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## อุปนयนะ: พิธีกรรมของเส้นด้ายกับความเชื่อใน คัมภีร์พระเวทและสังคมไทย

### UPANAYANA: The Thread Ceremony and Belief in the Vedic Texts and Thai Society

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## บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิชาการนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) เพื่อศึกษาพิธีกรรมอุพนายนะในพระเวท และ 2) เพื่อศึกษาพิธีกรรมของเส้นด้ายที่เกี่ยวข้องกับความเชื่อในพระเวทและสังคมไทย จากการศึกษาพบว่า อุพนายนะ เป็นพิธีกรรมของเส้นด้ายหรือการคล้องด้ายศักดิ์สิทธิ์ให้แก่เด็กในช่วงเริ่มต้นของการเรียนเพื่อส่งมอบเด็ก 3 วรณะให้แก่ครูเพื่อรับเอาความรู้หลายอย่างจากครู พิธีกรรมนี้ถือกำเนิดขึ้นจากยุคพระเวทจนถึงปัจจุบัน พิธีกรรมนี้มีชื่อเรียกอีกอย่างหนึ่งว่า “ยัชโญปวีต” สีของเส้นด้ายแตกต่างกัน ขึ้นอยู่กับวรรณะและเทพเจ้าของพวกเขา พิธีกรรมเส้นด้ายในสังคมไทยแตกต่างจากพระเวท เส้นด้ายตามความเชื่อของคนไทยมี 2 ชนิดคือ 1) สายสิญจน์ มี 2 สี ได้แก่ สีขาวและคละสี เส้นด้ายทั้งสองสีนี้ใช้ในพิธีกรรมที่เป็นมงคลเท่านั้น และ 2) สายโยง ใช้ในงานศพเท่านั้น คนไทยทุกกลุ่มสามารถใช้ด้ายมงคลได้ทุกประเภท ไม่จำกัดสีเหมือนกับคนอื่นแต่อย่างใด แม้ว่าทั้งสองชาติจะมีความเชื่อแตกต่างกัน แต่ก็ยังใช้เส้นด้ายเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการสร้างความมั่นคงและความเป็นเอกภาพให้แก่คนในสังคมได้ ดังนั้น เส้นด้ายตามแนวคิดของพระเวทและคนไทยถือว่าเป็นสัญลักษณ์ที่มีความหมายของทั้งสองวัฒนธรรมซึ่งสามารถเชื่อมโยงและสร้างเอกภาพในความหลากหลายของทั้งสองประเทศได้อย่างสมบูรณ์

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คำสำคัญ: อุพนายนะ, เส้นด้าย, พิธีกรรม, ความเชื่อ, คัมภีร์พระเวท

## A b s t r a c t

The objectives of this academic article were: 1) to study the Upanayana ritual in the Vedas and 2) to study the sacred thread ritual related to the belief in the Vedas and Thai society. From this study it was found that: Upanayana is a sacred thread ritual or investiture with the sacred thread which is performed when young people of the first three castes are passed over to a teacher to learn various forms of knowledge. This ritual originated in the Vedic period and continues to the present day. Another name for this ritual is “Yajyopavita.” The colors of the sacred threads are different, depending on the castes and their gods. The sacred thread ceremonies in Thai society differ from the ceremonies in the Vedas in various ways. There are 2 kinds of threads according to Thai beliefs: 1) the Sai-siñcana has 2 colors; white and multicolored—both are used in auspicious ceremonies only—and 2) Sai-yong; which is used only in funeral rites. All classes of Thais can use all kinds of sacred threads for they are not limited to some castes like in the Indian rituals. Although the two nations have different beliefs, they still use the threads to establish stability and unity for the people in society. Therefore, the sacred threads used in the Vedas and Thai society are a meaningful symbol in the two cultures to connect differences and create unity in the two nations perfectly.

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**Keywords:** Upanayana, thread, ceremony, belief, Vedas

## Introduction

The system of learning and teaching of India and Thailand in the past, mostly, liked operating it by a form of family and temple and relied on the wise men in the temple and family as the teacher to teach students who wanted to study many kinds of subjects according to their attentions and abilities. In India, a Brahmin caste has more accepted as the scholar and had much dominance in the parts of a knowledgeable man. The children who wanted to study had to choose a knowledgeable Brahmin appropriate to their needs to study in the Brahmin's family by offering themselves as the disciples. For a study fee, it might be money, gold, pets or valuable things. It depended on their status and readiness. But the system of Thais in the past, the learners had to try finding knowledge from wise men in various communities such as houses, palaces or temples, etc. The houses were the first places for socializing the family's members. Parents had the duty to transmit career, life skills, and training their children. The palaces were the center of savants and trained many sciences for people to be the noblemen. The

temples were the places for performing the rituals, they did their duty to train, teach and preach Dhamma for the Buddhists. The caste system and belief of Indians in the past have influenced to live their lives until the present. Most of their duties and missions do always relate to the caste belief, although they do the education system. Brahmin caste took time in studying 16 years, Ksatriya 22 years, and Vaisya 24 years respectively. (Keith 1925: 369-372)

