INTRODUCTION

Having searched the net I’ve not found a single book in English that gives the code of conduct for Hindu monks. Even on the websites of the Ramakrishna Mission, Divine Life Society, Satyananda Ashrama and Chinmaya Mission there is no code of conduct for their monastics. There are a couple of books in Sanskrit but they are not accessible to the general public.

The only comprehensive text I know of on this subject was written by Yadava Prakasha and commissioned by Bhagavad Ramanuja Acharya. The title is Yati-dharma-samuccaya — a compendium of the duties and obligations of monks. Yadava Prakasha collected in one volume all the rules and regulations for ascetics from all the known Dharma Shastras. It is comprehensive but also tedious for the layman to read because of the repetition and obscurantisms.

Today with the internet and mass media we are well informed about all the misdeeds, misdemeanours and crimes of the clergy. There are many famous and powerful and high profile gurus who have fallen in recent times, and millions of gullible people who are being conned by unscrupulous gurus with devastating spiritual consequences.

The reason for this two-way delusion is the ignorance of the laity about what the actual expectations are of monks, and often the monks themselves are ignorant of their own duties and obligations, or perhaps purposefully keep their devotees in the dark so as to better exploit them.

The purpose of this booklet is to inform the lay public about the ideal conduct of the monastics so as to be able to hold them to account, and to remind the monastics of what their duties and obligations are according to Shastra. Once there is a two-way transparency then exploitation becomes much harder.

For the sake of brevity and ease of reading I will be summerizing the Yati-dharma-samuccya. For those who are interested in deepening their knowledge of the subject and want to see the references for themselves I suggest they purchase the book —

Rules and Regulations of Brahmanical Asceticism: Yatidharmasamuccaya of Yadava Prakasa (Suny Series (Suny Series in Religion) Paperback by Patrick Olivelle (Author)

There are also a number of Sannyāsa Upaniṣads which deal with the subject.

The book is divided into 4 parts. The First Part is on Hindu monastic orders from Swami Sivananda, the Second Part the summary of the Yati-dharma-samuccya, the Third Part are suggested guidelines for householders in dealing with sannyāsis and the Fourth Part is an extensive discussion on Sannyāsa from The History of the Dharma Shastras by P.V. Kane.
Terms of Reference.

Sannyasa — the act of renouncing material life to pursue a spiritual life.

Sannyasi /sannyaśīn (m) Sannyasini (f) — a person who renounces, a renunciate, an ascetic, a monk/nun.

Parivrajaka — a wandering monk, mendicant, an anchorite.

Sadhu — same as a parivrajaka or wandering ascetic.

Yati — literally “a striver” a synonym for a monk.

Bhikṣu — a “requester of alms” — can be applied to both Hindu and Buddhist monks (bhikkus).

Jeeyar or jīyar — a Śrivaishnava sannyāsi

Swami — is only a formal title of address, it does not refer to the avocation of a renunciate.

Although the text refers specifically to males, Rāmānuja himself initiated 300 female ascetics. Nowadays many Hindu monastic orders admit women so all the rules and regulations apply equally to members of both genders.

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PART 1.

HINDU MONASTIC ORDERS
(by Swami Sivananda)

Sadhus And Sannyasins

Every religion has a band of anchorites who lead the life of seclusion and meditation. There are Bhikkus in Buddhism, Fakirs in Islam, Fakirs in Sufism, and Fathers and Reverends in Christianity. The glory of a religion will be lost absolutely if you remove these hermits or Sannyasins or those who lead a life of renunciation and divine contemplation. It is these people who maintain or preserve the religions of the world. It is these people who give solace to the householders when they are in trouble and distress. They are the messengers of the Atman-knowledge and heavenly peace. They are the disseminators of spiritual knowledge and Upanishadic revelations. They heal the sick, comfort the forlorn and nurse the bedridden. They bring hope to the hopeless, joy to the depressed, strength to the weak and courage to the timid, by imparting the knowledge of the Vedanta and the significance of the ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ Mahavakya.

Dasanama Sannyasins

Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanat-Kumara and Sanat-Sujata were the four mind-born sons of Lord Brahma. They refused to enter the Pravritti Marga or worldly life and entered the Nivritti Marga or the path of renunciation. The four Kumaras were the pioneers in the path of Sannyasa. Sri Dattatreya also is among the original Sannyasins. The Sannyasins of the present day all descendants of the four Kumaras, Dattatreya and Sankaracharya.

Sri Sankaracharya, regarded as an Avatara of Lord Siva and the eminent exponent of Kevala Advaita philosophy, established four Mutts—one at Sringeri, another at Dvaraka, a third at Puri and a fourth at Joshi-Mutt in the Himalayas, on the way to the Badarinarayana shrine.

Sri Sankara had four Sannyasin disciples, viz., Suresvara, Padmapada, Hastamalaka and Totaka. Suresvara was in charge of Sringeri Mutt, Padmapada was in charge of Puri Mutt, Hastamalaka was in charge of Dvaraka Mutt and Totaka was in charge of Joshi-Mutt.

The Sannyasins of Sringeri Mutt, the spiritual descendants of Sri Sankara and Suresvaracharya, have three titles, viz., Sarasvati, Puri and Bharati. The Sannyasins of the Dvaraka Mutt have two titles, viz., Tirtha and Asrama. The Sannyasins of the Puri Mutt have two titles, viz., Vana and Aranya. The Sannyasins of the Joshi-Mutt have three titles, viz., Giri, Parvata and Sagara.

The Dasanamis worship Lord Siva or Lord Vishnu, and meditate on Nirguna Brahman. The Dandi Sannyasins, who hold staff in their hands, belong to the order of Sri Sankara. Paramahamsa Sannyasins do not hold staff. They freely move about as itinerant monks. Avadhutas are naked Sannyasins. They do not keep any property with them.

The Sannyasins of the Ramakrishna Mission belong to the order of Sri Sankara. They have the name Puri.
Then, there are Akhada Sannyasins, viz., Niranjani Akhada and Jhuna Akhada. They belong to the order of Sri Sankara. They are Dasanamis. They are found in the Uttar Pradesh State only.

Rishikesh and Haridwar are colonies for Sannyasins. Varanasi also is among the chief abodes of Sannyasins.

**Saivas**

In South India, there are Tamil Sannyasins who belong to the Kovilur Mutt, Thiruvavaduthurai and Dharmapuram Adhinams. They do not belong to the Sri Sankara order. They are Saivas.

**Nagas**

Nagas are Saiva Sannyasins. They are in a naked state. They smear their bodies with ashes. They have beard and matted locks.

**Udasis**

Guru Nanak’s order of ascetics are called Udasis. They correspond to Sannyasins and Vairagis. They are indifferent to the sensual pleasures of this world (Udasina). Hence they are called Udasis.

**Vairagis**

A Vairagi is one who is devoid of passion. Vairagis are Vaishnavas. They worship Lord Rama, Sita and Hanuman. They read the Ramayana of Tulasidas. The mendicant Vaishnavas of the Ramanandi class are the Vairagis. This ascetic order was instituted by Sri Ananda, the twelfth disciple of Ramananda.

**Rama Sanehis**

The founder of this order was Ramcharan who was born in the year 1718 in a village near Jaipur in Rajasthan. The Rama Sanehi mendicants are of two classes, viz., the Videhis who are naked and the Mohinis who wear two pieces of cotton cloth dyed red in ochre. Their monastery is in Shahapur in Rajasthan. The Rama Sanehi sect has the largest following in Mewar and Alwar. They are found also in Bombay, Gujarat, Surat, Poona, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Varanasi.

**Kabir Panthis**

Kabir Panthis are the followers of saint Kabir. They are numerous in all the provinces of Upper and Central India. There are twelve branches. Kabir Chaura is at Varanasi. It is a big monastery of Kabir Panthis. Dharamdas was the chief disciple of Kabir. The followers are expected to have implicit devotion to the Gurus, in thought, word and deed. They should practise truthfulness, mercy, non-injury and seclusion. The followers of Kamal, son of Kabir, practise Yoga.

**Dadu Panthis**

The Dadu Panthis form one of the Vaishnava cults. Dadu, the founder of this sect, was a disciple of one of the Kabir Panthi teachers. The followers worship the Lord Rama.

Dadu was a cotton cleaner. He was born at Ahmedabad. He flourished about the year 1600. The Dadu Panthis are of three classes, viz., the Viraktas who are bareheaded and have one cloth and one water-pot, the Nagas who carry arms and who are regarded as soldiers and the Vistar Dharis who do the avocations of ordinary life.
The Dadu Panthis are numerous in Marwar and Ajmer. Their chief place of worship is at Naraina, which is near Sambhur and Jaipur. Passages from the Kabir writings are inserted in their religious scriptures.

**Gorakhnath Panthis**

Gorakhnath was a contemporary of Kabir. He is regarded as the incarnation of Lord Siva. He calls himself as the son of Matsyendranath and grandson of Adinath. There is a temple of Gorakhnath at Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh. Bhartrihari was a disciple of Gorakhnath.

The followers of Gorakhnath are usually called Kanphatas, because their ears are bored and rings are inserted in them, at the time of their initiation. They worship the Lord Siva.

**Nimbarka Sampradayis And Ramanuja Sampradayis**

There are Sadhus of the Nimbarka Sampradaya. There are Vaishnavas. The Sannyasins of the Ramanuja Sampradaya wear orange-coloured cloth, a holy thread and tuff and Tri-danda or three-staff. At present, they are very few in number.

**Parinami Sect**

Sri Pirannath is the founder of this sect. He was born in 1675 at Jamnagar, district Rajkot, in Kathiawar. He was the Divan of Raja Jam Jasa. The followers are to practise Ahimsa, Satya and Daya—non-violence, truthfulness and compassion. They study the sacred book, Kul Jam Svarup, or Atma-Bodha, in Hindi, which contains the teachings of Sri Pirannath. It contains 18,000 Chaupais. They worship Bala-Krishna, i.e., Krishna as a small lad.

The followers are found mostly in the Punjab, Gujarat, Assam, Nepal and Bombay. There are two Mutts or monasteries—one at Jamnagar and the other at Pamna.
PART 2.

YATI DHARMA SAMUCCAYA
The compendium of the Duties of Ascetics.

ELIGIBILITY

Only after paying his three debts\(^1\) should a man set his mind on renunciation. Should he take to renunciation without paying them he will fall (Manu 6:35).

Some teachers on the other hand say that one may depart for the mendicant’s life immediately after completing study. Some teachers also recommend that the blind and handicapped should also renounce early. If a person has chronic ailment or is facing an imminent death then he too may renounce. A man should renounce, therefore only after he has examined the purity of his heart for a long time and ascertained that his mind will not waiver from the Dharma. (Likhita)

EXTERNAL INSIGNIA OF A SANNYĀSIN

According to Angiras

A sannyāsi should have a sacrificial thread\(^2\), a triple staff\(^3\), a cloth to strain insects\(^4\), a sling\(^5\), a begging bowl, a stool (kurmiṣaṇa)\(^6\), a loincloth, and a waist-band\(^7\). Only a man who possesses these is a true ascetic. (yatidharma samuccaya 5:15-16)

According to Galava

Now a wandering ascetic bears the insignia: is shaven-headed, or wears a śīkha\(^8\), a sacrificial thread, dons a ragged ochre garment\(^9\). Let him wear a cloth to cover his loins but no upper garment. He carries a triple-staff, a water-strainer, a water-pot, a bowl and a ragged blanket. (5:219)

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1. The three debts and their repayment are: to the gods — through yajñas, to the rishis through study and teaching and to the ancestors through procreation.
2. A yajñopavīta which is a triple thread worn over the left shoulder and resting on the right hip. It is given to the student at the time of initiation into the gāyatṛi mantra. Some monastic orders especially those of the Advaiti persuasion discard the yajñopavīta when renouncing.
3. Tridaṇḍa — three bamboo sticks bound together and symbolizing the control of body, speech and mind. The triple-staff is only carried by Brahmīn monks.
4. This cloth is usually tied to the top of the triple-staff like a flag.
5. A sling like macramē to carry the begging bowl.
6. A low stool in the shape of a tortoise upon which to sit for meditation.
7. Yoga-paṭṭā is a belt-like device which is wrapped around the legs in certain yoga-postures.
According to Kratu

He may carry 10 or 20 articles or at least 5.

A ragged shawl, a needle & thread, a deer-skin, an umbrella, water-strainer, water-pot, stool, bowl, sling, rosary, sacrificial thread, a spade, a pair of sandals, loincloth, tripod, a pair of shoes, a staff, a yoga-band, and an outer-garment. Of these 20 only 5 are obligatory:— sacrificial thread, triple-staff, water-strainer, bowl, loincloth and waist-band. (5:26)

CLOTHING

He should wear a loin-cloth. According to some he should use discarded clothes after washing them. (GDh 3:18-19 & Brihaspati)

He should wear a loin cloth and a blanket/shawl as protection against the cold and a pair of sandals. Let him not take possession of anything else. (Hārita)

He should carry in his hand the triple-staff tied with the water strainer, and wear a garment made of grass, ragged (or rough) cloth, or tree bark and have one change of clothes. Some permit also a blanket against the cold. (Śankha & Likhita)

Even though the term ochre is used without further specification, nevertheless one should colour the garments with red-chalk known as gairika (gerua). (8:64)

MONASTIC VOWS

According to Śaunaka

Ten vows are enjoined on all ascetics:— non-injury, telling the truth, honesty, chastity, poverty, suppression of anger, obedience to the teacher, cleanliness, refraining from wrongful conduct in mental, verbal and physical activities and to avoid carelessness. (5:56 - 57)

According to Bodhāyana

Now then these are the vows: non-injury, telling the truth, honesty, chastity and renunciation (of all possessions). These are the secondary vows: suppression of anger, obedient service to the teacher, avoiding carelessness, cleanliness and purity of food. (B.Dh 2:18.2-3)

Every sannyāsi must be held accountable by his/her disciples for these common vows:—

1. Non-violence (ahimsa)

Since there are different types of injury, we must undoubtedly distinguish different types of non-injury. (yatidharma samuccaya 5:62)

Now there are ten types of injury from which a sannyāsi must refrain:—

1.1 Causing anxiety (mental pain)

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8 A śikha is a top-knot worn on the crown of the head. Nowadays usually only kept by Vaiṣṇava ascetics, the Advaitis either shaving the head and beard completely or allowing the hair to grow.

