




MARRIAGE :

DESIGN & DESIRE

A presentation made with an aspiration that an acquaintance with the nature, objectives, rationale, significance, merits and values of vedic processes and procedures and a good grasp of prayers, embedded leads and clues would lead to:

- *formation of a 'sathsang' i.e. virtuous union of a man & a woman ,*
- *self-evolution, sophistication and excellence,*
- *secular & spiritual progression,*
- *delightful, fascinating grihastaashrama i.e. family corps and*
- *observance of sacred injunctions - dharma, artha, kaama.*

.... 

Karhadesamskrithi.in

Publication : Khara, Kaarthika Poornima
(10-11-2011)

Art Work : Shree Ramesh Kidiyoor
9845016830

Printers : Vyasa Mudrana, Kunjibettu, Udupi
0820 - 2524670, 9844989457

Presentation: karhadesamskrithi.in

MARRIAGE: DESIGN & DESIRE

'Vivaaha' or marriage is one of the "shodasha samskaaras" (sixteen sacraments). Perhaps, it is the most important of them all. In the case of a girl child, this is the first and the only vedic samskaara.

As vivaaha sankalpa proclaims, the purpose is "to propagate 'sath-prajas' i.e. worthy children (citizens)". A thread of these thoughts and intent continues till the very end of the ritual. Yet, it would not be appropriate to consider mere procreation - common to all living organism - as an objective. *The goal is, in fact, to become a 'sathpraja' through self evolution and thereby help proliferation of 'sathprajas'.*

Progression on this journey of self-evolution involves committing all our resources to the development of qualities of head and heart in a sound body. Texts on ayurveda, atharva veda and upanishaths elucidate rudiments of nurturing a sound, disease free body by regulating diet, physical activities, yoga and sleep:

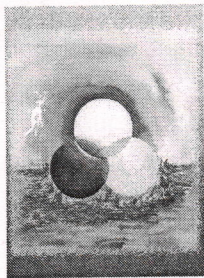
- Discourage child marriage – prescribe a minimum of 16 for the bride and 24 for the groom (18 & 21 as per existing legal framework). Children born for the young are prone to ill health, high mortality and retardation of body & mind.
- Find marriage between close relatives - 'sagothras' & up to 7 generations on maternal side – detrimental. Marriage between first cousins, though in vogue, is best avoided.
- Advocate strict celibacy through education. So too after marriage during menstruation, days of infertility, pregnancy, sickness, inflections etc.
- Detest, abhor and prohibit extra-marital sexual acts.
- Advocate gainful employment, earning livelihood through honourable means.
- Recommend 'Saathvik' food – that promotes vigour, health, agility and virtuous qualities.
- Mandate exercise, routine and sleep that nourish superior physical attributes.

Self evolution entails (a) seeing, listening to and doing what is virtuous – ignoring what is sinful (b) speaking truth – refusing what is 'untrue' (c) accepting, after careful deliberation, affable objects, pious thoughts, noble

principles, righteous deeds, pleasant memories while rejecting others. Nurturing purity of thought, speech and mind, compassion, kindness, mercy, generosity, forgiveness, tolerance, sympathy, self-restraint, character, equilibrium, humility, gratitude, self-respect, courage of conviction (qualities considered 'saathvik') and desisting anger, jealousy, arrogance, greed, deceit, lust, passion, ego, conceit, snobbery etc. ('raajasa' and 'thaamasa' attributes) is laudable. These are true 'human' values. These are qualities that blossom one's personality - lead one to success, contentment, delight and eminence.

Only those endowed with these qualities of body, intellect and heart can play an effective role in broadening the base of 'sathprajas'.

The ceremony fashioned by men endowed with divine powers and exceptional wisdom (venerable 'rishis') is a priceless contribution to humanity. It helps a person to visualise and contemplate upon an action plan, evolve a programme and create a special purpose vehicle (vi-vaaha) to traverse on a progressive path. *The journey is too long for a single person to embark upon and requires years of hard work (saadhana). Hence, he does 'paanigrahana' (i.e. holds the hand) and seeks active support of a woman.*



Marriage is a union of two individuals with varying mix of inborn qualities (sathva, raajasa & thaamasa). It creates a 'sathsanga' - provides a wonderful opportunity to learn from the other and expand 'saathvik' gunas and contain raajasa-thaamasa gunas. It enables one to become a 'grahastha' and

perform vedic rituals - pancha maha yajnas as enunciated by dharmashastras.

Note: (a) marriage is not an institution intended to merely grant licence for two persons to live together for meeting physical needs or making financial adjustments (b) the rituals, by themselves, do not create a 'sathpraja' – they merely initiate us into 'grahasthaashrama' and facilitate the process of self-evolution.

