

Vedic Marriage and Its Significance

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Marriage is one among the 16 "samskaras" of the life as viewed by the vedic scriptures. So the elaborate rituals and the procedures that mark the occasion of the marriage if needed to be understood, should be preceded by the understanding of the concept of the life in the Vedic philosophy.

The whole process of the life is viewed as the continuous progress from one form of intelligent manifestation to the other form of intelligent manifestation. The whole of the cosmos is viewed as the eternal flow of the consciousness of the ultimate., spiralling in different forms, continuously trying to upgrade it self to the higher and higher levels of the wisdom. Human life is also viewed as the same and thought to be progressing to the intelligent forms from that of the ignorant. (tamasoma jyothirgamayaha). The purpose of the marriage is viewed as that of aiding the creation of the higher and higher intelligent species in the homo sapiens for achieving the realization of the supreme. This thought was viewed by many westerners and the western educated persons as the stupidity of the Hindus barring the individual freedom of the soul to enjoy free sex and free life.

But the recent experiments conducted by the Genetic scientists confirmed that the whole range of the emotions leading to the love like and to the interest of the sex are controlled by a chemical secretion called oxytine, and the whole objective of this chemical is to continue the process of the progeny. The whole of the individual freedom and other behavior exhibited by the species is in confirmation to the control of the chemical named above for the progeny.

This has once again confirmed the wisdom of the ancient Sages who said that the marriage is for the progeny.

Now the whole of the span of the human life is divided in Hinduism to achieve all the objectives of the soul to lead a perfect satisfied life to achieve higher levels of the evolution.

The life is divided in to different ashrams like Brahmacharya, Grihastya, Vanaprasthya, and Sanyasa, each having a cycle of 21 years. There are different karmas to be performed at each of the ashram and they totalled to 16 karmas. Vivaha is one such karma to be performed at the end of the Brahmacharya ashram.

Brahmacharya Ashram includes the Balya Koumara and Youvana avasthas of the Human life. Once the Balya Avastha is over the individual is send to the Gurukula for the education and he will return to the parents after the education at the age of 21 years. Till then he will study the concerned field, along with the moral ethical studies related to physical, psychological, social, religious, and spiritual levels of the upgradation of the soul.

After the completion of the studies the teacher will perform the snataka vratha and graduates the student and asks him to join the society for the discharge of the three debts., namely

1. DEVA RUNA: The debt of the gods, or the personification of the natural forces. The nature is the gift of the natural forces and the stage where the evolution continues. So the preservation of this nature for the future evolutions and generations is the primary responsibility of the individual and this is the debt that each carry on his head if he is benefiting from the society.
2. RISHI RUNA: The great sages who understood the whole of the process of the cosmic evolution and the involution prescribed the guide lines and the modes of life for the collective living, by means of the sashthras. It is the following of these principles of living, traditions, customs, which are highly scientific in nature man can allow the peaceful co-existence., the performance of this is the Rishi Runa.
3. PITRU RUNA: This is the debt of our forefathers. This means that we have to perform the life of the Grihastha Ashram to create the progeny and be supportive for the other life systems on this planet. This also warrants us to be in conformity with the social norms as dictated by the sages for the progress of the society.

and the performance of the purusharthas- Dharma Artha Kama and Moksha.

It is at this juncture that the Vidyarthi can decide to enter or not to enter in to the marriage life. He can just opt for the Sanyasa ashram skipping the Grihastha and the Vanaprastha.

Exactly this is the starting point of the rituals of the marriage. The bride's father or his brother or the relatives will go and receive the Vidyarthi and bring him to their house. There They will convince him that the life of the Sanyasa is the later part of the life and will keep him satisfied with the elaborate food arrangements and other pleasantries which will keep the mind of the Vidyarthi off the Sanyasa. Then the parents offer their eligible daughter for the pani grahana to pursue him to perform the three debts.

The whole of the marriage mantras are to be recited by either groom or by the parents of the bride. It is unfortunate that now a proxy recites the whole of the mantras and we simply nod the head.

There are two different recitations in the marriage. One that is the conversation between the Groom and

the parents of the bride offering him their daughter and reminding him of the responsibility towards the society, and second the Mantras Proper recited by Groom on the act of Panigrahana, Saptapadi, and Mangalasuthra Dharana.

These are the Mantras principally recited for the Gods Agni, Indra, Soma, and Saraswathi. The Vedic concept of the cosmos is based on the evolution of the manifestation by cosmic will called EIGNE, with the aid of the cosmic mind INDIA to achieve the immortal truth and the consciousness called SOMA, with the aid of the continuous upgradation of the consciousness called SARASWATHI.

The bride groom recites the passages which mean I to perform the Purushartha of the human life in this form am taking or acceptingas my wife. She is already offered to the cosmic mind and cosmic will and to the eternal truth. (meaning this marriage is only to the continuation of the evolution.)

I will not trespass her in the performance of Dharma - all such acts that aid the evolution,

Artha-all acts that allows to create utilities of life,(money earning is one such act that creates the utilities of the life, and the artha is not merely money or paper currency) and

Kama- all such desires that come across in the life of us.(the Kama in the purview of the Sages is not only sex but the whole range of the desires.)

Dharma ca arthe ca kame ca nathi charami.

Here the MOKSHA is deliberately omitted by the sages. The reason is the intention of the salvation from the bonds of the life is dependent on the past karma of the soul. Either husband or wife depending on the past karma can achieve the salvation at their own pace. In case of Meera Bai it is the wife who achieved the salvation and in case of Ramanuja or Tukaram it is the Husband who achieved the salvation first.

Now lets consider the elaborate process of the marriage according to the Veda, and its scientific significance.

