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Marriage is not just a function designed to grant license to a boy and a girl to live together as husband and wife. It is much more. It is a संस्कार (Samskara) according to our religion. Even in English it is called a sacrament and the latter is defined as "A religious ceremony or act regarded as outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace."

Samskara is explained as सम्यक् करोतीति संस्कारः (one which makes the mind more cultured). What is this cultured mind? It is a way in which an individual behaves, reacts with others, responds to difficult situations etc. We can always discern a cultured behaviour from an uncultured one even though we cannot define what qualities constitute real culture. This is what we call as सत्वगुणाः (Divine qualities) as compared to रजोगुणाः and तमोगुणाः. A man possessing more of सत्वगुणाः is a cultured individual as compared to one possessing रजोगुणाः and more of तमोगुणाः. This is not the place where we can enumerate all those Gunas. Suffice it to say that the 26 divine qualities (दैवीसंपद्गुणाः) mentioned by Krishna in Bhagavadgita (16<sup>th</sup> chapter) constitute the सत्वगुणाः. A man possessing these Gunas can be referred to as a cultured individual. They are enumerated below:

अभयं	Fearlessness
सत्त्वसंशुद्धिः	(Mental Composure)
ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः	(Always seeking knowledge)
दानम्	Helping Others
दमः	Control of Senses
यज्ञः	Worship
स्वाध्यायः	Full knowledge about his own vocation
तपः	Deep thinking
आर्जवम्	Straightforwardness
अहिम्सा	Non-Violence
सत्यम्	Honesty
अक्रोधः	Without Anger
त्यागः	Sacrifice
शान्तिः	Peace
अपैशुन	Not-Carrying Tales

दयाभूतेषु	Kindness towards all beings
अलोलुपता	No addictions
मार्दवम्	Softness
हीः	Humility
अचापलम्	Steadfastness of the mind
तेजः	Always being bright
क्षमा	Forgiveness
धृतिः	Courage of conviction
शौचम्	Cleanliness (inward and outward)
अद्रोहः	Non Deceitful
नातिमानिता	Non-egoistic

The above are self-explanatory. It should be the endeavour of every individual throughout the world to develop such qualities and become greatly cultured individuals. It is only through such people that the nation or a state can become a welfare nation or a state.

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Throughout the world all religions only preach these – may be – in slightly different forms.

Looking at them, one can easily see that all these qualities are quite difficult to practise. Somehow, our senses are naturally opposed to such qualities and one must put in a tremendous effort to overcome one's natural tendencies to develop such qualities.

Our great Maharishis had a full understanding of these difficulties and have devised a wonderful way to practise them. If an individual is asked to practice these intellectual qualities independently, it is very well known that he is bound to leave them off as they are very difficult. But one is inclined to go through rites and rituals if he is promised that they will do good to him. So our Maharishis thought of a structure by which an individual has to mandatorily go through many rites and rituals right from his embryo-stage till his death. They called them Samskaras and made them mandatory. Through them they tried to inculcate the spirit of those divine qualities and once they enjoy the pleasure of these qualities, the Maharishis knew that the individuals would start practising them assiduously.

Among these Samskaras विवाह is also one and the most important one. Let us not be under the illusion that these qualities are a result of the Samskaras. No, they only give an inkling of the great qualities, and during the Samskara one is almost forced to practise

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them (without feeling that he is forced). Once he enjoys them, it forms the foundation for him to practise them throughout his life.

That is why the Maharishis have envisaged two important objectives of the Marriage संस्कार.

One is आत्मोन्नति (self evolution) and the second is धर्मप्रजासम्पत्ति: (getting righteous children). Self evolution is nothing but the practice of the divine qualities. Dharmaprajasampathi is a corollary to the first. It is true that whenever a man and woman come together we can expect progeny. But, just children are not sufficient for a welfare nation. The latter requires righteous children. What happens to a nation full of unrighteous citizens can be witnessed today in our great country. Unfortunately the most advanced medical technology cannot assist us in giving birth to a righteous child. The only way seems to be prayer and to develop cultured minds by both the wife and the husband. It may be expected that, when both of them have cultured minds, the child will also possess a cultured mind. That is why it can be said that धर्मप्रजासम्पत्ति: is a corollary to आत्मोन्नति. A couple striving for self evolution can, in all probability give birth to a child with an evolved cultured mind.