9 The “ragged” garment theme was embraced by the Buddhist monks who stitched their shawls from patches of discarded cloth that were found. This is still done today but the patches are uniform. Many Hindu monks have abandoned this practice and now many wear fashionable kurthas.
1.2 Causing physical pain
1.3 Causing someone to weep,
1.4 Drawing blood
1.5 Calumny — the making of false and defamatory statements about someone in order to damage their reputation; slander.
1.6 Destroying someone’s happiness,
1.7 Conquest — engaging in the take-over of another enterprise.
1.8 Making someone grovel — humiliating someone.
1.9 Obstructing someone’s welfare — either through acts or endorsements or proclamations or encouragements
1.10 Killing any living being. (Some include even plants in this prohibition).

2. Speaking the truth — a sannyāsi should always speak the truth but should also speak only beneficial truth, speech that is directed at improving or teaching another.

3. Honesty — a sannyāsi should never engage in any type of fraud or duplicitous dealings and all times and places obey the law of the land.

4. Chastity — a sannyāsi must completely refrain from all forms of sexual activity.

Different types of sexual activity:—

4.1 To think fondly of previous sexual activity.
4.2 To tell someone about previous sexual acts.
4.3 To engage in any form of flirtatious activity.
4.4 To look at an attractive person in an admiring and lustful way.
4.5 To speak in secret to an attractive person i.e. to invite an attractive person into one’s room or any other private or secluded space. i.e. a sannyāsi should never be alone in a room with a young person.
4.6 To formulate an intention to seduce someone.
4.7 To make a resolve and plan a sexual act — inducing another to act as a go-between.
4.8 To actually engage in a sexual act.\(^{10}\)

All these are the 8 types of sexual activity according to Brhaspati. Their opposite is what is called chastity. (5:66-67)

5. Renunciation of possessions — a sannyāsi should not accumulate any possession, not even the permitted articles of an ascetic for use at a future date. In other words when an article becomes unusable than another of the same sort can be resourced. (5:68)

6. Suppression of anger — a sannyāsi should make every effort not to become angry for any reason whatsoever. Anger-management is one of the foremost activities of a sannyāsi.

\(^{10}\) If a sannyāsi continues to engage in sexual activity he will be born as a beetle living in dung for 60,000 years. Thereafter he will be born as a mouse living in abandoned houses. And then he will be reborn as a dog for 12 lifetimes, then he will become a vulture for 20 years and a pig for 9. (Satatapa) This hyperbole is meant to stress how disgraceful and wrong any sexual activity is after taking sannyasa.
7. **Obedience to the guru** — a sannyāsi should obey the initiating (*dikṣa*) guru or abbot (*mahānta*) of the monastery (*aśrama*) in every respect, except if commanded to do something illegal or to act contrary to the dictates of the śāstra or to break a monastic vow.

8. **Cleanliness** — a sannyāsi should bathe at regular times and maintain optimum hygiene — brushing the teeth regularly, keeping the nails and hair/beard trimmed and neat. A sannyāsi must also maintain the cleanliness and tidiness of his bedding and *kuṭir* (cell).

9. **Mindfulness** — a sannyāsi must strenuously avoid all acts of negligence and must be mindful of his every act, understanding that he is an exemplar of the Dharma and a role model for others.

10. **Abstaining from wrongful conduct** — a sannyāsi must avoid causing harm, injury or pain to any living being by mental, verbal or physical means.

11. **Purity of food.** — a sannyāsi should preferably obtain his one meal a day by begging. If he is living in an aśrama (monastery) then he should ensure that the food that is served is pure and ethically obtained. Some authorities would argue that this is not a vow as such because it would be hard to maintain with frequent infractions.

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**PROPER CONDUCT OF AN ASCETIC**

(Derived from Manu Chapter 6)

1. A sannyāsi must relinquish all property.

2. A sannyāsi must give a promise of safety to all beings — whatever being comes to the sannyāsi for refuge he is under an obligation to give it.

3. A sannyāsi must abstain from injuring creatures; he should not cause the slightest fear to any being.

4. A sannyāsi must practice restraint of the senses, he must entirely abstain from any form of sensual enjoyment — any form of luxury is forbidden. This is socially and cutlery conditioned, but the general guideline is the sannyāsi must use whatever the lowest socio-economic group in the society in which he is based use for their bedding, accommodation, bathing etc. Traditionally in India a sannyāsi must always sleep on the ground and never use a bed because the majority of the common people sleep on the floor.

5. A sannyāsi must politely reject all forms of enjoyments that may be offered.

6. A sannyāsi must relinquish love and hatred. He must not bear affection towards favourable people nor malice towards unfavourable people.

7. A sannyāsi must be equal-minded towards all sentient beings. He should not be partial to devotees nor impartial and hostile to any others.

8. A sannyāsi must regularly practice the vow of noble silence (*mauna*). At regular times of periods the sannyāsi should observe the vow of silence and not speak any words whatsoever.

9. A sannyāsi must patiently bear harsh words that are spoken against him without retaliating. He must never intentionally insult anybody. Against an angry man let him not in return show anger, let him bless when he is cursed, and let him never say anything that is devoid of truth.

10. A sannyāsi must speak only the truth — he should not comment on anything that he does not personally know nor speak about things without knowing the established facts.

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11 Traditionally a sannyāsi was expected to bathe three times a day but this is impractical.
11. A sannyāsi should always wander alone, without any companion — nowadays many sannyāsis live in āśrams or monasteries — this injunction is observed by avoiding the cultivation of friendships with the other monks.

12. A sannyāsi must cultivate indifferent to everything, remain firm of purpose, meditating (and) concentrating his mind on Brahman.

13. Should wear coarse worn-out garments — he should wear simple cotton garments, preferable not stitched, but if the weather conditions do not permit — like in Europe then he should wear the simplest possible garments.

14. A sannyāsi should keep his heart pure — in other words he should cultivate loving kindness and compassion towards all being and repress any unwholesome and negative thinking.

15. Let a sannyāsi avoid creating enemies for the sake of his (perishable) body — a sannyāsi should never create enmity for the sake of preserving his own body, eating or living arrangements. If his presence in a particular locality causes enmity then he should remove himself to another place.

16. A sannyāsi must not earn a living by (explaining) unusual atmospheric occurrences and omens, nor by practicing astrology and palmistry, nor by giving advice and by the exposition (of the Sastras).

A sannyāsi must not try to interpret dreams, or the sight of comets or hurricanes or interpret birth-charts etc. nor counsel people nor teach the śāstras for payment. The only vocation permitted is giving teaching on dharma and expositions of the Upanishads – for this he may accept unsolicited donations but never a fixed salary.

17. A sannyāsi must always have his hair, nails, and beard trimmed. Traditionally the head and beard are shaved once a month on the full moon.

18. A sannyāsi should carry an alms-bowl, a staff, and a water-pot.

19. A sannyāsi must not use vessels made of metal. The prohibition against a sannyāsi using metal used to extend also to money and any other item. Nowadays in the west it would be very hard to observe this rule unless a sannyāsi were to have a credit card — but having a bank-account is forbidden and therefore money has to be used.

20. A sannyāsi must disdain all (food) obtained in consequence of humble salutations. By eating little, and by standing and sitting in solitude.

He should beg in silence and not be obsequious with the intention of maximising his alms. The formal request to the mother of the house is:— bhavati bhikṣām dehi — respect lady please give me alms! No prior salutation or asking after one’s health or family is required. The sannyāsi must eat only once a day.

21. A sannyāsi must not undertake any projects with the intention of acquiring merit.

He may engage in projects of social work and relief and engage in projects which benefit the poor, down-trodden, refugees, marginalised members of society etc. but it should be done with disinterest and never for acquiring merit or fame. The sannyāsi’s name should never be attached to welfare projects.

22. A sannyāsi must dedicate himself to the practice of meditation.

The principal religious activity for a sannyāsi is meditation only. He is forbidden to engage in pujas and yajñas.

23. Let him recognise the essential nature of the supreme Jīva, and its presence in all organisms, both the highest and the lowest.
He must practice viewing the ātman as pervading all beings, in this way he will be able to cultivate equanimity and equality of vision.

24. A sannyāsi must live without fire or a house and without comfort or protection. (Apastamba)

He must never kindle or touch fire either to cook for himself or to perform oblations. He may dwell in an āśrama but should not dwell in houses. He must avoid comfort using only what is necessary to maintain health — heaters in winter and fans in summer but only as is necessary. He should never take any means of protecting himself from enemies etc.

25. A sannyāsi should not treat people who are sick, poisoned or possessed. (Likhita)

A sannyāsi who has medical knowledge can, in a case of emergency treat patients, and all other sannyāsins can nurse the sick, lepers etc. as part of their service, but it should never be done for payment.

26. A sannyāsi should not acquire a lot of disciples nor broadcast his knowledge. (Likhita)

A sannyāsi should avoid attracting masses of devotees and followers because of the politics involved which will eventually lead to his being compromised. He should also never advertise his knowledge or competencies and should strive to maintain a low public profile.

27. A sannyāsi must refrain from uttering words of greeting or blessing. (Kapila)

The usual greeting and blessing of a sannyāsi is simply to raise his hand in abhaya mudra (the gesture of the gift of fearlessness) and utter the name of God such as “nārāyaṇa nārāyaṇa.”

28. A sannyāsi should refrain from the use of betel. (Jamadagni)

This would include the use of cigarettes, ganja and any other form of stimulation

According to Medhatithi

29. A sannyāsi should refrain from alchemy, judicial litigation, astrology, buying and selling and all crafts.

Alchemy would refer to all compounding of any substance whatsoever. A sannyāsi should avoid all forms of litigation in which he is the plaintiff. All indulgence in astrology and prescribing cures and all forms of trade are forbidden.

30. A sannyāsi should not watch dances and shows, attend gambling events, look at young women, festive foods or menstruating women.

A sannyāsi should never pass time by watching TV shows or movies nor attend any festive events such as weddings, births etc. Out of courtesy one may invite one’s guru who is a sannyāsi but he should never attend such an event but may send a householder or student as a proxy.

31. A sannyāsi should never live in 6 types of places, royal courts, cities, economic centres, granaries, cattle farms and houses.

32. A sannyāsi should never even think of these 6:— selfish-desire, hatred, arrogance, pride, hypocrisy and malice towards others.

33. These are the 6 causes of an ascetic’s fall: travelling at night, travelling in vehicles, talking about women, greed, sleeping on beds and wearing white clothes.

34. These are the 6 causes of a sannyāsi’s bondage: residence, lack of a begging-bowl, accumulation of possessions, gathering of disciples, sleeping during the day and idle conversation.

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12 Obviously living in or near granaries nowadays is not feasible.
34.1 Staying in a village for more than one day, in a city for more than 5 days outside of the rainy season is called “residence”.

34.2 The lack of a bowl for the reception of alms is “lack of a begging-bowl”.

34.3 Taking an additional, bowl, staff or similar artefact for future use is “accumulation of possessions”.

34.4 Gathering disciples not out of compassion but for service, profit, and honour constitutes “gathering of disciples”.

34.5 Knowledge is called “day” and ignorance “night” — a sannyāsi who is negligent of those practices that produce knowledge is said to be “sleeping during the day”.

34.6 Any conversation other than on spiritual topics discourses on Dharma, requesting alms, prayer, offering words of kindness or condolence or asking directions is called “idle conversation”.

35. A sannyāsi should be tongueless, neuter (kliṣa), lame, blind, deaf and stupid.

35.1 When a sannyāsi, as he eats does not notice the difference between tasty and not tasty, whether hot or sweet is called “tongueless”.

35.2 A sannyāsi unmoved to passion by a 16 year old young lady, a new born girl and an old woman is called “neuter”.

35.3 A sannyāsi who walks only to beg food, to answer the calls of nature, and does not travel beyond 3 miles is “lame”.

35.4 When a wandering ascetic does not look beyond 6 feet in front of him, unless there is some danger, is said to be “blind”.

35.5 A sannyāsi who is indifferent to kind or unkind words, praise or abuse is said to be “deaf”.

35.6 When a sannyāsi, in the presence of hostile people remains silent and acts as if he were asleep even though he has the full use of his faculties is said to be “stupid”.

36. By accepting servants, houses, vehicles, cows, real estate, grain, money and gold a sannyāsi destroys 200 generations of his family. Sannyāsīs who are intent on giving gifts, as well as accumulating clothes and other such goods will end up in a putrid hell because of their stupidity. (Kratu)

37. If someone reverts from sannyasa he will be born as a beetle living in dung for 60,000 years. He becomes an outcaste and] should be excluded from all religious activities.

38. Acquiring disciples for profit and self-adulation is the sign of a false ascetic. (Vasistha)

**Begging**

A sannyāsi may go to a village for his daily food. Let him not (in order to beg) go near a house filled with hermits, Brahmans, birds, dogs, or other mendicants. Let him go to beg once (a day), let him not be eager to obtain a large quantity (of alms).