## **1. Ritual, thread, and belief in the Vedas and Thai society**

### **1.1 Ritual**

Rite or ritual, rendered into Thai word as ‘Bidhikamma,’ means a ceremony. This compound word originated from 2 words; Bidhi and Kamma. When combined with them as a single word, it becomes “Bidhikamma.” This word “Bidhikamma.” means religious worships or forms practiced. (Office of the Royal Society 1999: 788)

Bidhikamma means ritual action that completes the wanted result or ritual action that leads the wanted action. It is the mutual activity of the community, the tool that trained

self-control or the basis to develop other virtues such as training the body and speech to be in self-control which causes the happiness to happen in that society. (Phra Dhammapitaka 1994: 7)

So, Bidhikamma is an activity, culture, tradition, and behavior that human beings supposed it up by intention according to their beliefs, has its steps in clear communication and action to attain the hope, happiness, abundance, rich, safety and other objectives that one expected. Bidhikamma is a way to create the fundamental discipline, support spiritual power to live together, living one's life and the beginning point to develop other virtues high by the principle of Bidhikamma in that religion.

## **1.2 Thread or Sai-siñcana**

Dai or thread means something that made by webs such as spun cotton or silk and then brought it to spin as a thread for sewing weaving etc. (Dictionary of the Royal society of Thailand 1999) when people brought the thread to perform the ceremony in auspicious activities and funeral rites of Buddhism, it is called "Sai-siñcana or Sai-sin." When there have auspicious events happened, a performer will make the Sai-siñcana circle round the Buddha image base including the bowl of holy water or everything in the ritual for auspiciousness. This Dai or Sai-siñcana has used in many kinds of auspicious events such as wrist-binding ritual, spirit-recalling ritual, wedding ritual or ritual of reciting an incantation over the amulets, etc.

Thread means the length of spun cotton, silk, flax, wool,

etc. especially for use in sewing and weaving. (Hornby 1988: 900)

In the present time, Thai people like to bring Sai-siñcana to cut into pieces to bind the wrists of interested people, and sometimes the villagers also use the silk to bind the wrists. Somewhere, the monks use 5 colors of thread and silk to knit as the rope and then recite an incantation over the thread with mantras. After that, they contributed holy threads to their followers. Some monks did not use only bare thread but they also bind the Takrud<sup>1</sup>. Some monks used Sai-siñcana to bind or knit it with colorful stones to be the holy amulets. (La-or 2018)

Sai-siñcana is the auspicious thread, believed that it is holy and has much influence on many kinds of auspicious events. If this thread is used in the funeral rites, it will be called “Sai-yong.” In the present time, Sai-siñcana is an important component in all kinds of auspicious events such as Sadohgroh ritual, it will have to embroil or tying Sai-siñcana around the holy thing and then bring it to bind around one head. Ancient Thai people believed that one who performed this ritual would free from all obstacles and dangers. There are 3 important ways of how to make Sai-siñcana namely (Phrakru Siriratananuwat 2016: 39-40) 1) Three threads or lines that made them twist or strand-like a rope means the Three Characteristics;<sup>2</sup> 2) Seven threads that made

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<sup>1</sup> Fetish or amulet containing with spell or incantation which was made by plaques or Lan leaves and then rolled like a short small pipe. It's used around the neck, tie an arm or around the waist to protect an evil spirit.

<sup>2</sup> The Three characteristics namely 1) Aniccatā impermanence; transiency 2) Dukkhatā: state of suffering or being oppressed and 3) Anattatā: soullessness; state of being not self.

them twist or strand-like a rope means 7 latent tendencies<sup>3</sup>, and 3) Nine threads that made them twist or strand-like a rope means 9 Supermundane states or nine-fold Lokuttaradhamma.

Thread or Dai comes from Sanskrit “Sutra.” This word is derived from the root or origin of the word is Siv which means sewing, weaving or knitting, etc. Basically, Sutra has two meaning namely: 1) the sacred thread that three castes of Indians wore or put on student’s neck to indicate the first time of studying the sciences from Brahmin and also the difference of each caste and 2) the basic scripture of philosophical system including the proverb set, concept or the principle to determine the way. (Grimes 1996: 306)

The holy thread combined with 3 threads or webs which meant the high gods of Hinduism namely: The Brahma, Visnu, and Shiva, or it means knowledge, Karma, and devotion. This thread indicates that the children are responsible for their parents, society and knowledge pursuit. (Krishnaswamy & Harini 2014: 35) In Thai society in the past until the present, thread or Dai is used in a variety of activities such as fabric weaving, making clothes by the time of tendency of each region. Moreover, the thread is also applied to the ritual.