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It was mentioned earlier that आत्मोन्नति is nothing but the practice of the divine qualities. Even though we have defined these qualities, it is very difficult to specifically describe them in black and white. We can only observe those who have practised them and made them their second nature, and learn to practise them ourselves. This is सत्संग. If you are in the midst of highly cultured people, it is but natural that it will be easier for us to imbibe all those qualities ourselves.

Unfortunately today it is quite difficult to go in search of such illustrious people in whose association we can spend our time.

Who else can be a better सत्संग than her life partner for a girl and

his life partner for a boy? Each will have some degree of सत्वगुणा:

And one can correct the other in its development and the advantage of सत्संग can be reaped at home.

Thus the विवाह सम्स्कार is one of the most wonderful and a firm foundation for the development of दैवगुणा:

It is no doubt a bitter truth that amidst all the pomp and grandeur in the present-day marriage, we do not see an iota of semblance of the दैवगुणा:. This can be attributed to our ignorance of the real message of our Maharishis as advised in the Sutras.

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Everyone of our Maharishis, Apasthamba, Bodhayana, Aswalayana, Katyayana, Drahyayana have written grihya sutras in which they have given in detail the proceedings for the Samskaras including Vivaha.

The sutras no doubt pertain to our Vedas. For example, Aswalayana's sutra is based on RigVeda. Apasthamba and Bodhayana base their sutras on Krishna Yajurveda. Drahyayana bases his sutra on Samaveda. People belonging to the different Vedas are supposed to follow the sutras of their own Vedas. However, if one looks at the proceedings, they seem to be basically one, with changes in some details. Of course, the mantras do vary according to the Veda, but with the basic idea behind a samskara being the same for all the sutrakaras.

There is nothing wrong in following the other sutrakaras when one is not familiar with his own.

Let us see what Apasthamba has laid down for the विवाह संस्कार. Again, it can be reiterated that if this cannot be followed due to non availability of purohits there is absolutely nothing wrong if one follows another sutra if its advocates are available. In the same way when one who is knowledgeable in other sutras is not available, he can always follow the Apasthamba procedure.

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The marriage Samskara starts with the decision of the bridegroom to get married. It is supposed that the bachelor is at the Gurukulam where he has gone for Vedadhyayana. At the end he has to perform four Veda vratas, and four Utsarjanas indicating the end of Vedadhyayana (Yajurveda). Later he goes through another Samskara called स्नान or समावर्तन where he adores himself with articles like a good dhoti, ear rings, chappals, umbrella and so on, all useful for a householder. As long as he was a bachelor, he was not expected to pay attention to such things as they distract his mind. He receives them reciting Mantras in a specific manner denoting discipline even in decoration. Nowadays this is only symbolic. At the end of समावर्तन he consults his friends as to what he should do next, whether he should go as a सन्यासी in search of self knowledge or he should become a गृहस्थ. Inevitably he decides that he should become a गृहस्थ। This व्रत and समावर्तन are performed today at the Kalyanamantapam itself. The समावर्तन goes by the name of so-called काशीयात्रा. We must remember that this व्रत and समावर्तन have absolutely nothing to do with the विवाह संस्कार. Even today, even though the boy is no longer in the Gurukulam, we can consider that his parent's house itself is his Gurukulam and perform the Vrata and Samavartana at home itself and then go for the marriage.