VADHU-GRIHA GAMANAM

The groom does guru, ganapathi smaran, seeks blessings of parents / elders and sets out. This is an important journey in his life. His attire is traditional – dhoti, uttareeya etc. head covered by a turban & an umbrella for protection. The procession will be lead by the head of the family accompanied by family priest, community

leaders, close relatives & friends. The women carrying poorna-paathras, kalasha, mangala-dravyas, flowers, mirror, lamp etc. represent Shachee, Lakshmee & Saraswathee. It is customary to play musical instruments - *an expression of joy and an alarm to 'alakshmi'.*

It is the groom who goes out to seek the bride with the apparel, ornament, and articles of adornment for her – a mark of respect for the women. Not to inconvenience the brides' parents, all essentials for the ritual are also carried by the groom.

GOWRI HARA POOJANAM

Early on the day of marriage, the bride worships Gowree-Hara seeking life-long 'sowbhaagya'. She also beseeches Indrani to bestow good health & prosperity. *This serves as a reminder of 'saadhana' required to win a virtuous husband & inspires her to emulate the example of Uma-Maheshwara in conjugal life.*

SWAAGATHAM

The wedding party is welcomed with vaadya- veda ghosha, poorna-paathra, 'neerajana' etc. by the bride's side. A 'baashinga' (or pushpa-mala) is tied around groom's turban – *a mark of distinction and tribute to the crown!*

VAAGDANA / MADHUPARKA / VARA POOJA

The bride's parents offer 'darbhaasana' to and perform 'paada-pooja' (washing the lotus feet) of the distinguished guest. *The belief is that Lord Lakshmee- narayana himself has arrived to marry their daughter.*

'Madhuparka' - a mix of curds, honey & ghee – is offered to him as a mark of rare honour. He accepts it in the name of the Lord, offers it first to Him for common good. The contemplation is: "I am partaking madhuparka which is the essence of the sweetest and best of the food. May this be the lifeblood of the dynasty". The proceedings reflect groom's (a) devoutness (b) modesty (c) self-confidence and (d) generosity.

The groom is honoured with gandhamaalya, a set of clothes, yajnopaveethas, ornaments, bhojana & jala paathras etc. *a mark singular of distinction* in accordance with host's sankalpa. As a brahmachaari he lived on alms. Fitting reception is extended to all those accompanying the groom. *Seeing a reflection of the self in others and the concept of 'athithi devo bhava' is a part of our treasured cultural ethos. It lays a strong foundation of mutual love, affection and the bondage between families.*

SAMEEKSHANA

The bride and the groom stand facing each other (separated by a screen) on heaps of rice *full of emotions, eagerness and expectations.* Akshathas (a mix of rice, cumin & jaggery) it is believed, help restore a balance between 'pittha' & 'vatha' in their body. The priests recite 'Sooryaasooktham'. It contains prayers that are repeated, in part, several times as the ritual progresses. In particular, there are aspirations that the bride should live long, be well behaved, brilliant, successful, loyal, begetting many children, devoted in compliance with dharma shastras and a source of delight to groom's parents and relatives. She would be a 'dharma pathnee', 'pathivratha' and a 'mahaasathee' – in line with what Indraani is to Indra, Shree to Shreedhara, Gowree to Shankara, Anusooya to Athreya, Arundhathi to Vashista and Sathee to Kaushika.

There is a couched reference to the divine hands of Soma, Gandharva and Agni (lyrically and passionately described as the previous masters of the bride i.e. she was earlier wedded to each of them) in the well rounded development of the bride. Soma, the Lord of all vegetation is the one who imparted qualities of the body and soul like vigour,

charisma, vivacity, drive, compassion, warmth and benevolence. Tenderness, melody, deftness, eloquence,



articulateness and agility are endowed by Gandharva, the Lord of music and fine arts. Agnideva is the one makes her a complete woman, regulates motherhood, purifies (neutralizes inadequacies, if any) and make her fit for all yajna kaaryas in her future life as a grihinee.

The first glance comes now as the screen slides. The groom touches bride's forehead, between eyebrows, (this is the nucleus of awakening power) with darbha-grass saying 'oum bhur, bhuva, swaha' - a confirmation that he is doing (a) what is virtuous (b) in a state consciousness and (c) what is blissful to do. The aspiration is that the bride is virtuous, kind and supportive to me & others in

the family, domesticated animals etc. and that she be blessed with vigour, charisma & success. If the bride is unhappy, sad, grim or depressed, it will be reflected in her eyes spoiling her appeal. On the contrary, if she is kind, helpful, friendly and pleasant her eyes will be alluring. It is, therefore, desired that she should always be positive, cheerful, lovely, smiling and amiable.

This part of the ritual is intended to *marginalise impurity, blemish, if any, caused by her deeds of ignorance etc.* It also breaks the ice: in traditional marriages this is the first physical contact between the two.

