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## The practice of *Samāvartana Saṁskāra* through the light of *Daśakarmakaumudī*

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### Abstract

The word '*Samāvartana*' generally means 'return', especially a pupil's return home after finishing his course of holy studies. The derivation of the word *Samāvartana* is "*Sam ā brt lyuṣ*". There are four stages in human life and these are called as *Caturāśrama*. These are- Brahmacharya, Gārhasthya, Vānaprastha and Sanyāsa. Among these four stages of life the Brahmacharya is very important and significant stage of life. It is the stage of gaining knowledge which is the ultimate property for a human being. In the Vedic period the students had to stay in *Gurugṛha* i.e at the residence of the teacher. Then the student is called as *Brahmacārī*. Along with their studies, the students had to do some household activities too in the *Gurugṛha*. After completing their studies they had to return to their Gārhasthya stage of life. So, at the close of the Brahmacharya stage, there was performed a special kind of rite called *Samāvartana* and recognized the student as graduated.

The concept of *Samāvartana* is broadly discussed in the *Daśakarmakaumudī* of Pītāmbara Siddhānta Vāgīśa Bhaṭṭācārjya and he gives a detail procedure of this ceremony. He is a well known *smṛti* digest writer of the Kāmarūpa school of Dharmasāstra. The work *Daśakarmakaumudī* is basically based on the performance of *Daśakarma*. Here in this present paper an attempt has been made to highlight the concept of *Samāvartana* in the *Daśakarmakaumudī* as well as it will be tried to give a modern relevance of the concept of *Samāvartana*.

**Key Words:** *Samāvartana*, *Daśakarmakaumudī*, dharmasāstra, *smṛti* digest

### 1. Introduction

The seed of Indian literature is sprouted in the Vedic literature. The Vedic texts are regarded as the first literary documents which are still accepted as authentic, supreme and unquestionable. The four Vedas along with their *Brāhmanas*, *Āraṇyakas* and *Upaniṣads* are considered as *Śruti* literature, i.e. the heard scriptures. All the other sacred text of Hinduism are called *Smṛti*, 'what is remembered' that is, what humans have thought of in response of *Śruti* <sup>[1]</sup>. Actually the root of the *Smṛti* literature is found in the *Śruti* literature. *Smṛti* denotes a set of precept for regulating the personal and social lives of people, from their birth till death and obsequial rites and customs are also within the province of this *śāstra* <sup>[2]</sup>. The *Smṛtiśāstras* are also known as *Dharmaśāstras*. *Manusmṛti* and the *Jājñavalkyasmṛti* are the early metrical *Smṛtis*. After that we can take the name of *Nāradaśmṛti*. The two epics *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Purāṇas* also have played a great part in the development of *Dharmaśāstra* <sup>[3]</sup>. The third period of *Dharmaśāstra* of the commentators and the writers of digests (*smṛti nivandhakāras*) covers over a thousand years from about the 7<sup>th</sup> century to 1800 A.D. <sup>[4]</sup> The *Dharmaśāstras* are the guidebook for the religious, social and domestic life of people. So, in later period all the rules and regulations prevailing in the *Dharmaśāstras* are seen to interpret and systemize in later *Smṛti* digests, composed by the *nivandhakāras*. In *A brief history of Dharmasāstra* of S.C Banerji, we find about the six schools of *Dharmaśāstras*. Among those the Kāmarūpa school of *Dharmaśāstra* is a prominent one.

Pītāmbara Siddhānta Vāgīśa is a renowned *smṛti* digest writer of Kāmarūpa school of *Dharmaśāstra*. He is well known by the title of *Mahāmahopādhyāya* and *Jagadguru*. He gained both of these titles from king Naranārāyana of Kochbehar (1540-1584 A.D). He was the court poet of king Naranārāyana. In the *Daraṅg-rāja-vamśāvalī* also it is stated that after bringing scholars from *Gauḍa* kingdom, the Koch king assigned them as court poet <sup>[5]</sup>. But here it is a noteworthy fact that Pītāmbara does not mention about his personal life anywhere.

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But the author has stated at the colophon of the *Vivāda-Kaumudī* that he was born in the southern direction of the river Brahmaputra <sup>[6]</sup>. On the other hand a tradition prevails that Pītāmbara was born in the Cinākoṇa mauza of the Mangaldoi sub division and that he was known as *Cinākoṇīyā brāhmaṇa*. Though the accurate number of the works of Siddhānta Vāgīśa cannot be determined, yet the authorship of the following works are attributed to him- *Dvaita Nirṇaya Dīpikā, Guḍhārtha Prakāśikā, Vāstuyāgapaddhati, Jalāśaya Pratiṣṭhā Paddhati, Homapaddhati, Graha Yāga paddhati, Ādyārcā Paddhati, Pañcayajña Kaumudī, Pramāṇa Kaumudī, Prāyaścitta Kaumudī, Tithi Kaumudī, Ācāra Kaumudī, Durgotsava Kaumudī, Vṛṣotsarga Kaumudī, Vṛṣotsarga Paddhati, Saṁkrānti Kaumudī, Janmāṣṭmī Kaumudī, Śuddhikaumudī, Sambandha Kamudī, Preta Kaumudī, Tīrtha Kaumudī, Daśakarma Kaumudī* and *Śivavrata Kaumudī*.

