

# Sapta Padi

In the first instance, please read through the actual translation of the Sanskrit *kshlokas* narrated during the Sapta-Padi (promises made over the seven steps) ceremony. Thereafter, you will have an opportunity to read the modern day watered down explanation. Finally, you will be able to read my opinion as to why this ceremony should No Longer be included in modern day ceremony. Especially when the overall ceremony is shortened to just under two hours as opposed to almost two weeks in the days gone by.

For easy reference, I have used five colours in this article:

Green Notes and watered down version

Red Bride's promises to the Groom

Blue Groom's promises to the Bride

Brown Reason why not to perform this ceremony

Violet Alternative version most apt for the 21<sup>st</sup> century – if one must be included.

O! Lord of all lords, I will be an equal partner in all your up's and down's of life. Wheresoever and howsoever shall you reside, I shall follow suit.

O! Fortunate one, you are the authority of my house. You shall endeavour to sustain happiness and contentment amongst all members of the family (household persons) and look after all materialistic items.

O! Provider, I will look after the young and elderly according to their needs. Whether any item is in the house or not, I will improvise and be content.

O! Woman, May God give you the strength to fulfil this mammoth and ambitious task that you are about to undertake. Along with the strength that you will gain, even I will flourish and continue to grow in strength.

O! Lord of the lords, you are now my God and will pray to you. I will always speak words most favoured by you.

O well wisher! You will be responsible for looking after my wealth and increase it as appropriate.

O Provider! When you show sorrowness, I will join in your sorrows. I will also be equal partner in sickness and in health. I will always obey your instructions.

Your consideration for my welfare and well being is paramount. This, you have demonstrated. Therefore I give you full permission to remain as a head of the household in my house.

After menstruation, I will bathe and purify myself. Thereafter only will I present myself to you for your pleasures! I will never think of any other man hereinafter.

O woman, with the help of cupid, you understand my animal instincts and therefore I nominate you to be in control.

O Lord, in the presence of Lord Vishnu I vouch that I will never cheat on you and will work on enhancing our love and friendship.

O woman, I will endeavour to ensure that all forms of happiness is bestowed upon you as and when seasonally available.

Sacrificial rites performance, religious or social actions that you engage in; as a matter of fact anything that you undertake, I will always be happy to accompany you and support you.

O chaste and devotional one, for your religious / rigorous obedience, in return you may enjoy complete pleasures and gratifications.

The ceremony conducted now-a-days predominately is directed towards the Bride making all the promises. From what I have seen and experienced in the field, there are just as

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many versions of these promises as there are priests conducting them. After having heard a few versions along with numerous versions made available on the internet, hereunder is the most appropriate (watered down) version for your consideration. I must add that I am not in agreement to this but sometimes I find compelled to have to perform the ceremony – reluctantly as the situation may be.

This is one ceremony that a number of couples getting married ask their priests to include within their wedding ceremony. Often only because one of their friends have had it done during their weddings. It also becomes very apparent that they are not really sure of the real purpose for this ceremony. In addition, there are also a number of priests who include this, even when not asked for. They include it as a matter of routine. Then there are others like my father, other honorary priests or even myself who ask the couples to abstain from inclusion of this ceremony. After all, if the whole ceremony is reduced to less than two hours, it is obvious that a number of other important aspects of the ceremony must have had to be axed over the years. So why not exclude Sapta-Padi as well.

Now, let us look at the promises made by the bride and the groom as translated above. These were feasible those many years ago. Well, even up until the generation but lasts, the ideas were practical. Now however! With both husband and wife working, having tight schedules of work, peer pressures, not living under the same roof with the 'in-laws' etc. etc., these promises most certainly would appear to be far fetched. There is every chance that you are not going to keep any of the promises. No, NOT one! Allow me to deviate from this a bit and then come back to this point:

Suppose you were to promise a little child a sweet if that child did certain favours for you. Now you got busy and did not buy that sweet you promised. A few days later you ask the child to do another favour for you. You promise that you will give him not only the sweet you were supposed to have purchased last time but yet an additional one to make up for the delay in keeping with your promise. Once more, you do not keep the promise because of the pressures of other events in your life. Now the chances are that that child will not be interested in attending to any requests that you make. Why? Because you keep breaking your promises!

Am I getting my point across to you? Or am I being cynical? I leave the decision for you to make.

Over to you! As the phrase goes!

And Now an Alternative Version

The Seven Steps:

- One for Each day of the week!
- One for each member of the family! (Always adds up to Seven in every individual's relationship. No More - No Less. Only SEVEN!)
- Excluding the two shadow planets, one for each of the main seven planets!
- OR Simply the ones that assist in phasing our lives less stressful and more harmonious!

Whatever the case may be, the primary purpose must be to ensure that the relationship between the bride and the groom prospers to the stage that is otherwise an unbreakable friendship.

So, here are the revised Seven Steps:

- With the First Step is where the bride and groom undertake to continuously find ways to provide prosperity for the members of the household so that all live a healthy and well nourished life.
- The Second Step is related to the development of good physical, mental and spiritual powers in order to lead a lifestyle that would be enjoy more happy moments, less arguments and more discussions to resolve any disagreements.

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- Third Step is to beg for spiritual strength needed to increase religious beliefs. The materialistic wealth can only accelerate pace when the couple work hand in hand. That only happens when the two have faith in each other. That 'Faith' otherwise is 'Religious Beliefs'.
- While taking the Fourth Step, the married couple pledges to acquire knowledge, happiness and harmony by mutual love, respect, understanding and faith.
- In the Fifth Step whilst the bride undertakes to bear the groom's children, the groom undertakes to be a responsible father to their children. Together, they pray to be graced with noble children.
- The Bride and the Groom, in this Sixth Step, wish and pray for self-control of the mind, body and soul and longevity of their marital relationship.
- And finally, the most important Seventh Step where the bride and the groom make final promise that they would work towards being true and loyal to each other. They would remain companions, share their responsibilities and be best of friends for life.

We have taken the Seven Steps so as to mutually integrate. We are now partners and will not look at anyone else in the same manner as we do each other. Let us share the joys. We are word and meaning, united. You are my thought and I am your sound.

Even if the above alternative version is thought to satisfy the couple of modern times, I still think that these promises are difficult to maintain. Modern times demand a lot more effort from both parties. Adhering to - let alone maintaining - these values has to be testing and can stray from one's goal-post.

As for me, I now include this service as standard unless one asks to opt out or we over-run on the scheduled time.

Whatever, Whenever & Wherever You Decide,  
May Your God Always Be With You

