

Hindu Samskaaras – Pumsavana & Seemantham

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A PREFACE

Time today is a resource to be saved rather than something that has to be spent! Our relentless progress towards scaling higher and higher levels of efficiency have been achieved by sacrificing the way of life our forefathers have followed. Rituals have been one of them. Those like marriages have been condensed from five days to a day and others like the Seemantham, a samskaara for an expectant mother to deliver a healthy child omitted in most cases. The purpose of this booklet is to explain the logic behind this ritual and serve as a ready reckoner for those who choose to conduct it. We hope it will help those interested in the practice and or research of Hindu Samskaaras.

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We hope this will be an interesting read for you. If you want a PDF of this, please email us at pradeepandanusha@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

'Pumsavana' means, "Ceremony for begetting a male child". While this may appear incongruent in today's society, in the past when patriarchal societies were in vogue, at least one male child was considered essential for the continuation of the family line. A male child alone is said to protect the ancestors from going to the nether world, Manu says - .

" *Pumnamno narakadyasmat trayate*

pitaram sutah" - Manusmrti, [9-138]

This ceremony (Samskaara) is to be performed either on the second or third or fourth month. The preferable stars for the performance are *Punarvasu, Pushya, Anuradha, Moola, Shravana, Ashvini* and *Mrigasirsha (Male Stars)*. The purpose of this ceremony is to instill faith and confidence in the mother to beget a male Child.

The scriptural sanction for this ceremony is authenticated by the following Mantra.

Pumanagnih. Pumanindrah. Puman devo Br.haspatih.|

Pumamsam Putram Vindasva tam Pumananujayatam||

(Samaveda 1-4-8,6)

Meaning-

"Agni, Indra, Brhaspati are all endowed with manly vigour. Oh, Lady! May you beget a male child, and the progeny succeeding him be also Vigorous".

'*Simantonnayana*' is the ritual performed on the sixth or the eighth month of pregnancy. However, following the scriptural option, Today, many combine both *Pumsavana* and *Simantonnayana*. Bangle wearing ceremony or bedecking with flowers (Valaikappu or Poochutal) is a social practice by the women in the family.

Hosted by the mother of the pregnant mother, the Valaikappu/

Poochootal is a purely social function for ladies where no Vedic hymns are chanted. The practice varies from region (Arcot/Thanjavur/Tirunelveli) and from family to family as well. Here is a general account.

On an auspicious day of the 7th month, the lady is asked to have a bath and then wear her 9 yards wedding sari. She is seated facing east on a palagai (slightly raised bench) and in front of her are placed as many sweets and savouries the family can afford. She is given a special breakfast of Pongal, Vadam and sweet. A banana leaf with the tapered end is placed in front and over that several objects placed. This list varies from family to family. A suggested list includes a rattle, a stylus (ezhuth-aani), a ladle, a pair of Marapachi dolls, a toy car and today even a computer mouse! On the other side of the leaf are placed some eatables – Vadai, Murukku, therattipal and a drop of payasam. All of these are closed with another leaf. The lady then closes her eyes and slips her hand under the leaf and picks as many of the objects as possible and places them on her lap. A lot of good natured humour accompanies this. The leaf is removed and the lady shares her payasam with a little child and eats the remaining food on the leaf. Once this is over all the women in the function who have children, come up to the lady. They gently smear her cheeks, hands and feet with turmeric paste, sandal paste and adorn her braid with some flowers (7 types of flowers woven into a string). They also dot her forehead with kumkum powder.

The lady's mother, starting with the right hand and then the left, and followed by other women in the family slip bangles on her hands. The right hand will have 9 bangles and the left hand 7. Usually glass bangles are preferred. The Nedunalvadai, an ancient Tamil work mentions the use of bangles made of the conch shell. Before the glass bangles are slipped on a pair of veppilai chool kappu (a bangle made by twisting the leafless stalk of the Neem tree. After this thin wires of gold and silver, also twisted into pairs of bangles and slipped on the ladies wrist.

The function ends with her bending down and receiving the achutham, drops of milk into which rice, flowers, arukam grass is mixed. The women sing a few songs, have a meal and are seen off. In the thamboolam bag a pair

of bangles, some sweets and savouries are included.

