

Marriage & Family

Hindu marriage Part of a series on
 Hinduism History · Deities Denominations · Mythology Beliefs & practices Reincarnation · Moksha Karma · Puja
 · Maya Samsara · Dharma Vedanta · Yoga · Ayurveda Yuga · Vegetarianism Bhakti Scriptures Upanishads ·
 Vedas Brahmana · Bhagavad Gita Ramayana · Mahabharata Purana · Aranyaka Shikshapatri · Vachanamrut
 Related topics Dharmic Religions · Hinduism by country Leaders · Devasthanana Caste system · Mantra Glossary ·
 Hindu festivals Vighraha · Criticism

This box: view • talk • edit

The Hindu religion has a deep significance and meaning for the institution of marriage. It is viewed as a sacrament and not a contract. Contents 1 Reception of the bridegroom 2 The giving away of the bride 3 The Nuptial Homa 4 Acceptance of Hand 5 Solemn vows 6 Ascending the slab / Stepping on the stone 7 The fried-rice offerings 8 Circumambulation around the sacred fire 9 Seven Steps 10 Sprinkling of water 11 Meditating on the sun 12 Touching the Heart 13 Meditating upon the Pole Star and the Arundhati Star 14 Partaking of food 15 Benediction 16 External links //

Reception of the bridegroom Vara Satkaarah

As soon as the bridegroom's party arrives, they are warmly welcomed by the bride's parents, relatives and friends. At the entrance of the hall, the threshold ceremony is performed. The officiating priest chants a few mantras of blessings and welcome. The threshold ceremony requires the bride's mother to receive and bless the groom with rice, red tumeric powde (kumkum) etc., by applying tilak (red dot and uncooked rice) on the groom's forehead. She sprinkles rice and red tumeric powder on the groom, and then blesses him with the palms of both hands - stretching them close to the groom's head. Now the priest and the bride's parents lead the bridegroom and his parents to the stage where they are given appropriate seats. All the other guests take their seats in the hall to witness the marriage ceremony.

To the accompaniment of ceremonial mantras by the officiating priest the bride's parents welcome the groom by invoking God's blessings and then offering the bridegroom a nutritious drink called Madhuparka. This is called the Madhuparka Ceremony, the origin of which dates back thousands of years when Rishis and sages of India used it as a way of welcoming guests.

The Bridegroom shall stand facing the east. The Bride shall stand facing the north. The bride (offering the seat or Asana, shall address the bridegroom as follows:

The bride: AUM, The noble one may accept and take the seat.
 The bridegroom: AUM, I am taking my seat. (P *M0>\$? M09(>. @)

The bride shall take her seat to the right of the bridegroom.

The bridegroom performs the Achamana and Angasparsha with water.

(Note: All Hindu religious ceremonies begin with two observances, namely Achaman or sipping a small quantity of water and angasparsha or touching one's limbs with one's right hand middle two fingers with a little water. Achaman is purificatory and conducive to peaceful attitude of mind. Angasparsha is intended to pray for physical strength and alertness. Achaman and Angasparsha are performed with the aid of Mantras.) Madhuparka Ceremony

Holding with his left hand a cup of Madhuparka (composed of honey, curd and ghee or clarified butter), after removing the cover and looking at the Madhuparka,

The bridegroom says:

May the breeze be sweet as honey; may the streams flow full of honey and may the herbs and plants be laden with honey for us!

May the nights be honey-sweet for us; may the mornings be honey-sweet for us and may the heavens be honey-sweet for us!

May the plants be honey-sweet for us; may the sun be all honey for us and may the cows yield us honey-sweet milk!

(Note: ‘honey-sweet’ = pleasant, advantageous, conducive to happiness.)

The bridegroom shall pour out the Madhuparka into three cups and then partake a little of it from each of the cups

reciting the following Mantra:

The bridegroom: The honey is the sweetest and the best. May I have food as sweet and health-giving as this honey and may I be able to relish it! Gift of a cow

The bride's father symbolically offers to the bridegroom a cow as a present. In olden times sons-in-law received real cows as gifts, since that was the most precious asset with which a newly wedded couple could start life. This part of the tradition has been preserved by a symbolical presentation. At the conclusion of the first part of the wedding ceremony, it is customary to present gifts to the bride. The bridegroom presents the bride with gifts of clothing and jewellery thereby acknowledging his life-long duty to provide her with the necessities of life.

