

SACRAMENT ANNAPRASHANA

Annaprashana Sacrament is a scientific one. This is based on the biological science of a child's body.

Parents should perform this sacrament when the child's digestive system becomes capable to digest solid food items. According to Ashvalayan Grihyasutra 1.16.1, 4, 5. Annaprashana Sacrament should be performed when the child is six months old. It is important to understand that sixth month is the earliest parents can perform this Sacrament on their child. The child should be fed cooked rice mixed with Ghee (Clarified butter) or cooked rice mixed with honey, curd and Ghee after having performed this Sacrament. After this sacrament the mother can continue with breast feeding her child till child is one year old. Because mother's breast milk is always nutritious and good for a child. In second year of child parents should continue with cow or equivalent milk and gradually increasing amount of solid food. As the child becomes more older then parents should gradually increase the amount of solid food and decrease the amount of milk.

Proper amount of rice and Ghee are very nutritious to the child. When milk teeth start coming out then a child can chew the solid food and digest it well. Before child's milk teeth start coming out parents should feed cooked rice powder or blended cooked rice mixed with Ghee or honey and curd as written above.

As written above Annaprashana Sacrament is a natural and scientific act and is connected with the set up created by Almighty God.

Points to consider- For this Sacrament parents should prepared food for their child as following.

Om Pranaay Twaas Jushtam Prokshami. Om Apaanaaya Twaas ----- Om Chachushe Twaas ----- Om Shrotryaas twaas ----- Om Agnaye swishtakrite Twaas -----.

The rice should be properly cleaned, washed and cooked. One should add reasonable amount of Ghee (clarified butter) while rice is still cooking. After the rice is properly cooked it should be cooled down and taken to the place where Havan is to be performed.

Parents should perform Yajna- Havan by reciting Ishwar Stuti Prarthana (Prayer to God), Swastivachana, Shantikarna and complete Samanya Prakarna. When time comes to do Annaprashana Sacrament they should recite following Mantras and feed the child the pre prepared food.

Mantra - Om Annapate annasya no dehyanameevasya shushminah. Pra pra daataram taarish oorjam no dhehi dvipade – chatushpade. Yajurveda 11.83.

Meaning of this Mantra is - O the owner of this cereal Almighty God, please bless us with disease free and nutritious cereals (food). We pray to Almighty God to protect and help farmers who grow these cereals so that we continue receiving these cereals in plenty in future.

In Vedic literature the food items which are appropriate for human consumption are called Anna (Food or corn). Only the vegetarian food is acceptable. It is said "Payah Pashoonaam. Rasmaushadhinaam". It means that food which does not contain milk, juice and medicine is called Anna and is always beneficial to human beings. Please remember that this Sacrament is named Annaprashana and not Meatprashna. Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati is in total agreement of the meaning of this Sacrament.

Parents should make sure that their children are brought up eating vegetarian food only right from the beginning of their life.

Aaharshudhau Satwashudhih - Pure vegetarian food helps in development of pure intellect. There is a proverb (saying) in Hindi "Jaisa Khao Anna Vaisa bane Mann". For a virtuous and righteous, pure, happy and successful life, consumption (eating) of a vegetarian meal is very important. This is the teaching of Vedas.

Mahavaamdevyagaan - This is a well established practice of reciting and singing of Mantras in a certain way which creates an environment of happiness, religious and sacramented. This song is a rule in all Sacraments. By hearing this song all the present guests feel very happy and then under the guidance of a well qualified and learned priest they all bless the child.

For blessing the child in this Sacrament this sentence is very appropriate.

"Twamannpatirannadovardhmaano Bhooyaah." It means - **O child, in future you become the owner of Anna (food) and keep progressing in your life after eating these Anna.**

Here the guests are blessing the child with not just eating the Anna but also become owner of Anna in future. A person who becomes owner of Anna will also work hard in his/her life to earn money by honest means and then live comfortably and donate for the welfare of the society. This is what taught to us by our Vedic culture.