In the 5th month, the ladies mother in law repeats the same function for her family. This is called the Moggu poochutal.

Some texts prefer that *Pumsavana* and *Seemantha* are performed for the sake of a child, others feel that they are for the mother. Some others believe that they are for both the mother and child. While Saunaka Rishi says, that they are to be performed for every subsequent pregnancy. Sage Yagnavalkya says that it is to be performed only once. Today it is typically done only for the first child.

In *Pumsavaana*, the first and the foremost rituals are *Udakashaanthi* and *Pratisara bandha*.

Udakashaanthi and Pratisara bandha.

These two rituals must be done on the day before the *Seemantha* or in the morning, before the *Seemantham*.

Varuna is invoked in the *Kalasa* (pot). In a banana leaf, grains of rice or sesuma are spread out. Then drawing a diagram like a lotus with two Darba (*Imperata Cylindrica*) grasses held together. The *Kalasa* is placed on this and then encircled by thread. Once this has been done, an aarti is performed for the *Kalasa*. The *Kalasa* is filled with water and at it's mouth are placed a sprig of mango leaves with the leaves pointing outwards and a coconut placed in the center of the leaves on the mouth of the *Kalasa*. The *Kurcha* or spreading of *Darbha* grass around the *Kalasa* is to ward away the obstacles caused by the negative forces (*Rakshasas*). The Mango leaves etc. will eradicate other defects (*doshas*) the coconut which has three eyes will drive away sins. *Mantras* explaining this are chanted.

'*Pratisarabandha*' or '*Kankana*' is to be tied on the wrist of the pregnant lady for protection against evil forces. Then the Brahmins are asked to utter *japa* of *Gayatri* and three other *Mantras*, '*Vedadi*', '*Krunushva*', '*Agneyashasrin*'. Then '*Dadhigra*', '*Aapo*', '*Hiranya*', '*Pavamana*', '*Varuna Sooktam*', '*Brahma Sooktam*', '*Vishnu Sooktam*', '*Shree Sooktam*' are

chanted along with the Mantra '*Namo Brahmane*'. These *Mantras* are for invoking the blessings of the Gods and for the wellbeing of the couple and others around them.

Then '*Punar Pooja*' is performed for *Varuna* in the '*Kalasa*' (pot), this is symbolic of thanking *Varuna* for manifesting himself in the *Kalasa* and for thanking him for visiting and sending him back, with honours to heaven. Then '*Surabhimathi*', '*Aplinga*' are chanted and water is sprinkled over the *Pratisara* (thread). The '*Karta*' (the performer of the ritual) has some of the sacred water sprinkled on his head while chanting the Mantra '*Devasyatva*'. Then the thread is taken by hand and the lower end is held by the left thumb finger and the ring finger simultaneously meditating on '*Vaasuki*' (the serpent goddess, linked to fertility rituals). Chanting a mantra, turmeric or sacred ash is applied on the thread by the right hand thumb finger and ring finger from bottom to upper portion. This is done twice again but the mantra is not repeated.

Then '*Navagraha Priti*' (Pacification of nine planets) is done by way of giving some *Dakshina* (gifts) to Brahmins assembled in the venue.

The pregnant lady is asked to hold rice on both her palms; fruits and the thread are placed over the rice. The objects in the hand are changed with the Mantra– "*Agniraayushman*". The lady wears the thread on her left wrist while chanting '*Brihatsaama*'.

Meaning of Brihatsama Mantra is as follows:-

"Let the tying of this thread protect the wearer".

Then, the '*Dampati*' (Husband and Wife) should have a bath though this is optional.

The Pumsavana Ceremony

The '*Dampati*' take a large tray in their hand called the *Thamboolan* which has betel leaves, betel nuts & fruits. Holding this in their hand, they chant the Mantra "*Asheshe Hei Parishad*" and give it to the priest as

'*Dakshina*' or fees for performing the ceremony. They also request the priest to bless them and perform '*Seemantam*'. The Brahmins seated around say '*Tathastu*' (let it happen) and bless the couple. , The '*Sankalpa*' is made where the husband agrees to perform the *Seemantam* for his wife. The *sankalpam* is also setting the context of the ritual in the context of time, and geography. This is to be performed before the *Aaupasana Agni*. (*Homa Kunda*), where the sacred fire is lit. The Fire God thus becomes a witness and his presence and blessings are invoked.