One’s belief that has existed with Thai society for a long time is to tie arms or wrists with thread. It has indicated what welcoming the guests, morale recalling, encouragement, and

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<sup>3</sup> 7 Latent tendencies are: 1) Kāmarāga: Lust for sensual pleasure, 2) Patigha: repulsion; irritation; 3) Ditthi: wrong view, 4) Vicikicchā: doubt; uncertainty, 5) Māna: conceit, 6) Bhavarāga: lust for becoming, Avijjā: Ignorance.

the blessing for people to be happy and successful in life, etc. Thai people have a special way how to make the thread for the wrist's tying. It also depended on the local belief and art. The thread brought to tie one's wrist, it has to be the raw thread which not never used in any activities. The performers have to make the thread as the circle, long enough to bind or tie around one's wrist. In the past, Thai people like counting each piece of thread for tying one's wrist. If it was a common person, one has to make the thread as a circle, each circle would have 3 threads. If it was an elite one, 5 threads would be used (Elite people 5, slaves 3). (Regional Distance Education Center-Udon Thani 2011: 10)

Thread and belief in ritual according to Thai people related to each other. Thread means a thing made of the web such as cotton or silk web and then brought to spin a web or line for sewing, weaving, knitting or fabric weaving. Thai people like using the thread to perform 2 kinds of rituals namely: ritual used in the auspicious event is called "Sai-siñcana." Thai people have believed that this thread is holy because the monks used it as the media for consecrating auspiciousness or holiness to protect one from ghosts, evil spirits, devils or dangers. And thread used in funeral rites is called "Sai-young, Bhusa-young." But the thread according to the Vedic concept means the sacred or holy thread that used in Upanayana ritual. Brahmins are the performers of this ritual and use the mantra to consecrate it for auspiciousness. This thread ritual is arranged for 3 castes only: Brahmins, Ksatriyas and Vaisyas.

### 1.3 Belief

Belief means acceptance, respecting or adhering something both concrete and abstract that it is real or unreal. This accepting or respecting something may have enough evidence to be proved or it may not have any evidence to be proved as real about that. When human beings believe in something, they will express it through physical and verbal appearance. (Phrakru Pariyatsarakarn 2008: 19)

Belief means an acceptance originated in the subconscious mind of human toward supernatural power that was good or bad to humanity or society. Although the supernatural power could not be proved that it was real but the humanity of society still accepted, paid respect and was afraid of. (Punnotok 1988: 95)

Belief is acceptance, respect and the way how to act or practice to something according to one's belief. The believed thing may be concrete or abstract, have reason or unreason to guarantee. This belief is important to the way of life of everyone. It is the center of people's minds, community, and society that operates to hold and socialize the way of life of people going in the same direction, and establishes stability, consistency, and unity for society.

### 1.4 Veda

Veda means knowledge. The term 'Veda' came from the Vid, means to know, knowing. The Veda is the wildest and greatest treasure in the part of spiritual knowledge revealed from the seers at different times. This knowledge has occurred from a state of high Dhamma practice and inherited respectively

for a long time from many generations of Indians by the way of oral transmission or memorization. Vedic scriptures have had its story of Aryans in the time they located their houses in middle Asia, close to the Caspian Sea. These scriptures appeared clearly and were influenced to the way of their lives and system of thought very much when they migrated to live in the new place of northern India which in the present called Punjab, India. (Griswold 1999: 1-2)

The Vedic era occurred from 1200 to 1500 BC. (Sampurnanand 1969: 7) The Aryans migrated from central Asia to live in the Indus River Basin the northern west of present India. Aryans society has been grown up obviously in the state of Punjab and composed many ancient mantras in the year 1400 BC. In Rigveda, there was a collection of mantras more than 1,000 verses. Most of the mantras narrated the Vedic gods and recorded them in Vedic Sanskrit. Aryans were nomadic and liked living in the wide prairie which could be divided into 3 groups: the kings, priests and common people. (Judith E. Walsh 2006: 17-18) Vedic scripture has 2 components: Mantrabhaga or Samhita and Brahmanabhaga. Both are believed that it is the ancient Hindu scriptures not composed by anyone. (Narayana 1895: 32) The main essence of the Vedas can be concluded 3 topics: 1) Karma Kanda means part of the practice to do good, 2) Upasana Kanda means part of meditation practice, and Jnana Kanda means part of spiritual knowledge for attaining the gods. The Veda was divided into 4 scriptures. (Jamison & Witzel 1992: 6) they are:

1.4.1 Rigveda: It is the collection of mantras to exalt the gods by having the priests functioned the mantra-prayers in the time of ritual performing. It is the first scripture of Brahmins. Many scholars believed that the mantras of Rigveda have been developed from the tribal songs of Aryans. These local people also liked to perform the rituals to worship the gods. (Radhakrishnan 1948: 64)

1.4.2. Yajurveda: It is the scripture of rule or regulation for performing the sacrifices and suggestions using in the Vedic rituals. Most of the mantras in this scripture are the mixed forms of both poetry and prose, divided into 2 types: 1) Black Yajurveda, and 2 White Yajurveda.