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The actual Samskara starts as said with the decision that the boy should get married. Then he requests three or four of his bosom friends to go out and look for a suitable girl for him. He prays to God, to make their path harmless and to be successful in their venture. The friends go in search of a suitable girl and when they find one who suits their friend's taste, go to her and her parents and recite the biodata of their friend in front of them and request them to give the girl in marriage to their friend. In today's marriages, this goes by the name of प्रवर. Of course, today, these are only symbolic as the girl has already been decided. The only thing that has to be appreciated here is that our Maharishis' great respect for the women folk. The boy's friends go to the girl's house and request the girl and her parents for the wed lock. Then the boy himself goes there and receives the girl. This is real culture. Unfortunately, today all this culture is forgotten and the bride and the bride's parents are at the receiving end trying to meet all sorts of conditions put forth by the boy's parents. It is most common to see that the groom's parents decide the girl and only make a show of asking the boy to go and have a look at the girl. It must be borne in mind that our Maharishis were so catholic in their outlook that there is absolutely no mention of the bridegroom's parents anywhere in the Marriage procedure. This is not to mean that their presence is not required. It only shows the importance of the boy and the girl who are marrying and not of the parents. Apasthamba goes to the extent of saying "यस्यां मनश्चक्षुषोः निबद्धः तस्यां ऋद्धिः नेतरत्

प्रस्तुतम्।  
... सुयामस्तुदेवा।

आद्रियेत इत्येके" (if the boy feels, his mind and eyes are attracted towards a particular girl, let him go ahead and marry her, he will prosper. He need not bother about other specifications mentioned.) Of course, Apasthamba mentions it as the opinion of some, but it is axiomatic that he would not have mentioned it in his sutras if he did not approve of it.) It looks like "love at first sight". This only shows the magnanimity of our Maharishis in giving independence of opinion to a well educated mature youth.

The boy's friends come back and tell the boy that they have found a suitable girl and now the boy himself sets off to see the girl himself. Of course, he sees her, reciting two mantras praying to god to remove all infirmities from her if any. When the girl and her parents are satisfied, they give away the girl to the boy for further purposes. This is called Kanyadana today. Somehow, the word Dana (दान) seems to be inappropriate. Dana is one in which the owner parts with something in his ownership to another saying that that the thing belongs to the other and no longer his, (तुभ्यमिदं न मम)

How can we consider the girl as one's property? There is no question of ownership of a girl. When there is no ownership one cannot give her away as he likes. This is why, while giving the girl the father says प्रजा सहत्व कर्मभ्यः तुभ्यम् इमाम् कन्याम् प्रतिपादयामि (for getting good children and performance of good karmas, I am presenting the girl to you). He does not say न मम (she is not mine)

"अश्रावणी" ...  
"चतुष्पदे"

as in a दान. Here again the belief that कन्यादान fetches great पुण्य is just a misnomer.

Once the boy receives the girl, he takes an oath that he will never transgress her in Dharma, Artha and Kama (धर्म च अर्थे च कामे च नातिचरामि). That means that he must consult her and take a 'decision in every aspect of their lives. Both of them can remind each other of this oath whenever, one crosses the boundary of propriety.

From now on, the Samskara is an affair between the boy and the girl only. He gives her a ceremonial bath. He places a ring made of दर्भ on her head and over that he places a yoke used for tying oxen to a cart, so that the hole through which passes the rope for the oxen comes on the दर्भ ring. He places a golden article in the hole and pours water through the hole for her bath. Just to symbolize the purity and sanctity of water, this procedure is adapted. The water is brought by scholars, passes through gold, darbha and the hole in a yoke. All these are sanctifying agents and hence the water going through them is sanctified. Added to this, all these processes are done accompanied by suitably meaning mantras which add to the sanctity of the water. Thus the bride has a bath and feels sanctified. She wears a new saree and a योक्र (belt) made of Darbha is tied around her waist. The boy holds her hand and brings her in front of the sacred fire which is already there. While

"अथैषो...  
देवसाश्च"

"स्वेनसः...  
वर्चसम्"

हो ते हिमयम्...  
सप्तसृजस्व

"एतिलो...  
अशाशान्त... कम्"

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bringing her he recites a beautiful Mantra which says "It is the Sun-God who is bringing you here and not me, please come to my house and be a good house wife, later telling the story of your grand marriage to your children and grandchildren sitting in your lap."

