

# Vaidika Samskaras (contd..)

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(Sections and sub-sections are numbered in continuation from the previous article)

In the previous article in Volume 5 No. 1&2 of ParamaArtha Tattvam, we discussed one of the most important *samskAras*, the *upanayana samskAra* and the following educational *samskAras*. We will continue the discussion with the marriage ritual - *vivAha samskAra* - in this article. All the discussions are based on tradition and scriptures; some of them may not apply to present day situations.

## 5. Marriage - *vivAha*

This is the 14<sup>th</sup> in the list of *samskAras* and represents the entry in to the second *ASrama*, known as *grihasthASrama*.

### 5.1 Meaning of the term *vivAha*

The term *vivAha* is used synonymously with several other terms such as, *udvAha*, *kanyakA dAnam*, *kalyANam* etc. The first two terms, namely, *vivAha* and *udvAha* are similar in the following sense:

विशेषेण वहति इति विवाहः (विशेषेण □ special )

So far, the person was a single individual whose main job was to study only. After marriage, his life is not isolated any more, but 'specially' interlinked with another life - 'yoked' with another life (symbolically a 'yoke' is used during the marriage also!)

ऊर्ध्वम् वहति इति उद्वाहः (ऊर्ध्वम् □ lift )

Until marriage, the *brahmacArI* did not have any right (*adhikAritvam*) to perform any rituals ( *brahmacAriNa: karmaNi adhikAra: nAsti* ); he should perform the *sandhyaA-vandana-karma* alone. But after marriage, he can perform all

other *puNya karmas* also which will lead to *dharmaprApti*, *puNyaprApti*, *cittaSuddhi-prApti*, etc.

In addition, after marriage, the person will maintain the *kula dharma*, which has been maintained from time immemorial by the family lineage and will have the ability to hand over to the next generation.

Since the entire life will be lifted by these noble deeds, it is called *udvAha*.

Since the bride's father is giving away the daughter ( *kanyakA* ) as a gift ( *dAnam* ), the ritual is called *kanyakA-dAnam*.

Since the marriage ceremony is a holy, noble and sacred ceremony, because it leads to *dharma* or *puNyam*, it is called *kalyANam*.

From the *vedAntic* perspective also, the *grihasthASrama* is an inevitable *ASrama* for developing *cittaSuddhi*, *maturity*, *patience*, a polished personality etc, which are rather under-developed or undeveloped in the case of a *brahmacArI*.

Hence, all the four terms, indicate the glory of *grihasthASrama*. It gives the ideal opportunity to serve all others, which is very unique for the *grihasthASrama*.

यथा वायुं समाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्वजन्तवः  
तथा गृहस्थमाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्वे आश्रमाः ।

(As all creations live based on the wind-god, in the same way, all *AsramIs* survive based on the *grihastha*).

## 5.2 Purpose of Marriage

The purpose of the married life can be seen from the point of view of all the four *purushArthas* – namely, *dharma*, *artha*, *kAma* and *moksha*.

Union of male and female follows a natural instinct leading to the fulfillment of a fundamental desire. However, the human system is highly analytical and evolved, and so, the system changes such a *kAma karma* leading to the *kAma purushArtha* in to a very dignified *samskAra*.

The married life involves protection and security for both the partners by way of sharing and caring for each other. It also enables acquisition of wealth, and other riches, thus fulfilling the *artha purushArtha*.

The very *samkalpa* taken at the time of marriage emphasizes on '*dharma*' and '*prajA*' as the primary purpose. (धर्मप्रजा अभिवृध्यर्थम् ). The *samkalpa* never emphasized *kAma* and *artha* at all! In addition, right from the time of birth, every person has indebtedness, namely, *devaRiNa* (indebtedness to the devas), *RishiRiNa* (indebtedness to Rishis) and *pitruRiNa*. (indebtedness to the ancestors) Among these, the *RishiRiNa* can be removed in the *brahmacarya ASrama* also. However, the *pitruRiNa* is removed by *SrAddha*. ceremonies etc., and, more importantly, by having good children ( पुत्रोत्पत्त्या पितृऋणं ), which can be accomplished in the married life only. Also, the *devaRiNa* is removed through *yajnas*, which also can be performed only by a *grihastha*. Since the married life alone enables one to pursue these *dhArmic* endeavors, the marriage fulfills the *dharma purushArtha* also.