Six vessels are to be made ready. The, bud of the Banyan tree's flower along with two unripe fruit are crushed usually by a girl child in an '*Ammi Kuzhavi*' (Pounding Stone) and a piece of new cloth are kept beside the officiating priest.

Then the *homa* is performed to the sacred fire by chanting four mantras that begin with '*Dhaataa*', followed by four mantras beginning with '*Yastva*'. At this point, the wife should touch the shoulder of her husband with the *Darbha* grass. The first set of Mantras mean:-

1. *Isaana*, the Lord of the Universe may bestow on us wealth. May he fulfill our desires.
2. "Dhatre idam na mama" *Dhaataa* the giver of siblings and wealth alone is the creator of this Universe. He is alone the giver of a son. To him, I offer this oblation.
3. He gave our ancestors wealth, may he give us wealth sufficient for our living. We meditate on His intellect.
4. May he, give us a son , the reason for my wife's pregnancy. Let all other divine beings be present in my house.

The second set of Mantras Mean:-

1. "*Agnaye Putravate idam na mama*" Oh Agni! I, the mortal, praise and invoke you the immortal. Bestow on us children and also food for living without the fear of death.

Oh Agni! You are give happiness to those who perform sacred rituals. They have many sons and grand children and are prosperous.

2. "*Indraaya Putrine idam na mama*" Oh! Powerful Indra. You possess all things aspired by all men. Therefore, there is none superior to you.

May every mantra along with the oblation given to the fire, please Indra. Even those equal to Indra seek him in times of their sorrow.

Chanting the above Mantras, oblations (typically Ghee) are poured on the Agni by pronouncing '*Svaahaa*'.

Then the *Jayaadi Homa* is to be performed.

After the *Jayaadi Homa* the banyan flower bud is kept in the cloth and crushed till the cloth is soaked with the juice. The Mantra "*Pugumsavanamasi*" is chanted, and simultaneously the cloth with the juice is gently squeezed into the right nostril of the pregnant lady. At this point, the lady must face west and the husband to the east of his wife.

Meaning of the mantra:-

"You are given these drops into your nose for the sake of begetting a son".

The *Sankalpa* is repeated and a *naandi Shraaddha* is done by way of gifts to Brahmins to please the ancestors. After this the *Punyaha Vaachana* is done. This ceremony is for purification and the sacred water is sprinkled in the house.

With this the *Pumsavana* ceremony comes to an end.

The Seemantha Ceremony

Seemantha Ceremony is succeeded by the *Pumsavana*. It is called *Seemantha*, because, the hairs on the head of the pregnant women is partitioned with the quill of a porcupine or *Darbha*.

This begins with the Mantra '*Asheshe hei Parishad*'- The materials

to be made ready are '*Darbha Stambam*' (a bundled grass) the quill of porcupine and sprouted rice, that symbolize prosperity and growth.

The pregnant woman is seated to the east of the *Agni Kunda*, and the husband parts the hair of his wife into two equal parts beginning at the forehead and going all the way back to the nape of the neck. Once he does this the material used is thrown away behind the lady. The Goddess '*Raaka*' the presiding deity of the full moon, is invoked. For the ceremony to be performed and her blessings are invoked. She is asked to give the couple a son who has a sharp intellect and having a charitable disposition of giving gifts to others..She is also requested to bless the parents who are performing the ceremony (*Taittiriya Samhita 3-3-11*).

Then two Mantras are chanted simultaneously The Veena is played. The notes of the Veena are said to create a soothing atmosphere for the child, an evidence of our ancient's knowledge of music as a form of therapy. The meaning of the Mantra-

Oh! Yamuna, "(or the name of the river closest to the venue) the people belonging to Saalva country living on your banks sing and praise Yugandhara's son as their King". This song is sung by all Brahmin women. This is the *Rajastuti* in Veena. (*Somarajastuti*).