When no smoke ascends from (the kitchen), when the pestle lies motionless, when the embers have been extinguished, when the people have finished their meal, when the dishes have been washed, let the ascetic always go to beg.
Let him not be sorry when he obtains nothing, nor rejoice when he obtains (something), let him (accept) so much only as will sustain life, let him not care about the (quality of his) utensils.

A sannyāsi may go to beg at 3, 5 or 7 houses that have not been previously selected (for the quality of their food).

**Eating**

A sannyāsi should not eat a full meal in one house.

A sannyāsi may eat a full meal at one house, only if he is old, sick or suffering from a chronic ailment or as an act of kindness (to the host)

A sannyāsi should eat only enough to sustain life — eight mouthfulls.

A sannyāsi should avoid eating food that has been offered to ancestors.

A sannyāsi should avoid food if accepting it would cause hardship to someone

Jabali the elder says that a sannyāsi should not inquire after the donor’s class or if state of purity, when the alms-food falls into the bowl let him not think whether it is pure or impure.

A sannyāsi should not beg food from families that are related to him.

He should eat healthy foods that are easily digested.

A sannyāsi should never add salt to the food that is served to him.
PART 3.

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR HOUSEHOLDERS

1. Do not seek out or prefer to take a sannyāsi as a guru unless householder gurus are not available.

2. Never physically touch a sannyāsi — either on the body or the feet, unless compelled to do so during travel etc.

3. It is not advisable to sit on the same bench or seat unless travelling.

4. Never seek blessings from a sannyāsi — they are not permitted to bless.

5. Never seek personal or domestic advice or counsel from a sannyāsi.

6. Never discuss your personal or domestic issues with a sannyāsi.

7. Never offer any personal service to a sannyāsi such as massaging of the feet, head-rub, shoulder rub, body scrub etc. except in cases of sickness and as treatment only.

8. When organising travel arrangements, make sure he has a (male) disciple or attendant with him to attend to his needs.

9. One should not book business or first class travel — the travel arrangements should be the most basic available.

10. When arranging accommodation in houses it is best that the sannyāsi be housed by several different people during his stay.

11. The sannyāsi should be given a separate room but no extra luxuries such as soft bedding, pillows, spas, TV or any entertainment should be provided. He should preferably sleep on the floor.

12. If accommodating in a hotel then it should be the most basic motel or hotel. All arrangements should be those that are available to the common people only.

13. Food served should come from 3, 5 or 7 houses and never from one house. So it is preferable to have 3 or 5 items cooked by different women and served.

14. A sannyāsi is supposed to eat after every one else has eaten, so always make an attempt to serve him last in a separate area.

15. A sannyāsi should only eat 8 handfuls of food – so when serving, serve small portions and do not insist that he eat more.

16. A sannyāsi will eat only once a day so do not make elaborate arrangements for 3 or more meals. If need be some fruit and milk can be offered in the evening.

17. Never present any gift to the sannyāsi unless it is vitally important for their work or wellbeing. Especially no luxury item should be gifted such as jewellery, wrist watches or adornments.
18. If a new robe is required it should be made of coarse cotton or hemp and be coloured ochre, never silk.

19. Nowadays most people consider a mobile phone as essential personal equipment — a sannyāsi may have a phone since a mobile phone has a clock, alarm, calendar, diary etc. Without these accessories travel would be impossible. Other technology would also be useful such as iPads, computers etc.

20. No property may be bequeathed to a sannyāsi – one may give it to the monastery to be utilized for the benefit of the community but never to individual monks.

21. A sannyāsi should never be invited to attend dance performances or any form of entertainment — you may extend the courtesy of inviting them to open the proceedings or address such audiences before the performance starts, but make arrangements for them to depart before the performance begins.

22. Sannyāsi should not be invited to watch secular movies, historical or Dharmic movies are permitted or ones that are useful for social action.

23. Sannyāsi should never be invited to weddings or birth ceremonies, they may certainly be invited to initiations (upanayanas) and funerals.

24. A woman should never be alone with a sannyāsi at any time — there is absolutely no reason that a woman should enter the sannyāsi’s apartments apart from cleaning them — and then too the sannyāsi should be politely requested to vacate the room and the door must be left open.

25. The only time women should have legitimate association with sannyāsi is to receive teaching or to offer alms.

26. A young woman should never be engaged as a secretary to a sannyāsi.

27. If a woman is holding a professional meeting with a sannyāsi in an office then the door must be kept open at all times.

28. When receiving teaching a woman should never be alone but should be accompanied by others.

29. Nowadays sannyāsis do need money in order to function — but all monetary transactions must be open to scrutiny. Do not open a personal bank account for the sannyāsi. There may be a joint account of the monastery or āśrama or trust with an accountant to oversee all transactions.
PART 4

HISTORY OF THE DHARMA SHASTRA Vol 2 Chap, 28
BY PANDURANG VAMAN KANE, M. A., LL. M. Poona 1941

SANNYĀSA

(the order of ascetics).

It is somewhat doubtful whether the Chandogya Up. regarded sannyāsa as the fourth and the last stage in a man's life when ideally planned. It merely states that:— 'one that holds fast by the realization of brahman attains immortality’. But it appears that a stage of the abandonment of worldly riches, a life of begging and contemplation of the Absolute and its realization had been known to the earliest Upaniṣads like the Brhadaranyakā. Whether it was the fourth stage or whether it could be reached even in the stage of brahmācārya or of a house-holder is left in doubt so far as the older Upaniṣads are concerned. The Jabalopanishad (4) has already been quoted to show that it gave an option either to regard sannyāsa as the 4th stage in a man's life or to resort to it immediately after any of the first two āśramas.

In the Br. Up. (II. 4. 1) we see that Yajñavalkya when about to become a parivrājaka (a wandering ascetic) tells his wife Maitreyī that he was going to leave home and that he wanted to divide whatever wealth he had between her and her co-wife Kātyāyanī. This shows that a parivrājaka had even then to leave home and wife and to give up all belongings. The same Upaniṣad in another place (III.5.1)13 states:—

‘Those who realize ātman give up the hankering after progeny, possessions and heavenly worlds and practise the beggar's mode of life; therefore the brāhmaṇa, having completely mastered (and so risen beyond) mere learning, should seek to be like a child (i.e. should not make a parade of his latent capacities or knowledge) and having completed (gone beyond) knowledge and bālya (child-like behaviour) he should attain to the position of a muni, and having risen beyond the stage of a muni or non-muni, should become a real brāhmaṇa (one who has realized brahman).’14

The Jabalopanishad (5) declares that the ascetic (parivrāṭ) wears discoloured (not white) garments, has a tonsured head, has no possessions, is pure, hates (or injures) no one, begs for alms and thereby tends to attain non-difference from Brahman. In the Paramahāṃsa, the Brahma, the Nārada-parivrājaka, and the Sannyāsa Upaniṣads numerous rules are laid down about sannyāsa. But the antiquity and the authenticity of these Upaniṣads is extremely doubtful and therefore passing them over, attention will be confined to the Dharma-sūtras and many other Smritis and Purāṇas which dilate upon the characteristics and duties of ascetics (yati-dharma).15 Some of the most salient features are set out below with a few references.

(1) In order to qualify himself for sannyāsa, a person had to perform a sacrifice to Prajāpati in which whatever he had he distributed to priests and the poor and the helpless.16 The Jabalopanishad 4 adds that the sacrifice should be for Agni (and not for Prajāpati as some hold). The Nṛsimha

13 Vide Vedānta-sūtra III. 4. 47-49 and 50 for a discussion of this last passage.
14 Vide also Br. Up. IV. 4. 22 for similar words and sentiments.
16 Manu VI. 38, Yāj. III. 56, Viṣṇu Dh. S. 96. 1, Sankha VII. 1
Pūrāṇa (60. 2-4) requires that before entering upon this order one should perform eight śrāddhās. The Nṛsimha Pūrāṇa 58.36 allows every one who is a Vedic student to become an ascetic if his tongue, his sexual emotions, his appetite for food and his speech are pure (i.e. under strict control). The eight śrāddhās are daiva (to Vasuṣ, Rudras, Ādityas), ārṣa (to the ten sages viz. Marīci and others), divya (to Hiranyagarbha and Vairāja), manuṣya (to Sanaka, Sanandāna and five others), bhautika (to five elements, prthvī etc.), pātīrka (to Kavyavad fire, Soma, Aryaman, pitṛs called Agniśvatta etc.), maṭṛśrāddha (to ten mothers such as Gaurī, Padma et al), ātma-śrāddha (to Paramātman). 17

Manu is careful to point out (VI. 35-37) that a man should fix his mind on mokṣa after studying the Veda, procreating sons, performing sacrifices i.e. after discharging his debts to the sages, the pitṛs and gods. Baud. Dh.S.II.10.3-6 and Vaik. IX.6 state that an householder who has no children or whose wife is dead or who has established his children in the path of dharma or who is over 70 may become an ascetic.

(2) After leaving home, wife, children and possessions, be should dwell outside the villages, should be homeless and stay under a tree or in an uninhabited house wherever he may be when the sun sets and should always wander from place to place; but he may remain in one place only in the rainy season. 18 Śaṅkha (quoted by the Mit. on Yāj. III. 58) allows him to stay in one place only for two months in the rains, while Kanva says that he may stay one night in a village and five in a town (except in the rains). When he follows the rule of staying four or two months in one place, he should do so from the full moon of Āśāñha or an ascetic may always stay on the banks of the Ganges.

(3) He should always wander alone without a companion, as by so doing he will be free from attachments and the pangs of separation. Dakṣa (VII. 34-38) emphasizes this point very well:—

‘The real ascetic always stays alone; if two stay together, they form a pair; if three stay together they are like a village and if more (than three stay together) then it becomes like a town. An ascetic should not form a pair or a village or a town; by so doing he swerves from his dharma, since (if two or more stay together) they begin to exchange news about the ruling prince, about the alms obtained and by close contact sentiments of affection, jealousy or wickedness arise between them. Bad ascetics engage in many activities viz. expounding (texts) for securing money or honour and also gathering pupils round them. There are only four proper actions for an ascetic and no fifth viz. contemplation, purity, begging, always staying alone’. 

Nārada says:—

‘there are six acts which ascetics must do as if ordered by the king under the threat of a penalty viz. begging, japa, contemplation, bath (thrice daily), purity and worship of Śiva or Viṣṇu.’ 19

(4) He should be celibate, should always be devoted to contemplation and spiritual knowledge and should be unattached to all objects of sense and pleasure. 20

(5) He should move about avoiding all trouble or injury to creatures, should make all creatures safe with him, should bear with indifference all disrespect, should entertain no anger towards him who is furious with him, should utter benedictions over him also who runs him down, should never utter an untruth. 21

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17 Vide Yati-dh. p. 9 and Sm. M. p. 177.
18 Manu VI. 41, 43-44, Vas. Dh. S. X 12-15, Śaṅkha VII. 6
19 Quoted in Yati-dh. p. 62 and Sm. M. p. 188
20 Manu VI. 41 and 49, Gaut. III. 11
21 Manu VI. 40, 47-48, Yāj. III. 61, Gaut. III. 23
(6) He should neither kindle srauta fires nor grhya fire nor even ordinary fire for cooking food and should subsist on food obtained by begging.22

(7) He may enter a village for begging food only once a day, he should not ordinarily stay in a village at night (except in the rains) but if he stays at all he should do so only for one night.23

(8) He should beg alms from seven houses without selecting them beforehand.24 Baud. Dh. S. (II. 10. 57-58) prescribes that he should visit for alms the houses of brāhmaṇa householders of the Śālina and Yāyāvara types and should only wait for as much time as would be required for milking a cow. Baud. Dh. S. II. 10. 69 quotes the view of others that an ascetic may take alms from persons of all varnas or food from only one among dvijātis; Vas. X. 24 also says that he should beg of brāhmaṇas only. The Vayu Purāṇa 1. 18. 17 prescribes that ascetics should not eat food belonging to one man (but should eat food collected from several houses), or flesh or honey and should not accept āma-śrāddha (i.e. śrāddha with uncooked food), should not use salt directly or by itself (i.e. they may eat vegetables in cooking which salt has been used).

According to Uṣānas (quoted in Sm. M. p. 200 and Yāti-dh. pp. 74-75) food obtained by begging is of five kinds viz. madhukara (collecting food from any three, five or seven houses at random just as bees collect honey from any flowers), prāk-praṇīta (when a request is made by devotees to take food at their houses even before the ascetic gets up from his bed), ayācita (when invitation to take food at his house is given by a man before the ascetic starts on his begging round), tar-kālika (the food that is announced by a brāhmaṇa the moment the ascetic approaches), upapanna (cooked food brought to the maṭha by devoted disciples or other people).

(9) He should go out for begging when the smoke from kitchens has ceased to rise and when the noise of pestles has died down and the live coals (in the kitchen) have been extinguished and the plates used for the dining (by the householders) have been kept aside i.e. he should beg food in the evening.25 He should not take as alms honey or flesh (Vas. X. 24). He should not endeavour to secure alms by the practice of predicting, interpreting portents and omens or by the practice of describing the consequences indicated by them, nor by astrology nor by expounding the principles of a lore nor by casuistry (or discussion) nor should he approach a house that is already besieged by hermits, brāhmaṇas, birds and dogs, beggars or others (Manu VI. 50-51).

