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Marriage

What Is the Basis for a Happy Marriage?

A happy marriage is based first and foremost on a mature love, not a romantic ideal of love. It requires selflessness and constant attention. A successful marriage is one which both partners work at making successful. Aum.

While not all marriages must be arranged, there is wisdom in arranged marriages, which have always been an important part of Hindu culture. Their success lies in the families' judgment to base the union on pragmatic matters which will outlast the sweetest infatuation and endure through the years. The ideal age for women is from 18 to 25, men from 21 to 30. Stability is enhanced if the boy has completed his education, established earnings through a profession and is at least five years older than the girl. Mature love includes accepting obligations, duties and even difficulties. The couple should be prepared to work with their marriage, not expecting it to take care of itself. It is good for bride and groom to write out a covenant by hand, each pledging to fulfill certain duties and promises. They should approach the marriage as holy, advancing both partners spiritually. It is important to marry a spouse who is dependable, chaste and serious about raising children in the Hindu way, and then worship and pray together. The Vedas say, "Devoted to sacrifice, gathering wealth, they serve the Immortal and honor the Gods, united in mutual love." Aum Namah Sivaya.

How Are Hindu Marriages Arranged?

Marriage is a union not only of boy and girl, but of their families, too. Not leaving such crucial matters to chance, all family members participate in finding the

most suitable spouse for the eligible son or daughter. Aum.

In seeking a bride for a son, or a groom for a daughter, the goal is to find a mate compatible in age, physique, education, social status, religion, character and personality. Elders may first seek a partner among families they know and esteem for the kinship bonds the marriage would bring. Astrology is always consulted for compatibility. Of course, mutual attraction and full consent of the couple are crucial. Once a potential spouse is selected, informal inquiries are made by a relative or friend. If the response is encouraging, the father of the girl meets the father of the boy and presents a proposal. Next, the families gather at the girl's home to get acquainted and to allow the couple to meet and discuss their expectations. If all agree to the match, the boy's mother adorns the girl with a gold necklace, or gifts are exchanged between families, signifying a firm betrothal. Rejoicing begins with the engagement ceremony and culminates on the wedding day. The Vedas say, "Straight be the paths and thornless on which our friends will travel to present our suit! May Aryaman and Bhaga lead us together! May heaven grant us a stable marriage!" Aum Namah Sivaya.

What Is the Hindu Family Structure?

The main Hindu social unit is the joint family, usually consisting of several generations living together under the guidance of the father and mother. Each joint family is part of a greater body called the extended family. Aum.

A joint family lives under one roof. It includes a father and mother, their sons, grandsons and great-grandsons and all their spouses, as well as all daughters, granddaughters and great-granddaughters until they are married. The head of the family is the father, assisted by his wife, or in his absence the eldest son, encouraged by his mother, and in his absence, the next eldest brother. The family head delegates responsibilities to members according to their abilities. The mother oversees household activities, nurturance, hospitality and gift-giving. Religious observances are the eldest son's responsibility. The joint family is founded on selfless sharing, community ownership and the fact that each member's voice and opinion is important. The extended family includes one or more joint families, community elders, married daughters and their kindred, close friends and business associates. It is headed by the family guru, priests and panditas. The Vedas offer blessings: "Dwell in this home; never be parted! Enjoy the full duration of your days, with sons and grandsons playing to the end, rejoicing in your home to your heart's

content." Aum Namah Sivaya.

How Are Marital Problems Reconciled?

When problems arise in marriage, Hindus study the scriptures and seek advice of family, elders and spiritual leaders. A good marriage requires that the husband be masculine and the wife feminine. Aum Namah Sivaya.

Success in marriage depends on learning to discuss problems with each other freely and constructively. Criticizing one another, even mentally, must be strictly avoided, for that erodes a marriage most quickly. Under no circumstance should a husband hit or abuse his wife, nor should a wife dominate or torment her husband. It is important to not be jealous or overly protective, but to have trust in one another and live up to that trust. Problems should be resolved daily before sleep. If inharmony persists, advice of elders should be sought. A reading and reaffirmation of original marriage covenants and an astrological assessment may provide a common point of reference and a foundation for mutual sacrifice and understanding. The husband who does not take the lead is not fulfilling his duty. The wife who takes an aggressive lead in the marriage makes her husband weak. She must be shy to make him bold. Couples keep a healthy attitude toward sex, never offering it as reward or withholding it as punishment. The Vedas say, "Be courteous, planning and working in harness together. Approach, conversing pleasantly, like-minded, united." Aum Namah Sivaya.

Must We Marry Within Our Religion?

Tradition requires that the wife adopt the religion and lifestyle of her husband. Thus, Hindu women wanting to continue their family culture and religion will, in wisdom, marry a spouse of the same sect and lineage. Aum.

The mutual spiritual unfoldment of man and wife is a central purpose of marriage. When we marry outside our religion, we create disharmony and conflict for ourselves and our children. Such a marriage draws us away from religious involvement instead of deeper into its fulfillment. For marriage to serve its spiritual

purpose to the highest, husband and wife should hold the same beliefs and share the same religious practices. Their harmony of minds will be reflected in the children. A man's choice of spouse is a simple decision, because his wife is bound to follow him. For a woman, it is a far more important decision, because her choice determines the future of her religious and social life. While his lifestyle will not change, her's will. Should a Hindu marry a non-Hindu, traditional wisdom dictates that the wife conform to her husband's heritage, and that the children be raised in his faith, with no conflicting beliefs or customs. The husband may be invited to convert to her faith before marriage. The Vedas pray, "United your resolve, united your hearts, may your spirits be one, that you may long together dwell in unity and concord!" Aum Namah Sivaya.