KANYA PRATHIPAADANA

It is customary for bride's father to do 'abhivaadan' & seek the blessings of the guru and elders. The 'sankalpa' is done with physical, verbal and mental purity ('thrikarana') for the wellbeing of all the (12 generation of) ancestors, the self and to appease the Supreme couple - Lakshmee-Naaraayana. All the Gods, all the spirits, all the elders are witnesses to the 'braahma-vivaha' i.e. as enshrined in the scriptures.

A well endowed and adorned bride is presented by her father by touching her right shoulder mentioning kula, gothra and her name. A piece of gold, kusha & akshatha

are placed on the grooms' palm as a symbol of purity & piousness. The water for 'dhaara' is the one into which all the gods are being ceremonially invoked. *They bless the occasion and act as primary witnesses.*

The groom accepts the bride touching her right shoulder and vows not to transgress her in dharma, artha, kaama – (a) in his duties as a husband (b) in financial matters and (c) in nurturing & fulfilling worldly desires. *He repeats this thrice to emphasise on firmness of partnership, consultative practice and unison in managing family affairs.* (The practice of repeating marital vows thrice is conspicuous in other religions as well)

This is a true partnership often likened to 'Prithvi' and 'aakasha'. We cannot think of one to the exclusion of the other. The word 'kaama' repeatedly used in the mantras includes but not restricted to sexual desires. It refers to the collective desires ('kaamanaas') of the two in discharging all the obligations grahasthaashrama – including earning wealth through honest means and utilising such resources for the common good (generally referred to as 'purushaarthas') and discharging the debt one owes to gods, sages and parents. Such desires are pure and virtuous.

In what is often described as a 'kanyaadaana', the word 'na-mama' is not used - the father does not abdicate his responsibilities towards her.

All responsibilities connected with the ritual are now taken over by the groom's side. This underscores the principle of a joint-venture in conducting the ritual.

ABHIMARSHANAM

The groom touches bride's abdomen on the right side in the name of vishwedevaas and yearns for strengthening of warmth and friendliness between the two. Let us get united in mind and spirit, let us live together, let there be unanimity in all our thoughts, ways, deeds, aspirations, aptitude, conviction and beliefs.

PROKSHNAM

The priests sprinkle consecrated kalashodaka on the couple. They pray for all round prosperity in the family and bless the couple with long life, unity, harmony and worthy fellowship.

SOOTHRAVESHTANA / KANKANA

A thread dipped in milk is tied around the couple at shoulder & waist level. Just as the thread encircles the couple, the mantra surrounds & appeases Lord Indra and keeps evil forces at bay. The thread at neck level is it always as

removed & the groom ties it to bride's wrist with a piece of turmeric. The bride follows. *This signifies oneness in everything that follows in their life. Turmeric is symbolic of purity.*

AKSHATAAROPANA

The bride puts 'akshatha' (purified by milk, ghee & gold) on groom's head & then the groom on the bride's. The process is repeated 12 times i.e. each of groom's statements & bride's responses to it repeated twice.

Bride's wishes	groom's prayers
'bhago me ...': resources	Yajno me...' perform grahashta's duties
'shreeyo me...': affluence	'dharma me ...': adherence to scriptures
'praja me...' : fellowship	'yasho me...' success in life.

Although these prayers of the bride and the groom appear to be divergent, a close look at them shows that their wishes are closely intertwined and complimentary in nature. There is unison in their prayers as well.

The groom picks a flower from his head, dips it in milk & applies a thilak on the bride's forehead. The bride follows. The bride and groom garland each other.

MANGALA SOOTHRA

The groom ties the mangalasoothra, made of black beads, praying for bride's 'sowbhaagya' for 100 years. She wears

it always as long as her husband is alive. This is not a symbol of slavery but sign of an oath taken and a word given by one to the other. It is a mark of groom's responsibility for her wellbeing and protection. *Bride is his life-line. The strength of 'pathivratha-paavithrya' acts as a protective shield for the groom.*

PURODHA GRANTHI

Praying for successful completion of 'vivaaha-vratha', Ganapathi-pooja is performed. The ends of the 'uttareeyas' of the couple are tied together. *It is a mark of oneness. The two can move independently - but, within certain limits. They enter a new, flourishing and lasting bondage. All yajnas hereafter are performed dutifully, together.*

PRADHAANA HOMA

The ritual of bride attaining "bhaaryathva" (the groom becomes a 'grahashta') now begins. The holy fire called 'yojaka' is offered oblations with following prayers: (1) Eradicating all difficulties and poverty, grant us energy, strength, eminence and long life. (2) We seek the benevolence of Agni - the all knowing, purifying and alluring (3) Grant us vigour, wellness & physical and spiritual prosperity. (4) May Aryama (Agni), to whom

cow's ghee is hereby offered, add lustre, make our life affable and amiable. (5) He is the creator of this world & He alone can administer it. We place before Him all our desires & seek His munificence.

