

## Grihastha – Householder

**During this stage a Hindu will marry and raise a family, earn a living and contribute to the community.**

The Householder is responsible for bearing the burden of all.

The word *grihastha* derives from the Sanskrit word for 'house', *griham*. The second phase of life is that of the householder and usually begins after the individual has completed his studies. Entry into a householder's life is marked by the wedding ceremony, *vivaha*. The individual is expected to earn a living, acquire wealth: *artha*, and fulfil his legitimate desires: *karma*. All these are to be carried out under the guidance of *dharma* or righteousness. The householder is expected to start a family and must provide financial support to the family and society.



Relevance today

The householder must look after the needs of *all* his family members including children and parents, and of other close relatives. In modern times the couple are only expected to look after their children while this ancient system insists that the couple look after their parents as well as distant family members. They are expected to provide for guests, and should contribute towards the welfare of their community and society. The householder, in this sense, provides financial support to the whole social structure. This is a pivotal stage in life dedicated to the service of others. This stage in life emphasises that religious life is not a matter of learning to *live with others* but learning to *live for others*. Sri Ramakrishna said, "If a householder does charity in a spirit of detachment, he makes great spiritual progress. It is God alone that he serves, God who dwells in all beings."

The process

This begins when the student returns from his studies, marries and takes on the duties of a householder. This stage is considered to be very important as marriage is a sacred duty for Hindus in order to continue the family and all the social and religious obligations that go with it. The ritual of marriage is called *vivaha*, a word which also relates to maintaining order and harmony. No religious ritual can be performed by a man without his wife. No man's or woman's life is seen as complete without marriage. Householders are expected to give to charity, care for aged parents, offer hospitality to guests and provide a settled, well-run household.

A married woman's duties include bringing up the children, managing the household expenses, preparing food, keeping the home clean and organising the celebration of festivals and other religious rites. Today, many Hindu women have full-time jobs as well. A husband must provide for his wife and children, educate and arrange marriages for his sons and daughters, earn money honestly and spend it on ways that are beneficial to himself and others.