1.4.3. Samaveda: It is the scripture collected many kinds of poems prepared for praying in each ritual performing and including rhythm or melody in mantra-praying to perform the ritual. The performer will recite the mantras in the poems by different rhythms. Most of the Samavedic mantras originated from Rigveda. (Jamison &Witzel 1992: 8) The scholars believed that both Samaveda and Yajurveda happened at the time of Rigveda collection in groups and the Brahmana period. After that, it emphasized in the ritual and then many rituals have finally become part of Hinduism. (Radhakrishnan 1948: 65)

1.4.4. Atharvaveda: it happened in the late period and the main source of mantras, spells, witchcraft, incantations, superstitions, black magic, rules, and methods how to use black mantras and white mantras by its objectives, application of materials related with house rituals such as wedding ceremony,

funeral rites, etc.

Then, Vedas are the ancient scriptures of Brahmanism about 1500 BC. Veda comes from the roots Vid, it means knowing or immortal knowledge related to realities. This knowledge did not happen from human beings' thinking, not composed by them (Apaurisheya), but it happened from the gods. After that, the gods brought it to inform the seers and then they brought it to tell human beings respectively. The essences and practices of the Vedas were transmitted by oral way of the priests or Brahmins, believed that it was sacred very much. Vedas learning is allowed for 3 castes only: Ksatriya, Brahmana, and Vaisya. One who wanted to study the Vedas had to perform Upanayana ritual to wear the holy thread from the savant Brahmin. Whoever did not perform this ritual, could not study the Vedas. Indians in the Vedic period believed that threads were a part of clothing and auspiciousness in family rituals. So in many activities, the way of life, faith of gods or religious rituals, they would always use the threads to be the part of their operation. Here are some verses of the Vedas mentioned the threads:

“6 Indra, as such, give us a share of sunlight, of waters, sinlessness, and reputation. Do thou no harm to our yet unborn offspring: our trust is in thy mighty Indra-power.” (HYMN CIV. Indra. p-105)

“3 This light, the best of lights, supreme, all-conquering, winner of riches, is exalted with high laud. All-lighting, radiant, mighty as the Sun to see, he spreadeth wide unfailing victory and strength.” (HYMN CLXX. Surya. p-606)

“5. Loose me from sin as from a bond that binds me: may we swell, Varuna, thy spring of Order. Let not my thread, while I weave song, be severed, nor my work’s sum, before the time, be shattered.” (HYMN XXVIII. Varuna p-178)

“14 Speed forward hither, come to us, rejoice thee in the milky draught: Spin out the thread of ancient time, as well is known.” (HYMN XIII. Indra. p-391)

“6 Over the heights have they attained the highest thread that is spun out, And this which must be deemed most high.” (HYMN XXII. Soma Pavamana. p-466)

“4 The Gods have made me bearer of oblations, who slipped away and passed through many troubles. Wise Agni shall ordain for us the worship, whether five–wayed, threefold, or seven–threaded.”

“6 Spinning the thread, follow the region’s splendid light: guard thou the path ways well which wisdom hath prepared. Weave ye the knotless labour of the bards who sing: be Manu thou, and bring the Heavenly People forth.” (HYMN LIII. Agni Saucika Gods. p-545)

“2 May we obtain, completely wrought, the thread spun out to reach the Gods, That perfecteth the sacrifice.” (HYMN LVII. Visvedevas. p-547)

These verses signified that Indians in the Vedic era used the threads to be the part of their life, daily activities, clothing, a belief of religion and gods. Spinning the thread to sew their clothes was the main task of people at that time. In the part of gods, they took the threads to connect the supernatural power

and ask for blessings from the gods. To use the threads in the rituals had the difference. Sometimes they used five-wayed, threefold or seven-threads, it depended on each ritual and occasion. So the threads are important evidence of the Vedas that can establish the greatness of Indians and have their own identity which well-known around the world.

