



## SANATAN (HINDU) WEDDING CEREMONY

### (A BRIEF DESCRIPTION)

#### **Polite Request**

It is our polite request that all patrons respect our wishes and observe silence during the ceremony duly conducted by Bhasmank Mehta. Thereafter, there will be ample time afforded to you for meetings and greetings as you please.

#### **Introduction**

The traditional Indian wedding ceremony is thousands of years old and is considered to be the thirteenth of the sixteen sacraments. Marriage is a sacred spiritual partnership between two souls that not only unite the bride and groom, but also form a tie between the two families for generations to come. The ceremony is performed under the Mandap. This Mandap or an Alter is made with two pairs of pillars representing each of their parents and the roles they have played in the upbringing of their respective siblings. Also the continuous support they will receive during their wedded lives without actually being intrusive.

#### **Swagatam** (Welcoming of the Groom)

The wedding day begins with the Swagatam or Welcoming the Groom and his followers who are greeted by the bride's family, relatives and friends. The groom is asked to break an earthen pot filled with curd, honey, and cottonseeds symbolizing the different experiences he would encounter in the joint journey of life ahead. That he should try and overcome these situations as and when faced with. Else he is warned to walk away, Now!

#### **Ganesh Puja** (Worshipping Lord Ganesh)

The ceremony, performed by the bride's parents, begins with a prayer to Lord Ganesh, the God of wisdom and the destroyer of all evils. This ceremony is performed under the peaceful and harmonious Mandap. This prayer dispels the darkness of ignorance and removes obstacles. At this time, the bride is not present. The full version of this ceremony will have taken place at their respective houses some time prior; such as the morning or the day before.

#### **Madhuparka** (Butter and Curd)

At this time, the groom's feet are washed and he is fed "Madhuparka" (melted butter and curd) while sitting under the mandap. This signifies the purification of the groom as will the bride be upon her entrance to the Mandap. Meanwhile, the bride's sisters steal the groom's shoes, adding mischief and humour to an otherwise sad moment in which a daughter / sister is leaving home to begin a new life as part of her husband's family. At the end of the day, the groom retrieves his shoes by offering his sisters-in-law some gifts or money.

#### **Kanya Agamana** (Arrival of the Bride)

The bride is usually ferried / carried into the Mandap by her maternal uncle and offers his blessings for the life hereinafter. The Antarpad or the white Curtain separating the bride and groom – raised prior to the bride's entrance - is lowered and the couple exchange garlands. The exchange of garlands is an expression of respect for each other and a formal acceptance of each other.

#### **Kanya Daan** (Giving of Bride)

The bride's parents and relatives then bestow Varmala, a garland made of hand woven cotton threads around the necks of the couple to symbolise the unification of the couple's souls. *(In the olden days, many a marriages used to stop here abruptly but for - mostly - one sided negotiation of the Dowry)*

#### **Hasta Melap** (Joining of Hands)

It is now time for the bride to be given away in a ritual known as Hasta Melap (Joining of Hands). The parents of the bride place the bride's right hand into the groom's right hand symbolizing their renunciation, the groom's acceptance of the bride together with the acceptance of the responsibility to love, respect, and protect her forever.

#### **Havan** (Lighting of the Fire)

A sacred flame is lit which represents Agni, the Lord of Fire, usually witnessing all Sanatan (Hindu) rituals. He, the Lord of Fire, blesses the couple with purity and happiness in their lives together as Husband and Wife. The Lord Agni also dispels darkness and ignorance and leads the couple into a world of light and knowledge. Route to salvation.

#### **Mangal Phera** (Circles of the Holy Fire)

During the Mangal Pheras, the couple circle the holy fire four times symbolizing the four basic human attributes:

Dharma	Realization of life's purpose together	Karma	Fulfilment of pleasure and desire
Artha	Material well being	Moksha	Liberation of the soul from rebirth

The groom leads the first three rounds whereas the bride leads the last one. After completing of the forth round, the bride sits at the groom's left side and becomes Vamangi, the husband's lawful wedded wife – the other Half!

#### **Sapta Padi** (Seven Steps)

The bride and groom take seven Steps representing seven principles and promises to each other, "Together we shall":

Equally share happiness and sorrow  
Share and support each other's feelings  
Always be truthful  
Be content in any circumstances and care for the young and the elderly members in the family

Always speak gently and respectfully  
Raise a family and be faithful and loving to each other  
Do spiritual and charitable work

#### **Kansar** (Sweet Meal)

The mother of the bride brings Kansar or other sweets for the bride and groom. The bride and groom feed each other five times as a display of their love for one another.

#### **Sindoor** (Red Powder)

At this time the groom puts red powder (Kumkum) in bride's hair signifying their role as husband and wife. Then the groom ties "Mangal Sutra" (black beaded necklace) around her neck, as a symbol of abiding love, integrity and devotion to each other.

**Saubhagyavati Bhava** (Secret Blessings)

The Saubhagyavati Bhava is a ceremony in which several married women from the bride's family come to the Altar so as to whisper secret blessings into the bride's right ear. These blessings can become tense and emotional. Therefore, to bring some humour into otherwise tense situation, these ladies, during their turn, try to grab the groom's nose. At this moment, the groom reaches out and tries to grab the offender's Paalaou (loose end of the Sari), a tradition called Chedo Pakadvo. If the groom succeeds, he will ask for a small contribution as a price for releasing the Paalaou. A mark of punishment for trying to grab his nose in the first place! Just a game played as a tradition to make the wedding more fun. If the woman trying to grab the nose succeeds without her Paalaou being caught, this is supposed to be an insult for the groom!

**Aashirvaad** (Blessings)

Once the wedding ceremony is complete, the couple beg for blessings by way of touching the feet of the priest, the parents and other senior relatives present. The blessings thus conveyed are known as Aashirvaad.

**Kodi Kodia** (Wedding Game)

This game can either be played after lunch in the Mandap or following Vidaay at groom's house. Inside the Mandap because the crowd can enjoy the ceremonial aspect of this game. At home because this is where the bride has no one of her family to support her and anyone supporting her is deemed to be her new found companion in this strange environment. Two games are played to find the dominant person amongst the newly married couple!

**Vidaay** (Final Send-off)

The day concludes with the bride leaving her family and joining her husband as they begin a new life together. This departure is a very emotional moment for the bride and her family as it represents the bride's transition into a new family. A Prayer to God culminates the ceremonial process begging for love and happiness for the couple for what is:

**The First Day  
Of  
The Rest Of Their Lives.**

<b>Mr &amp; Mrs Bride's Parents</b> <b>Their Address</b> <b>Any Town</b> <b>Post Code</b> <b>Contact details</b>	<b>Bhasmank Mehta</b> Tel/Fax: 020 8363 3553 Mobile: 07961 40 15 40 Email: <a href="mailto:indianmaharaj@hotmail.com">indianmaharaj@hotmail.com</a> Website: <a href="http://www.indianmaharaj.com">www.indianmaharaj.com</a>
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**Kanya Daan** – Not a necessity to include this line. It's only useless information only.

**Sapta Padi** is there for you to read and thereafter remove. I tend not to perform this ceremony due to some very serious promises that are no longer practical in the present day circumstances. If you still want to add and want me to include them within the ceremony, I need YOU – The Bride – to call me and agree to understand the real *Sapt Padi* version. Plus add an extra 10 minutes to the scheduled timing.