(10) He should not eat food to satiety, but should eat only as much as is necessary to keep body and spirit together and should not feel delight when he gets substantial alms nor feel dejected when he gets little or nothing.26 There is a famous verse:—

   “An ascetic should take only eight morsels of food, a forest hermit 16, a householder 32 and a Vedic student an unlimited number.”27

(11) He should hoard nothing and he should own or possess nothing except his tattered garments, his water jar, begging bowl.28 Devala quoted by the Mit. on Yāj. III. 58 declares that the ascetic should possess only a water-jar, a pāvitra (cloth for straining water), pādukās, (wooden clogs) an āśana (a seat) and a kanṭhā (patched blanket for protection from extreme cold). The Mahābhārata states that wearing ochre-coloured garments, shaving the head, and keeping a water jar and three staffs these are only outward signs meant to secure food and do not lead to mokṣa (dialogue of

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23 Gaut. III. 13 and 20, Manu VI. 43, 55
24 Vas. Dh. S. X. 7, Saṅkha VII. 3, Adi. 119. 12 ‘five or ten houses’
25 Manu VI. 56, Yāj. III. 59, Vas. X. 8, Saṅkha VII. 8
26 Manu VI. 57 and 59, Vas. X. 21. 22 and 25, Yāj. III. 59
27 Āp. Dh. S. II. 4. 9. 13, Baud. Dh. S. II. 10. 68
28 Manu VI. 43-44, Gaut. III. 10, Vas. X. 6
Janaka and Sulabha). The Vāyu Purāṇa I. 8 (quoted by Aparārka pp. 949-950) lays down what he should possess. He should take a staff of bamboo the outward surface of which is intact, which is not formidable and which has the parvans (the parts between the joints) of equal length, which is surrounded by a rope of cow's tail hair four aṅgulas in length and has three knots and which he holds in his right hand; he should have a śikya (loop on which to carry his jar or other things) made of kuṣa or cotton or hemp threads or strings and of the form of a lotus and six muṣṭis (fists) in length; he should also have a water jar and a pātra (vessel or bowl for begging); he may have a seat (āsana) of wood square or round in size for sitting on or for washing his feet; he should have a loin-cloth to cover his private parts and a kānthā (patched garment) for protection against cold and he may have two pādūkas (sandals). He should have only these and should not accumulate anything else.

(12) He should wear garments only for covering his private parts and may wear such garments as were worn by others and are used by him after washing (Gaut. III.17-18), while Āp. Dh. S. (II. 9. 21. 11-12) states that he should wear clothes thrown away by others and that some say that he may be naked. Vas. (X. 9-11) says that he should wear his body with a piece of cloth (śāṭi) or with deer skin or with grass cut down for cows. Baud. Dh. S.II.6.24 requires that his garments should be ochre-coloured (quoted by Aparārka p. 962).

(13) The begging bowl and the plate from which the ascetic eats should be made of clay or wood or of a gourd, or of bamboo which should be without holes and he should not use metal vessels; and these vessels are to be cleaned, with water and scoured with cow's hair.29

(14) He should pare his nails, cut all his hair and beard30; but Gaut. III. 21 appears to allow him an option viz. be may tonsure the whole head or keep only a top-knot.

(15) He should sleep on raised ground (sāndila), should feel no concern if he suffers from an illness, he should neither welcome death nor should he feel joy for continuing to live, but he should patiently wait till the time of death, as a servant waits till the time he is hired expires.31

(16) He should generally observe silence except when he repeats the Vedic texts learnt by him.32

(17) He should be tridaṇḍi (carrying three staffs) according to Yāj. III. 58, while Manu VI. 52 simply says he should be daṇḍi (i.e. carrying a staff). The word daṇḍa is used in two senses, a staff of bamboo or restraint. Baud. Dh. S. II. 10. 53 gives an option that he may be ekadaṇḍi or a tridaṇḍi and also says that he should not cause harm to creatures by speech, actions and mind (II. 6. 25). Manu XII. 10, which is the same as Dakṣa (VII. 30), declares that that man is called tridaṇḍi who has restraint over his speech, mind and body. Dakṣa makes certain apt remarks:—

‘Even gods who pre-eminently possess the sattva-guṇa are carried away by pleasures of sense; what of men? Therefore he who has given up his taste for pleasures should resort to daṇḍa; others cannot do it as they will be carried away by pleasures. An ascetic is not called tridaṇḍi by carrying bamboo staffs; he is tridaṇḍi who has the spiritual daṇḍa in him. Many people make their livelihood under the guise of (carrying) three daṇḍas ’ (VII. 27-31, quoted by Aparārka p. 953).

Restraint of speech requires, that he should observe silence, restraint of action that he should cause Injury to no creature and restraint of mind that he should engage in prāṇāyāma and other yogic practices. Laghu-Viṣṇu IV. 12 says he may be ekadaṇḍi or tridaṇḍi. The Jivana-mukti-viveka (p. 154) quotes verses to the effect —

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29 Manu VI. 53-54, Yāj. III. 60 and Laghu-Viṣṇu IV. 29-30
30 Manu VI. 52, Vas. Dh. S. X. 6
31 Manu VI. 43 and 46
‘he who wields the staff of the knowledge of Reality is called ekadāndi, while he who merely holds a stick in his hand without knowledge and eats everything (or has all sorts of desires) reaches terrible hells.’

(18) He should recite the Vedic texts referring to yajñas or gods or texts of a metaphysical character found in the Vedānta (such as ‘satyam jñānam-anantam brahma’ in Tai. Up. 2.1).

(19) He should walk after ascertaining with his eye that the ground he treads is pure, should drink water after passing it through a piece of cloth (in order to prevent ants etc., being taken in by him), he should utter words purified by truth and should do what his conscience (inner voice) decides to be right or proper.

(20) In order to generate the feeling of vairāgya (desirelessness) and to curb his senses he should make his mind dwell upon the body as liable to disease and old age and as packed full of impurities; and should revolve in his mind the transitory nature of all mundane things, the trouble one has to undergo in body and mind from conception to death, the incessant round of births and deaths.

(21) Truthfulness, not depriving another of his possessions or his due, absence of wrath (even against one who harms), humility, purity (of body and food etc.), discrimination, steadiness of mind (in sorrow), quiescence (or restraint) of mind, restraint of senses, knowledge (of the self), these are the dharma of all varṇas (or these constitute the essence of dharma). And these have to be acquired most of all by the ascetic, since the outward signs, viz. the scanty clothing, the water jar etc., are not the real means of discharging the real duties of sannyāsa, as anyone can possess these outward signs.

(22) He should endeavour to purify his mind by prāṇāyāma and other practices of yoga and thereby enable himself gradually to realize the Absolute and secure final release.

**Classes of Ascetics**

In many works ascetics are divided into four classes. The Mahābhārata (Anusāsana 141. 89) says that ascetics are of four types, kutiṭaka, bahudaka, hamsa and parama-hamsa, each later one being superior to each preceding one. Viś. 7. 7, Laghu-Viś. IV. 14-23, Suta-samhita (Māṇa-yoga-khaṇḍa chap. 6), Bhiksukopaniṣad, Präjāpati (quoted by Apsrarka p. 952) define these four but they do not all agree.

The kutiṭaka, as the name itself implies, is one who resorts to sannyāsa in his own house or in a but erected by his sons, begs food of his sons and relatives, wears the top-knot, the sacred thread, has the three staffs, carries a water-jar and stays in the same hut. The description of these four contained in Viśk., being probably among the oldest available, is set out here:—

The kutiṭaka stay in the hermitages of sages like Gautama, Bharadvaja, Yajñavalkya and Harīta, take eight morsels of food every day, know the essence of the path of Yoga and hanker only after mokṣa (release).

The bahudakas have three staffs, the water-jar and wear garments dyed with ochre, beg for food at seven houses of sage-like brāhmaṇas or other well-conducted men but avoid taking flesh, salt and stale food.

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33 Vide Manu VI. 83.
34 Manu VI. 46, Saṅkhī VII. 7, Viś. Dh. S. 96. 14-17
35 Manu VI. 76-77, Yāj. III. 63-64, Viś. Dh. S. 96. 25-42
37 Manu VI. 70-75, 81, Yāj. III. 62, 64
The Ṛṣis stay not more than one night in a village and not more than five nights in a town for alms or subsist on cow's urine or dung, or fast for a month or always perform the candrāyana penance. Pitāmahā quoted in Sm. M. (varnāśrama p. 184) states that the Ṛṣis carry only one dānḍa, enter a village only for alms and otherwise stay under a tree or in a cave or on a river bank.

The Paramahāṃsas always stay under a tree or in an uninhabited house or in a burial place and either wear a garment or are naked; they are beyond the pairs of dharma and adharma, truth and falsehood, purity and impurity. They treat all alike, they regard all as the Self, to them a clod of earth or gold is the same and they beg alms from persons of all varnas.

It appears that long before the Āp. Dh. S. (II. 9. 21. 13-17) i.e. at least five or six centuries before Christ there were people who thought that an ascetic was beyond all vidhi (injunctions to do a thing) and niṣedha (prohibition), that he was above the ordinary rules about truthfulness or falsehood, that he should not care for pleasure or pain or for the study of the Vedas, or for this world or the next, he should simply seek to realize the Self, that when he realizes the Self all his sins, if any, would be liquidated thereby. Āp. combats these ideas by saying that such sentiments were opposed to the śāstras laying down rules about ascetics, that by realizing the Self, he cannot be free from the effects of what he does or the consequences of having a body. The sentiments which Āp. controverts arose from such passages as the one in the -Br. Up. IV. 4. 23:—

'This is the eternal greatness of the man who realizes Brahman that by the actions he does, he does not add to it or detract from it. Therefore one should only know the real nature of that greatness; he on knowing Brahman is not affected by an evil action.'

In the Kausītaki Br. Up. III. 1 it is stated:—

'Whoever realizes One (the Supreme Spirit), his worlds (i.e. his position) are not destroyed by any action of his, not even if he kills his parents, not even by theft nor by the murder of a learned brahmaṇa.'

These words are not to be taken literally, they are merely a boastful utterance (a praudhi-vāda), they are really laudatory statements emphasizing the supreme value of the realization of Brahman. Similarly the Chan. Up. IV.14.3 says:—

‘Just as water does not stick to a lotus-leaf, so sinful actions do not cling to him who knows this’.  

In the same Upaniṣad (V 2.1) we read:— ‘to him who knows this, nothing becomes unfit as food.’ The Upaniṣads, however, generally lay great stress on moral virtues and emphasize that a high moral life is absolutely necessary for the seeker after spiritual truth. 38

The position of the Vedānta-sūtra (in III. 4.27-31) is that the seeker after eternal truth must be endowed with restraint of senses and quiescence of mind and he cannot act just as he pleases (śabdaścāto’kāmakāre) and spurn all rules of morality. Śaṅkarācārya on Vedanta-sūtra II. 3. 48 and other places makes this position perfectly clear. Viśvarūpa on Yāj. III. 66 states that even ascetics of the paramahāṃsa type are not allowed (by Yāj. and other sages) to behave as they please. The Par. M. (I. part 2, pp. 172-176) says that the paramahāṃsa should have only one dānḍa and argues that paramahāṃsas are of two kinds viz. vidvat (those who have already realized Brahman) and vividīṣu (those who are eager seekers after realization) and relies on Br. Up. III.5.1 for the former and Br. Up. IV.4.22 and Jabālopaniṣad for the latter. Yajñavalkya is an example of vidvat-sannyāsa, which leads to jivan-mukti (i.e. release even when the body still persists), while the latter (vividīṣā-sannyāsa) leads to release after the body is no more (i.e. videha-mukti). 39

The Jabālopaniṣad (6) describes the state of paramahāṃsas at great length. They are sages like Śamvarta, Aruni, Śvetaketu, Durvasas, Rbhu, Nidagha, Jaḍabhara, Dattatreya, Raivataka; they

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do not exhibit any visible signs of their order or any visible rules of conduct; though they are really
not mad they behave like one mad; they go out for alms only for keeping body and soul together;
they are unaffected by acquisition or absence (of alms), they have no house but wander about and
stay in a temple or on a heap of grass, on an ant-hill, or at the foot of a tree or on a river bank or in a
cave, they have attachment for nothing, they are centred in contemplation of the One Spirit.
According to Suta-samhita it is only hamsa and paramahamsa that give up śikha and the sacred
thread.

The Sannyāsopaniṣad (13) adds two more varieties to the four enumerated above viz. ‘turīyatīta’
and ‘avadhūta’ and defines them as follows:—

‘turīyatīta’ (one who is beyond the 4th stage viz. of paramahamsa) eats only fruits in the way cows
take food (i.e. he does not hold them in his hands), if he takes cooked food then only from three
houses, he wears no cloth, his body only continues to live (but he is not conscious of that fact), he
deals with his body as if it were dead.

The avadhūta is beyond all restrictions, he takes food from all varnas except those who are charged
with mortal sins or are patita (outcasts) and eats like an ajagara (a boa constrictor) i.e. lying down
and opening only his mouth without any effort and is solely absorbed in the contemplation of the
real nature of the Spirit. Medhātithi (on Manu VI. 33) is quite emphatic that sannyāsa does not
consist in defying all the rules of sāstra, but in giving up the sentiment of egoism and of
possessiveness and that it is not true to say that for the sannyāsin all rules (even of morality) are
non-existent.

Who is eligible for Sannyāsa?

