
Impressum

Klaus Bung: Wedding Wishes

Length: 804 words = 4,635 characters

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Date: 2007-00-00, Mk1.7

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The author has a friend in Calcutta whose son is about to get married. The author sends his good wishes to the son.

Motto:
And these few precepts in thy memory
Look thou character
(Polonius to Hamlet)

Klaus Bung: Wedding Wishes

Dear E,

Salma and I are writing to wish you and your bride Ishvara's blessing for your wedding and for a long, happy and successful marriage.

There is an ancient Sanskrit saying, which is a recipe for a happy and successful life:

- Treat your parents like God
- Treat your teacher like God
- Treat your guest like God
- Treat your husband like God

to which we should add, since we live in the 21st century and since Hinduism is a living and developing religion:

- Treat your wife like the Devi

This last dictum is the most important of these, for a man, and surely a recipe for happiness in marriage, since you can never control how your wife treats you, but you can control how you treat your wife. And if you are lucky, and Ishvara anugraha (with God's grace), she will respond in kind.

This expectation is better than demands, which never lead to anything but can generate ill-feeling, however reasonable they may be.

Another useful attitude rooted in Hinduism, and sadly neglected in the West, is that each of us concentrates on doing his own duty rather than clamouring for his rights (= the duties of somebody else), since it is easier to do the former (do our duty) than to enforce the latter (other people doing their duty). The outcome, as the Gita teaches, is in God's hands and may sometimes, but not always, be positive. But having done our duty we will at least have done the thing which is most likely to be successful and contribute to happiness for us and for others.

If each partner's main concern is for the happiness and success of the other rather than hoping to get from the partner as much as possible, he/she is less likely to be disappointed, and happiness results as a by-product.

Finally I would like to add a thought from a Western author, one that criticises the Western tradition of celebrating a wedding with much rejoicing, even though so many Western marriages these days break down very quickly, something that I would not wish on you.

This comes from the German poet Goethe in his novel "Wilhelm Meister":

Eigentlich aber konnte man bei dieser Gelegenheit die Bemerkung recht wahr finden, daß man keinen Zustand, der länger dauern, ja der eigentlich ein Beruf, eine Lebensweise werden soll, mit einer Feierlichkeit anfangen dürfe. Man feire nur, was glücklich vollendet ist; alle Zeremonien zum Anfange erschöpfen Lust and Kräfte, die das Streben hervorbringen and uns bei einer fortgesetzten Mühe beistehen sollen. Unter allen Festen ist das Hochzeitsfest das unschicklichste; keines sollte mehr in Stille, Demut and Hoffnung begangen werden als dieses.	On this occasion one could note the truth of the observation that one should not begin with a celebration any state which is intended to last, and which is meant to become a profession, a way of life. One should celebrate only what has been successfully concluded; all ceremonies at the beginning exhaust the desire and the strenght which produce the striving which we need to assist us during continued efforts. Of all feasts the traditional wedding feast is the most inappropriate. No occasion demands more than a wedding day that it be spent in quietness, humility and hope.
Goethe, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, Book 5, Ch 13, Hbg Ausg., Vol 7, p 329	Translated by Klaus Bung

To Goethe's "quietness, humility, hope" one might add "and prayer".

As Hindu doctrine says, no action is purely good, or purely bad, or purely beneficial to all people (in brief: every silver lining has a cloud). Whatever we do for the benefit of one person will cause at least some sadness or disappointment in another.

I am aware of this. But if we insisted on avoiding absolutely any negative effects in our actions, we could never act at all. So all we can hope for and pray for, even at the beginning of a marriage (as a commentator on the Gita says) is that the good we do may outweigh the bad, the happiness that results for us and for others may be more than the unhappiness and sadness we inevitably cause.

In this spirit Salma and I are sending our good wishes and prayers to you and your wife and to both your families. Insha Allah, one day we will get to know you personally.

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