From the *moksha purushArtha* point of view also, married life plays an important role since, it can lead to *cittaSuddhi*, *viveka*, *vairAgya*, mind and sense control, maturity etc. which are

fundamental qualifications to pursue *jnAnamArga* – which is the only way to attain *moksha*.

## 5.3 Choice of partner

Choice of a suitable boy or girl, is based on several considerations:

- a. Compatibility cannot be assessed easily because, it is never possible to know the in-depth character of an individual. If judgment of compatibility of the boy and girl is based on a few things like character, taste towards things, etc.,- it is subject to change and so is the compatibility. In our tradition, we understood that perfect compatibility is never possible. That means, a marriage should never depend on compatibility; instead, in spite of it, it should continue. The system itself looks for compatibility based on several other means, such as horoscope etc.
- b. The choice should be based only on *dharma*, *artha* and *moksha* and never on *kAma*. The emphasis is on *dharma* and not on physical beauty, wealth etc. Our tradition believed that a poor *dhaarmic* family is better than a rich *adhaarmic* family.
- c. Also, marriages were arranged between people of the same *varNa*. This is based on, essentially, convenience since each *varNa* follows different traditions and way of life, especially with religious practices.
- d. Marriage between people of the same *gotra* was barred. Even medical findings do not recommend marriage between close relatives. People belonging to the same *gotra* are believed to be from the same lineage.
- e. There was a lot consideration given to age of the partners. The term *kanyakA dAnam* suggests that the girl should be a *kanyakA*.

Girls are referred by their age as follows:

अष्टवर्षा भवेत् गौरी - Age 8 – *Gowri*

नववर्षा तु रोहिणी - Age 9 – *Rohini*

दशवर्षा भवेत् कन्या - Age 10 - *kanya*

i.e marriages were performed about 10 years of age for the girl. If one can divide the whole life (100 years) in to four parts, ~ the first quarter of 25 years is spent in *gurukulam*. So one can say that the marriage could be between the ages of 10 to 25. It was recommended that the girl should be younger in age than the boy. According to *Ayurveda*,

बालार्को होमधूमश्च बालस्त्री निर्मलोदकम्  
रात्रौ क्षीरान्नभुक्तिश्च आयुर्वृद्धिः दिने दिने ॥  
and the opposite being,

वृद्धार्को प्रेतधूमश्च वृद्धस्त्री पल्वलोदकम्  
रात्रौ दध्यन्नभुक्तिश्च आयुः क्षीणं दिने दिने ॥

Also, early marriage enables easier adjustment with the new family.

#### 5.4 Types of Marriages

Our ancestors divided marriage broadly in to eight categories. They are:

1. *brAhma vivAha*
2. *prAjApatya vivAha*
3. *daiva vivAha*
4. *aarsha vivAha*
5. *gaandharva vivAha*
6. *aasura vivAha*
7. *rAkshasa vivAha*
8. *paiSAca vivAha*

Among these, the first four only are accepted by the *Sastras*. Among those that are accepted, *brAhma vivAha* is of the highest priority, which is in practice generally in India, today.

Let us first discuss those types of marriages which are not approved by the *Sastras*.

In this category, the worst is the *paiSAca*

*vivAha*. This involves forceful abduction of the girl without the knowledge of parents and without the girl's consent.

In *rAkshasa vivAha*;, the girl is taken without the knowledge of the parents, but with the girl's consent.

In *Asura vivAha*;, the parents agree to give the girl away in marriage in return for money or other wealth with a selfish motive.

In *gAndharva vivAha*;, the boy and girl love each other and marry without the knowledge of the parents (i.e the gift itself walks away!)