One important question on which opinion was sharply divided is whether sannyāsa was allowed to
all the three varnas or only to brāhmaṇas. Those who held that it was allowed only to brāhmaṇas
argued from the following texts:—

‘This Self brāhmaṇas seek to know by the study of the Veda’; Br. Up. IV.4.22 states:—
‘After knowing this Self, brāhmaṇas give up the hankering after progeny, wealth and heavenly
worlds and practise begging.’ Br. Up. III. 5.1
‘Closely examining the worlds that are the rewards of actions, a brāhmaṇa should come to be
disgusted etc.’ Muṇḍaka I.2.12

Here, the word ‘brāhmaṇa’ being used, śrutī indicates that brāhmaṇas alone can be sannyāsins.
Manu (VI. 38) begins his description of the 4th stage with the words:— ‘a brāhmaṇa should leave
his house and go into the world as a wanderer’ and winds up the chapter (VI.97) by saying:— ‘I
have declared this fourfold procedure in relation to brāhmaṇas’.

The Jabālopaniṣad (4) ordains:—

‘whether a man has fulfilled his vratas or not, whether he has performed samāvartana (the
ceremonial bath after studying Veda) or not, whether his fires (Vedic) have ceased or not he
should resort to the wandering ascetic’s life the very day on which he feels disgust with mundane
affairs’.

It thus allows even a brahmacārī to become an ascetic; a kṣatriya and vaiśya could be a brahmacārī.
Yāj. III. 32 states that sannyāsa is a means of purification (of the mind) in the case of twice-born
classes. Besides the only condition precedent mentioned by the Jabālopaniṣad for resorting to
pravṛṣya (ascetic life) is vairāgya and whoever feels the latter is authorized to betake himself to
that stage. Yāj. III. 61 while laying down the observances of ascetics employs the word ‘dvijāḥ’ and
not ‘brāhmaṇaḥ’.
Both opposing views are supported by the most famous authors. The first view that only brāhmaṇas can be sannyāsin is affirmed by the great Śaṅkarācārya in his bhāṣya on Br. Up. III. 5.1 and IV.5.15. It is most interesting and also very refreshing that Sureśvara in his Vārtika on Śaṅkara’s bhāṣya on Br. Up. III.5.1 first explains the views of his guru, then enters the lists against his great master and combats his views with cogent arguments. Most of the medieval writers and works such as Medhātithi on Manu (VI. 97), the Mit., the Madana-pārijāta (pp. 365-373), the Smṛti-muktā-phala (Varnaśrama p. 176) uphold the view that only brāhmaṇas can resort to the 4th āśrama, while a few works like the Smṛti-candrika (I. p.65) support the second view.

So far as the smṛti texts and the medieval works are concerned a śūdra could not become a sannyāsin. The Santi-parva (63. 11-14) is quite dear that a śūdra cannot be a bhikṣu. It also (18. 32) informs us that in its day many (probably including śūdras) assumed the outward signs of the 4th āśrama, got their heads tonsured and moved about in ochre-coloured garments (kāśāya) for securing alms and gifts. But there are clear indications that śūdras did assume even in the times of ancient smṛtis the ascetic’s garb and mode of life. When the Āśrama-vāsika-parva 26. 33 states that Vidura was buried as an ascetic, the commentator Nīlakaṇṭha remarks that this indicates that even śūdras can follow the mode of the ascetic life.

It appears that even women could in rare cases adopt the ascetic’s life in ancient brahmanic times. The Mit. on Yāj. III. 58 quotes a sūtra of Baud. (strinām caite) to the effect that according to some ācāryas even women could adopt the ascetic mode of life. Patañjali in his Mahābhāṣya (vol. II. p. 100) speaks of a woman ascetic (parivrājika) named Śaṅkarā.

In the drama called Mālavikāgnimitra, Kalidāsa describes the Paṇḍitā Kausikī as wearing the garb of an ascetic (in I. 14). It must be said that the general trend of Hinduism is against women adopting the homeless or ascetic life. The Jātakas (e. g. IV. 392) rarely speak of cāṇḍālas as adopting the homeless condition

**Sannyāsa — Women and Śūdras**

When the question is asked whether śūdras or women could resort to sannyāsa there is likely to be some confusion. The word ‘sannyāsa’ conveys two ideas:

(a) relinquishing of all actions (kāmya karma) that spring from the desire to secure some object or other and secondly,

(b) following a certain mode of life (āśrama) the outward signs of which are carrying a staff and the like and the entrance into which is preceded by the utterance of the praiṣa.

The Jīvan-muktī-viveka (p. 3) states that mokṣa (amṛtatva) depends upon tyāga (abandonment) as stated in the Kaivalyopaniṣad (2) — ‘not by actions, nor by progeny nor by wealth, but by tyāga some attained mokṣa’ (liberation) For such abandonment even women and śūdras are eligible! The best example of a woman giving up everything being that of Maitreyī, the wife of Yājñavalkya, who plainly told the sage (Br. Up. IV. 5. 3-4) — ‘What have I to do with that which will not make me immortal (will not release me from samara)?’ The Bhagavad-gītā (18.2) also declares that sannyāsa means the giving up of actions springing from desires (to secure certain objects). The Jīvan-muktī-viveka further states that by resorting to the āśrama of sannyāsa the mother and the wife of a sannyāsin are supposed not to be born again as women (but they may be born as men). So women and śūdras may renounce all actions, though they could not adopt the peculiar ascetic mode of life with its outward symbols. According to Sankara’s bhāṣya on Vedānta-sūtra I.3.34 the order of sannyāsa, the peculiar rules of which are recommended by Vedic texts, is only for the three varṇas, while the practice of mere nyāsa (relinquishing of worldly pleasures and desires) can be resorted to by women, śūdras and mixed castes.
Sannyāsa and the disabled

Some espoused the view that sannyāsa was meant only for the blind, the cripple and the impotent, that is, for persons who possessed no eligibility (adhitāra) for the performance of Vedic rites. Śaṅkarācārya in his bhāṣya on V.S. III.4.20 refutes the view that the passage of the Jabālopaniṣad (4) cited above relates to those who are not eligible for performing Vedic rites and establishes that that passage has in view the general prescription that there is a stage of life called parivrāja (sannyāsa) meant for all that seek release from samsāra. Medhatithi on Manu VI.36 rejects this view (of some) by saying that the blind or cripple cannot follow the rules and practices (such as not staying in one village for more than one night) just as they cannot perform Vedic rites and hence it could not have been intended by the smṛti writers that sannyāsa was only for the blind and the cripple, nor can the impotent take to sannyāsa as no upanayana is performed in their case.

Reversion from Sannyāsa

One of the principal rules for a yati was that he was to leave wife and home and never to think of sexual matters or to revert to the life of a house-holder. Atri (VIII. 16 and 18) declares:—

‘I see no penance (expiation) for that twice-born man, who, after having resorted to the duties of a celibate (sannyāsin), reverts from that stage; he is neither a dvija nor a śūdrā, his children become caṇḍālas called Vidūra’.

Śaṅkara on V.S. (III.4. 42) explains that these words are only intended to emphasize the great effort required to remain celibate as a sannyāsin and that expiations are as a matter of fact prescribed for a bhikṣu having sexual intercourse. Dakṣa VII. 33 requires the king to brand on the forehead with the mark of a dog's paw and banish from the kingdom a person who after becoming a sannyāsin does not abide by its rules (of celibacy etc.). It has been seen above that a man who falls away from the order of sannyāsins became a slave of the king for life (p. 185).

Śaṅkara and the 10 Monastic Orders

The great ācārya Śaṅkara was a celibate all his life, but he is said to have established four maṭhas as stated previously for the propagation of his doctrines and philosophy at Srīngapura (modern Srngerī) and other places. Pious devotees bestowed considerable donations on these maṭhas. In course of time these maṭhas went on increasing and huge properties came to be under the control of the pontiffs of these several maṭhas. There arose ten orders of advaita sannyāsins⁴⁰ alone viz. tīrtha, āśrama, vana, aranya, giri, parvata, sāgara, sarasvatī, bharatī and pūrī. These ten orders are said to be the pupils in succession of the four disciples of Sāṅkara i.e. the first two of Padmapāda, the next two of Hastāmalaka, the next three of Troṭaka (or Toṭaka) and the last three of Sureśvara.

Maṭhas and their disputes

The several maṭhas at Srngerī, Kāncī, Kumbhakonam, Kudalgi, Śaṅkēśvara, Sivagaṅga have been quarrelling among themselves as to their jurisdictions⁴¹ and their rights to claim monetary payments from the people and to exercise spiritual authority in matters of expiations, excommunication etc. To support the claims of the various maṭhas pedigrees of teachers⁴² and pupils appear to have been

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⁴¹ Vide Rajvade, Khaṇḍa 21 (in Marathi) letter No. 190 at p. 240, dated śāke 1763 where the claim is made by the Karavīra maṭha that its jurisdiction extends from the river Malāpahāri towards the north and that the Srṅgerī maṭha has no jurisdiction in that area.

⁴² Wilson's 'Religious Sects of the Hindus' vol. 1, p. 201 (for 29 ācāryas of Śrṅgerī from Govinda, the teacher of Śāṅkara, to the present day; J.B.B.A.S. vol. X. pp. 373-74 for 56 occupants of the Śrṅgerī gadi from Śāṅkara; and 'Shankaracharya and his school' (1923) by the late Mr. M. B. Bodas, which last (in Marathi) is a very valuable work,
fabricated, no two of which agree in toto and in some of them Sureśvara is said to have lived for 700 or 800 years.

The disciples of Rāmānuja and Madhva also have many mathas of their own. Vallabhaçārya (one of the great ācāryas that interpreted the Vedanta-sūtras) and his disciples do not accept the order of sannyāsa. According to them in the Kali age sannyāsa is forbidden for the seeker as it leads on to regret and worry (if its rules are to be strictly observed) and that the parityāga (abandonment) that is the essence of sannyāsa does not consist in resorting to the 4th āśrama but in behaving in the way in which bhaktas (devotees) like Uddhava acted (vide Bhagavata III. 4).

Most of these mathas have large endowments or incomes which are spent in pomp and show (e.g. keeping golden images and paraphernalia). Very few of the heads are really learned even in ancient Sanskrit Literature in all its branches, they are impervious to modern tendencies and requirements, are obscurantists and generally oppose all ideas of reform. Only a very few mathas are presided over by persons who have been celibate throughout their lives. Most of them originally were householders and then took to sannyāsa. Besides the succession to the gadi is often a hole and corner affair. When the incumbent is about to die the influential and intriguing persons round him catch hold of some aspirant and make him a disciple of the dying sannyāsin and afterwards he is installed as the pontiff. He retains his attachment to his former family and uses a good deal of the income for his relatives and friends. Real reform of the mathas cannot come unless great improvements are made in selecting a successor. There must be several disciples, the selection must not be made on the incumbent's death-bed, representative bodies must have a voice in the selection.

The heads of ascetic mathas have often come to the courts on questions about dignity, jurisdiction and properties. For example, in 3 Moore's Indian Appeals p. 198 the Śrīneri Pontiff claimed a declaration that he alone was entitled to proceed on the public road in a palanquin crosswise and for an injunction restraining the Swami of the Lingayats from doing so; in Madhusudan Parvat v. Shree Madhav Teertha, 33 Bom. 278, the Śaṅkaracārya of the Śāradā mathā at Dwarka sued for a declaration that the defendant was not entitled to the title and dignities of a Śaṅkarācārya and that he was not entitled to call for or receive any offerings from people at Ahmedabad or other places in Gujarat either in his assumed capacity of a Śaṅkarācārya or as a Śaṅkarācārya of the Jyotir-matha (this claim was also rejected on the grounds that the suit was not of a civil nature and that the offerings were voluntary).

In Vidya Shankara v. Vidya Narsimha, 51 Bom. 442 (P.C.) the Privy Council had to deal with a pretty tangle of claims between four persons, the plaintiff and the defendant each claiming to be the lawful Śaṅkarācārya of Śankeswar and Karvir matha and both having selected a disciple to succeed them. — These illustrations indicate how the world-renouncing ideal of conduct set forth by the great Śaṅkarācārya is honoured in modern times by those who swear by his name. They should lay to heart the words of the Jivan-mukti-viveka and the quotation in it from Medhātithi (pp. 158-159) viz.

‘if an ascetic secures a matha as a fixed place of residence and thereon a sentiment of ownership arises in him his mind will be disturbed when loss or expansion of the matha takes place; therefore an ascetic should not possess a matha nor should he have vessels of gold or silver for his use nor should he gather pupils round himself for securing service from them or in order that they may honour him, spread his fame, or bring money to him, but he may gather disciples only for removing their ignorance.’

containing lists of pontifical succession of five mathas (pp. 91-103) and also the Matgâmnyasetu (in Sanskrit) mentioning the several mathas, their traditions, mottoes etc.
In J.R.A.S. for 1925 pp. 479-486 Dr. J. N. Farquhar contributes a very learned article on the organization of the sannyāsins of the Vedanta. Therein he shows how Moslem armed fakirs molested and even killed Hindu ascetics, how Madhusudāna Sarasvaṭī approached the Emperor Akbar, how failing to get complete redress he initiated kṣatriyas and vaśyās into seven out of the ten orders of sannyāsins and armed them, how these sannyāsins fought against the moslem fakirs and also among themselves, how even non-brahmin women are initiated into the giri and puri orders and how in Northern India the pure monastic orders are those of tīrtha, āśrama and sarasvaṭi. This innovation later on led to serious consequences. The sannyāsins and fakirs infested the province of Bengal and their incursions and depredations caused great alarm in the first days of the British rule (latter half of the 18th century). This shows how the rule of ahimsa enjoined upon ascetics became perverted.

