



## **VEDIC WEDDING CEREMONY**

### **Sanskars**

Vedic sacraments are called 'Sanskars' and the sacraments performed at the time of a wedding are called 'Vivah Sanskar'. This sanskar marks the start of the second and the most important stage of life called the 'House-hold Sacrament' which involves setting up of a new family unit. Two individuals, who are considered to be compatible, form a lifelong partnership at this ceremony in which the responsibilities and duties of a householder are explained.

#### **1. Jayamaala (Exchange of Garlands)**

Firstly, the Bride's parents welcome the Bridegroom and his family into their home or marriage hall. Members from both families are formally introduced, marking the start of relationship between two families. The Bride and the Bridegroom then exchange garlands and declare: "Let all the learned people present here know, we are accepting each other willingly, voluntarily and happily. Our hearts and lives are together and united like water from different sources when mixed together take one identity."

#### **2. Madhu-Parka (Offering) and Aachman (Purification)**

The Bridegroom is brought to a specially decorated altar called 'mandap' and offered a seat and a welcoming drink enriched with honey. The Groom sips water for purification of Heart and Body.

#### **3. Gau Daan (Donating a cow)**

'Gau' means cow and 'Daan' means offering (Cow symbolizes health, wealth and prosperity). Nowadays, the symbolic exchange of clothes or ornaments takes place. (Not mandatory).

#### **4. Kanya Pratigrahan (Giving a Daughter's Hand in Marriage)**

The Bride's parents request the Groom to accept their daughter as an equal partner in all walks of life. The Groom promises to accept his Bride as an equal life partner.

#### **5. Vivaha-homa (The chief Homa of marriage ceremony)**

A sacred fire is lit and the Purohit (Priest) recites the sacred mantras from Vedas. Oblations are offered to the fire whilst saying the prayers. An act of selflessness is signified each time an offering is made to the fire with the words 'Idam na mama'. This teaches the virtue of self-sacrifice required to run a family.

#### **6. Paanigrahan (Hand grasping)**

The bridegroom holds bride's right hand and recites the marriage vows: "I hold your hand in the spirit of Dharma (virtuous life) etc., and I expect you to act accordingly".

#### **7. Shilarohan and Laaja Homa (Stepping upon a stone and pledges of the bride)**

The Bride places her right foot on a stone which symbolizes her willingness and strength to overcome difficulties in pursuit of her duties. Laaja

Homa is the coming together of the Bride and Groom akin to the process of Skin and Seed joining together to form a grain.

#### **8. Mangal Phera-Pradakshina Mantra (Declaration of the Bridegroom)**

The Bride's brother prays to the God to dispel darkness and ignorance from her life while leading her into light and knowledge. The Bride and Groom walk around the fire four times signifying four basic goals of human life:

**Dharma:** Moral sense to lead a good life:

**Artha:** Financial prosperity

**Kama:** Blessing for strong virtuous children

**Moksha:** Detachment from worldly things and attainment of the state of completeness.

Together the four goals symbolize the couple's commitment to each other, the family and the society.

#### **9. Sapta-Pati (The Seven Steps with Vows) [Symbolically beginning the journey of togetherness in life]**

This is the main and the legal part of the ceremony. The couple walk seven steps together, symbolically beginning the journey of togetherness in life. These are the seven vows which are exchanged. The first for food, the second for strength, the third for prosperity, the fourth for happiness, the fifth for progeny, the sixth to perform all spiritual commitment and duties together faithfully and the seventh for friendship.

#### **10. Exchange of Vows**

The Priest reads the solemn union declaration. The Bride and Bridegroom exchange the Holy marriage vows that they will forever pursue a path of righteousness and they will forever stand by each other.

#### **11. Seeing the Sun**

The couple look at the Sun in order to be blessed with creative life.

#### **12. Seeing the Dhruva and Arundhati Stars**

The couple looks in the direction of the Dhruva (Polar star) and resolve to remain unshaken and steadfast like the Polar star. They also look in the direction of the Sapta Rishi Constellation i.e. Arundhati star and take vow that they won't obstruct their good and righteous ventures.

#### **13. Mangalsutra - Tying of the necklace (Optional - not in the ancient time)**

The groom puts the Mangalsutra (a sacred necklace) around the neck of the bride.

#### **14. Sindoor Daan (Groom should put his right hand ring finger on the forehead of the bride and chant mantra)**

The husband marks the parting in his wife's hair with the red kumkum powder for the first time. This is called 'Sindoor'.

#### **15. Aashirwaad (Blessings)**

The couple is blessed by the parents, elders and the priest for a long and prosperous married life.

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