All these four kinds of marriages are not allowed by the *Sastras*.

Among the types of marriages that are allowed by the *Sastras*, *daiva vivAha*: is one where the father gets his daughter married to a priest for performing an *yajna*.

*Arsha vivAha*: is one where the father receives materials (land, money, cows etc.) for performing an *yajna*. Since the father gets some thing in return, it is not considered *kanya dAnam*.

In *prAjApatya vivAha*;, conditions related to the rights of the *prajA* (progeny) are demanded (like that of Satyavati's father to Bhishma).

*BrAhma vivAha* is the ideal one without any conditions and without expecting any material benefit in return.

#### 5.5 How did 'dowry' come in a marriage?

One of the evils of the Hindu marriage system in practice for quite some time, is the problem of 'dowry' where money, material etc. are demanded from the bridegroom's side. What was said in the *SAstras* got mutilated over time and took the shape of this demonic practice.

According to the *SAstras*, whenever any gift

is given, gold (or money) also should be given along with. Even when some one is fed with a sumptuous meal, the *SAstras* suggest a *bhojana-dakshiNA*, to be given based on one's affordability. Since the boy is given the *dAnam* of the girl during marriage, the girl's father gives whatever he can as *vara-dakshiNA*. Whatever was originally meant to be voluntary according to the affordability of the bride's father - *vara dakshiNA* - got mutilated to the terrible practice of dowry. In addition, the parents themselves, out of love of their child, give a lot of gifts to the boy and the family, which are called *SrIdhanam*. What was originally meant to be given out of love, got transformed to the terrible practice of demanding wealth and materials of all kind later, under the name of *SrIdhanam!*

#### 5.6. Marriage Rituals.

Most of the marriage rituals are centered around the bride. Most of the rituals given here are from a South Indian - Tamil Brahmin wedding. Even though some of the practices may vary in the other parts of India and among other communities, the general spirit underlying a *vedic* wedding is the same.

The majority of the *mantras* recited during a wedding ceremony could be broadly divided in to three groups:

- for purification of the girl (boy's purification ceremony is the *upanayanam*) and to free from problems
- as advice as to the do's and don'ts after marriage
- prayers for future welfare

Why purify the bride? Marriage ceremony for the girl is similar to the *upanayanam* ceremony for the boy. Actually, several of the rituals like *maunjIbandhana*, *asmArOhaNa* etc. are the same

as in the *upanayana* ceremony. In case of marriage, the *guru* is supposed to be the husband himself and the girl is in the place of the student. By now, the boy, who went through the purification rites during his *upanayanam*, should have practiced the austerities of a *brahmacArI* and become eligible to be a *guru* over the years (true in those days, at least!).

When the husband is viewed as *guru*, it is not to be viewed as any superiority or inferiority being portrayed. Each one compliments and supports the other in several ways. That is why the wife is called *sahadharmacArINI*. Her purification or *citta-Suddhi* results from her support to him in the conduct of the rituals of a *grihastha* and his *citta-Suddhi* results from the sincere performance of the rituals for the welfare of his family. So, both can become eligible to reach the final goal of *AtmajnAnam*.

Among the various rituals, some of them are of *vaidika* significance (as given in the scriptures) and some of them are of *laukika* significance (family traditions / practices) which are not given in the scriptures. Actually there is a saying: *vivAhe ca smaSAne ca vridhAnAm strINAm ca vacanam kuryu.*, which implies that, in matters of marriage, or death, take to the sayings of the elder ladies of the family. Ceremonies like 'nalangu', breaking of 'appaLam', paccahipodi etc. (popular among tamil marriages), come under the category of *laukika* ceremonies.

The first *laukika* ritual is the engagement ceremony or *niScaya-tAmboolam*. In this ceremony, the *vAk-dAnam* is given regarding the offering of the girl to the boy. The *pravaram* of the boy and the girl are given in an assembly of people of both the families, and *gaNapati pUjA* etc. are performed.