The father of the bride, offering to the bridegroom the present of a cow, a finger-ring or some other suitable article says:

The father of the bride: AUM, (Please) accept these presents. The bridegroom: AUM, I accept (these presents).

The giving away of the bride Kanya Daan

Kanya means daughter or girl. Daan means giving away. This is an important part of the marriage ceremony in which the bride's parents give her away to the groom by entrusting her to the bridegroom. The officiating priest chants appropriate verses in Sanskrit. The people in the audience (the public) is now notified that the parents have willingly expressed their wish and consent by requesting the groom to accept their daughter as his bride. As soon as the groom indicates his acceptance the bride's parents place their daughter's right hand into the bridegroom's right hand. The parents now bestow their blessings on both the bride and the groom and pray to the Lord to shower His choicest blessings on them.

The father of the bride, placing her right hand on the right hand of the bridegroom, says:

The father of the bride: Be pleased to accept hand of my daughter (name of the bride) of the Gotra (here the surname of the family).

The bridegroom: AUM, I do accept.

The bridegroom makes an Offering of the garment and the scarf to the bride to wear. The bridegroom wears the garments and the scarf offered by the parents of the bride. Then facing each other The bride and the bridegroom speak as follows:

Ye learned people assembled at this sacred ceremony know it for certain that we two hereby accept each other as companions for life and agree to live together most cordially as husband and wife. May the hearts of us both be blended and beat in unison. May we love each other like the very breath of our lives. As the all-pervading God sustains the universe, so may we sustain each other. As a preceptor loves his disciple, so may we love each other steadfastly and faithfully. - RigVeda X.85.47

Addressing the bride, the bridegroom says:

- Distant though we were, one from the other, we stand now united. May we be of one mind and spirit!
- Through the grace of God, may the eyes radiate benevolence. Be thou my shield. May thou have a cheerful heart and a smiling face. May thou be a true devotee of God and mother of heroes. May thou have at heart the welfare of all living beings!

- Rig Veda X.85.44

The bride: I pray that henceforth I may follow thy path. May my body be free from disease and defect and may I ever enjoy the bliss of your companionship!

The Nuptial Homa Vivah-homa or the sacred fire ceremony

All solemn rites and ceremonies commence with the performance of Homa (sacred fire ceremony) among the followers of Vedic religion. The idea is to begin all auspicious undertakings in an atmosphere of purity and spirituality. This atmosphere is created by the burning of fragrant herbs and ghee and by the recitation of suitable Mantras.

The Achaman and Angasparsha are performed for the second time. The bride also participates.

The three Achaman mantras involve sipping of a little water three times.

The seven Angasparsha mantras involve touching water with the right hand middle two fingers apply the water to various limbs first to the right side and then the left side as follows:

- Mouth
- Nostrils
- Eyes
- Ears
- Arms
- Thighs
- Sprinkling water all over the body.

Acceptance of Hand Pani-Grahanam

The bridegroom rising from his seat and facing the bride, shall raise her right hand with his left hand and then clasping it says:

The bridegroom: I clasp thy hand and enter into the holy state of matrimony so that we may be blessed with prosperity and noble progeny. Mayst thou live with me happily throughout life! Through the grace of the all-mighty Lord, who is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and in the presence of this august assemblage, thou art being given away in marriage so that we may together rightly perform our duties as householders.

With all my strength and resources, I have clasped thy hand; and thus united, we shall together follow the path of virtue. Thou art my lawfully wedded wife and I am thy lawfully wedded husband. God, the protector and sustainer of all, has given thee to me. From today, it devolves upon me to protect and maintain thee. Blessed with children, mayst thou live happily with me as thy husband for the full span of human life (a hundred years).

Following the divine law and the words of wisdom uttered by the sages, may we make a good couple and may God vouchsafe unto us a shining life of virtue and happiness.

As God nourishes and sustains all creatures through His great forces like the sun, the moon, the earth, the air etc., so may He bless my wife with healthy and virtuous progeny and may you all assembled here bless her!

- I accept thee as my partner for life.
- I will not keep away even mentally anything from thee.
- I will share with thee all I enjoy.
- We will persevere in the path of virtue, surmounting all obstacles.