The sprouted grains are bundled with a thread and placed on the head of the pregnant woman. She is then, asked to observe silence till the dawn of next day. Then the next day she should see a calf with a cow and then break the silence. She must pray to the Gods, and give gifts to Brahmins for having completed the *Seemantonnayana*.

Details of the Mantras -

Water should be sprinkled on all the sides of the *yajurvedi* with the mantras *Aditeanumanyasva* and with the following *mantra* on the four sides of the *Vedi*-

ओं देव सवितः प्रसुव यज्ञं प्रसुव यज्ञपतिं भगाय इत्यादि।

After sprinkling the water on four sides of the *yajnavedi* the four oblations of *Agharavajyabhagahuti* and four oblations of *Vyahriti Ahuti*, (thus amounting to eight oblations in all) should be offered according to procedure mentioned in *Samanya Prakarnam*.

Thereafter pronouncing the mantra ओम् प्रजापतये त्वा जुष्टं निर्वपामि the performers of the *Samskaara* should take rice. Sesamum Indicum (तिल) and Phaseolus Mungo in equal quantity (about 6 gm each) and wash it with water with *Mantra*- “ओम् प्रजापतये त्वा जुष्टं प्रोक्षामि” After washing the ingredients he should cook them while mixing sufficient ghee into this. He must offer it to the five and say the following Mantras:

ओं धाता ददातु वाशुषे प्राची जीवातुमुक्षितम् ।
वयं देवस्य धीमहि सुमतिं वा जिन्वति स्वाहा ॥
इदं धात्रे इदन्न मम ॥१॥

अथर्व० कां० ७ । सू० १७ । मं० २, आश्व० गृ० १ । १४, १६
ऋ० खिल सू० १३ । मं० ७, निरुक्त अ ११ । खं० ११)॥
आपस्तम्ब गृ.सू. १४.२-१

ओं धाता प्रजानामुत रायईशे धात्रे वै विश्वं भुवनं जजान ।
धाता कुष्ठीरनिमिषाभिचष्टे धात्रे इद्धव्यं घृतवच्चुहोत स्वाहा ॥
इदं धात्रे-इदन्न मम ॥२॥

- आश्व० गृ० १ । १४ । ३, ऋ० खिल सूक्त सं० ३ मं ॥
आप.गृ.सू. १४.२.२

ओं राकामहं सुहवां सुष्टुतौ हृदे शृणोतु नः सुभगा बोधतु त्मना ।
सीव्यत्वपः सूच्याच्छिद्यमानया वदातु वीरं शतदापमुवथ्यं स्वाहा ॥

इदं राकायै-इदन्न मम ॥३॥

पास्ते राके सुमतयः सुपेशसो याभिर्ददासि दाशुषे वसूनि।
ताभिर्नो अद्य सुमनाउपागहि सहस्रपोषं सुभगे रराणा स्वाहा॥
इदं राकायै-इदन्न मम ॥४॥

ऋ० मं० २ । सू० ३२, मं. ४।५ ॥

नेजमेष परा पत सुपुत्रः पुनरापत।
अस्यै मे पुत्रकामायै गर्भमाधेहि यः पुमान्स्वाहा॥५॥
यथेयं पृथिवी मह्युत्ताना गर्भमादधे।
एवं तं गर्भमाधेहि दशमे मासि सूतवे स्वाहा ॥६॥
विष्णोः श्रेष्ठेन रूपेणास्यां नार्या गवीन्याम्।
पुमांसं पुत्रानाधेहि दशमे मासि सूतवे स्वाहा ॥७॥

आश्व० गृ० १ । १४। ३, ऋ० खिल सूक्त सं० ३४ । मं० १-३

O lady of vigorous progeny! May God who sustains the universe provide the giver with life-giving herbs full of juice. Give us good knowledge of that mighty power and let us guard it well. Whatever is uttered herein is true. The oblation offered is meant only for *Dhataa* and is not for me.

The all sustaining Lord is the master of all the creatures and wealth. This whole universe has come into being by his power and wisdom. He upholds all and is witnessing every action of every one at every moment.

O men! Offer the oblation full of *ghee* for obeying the command of Lord, the sustainer of the universe. Whatever is uttered herein is true. The oblation offered is meant only for *Dhataa* and is not for me.