Among his works, the *Daśakarmakaumudī* is a very important one which contains the procedure of the performance of *Daśakarmas*. These are- *Garvādhāna, Puṁsavana, Sīmantonayāna, Jātakarma, Annaprāśana, cūḍākarāṇa, Upanayana, Samāvartana* and *Vivāha* <sup>[7]</sup>. From the publisher's note of 4<sup>th</sup> edition of this work we come to know that, the Hindu priests of ancient Kamrup took this work along with them and used as a handbook regarding the performance of *Daśakarmas* and still it is prevailing. In the *Daśakarmakaumudī*, we find a detail procedure of performance of *Samāvartana* which is discussed here.

## 2. The concept and procedure of *Samāvartana* in the *Daśakarmakaumudī*

The general meaning of the word *Samāvartana* is return, especially a pupils' return home after finishing his course of holy study <sup>[8]</sup>. In the Vedic age, the students had to go to the residence of the teacher i.e. *Gurugṛha* for taking education. Then they are called *Brahmachārīs* and they had to do some household activities in the *Gurugṛha*. After completing their studies they were recognized as *snātaka* i.e. graduated. At the end of his studies, the *Brahmachārī* had to take his customary bath which was known as *Samāvartana* or *snāna* and thus he took permission to proceed to the household life from his teacher and after that he could get marry. In the *Muktākṣara* commentary of Haradatta on *Gautama-Dharmasūtra* the word *snāna* is used to denote this *Saṁskāra* i.e. *Samāvartana* <sup>[9]</sup>. Manu uses both of the term i.e. *Samāvartana* and *snāna* <sup>[10]</sup>. In the *Āpastambagrhyasūtra* also it is stated that- after having the study of Veda, one had to take his ceremonial bath <sup>[11]</sup>. Here it is a noteworthy fact that the word *Samāvartana* literally means return from *Gurugṛha* to one's home. But if a boy studied under his own father then this ceremony was not necessary for him. So we can say that *Samāvartana* was not a necessary and adjunct part of marriage, because one who studied under his own father, he could directly enter on matrimony. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, we find that Upakosala Kāmalāyana was the student of Satyakāma Jāvāla and he was tending fires for twelve years at the residence of his *guru*. When the time of *Samāvartana* was coming Satyakāma gave *Samāvartana* to his pupils except Upakosala <sup>[12]</sup>. So we can say that the exact meaning of the term *Samāvartana* is known by the *Upaniṣads*. In the *Pāraskaragrhyasūtra*, three kinds of *snātakas* are mentioned. They are- *vidyāsnātaka, vratasnātaka* and *vidyāvratasnātaka* <sup>[14]</sup>. If one took *Samāvartana* after completing the study of Vedas did not complete *vrata*, he was called *vidyāsnātaka* <sup>[15]</sup>. One who did complete opposite of the former than he was called *vratasnātaka* and one who took *Samāvartana* after

completing both then he was called as *vidyāvratasnātaka*. <sup>[15]</sup> In Vedic time during the occasion of *Samāvartana*, in the presence of students, teachers and guests, the graduating student would offer his *guru-dakṣiṇā* after which the *guru* would recite the *snātaka dharma* from the *Śikṣā vallī* of *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* <sup>[16]</sup>.

