

about it, and that life emanated from it.⁴² On the day of the feeding ceremony, the sacramental food is prepared out of cleaned materials, while muttering appropriate Vedic hymns. Different types of food are prescribed for different results intended for the child. Honey and butter in a golden pot are suggested by some authorities. One oblation is offered to Speech (Vāc), another to Vigour (Ūrjā or Ojas). Further, four oblations are offered with these words: *Prāṇenānnaṁ aśīya svāhā, apānenānnaṁ aśīya svāhā, rakṣasā rūpānyāśīya svāhā, śrotreṇa yaśośīya svāhā* (With up-breathing may I enjoy food, *svāhā!* With down-breathing may I enjoy food, *svāhā!* With the eyes may I enjoy visible things, *svāhā!* With the ears may I enjoy fame, *svāhā!*),⁴³ Here the word 'food' is used in a wide sense. The significance of this sacrament is that it marks the weaning of the child from the mother at the proper time, that it impresses the need of food suitable for the age, and that it imparts to the child a sense of the sanctity of food.

Cūḍākaraṇa (tonsure) is the eighth *sanskāra*, the purpose of which is the achievement of long life and beauty for its recipient.⁴⁴ Life is prolonged by tonsure and shortened without it; therefore it should be performed by all means.⁴⁵ That tonsure conduces to long life and beauty is endorsed by Śuśruta, who states that shaving and cutting the hair and nails remove impurities and give delight, lightness, prosperity, courage, and happiness,⁴⁶ and by Caraka, who opines that cutting and dressing the hair, beard, and nails give strength, vigour, life, purity, and beauty.⁴⁷ It is the opinion of some anthropologists that this ceremony had originally a dedicative purpose: that is, hair was cut off and offered to a deity as a gift;⁴⁸ but this dedicative purpose is unknown to the Gṛhya-Sūtras and the Smṛtis. No doubt, the sacrament is sometimes performed in the temple of a deity; this, however, is done only in the case of those children who are born either after long disappointment or after the death of previous children. As a rule, there is no connection between tonsure and the dedication of the shaved hair to a deity.

According to the Gṛhya-Sūtras, the *cūḍākaraṇa* ceremony should take place at the end of the first year or before the expiry of the third year, though later authorities extend the age to the seventh year. The most distinguishing feature of this sacrament is the arrangement of the hair tuft

⁴² Y. P., XVII 33; *Tai. U.*, III. 7. 9. ⁴³ *Pāraskara Gr. S.*, I. 19. 3

⁴⁴ *Yena dhātā bhāspater agner indriya cāyur vapat; tena te āyur vapatni vullohāya matarye.*—*Āhulāyana Gr. S.*, I. 17. 12.

⁴⁵ *Paṇḍita*, quoted in the *Vṛnamudaya*, I. p. 296.

⁴⁶ *Pāpapatamanah kṛta-nakha-roma-parimājanam.*

Harṣa-lāghava-saubhāgya-karam utāha-varidhanam

—*Cikīṭṣā uśhna*, Ch. XXIV 72.

⁴⁷ *Paṇḍitakṣi vṛgyam āyuryam sucīrūpam virājanam.*

Kṛta-smakṛa-nakhādīnāṅh kartanam sampravāddhanam.

⁴⁸ Crawford Howell Toy, *Introduction to the History of Religions*, p. 81.

THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIA

(*śikhā* or *cūḍā*), as the very name of the *śanīshāra* suggests. The vital connection between *śikhā* and life is thus explained by Susruta: 'Inside the head, near the top, is the joint of a *śirā* (artery) and a *śandhi* (critical juncture). There, in the eddy of hairs, is the vital spot called *adhīpati* (overlord). Any injury to this part causes sudden death.'⁴⁰ In course of time, *śikhā* developed as a universal symbol of Hinduism, and its removal came to be regarded as a grave sin.⁴¹

Karṇavedha is the sacrament connected with the boring of the ear, performed between the first and the fourth year of the child. Boring of the limbs for wearing ornaments is a practice current among various peoples all over the world. Throughout the history of civilization, the love of ornamentation has continued. The boring of the ears is a custom undoubtedly ornamental in its origin; but later on it was believed also to be useful from the point of view of health, and in order to emphasize this importance it might have been given a religious sanction. Susruta says that the ears of a child are to be bored for protection and decoration.⁴² The same authority explicitly prescribes the boring of the ears for preventing hydrocele and hernia.⁴³ The type of needle—gold for Kṣatriya, silver for Brāhmaṇa and Vaiśya—with which the ears are to be bored is also prescribed. The *Vīramītrodaya* quotes Bṛhaspati to this effect: A gold needle lends elegance, but those who have no means to have it may use a silver or an iron needle. When *karṇavedha* assumed a religious importance, it became compulsory like the keeping of the *śikhā*. Devala, a mediaeval Smṛti writer, warns that all accumulated merits would disappear at the sight of a Brāhmaṇa through whose ear-holes the rays of the sun do not pass.

EDUCATIONAL SAMSKARAS

Vidyārambha is the tenth sacrament, and it marks the beginning of study, or the learning of the alphabet. When the mind of the child has developed and become ready to receive education, the first thing that is to be done is to teach it the alphabet—to handle the most advanced medium of education. The alphabet is regarded as the route to all knowledge, just as rivers lead to the ocean. 'By the proper mastery of the alphabet he entered the wide domain of literature (*vāñmayā*), as one reaches the ocean through the mouth of the river.'⁴⁴ This sacrament is also known as

⁴⁰ *Sarira-śāstra*, Ch. VI. 21.

⁴¹ *Laghu-Hārta*, IV.

⁴² *Rakṣā-sāhāyāna-nimittāni bālaṃ karṇau vidhyāt.*—*Sarira-śāstra*, XVI. 1.

⁴³ *Saṅkhopari ca karṇau tyaktvā yatrna śvanādi;*
Pyatyāśādi vā śirāni vidhyed antareṣṭādi niṣṭāre.

—*Cikitsā-śāstra*, XIX. 21.

⁴⁴ *Uper yathāśud grahaṃyena vāñmayam*
Nadī mukheraiva samudram āśat.—*Raghuvansha*, III. 28