

The history of hinduism rituals religion essay



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Hindus practice many rituals collectively known as Sansakaras. These rituals or sanskaras depict events in the life cycle of a Hindu person. According to the ancient texts in Hinduism, most significant events in the life cycle include Birth, Marriage, and Death. These Are Explained as Follows: Mix Christianity intro

1. Birth:

In Hinduism, birth of a child is considered a religious ceremony, and involves many rituals. Some of the common rituals, practiced by almost all Hindus at the time of birth of a child, and their significance are discussed below. These rituals initiate a child into Hinduism and are collectively referred to as 'birth rituals.'

i. The first one is Garbhadhana or Impregnation rites. This ritual includes a planned sexual intercourse, between a husband and his wife, performed in a certain way, to conceive the best possible baby. The sex during Garbhadhana is not for pleasure but for developing a good or divine soul in the womb of the wife. Garbhadhana is purely spiritual, and is considered to be very essential. It is required to populate the world with good souls. This is explained by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita, " Sex aimed at creating godly children is as good as God Himself.

'balaṃ balavatam caḥam

kama-raga-vivarjitam

dharmaviruddho bhutesu

kamo 'smi bharatarsabha'

'I am the strength of the strong, devoid of passion and desire. I am sex life which is not contrary to religious principles, O lord of the Bharatas'" (Hindu).

ii. Jatakarma is the ritual performed to welcome the baby into this world. It is performed right before the umbilical cord is cut. In this ritual, father of the child feeds honey to the baby and chant prayers or mantras in baby's ear. This ritual is supposed to increase the aptitude of the child and spiritually help him or her to lead a long and healthy life. In addition, it represents that the presence of the child is desired and appreciated in the family.

iii. Namakarana, meaning 'to give a name,' is the ritual in which the child is given a name, which is meaningful and inspiring. A good name is very important for the child because its meaning reminds him of a purpose or an objective in life and inspires him to fulfill that objective. Generally there is a get-together, in which, sweets are distributed among family and friends after a name has been given to the baby.

iv. Mundan is the ritual where, first haircut of the child is performed. In this ritual, all the hairs on child's head are removed and poured into the nearest holy water body. The removal of these hairs signifies the removal of any deficiencies in the child, and is considered to stimulate growth of the nervous system.

Another initiation ritual, called as Upanayana, is performed for boys in Hinduism. It is carried out right before the puberty starts. This ritual marks the second birth of the child as he begins his journey of 'religious self-

construction.' In this ceremony, the boy acknowledges his duties towards his religion and his privileges resulting from Hinduism. During Upanayana ceremony, a sacred thread is tied around the waist of the boy. This thread consists of three separate symbolic threads meaning to, " worship god, show love and respect to parents, and learn from the religious teacher" (Hindu). Although, a child is born into Hinduism by various birth rituals, a boy child is again initiated into the religion through Upanayana ritual.

Christianity on the other hand, has few significant specific rituals for birth. One common practice in Roman Catholics is where the mother goes to the church, certain days after giving birth to a child, to thank god for a successful birth. By doing this, she re-enters her religious community after pregnancy, and hence this practice is sometimes referred to as a 'purity rite.'

The most significant ritual associated with birth is baptism of the baby. It represents the baby's commencement into Christianity. It is generally performed from 0 to 6 months after the birth of the baby. It is generally performed by the minister of the church, when he pours the holy water and says, " I baptise you (or, 'The servant of God (name) is baptized') in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (see Matthew 28: 19). According to bible, " baptism is a requirement for salvation (Mark 16: 16; Titus 3: 5). Baptism pictures the death and burial of our old self and our resurrection to a new life in Jesus Christ as Romans 6 tells us:

'Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through

baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

" For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

" For the death that He (Jesus) died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Romans 6: 3-6, 10-11, NKJV)" (biblestudy).

This verse and its description in biblestudy. org clearly demarcates that the sins of a person are forgiven and washed away by getting baptized because through baptism, the person symbolizes that he is regretful for all his sins but now he has complete faith in Jesus, and is willing to live a good life under the shadow of Jesus Christ.

Although, infant baptism is performed soon after the birth of a child, it can be compared to the Hindu initiation ritual of Upanayana because of the similar purposes of the two rituals. After baptism, a catholic child is regarded as a member of the church and a complete relationship is established between the child and the church. Therefore, it is clear that like Upanayana, Baptism marks the beginning of religious education. Confirmation to baptism occurs when " the young person can knowingly and freely choose Christian faith," (21 cite this). This happens at an age similar to the age of Upanayana ritual in Hinduism. For both these rituals, a fundamental change takes place

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in the life of the person undergoing the ritual, and this change is considered a rebirth as a fresh identity with new faith, duties, and privileges. According to Christianity, a person cannot attain salvation without being baptized.

Likewise, Upanayana ceremony in Hinduism is the initiation on the road to religious education that ultimately leads to salvation.

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Initiation

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