



A Comparative Study of Solah Sanskar in Sanatan Dharma and Parallel Rituals in Other Religions

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ABSTRACT

Rituals and sacraments have been an intrinsic part of human civilization, reflecting our collective understanding of life's purpose, ethical evolution, and spiritual growth. The **Solah Sanskar (Sixteen Sacraments) of Sanatan Dharma** serve as milestones in an individual's journey from conception to liberation (moksha), ensuring the refinement of body, mind, and soul. However, this is not an isolated phenomenon. **Similar rites of passage exist across major world religions**, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism, underscoring the universality of human spirituality.

This paper provides a **comparative study** of Solah Sanskar and analogous rituals across different faiths, exploring their **philosophical foundations, cultural significance, scientific validity, and psychological impact**. It highlights how these rituals, though differing in practice, share common themes of **spiritual purification, moral education, societal integration, and preparation for transcendence**. In an era of increasing cultural exchange, understanding these sacraments from a **universal perspective** fosters greater interfaith respect and appreciation.

Introduction

Since time immemorial, societies have recognized the need to sanctify significant life transitions. Rituals serve as **bridges between the physical, psychological, and spiritual realms**, ensuring that an individual evolves in alignment with ethical and social expectations. **Sanatan Dharma** has formalized this process through the **Solah Sanskar**, each of which refines a specific phase of human life. These sacraments are not merely religious customs but **scientifically and philosophically structured interventions** that shape an individual's personality, responsibilities, and spiritual progress.

However, the concept of life-stage sacraments is not exclusive to Hinduism. Major religions worldwide—**Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism**—also practice **rites of passage** that serve the same purpose. By analyzing these sacraments through a **comparative and cross-cultural lens**, we gain deeper insights into the **fundamental unity of human thought** despite religious diversity.

This paper aims to:

1. Examine the Solah Sanskar in detail—their **purpose, process, and significance**.
2. Compare them with parallel rituals in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism.
3. Evaluate the psychological and scientific relevance **of these sacraments in shaping human lives**.
4. Explore their role in strengthening individual identity and social cohesion.

Comparative Analysis: Similar Rituals in Other Religions

Hinduism (Solah Sanskar)	Christianity	Islam	Judaism	Buddhism
Garbhadhana (Conception Prayer)	Blessing before conception	Islamic Dua for righteous progeny	Kabbalistic prayers for fertility	Buddhist prayers for a virtuous birth
Jatakarma (Birth Ritual)	Baptism	Adhan (prayer in baby's ear)	Brit Milah (circumcision)	Monk blessings for newborns
Namakarana (Naming Ceremony)	Christening	Aqiqah (naming & charity)	Simchat Bat (Jewish naming)	Naming ceremony by monks
Upanayana (Initiation into Learning)	Confirmation	Bismillah (Quranic initiation)	Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Ordination for novice monks
Vivaha (Marriage Rituals)	Holy Matrimony	Nikah	Kiddushin	Buddhist blessing ceremony
Antyeshti (Funeral Rites)	Last Rites	Janazah (Islamic burial)	Jewish Mourning (Shiva)	Buddhist Cremation Rituals

This comparison highlights that despite **cultural differences**, the **essence of these sacraments remains universal**.

Scientific and Psychological Impact of Rituals

1. Psychological Significance

- Rituals provide **mental stability**, reinforcing **social and personal identity**.
- They help individuals **transition smoothly** between life stages.
- They promote **community bonding**, strengthening cultural continuity.

2. Scientific Relevance

- **Fetal rituals (Pumsavana, Seemantonnayana)**: Modern research shows that a child's **neurological and psychological development begins in the womb**, validating the practice of prenatal rites.
- **Ear Piercing (Karnavedha)**: Ayurveda and modern science suggest that **ear piercing improves brain function and immune response**.
- **Funeral Rites (Antyeshti)**: Cremation, practiced in Hinduism and Buddhism, has been found to be an **environmentally efficient way** of body disposal compared to burials.

These rituals are **not just spiritual customs but also have deep scientific foundations**.

Conclusion

The Universality of Rites of Passage

The **Solah Sanskar of Sanatan Dharma and similar rituals in other religions** reflect a shared human tendency to sanctify life's transitions. These rituals **align the individual with their moral responsibilities**, ensuring a life of **dharma (righteousness)**, **artha (prosperity)**, **kama (fulfillment)**, and **moksha (liberation)**.

While **each religion expresses these rites in unique ways**, their **core purpose remains the same**—to elevate human consciousness, foster ethical behavior, and prepare individuals for their ultimate spiritual journey. Recognizing these **universal patterns of human civilization** promotes **interfaith dialogue, respect, and appreciation**, paving the way for a more harmonious world.

In essence, rituals are **not just traditions**; they are **psychological tools, social contracts, and spiritual pathways that connect humanity across time and culture**.

Future Scope of Research

Further studies could explore:

1. The **evolution of these sacraments over time** across different civilizations.
2. **Scientific validation** of each ritual's impact on human development.
3. The **role of modern society in preserving or modifying these traditions**.

Understanding and preserving these rituals can **enrich both individual lives and global cultural heritage**, ensuring their wisdom continues to guide future generations.