The suggestion here is to be pure and observe 'pathi-vratha' & 'pathnee-vratha'.

PAANIGRAHANA

The bridegroom holds right hand of the bride *signifying friendship & owning of responsibility of the bride. I am holding your hand- seeking your support- on this long and arduous journey for the fulfilment of the duties and responsibilities of 'grihastaashrama'.* We are partners for life. May our relation last long and be stable. Let us not keep away, even in thoughts, anything from the other. Let us share with one another all that we have in life – joy or grief. Let us preserve a virtuous path.

It is mutual affection, trust and complete unanimity in thought, speech and deeds that forms the edifice of 'grihastaashrama'. Just as it is the duty of the woman to be caring & supportive, man's success and effectiveness hinges on the backing and encouragement of his spouse. This involves appreciating, respecting and responding to the feelings, sentiments and aspirations of the other as

also devoting all the senses, body and mind for the common good – of the couple, other family members and people around. This is what is propounded by veda shaasthras & dharma shaasthras. This is what makes life meaningful and renders it complete. This is the *raison d'etre* of 'paanigrahana' (i.e. hand-holding) and the intent and purpose of 'vivaaha samskaara'.

ASHMAAROHANA

The bride steps on a mill-stone with her right foot and the groom's sister helps her wear silver rings on the index fingers. *It signals self-confidence and firmness of her new relationship. The couple is expected to face ups & downs, joy and sorrow, health & illness, prosperity and adversity— like a stone that endures any storm. They will remain steadfast and true to each other.* May your head & heart be firm to win over all your internal enemies (like anger, lust, envy etc.) and remain ingrained in her new family. *These are extremely encouraging, confidence building words for a bride facing concerns, anxieties, uncertainties, fears & reservations.*

LAAJAHOMA

The groom assists the bride in offering 'laaja' (popped rice) into the fire. The prayers are to relieve this bride

from the bondage of her parent's family and conjoin with that of the groom forever. I am freeing you from 'varuna-paasha' i.e. entanglements of the past as you are entering 'grihsthaashram' with me. I will support you and shield you from all calamities. Freeing you from your parent's family and aligning with that of mine, I am



fastening our bondage and beseech Indra to grant us bright, virtuous association & wellness.

All these prayers seek a quiet, peaceful, natural & graceful transition from a protected, loved, cared-for child with strong parental bondage into a new lead role in the groom's family – a role of responsibility. The success of 'grahasthaashrama' (and the entire family & social structure) hinges on this.

AGNIPARINAYANA

With kalasha in hand, the couple go round the consecrated fire. The ' amohamasmi....' manthra is pregnant with meaning and beautiful simile. I am holding your hands consciously, with full knowledge and utmost warmth. Likewise, you are fully perceptive of our unification.

Two of us mingle like 'devaloka'-' bhooloka'; 'samaveda'- 'rigveda'; mind-speech (*speech reveals the mind ; rigvedic manthra are set to samagaana ; showers from the sky render soil fertile and the nature picturesque*). Let us remain inseparable, affectionate and cordial, nurture lineage and live long. Here He is – Parabrahma – right in front of us. We take an oath in His presence. Let us pray in concert for amity, comradeship, reliance and alliance and He will certainly answer.

What a moment of supreme ecstasy for the couple and others!

SAPTHAPADEE

The groom helps the bride take seven steps with her right foot, on seven heaps of rice. The aspirations expounded in seven manthras chanted by him are:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Isha ekapadee ...': | be nourishing; be an ally in my resolve; be perceptive of my mind and beget worthy children. |
| 2. ' Oorje dwipade...': | be revitalising - i.e. a source of physical, intellectual and spiritual strength. |
| 3. 'Raayasposhaaya': | support proliferation of wealth & guard the same. |

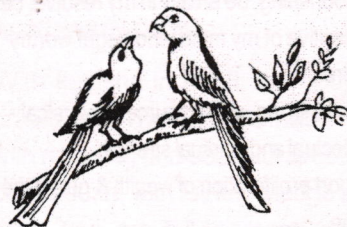
4. 'Mayo bhavyaya .': be a source of delight i.e. enhancing comfort and wellness.
5. 'Prajaabhyaha': foster and care for descendents and those other living beings dependent on us.
6. 'Rithubhyascha ...': remain enjoying what nature has to offer us every season.
7. 'Sakha': be collaborating with me as a good friend and maintain complete harmony & understanding with all our relatives.

Let us live & traverse together. Let there be unanimity in our thoughts, perceptions, prayers and equanimity is accepting our rewards. Although the words are very short, they contain far wider connotations and suggestions. For example, the reference to seasons imply (a) adapting to vagaries of seasons (b) being responsive to varying situations in life and (c) encountering ups & downs in the

family.

Now, the marriage becomes irrevocable.

We have taken these devout steps in the presence of Agnideva and our well-wishers.



We have now become friends - eternally.