I, the husband! Call my wife who is as beautiful as the full moon and always speaks well of me, in all the functions. Let her, the lady of good fortunes, listen to my words and understand them in letter and spirit. May she perform this function for the wellbeing of the child. Let her do it without

harming herself, like sewing with a needle without hurting oneself. May she give me a brave son. Whatever is uttered herein is true.

The oblation offered is meant for *Raakaa* and is not for me.

मूर्ध्नि दिवो अरतिं पृथिव्या वैश्वानरमृत आ जातमग्निम् ।
को वदे सप्राजमतिथिं जनानामासन्ना पात्रं जनयन्त देवाः ॥२॥

यजु० अ० ७ । मं० २४ ॥

ओं अयमूर्जावतो वृक्ष ऊर्जीव फलिनी भव ।
पर्ण वनस्पते नु त्वा नु त्वा सूयतां रयिः ॥३॥

पा० गृ० १ । १५ । ६, मन्त्र ब्रा० १ । ५ । १ ॥

ओं येनादितेः सीमानं नयति प्रजापतिर्महते सौमगाय ।
तेनाहमस्यै सीमानं नयामि प्रजामस्यै जरदष्टिं कृणोमि ॥४॥

मन्त्र ब्रा० १ । ५ । २ ॥ गो० गृ० २ । ७ । ६ ॥

ओं राकामहं सुहव् सुष्टुती हुवे शृणोतु नः सुभगा बोधतु त्मना ।
सीव्यत्वपः सूच्या छिद्यमानया ददातु वीर शतदायुमुख्यम् ॥५॥
ओं यास्ते राके सुमतयः सुपेशसो याभिर्ददासि दाशुषे वसूनि ।
ताभिर्नो अद्य सुमना उपागहि सहस्रपोषं सुभगे रराणा ॥६॥
किं पश्यसि प्रजां पशून्सौभाग्यं मह्यं दीर्घायुष्वं पत्युः ॥७॥

मं० ब्रा० १ । ५ । ३-५ । गो० गृ० २ । ७ । - १० ।

May the waters and herbs be friendly to us! May they be unfriendly or destructive to those diseases which harm us and whom we also dislike.

Masters of science and archery are the most learned. Like them, the sun that has the highest position knows best where all the precious ores are hidden inside the earth. The learned are well known for their good behavior

and for following a righteous path. They delight all and are respected like guests. They selflessly work towards the protection of the arts and have the qualities of the fire. Like them and a king who brings greatness to his country, so shall we!

O lady! As this tree of *Ficus glomerata* (उदुम्बर) is laden with ripe fruits, so too will you be blessed with the arrival of a good child. O lady! May we be praising frequently your bud like child. May it, produce wealth with your co-operation.

O lady with the as radiant as the full moon! You came to me with a delightful heart and good advice. You have given me physical and spiritual wealth in abundance. You have given me thousand kinds of fortunes, I speak only the true and this oblation is not for me but for *Raakaa*!

My virile husband has implanted his sperm within me in his desire to have a son who is equally virile! May my husband be free from all evil influences and accompany me as I bring up this son.

This earth that is stable contains in her the seeds of various things. So do you oh lucky lady! I have established in you an embryo for you to give birth to in the tenth month.

O house-holder! By the good grace of God you will get a healthy male child from this lady, the owner of great wealth in the form of cows and other animals in the tenth month.

The seven oblations of the mixture are offered when reciting the above mantras. One more oblations is offered when saying – ‘प्रजापते न त्वदेतानन्यो’, thus these become eight oblations. Again one oblation of cooked rice should be offered with the *mantra* ‘ओं प्रजापतये स्वाहा’ Afterwards one oblation of the mixture previously prepared should be offered while saying - यदस्य कमणो.

Thereafter offering eight oblations of *ghee* with the eight *mantras*

beginning with त्वन्नो अग्ने० etc. and four oblations of *ghee* with the four *mantras* of *Vyahriti Ahuti* (ओं भूर्गनये०) the husband and wife should go to a lonely place and sit on a seat so that the husband is seated behind the wife.