पुषा।वेतो...  
...असिवाग्नि

Next he prays to Soma, Gandharva and Agni to bless him with good progeny and wealth.

"सोमः प्रथमो  
... इमाम्"

Next comes the most important part of the marriage, the पाणिग्रहण and the सप्तपदी.

These two are supposed to be the main rituals in any marriage which confer on the couple दम्पतित्व.

That means that they have become husband and wife. Before this they are just considered boy and girl. The Hindu law also requires this to be completed before they can be considered as 'husband and wife. Nowhere it is said that they are husband and wife if the husband ties theमान्गल्य to her. As a matter of fact, the Mangalya Dharana does not find a place in the Maharishis' system of Marriage. No doubt, it is done in between, without any Mantra accompanying. The misnomer that Mangalyadharana confers दम्पतित्व on the couple must go.

In Panigrahana, the boy holds the girl's right hand reciting the four Mantras, all prayers to different Gods and Goddesses to bless them

सृष्ट्यामि ते  
... कृणोतु

with good progeny. Then comes the सप्तपदी where the boy walks seven steps with the girl. It is assumed (according to Vedic practice) that whenever one walks seven steps with another, both of them are deemed to be friends. In the same way, here the boy walks with the girl seven steps, reciting one mantra at each step.

सकामिणे  
... शौताभ्यो  
विष्णुस्त्वामेव

“Let God Vishnu bless us with lot of food by your first step; Let your second step accompany the blessings of Vishnu for good strength to all, let the third step bring the blessings of Vishnu for performance of ceremonies, fourth one for good health to all, fifth one for cattle health, sixth one for good at all times, seventh one for frequent yagnas in the house.”

Thus praying, at the seventh step he stops and addresses his mate in a soul-stirring fashion with a beautiful mantra “My girl! We have become friends. Let this friendship last for ever. Let it not get broken for any reason. Let us take a pledge today that we will welcome all guests to our house single mindedly, with smiling faces and with all affection. Let our house be always filled with material required for satisfying our guests. Just as RigVeda and SamaVeda are together always; just as universe is in space and space is in the universe and they are inseparable, we must also remain inseparable. You are the space and I am the universe, you are the word and I am the mind. Just as everyone speaks whatever is in his mind, you must speak out my mind. That is, we

सख्यारूपपदा  
... स्मृतं

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are inseparable. Let us live together happily and get righteous progeny. Come on! let us start our lives."

What a wonderful, lofty ideal! The boy holding the hand of his sweetheart, in front of the sacred fire and in front of so many friends, relatives, elders, and well wishers, accompanied by the soul stirring vedic mantras. Such a scene will thrill anyone to the core. Imagine the boy and the girl. They are thrilled and tears of joy roll down their cheeks. It is a wonderful occasion. It has to be experienced to be believed. One may ask whether the boy and the girl in today's marriages experience and enjoy such a bliss at all. First of all, to enjoy such an occasion it requires a perfectly silent atmosphere (people should be there but maintain pindrop silence), wherein the concentration of the boy and the girl will be on each other only. This has been never possible in the present day marriages with the din created by several people talking together. Secondly, to enjoy the chanting of the Mantras also requires perfect silence. Thirdly, neither the purohit nor the couple know the meaning of the Mantras that are recited. The result is complete estrangement on the part of the couple. As Schumaker nicely observes in his "SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL" "when one understands what he is doing he feels a sense of participation and involvement; when one does not understand what he is doing he feels a sense of estrangement".

Once the Sapthapadi is over, both of them sit in front of the sacred fire and perform what is called प्रधानहोम, consisting of sixteen homas, to different deities. सोमाय जनि विदे  
स्वाहा...  
गैवजगं  
स्वाहा

Again all the mantras are to keep the girl happy in his house and also getting a good progeny.

