical body and spiritual body. It is not but to perform good deeds with the physical

and spiritual body. The physical body and spiritual body play a vital role in the concept and origin of the *Samskaras*. The *Samskaras* is essential for a better, healthier, happier and blissful life. *Samskaras* are purifying sacraments from impurities. Through the stages of *Samskaras* we can achieve the *Brahma* easily. *Samskaras* are said to be helping for achieving spiritual nourishment, peace of mind and ultimate *Moksha*. *Samskara* gives a spiritual touch to the important events at different stages in Hindu life, right from birth to post-death.

***Samskaras* for Human Growth**

Samskaras helps in better intellectual growth and also it is very important as they ensure progress, prosperity, knowledge, wisdom, moral character and good deeds. These guarantee a better and prosperous social and continuity life. The good and moral deeds make the world a better and a peaceful place to live in harmony with others and make collective progress (Singh, 2002).

Samskaras in Hinduism stands for the ways extent and quality of formation, growth and effect, the formation and the growth which really relate to the *samsakaras*. In *Samaskara*, the most important term is ‘*Dwija*’ which means ‘To Born Again’ *Samskaras* is like a second birth. This second birth is not physical, it is the inner change. There are many good and bad influences which we carry from one birth to another and experience at the utmost *Samskaras* gives us the power to distinguish between good and bad influence and help in opting for good influence and rejecting the bad ones. *Samskaras* will make us attain pure soul also make us able to absorb a lot of power, grow better and achieve significant success.

Importance and Purpose of *Samskaras*

Samskara plays a vital role in making a better society. It gives really important to ensure prosperity, progress, knowledge,

wisdom etc. Thus *Samskara* guarantees a better and prosperous life. Actually, *Samskara* is like a second birth. Not physically but mental growth. It can be divided into popular and cultural purposes. The former is motivated by questing faith and simplicity while the latter is priestly and cultural.

Ancient Hindus like others believed that they were surrounded by superhuman influences that were potent enough for good and evil consequences. They tried to remove hostile influences and attract beneficial ones so that they may grow and prosper.

a. Removal of Hostile Influences

Several means were adopted to remove the hostile influences. The first of them was propitiation. Demons were offered praise, oblations and food so that they may return satisfied without causing injury to the individual. The second was a deception e.g. at the time of tonsure, the severed hair was mixed with cow dung and thrown into a river so that none could play magic upon it. When the first two methods proved inadequate, a third step was taken. Mischievous spirits were plainly asked to go away, threatened and directly attacked. While performing *Chaturthikarma* (the fourth day after marriage), the husband invites Agni, Vayu, Surya etc. to remove injurious elements from the newly married wife. Other devices used were Water. It washed away physical impurities and warded off demons. The noise was made at the time of burial to scare away lurking spirits (Singh, 2002).

b. Attraction of Favourable Influences

Just as influences are to be warded off, favourable ones are to be attracted for the benefit of the recipient of a particular *Samskara*. The Hindus believe that every period of life was presided over by a deity. Thus, on every occasion the deity was invoked to confer boons and blessings on the man, e.g., at the time of conception, Vishnu was the chief deity. But there was no entire dependence on gods. Men helped themselves by various means. Touch exercised a

magic power, e.g., a branch of a fig tree was applied to the neck of the wife, as the touch was believed to bring fertility (Singh, 2002).

c. The Material Aim of the Samskaras

Were the gains of cattle, progeny, long life, wealth, strength and intellect? The *Samskaras* were domestic rites and naturally during their performance things essential for domestic felicity were asked from gods. It was believed that by prayer and appeal, their desires and wishes were communicated to the deities who responded to them appropriately.

d. *Samskaras* as Self-expression

The householder performed the *Samskara* to express his own joys, felicitations and even sorrows at the various events of life. The birth of a child or marriage of a couple was happy occasions while death was a sad one (Singh, 2002).

The Moral Purpose of *Samskara*

In the course of time, a moralizing feature emerged from the material body. *Samskara* gives eight good qualities of the soul that is mercy, forbearance, freedom from envy, purity, calmness, right behaviour and freedom from greed, covetousness. The *Samskaras* were never regarded as ends in themselves (Rajneesh, 2004). They were expected to grow in human values. For every stage of life rules of conduct were prescribed in the *Samskara*. Superstition there was but an ethical attempt for the moral upliftment on the individual is visible.

Spiritual Significance of *Samskara*

Spiritualism is a chief feature of Hinduism and every phase of Hindu religion is mixed with it. This spiritual outlook of the Hindus transformed the *Samskara* into a spiritual *Sadhana*. The spiritual experience is of those who have received the sacraments. To Hindus, the *Samskara* are “an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace,” like the sacraments for Christians. He looks beyond the ceremonial performance and feels something invisible which sanctified his whole personality.

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Need of *Samskaras*

The need for *Samskaras* can be easily understood. *Samskaras* are cultivated with conscious effort during a long period. Perfection is concerned with cultivating *samskaras* throughout your life. It is a goal to make an individual perfect. Every society gives importance to education because it is a remedy for all evil. It is the key to solve the various problems in life. *Samskaras* are the impressions created in our minds and thought and also by our action. These *Samskaras* play a huge role in our personal life also our personalities. *Samskara* also motivates our thoughts, communication, actions etc. Also, *Samskara* can take the negative to positive.

Benefits of *Samskaras*

There are numerous benefits from *Samskara* like mental and physical health is the best gift and the greatest benefit from *Samskaras*. *Samskara* makes the whole life better and refined. They give culture and refined sensibility for better control over intellect and its higher and deeper use. The intellect will work in a fine manner. Once the balance is achieved, the equilibrium is maintained throughout life. *Samskara* makes us lead a complete and satisfying life. A man with *samskara* in his life will be able to be confident and successful in facing the problems of life. He will be not afraid of anything or anyone. He knows what he has done the best and will

A man with *samskara* in his life will be able to be confident and successful in facing the problems of life. He will be not afraid of anything or anyone. He knows what he has done the best and will get the best only. *Samskara* give enough faith and confidence that a dying person will not be afraid of the unknown life after death because he has done nothing wrong in life if he had followed the *Samskara* in his life.

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Conclusion

Life has been a great mystery to man. Its origin, growth and disappearance have always exercised his thoughts and emotions. The Hindu *Samskara* was an attempt to facilitate the flow of this mystery. Through a process of trial and error, ancient Hindus realized that life was art, needed care, protection

and cultivation like plants in a garden. The *Samskara* were a conscious effort to meet this need in life. As in life so in rituals life was regarded as a cycle. From birth to death, it is a series of incidents from the desire to live, to enjoy, to think and ultimately to retire.

The entire *Samskara* and their ceremonies emanate from the centre of life and are happening with its circumference. In the beginning, the *Samskara* was occurring as a result of sudden, but not automatic. As the *Samskara* was developed and were amplified according to the social sentiments and needs, a conscious attempt was made at the action of the *Samskara* (Shobhit, 2017). While this provided stability to the *Samskara*, it hindered its spontaneous growth, which resulted in decay and rigidity.

Samskara covered all fields of life with religion being an all-embracing factor and rituals were given the sanctity and stability to all possible incidents in life. The *Samskara* aimed to create conditions for the development of an integrated personality of an individual, who can adjust himself with the world around him believed to be full of human and superhuman forces. Though the *Samskara* were comprehensive in their scope originally, they, later on, came to be included in the Path of Action (Kabil, 2001). The first path was a stepping stone to the second and third ones, meant for purification of the mind.

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