## **2. Upanayana-lacing and tying the thread in the Vedas**

The system of education of Indians in the Vedic period proceeded by the form of family, depended on the family's scholar as the teacher to teach many kinds of knowledge to the youth according to his ability and attention. Brahmin caste has accepted as an experienced scholar and has had an important role in maintaining the varieties of knowledge. The youth who wanted to study the sciences had to select the knowledgeable Brahmin to meet his own needs, entered to study in the Brahmin family, offered himself as a pupil. The tuition fee might be money, gold or some valuable materials. It depended on the pupil's status and readiness. (Choosukhserm 2562: 114)

In ancient times, Thai education had an inheritance of traditional culture, was an effort to gain knowledge from the wise men in various communities. At this time, the villages, temples, and palace were the main center of education such. The village was the training place, socializing the mind of family members, the parents were responsible for transferring knowledge, careers, and training for children. Palace was the center of various scholars in many fields to be the noblemen

serving in His Majesty's feet especially the work of arts and handicrafts to build the palaces and perform royal ceremonies. The temple was a place for performing the religious rituals, the monks were responsible for providing the knowledge, training and preaching Dhamma to people. In the past Thai society, Thai people like to ordain men to study before marriage to make them have morality, confident minds and able to take care of their houses and live happily together. The caste system and belief of ancient Indians had influenced the way of life of all people's groups. All their duties or burdens do always have the caste-related to, even though the educational systems do. If a child was born in the Brahmin caste, it would have some ritual to step into studentship when he was 8 years old, the king caste 11 years old and Vaisya caste 12 years old. The way of life and time for study in the teacher's family will take time in descending order according to the period of the first study. Brahmin took time for study 16 years, the king 22 years and the Vaisya 24 years. (Keith 1925: 369-372)

Upanayana means bringing near, fetching, gaining, attaining, procuring, employing, investiture with the sacred thread, initiation into a sacred study, handing a youth of the first three castes to a teacher, (Apte 1890: 324) or it means leading to or near, investiture with the sacred thread to youth on the first time of his study. (Lakshman 1889: 138)

Upanayanam means thread ceremony, Upanayanam Samskara or pre-educational Samskara. It is part of the educational Samskaras. When the students want to get all kinds

of knowledge from the teachers, they have to perform the foremost ritual which is called Upanayanam. The students who wanted to study the Vedas, they have to start their educations only after this Samskara. (Yegnasubramanian n.d.: 1) Upanayana and Upanayanam are derived from the same root and same meaning. Upanayana is used like a primitive noun, not having a system of noun declension and Upanayanam used like an object of the verb and having noun declension in Sanskrit language. In this article, a writer used both words of the same meaning.

This ritual is to be performed for all three castes: the Brahmins, the kings, and the merchants. Whoever does not want to study or join the system of the Vedic education or Vaidika Samskara, they are generally considered Sudras. Upanayanam ritual will always follow the Vedic scriptures. It suggests the time in which this Samskara can be performed. The age of caste or Varna of each student will specify the appropriate time of this ritual namely: (Keith 1925: 369-372)

2.1 Brahmins, when the children of this caste were 8 years old including pregnancy, they have to perform the thread ceremony. This ritual is usually in the Spring seasons or Vasanta Ritu. All Brahmins have to follow the Vedic function; Veda Pathanam or teaching of Vedas.

2.2 Kshatriyas or the kings, when the children were 11 years old including pregnancy, they have to perform this ritual. The suggested season is summer or Grishma Ritu. Their function is to know and follow their Dharma. Their Vedic education was also limited to that extent because they had a larger responsibility

for protecting the entire country.

2.3 Vaisyas or merchants, when the children were 12 years old including pregnancy, they have to perform this ritual. The suggested and preferred season is autumn or Sarad Ritu. Their function was essentially commerce to assure the economic basis for the country. Their Vedic education was limited to that much extent to know their Dharma adequately and also had additional education in commerce etc.

### **3. Purpose of Upanayanam**

Upanayanam means the symbol or mark of entry into a second life. First life was born from his mother. The second life was from this ritual. And after the performance of this ceremony, the boy becomes a Dvija which means the second birth as (Dve janman yasya sa: - one who had got two Janmas. When three castes or Varnas had done this Upanayanam ritual, they are known as Dvijas. Most of the Indian people believed that the children who did not perform this ritual, they did not have the complete birth and personality. When each child reaches the age of 7 or 8, the mind, intellect, etc. will be developed from that stage to the human stage with self-awareness and feeling of humanity, etc. It is necessary and critical to regulate and orient the personality of each child in the right direction. Upanayanam in this time is a Samskara to mold the personality to become a good and responsible human being with several considerations such as:

3.1 Proper emotional personality; absorbing of values such as Satyam Vada (speak the truth); or Dharmam Cara (abide by

Dharma), etc. Even if the child does not understand and follow for the values sometimes, he will realize the values later and grow with the right attitude and emotion.

3.2 Development of the intellect with the right type to knowledge such as Viveka (dispassion) etc. and development of a spiritual personality.