In the *Daśakarmakaumudī*, the *Samāvartana saṁskāra* is discussed after *Upanayana* and before marriage. According to the *Daśakarmakaumudī*, at the very beginning of this ceremony the *Brahmacārī* has to take permission from his *guru* and go for taking bath. After taking bath, the *Brahmacārī* sits in the south direction i.e. at the right side of his teacher. The fire is lightened by the teacher already. There is needed eight pots with full of water and each pot have to contain *pallavas* i.e. newborn leafs. All those pots are kept in a line from south to north i.e. right to left. For this ceremony, the necessary things are- *Audumbara* (one kind of fruit), twelve fingered *Dantakāṣṭha* (a piece of stick or twig used as a toothbrush), *sugandhi dravya* (scented things), *anulepana* (ointment), new cloths, *yajñopavīta* (the sacred thread), flowers, ornaments of gold, collyrium, mirror, umbrella, wooden shoes, curd, paste of sesamum and a *vaiṇavaḍaṇḍa* (a bamboo stick). <sup>[17]</sup> In this ceremony basically *Dhanañjaya agni* is worshipped. After that, through the mantras of the four Vedas the offering of oblations to deities is done. The student is sprinkled with the water from those eight pots. After removing the *mekhalā* i.e. a kind of waistband through his head the student should take his customary bath which is the main ritual of this ceremony. Before taking bath, the *Brahmacārī* has to shave his matted hair, hair of the body, cut the nails and wash his teeth by *audumbara*. He has to smear curd and paste of sesamum on his head <sup>[18]</sup>. The *Brahmacārī* has to take bath up to the upper portion of his body with the powder of *yava* (barley), *sugandhi dravya* (scented things) and oil <sup>[19]</sup>. The smearing of sandal paste in both hands is also necessary. After taking bath, the *Brahmacārī* has to wear new cloths, but in the lack of new cloths he can wear the cloths which are washed by *kṣāra* (saline essence), he has to put on *tridaṇḍikā* (the three sacred threads), *uttarīyavastra* (the upper garment), the garland of flowers, earrings, take umbrella and the *vaiṇavaḍaṇḍa* and wear the pair of wooden shoes. The *vaiṇavaḍaṇḍa* means a bamboo stick where the things like *kuśa* grass, *tāmrakuṇḍa* (a copper-vessel) and *sandhyāvidhi* are hanged at the top of that bamboo stick by rapping with a cloth. In the *Daśakarmakaumudī* the student is advised to offer suitable gift to the teacher i.e. *Ācārya* <sup>[20]</sup>. In the *Hiraṇyakeśi-grhyasūtra* we can get the same suggestion. Hear it is a note noteworthy fact that Siddhānta Vāgīśa does not give the instruction to the *guru* to recite the citation of *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* as it follows the *Kāṇva śākhā* of *Śuklayajurveda* <sup>[21]</sup>.

In the present day's society there is not the culture of going to the residence of the teacher to take education. Currently people are going to the institutions like schools, colleges, universities etc. for taking education. But it does not mean that all the rituals of Vedic times are not following in present society. The sixteen *Saṁskāras* like *Garvadhāna, Puṁsavana, Sīmantonayana, Jātakarma, Upanayana, Vivāha* etc. are still performing in the current society. Among the sixteen *Saṁskāras*, *Samāvartana* is a remarkable one. It was completely an individual ceremony held in the Vedic time. But now a days, the *Samāvartana* ceremony is done along with the *Upanayana* ceremony. In the assamese society of ancient Kamrup, the *Upanayana Saṁskāra* was done according to the rules and regulations stated by the great

smṛiti digest writer, Pītāmbara Siddhānta Vāgīśa in his work *Daśakarmakaumudī* which are still prevailing. Though in the *Pāraskaragr̥hyasūtra*, the *Samāvartana* is advised to do separately after the time of *Brahmacarya*, yet in the commentary of Gopālacandra Bhāgavati on *Daśakarmakaumudī*, it is clearly mentioned that- the *Samāvartana* ceremony is suggested to do in the very day of *Upanayana*.<sup>[22]</sup> Moreover all the rules and regulations of Siddhānta Vāgīśa as discussed earlier are not seen to follow properly in our present society. Here it is a noteworthy fact that though the Vedic rituals are done as it is in the recommend work, yet in some context, the influences of *Lokācāra* nad *Kūlacāra* are seen there. As the *Samāvartana* ceremony is done along with *Upanayana*, the *Brahmacārī* should not take bath at the beginning of the *Samāvartana* ceremony as it is continuing after *Upanayana*. The tradition of taking bath from the water of eight pots which is stated by Siddhānta Vāgīśa is still following. The mother of the *Brahmacārī* and some females (*Āyatī*) go to pond, river any other water sources to bring water which is called 'Pāni tolā', which is totally impossible in the Vedic age, because, in the Vedic age, *Samāvartana* ceremony was done at the residence of the teacher, where the parents of the *Brahmacārī* did not present. But point to be noted here that in *Samāvartana* ceremony of current society, the actual concept of *Samāvartana* i.e. return to *Gārhasthyāśrama* from *Brahmacaryāśrama* is followed, because in present day's *Samāvartana* ceremony, three lines are drawn by the *ācārya* on the surface of the earth and the *Brahmacārī* is interrupted to cross the third line and requested to come back to the home i.e. the *Gārhasthyāśrama*, which justifies the actual concept of the *Samāvartana* ceremony. In the *Mahābhāṣya* it is said that after completing *Samāvartana* ceremony, one could use bed for sleeping. Here it is a noteworthy fact that in Vedic time when the students were living in the teacher's home they had to sleep on flour and they did not have the right to use bed even he was coming from a royal or rich family. But in present society it cannot be seen. So generally when the *Samāvartana Samskara* is performed along with *Upanayana* the boy has to stay and sleep in flour until then the ceremony will be completed. Thus in present society the traditional *Samāvartana Samskara* is done.