Another *laikika* ceremony is the *jAnuvAsas* ceremony, where the bridegroom is taken in a

ceremonious procession. (There are variations of this practice in various regions)

Now on, we will discuss the actual marriage rituals.

**5.6.1 *ankurArpaNam*** - seeding - Nine different grains (lentils, pulses, grams etc.) are sown in nine different clay pots with prayers to all deities. It is a symbolic ritual, which implies that, as the seeds grow, so may the marriage relation also grow over the years to come.

**5.6.2 *pratisarabandha*** - tying of a string around the wrist. In order to protect the boy and girl from the influence of any evil forces, a string made of gold, silver or mostly commonly, cotton thread, is wound around the wrist nine times with the chanting of *mantras*. This also serves to insulate them from any *aSauca* (impurity) that may arise due to a death or birth in the family etc.

**5.6.3 *varaprEshaNam*** Actually most of the wedding *mantras* are from the *rigveda*. The context in the *rigveda* was the marriage between *suryA*, the daughter of the Sun god and the Moon god, *Soma*. The same *mantras* are chanted today, praying to all the deities for a successful wedding etc.

**5.6.4 Exchange of garlands.** This is another *laukika* ritual with no *mantras* etc., but has a beautiful significance. The garland of flowers is symbolic of *vAsanA* – and stands close to the heart when worn. So, the boy's garland symbolizes his *vAsanAs* and the girl's, her *vAsanAs*. If they stick to each other's *vAsanAs* only, even after the wedding, there will be no room for adjustment and understanding at all. By the exchange of garlands, each is expressing their willingness to share and adjust so that the marriage stays forever.

**5.6.4 The Swing.** This is another *laukika* ritual. The boy and the girl sit together on a wooden

plank – symbolic of the married life. The swing goes through ups and downs and so is life. It is to reassure each other that they will be together in any such swing in real life. The chain of the swing is symbolic of *karma*, which alone is responsible for the ups and downs. The plank of life which swings and changes, is connected by the shaft at the top (from which the swing hangs), which remains stationary and does not change. The shaft represents *Brahma* which is the ultimate support.

**5.6.5 *kanyakAdAnam*** - offering the girl. This is the first important ritual in a marriage. The receiver, namely the bridegroom, is considered as Lord Vishnu and so, the giver offers the girl with *Iswara-arpaNa-buddhi*. Because the bridegroom is considered as Lord *nArayaNa*, the girl's father washes his feet and makes the following statement:

कन्यां कनकसंपन्नां कनकाभरणभूषितां  
दास्यामि विष्णवे तुभ्यं ब्रह्मलोक जिगीषया

(I offer the girl who is endowed with gold, wearing gold ornaments, to you, the *MahAvishNu*, for me to attain *brahmaloka*). A tinge of selfishness – to attain *brahmaloka* is also exhibited, even though this is a *dAnam*!

Also,

विश्वंभराः सर्वभूताः साक्षिणः सर्वदेवताः  
इमां कन्यां प्रदास्यामि पितृणां तारणाय च

*I offer this girl with the witness of all the beings and all the deities, so that (through begetting children), the boy's ancestors will be protected.*

कन्ये ममाग्रतो भूयाः कन्ये मे देवि पार्श्वतः  
कन्ये मे सर्वतो भूयाः त्वद्भ्रानात् मोक्षमाप्नुयाम्

*O girl, come to my front; to my side; and all around; by offering you, may I attain moksha*). So, it was believed that a *grihastha* also could attain *moksha* by proper following of the *ASrama*.

All the above *mantras* are recited by the girl's father and the offering is done symbolically by pouring water, holding a coconut, by the father.

The bridegroom recites a few *mantras* when he receives the *dAnam*, seeking the help of the deities to help him in protecting the bride and to treat her properly. Also, since the father-in-law is elder to him, if he prostrates to the boy, the boy's *puNya* will deteriorate and so, the boy keeps on reciting several prayers. Following this, there is *madhuparka pUjA*. In olden days, a cow *pUjA* was also done to indicate the protection of cows.