3.3 Training the physical discipline such as getting up early, cleanliness, etc.

3.4 Learning the knowledge of Varna or caste Dharma and Asrama Dharma including the duties to respect others etc.

So, in the life of this Samskara, the society and the individual are considered together to build up the right personality of the child during his growth. Entry into such a lifestyle is indicated by the Upanayana Samskara. In the Vedic period, the child started his study from the scholars or Brahmins. The ideal setting for this education was the Gurukula setting. The child can learn without the emotional considerations, pampering, etc. of the parents, and will also be able to learn through social interaction with other children. And many parts of social skill will start from this ritual. The course for this education is depended on the Vedic scriptures related to many programs of knowledge such as the Purusharthas of the individual, the social well-being duties to family, teachers, priests or society, etc. When a learner leads a life on learnings the Vedas, this life will be called “Brahmacaryam” means a way of life which devised by Brahma – the Vedas. A student who leads such a life is called a Brahmacari. Another meaning of Brahma refers to Para Brahman.

The word Upanayana has been described in many ways. The term Upa means ‘near’ and Nayanam means ‘leading’. When combining these terms together, they become “Upanayana” means ‘leading near.’ It is a ritual by which a person is purified and made fit to learn the Vedas or Vedam Upanayanam. These are some examples and steps of Upanayanam:

- to study Vedas, the child goes to a Guru and so it can be described as Gurum Upanayanam.

- through this ritual, the child is coming closer and closer to the Parabrahma and so can be described as Parabrahama Upanayanam.

- when the teacher or Brahmin utters the Mantraham Upanaye which means I take the boy near myself, it will be called Upanayanam.

When the child learns the Vedas from the teacher, an ideal human being is born, and for this birth, the Veda is the mother and the teacher is the father. So there are two births in detail: First birth-a non-refined individual is with human anatomy and the second birth takes place in Upanayanam. Vedic mantra is held to be the most sacred mantra of the Vedas. (Grimes 1996: 128) In summary, the purpose of Upanayanam has two meanings:

1. It symbolizes entry into Gurukulam. When the parents of children choose the appropriate scholars or Brahmins, they will lead their children to the teacher’s family or Gurukulam.

2. It purifies the child to enter the teacher’s family or Gurukulam to learn and recite the Gayatri mantra and the Vedas. After performed the Upanayanam Samsakar, the teacher

or Guru begins to provide many kinds of Vedic knowledge to his student. The Vedas are the sources of many sciences such as religion, philosophy, tradition, culture, political science, astrology, mathematics or ethnic, etc. Moreover, the children have learned new things and the necessary social skills of life to live in society peacefully.

#### **4. The Upanayanam ritual**

There are a few steps of the father to teach his son before sending him to the teacher's family. The biological father, usually, does the Gayatri mantra Upadesam to the child, before sending to the Gurukulam and hence, plays the role of the Acarya. If the father has not been performing the Sandhya Vandanam rituals regularly, at least a few weeks before the ritual, he should recite 1008 Gayatris along with the Sandhya Vandanam. (Yegnasubrmanian n.d. : 5-6)

When the parents wanted to perform Upanayana ritual to their children, they have to do many preparatory rituals prescribed in the Vedic scriptures such as Nandi Sraddham (to propitiate the ancestors), Udakasanti, Punyaha Vacanam (purificatory rites), etc. From the past until now, all these rituals for the boy were done by his father such as Uatakarma, Namakarana, etc. And from now on, the child becomes responsible to do all the rituals and so has to be purified. This is considered a second birth in the old days, the child was asked to remain silent in a separate room to be symbolic of Garbhavasa. Then, Acarya is going to teach the child. He keeps the child in his Garbha or room, as it were - for three nights-Tam Ratri: Tisra: Udare Bibharti and when

the new Brahmacari is born, all the Devatas will come and be happy “Tam jatam drushtum abhisamyanti deva. To complete this ritual, a boy has to join many steps of this ritual. They are as follows: 1) Wearing of the sacred thread, it is called Yajnopavita Dharanam which means wearing of the sacred thread, 2) Kumara bhojanam or Joint meal, 3) Vastra Dharanam or wearing of new clothes, 4) Brahmacarya Lingani or symbols of the Brahmacari by using three strands of Munja grass braided and tied around the waist three times clockwise. (Lakshman 1889: 587), 5) Anjali Tirtha-Prokshanam or purification of the child, 6) Acarya Varanam or choosing the teacher, 7) Upanayana Homam or meaning of praying to deities to ask for various boons from each of these deities for the, 8) Brahmopadesam; this term Brahma, in this case, refers to Vedas, not Brahma god. This ritual is conducted completely with the mantra recited by the teacher on the right ear of the child - Ganga is supposed to be present on the right ear. At the same time, the teacher, the student, and the parents are enclosed so that this cannot be overheard. After that, the Upanayana samskara is considered as the second birth of the student.