Various estimates have been made about the number of persons in India professing to lead the ascetic life. They could easily have been 10% of the population, particularly in Northern India. They generally led very indolent, parasitic and dissolute lives. There are however, reasons to believe that in recent times the number of so-called sannyāsins is being substantially reduced owing to several causes.

There have been swarms of monks and nuns in Christian countries also. Before the suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII in England about 400 years ago, the number of monks, nuns and persons dependent on them was enormously large.

According to both ancient and modern Hindu Law, when a man became a sannyāsin, he became cut off from his family and lost all his rights to property, partition and inheritance in that family. Vas. Dh. S. 17. 52 lays down that those who resort to another āśrama (i.e. vānaprastha or sannyāsa) are excluded from their share (in the family property). This result, however, does not follow by merely wearing the garments of a sannyāsin, but in order that this result may follow a person must have performed the necessary ceremonies for entering the order of sannyāsins. On the other hand whatever belongs to a sannyāsin such as his clothes, his sandals, his books would not devolve on his blood relations as heirs but will go to his spiritual heir (viz. his pupil). These rules, however, do not apply to a śūdra turning an ascetic. He does not become severed from his family by entering the order of asceticism, unless a usage to that effect is established.

The Vāyu Purāṇa (quoted in the Yati-dharma-sangraha p. 108) invokes dire consequences on him who after becoming a sannyāsin has sexual intercourse, viz. he becomes a worm in ordure for 60,000 years, passes through the lives of a rat, a vulture, a dog, a donkey, a pig, a tree without flowers and fruit, a goblin and then he is born as a cāndāla.

In the Presidency of Bombay several cases have come before the courts about the rights of succession to Gharbhari Gosavis (i.e. ascetics who have a house and family).

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43 Vide 'Sannyasi and Fakir raiders in Bengal' by Rai Saheb Jamini Mohan Ghosh (1930) for a detailed and interesting account.
44 Vide 'English monks' by Geoffrey Baskerville, p. 285, (f. n. 2) where the figures of monks and nuns in England, France and Spain at various periods are given.
45 Vide Yāj. II. 137 and the Mit. thereon.
47 Vide Steele's 'law and customs of Hindu castes,' Appendix B on pp. 444-446 'Gharbaree Gosavies' by Mr. Warden.
48 Vide Comin Rambharti v. Mahānt Sarajbharti, 5 Bom. 682 (where it was held that a Gosavi who succeeded as a disciple to a mohunt did not forfeit his rights by subsequent marriage), Balgir v. Dhondgir, 5 Bom. L. B. 114, Gitabai v. Shivbakas, 5 Bom. L. R. 318, Hirabharthi v. Bai Javer, 30 Bom. L. R. 1555.
In the Gupta Inscriptions we have several records of a line of kings who were the feudatories of the imperial Guptas and who bear the appellation 'nrpati-parivrājaka' (kingly ascetics).

Their gotra was Bharadvaja and the founder is said to have been an incarnation of Kapila (p. 115). It is likely that the founder, after being a king, ultimately became a sannyāsin and his descendants (in the fashion poetically described by Kalidasa) also became ascetics after adorning the throne for some time. Hence they probably came to be called nrpati-parivrājakas.

**Procedure of becoming a sannyāsin**

The description of the Baud. Dh. S. being probably the most ancient among extant works is briefly set out below:—

“After having cut the hair on the head, the beard, the hair on the body, the nails, he makes ready three sticks, a loop of strings, (a piece of cloth as) a water strainer, a jar and a bowl. Having taken these he should go to the end of his village, or to the extremity of the boundary of his village, or the fire-hall; he should partake of clarified butter, milk and curds (mixed together) and should fast or drink water. Then he should recite the vyāhārtis separately preceded by ‘om’ and followed by the words:— ‘I enter the Savitṛ’ and by one pāda of the sacred Gāyatṛi and then all together.  

Before sunset, he heaps fuel on the gārhapatya fire (if he has maintained Vedic fires), brings the anvahāryapacana (dakṣināgni) to the spot, takes the flaming āhāvanīya fire out of the gārhapatya, melts clarified butter on the gārhapatya, cleanses it (with blades of kuśa), takes four portions of the butter in the spoon called ‘sruk’ and offers in the āhāvanīya fire on which fuel-sticks have been heaped a full oblation (i.e. whole spoonful) four times saying ‘om svāhā’. This is called Brahmanvadhāna (putting fuel-sticks on fire for securing knowledge of brahman). Then in the evening after agnihotra has been offered, he strews grass to the north of the gārhapatya fire, places on the grass sacrificial vessels in pairs with the upper parts turned downwards, spreads darbhā grass to the south of the āhāvanīya fire on the seat meant for the brahma priest, covers it with black antelope skin and remains awake the whole of that night. Then he rises at the time (muhurta) sacred to Brahma and offers agnihotra in the early morning at the proper time. Then after covering the part of the altar called pṛṣṭyā and bringing water he prepares an offering for Agni Vaiśvanara cooked on twelve potsherds. That well-known īśī will be the last he will perform. Afterwards, he throws in the āhāvanīya fire those sacrificial vessels which are not made of stone or earth. And throwing the two arāṇīs (the sticks by the friction of which fire was produced for vedic rites) into the gārhapatya fire with the words:— ‘may you two be of one mind with us’, he (mentally) deposits the three fires in himself. Repeating the mantra:— ‘yā te agne yajñyāṃ tanuḥ’ (Tai. S. III. 4. 10. 5) he inhales the smell of the smoke of each of the three fires thrice. Then standing within the sacrificial enclosure he says thrice in a low voice and thrice aloud the words om bhūḥ, bhuvah svah. I have entered the order of sannyāsa (lit. I have abandoned), I have entered the order of sannyāsa, I have entered the order of sannyāsa. Lastly he pours out as much water as will fill his joined hands saying:— ‘I promise that no injury will proceed from me to any creature’. He must henceforward restrain his speech. He holds his staff saying:— ‘thou art my friend, protect me.’ He takes the sīkya (loop of strings) with the words:— ‘yādasya pare rajasah’ (Tai. S. IV. 2.5.2); he takes the cloth for straining water with the text:— ‘yena devah pavitrena’ (Tai. Br. I. 4.8 and Nirukta V.6); he takes the water jar reciting:— ‘yena deva jyotiḥsordhvaṃ’ (Tai. S. V. 7. 2. 2); he takes the bowl after reciting the seven vyāhārtis. Taking with him the staffs, the loop of strings, the cloth, a water strainer, the water-pot and the bowl he goes to a place where water can be had, bathes, sips water and sprinkles himself (performs mārjana) with the Surabhimaṇī verse (dadhikrāvno, Rig. IV. 39. 6), with Ablingā verses, Varuṇī verses, Hīraṇyavānā verses (Tai. S. V. 6. 1. 1 = Atharvaveda I. 33. 1-4) and Pavamani verses (Rig. IX. 1 etc.). While still in the water he performs sixteen prānāyāmas after (mentally going over) the Aghamaṛṣaṇa verses (Rig. X.190.1-3), comes out of the water on the bank, wrings his garments, 

49 The central ideas of the ceremony are the renunciation of all worldly ties, contempt of the world and all earthly riches, a life of ahimsā and contemplation on and realization of the Absolute Brahman. The summary is close to the original, only omitting a few quotations, a few repetitions and some matters that have already been dealt with.
puts on another pure (washed) garment, sips water, takes the cloth for straining water with the words:— ‘om bhur bhuvah svah’ and performs tarpāṇa to the seven vyāhṛtis. He then fills his joined hands with water and performs tarpāṇa to the Manes just in the same way as he did to the gods, then he worships the sun with the two verses udu tyam (Rig. I.50.1) and ‘citram’ (Rig. I. 115.1). He then offers tarpāṇa to the Atman (self) with:— ‘the syllable om is brahma; this light (the sun) that diffuses warmth is indeed brahma; this which gives warmth is indeed the Veda; this indeed that sheds warmth is the (proper) object of knowledge’; then he worships the Atman with the words:— ‘the Self is brahman, it is light’. Let him repeat the Gayatri verse one thousand times or an unlimited number of times. Repeating:— ‘om bhurbhuvah svah’, he takes up the water strainer (cloth) and fetches water.

Let him not thereafter perform ācamanā with water that has not been drawn up (from a well), which has not been strained and which has not been completely cleansed. Let him not wear thereafter white garments. He may carry one staff or three.

He has to keep the following vows: — aḥiṃsā (abstaining from injury to any creature), truthfulness, not depriving others of any property of theirs, continence, and liberality.30 There are five minor vratas (vows) viz. absence of anger, waiting upon the guru, avoidance of carelessness (or rashness), cleanliness, purity in food. Then follow rules as to begging for alms (some of them are at pp. 933-934 above). When he returns from begging, he places the alms in a pure spot, washes his hands and feet and announces (the alms) first to the sun with the verses:— ‘udu tyam’ (Rig. I. 50. 1) and ‘citram’ (Rig. I. 115.1); he also announces the alms to brahman with the text:— ‘brahma jayñanam’ (Tai. S. IV.2.8.2 = Atharvaveda IV.1.1).

It is declared (in Vedic texts) that after the brahmādhāna the sacred fires are contained in the sacrificer himself; his prāṇa, apāṇa, vyāṇa, udāṇa and samāṇa represent the five fires gārhapatiya, anvahāryapacana (dakṣiṇagni), āhavanīya, sabhya and avasathyā. These five fires indeed abide in the Atman; he, therefore, offers (the oblations) in the Atman only. This sacrifice offered in the soul, which is centred in and based on the Atman, leads the soul to bliss. Giving compassionately portions of the alms to creatures and sprinkling the remainder with water, he should partake of it as if it were some medicine. After he has eaten and taken ācamanā he worships the sun with the Jyotismatī verse viz. ‘ud vayam’ (Rig. I. 50.10) after inaudibly muttering the two texts:— ‘vān me āsan’ (Tai.S.V.5.9.2) and ‘nasōḥ prāṇāḥ’ (Tai. Ar. X.72). Let him eat food given without asking, regarding which nothing has been settled beforehand and which comes to him by chance and so much only as is necessary to support life.

Now they quote the following rules for the case where the teachers explain the Upaniṣad —
‘standing (in the day), keeping silence, sitting (at night) in the posture of crossed legs, bathing thrice a day, he shall subsist entirely on rice grains, oil-cake, food from barley, sour milk and milk’.

It is declared in Vedic texts—
‘on that occasion he shall keep strict silence and converse as much as is necessary with the teachers deeply versed in the three Vedas, with ascetics or other learned persons in the several āśramas, after pressing the teeth together, all the while contemplating on what he hears, but not in such a way as would cause a breach of his vow. He may keep only one of the rules out of the three viz. standing (in the day), rigid silence and sitting with crossed legs (at night) and not all together. Eight things do not cause him who is intent on vows as above to break his own vow viz. water, roots, clarified butter, milk, sacrificial food, the wish of a brāhmaṇa, an order of his guru, and medicine. Let him mutter the mantras in the evening and morning that are repeated in the Agnihatra. He should perform his evening sandhya adoration with mantras addressed to Varuṇa and in the morning with those addressed to Mitra (Rig. III.59). It is declared in the Veda:— ‘limited in number are the rk verses, the sāmans and the yajus formulae, but there is no limit to

30 Vide Manu VI. 46 for straining water. ‘liberality’— the ascetic has ex hypothesi no property, but his tyāga may consist in imparting knowledge and giving his mss. or books to the needy.
this that is brahma.’ In this way (i.e. repeating om) the ascetic may give up the rest of the Veda, but should stand firm by the root of the Veda (viz. om). The Veda is the tree and its root is prāṇava (om). He should meditate on ‘om’. Prajāpati has declared that prāṇava leads on to union with brahman. Let him cleanse the vessel of brahman with seven vyāhritis.

Among medieval works the Smṛtyārthasāra (pp. 96-97), the Sm. M. (pp. 177-182), the Yati-dh. (pp. 10-22), the Nirmaya-sindhu (III. Uttarardha pp. 628-632), the Dharma-sindhu give various detailed procedures. The procedure in the Dharma-sindhu contains the following elements:—

- **Sannyāsa** is to be resorted to in the northward passage of the sun and for a man who is about to die even in the southward passage.

- He should find out a teacher possessed of the virtues of quiescence and note for three months the duties of ascetics in his company, should purify himself with japa of the sacred Gayatrī, Rudra mantras and by Kuṃśāṇḍa homa (for which see Tai. Ar. II. 7).

- He should then make a sankalpa after reciting the place and time on a rikta tithi and should perform the prāyaścitta of catuh-kṛcchra by giving a cow or money for each as stated above.

- Then he should begin to perform on the 11th or 12th day 16 śrāddhas of himself and sapindākaraṇa. Then he is to perform eight śrāddhas (vide above p. 932) and tarpaṇa as a subordinate part (anga) of these eight śrāddhas.

- On the day these eight śrāddhas are performed or on the next day he should shave off the whole head after keeping six hairs out of his top-knot, pare his nails, then take his bath.

- Then he is to donate to brāhmaṇas and his sons all his wealth except his wearing apparel and the materials for homa.

- The garments he is to wear should be dyed with red chalk; he should secure a bamboo staff as high as his head etc.. and as thick as his finger and brought by a brāhmaṇa; that staff should be sprinkled over with water from a conch to the accompaniment of ‘om’, the puruṣa hymn (Rig. X:90) and such names (of Viṣṇu) as Kesava.

- He should also keep ready a water jar, a strip for his loins and a garment to cover his body and a blanket and pādukās (sandals).