**5.6.6 vara-eeekshaNam** The boy will look at the girl and address her with proper attitude. The boy will request the girl to have a kind look; to be nice to his siblings; to be a source of auspiciousness; to perform noble actions together; to beget worthy children etc. Two important prayers will be to engage in noble *karma* and to beget good / noble children. By getting good children, the indebtedness to ancestors could be removed. The groom will symbolically wipe between her eyebrows to remove any *alakshmi*, if present.

The girl may cry due to the thought of leaving her parents. Since it is considered inauspicious to cry in such a happy occasion, one *mantra* is chanted, requesting the girl not to cry, to think of positive things in life; to ask for blessings, humility etc.

**5.6.7 Plough** – Symbolic of two bulls connected by this wooden device, for them to work together, for accomplishing life's task, both the husband and wife should work together. This ritual is based on a story from the *Rig veda*, where a girl named *abala* had a certain disease and so could not be married. She prayed to *Indra*, who kept the wheel of a chariot on her head and kept the wooden shaft above it. He then poured water over the girl through the shaft and wheel, after

which she got cured. In marriages, this ritual is performed to remove any physical or mental illness. A gold piece is kept in the whole of the shaft for purification, which later is made into *mAngalyam*. Actually, there is no reference to *mAngalyam* in the Vedas. The idea of all these ritualistic prayers is for the girl to be free from any evil influence and to stay healthy.

**5.6.8 nUtana-vastra-dhAraNam** - wearing new clothes. The *mantras* are similar to what are recited during the *upanayana* ceremony. The girl wears new clothes with prayers to *Indra* for health, auspiciousness, noble children, etc.

**5.6.9 mAngalya-dhAraNam** - tying the *mAngalyam* or *mangala sUtram* - This is the second important ritual and not a *vaidika karma*. The following *sloka* (not a *veda mantra*) is recited and a thread containing the gold *mAngalyam*, is tied to the neck of the bride.

मांगल्यतन्तुनानेन मम जीवन-हेतुना ।  
कण्ठे बध्नामि सुभगे त्वं जीव शरदः शतम् ॥

अनेन मांगल्यतन्तुना	by this <i>mAngalya</i> string
मम जीवन-हेतुना	which is my life-strength
With that,	
कण्ठे बध्नामि	I tie on your neck
सुभगे	O, <i>sumangali</i>
त्वं जीव शरदः शतम्	you live 100 years.

The boy puts a knot; boy's sister and other family members put two more knots, amidst the chanting of *mantras* and the sound of musical instruments.

**5.6.10 maunjee-bandhanam** - tying a belt of munja grass. The next important ritual is to tie a belt made of munja grass around the waist of the bride by the bridegroom. This ritual is similar to the *upanayana* ritual, discussed in a previous article. This is important since, having got purified, the girl is led to the fire for performing

fire related rituals only after this ritual.

**5.6.11 pANigrahaNam** - holding the hand -  
Leading to the fire, the boy addresses the girl:

गृहान् गच्छ गृहपत्नी ( भव) Be my mistress

वशिनी भव - be one who keeps the family under  
control

विदथं आवदासि - give suggestions to perform  
noble *karma*

Reciting the above *mantras*, the boy holds the hand of the girl and leads her to the *agni kuNDa*. This ritual is most important since, this is the first time, that the couple come in physical contact. There are lot of details given as to how to hold the hand etc.

अथास्यै दक्षिणेन नीचा हस्तेन दक्षिणमुत्तानं हस्तं

गृह्णीयात् - By his right hand, the bridegroom should hold the right hand of the girl, facing up, including all her fingers. According to *Apasthamba sutra*,

यदि कामयेत स्त्रीरेव जनयेयं इति अङ्गुलीरेव

गृह्णीयात् - if daughters alone are desired, all fingers (except the thumb) should be held, and,

यदि कामयेत पुंसः एव जनयेयं इति अङ्गुष्ठमेव

गृह्णीयात् - if, male children are desired, then, only the thumb should be held. If children of both genders are desired, all fingers should be held.