Then comes what is called the लाजहोम. The bride is made to stand on a firm stone symbolizing the prayer that she also should be firm like stone in her in-law's house. Then the bride performs the लाज

होम (नेल्पोरी), with the groom reciting a beautiful mantra. "Oh God!

This girl is offering you the लाज with the request that her husband should live long". Hitherto the groom was reciting the mantras praying to God but now he does it through his spouse! Perhaps even Gods fulfil our wishes when approached by women!

That too, the bride does not pray for her own welfare but for her husband's. This is real culture and the sense of unselfishness.

Two more such homas are performed and everytime they go around the sacred fire in a प्रदक्षिणम् — तुभ्यमग्रे... अतिग हेम द्विद्विगः

आतिष्ठेममः -  
पुत्रजायतः

इयं गाम्नी  
इत्तम्

अर्थमणं गु देव  
अमृत स्वस्त  
त्वमर्थमा अनास  
कृणोषि

At the end of the Homa, the groom unties the Darbha belt tied to her waist. Immediately, he must collect the sacred fire in a mud vessel and start off with his spouse, heading for his home. The sutrakara feels that no time must be lost between the preparations to start and the untying of the योक्र.

प्रलाम्बुद्धमि  
"कुपौमि"

This means that the responsibility of the girl's parents is only for half a day unlike the present day marriages where they have to bear the brunt for three full days!

Apasthamba does not want the groom to take the girl walking to his house. He insists that she should be carried in a palanquin or taken in a chariot.

Today we can use our cars or trains There are <sup>few</sup> ~~two~~ significant Mantras recited by the groom while he is accompanying her into the vehicle. He addresses her "You will be the queen in the house from tomorrow. You are not only the queen to me, but to your inlaws, brothers and sisters too. The whole responsibility of running the house will be on you. You are the presiding ruler over our earnings as also the other children".

एह किंग् क्रावण्  
"विश्वम्भर"

The meaning need not be taken literally. The spirit is that she is made to feel at home in the hither-to-unknown atmosphere of her husband's household. It also implies that she knows better how to run the household than men! She is never made to feel the servant attitude, which is prevalent today in many houses.

The boy comes to his house with the girl, his friends carrying the sacred fire behind them. The girl is made to enter the house reciting again a beautiful Mantra. " I am entering this beautiful and auspicious house with a happy mind. Let my entrance not cause any trouble to people already here and even to the servants. Let the house be full with grains and let there be lot of ghee spilling over the floor while feeding the honoured guests. I shall be entering such a house happily".

गृहम् अविमं  
सर्विभम्

What a wonderful feeling again! She is holding her life partner's hand, and the sacred fire is behind, all well-wishers and relatives are standing behind enjoying the scene, the sun is slowly setting in the west and she recites the soul moving musical mantra, and enters the house, to the welcome of all. She feels thrilled as if she is entering Indra's Amaravati. All the spectators also do get thrilled at such a wonderful sight. That is the spirit of rituals envisaged by our great Maharishis. That is why Aldous Huxley (a great English thinker) observed, "A well performed ritual is a work of art by which even a sceptical spectator will get a kick". Let us be proud to say that our Maharishis have made all rituals look like works of art if performed exactly as envisaged by them.

He goes inside with the girl and places the fire on an altar and performs what is called the गृहप्रवेशहोम.

Again, a set of homas praying to deities for the girl's welfare and for bestowing them with good progeny. One of the Homa Mantras

आगन्तोषं  
ऋषेजम्

reads "Lord Brahma, created you as my wife and me as your husband. Let the same Brahma bless us with a long happy married life".