- He should declare his resolve (sankalpa) to become a paramahāmsa and perform the worship of Ganesa, punyāha-vācana, worship of mother goddesses and Nāndī-śrāddha. He should then perform japa by saying ‘namah’ to Brahma (in the dative), Viṣṇu, Rudra, Surya, Soma, Ātman, Antarātman, Paramātman and also repeat the first padas of each of the four Vedas.

- He should then eat three handfuls of barley flour with ‘om’ and touch his navel. He should then sip clarified butter or water mixed with milk and curds repeating the mantras trīvṛd-asi, pravṛd-asi, vivṛd-asi (all three in Vāj. S.15.9) and then drink water with the mantra:– ‘may the waters purify’ (Tai. Ar. 10.23), then perform ācamana and declare his resolve to fast.

- Then comes Savitrī-praveśa (as in Baud, above); then he should kindle his grhya fire or if he has no grhya fire then he should bring domestic fire with the mantra:– ‘prṣṭo divi’ (Rig.VII. 5. 27) and kindle it with the three mantras ‘tat savituh', ‘tāṃ savitūḥ’ and ‘viśvāni deva ’ (Rig. III. 62.10, Vaj. S.-17.74, Rig. V.82.5).

- Then comes brahmānvādhāna before sunset (see above p. 954). He should thereafter perform evening sandhya adoration, homa and vaiśvadeva and keep awake the whole night near the fire.
Then the next morning after the daily homa and Vaiśvadeva he should offer a mess of cooked food to Agni or Vaiśvanara and perform the homa to prāṇa and others, the puruṣa-sūkta homa and Virāja homa. The Virāja homa is a lengthy performance and the principal elements in it are:— the offering of 40 oblations of each out of the three viz. fuel-sticks, boiled rice and clarified butter after repeating certain formulae such as — 'may my five prāṇas be purified, may I be light (illumination) free from rajas (the principle of activity or obstruction) and from evil, svāhā; this is for the prāṇa and the rest, it is not mine.' In this way oblations are offered to five senses, the mind, buddhi, seed, thought and sankalpa, to the constituents of the body, to the several limbs of the body (head, hands and feet etc...), to purusa and others, to the five elements, to the five guṇas of the elements, to the five kośas (sheaths) and several others. Then an oblation of ājya is made to Prajāpati. Then he should recite the Purusa hymn (Rig. X. 90) and the first sentences of the four Vedas, offer oblations to Agni Sviṣṭakṛt, distribute gifts to students and others, he should burn his wooden utensils in his grhyā fire if he has kept one and donate the metal vessels to his guru, then he should deposit the fire in himself by reciting 'ayam te yoniḥ' (Rig. III. 29.10) and 'ya te agne yajñiya' (Tai. S. III. 4.10.5) thrice and should face and take in the blaze and warmth of his grhyā fire, should take a black antelope skin and leave his house.

He should give blessings to his sons and other near relatives and bid good-bye to them with the words:— 'to me belongs no one nor do I belong to any one.'

Then he should go to a reservoir of water, take in his folded hands water and offer it to all gods with the hymn Rig. X.103 (1-13). He should declare a resolve to resort to sannyāsa for the realization of brahman and offer three handfuls of water in the reservoir. He should then discharge water into the reservoir from his joined hands saying:— 'I have given up the hankering for sons, wealth, worlds and for everything) may there be safety to all creatures from me, svāhā.'

Then he should again declare that he has abandoned everything, all pleasures, all sentiments of anger etc., all joys of flowers, scents, dancing and music, all duties of varna and āśramas etc.; he should also declare:— 'I shall not cause any injury to any creature in thought, word or by the body; may all creatures have no fear of me.'

He should think of the sun and other gods as witnesses to this declaration and standing in navel-deep water should again perform the Savitrī-praveśa and offer water in declaring:— 'I have risen beyond the desire for sons, worlds and wealth and shall practise begging.'

After this comes the utterance of the praiṣa (the call or direction). In a low, moderate and loud voice the entrant should declare:— 'om, bhuḥ — I have given up everything! om bhuvah, I have ……., om svah, I have……., om bhur bhuvah svah, I have given up everything', and should discharge water in the reservoir of water with the words:— 'may there be no injury to all creatures from me, svāhā.'

He should pluck out the topknot, take out his sacred thread and hold them in his hand and offer them in water with water with the words — 'water is indeed all deities, I sacrifice (the top-knot and sacred thread) to all gods, svāhā' and then he should send up a prayer to Vasudeva.

Then he should remove his wearing apparel and walk five steps with his face to the north.

Then the ācārya should bow to the entrant and should hand over to the latter a piece of loin cloth and upper garment and a staff. The entrant should wear them and hold the staff with appropriate mantras and also a water jar and an āsana (a seat).
He should then hold a fuel-stick in his hand, bow to his guru, sit down in the eagle posture and make a request to the guru in the words:—‘O teacher, who are like the Lord of the Universe to me, save me who am scorched by the fire of samsara and who am bitten by Death; I have thrown myself on your mercy’ and also repeat the verse:—‘yo brāhmaṇaṁ’ (Svetasvatara Up. VI. 18 quoted in note 856 above). Having waited upon the guru with these words and placing his right knee on the ground, he should clasp the feet of his guru and should say:—‘teach, Sir, Brahman to me.’

The guru should contemplate on his Self as brahman, should recite over a conch full of water the sacred syllable ‘om’ twelve times, should pour the water from the conch on his disciple, should recite the propitiatory verse—‘sam no mitraḥ’ (Rig. I. 90. 9), then lay his hand on the head of the disciple, should recite the Purusa hymn (Rig. X. 90), should place his hand on the heart of the disciple and mutter the mantra:—‘I place thy heart in disciplined obedience to me,’51 the guru should then mutter in the right ear of the disciple the syllable ‘om’ and should enlighten him about the significance of ‘om’ and of pañci-karaṇa; he should then impart to the disciple one of the four great Vedānta sentences (mahāvakya) ‘prajñānam brahmaṇa’ (Ait. Up. III.3), ‘ayam-ātma brahma’ (Br. Up. II.5.19), ‘tat tvam-asi’ (Chan. Up. VI. 8. 7), ‘aham brahmaśmi’ (Br. Up. I. 4. 10) in accordance with the tradition of his school and enlighten him about the meaning thereof.

Then he should give to the disciple a name ending in tīrtha, āśrama etc.. according to the tradition of his order.

Then the guru may bring about what is called paryanka-śauca and give to the disciple the yoga-paṭṭa.

The paryanka-śauca (purification by being seated on a stool etc.) may be briefly described.

On an auspicious day a householder seats the ascetic in front of him on a wooden stool or seat, places five heaps of earth to his left and also to his right and also pure water on both sides. Then the householder simultaneously washes the two knees of the ascetic with water and earth from the first heap of earth on the left. Then he should wash his own left hand with earth and water taken from the half of the first heap on the right and with the remaining half of the first heap on the right he should wash both his hands seven times with the same water. With the second heap on the left he should wash simultaneously the two thighs (janghā) of the ascetic four times and with one half of the second heap on the right he should wash his own left hand seven times and with the other half of the second heap (on the light) he should wash both his hands four times. The ankle, the upper part of the foot and the lower park (sole) of the foot of the ascetic are respectively washed with the third, fourth and fifth heap on the left and his own left hand and both hands are washed a certain varying number of times with 3rd, 4th, 5th heaps on the right.

The yoga-paṭṭa (lit. the cloth of yoga, union with Spirit) is given in the following way:— After the ascetic has undergone paryanka-śauca, he should cleanse his waist, wear a string round his waist and his loin cloth and cover his waist with a piece of cloth. He should then sit with his guru's permission on a high seat and should propound some Vedānta topic in the presence of the persons assembled. The ascetic guru should sprinkle on the head of his ascetic disciple water from a conch to the accompaniment of the Purusa hymn (Rig. X 90), should honour him by offering clothes, sandalwood paste, flowers, incense, lamp and naivedya. He (the guru) should hold a piece of cloth

51 Mama vrate hṛdyam te dadāmi ... This occurs in Āśv. I. 21. 7 and Pār. II. 2 in uparaṇayana where the teacher addresses the boy in these words. The same words are addressed in the marriage rites by the bridegroom to the bride, as e.g. in Pār. gr. I. 8 (where prajāpati substituted for brihaspati).
over the head of the disciple, recite along with the other yatis the chapter called Viśvarūpa (11th chapter of the Bhagavad-gītā) from the 15th verse to the 33rd verse. He should then give the name already determined upon to the disciple and say to him:— ‘Henceforward you may admit to sannyāsa one who is eligible for it, initiate him and give him the yoga-patā. Then the disciple bows to the yatis older than himself. Then the guru gives to the disciple a waist-thread and a staff marked with five mudras and should offer his own salutation to the disciple according to the tradition of his order. Other ascetics and house-holders also should bow to the disciple, who should only repeat the word ‘Narāyana,’ should leave the high seat and seat his guru thereon, should bow to the guru according to the rules of the order and to the other ascetics.

Sannyāsa-for the dying

The Jabālopaniṣad (5) allows sannyāsa to those even who are suffering from illness and are about to die, all that is required being that they should declare in words and resolve in their mind to enter the order of sannyāsa. No extensive ceremonial is required. Angiras and Sumantu quoted in Sm. M. (pp. 174 and 182) state:—

“When a person is shattered by old age or harassed by his enemies or is suffering from (an incurable) disease he may resort to sannyāsa by merely uttering the praiśa (vide above) and no further rites would be absolutely necessary. He should recite thrice in the morning, at noon and in the evening:— ‘I have given up everything (or entered upon sannyāsa)’ and further say I forswear whatever action I may have done through ignorance, indolence or carelessness; I shall cause no harm to creatures with my hands or feet, with my speech, body or mind; may all creatures have no fear from me.’”

The Dharma-sindhu (III, uttarārdha) says that in this sannyāsa for those at the door of death the absolutely essential elements are the resolve (sankalpa), the uttering of the praiśa and the giving of the promise of non-injury and the rest of the rites may or may not be performed according to circumstances.

Even now such a sannyāsa (called ātura-sannyāsa) is sometimes resorted to by religious-minded men in extremis, the only essentials gone through being sankalpa (declaration of resolve), kṣaura (tonsure of the head), savitri-praveśa (described above) and praiśa-ucāra (utterance of praiśa).

Sacred thread and Śikha

One question on which controversies have raged from very ancient times is whether an ascetic should give up his topknot and sacred thread also. The Jabālopaniṣad (5) states that Atri asked Yajñavalkya how a man who did not wear a yajñopavīta (when he became an ascetic) could still be a brāhmaṇa and that the great sage replied that in the case of the ascetic the Self was his yajñopavīta and the same Upaniṣad (6) states that the paramahamsa is to abandon in water the three daṇḍas, the water-jar, the śikha, the begging bowl, the water-strainer, the topknot and yajñopavīta and should be a seeker after the Self. In the Arunika Up. (i) it is said that he should discharge his yajñopavīta on the earth or in water and that he should give up his śikha and the sacred thread. Śaṅkara in his bhaṣya on Br. Up. III. 5. 1 sets out at some length the arguments and the authorities on both sides and ultimately gives it as his own view that the sacred thread and śikha should be given up by the ascetic. On the other hand Vṛddha-Harīta VIII. 57 declares:—

“If an ascetic gives up the acts peculiar to brahmanas, viz. keeping a topknot and wearing a sacred thread, he becomes a caṇḍāla while alive and is born a dog after death.'

In modern times sannyasins of the Advaita school give up these two whereas the Vaishnavas don’t.
Sannyāsa — rules of conduct

Some special rules are laid down about the *ahnika* (daily rites) of ascetics. They have to perform *śauca*, brushing the teeth, bath, just as house-holders have to do. Manu V. 137 (a Vas. Dh. S. VI. 19, Viṣṇu Dh. S. 60. 26, Śaṅkha 16. 23-24) says that forest hermits and ascetics have respectively to perform three and four times as much *śauca* (bodily purification) as house-holders.

Certain rules are laid down for an ascetic as regards giving and receiving honour or salutation. An ascetic should bow to gods and to older ascetics who act according to the rules of their order, but should not offer *namaskāra* to an house-holder even if the latter be well-conducted. If another person bows to an ascetic, the latter should not pronounce any benediction but should only utter the word ‘Nārāyaṇa’.

When an ascetic (even one who has taken sannyāsa on his death-bed) dies, he is to be buried and not cremated. No mourning is to be observed for a *yati* when he dies (Atri 97) and no śrāddhas are to be offered on his death except the pārvana on the 11th day after death (vide Aparārka p. 538). If an ascetic hears of the death of his son or any other relative, he does not become impure and has not to bathe but on hearing of his mother's or father's death he has to bathe, though he observes no mourning.

Sannyāsins and pariṣads

According to the theory of Dharma-śāstra, the king is not only the head of the civil administration and the fountain of justice, but he is also the final controlling authority in preserving religious and spiritual institutions, he is to see that people follow the dharma, to punish them for breaches of the religious and spiritual codes and to see to the administration to them of appropriate penances. In short, he is also the Defender of the Faith. But he regulated spiritual and religious matters not by his arbitrary authority but on the advice of his purohita and ministers and after taking the opinion of the assemblies (pariṣad) of learned men. Whenever difficult questions arose about the validity of anything from the religious point of view or about penances for lapses, or about excommunicating or outcasting a man, the opinion of the assembly of learned men was sought. Therefore, detailed rules are laid down in the Dharma-sūtras and smritis about the constitution of pariṣads.

A few words must be said about the pariṣad and about the claims of the Śaṅkarācāryas (the modern heads of *maṭhas*) to regulate religious matters affecting their followers. Among the oldest texts on this point is the one contained in the Tai. Up. 1.11. viz. the exhortation of the teacher on the eve of the student's departure at the close of his studies.