At this time, the bridegroom seeks permission from three deities before taking the girl, namely, 1. *soma*, 2. *gandhrava* and 3. *agni*.

According to the *Sastras*, each stage in a girl's growth and development, is presided by a particular deity.

Stage 1: 1 to 4 years -*soma*. (moon god)

Stage 2: 5-8 years - *gandharva*

Stage 3: 9-12 years - *-agni*

There are other prayers also: To goddess *saraswatI*, for auspiciousness; to the wind-god, *vAyu*, for love etc.

**5.6.11 saptapadi** (seven steps) This is the most important ritual in the marriage. Even if all other rituals are abridged (as in the case of modern day marriages !), this ritual should not be skipped. According to the *Sastras*

नोदकेन न वाचा वा कन्यायाः पतिरुच्यते

पाणिग्रहणसंस्कारात् पतित्वं सप्तमे पदे ।।

न उदकेन - not by *kanyA dAnam* (giving water)

न वाचा वा - or not by *vAgdAnam - niScitArtham*  
one becomes a husband - पति.

पाणिग्रहण-संस्कारानन्तरम् सप्तमे पदे एव

पतित्वं भवति - But, after *pANigrahaNam*, only when the 7<sup>th</sup> step is done, one becomes a husband.

After the 7<sup>th</sup> step, what happens?

First, the girl's *gotra* goes away. She keeps seven steps along with the husband. Each step has a prayer for ideal marriage. All steps have a common ending expression -

विष्णुः त्वा अन्वेतु । (Let Vishnu come along with you / behind you)

Step 1: एकं इषे - विष्णुः त्वा अन्वेतु - for providing food, let Vishnu be with you.

Step 2: द्वे ऊर्जे - विष्णुः त्वा अन्वेतु - for giving physical and mental energy/ power, let Vishnu be with you.

Step 3: त्रीणि व्रताय - विष्णुः त्वा अन्वेतु - for the sake of performing various austerities, let Vishnu be with you.

Step 4: चत्वारि मायो भवाय-विष्णुः त्वा अन्वेतु - for the sake of happiness/peace of mind, let Vishnu be with you.

Step 5: पञ्च पशुभ्यः – विष्णुः त्वा अन्वेतु - for the sake of cattle, wealth, prosperity etc. let Vishnu be with you.

Step 6: षड् ऋतुभ्यः-विष्णुः त्वा अन्वेतु - for the sake of the six seasons, let Vishnu be with you.

Step 7: सप्त सप्तभ्यः-होत्राभ्यः-विष्णुः त्वा अन्वेतु for the sake of priests to do rituals, let Vishnu be with you.

After *saptapadi* the relationship is made firm; so, holding her hand, the husband addresses her:

-सखा सप्तपदा भव सखायै सप्तपदा बभूव । From this we have become friends (indicating sharing of pain and pleasure)

-सख्यं ते गमेयं - I am entering in to your friendship.

-सख्यात् ते मा योषं - I will not go away from your friendship.

-सख्यात् मे मायोष्ठाः - From my friendship you also do not go away.

-समयाव संकल्पावहै - Let us make all plans together (in life)

-सप्रियौ - let us be loving

-सुमनस्यमानौ - let us have noble thoughts about each other

-सनौ मनासि संव्रता - let our minds be together to do austerities.

We should be inseparable. Some examples are given:

द्यौरहं पृथिवी त्वं - I am sky, you, the earth

रेतोरूहं रेतोभृत् त्वं -I am seed; you, the land.

मनोरूहं वाक् त्वं - I am mind; you, word.

सामाहं ऋक् त्वं - I am *sAma veda*; you, the *rig veda*.

सूनृते - O, lady of noble words;

पुंसे पुत्राय, श्रियै पुत्राय वेत्त वै - let us beget noble / auspicious offsprings

This concludes the most important ritual in the marriage, namely *saptapadi*.