### 3. Conclusion

From the above discussion we can come to the conclusion that the *Samāvartana* ceremony is very necessary in human life which basically separates the student life and the household life. After gaining knowledge about different aspects the student will be ready to enter to the complicated, tough and puzzle life of a householder, who has to go through a very difficult path of his life. The student life makes a person stronger and capable. If we think it in a deep sense we can realize that the customary bath is taken by *Brahmacārī* in the *Samāvartana* ceremony actually purifies the inner soul of that person. That means the knowledge, gained in the student life purifies the heart of a student and after that with a clean heart the student has to return to his own home and starts the household life with great patience and maturity, which is the main concept of *Samāvartana* ceremony. Though in the present day the education system is totally changed and there is no tradition of studying in *gurugr̥ha*, yet after completing the studies the students are given convocation i.e. the *Dikṣānta samārohaḥ* which represents the *Samāvartana* ceremony in present society. By this way the students can get

their fruit of labour in studies. That is why it is said *achātrānām adhyayanam tapaḥ*.

### 4. References

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4. Ibid., p. 264
5. gauḍa kāmārūpe yata paṇḍita āchilā/samastake āni satra devāla pātīlā// As quoted by Biswanarayana Shastri (ed), Tīrtha Kaumudī, f.n. 54, p.Lvi.
6. Pītāmbareṇa guṇasundaramandireṇa kāmēśvarī caraṇareṇu parāyeṇena/ lauhitya dakṣiṇakūle(su) samudbhavena bhuyat kṛtaḥ kṛtimude mahito nivandhaḥ// As quoted by Naliniranjan Sarma, Kāmārūpa school of Dharmaśāstra, f.n. 102, p.157
7. Garvādhānapuṃsavanasīmantonnyān gārvān jātanāmānaprāśān śaiśavān cūḍopanayasamāvartān kaiśorān saṃskārān jauvanasaṃskārān vivāhamāhuriti/in the commentary of Gopala Chandra Bhagavati, Daśakarmakaumudī, p. 2
8. Vaman Shivram Apte, The Student's Sanskrit- English Dictionary, p.588
9. Snānam samāvartanam/ Gautama-Dharmasūtra, 8.16, p.73
10. Guruṇamataḥ snātvā samāvṛto yathāvidhi/Udvaheta dvijo bhāryām savarṇām lakṣaṇānvitām// Manusmṛti.3.4
11. Apastambagr̥hyasūtra, 12.1
12. Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 4.10
13. Trayaḥ snātakā bhavanti vidyāsnātako vratasnātako vidyāvratasnātaka/ Pāraskaragr̥hyasūtra, 2.5.32,
14. Ibid., 2.5.33
15. Ibid., 2.5.34-35
16. Vedamanūcyācāryō'ntevāsinamanuśāsti/ satyām vada/ dhamam cara/ svādhyāyānmā pramadaḥ/ ācāryāya piyam dhanamāhṛtya prajātantum mā vyavacchetsiḥ/ satyāna pramaditavyam/ dharmāna pramaditavyam/ kuśalāna pramaditavyam/ bhūtyai na pramaditavyam/ svādhyāya-pravacanābhyaṃ na pramaditavyam/taittirīyopaniṣad, 1.11.1
17. Auḍumbaradvādaśāṅguladantakāṣṭham sugandhidravayamanulepanam nūtanavastratrayam yajñopavitam paridheyapuṣam sauvarṇakuṇḍaladvayam sauvīrādyanñjanam darpaṇam chatram pādūkāyugalam dadhitilapiṣṭam vaiṇavadaṇḍam etanyāsādayet/ Daśakarmakaumudī, p.101
18. Tato jātalomanakhān vāpayitvā dadhipiṣṭatīlān śirasi prakṣipyā audumbareṇa dantān dhāvayet/ibid., p.111
19. Sugandhimiśritena yavādicūrṇena tailasahitena śārīrayuddharttyam snāyāt/ibid., p.111
20. Om viṣṇurityādi yathānāmagotrebhyo brāhmanebhyaḥ amukagotrasya matputrasya śrīamukadevaśarmaṇa upanayanavedārambhasamāvartanakarmasu navānām grahānām prīaye etāni navavāyavāni yajñopavitādyupakaraṇopetāni prajāpatidaivatāni sadakṣiṇāni amukaṣigotraḥ śrīamukadevaśarmāhamutmrje/
21. Hiranyakeśi-gr̥hyasūtra, 2.7.12
22. Yadyapi guruṇānujñāta iti pāraskariyeṇoktabrahmacaryakālātaram samārtanam vihitam tathāpi yathāmaṅgalambetyādi pāraskarasūtrāntarādūpanayanadine kriyate/ibid., p.102