ओं सुमित्रिया न आप ओषधमः सन्तु दुर्मित्रियास्तरस्मै सन्तु योऽस्मान्द्वेष्टि यञ्च वयं द्विष्मः ॥ १॥

यजु० अ० ६ । मं० २२

The fifth and the sixth *mantras* are translated previously.

Asks the husband. O lady! What do you see here? Do you see progeny, animals, good fortune and a long life for me?

Pronouncing these above cited seven mantras the husband should drop odiferous oil in the hair of his wife with his own hand and dress the hair with a comb. Afterwards he, taking the small smooth branch of अर्जुन tree, (Germinalia Arjuna) or the branch of smooth Kusha (कुशा) or the quill of porcupine clean the hair of his wife, make two partings beginning at the forehead.. After this they must return to the yajnasala. At this time the instruments like वीणा etc. can be played. After this the *Samaveda Mantras* given in the end of *Samanya Prakarana* should be sung. In singing the *Mantras* of *Samaveda* the following *mantra* must be sung first:

ओं सोम एव नो राजेमा मातुषीः प्रजाः।
अविमुक्तचक्र आसीरस्तीरे तुम्यम् असौ*॥

पार० गृ० कां १ । कं० १५ । सू० प ।

May our King be possessed of peace and tranquility, may this human subject be blessed with happiness and prosperity. This is the river on the vast bank of which the people dwell.

The pregnant wife pours the remaining mixture into the fire and sees her face reflected in the ghee. This time the husband should ask- ‘‘किं पश्यसि’’ what do you see?

The lady should reply- ‘‘प्रजां पश्यामि’’ I am seeing progeny.

Then, older ladies related to the pregnant lady and have many children chat to the mother as she eats the mixture and receives the blessing of the older ladies. They give her the following blessing -

ओं वीरसूस्त्वं भव, जीवसूस्त्वं भव, जीवपत्नी त्वं भवा॥

गो० गृ० २ । ७ । १२ ।

You will give birth to a brave child, you will give birth to a living child, and you will remain the wife of a living husband.

As the sacred water is sprinkled on the lady, *Theertha prokshana*, the priest recites a hymn for the child to be born without any deformity.

1. *Yatheva somah pavathe yatha samudra ejati. Evam tey garbha ejatu.Sahajaraayunaa nishkramya pratitishtha tvaayushi brahmavarchasi yashasi veeryeannadye.*
2. *Dasha masaancha Shayano dhaatra hi tatha krutam .Ethu garbho akshato jeevo jeevantaah.*

Meaning:

Like the soma creeper oozing out the juice in a Sacrifice, like the wave of the ocean. May your pregnancy be smooth and the child born, with a long life, brilliance, fame, vigour and strength.

Brahma has ordained your pregnancy for ten months. I pray for you to release the child with full life and yourself (the mother) having full life.

The ceremony ends with the couple receiving the blessings of all present. A meal follows this with the guests being seen off – the women by

* Here the name of a river should be pronounced.

the lady and the men by her husband. As they leave, the guests are given a bag of betel leaves, betel nuts, a fruit / coconut.

Appendix – 1 – Materials needed for the ceremony

Items Description	Quantity
Turmeric tubers	50 gms
Turmeric powder	50 gms
Kumkum powder	1 box
Sandalwood paste	1 box
Flower garland	5 feet
Flower garland knotted on both sides	2+2
Betel leaves (Piper Betel)	50 leaves
Betel nuts	50
Bananas (attached to the stalk	24
Coconut	15
Rice	5 kg
Unhusked rice /Paddy	200 gms
Incense Sticks	1 packet
Camphor	1 packet
Wicks for lamps	12
Matchbox	1
Oil for the lamps	500 mg
Banana leafs with tapered corners (nuni-elai)	8
Cow's milk	100 ml
Cow dung cakes for the sacred fire	8
Sticks for the fire	Rs 20
Ghee	1 kg
Mango leaves attached to the twig	1
Rice flour for kolams	1 box
Mortar and pestle	1

Veena	1
Platter for arti	1
Metal (brass/silver) utensils Kudam/pot	1
Sombu/smaller pot shaped vessel	1
Kula pathram, a cylindrical tumbler	1
Tumbler	2
Trays	6
Lamps - Kuthu Vilakku	2
Bricks for the Agni Kunda	12

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