

## **Padma Purana on urdhvapundra tilak**

(Uttara Khanda, ch. 225)

Shankara said (to Devi):

1-4. O you of an auspicious appearance, I shall tell you the greatness of the Urdhvapundra (vertical Vaishnava mark on the forehead). The best brahmana would be free from the bond of the worldly existence just on having it. Within the large and very charming space in the Urdhvapundra, Vishnu, God of gods, is seated with Lakshmi. Therefore, the body of him, on which there would be the mark, is the clean, auspicious temple of the lord. That devotee of Vishnu, who has the mark made with white clay, has bathed at all holy places, is prepared for all sacrifices.

5-8. The brahmana having the mark is honoured among all people, (and) getting into an excellent aeroplane, goes to the highest place of Vishnu. The best brahmana should put on the mark thrice (a day), for purification of all sins, and for obtaining the fruit of performing sacrifices and digging wells and doing other acts of charity. (A man) seeing one having the mark, is freed from all sins. By saluting him devoutly he would obtain the fruit of all (kinds of) charity. The dead ancestors of him who will feed a brahmana having the mark are undoubtedly pleased for crores of kalpas.

9-14. O you of an auspicious face, he who, having the mark, performs a shraddha, would obtain, for crores of kalpas, the fruit of the shraddha (performed) at Gaya. The religious merit of the sacrifices, gifts, penance, muttering (of hymns), sacrificial rites etc. of one having the mark is endless. All the sacrifices performed, wells dug, and other charitable acts done by him who does any act without having the mark, are useless. That human body which is without the mark should not be seen at all. It would be like a cremation ground. All the rites etc. which a man without the mark would do, are taken (away) by demons; and he goes down to hell. A brahmana well-versed in the Vedas, should have the mark with white clay. The wise one should never have it in an oblique manner even in a misery.

15-18. Brahmana should have the mark. The mark of kshatriyas should be round; that of vaishyas should be strip-like; that of sudras should have three lines. The mark should be made with clay; the round one with musk; the strip-like one with sandal; and the three-lined one

with sacred ash. The vertical mark is recommended for all. It is not prohibited. A kshatriya etc also, if he is Vishnu's devotee should have it. Brahmanas are not to have the oblique or the strip-like mark. And they are not to worship any other (deity) than Vishnu, the highest lord.

19-23. O goddess, if a brahmana, learned and born in a noble family has put on (the mark of) sacred ash, one should avoid such a brahmana, as a pot in which liquor is left as the remnant. The mark of three lines is the practice for those who are sudras and like sudras. There is no doubt that a brahmana having the mark of three lines, falls. The very noble ones, interested in the good of all living beings, should have a pundra with a gap like the shape of Vishnu's foot. A man should have the mark in accordance with the precept, resembling the foot of Vishnu and having a gap in its centre; for that is Vishnu's temple. He should have the mark which is good, pleasing, has the shape of a staff, good sides, which is very charming, very beautiful, and which has a gap at the centre.

24-27. Therefore, O you of an auspicious appearance, brahmanas and women should always have the mark which has a gap, has the shape of a staff, and is very beautiful. In the large and very beautiful gap at the centre of the vertical mark, Vishnu is seated with Lakshmi. That mean brahmana who would have a gapless vertical mark, expels Vishnu along with Lakshmi seated there. There is no doubt that there always is a dog's foot on the foreheads of those mean brahmanas who have a gapless vertical mark.

28-40. Therefore, in order to attain the same world as of Vishnu, a brahmana should always have a mark with a gap, with turmeric, and having auspiciousness. For securing likeness of Vishnu one should, with great devotion, bring the clay from the pool on the Venkata mountain (Tirupati), and make the vertical mark with it. A devoted person should bring the clay from the root of Tulasi of Sri Krishna, and should make the vertical mark (with it). Vishnu is pleased with him. Or the best brahmana, having brought the pleasing clay from the auspicious, charming pool (i.e. sacred to) Vishnu at Dvaravati (Dwaraka), should make the mark (with it) in order to secure all desired objects. He who, having brought with great devotion, clay from the banks of Ganga, makes the mark with it, would obtain the fruit of all sacrifices. Due to having the mark (with) sandal, turmeric, so also ash from the sacred fire one is said to control everything. He should bring the clay from that place which is sacred to Vishnu. One

should get the clay from the top of a mountain, the bank of a river, the root of a bilva tree, a reservoir of water, the coast of a sea, an anthill, especially from a place sacred to Vishnu, and from the place where the water used for Vishnu's bath always flows, for having the mark. A man, taking clay with water flowing from Vishnu's feet, and having pundra marks on the limbs of his body at Shriranga, Venkatagiri, Shrikurma, the auspicious Dvaraka, Prayaga, Narasimha mountain, Varaha, a Tulasi-grove would get likeness of Vishnu. For having the mark clay should be taken from that place wherefrom the noble devotees of Vishnu take it. A dark mark is said to cause peace. So also a red one is said to bring about control. They say that a yellow one leads to riches. The white one leads to salvation and is auspicious.

41-50. They say that a round, oblique, gapless, short, long, protracted, thin, crooked, ugly mark, one with its top closed or with its root cut off, with a line missing, inauspicious, rough, fixed, one that is not drawn with the finger, not having fragrance, or inadequate is unfortunate. One should draw it with clay beginning with the root of the nose. Starting it from the middle of the eye-brows, he should have a gap in it. The gap should be of the measure of two fingers, and the sides of the size of a finger. With white clay he should draw a better and auspicious mark. He should meditate upon Kesava (as staying) on his forehead. (He should meditate) upon Narayana (as staying) in his belly, Madhava (as staying) in his chest, and Govinda (as staying) in his throat. (He should meditate) upon Vishnu (as staying) in the right side of his belly and Madhusudana (as staying) in his right arm. (He should meditate) upon Trivikrama (as staying) in (the right side of) his neck, and Vamana (as staying) in his left side. (He should meditate) upon Sridhara (as staying) in his left arm, and Hrishikesha in (the left side of) his neck. (He should meditate) upon Padmanabha (as staying) in his back, and place Damodara in the lower part of his spine. And with the water for washing it (he should meditate) upon Vasudeva (as present) in his head. He should draw the mark of the measure of four fingers on his forehead, both the arms, on both (the sides) of the back, and on the neck. On the belly and near its sides a long one of the measure of ten fingers is recommended. On the arms and chest a mark of the measure of eight fingers is recommended. Thus a brahmana should always have twelve marks.

51-59. He should, after meditating upon those images with their respective hymns, have the marks (on those respective limbs of his

body). In the gap he should put auspicious turmeric. They say, ksatriyas should have four marks and vaisyas should have two. One mark is laid down for women and sudras. He should have four marks on the forehead, on his chest, and on the arms. Two are laid down for the forehead and the chest and one for the place where the hair is separated. Of all the marks, the vertical one is said to be the first (that should be put) on the forehead. As laid down, it should be had in the order of the forehead first. One should have the images of Vasudeva etc. in the four vertical marks. In two he should have the two (images of) Govinda and Krsna and one of Narayana. O Girija, I have thus told (you) the manner in which the pundra is had. The triad of one resembling the ashvattha-leaf, the reed-leaf, or the lotus-leaf, is said to be 'Mohana'. A pure, great devotee of Vishnu, should, in case of a controversy, have a vertical mark of the shape of a staff. Those, those whose arms are marked with Sudarshana, so also all of whose limbs are marked with the vertical pundra, who have lotus garlands and tulasi rosaries, protect the people from contact with heaps of sins.