## 5. Threads and colors of Indian belief

In the present, Indians have believed in threads differently and the color of threads have also much influence toward their lives and believes. When we saw many Indians wearing different colorful threads on various parts of their bodies, we didn't know exactly what they mean. In Hinduism, wearing the sacred threads is a common practice. People have worn the various colorful

threads such as white, black, yellow, red and orange on their wrists or necks and sometimes on the waists. Each colorful and sacred thread of Indians has an importance of its own. These threads are usually tied to a part of the body to ward off all evil eyes, bad dreams or enemies, or ask for an abundance of prosperity or good health, etc. These sacred threads cannot be worn by everyone. Some thread is worn only by the upper castes of people. Even the yellow thread or the Mangalsutra is worn by married women. Here are some brief details of each colorful threads: (Muraleedharan 2019)

5.1 Red Thread or Kalava: Wearing the red thread on either wrist is a common sight in India. Men, as well as women, can be seen wearing the red thread, which is also known as the Kalava. The red thread or Kalava symbolizes a long life and protection against enemies. Hence, in some parts of India, the Kalava is also called ‘Raksha’ which means protection. The red thread is usually tied on the right hand of men and unmarried women, while it is tied on the left hand for married women.

5.2 Black Thread: Black color denotes protection from evil eyes. A black thread is usually tied to the waist of small children to protect them against ‘Nazar’ or evil eye. Some tie it for blessings from Lord Shani.

5.3 Orange or Saffron Thread: Orange or saffron threads are also tied on the wrist to bring fame, power and guard the person against all evils.

5.4 White Thread: The sacred white thread is tied to the Upanayana ceremony. This thread is also known as the ‘Janeu

thread'. White symbolizes purity. According to Hindu practices, the white thread is only worn by Brahmins.

5.5 Yellow Thread: The yellow thread is the symbol of marriage. On the wedding day, the yellow thread is prepared using turmeric and is tied around the bride's neck with three knots while the priest recites Vedic hymns.

5.6 Green thread: Shiny Green Threads are worn by few people who are from the Agriculture background and who support nature. Green threads signify Mother Nature and people tie it to show their support for preserving nature and fight against deforestation. Also, some wear green threads when they follow Lord Guberan (God of Wealth). The belief is to remain prosperous with blessings from the Lord of Wealth. (Indiainten 2018)

5.7 Multicolor Raksha Sutra: Then there are threads with several other color variations. Pale Red color for Lord Ayyappa (Kerala). Bright Orange color threads are worn by devotees of Lord Hanuman who gives confidence and strength.

5.8 Fashion Threads: Wearing fashion threads on the wrist has always been on vogue. A pop of color adds glamour to a dull boring outfit. These fashion threads can be worn around the wrist and neck and sometimes around the ankle. These days we can find small embellishments and trinkets embedded in the thread that brings in a lot of life to the accessory. Wearing fashion threads is a timeless way of adding more appeal to personality. Varying from a brown thread with wooden beads that go well with monochrome dresses to colorful threads with tassels and Pom Poms that is best paired for Boho type dresses,

there one for every outfit.

So, Indians have believed in threads and colors of threads differently. The Color of each thread has different meanings and objectives. Some threads are allowed for upper castes of people but some for common people. However, although the threads have different colors they denote the unity of Hinduism. Threads and their belief have become a part of Indian society and an important cause to socialize unity of people and build stability in society.

## **6. Threads with unity in diversity of two nations**

Thais and Indians have believed in threads from the ancient time. Thai people used threads in many activities such as weaving, sewing, embroidery, clothing, etc. But when the threads are used in Buddhism, they are divided into 2 meanings: 1) Sai-siñcana ; it means the auspicious or holy thread such as wedding ceremony, new house ceremony, welcoming ceremony, the ceremony of creating people's morale or ceremony of teacher worship, etc. This Sai-siñcana is usually white. But in the present, it has many colors like fashion threads, especially colorful bracelets. It depends on people's beliefs and regions. All people can use and tie the wrist's threads. When these threads or bracelets were recited incantations over by the monks, people have believed that they are holy and can protect them from all bad things and build wealth, health, money or property as they wanted. 2) Sai-yong; It is kind of Sai-siñcana but used in funeral rites only. When someone died, relatives will connect Sai-yong from a corpse to the monks. Then, the monks recited

some mantras to dedicate goodness to a departed.

In the past time, an evidence of culture how to use thread and silk in Thailand was not clear. As we known, silk and many kinds of threads originated in ancient China and India where the practice of weaving silk began around 2,640 BCE, Chinese merchants spread the use of silk throughout Asia through trade. (Thai Silk 2020) When going back 3,000 years, it was found that there was an excavated village called Baan Chiang near the northern city of Udon Thani. This is the oldest known village in Indochina and archeologists found silk threads there along with pottery with painted silk worm motifs. (Remember China first developed silk almost 5,000 years ago.) No one knows how silk thread came to Baan Chiang. Did silk traders from China bring it? Or did Baan Chiang inhabitants engage in sericulture and made the silk thread themselves? No one is certain. Thai silk history goes completely dark until the 13th Century when the 1st Siamese capital of Sukothai became a prominent political and economic player in Old Siam. Sukothai imported silks from China, India and the Khmer Empire and the Siamese Royal Court wore exclusively these imported silks. Thai silks were considered of inferior quality to these imported textile. (My Thailand 2016)