SHIRODHARA

Abhisheka of duly consecrated water is done on the couple (their heads held together) with 15 'shanthi manthras'. The uttareeyas of the couple fused earlier are now separated. But, they remain united. *The bride affirms that she will remain a consort for life.*

SOORYA DARSHANA

The Sun shines relentlessly providing life-blood to the entire universe and is a witness to every event thereon. All the prayers so far were addressed to Him. It is He who brought us – our body, heart, mind – together. The bride has Soorya darshan and prays for 'jeeva pathnee prajaam vindeya' i.e. (a) full span of life of hundred years and (b) children – bearing virtuosity of the sun: *There is an underlying message as well – the bride has to be (a) gleaming like the rising Sun and (b) watchful in managing the affairs of the household.*

DHRUVA/ARUNDHATHEE DARSHAN

At night, the bride will have a darshan of Dhruva (the polestar) - a suggestion for the bride to be like polestar i.e. (a) remain steadfast like Dhruva who remained undaunted by Devendra's tricks (in this context stay

committed and trustworthy) (b) be a leader and guide in the family and (c) remain in command and focussed on the common good of the household. Star Arundhathee is located close to the constellation of seven stars. She was granted a celestial status like Saavithree, Gaayathree & Saraswathee by the Trinity. This is in appreciation of the supreme love and affection portrayed by sage Vashista & Arundhathee. They manifested thrice - in each birth as husband & wife. *Can there be a better role model for the new couple?*

THRIRATHRI VRATA, AGNI-PARICHARYA & UPAASANA HOMA

As a part of vivaaha vratha the couple will observe celibacy for three nights to affirm allegiance and commitment. They will have food considered 'saathvik' that nurture 'saathvik' qualities - good health, longevity, intellect and agility (to the exclusion of what is too salty, hot, pungent, bitter, half-cooked/ripe, stale) on all these days. Thereafter, it would probably become a part of their personality.

They would remain confined to the house and avoid lavish bath, perfumes, new attire etc.- to enable the couple to (a) focus on 'Agni paricharya' & understanding

each other better (b) recount the vows they made, divine pleasure they together enjoyed and (c) avoid situations that will arouse passions, irritations, anger etc.

Agni (a visible manifestation of the Supreme Lord on the earth) is kept continuously ablaze & offerings are made twice a day on all these days. *What a soul-stirring experience it is to feel and experience His presence at our home at all times!* There is no room for fear, confusion or evil thoughts. 'Paricharya' is pleasing Him by offering what He likes most i.e. fuel sticks with a sense of gratitude, recounting His myriad acts of kindness unto humanity and placing before Him all our desires and dreams. 'Upasana' is experiencing His presence, the drive and vitality He imparts and doing the utmost to fall in line with His command. *As a mark of respect for Him, the couple will not accept a seat higher than that of Him and hence sleep in the floor.*

Agni is purifying and these oblations and engagements are intended to promote purity of thought, action and speech. *Such inner qualities will lead to a better understanding of each other, destroy discord, if any, and ensure perfect harmony.*

Every 'grahastha' is required to perform this 'yajna' both



in the morning & evening after other 'nithyakarmas' are performed. Perhaps, this part of the ritual may not gel with modern life style.

AIRINI DAANA & CHANGE OF GUARD

Traditionally this takes place on the fourth day. The bride's parents perform 'Uma-maheshwara pooja' and wave a large bamboo tray (parents of the groom hold the other end) containing a set of 16 lighted lamps, beetle nuts etc. *Bamboo (called 'vamsha', phalaantha, dridha-kaanda etc. in sanskrit) is symbolic of the contribution*

the bride would make to her new home – stability, lineage and prosperity.

The bride is helped by her parents to sit on the lap of each of the groom's parents to mark the transition. This signifies (a) *that it is not merely an arrangement between the bride & the groom but a relation between two families* (b) *an implicit request by the bride's parents to treat their daughter with love & consideration as is the case with their son* (c) *the bride will, henceforth, be guided by her in-laws on all family matters* and (d) *the bride*

should treat them with respect.

MANTHRAAKHATHA & VIDAAAYA

Neeraajana is waved at the couple as the braahmanas chant manthras and shower akshathas on them. The bride seeks the blessings of all the elders gathered (who would symbolically offer a coconut to bid good bye) before she accompanies her husband.

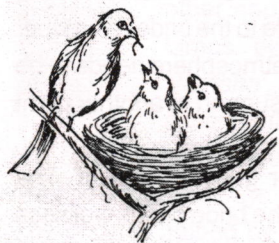
GRIHAPRAVESH

On arrival, the wedding party is received ceremonially. Everyone is considerate and gentle to the bride. A creeper grown in a very different soil and atmosphere needs to be nursed carefully until it takes the support of another plant and stabilises.

