

Hindu Studies - Karma Kaanda

Preamble:

Whereas Karma Kaanda is the constituent body of Hinduism, while philosophy is the head of the pantheon. Prudently, the Karma Kanda is based on the rationale and pragmatic theory enshrined in Vedas, codified as Meemaamsa Shaastra. In addition, the application part of the Karma Kaanda has theory and practical parts as well. It has branched out to as many tiers, to reach out to all the sections of the society.

Similar to any system, theory symbolizes the bones and flesh, whereas the practical Manuals represent the skin and hairs.

Theory and Frame Work

1. **Meemaamsaa Philosophy-** Analyses Vedic Stipulations to promote a rationalist and sensible approach. One of the important tenets is to understand the mundane benefits of each act and deed, rather than branding every action in rituals as Punya.
2. **Shrouta Sutra:** First among the Kalpa Sutras, Shrouta Sutra is composed promoted by seers, to arrange the Mantras of each Veda Shaakha in the frame of Vedic Rituals, commonly based on Tretagni system (Triad of sacrificial fires), performed on an elaborate and extensive scale. Each Veda Shaakha has one or more treatises attached to it, composed by different sages such as Aashwalaya, Aapastamba, Bodhayana, Drahyayana etc.
3. **Gruhya Sutra:** Second among the Kalpa Sutras, Gruhya Sutra is a code of conduct for house-hold rituals. Seers have taken utmost care, to provide all the necessary the Vedic Verses, required for a house hold ritual, commonly based on Ekagni system (Singular sacrificial fire present in every home). Each Veda Shaakha has one or more treatises attached to it, composed by different sages such as Aashwalaya, Aapastamba, Bodhayana, Drahyayana etc.
4. **Aagama:** Focuses on the worship aspect of Super Natural forces, in a form closer to the human form. To suit different faiths, Aagama Shaastra explains the worship system of Shiva, Vishnu, Devi predominantly. Construction, Maintenance, Inauguration, Alteration of Temples, Public Amenities are the domain of Aagama,

while occasionally providing the philosophical impetus to the protagonists of the rituals.

5. **Dharma Shaastra: is the third Part of Kalpa Sutra.** This treatise essentially provides the code of conduct for the society, required for harmonious living. It will not be an exaggeration that the Dharma Shaastra, often called as Smruti, provides a frame work to the society in non-ritualistic matters fostering the purpose of life. Apart from Dharma Sutras, treatises such as Dharma Sindhu, Nirnaya Sindhu, Veera Mitrodaya, Vaidyanatha Deekshiteeya are popular.

Practical Part of the

1. **Shrouta Karma** - Different scholars have prepared the manuals for rituals, based on the 4 Aspects of Yajna: Aadhwaryava, Houtra, Oudgaatra, Yaajamaana. These manuals have modifications based on the regions and customs, often by incorporating features from other Veda Shaakhas and traditions. Agnihotram, Darsha Poorna Maasa Ishti, Chaturmaasya, Agnishtoma Soma Yaga, Mahagni Chayana, Satra Yaga are important components of Shrouta Karma, which requires continuous maintenance of Tretagni in the entire life-span of an Agnihotri couple.
2. **Smaarta Karma** - Smaarta Karma is in the ambit and reach of common holder and constitutes the common ritual core of India today. Categorized as Samskaaras (16 - 18), Prayashtitta, Shaanti and Poushtika, the rituals are also called as Nitya and Naimittika. These are based on Gruhya Sutra model.
3. **Deva Sthaana Rituals** - Construction, Inauguration, Alteration, Annual Ceremonies, Occasional and season ceremonies are the domain of Temple Rituals based on Aagama Shaastra. Nitya Archana, Kalyanotsava, Brahmotsava, Pratishtha (Karshanaadi Pratishthaanta) and Praayaschitta are the important components of Aagama Rituals.
4. **Pouranika Karma** - are the essential and least complicated Karma serving the society. Though based on the Vedic Philosophy frame work, they operate without the necessity of Veda Mantras. Pouranika Karma includes all the Samskaaras, rituals from the Smaarta Karma patterns. Vratam is the most important aspect of Pouranika Karma. Examples: Satya Narayana Vratam, Varasiddhi Vinayaka Vratam, Rishi Panchami Vratam, Vara Maha Lakshmi Vratam, Ekadashi Vratam.

Vrata also stands for regulating and restricting food intake, which is a prominent feature of every ritual, across the platforms.

- 5. Karma Philosophy:** Bhaarateeya Samskruti (Indian Culture) is a grand colourful several communities, languages, dialects, regional flavours; plethora of traditions have formed and shaping up. What binds all of us across the globe is the philosophy.

This section of the course summarises the beauty of Karma Philosophy and its essential message to the society.