Mundan Ceremony
A Sacred Ritual. A Chance to Bond with Family.

by Priyanka Singh

BEFORE YOU READ: What rituals do you practice? What rituals help you connect with your family?

In Hindu tradition, babies go through a hair removal ceremony called *mundan*. Hindus perform this ceremony because we believe that the hair from birth is associated with undesirable traits from past lives. In this ceremony, the priest shaves off a part of the child's hair while chanting sacred hymns. After that, the barber shaves off the rest of the hair. The shaved hair is either offered to a deity or to a sacred river like the Ganga. We perform this ceremony for both boys and girls.

> **In this ceremony, the priest shaves off a part of the child's hair while chanting sacred hymns.**

My parents performed the mundan ceremony for me and my siblings. I remember my sister's mundan ceremony. The whole family went to Haridwar City, one of the seven holiest places to Hindus. My father contacted a priest and a barber to perform the ritual. In the early morning on the banks of the holy river Ganga, the priest started the ceremony by chanting mantras and doing a small *puja* (prayer). As soon as the barber started to shave off my sister's hair, she started crying, and she cried for the entire ceremony. Once her head was completely shaved, we collected each and every strand of hair and immersed them in the river Ganga. After that, all the elder family members bestowed their blessings on my sister, and my mother distributed sweets to everyone. After the ceremony, my grandfather explained to us the importance of mundan ritual. He said, "All the festivals and rituals are important but most important is family bonding."

Many of my friends also performed this ceremony for their kids. But some of them didn't. Even my sister didn't perform the mundan ceremony for her son. When I asked her why, she said, "My son has beautiful hair. He is comfortable with it. Whenever I feel that it is bothering him, I will cut it off."

> **Mundan ceremony is important to me not just for religious reasons, but also because these kinds of ceremonies connect families.**

We are living in a free world, and everyone

WORLD EDUCATION

Study the photo above. Describe what you see. Be as detailed as possible. For example, notice the hands in the photo. What are the hands doing? Do the hands belong to men or women or both? Explain your opinion. Describe the child's expression? After reading the article on p. 10, write a story about the picture. Include details about mundan ceremony. (Photo above by Amjhihello, and photo on p. 10 — of the sacred river Ganga — by JM Suarex, both from Wikimedia.)

has their own perspective. The beauty of Hinduism is that it does not strictly require everyone to follow all the practices. For example, I follow some of the Hindu practices, like daily worshipping and fasting on certain days. But I don't put *sindoor* (vermillion powder) on my forehead, like many married Hindu women. It is my choice.

If I have a child in the future, I would love to have the mundan ceremony for my son or daughter. It is important to me not just for religious reasons, but also, as my grandfather explained, because these kinds of ceremonies connect families.

References: <www.babycenter.in/a1015415/imundani-ceremony>; <www.indiaparenting.com/indian-culture/71_5028/mundan-ceremony-of-a-baby.html>

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