An offering to fire-god is made for 'grihyathva-sidhi'. The aspirations of the groom are: (1) the bride brings wellness to the entire family as she enters her new house, exudes joy, remain united till the very end. (2) The bride is not cruel - but, is benevolent and supportive to me & others in the family, domesticated animals etc.; lively & charming; bears exemplary character (3) Indra will bless this bride with 10 worthy children (this is not relevant today) and prompt her to raise them (groom is the 11th) with love. There is suggestion for the bride not to be greedy

either - raising a larger number of children will be perilous to her health and impact both the physical and mental advancement of the children born to a drained couple (4) Lord will place her as the 'samraajnee' of the household. Welfare of her in-laws and other members of the family will be at her heart.

The word 'samraajnee' should be very comforting to a bride entering a new house. It carries responsibilities as well. Like a queen, she ought to be (a) fair, impartial,



objective and non-discriminatory in her disposition (b) earning the goodwill and respect of the other members (c) protecting the young, aged and weaker in the household and (d) orderly and disciplined in her personal life.

The word 'sam-raajne' also means 'one who radiates happiness' i.e. remaining cordial, considerate, supportive and sympathetic.

After the sacrifice, the residual 'aajya' is applied as 'anjana' by the couple to each others' chest praying 'Vishwedevaas' to unite their hearts with love & affection, banish all differences, hurdles and difficulties on their

path and enthuse them to engage in both worldly affairs & religious duties with no aversion. May Aapodevathas, Praanadeva, Dhaatr' and Saraswathee unite the two and bestow happiness. *What a wonderful thought & delightful experience!*

At an auspicious time, the bride performs 'dwaara pooja' at the threshold and the groom enters his house holding her hand to the chanting of manthras and mangala-vaadya. She is entering a new house which is overflowing with grains as a number of elders, well-wishers and friends witness. There is plenty for everyone here to share. *What a magnificent feeling!*

Ganapathi pooja, punyahavaachana, Lakshmee pooja and kuladevatha poojas are performed and blessings of the elders & braahmanas are sought. It is customary to hold a naming ceremony - the bride gets fused into a new family, begins her new life with new identity. The new name acts as a reminder of her new position - encourages her to continually strive to fall in line with the lifestyle, economic circumstances, cultural ethos, customs and traditions of her new family. *She thus takes her second birth shaking off her previous 'vaasanas.'* This is very central to the success of the institution of marriage and our social structure. The far-sightedness and the concern of the sages for the future generation are noteworthy.

NAANDI-UDVAASANA

After the return of the wedding party to the groom's house, Aryanjana, abhisheka & pooja is performed to all the gods invoked on the day of naandi-shraaddha and later they are withdrawn from the 'mandap' (to one-self). The abhisheka jala is sprinkled on all the members of the family by the brahmanas who bless them. *What a remarkable event it was! Thank Him – again and again.*

NAAGALAKSHMEE POOJA & FELICITATION

At bridegroom's house, Naagadevatha pooja is performed praying for good health, wealth, long life & virtuous lineage. Bride's parents, relatives & friends are specifically invited & on arrival *they are welcomed as the most privileged*. In particular, (a) bride's parents (b) maternal uncle & aunt of the bride & the groom (c) married sisters & their husbands of the bride & the groom are specially felicitated. *This is also an expression of gratitude for their support in making vivaaha mahotsava a grand success.*



SAMAARAADHANA

On the following day, it is time to express gratitude to everyone for the successful

completion of the ceremony. Kuladevatha pooja & braahmana-suvasini-kumaara-kumaarika araadhana are done and the blessing of gurus & elders is sought. This signifies conclusion of all the rituals related to 'vivaaha mahotsava' & return to normalcy.

MOMENTOUS VISIT OF THE COUPLE

It is customary for the parents of the bride to invite the couple to their house. This is done on an auspicious day after the wedding, in person. This formal visit to groom's house is (a) an opportunity to strengthen the bondage between the two families (b) to seek the approval of the head of the groom's family (c) to adore the new couple. It is for the first time that the bride's parents come to reckon that their daughter has acquired a new role, a new identity, a new responsibility, a new ordain and is now *visiting them with her husband as distinguished guest*. It is customary to extend them a befitting welcome, admire them (usually by performing pada-pooja) as 'Lakshmee-Naaraayana', revered as the first couple of this universe. Seizing this opportunity to express their love and affection, appropriate gifts are handed over on this occasion. *This is a part of our well guarded ethos.*

ADDENDUM

PREPARATORY

- 'Mangalasnaana' – bride / groom take bath after the womenfolk apply turmeric-oil to them with mango leaves.
- 'Samaavarthana' homa by the groom marking completion of brahmacharya. A few 'do' & 'don't' are explained to the groom to help him internalise the importance of 'grahasthaashrama' and responsibilities which it carries.
- Seeking smooth conduct of the ritual by invoking, worshipping, meditating upon Shreeman mahaaganapathi.
- 'Punyaha-vaachana' – assembly of elders, teachers etc. wish that, with the grace of shree Lakshmee-Narayana, the moment be auspicious.
- 'Swasthi-vaachana' – the learned bless and pray that the ritual bring health, longevity, vitality, peace and prosperity. Sprinkling of 'theertha' at the end generates a feeling that one is cleansed.
- 'Naandee-shraaddha' - seek the blessings of departed ancestors. Forget not those who are alive – touch their feet and seek their blessings as well.