At the end of the प्रवेशहोम, after the stars are seen in the sky, the boy takes out the girl and shows her the pole star ध्रुव नक्षत्रम् and the Arundhati अरुन्धती नक्षत्रम्. It is a symbolic ritual wherein the prayer is that she should be firm like Dhruva Nakshatra who is the guide to all and Arundhati who is considered the greatest gem of all. Rishipatnis

इह्यावः  
... निष्पद्यतु  
"सौमिनादिये...  
... आदितः  
प्रकृत्यः प्रेयं  
... शौचैष्ट  
Gummy fruits  
to a child  
endear to the  
couple  
"ध्रुवशक्तिः...  
... अष्टमी"

Before they go for watching the Nakshatras, both are expected to sit silently after the गृहप्रवेशहोम. till the Nakshathras are seen. At that time the groom recites a Mantra addressing the gathering. "Kindly bless the girl with all prosperity and Sowmanglaya and return to your places from where you have come". This is significant in the sense that the presense of relatives etc is not necessary further, for the next four days when the couple will be doing औपासनम् and अग्निपरिचर्या. This is a nagging doubt amongst present day people who otherwise are inclined to go though the four day marriage. If all the relatives have to be maintained for all 4 days, it will be a difficult proposition.

"इह्ये प्रियं...  
... आवक्षामि"  
"सुमुखं नीदियं  
... विपक्षैतज्"

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There are instances where they have declined the four day marriage just because they cannot afford the maintenance of all. Perhaps this must have been prevalent even during Apasthamba's days and he has intelligently introduced the above Mantrà so that their stay is not only not necessary but their going away is considered as if it is mandatory!

Then comes what is called the (आग्नेय स्थालीपाक). Apasthamba has given a lot of importance to this. He considers this, as almost a यज्ञ. It is a simple ritual wherein rice is cooked in the sacred fire itself, Two Ahutis are given to अग्नि and the rest of the cooked rice mixed with a lot of ghee, a Brahmin in whom the groom has <sup>the</sup> greatest respect is fed. He is also given sumptuous दक्षिणा

Apasthamba says that the rice required for this स्थालीपाक should be pounded by the girl and rice well-cooked by both. It is a nice gesture of showing श्रद्धा . She has made the rice and they have cooked it in their विवाहाग्नि , and then feed the brahmin. They will have the full satisfaction of having satisfied both the fire and the brahmin. This is श्रद्धा at its best and offering sumptuous दक्षिणा is त्याग

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at its best. This should form the foundation in their further life in doing any ceremony.

Then comes the औपासनम्. This is nothing but meditating on the sacred fire which can be considered symbolic of Paramatman.

There is no end to the benefits that all of us have derived from fire and in all gratitude we should offer our respects to him.

अग्नि is the प्रथम देवता for us. The Upanishadic Brahma is invisible and Agni is the visible symbol of that great Brahma. With gratitude swelling in our hearts for all the benefits accrued from him what else can we do to manifest our gratitude except worshipping him in a specified manner, that is औपासनम्?

The Agni is kept alive throughout (day and night) and every morning and evening we wake him up (make him active) and offer him two handfuls of washed rice. We pray to him and prostrate before him. This is all there is for औपासनम्. This is supposed to be continued throughout our lives but due to some inexplicable reasons, almost all of us have forgotten it except a very few ardent followers.

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Apasthamba has given us a concession to do this उपासना 'at least for four days during the marriage and be participants to whatever benefit that accrues.

More than the morning and evening offerings, the constant presence of that symbol of Brahma, keeps us conscious of the presence of God. (Not that before that we were unconscious of HIS presence! The belief has become so common that we never feel that God is always around. But with the physical presence of Agni whom we have to tend in the morning and evening we become alert). That is why a great man calls this as the "Practising the presence of God" (ईश्वर समक्षताभ्यासः )

That is why it is called अग्निपरिचर्या. In HIS active presence our minds cannot afford to think of bad thoughts. This is a great step in आत्मोन्नति .

Starting from the day when the groom enters his house with the bride, this औपासनम्, has to be done for four nights and four days (minimum). If one can afford to keep it further he can do it as long as he can. During these three days both of them are supposed to be in (दीक्षा)

They have to be only on sattvic food (avoiding salt and hot things), have to be in Brahmacharya (celibate), have to sleep on the ground (not on cots) to show their respect to God fire. After such three days of अग्निपरिचर्या, they have to perform what is called शेषहोम in the later half of the fourth night. They have to get up at about 2 AM, kindle the fire and perform the शेषहोम.

