

[Husband and Wife](#)

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The spiritual union which binds man and woman is a religious sacrament, a personal contract and a lawful custom of

Our center section this issue offers ten questions and answers on marriage. Quite possibly the reason Hindu society has held together for thousands of years is the stability of the Hindu home. It is based upon proven wisdom of the relationship of men and women, and the creation of a reliable family structure. Unfortunately, there is a tendency now to adopt the patterns of Western family life, with its easy divorce and unmindfulness of the family as a unit. Here, in a nutshell, is the grihastha ideal.

What Is the Central Purpose of Marriage?

The two purposes of marriage are: the mutual support, both spiritual and material, of man and wife; and bringing children into the world. Marriage is a religious sacrament, a human contract and a civil institution. Aum.

Through marriage, a man and a woman each fulfill their dharma, becoming physically, emotionally and spiritually complete. He needs her tenderness, companionship and encouragement, while she needs his strength, love and understanding. Their union results in the birth of children and the perpetuation of the human race. Marriage is a three-fold state: it is a sacrament, a contract and an institution. As a sacrament, it is a spiritual union in which man and woman utter certain vows one to another and thus bind themselves together for life and for their souls' mutual benefit. As a contract, it is a personal agreement to live together as husband and wife, he to provide shelter, protection, sustenance, and she to care for the home and bear and nurture their children. As an institution, marriage is the lawful custom in society, bringing stability to the family and the social order. Marriage is a jivayajna, a sacrifice of each small self to the greater good of the

family and society. The Vedas exclaim, "I am he, you are she, I am song, you are verse, I am heaven, you are earth. We two shall here together dwell, becoming parents of children." Aum Namah Sivaya.

What Are Special Duties of the Wife?

It is the wife's duty, her stri dharma, to bear, nurse and raise the children. She is the able homemaker, standing beside her husband as the mother and educator of their children and the home's silent leader, grihini. Aum.

The biological differences between man and woman are part of their human dharma. The two together constitute a whole. They are equal partners in joy and sorrow, companions and helpmates, yet their functions differ. The Hindu home and family is the fortress of the Sanatana Dharma, which the wife and mother is duty-bound to maintain and thus to perpetuate the faith and create fine citizens. As long as the husband is capable of supporting the family, a woman should not leave the home to work in the world, though she may earn through home industry. The spiritual and emotional loss suffered by the children and the bad karma accrued from having a wife and mother work outside the home is never offset by the financial gain. The woman's more intuitive and emotional qualities of femininity, gentleness, modesty, kindness and compassion are needed for the children's proper care and development. The Vedas encourage, "May happiness await you with your children! Watch over this house as mistress of the home. Unite yourself wholly with your husband. Thus authority in speech till old age will be yours." Aum Namah Sivaya.

What Is the Hindu View of Sexuality?

The purpose of sexual union is to express and foster love's beautiful intimacy and to draw husband and wife together for procreation. While offering community guidance, Hinduism does not legislate sexual matters. Aum.

Sexual intercourse is a natural reproductive function, a part of the instinctive nature, and its pleasures draw man and woman together that a child may be

conceived. It also serves through its intimacy to express and nurture love. It is love which endows sexual intercourse with its higher qualities, transforming it from an animal function to a human fulfillment. Intensely personal matters of sex as they affect the family or individual are not legislated, but left to the judgment of those involved, subject to community laws and customs. Hinduism neither condones nor condemns birth control, sterilization, masturbation, homosexuality, petting, polygamy or pornography. It does not exclude or draw harsh conclusions against any part of human nature, though scripture prohibits adultery and forbids abortion except to save a mother's life. Advice in such matters should be sought from parents, elders and spiritual leaders. The only rigid rule is wisdom, guided by tradition and virtue. The Vedas beseech, "May all the divine powers together with the waters join our two hearts in one! May the Messenger, the Creator and holy Obedience unite us." Aum Namah Sivaya.

What Are the Duties of the Husband?

It is the husband's duty, his purusha dharma, to protect and provide for his wife and children. He, as head of the family, griheshvara, is responsible for its spiritual, economic, physical, mental and emotional security. Aum.

By their physical, mental and emotional differences, the man is suited to work in the world and the woman to bear and raise their children in the home. The husband is, first, an equal participant in the procreation and upbringing of the future generation. Second, he is the generator of economic resources necessary for society and the immediate family. The husband must be caring, understanding, masculine, loving, affectionate, and an unselfish provider, to the best of his ability and through honest means. He is well equipped physically and mentally for the stress and demands placed upon him. When he performs his dharma well, the family is materially and emotionally secure. Still, he is not restricted from participation in household chores, remembering that the home is the wife's domain and she is its mistress. The Vedas implore, "Through this oblation, which invokes prosperity, may this bridegroom flourish anew; may he, with his manly energies, flourish the wife they have brought to him. May he excel in strength, excel in royalty! May this couple be inexhaustible in wealth that bestows luster a thousand fold!" Aum Namah Sivaya.

What Is the Relation of Sex to Marriage?

Wisdom demands that the intimacies of sexual intercourse be confined to marriage. Marriages that are free of prior relationships are the truest and strongest, seldom ending in separation or divorce. Aum Namah Sivaya.

When a virgin man and woman marry and share physical intimacy with each other, their union is very strong and their marriage stable. This is because their psychic nerve currents, or nadis, grow together and they form a one body and a one mind. Conversely, if the man or woman has had intercourse before the marriage, the emotional-psychic closeness of the marriage will suffer, and this in proportion to the extent of promiscuity. For a marriage to succeed, sexual intercourse must be preserved for husband and wife. Each should grow to understand the other's needs and take care to neither deny intercourse to the married partner nor make excessive demands. A healthy, unrepressed attitude should be kept regarding sexual matters. Boys and girls must be taught to value and protect their chastity as a sacred treasure, and to save the special gift of intimacy for their spouse. They should be taught the importance of loyalty in marriage and to avoid even the thought of adultery. The Vedas intone, "Sweet be the glances we exchange, our faces showing true concord. Enshrine me in your heart and let one spirit dwell with us." Aum Namah Sivaya.