- 'Mathr'ka-poojan' – seek the blessings of a group of 23 mothers i.e. human as well as celestial.
- 'Mantapa-devatha' – seek the blessings of Ganapathi & 7 feminine devathas to forestall any mishap at the venue.
- 'Navagraha' pooja/homa to appease (reduce unfavourable effects, if any, found astrologically) the nine planets that influence our life.
- 'Praayaschittha' for violation, if any, of brahmacharya. This is done by appeasing 'Vita' Agni through aajya-homa or thila-homa. Alternatively one may do 10,000 Saavithree Japa, hand out daana, dakshina etc. and take approval of the Guru to do samaavarthana.
- Appropriate 'praayaschittha' if there are any lapses / omission in the performance of 'samskaaras' that ought to have been performed earlier.
- Thaamboola-dakshina' & a prayer is offered seeking the munificence of the 'graama-devatha' for the successful completion of the 'mangala-kaarya'. Kulapurohitha is requested to preside over the ceremony.

SOME VALUE BASED CUSTOMS

- Marriage should not be among close relatives and families of the same 'gothra'. The bride should be reasonably younger. *Medical sciences also support these values.*

- There should be a healthy gap between (a) two marriages (b) a house-warming and marriage (c) death in the family & marriage - it is not performed until 'aabdika-shraaddha' - excepting when there is no one else in the family. *Note the foresight and financial planning!*
- Vaagdana i.e. settling of marriage through oral promise by bride's father is done in the presence of all elders, guru / kula-purohithas, near relatives, friends and community leaders. In turn, the father of the groom promises to accept her. Here is a consensus that strengthens the bondage between the two families, sustains and promotes harmony. It also casts responsibility of ensuring the success of marriage on a wider group. *'Swayamwara' though permitted by dharma shaasthras, is not a recipe for success in life.*
- The conventional process of considering family history, educational and cultural background etc. in match-making is long drawn. *The emphasis is on creating a 'sathsanga' as elucidated earlier.*
- Rituals are performed by bride's father & if he is not alive by the grandfather, elder brother or paternal uncle-in that order. Roles, responsibilities, duties are to

- be explicitly stated: (a) 'Yajamaana' - the senior most couple to lead & guide the entire proceedings. (b) maternal uncle - if there are more than one, one of them will be nominated by the head of that family (c) sister & her husband - if there are more than one, one will be nominated by the parents (d) a close associate or friend of the bride /groom - could be a sister, cousin, aunt, a neighbour - one of them is identified for the occasion. *This ensures that everyone is involved and averts chances of some relatives or friends being ignored.*
- Marriage is not just an affair between the two individuals or even two families. It is a 'vivaaha-mahotsava'. Its success depends on the active participation of the entire community. It is customary to specifically recognize this fact while extending invitation: *"please come, guide, conduct the proceedings & bless the couple".*
- As the procession nears the bride's residence, it is customary to alert the hosts so that they are in a state of readiness to receive the guests. *This, indeed, is a healthy practice to be followed at all times - not to put the host off-guard.*

- It is recommended that the groom & the bride take very light, 'saathvik' food before the wedding as a part of 'vivaaha vratha'. It is a healthy practice for the brides' parents to partake such food after the kanya prathipaadana. *This helps them to remain agile and alert through the ritual.*
- It is recommended that just as the groom's wedding procession includes his family priest, the bride's parents are accompanied by their priest when they attend felicitation at groom's house. *This avoids possible confusion arising from differing customs & facilitates smooth conduct of all follow-up rituals.*

SOME CUSTOMS TO BE REVISITED

- Samaavarthana (where the groom takes bath, wears new dress, adorns with a mala, perfumes etc. for the first time and symbolically seeks approval of the guru /elders to migrate into the 'grahasthaashrama') is performed a couple of days before the wedding. It would be pertinent to perform this before the search for a match starts. For, after the decision to get married is taken, 'vaagdaana', 'kaashi-yathra' and seeking ratification appear to be out of tune. *Performed at appropriate time, it would throw meaningful signals.*

- Garbhaadhaana samskaara is not formality that needs to be run through for accommodating personal conveniences of the friends & relatives. This is a very significant samskaara and ought to be performed on an auspicious day taking into account (a) the purpose, process, related customs & practices etc. (b) the intent of the couple to consummate the marriage and have a child (c) bride's menstrual cycle and (d) age, health and other special circumstances in their life.