**5.6.12 vivAha- homa** - the marriage *havan* - This is another important fire ritual in which several items are prayed for with sixteen mantras, such as, wife's well-being, children, health, freedom from external forces, destruction of all sins, etc. Some are also repetitive. It is also customary to go around the fire. Following are some of the important mantras:

प्र इतः मुंचाति न अमुतः - Let her cut off the relationship from that family; but not from my family

सुबद्धां अमुतः करत् - Let her be firm

मा ते गृहे निशि घोषः - Let there not be any noisy scenes in the house

त्वत् रुदस्यः अन्यत्र संविशन्तु - Lend your crying power to someone else

मा त्वं विकेशी - Let your hair not be untied

**5.6.13 asmArOhaNam** - stepping on a stone - A symbolic ritual, where the bride stands on a stone and the mantras are similar to the ones used in the upanayana ceremony for the boy.

**5.6.14 lAja hOma:** - *havan* with puffed rice. This ritual is done by the bride, and the bridegroom recites the mantras on her behalf. Puffed rice is offered through three mantras, and after each, go around the fire and step on the stone, praying for long life, children, beauty, health, destruction of enemies, love for husband's family, harmony etc.

**5.6.15 patnI nayanam** - taking the bride to the husband's house. The husband makes her feel comfortable, assures her of her role as the queen of the family and all its members. There are prayers for a safe journey to the husband's house. Then upon reaching the house, the husband asks



her to look at all that she brought with her from her house and all that is in his house with an equal sentiment etc.

**5.6.16 griha praveSa** - entering in to the house. The bride enters the house placing her right foot first. A particular *homa* called *praveSa homa* is performed. It contains about 13 *mantras* praying for long life, health, happiness, auspiciousness, children, prosperity etc. Then he asks her to take the responsibility of the family.

**5.6.17 dhruva - arundhatI darSanam** - seeing the stars *dhruva* and *arundhatI*. *druva - arundhatI darSanam*. This ritual occurs in the night, when she asks him to see the star, *dhruva*, symbolic of steadiness and he asks her to see the star *arundhatI* symbolic of chastity.

Then two more fire rituals known as *AgneyasthAlIpAkam* and *aupAsanam* are performed. These are supposed to be *nitya-karmas* for the *grihastha*.

With this, the rituals to be performed on the first three days of the wedding are concluded. Then, one of the most important fire rituals, known as *Sesha homa* is performed on the fourth day. Until this time, the groom has to observe *brahmacarya* disciplines. This ritual involves a few *mantras*, praying for the removal of sins, enemies etc. At the end the girl addresses the boy thus:

मनसा चेकितानं त्वा अपश्यम् - I am seeing you as a person who will understand my feelings.

तपसो जातं - You are Born out of *tapas*;

तपसः विभूतं - glory of *tapas*

So, the respect becomes mutual. If he ill-treats her, it is believed that he will be born as a girl for seven births! And says,

प्रजायस्व प्रजया प्रत्र काम - 'May you beget children through me' but puts it in a beautiful way as, "may you be born as my child". The idea is that,

the husband enters the wife through *garbhAdhAnam* and is born as the child! Then he prays for three things:

1. नौ हृदयानि समंजन्तु - Let our hearts become one - united.
2. प्रजापते-तन्वं मे जुषस्व त्वष्टः देवेभिः सहसामः इन्द्रः ।  
Let the divine carpenter, *tvashTa* shape the body of the child and let *indra* give strength.
3. शं नो भव द्विपदे शं चतुष्पदे - Let my wife have noble relationship with the bipeds and quadrupeds of the house.

*garbhAdhAnam* is to be done only after this. The husband first prays to *soma*, *gandharva* and *agni* who were guarding her all these days and seeks their permission to assume guardianship of her.

Then a ritual to seek the blessings of the ancestors - *nAndI SrAddham* is performed by them. The ceremonies conclude with gifts to priests and others followed by blessings by the elders etc.

This concludes one of the most important rituals. We will discuss the remaining rituals in the next article.

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