Again there are seven Mantras in the Homas, pregnant with meaning. This time the prayer is slightly different. They pray to Agni, Vayu, Aditya and Prajapati to help resolve any ideological differences that may occur between them in their future life. (Agni, Vayu etc were supposed to be healers of differences amongst the devatas). Anytime, in their lives, whenever differences crop up that may lead to heated arguments, a hint of such a homa done earlier by any one of them, will act as a healer and cement their minds. That is the greatest advantage of a well-performed ritual.

अग्ने प्रायश्चित्ते  
जम्भेदम् स्वहा

अग्ने स्वाहा  
अग्ने स्वाहा  
अग्ने स्वाहा  
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Symbolic of their one-mindedness, a beautiful ritual is proposed by Apasthamba at the end of the शेषहोम. The groom takes the आज्यशेष (left over ghee from the Homa) in his thumb and अनामिक (last but one finger) and taking the girl nearer to him, he touches her heart with the thumb and his heart with the अनामिक, Apasthamba says

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that this symbolic act should be done with both the fingers touching each other's hearts simultaneously. A Mantra is recited for this act where they request Viswedeva, Water, Vayu, Brahma, Saraswati etc to bless them with one mind. What a wonderful experience! The Homa is finished and the couple have to go and sleep for their first night.

They are supposed to recite some nine mantras even during the consummation act wherein they pray Vishnu, Brahma etc to be born as their child!

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पूजापद . . .  
... शेषम्  
विष्णुयै जि . . .  
....

With their minds full of sattvic experiences in the last four days of अग्निपरिचर्या and औपासनम् , with the शेषहोम, recently performed and the meanings of the Mantras at night illuminating their heart with Daivic glow, they will be in an ecstatic state effusing daivatva. When they come together under such conditions, why can't we expect a progeny worthy of Rama or Krishna? In all probability a brilliant child with all the divine qualities inherent in it, who will become a torch-bearer of our great धर्म , and a pioneer in upholding righteousness can be expected. That is the objective and result of a well done विवाह संस्कार

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Bodhayana goes to the extent of saying that a Maharishi will be born if one remains in the विवाह दीक्षा for one full year. Why not we try to get the benefit of atleast four days' दीक्षा?

After that, the couple take the morning bath, perform the औपासनम्.

recollecting the events in the last four days. They perform the

नान्दीश्राद्ध ie an obeisance to their ancestors and start their married life.

This is all about the our Maharishi's procedure. There may be so many other things found in present-day marriages like Nischithartha, Janavasa etc etc, which can be doubtlessly be dubbed as unnecessary and unmeaningful additions. They are worth discarding only, as they never help in the Samskara. It is quite clear that they are later additions and additions of a mind ignorant of the spirit of a Samskara as envisaged by our Maharishis.

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One of the glaring examples of our ignorance almost bordering on absurdity can be cited. Performance of the four day marriage and अग्निपरिचर्या must have stopped about 60 to 70 years ago. Everything is completed in the morning itself within one or two hours. But a peculiar practice is there in TamilNadu. An empty decorated mudpot is brought along with other things and finds a place on the platform where the marriage is going on. At the end, when everything is over and the bridegroom's party is ready to depart, the empty mudpot is kept very protectively along with the other luggage and everyone cautions the party to see that the pot is taken home without breakage. At home, the empty pot is kept as an antique for years together. Nothing more absurd can be thought of. Perhaps they had seen a mudpot being brought for collecting the fire and taking it home for औपासना. The practice of bringing the mudpot is maintained but not the carrying of the fire! The fire does not even touch the pot, let alone being collected. What is the use of taking an empty pot home and preserving it? No thought seems to have been endowed on this point, and the absurd tradition is still being followed by everyone very very assiduously!!

The above is only one example of our absurd traditions. There are many!