So, when considering from details mentioned above, we have some evidence to indicate that Thailand has had the culture how to use and weave the thread and silk from China and India. In a writer's opinion, the threads used in many activities of Thai culture and tradition got some influence from primary belief in Supernaturalism and Brahmanism. The threads are connected

with one's belief and holiness and then they are used in two nations widely. Thailand and India use the threads like a media to connect belief and the way of life together to create morale and unity in the family's member and society. The threads of two nations connect a cycle of entire life from one's birth until the end of life by performing each ceremony in each age, but they're different in details and meaning. India use colorful threads in performing ceremonies but Thailand mostly use the white threads in the ceremonies. And the two nations do still use the threads as mediator to connect belief and unity of people in their communities.

Indians in the Vedic period until the present, they used the threads to be the part of their lives both in daily routines and religious belief. In the part of religious beliefs, they used many colors of threads. Each color has a different meanings:

- 1) Red Thread or Kalava symbolizes a long life and protection against enemies. Hence, in some parts of India, the Kalava is also called 'Raksha' which means protection.
- 2) Black Thread denotes protection from evil eyes.
- 3) Orange or Saffron Thread denotes to bring fame, power and guard the person against all evils.
- 4) White Thread is tied to the Upanayana ceremony. This thread is also known as the 'Janeu thread'. White symbolizes purity.
- 5) Yellow Thread is the symbol of marriage.
- 6) The green thread is worn by a few people who are from the Agriculture background and who support nature and fight against deforestation.
- 7) Multicolor Raksha Sutra is worn by devotees of Lord Hanuman who gives confidence and strength.
- 8) Fashion Threads is a timeless way

of adding more appeal to the personality.

Both Thais and Indians have also believed in the threads. The threads are the symbol of the unity of the two nations. They can weld, connect and create morale, encouragement, willingness and spiritual belief in the part of their lives. The colors of threads in the concept of Indians are different from the concept of Thais. Indians have divided the threads according to the castes, gods, and genders of people. But Thais do not divide the colors like Indians. White threads in the concepts of Thais are used in both auspicious ceremonies and funeral rites but their names are different. Sai-siñcana is used in the auspicious ceremonies but Sai-yong in the funeral rites. In the present, the colors of threads are not limited like in the past. Thai people can use multicolor in the auspicious ceremonies. All classes of Thais can use the same threads, not like Indians. But although the beliefs of two nations are different in detail the threads can weld, connect and create their unity. This unity can socialize and establish stability for two groups of people and also build friendship in two societies to live together happily according to their belief.

## 7. Conclusion

Upanayana is the important ritual of Vedic Indians but it has still been inherited to the present. The word Upanayana has been described in many ways. The term Upa means ‘near’ and Nayanam means ‘leading’. When unifying these terms together, they become “Upanayanam” means ‘leading near.’ It is a ritual by which a person is purified and made fit to learn the Vedas or

Vedam Upanayanam. These are some examples and steps of Upanayanam: 1) to study Vedas, the child goes to a Guru and so it can be described as Gurum Upanayanam. 2) Through this ritual, the child is coming closer and closer to the Parabrahma and so can be described as Parabrahama Upanayanam. 3) When the teacher or Brahmin utters the Mantraham Upanaye which means I take the boy near myself, it will be called Upanayanam. In the Vedic period, a boy had to join this ritual before entering a system of Vedic formal education by using the threads to be part of this ritual. This ritual has been opened for 3 upper castes only. In the present, most of Indians like to use multicolor threads to tie the people's wrists to ward off bad evils and protect them from all kinds of dangers and obstacles. Each color of the thread indicates the caste, their gods. In Thailand, people have used threads from ancient times. The threads have been used in many activities including religious ceremonies. In this case, there are two types of threads: 1) Sai-siñcana ; it is used in the auspicious ceremony such as the wedding ceremony, the ceremony of a new house, the ceremony of Teacher Day or ceremony of wrist's tying, etc. People believe that the threads are holy and can protect them from evils, misfortunes, or dangers, etc. In the past, people liked the white threads but now there are many colorful threads. All classes of people can use them not like Indians. 2) Sai-yong; it is used in the funeral rites only. So, the Upanayana ritual is a way to use the thread and lead a boy going into the formal system of education according to the Vedic scriptures by using the thread as its media. The thread can connect Indian

people to be the great society now. It can socialize and refine their thought and belief in the form of India but it is the unity in a various diversity of gods and religious beliefs. In Thailand, people can use threads as the media to connect the spiritual and religious beliefs. They are the symbol of holiness, firmness, encouragement, and friendship of people to live together happily. Thread and its color are not serious on Thais' belief.



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