“If you have hereafter a doubt about any rite or about a course of conduct, you should behave in the way in which the brāhmaṇas of your place, who are thoughtful, intent (upon doing their duties), act spontaneously (without being urged by any one), are not hard-hearted and have an eye only to dharma (and not to Kama or artha) will behave. The same holds good about your conduct towards persons charged (generally falsely) with sins or lapses”.

The words ‘*sabha*’ (Rig X.34.6) and ‘*samiti*’ (Rig X.97.6) occur even in the Rig Veda but their exact significance is doubtful and the former word at least seems to bear the sense of ‘gambling hall’ in some passages. In the Upaniṣads, however, the words *samiti* and *pariṣad* assume a more definite sense, meaning ‘an assembly of learned men in a particular locality’. The Chan. Up. V.3.1 states that Śvetaketu Aruṇeya repaired to the assembly (*samiti*) of the Paṅcālas (where Pravahaṇa Jaivali put him five questions of a metaphysical and esoteric nature). The Br. Up. VI.2.1 when narrating the same episode employs the word *pariṣad*. These passages establish that in the times of the Upaniṣads there were assemblies of learned men where intricate questions were discussed. Gaut.

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28.46 prescribes just as the Tai. Up. I.11 does that in matters about which there is no certain rule (or there is doubt) one should do what is commended by respectable persons not less than ten in number, who are clever in discussion and are above covetousness. The Āp. Dh. S. I.3.11.34 declares that holidays other than those stated by him may be observed as settled by pariṣads. The Baudh. Dh. S. II.1.41-45 prescribes:—

“The relatives of a brāhmaṇa who is guilty of sexual intercourse should empty a water pot in the pariṣad and the offender should confess:—

‘I, so and so by name, am guilty of such and such a misdeed and that after the erring person has performed penance and when he has touched water, milk, ghee, honey and salt, the brāhmaṇa should ask him ‘have you performed the penance?’

The other shall then reply ‘yes’; then they shall admit him who has performed penance to all sacrificial rites making no difference between him and others.’

This clearly establishes that at least five centuries before the Christian era it was the privilege of the assembly of the learned brāhmaṇas to administer penance to a sinner and then restore him to all rights of inter-dining and other social intercourse. Vas. Dh. S.1.16 declares:—

‘There is no doubt that whatever persons who have studied Dharma-sastra and the three Vedas expound as purifying themselves and others is the proper dharma.’

Āp. Dh.S.1.1.1.2 declares that the conventions of those that know dharma are the authoritative standard (of conduct for ordinary men). When the smritis declare that Veda, smṛti and the usages of sīṣṭas are the three sources of dharma (e.g. Vas. Dh. S. I. 4-5) they convey that sīṣṭas can and should determine from time to time what is religious conduct. When Brhaspati enjoins that doubts about dharma should not be settled by blindly following the letter of śāstras, but that logic and reasoning should be employed, he strikes the true note of the spirit of the ancient sages.53

Manu XII. 108 states:—

‘If one were to ask how one should act in matters of dharma on which no express rule is declared in this work, the reply is that in such cases what is declared to be a proper rule of conduct by respectable (sīṣṭa) brāhmaṇas would undoubtedly be the dharma.’

Yāj. III. 300 requires that a person guilty of a sin or lapse should declare it to an assembly of learned brāhmaṇas and undergo such vrata (penance and observances) as is approved of by the pariṣad. Śaṅkarācārya in his bhāṣya on Br.Up. IV.3.2 makes the very significant remark:—

“It is therefore that in coming to a decision on a subtle point of dharma, it is desirable to have a pariṣad working and a specially distinguished person is wanted (to give the lead) as stated in the rule ‘a pariṣad should consist of not less than ten persons or of three or of one (specially distinguished).’"

These several authorities establish that for over 1500 years before the great Śaṅkarācārya the pariṣad of learned brāhmaṇas was the acknowledged authority for settling doubtful points of dharma and administering penances on lapses from proper conduct, and that Śaṅkarācārya himself acknowledged this privilege of the pariṣad.

The next question is:— what is the number of persons required to constitute a pariṣad for deciding on doubtful points of dharma and what their qualifications should be. According to Gaut. 28. 46-47 a pariṣad should consist of at least ten persons viz. four, each of whom has mastered one Veda, three members who are respectively a (perpetual) student, a house-holder and a sannyāsin and three more each of whom has studied distinct Dharma-śāstras. Vas. Dh. S. III. 20, Baud. 1. 1. 8, Parāśara VIII. 27 and Angiras declare that four persons each of whom has mastered one of the four Vedas,

53 Vide also Manu XII. 106 and Gaut. XI. 23-34 for the importance of reason (tarka) in settling matters of dharma.
one who knows the Mīmāṃsā, one who has studied the six subsidiary lores of the Veda, one who has studied Dharma-sastra and three persons who are a house-holder, a forest hermit and a sannyāsin constitute a pariṣad of ten. Manu XII. 111 defines the ten as consisting of three masters of each of the three Vedas (excluding the Atharva-veda), one who has studied Logic, a student of Mīmāṃsā, a student of Nirukta, a master of Dharma-śastras and three members in each of the first three āśramas. Bṛhaspati quoted in Par. M. II. 1 p. 218 declares that a pariṣad may be constituted by seven or five persons sitting together who have studied the Vedas, their six subsidiary lores and dharma-sastra and that such a pariṣad resembles a solemn sacrifice.54 Vas. Dh. S. III. 7, Yāj. 1.9, Manu XII.112, Parāśara VIII.11 state that at least four or three men should constitute a pariṣad, but they should be students of each of the four Vedas, should be agnihotrins and should have also studied dharma-sastra.

If even three cannot be found then even a single man can declare the dharma in case of doubt (Gaut. 28.48), but he must possess special qualifications. Gaut. 28. 48, Manu XII. 113 (= Atri 143) require that he must be the best of brāhmaṇas, a śiṣṭa and a deep student of the Veda. Yāj. I. 9, Parāśara VIII.13. Angiras say that a single person who is the best among ascetics possessing knowledge of the Self may form a pariṣad and declare what the proper rule is on a point of doubt. Though the texts permit in extreme cases a single man to declare dharma in case of doubt they give emphatic warning that this should not be done as far as possible. Baud. Dh. S. I.13 observes:—

‘The way of dharma is very subtle and difficult to follow and it has many entrances (i.e. it appears different in different circumstances); therefore a person though knowing much should not undertake single-handed to propound the proper course of conduct in case of doubt.’

The texts also emphasize that doubtful points of dharma are not to be decided by the votes of ignorant people, even if they muster in thousands. Smṛṭikāraś55 state:—

‘Even if thousands of brāhmaṇas who have observed no vrata and who have studied no Vedic mantras and who make their living merely by virtue of their caste come together they do not constitute a pariṣad. When such foolish persons deluded by ignorance and ignorant of dharma declare (a penance for a sin) the sin is multiplied a hundred-fold and reaches the propounders.’

The Mit. on Yāj. III. 300 remarks that the number mentioned as constituting a pariṣad is not material, that all that is meant is that for lesser sins a small number of learned men can declare the penance, but in the case of serious sins, the number of persons who constitute the pariṣad should be large. Devala quoted in the Mit. on Yāj. III. 300 says that when the sin is not grave, brāhmaṇas may declare the penance without reference to the king (and restore the sinner to his privileges) but when the sin is grave, then the king and brāhmaṇas must carefully examine the matter and then declare the penance. Parāśara (VIII. 28-29) ordains:—

‘Brāhmaṇas should declare penance for sins with the king's consent, that they should not declare the expiation of sins by penance of their own motion and that if the king decides to give prāyaścitta without reference to brāhmaṇas, the sin becomes increased a hundred-fold.’

It is the duty of the pariṣad to declare an appropriate penance when a man comes to it, declares his lapse and seeks to be freed from the taint and if the pariṣad knowing what the appropriate penance is refuses to administer it, they incur the same sin as that committed by the man who approaches them. Parāśara VIII. 2 prescribes that one should on being convinced of his having committed a sin at once repair to the assembly of learned men, should prostrate himself on the ground before them and request them to administer prāyaścitta (expiation).

A large part of Northern India was under Moslem rule for about 500 years from about 1200 C.E. and a portion of the Deccan and a part of South India also were under Moslem rule for about 300

54 Vide also Angiras quoted by Aparārka p. 23 for seven or five men as ‘constituting a pariṣad.
55 Manu XII. 114-115 (=Baud. Dh. S. I. 1. 17 and 12=Vas. Dh. S. III. 5-6=Parāśara VIII. 6 and 15)
years. Numerous documents have been published by the late Mr. Vishvanath K. Raj Wade (a scholar, who made unique contributions to the elucidation of Maratha History, Marathi Philology and Marathi Literature) and his friends. From these it appears that during the time of the Maratha domination learned brāhmaṇas of holy places like Paithan, Nasik and Karad were consulted in religious matters by the king or his minister, that the holders of the ‘gāḍī of Śāṅkarācārya at Sankeśvara and Karavīra and other seats were also rarely consulted in these matters and that it is only after the advent of the British rule that the Śāṅkarācāryas have begun to claim almost exclusive jurisdiction in ecclesiastic matters and in restoring men to their castes or excommunicating them for lapses. It will be seen from passages quoted below that both the learned brāhmaṇas at holy places like Karad and the Śāṅkarācāryas claim the exclusive right in these matters by reason of immemorial usage.

In several works it is said that the pariṣad must be constituted by śiṣṭas (vide Gaut. 28. 46). Śiṣṭa is variously defined by some smṛti works. The Baud. Dh. S. (I.1.5-6) says:—

‘Śiṣṭas are those who are free from envy and pride, who keep only as much corn as is measured by kumbhī (vide p. III. n. 235), who are free from greed and from hypocrisy, arrogance, covetousness, delusions and anger. Those are śiṣṭas who have studied the Veda according to the prescribed method, together with its appendages (viz. Itiḥāsa and Purāṇas), who know how to draw inferences from that and who tend to make people realize the teaching of the Veda.’

The Mahābhāṣya defines śiṣṭas in almost the same words as Baud. Dh. S.1.1.5. Vas. Dh. S.1.6 defines śiṣṭa as one whose mind is free from desires.

It is well-known that Shivaji, the great founder of the Maratha Empire, established a council of eight ministers, viz. Mukhya Pradhāna, Āmatya, Saciva, Mantrī, Senāpati, Paṇḍīta-rao, Nyāyadhīṣa and Sumanta.

‘The jurisdiction of the Paṇḍīta-rao extended over all religious matters, he was to examine and decide disputes about dharma and adharma, he was to honour śiṣṭas (respectable people) on behalf of the king, was to make his signature expressing his approval of the writings (decisions) about ācāra, vyavahāra and prāyaścittas (made by learned brāhmaṇas). He was to superintend and carry into immediate execution gifts, propitiatory rites (for the king).’

This shows that even in matters of prāyaścitta (penance for lapses and sins) the final control rested with the Paṇḍīta-rao, who used to send doubtful matters to learned brāhmaṇas at holy places like Wai, Nasik, Karad for their opinions and accept them. There are letters which show that the Paṇḍīta-rao convened meetings of learned brāhmaṇas and with their approval declared prāyaścitta in the case of a brāhmaṇa who had been forcibly converted by Mahomedans and who was thereafter restored to caste.

On the other hand in numerous instances the assembly of learned brāhmaṇas was approached either by the Panditarao or by the interested parties themselves to declare the proper penance and restore the guilty party to his caste. One Gangadhara Banganatha Kulkarni of Harsul was forcibly converted by the Moslems; then the Maratha king Sambhaji ordered his minister the Panditarao to restore him to his caste after giving him appropriate prāyaścitta and the Panditarao called a meeting of learned brāhmaṇas, looked into works like the Mitakṣara and with the approval of the brāhmaṇas administered prāyaścitta to him and sent him on a pilgrimage.

It may be noted in passing that Raja Netaji Palkar who was one of the great commanders under Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha Empire, was made a moslem by the Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb

56 Vide Rajwade’s Khand 21 published by the Bhārata-itiḥāsa-samśodhaka Mandal at Poona, letter No. 205 at pp. 256-58 dated śāke 1778 (1856 C.E.) for the claim of the śāṅkarācārya of Karavīra maṭha.
and was subsequently taken back into the Hindu fold by Shivaji. In another document the learned brāhmanas of Pune, 46 in number, write to the brāhmanas of Karavīra about one Narasimha Bhaṭṭa Toro of Paithan who had been engaged as a priest in a Vedic sacrifice in which he had offered the effigy of an animal made of flour, who had therefore been made outcast and who was subsequently restored to the caste after undergoing penance.

We see that asceticism presents several aspects viz. fasting or at least reducing the intake of food, abstention from meat and drink and pleasures of sense, total absence of sexual gratification and suppression of the sexual emotion, vow of silence, sleeping on bare ground, nakedness or making use of minimum clothing, contempt for the world and its riches.

The Hindu Scriptures however do not enjoin self-in infliction of pain or flagellation that was indulged in by monks in the early centuries of Christianity. Asceticism in the several forms indicated above is a feature common to all religions. It is the fashion to assert that Indians\(^5^7\) have the highest regard for asceticism and that the men whose memories they cherish as ideals of human conduct are ascetics.

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57 Vide: 'mystics, ascetics and saints of India' (1903) by J. C. Oman p. 271 — “it is the ascetic profession that time out of mind has been a pre-eminent dignity in the eyes of the Indian people.”