Solemn vows Pratigna-Karanam

The bridegroom taking the palm of the bride into his hand helps her to rise and then they both shall walk round the altar, the bride leading. Then facing the east take the solemn vows:

The bridegroom: O virtuous one! I have accepted thee thoughtfully and so hast thou accepted me. Out of the fullness of love have I accepted thee and so hast thou accepted me. I am the Sama and thou art the Rik. I am the Dyau (heaven) and thou art the earth. We marry each other joyously. May we be blessed with bright, heroic and long-lived children! The bride and the bridegroom: Let us be devoted to each other. Let us share each other's joys and sorrows, wish each other well and look upon each other with love and live for at least a hundred years. May we live happily for at least a hundred years. May we live, listening to sweet words for at least a hundred years.

Ascending the slab / Stepping on the stone

Shilarohanam (Shila: stone ; Arohan: stepping upon)

In this ceremony the mother of the bride assists her to step onto a stone and counsels her to prepare herself for a new life. The stone signifies strength and trust. A married couple is likely to encounter ups and downs, joys and sorrows, prosperity and adversity, sickness and health. In spite of the difficulties facing them, they are enjoined to remain steadfast and true to each other.

The bride places her right foot on the slab (stone), assisted by her mother or her brother. The priest recites a Mantra from the Atharva Veda (AV II.13.4)

The fried-rice offerings Laja-Homah

[Note: 'Laja' means puffed rice or barley like popcorn.]

The bride shall place the palms of her hands over those of the bridegroom and make three offerings (ahutis) of fried rice soaked in ghee (clarified butter).

The bride:

- I adore God, the unifier of hearts. Now that I am leaving my parents' home for my husband's, I pray that He may keep us perpetually united!
- With these offerings I pray for Long life for my husband and for the prosperity of all our relations!
- (Addressing her husband) In making these offerings for your prosperity I once again pray that God may bless this union of our hearts!

Circumambulation around the sacred fire Parikrama or Pradakshina or Mangal fera

[Note: This is an auspicious and important part of the marriage ceremony. It consists in walking around the sacred fire (clockwise) four times. This aspect of the ceremony and the one that follows, namely Saptapadi (seven steps)- constitute the most important part, in as much as it legalises the marriage according to Hindu custom and tradition. These two aspects of the marriage ceremony establish an indissoluble matrimonial bond between the couple.

In the first three rounds the bridegroom leads the bride as they circle together around the sacred fire. In the fourth (last) round, the bride leads the bridegroom around the sacred fire.

In each round around the sacred fire, an appropriate mantra is recited which expresses noble sentiments in relation to their future matrimonial life. Each round culminates in both the bride and the bridegroom placing offerings or ahutis of fried rice in the sacred fire. The Hindu religion emphasises enjoyment of life as well as the discharging of family, social and national responsibilities.

During the first three rounds, God's blessings and help are sought; loyalty to each other is emphasised and; a promise to keep in mind the well-being and care of the future children is made.

In the fourth (last) round (led by the bride) the bride promises that she will lead her life according to the tenets of the Hindu religion, namely Satya and Dharma or Truth and devotion to duty, and that she will always ensure that the bridegroom can rely on her to carry out her family, religious and household duties.

The bridegroom then places his hand on the bride's head and states that henceforth she will be his wife and he will shield her against any danger or harm.

At the end of the four rounds they shall exchange seats, the bride taking her seat to the left of the bridegroom.]

Seven Steps Saptapadi

Besides a religious meaning behind the seven steps, there is also a mathematical rationale on performing the 7 rounds circling the fire. A circle is 360 degrees, all the numbers between 1 and 9 divides 360 except the number 7. It becomes an irrational number hence symbolizing the marriage as indivisible. Does this reinforce that Indians came up with the concept of Zero?

The ends of their garments (the bridegroom's scarf and upper garment of the bride) are tied together by the priest (signifying marriage knot). Then both shall stand facing the north. The bridegroom shall place his right hand upon the right shoulder of the bride.

They shall take the first step in the north easterly direction.

In taking these seven steps, the right foot shall always lead and the left foot be brought forward in line with it. Uncooked grains of rice (about a small handful) are placed in a line at equal distance at seven places. The bride and the groom take seven steps together, stepping upon first mound of rice with the right foot as the priest recites a mantra. Then stepping upon the second mound of rice with the right foot as the priest recites a mantra. (All seven steps are done the same way).

- May the first step lead to food that is both nourishing and pure.
- May the second step lead to strength (at the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual levels).
- May the third step lead to prosperity.
- May the fourth step lead to all round happiness.
- May the fifth step lead to progeny (noble and virtuous children).
- May the sixth step lead to long life.
- May the seventh step lead to friendship (through harmony, understanding).