Though there may be variations in the sequence of the performance of the different parts and though they are called by different names in the respective colloquials, the Vedic Marriage consists of

01. NANDI- getting started
02. NISCHITARTHA- confirming the alliance
03. ANKURARPANA-creation of the alliance by lighting the yagna fire
04. LAJA HOMA- yagna
05. SNATHAKAM-graduation ceremony
06. UPANAYANAM-thread marriage
07. KASI YATHRA- the indecisive journey of the groom to kasi for the sanyasa and bringing him back to the house by the parents of the bride for the marriage.

08. KANYA DANAM- offering of the daughter for the marriage.

09. PANI GRAHANAM, SAPTHA PADHI, MANGALASUTHRA DHARANA, OR VEEKSHANAM - the seeing of each other, touching of each other, and walking together, and tying the knot of the marriage.

10. TALAMBRALU-other performances- acquaintance of each other.

11. ARUNDHATHI DARSHANAM-showing of the arundhathi star

12. GRIHAPRAVESAM- taking the bride to the in-laws house

13. APPAGINTHALU-handing over the daughter to the groom

14. DHRUVA DARSHANA

15. SOBHANAMU-nuptials

16. GARBHADANAM-the act of creation of the foetus.

Now lets see each of these acts in detail.

One important point to be noted is that in the Vedic Age the school going is both for the boy and the girl. And the Upanayana is to be performed for both of them. At the time of the marriage the women starts wearing the ornaments and the man continues to wear the sacred thread.

The thread marriage which is confined to only few groups of persons now, used to be in vogue for all at ancient times as the process of Sandhya Vandana is more to do with the Psychological and the Mental Personalities of the Individual.

The points like why women wear ornaments and keep bindi are beyond the purview of this discourse.

So when both complete the Education comprehensive education for the development of the individual and the society the parents used to find the match by comparing the Horoscopes of the probable matches and used to confirm the alliance based on the Gana Matching. Gana or Group signifies a particular set of mental traits, and for any marriage at least 24 ganas should match i.e., should of the same count for the boy and girl.

Of course this science of Astrology too was highly misused and it is now commanding the lowest esteem among the moderners.

Among the 16 process discussed above,

1 to 7 are to be performed at different ages and only Kasi Yatra is performed as a prologue to the marriage. But all these are performed just before the marriage due to the changing values in our societies.

8. The actual Kanyadana is the offering of the bride to the groom to perform his Duties towards the society by following the path of the Dharma.

9. From then the Veekshana is the right time for the bride and the groom to see each other. Then the Pani Grahana is the taking the hand of the bride or the

process of the first physical contact between the bride and the groom starts. The Sapthapadi or the walking of seven steps around the Agni signifies that we go together in all the seven planes of consciousness in performing the dharma. The seven planes of the Consciousness are signified by the 7 Vyahritis of the Gayathri Mantra. The Mangala suthra Dharana is the tying of the thread containing the marks of the Vishnu or Shiva in the neck of the bride by the groom.

There is a dispute over the point that which is the proof of the performance of the marriage- veekshana, panigrahana, sapthapadi, or mangala suthra dharana or the time of keeping the bindi in the fore head. Various Pundits explain in different ways. But all these practices depending on the regional variations may be performed or may not be performed. All form part of the Vedic Marriage Rites so the argument is unnecessary.

10. In many South Indian marriages this act is a must. The rice mixed with the turmeric is poured over the heads of groom and bride by bride and groom. After this there will be certain ceremonies of name calling singing and certain other things and all these are basically aimed at the bringing the bride and the groom nearer in psychological and mental paths.

11. Arundhathi Darshanam is the showing of the Saptha Rishi Mandala and the small star Arundhathi underneath the star of Vashistha. The significance is to remind the pair about their cosmic responsibilities they have to perform in the coming walk of life. These seven sages and their families are the originators of the Vedic Lore of the Hindus. In memoriam of these great sages we named the seven stars in the Great Bear constellation after their names. It is the Darshan of these Great Sages will remind the couple the heritage they have to carry and the Debt of the sages to be performed.

12. Grihapravesam is the taking of the bride and the groom to the house of the groom.

13. Appaginthalu or the handing over of the bride to the parents of the groom by stating that "I have nurtured this child till this age and am handing over to you for the progeny and prosperity of your family. Consider her as your daughter and be the guide and philosopher for her till she lives with you.

The Mangala Vaidyalu or the instruments that are blown are to create the serene atmosphere among the people who gathered there. As these are the ragas of the great composers they produce the sonorous and serene effect on the listeners. The Mangala Vaidyalu will be over at this juncture.

15. Sobhanamu is the Nuptials arranged by the parents of the bride in their residence first and in the residence of the groom next. This is the starting of the enjoyment of the joy of the sex as learned in the Gurukula by reading the Kamashasthra and implementing

it in a socially acceptable way for the joy and for the bliss and for the progeny of the race.

16. Gharbhadanamu is the act of sex for the progeny. This is set on the day that is neutral from the cosmic influences like the moons gravity and the suns gravity or other disturbances to create the foetus for the Jiva to enter in to the Womb of the mother to take the birth to perform his cycle of karma and to make the parents to fulfil the cycle of the karma.

...The dress pattern on all the Vedic Marriages is in conformity with the modern day scientific non infection dressing.

...The decoration with mango leaves or the performance of the homa is in a way more advanced systems of the pollution control at a group level.

...The wearing of the ornaments at the ceremony of the marriage is in conformity with the Advanced Magnetic Resonance Preventive Medicine of the Present day Medical world.

...The details of the food is the medicine prepared to lead the happy sexual life and is based on the Ayur Veda and is practiced in the west too.

This is the wisdom as thought by our great teacher Sri Sathya Sai Bhagavathpada and is dedicated to the lotus feet of all Sages who found the Dharma and this science of the marriage.

The End