AATHITHYA, DAANA, DAKSHINA & SATHKAARA

- Dakshina is given to the astrologer who chose the 'muhoortha', all vaidiks i.e. priests & other scholars who enhance the auspiciousness and boost the value of the ritual. Thaamboola is offered to community leaders i.e. 'muktheshwaras'. *An opportunity to honour such distinguished guests is always seized.*
- *The guests who have assembled are collectively revered* (since it is not feasible to do it individually) by 'swaagatha', 'namaskara', distributing 'mangala dravyas' and sweets. (Sabha Pooja)
- It is customary for the groom to gift a 'vasthra' to bride's brother who supports the process of dhaara &

laja-homa and mother who brings the fire for the ritual - a mark of *recognition of their contribution to the conduct of the ritual.*

- The parents hand over mangaladravyas - rice, coconut, thaamboola, turmeric, some gifts, eatables etc. to the bride at the time of vidaaya - *a healthy practice to be followed at all times.*
- It is customary for the bride's parents to offer gifts, flowers, mangala dravyas etc. to the couple when they visit their daughter for naaganthani (in fact, this is the first such opportunity for them) garbhaadhaana ritual, and on the eve of deepawalee, ugaadi, navaraathra etc. *This is an expression of love & affection. Likewise, grooms' family will aptly reciprocate these gestures. This is how the ties between the two families strengthen.*
- Close relatives and other guests bless them and may make 'archana' at naaganthani - *a contribution to a token pool of 'seed money' for a couple who have set on a new journey.* There is no room for ostentation, pomp & pretensions in presentations, gifts and handouts. There is only an expression of love and affection that gels seamlessly with the marriage rituals. These are

manifestations of inner qualities which every 'samskaara' tries to build.

Dharmashastras provide detailed guidelines on daana and aathithya which every grahastha follows assiduously, every day. *Marriage provides a wonderful opportunity to practice them.*

GRIHASTHAASHRAMA - WORDS OF WISDOM

Here are a few extracts from atharva veda & munu smriti:

- It is an extremely rare occurrence to find a couple with identical merits, pattern of conduct, behaviour, deeds etc.
- Be conscious of the desires expressed and pledges made at the marriage ceremony & never digress from them.
- Grihasthaashrama is pre-eminent - it fosters the others i.e. brahmacharya, vaanaprashtha & sanyaasa.
- The bride ought to remain composed, adept, contented and develop expertise in all house-hold duties (e.g. cooking, maintaining cleanliness, caring elders, domestic animals) to earn good will of every member of the family. She should exude happiness, free from any blemish, remorse etc. and be

dedicated to the wellbeing of herself & her family.

- Both should pay utmost attention to their health (regulated food, physical activity, professional work, sex etc.) so critical to the upbringing of worthy children.
- Always deal with the other with amiable speech, utmost love, affection, faith, understanding, truthfulness, concern, support, loyalty & conviction.
- Earn livelihood through scrupulous and honorable means dutifully. Desist from sinful accumulation of wealth that will endanger the welfare of the entire family in the long run.
- Families where the women are respected and cared for (through pleasing words, proper nourishment, clothing, adornment, goodwill, cooperation etc.) can only prosper. Disrespecting them or causing misery or grief to them is a sure recipe for catastrophe. Disappointments, worries, depression in such families cause incessant quarrels and affect sexual urge leaving such couples with no progeny. Even if children are born, they will be of bad character - a burden on the family and the society.
- Stthree is 'shree' and 'shobha'. It is she who looks

after the daily administration of the household, raise children, care for the elderly, domestic animals, all guests and perform of all other duties mandated by the scriptures.

- Even if women in the family do not have desired qualities of head & heart in the beginning, they will get better and grow over a period under the influence of worthy men. Hence, it is important for the men-folk to set an example and strive for the betterment of their wives.
- Serve guests with all earnestness by offering them food, shelter and paying due attention. Use such opportunities to interact with noble, learned people to enrich knowledge and improve quality of life around.
- Be very prudent in extending 'aathithya' only to deserving people. Likewise gifts, hospitality etc. should be accepted only from 'dharmanishtas'.
- Perform regularly nithyakarmas like sandhyaavandan (oblations at dawn & dusk) Agni kaarya (offerings in fire), swaadhyaya (self-study - both vedic and profession related), pithr' yajna (oblations to the departed & salutations to the living) and bhootha yajna (caring other living beings).

Our publications:

- * ಬ್ರಹ್ಮೋಪದೇಶ ತತ್ತ್ವಸಾರ
- * ಆಹ್ನಿಕ ವಿಧಿ
- * ಪಾಣಿಗ್ರಹಣದ ಅಂತರಂಗ
- * Brahmopadeha-ethos & values
- * Nithya karma
- * Karhade Delicacies