The bridegroom says: Having completed the seven steps, be thou my life long companion. Mayst thou be my associate and helper in successful performance of the duties that now devolve upon me as a householder. May we be blessed with many children who may live the full duration of human life!

After the completion of the seven steps ceremony, the couple (with knots tied to each other) take their seats. The wife now takes her rightful place on the left side of her husband as the marriage is now religiously solemnized in its entirety.

Now the couple are husband and wife. The husband garlands the wife and she in turn garlands her husband.

Sprinkling of water Abhishek

The priest (or a brother of the newly wedded wife) shall sprinkle water on the foreheads of the bride and the groom. The priest recites mantras from the Rig Veda (RV X.9.1/2/3) during the sprinkling of water.

Meditating on the sun Soorya Darshanam dhyaanam va

(Looking at or mentally visualising the sun, to give them power to lead a creative, useful and meaningful life).

The bride and the bridegroom together pray: O God, who art the illuminator of the sun, may we, through thy grace live for a hundred years, hear for a hundred years, and speak for a hundred years. And may we never be dependent upon anybody. May we likewise live even beyond a hundred years! -Rig Veda, VII. 66. 16)

Touching the Heart Hriday sparsh

Touching the heart of the bride The Bridegroom says: May I have hearty co-operation from these in the performance of my duties. May thou be of one mind with me. May thou be consentient to my speech. May the Lord of creation unite thee to me!

The Bride: May I have hearty co-operation from these in the performance of my duties. May thou be of one mind with me. May thou be consentient to my speech. May the Lord of creation unite thee to me!

Meditating upon the Pole Star and the Arundhati Star Dhruva dhyaanam darshanam va

[Note: The Pole Star is stationary and fixed in its position, likewise the couple is expected to be steadfast and firm in fulfilling their vows and responsibilities.]

The bride: Just as the star Arundhati is attached to the star Vasishtha, so may I be ever firmly attached to my husband! Placing his hand upon the bride's forehead

The bridegroom: As the heavens are permanently stable, as the earth is permanently stable, as these mountains are permanently stable, and as the entire universe is permanent stable, so may my wife be permanently settled in our family! -Rig Veda X.173.4

(Addressing the bride): Thou are the Pole star; I see in thee stability and firmness. Mayst thou ever be steadfast in thy affection for me. The great God has united thee with me. Mayst thou live with me, blessed with children, for a hundred years!

Partaking of food Anna praashanam

In the last symbolic rite the couple make offerings of food with chantings of Vedic Havan Mantras (oblations of food in the Sacred fire). Having done that, the couple feed a morsel of food to each other from the residue of the offerings. This being the symbolic expression of mutual love and affection.

Benediction Aashirvadah

Placing his hand upon the forehead of the bride

The bridegroom: Ye men and women present here, behold this virtuous bride possessed of high attainments, and before ye disperse, give her your blessings! All the people present shall pronounce the following blessings upon the couple.

- O Lord, may this couple be prosperous!
- O Lord, may this couple live in perpetual happiness!
- O Lord, may this couple be ever infused with love for each other. May this couple be blessed with children and grandchildren and live in the best of homes for the full period of their lives!
- May you two live here together. May you never be parted. May you enjoy the full span of human life in the delightful company of your happy sons and grandsons!

Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih. [Note: The Hindu wedding ceremony may vary in minor details from region to region and different priests may adopt some variations.]

[Sacraments constitute an important part of Hindu religion. Sacraments in Hinduism are designed to build a solid foundation for righteous living. They are known as 'Sanskaras'. Their purpose is to create and develop a religious and spiritual outlook in life. The Hindu religion has instituted sixteen different Sanskaras (sacraments) meant for

different phases of life from conception to marriage to old age and death. The word sanskara in Sanskrit means 'to cause indelible impressions on the mind and to develop every aspect of one's personality.' Therefore it is necessary to understand and appreciate their significance and to derive benefit from their performance. Of the sixteen sanskaras in Hinduism, the sacrament of marriage or Vivah Sanskara is the most important. Marriage influences the personality of man and woman as life partners, enabling them to take their rightful place in society.]

External links

- A Manual of Hindu Marriage pdf download. Shriram Sharma Acharya (1997)
- Website with more information on Saat phera and Indian Hindu marriage
- Marriage is a Sacred Bond and Pledge
- Hindu Marriage - Resplendence and depth of thought

This article is licensed under the GNU Free Documentation License. It uses material from the Wikipedia article "Hindu teaching and customs of marriage".