

# VAIDIK VIVAH VIDHI

(Vaidik Wedding Ceremony)

## 1. ARRIVAL OF THE GROOM'S PARTY

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Lota (glass) of water	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Senior member of two parties embrace. While reciting Mantra, priest sprinkles water over members of both parties – uses fingers or mango leaf.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> Prayer for peace, health, bliss and auspicious union of two parties.
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MANTRA:</b> Om aapo hishthaa mayo-bhuvastaa na-oorje dadhaatana. Mahe ranaay chakshase. Yo vah shivatamo rasatasya bhaajaya-te-hanah. Ushatee-riva-maatarah. Tasmaan aram gamaam vo yasya kshayaay jinvatha, Aapo janayatha cha na. Om aapah shivaah shivatamaah shaantaah shaant-tamaa-staaste krinvantu bsheshajam.</p>
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## 2. ARTI BY BRIDE'S PARTY

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Thali, camphor in a Diya, Chandan or Kum Kum, Lota of water.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> As done traditionally.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> Welcoming of Groom (no Mantras). Appropriate folk – songs are sung during the welcome.
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## 3. PROCESSION TO STAGE

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Shehnayi played live or pre-recorded cassette.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Priest followed by Bride, Groom, and then the parents. Slow pace.
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#### 4. OPEN ADDRESS

**PROCEDURE:**

To be delivered by the chosen officiant, usually the priest.

**ADDRESS:**

We have gathered here to witness and bless the marriage of \_\_\_\_\_ (Groom's name) and \_\_\_\_\_ (Bride's name). A wedding is a very important occasion in one's life. Of all the prescribed *Sanskaras* (ceremonies) the wedding is regarded as the most important. The Vedic rituals that comprise the Hindu wedding ceremony are each very significant. If these are clearly understood then the couple need look no further for guidance to a happy married life.

I shall briefly explain the significance of each rite. So please join me as I take the bridal couple through the pre-nuptials and marriage ceremony.

It must be remembered that according to tradition the bride and her family received the Groom who with his entourage arrived as guests. A large part of these pre-nuptials, which have become sanctioned as a part of the wedding ceremony, gives expression to the hospitality extended by the Bride and her family.

#### 5. RECEIVING THE GROOM

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Nil	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Priest recites Mantra.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> The Bride asks the Groom and his family to stay and allow her to receive them with due respect.
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**MANTRA:**

Om sadhu bhawaan aastaam archa-yishyaamah bhavantam.

<b>PROCEDURE:</b> To which the Groom replies (repeats after priest)	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> Expression of hospitality.
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**MANTRA:**

Om archaya (Please do)

## 6. OFFERING OF SEAT

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Seat (which is already in place).	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> The Bride places her hand on the seat in the manner of offering the Groom a seat while the priest chants the Mantra.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om vishtaro vishtaro vishtarah prati-grihyataam
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<b>PROCEDURE:</b> To which the Groom, placing his hand on the seat in the manner of receiving it, replies (repeats after priest)
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om prati-grihnaami (I accept)
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<b>PROCEDURE:</b> The Groom sits while the Mantra is recited.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> The Bridegroom vows to be as valiant and resplendent as the sun so that he may be worthy of her.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om varshmo-asmi samaanaa-naam-udyataam-iva suryah. Imam tamabhi-tishthaami yo-maa kashchaabhi-daasati.
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## 7. SYMBOLIC WASHING OF FEET

<b>REQUIREMENT:</b> Lota of water.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> The Bride offers him water to wash his feet. She holds the receptacle while Mantra is chanted.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Bride – Om paadyam paadyam paadyam prati-grihyataam (kindly wash your feet with water)
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<b>PROCEDURE:</b> With the Mantra, the Groom receives the water and repeats after priest.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om prati-grihnaami (I accept)
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<b>PROCEDURE:</b> With the Mantra, he sprinkles water on his feet.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> The Mantra pronounces the propensity of water as a divine cleanser.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om viraajo doho-asi viraajo doha-masheeya mayi paadyaayai virojo dohah.
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## 8. SYMBOLIC WASHING OF FACE

<b>REQUIREMENT:</b> Lota of water.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Bride offers the water. She holds receptacle while Mantra is recited.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om argho-argho-arghah pratigrihyataam.
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<b>PROCEDURE:</b> The Groom receives the water and repeats after priest.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om prati-grihnaami (I accept).
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<b>PROCEDURE:</b> With the Mantra, he sprinkles water on his face.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> The Mantra pronounces the greatness of water as the primary source of all creation.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om aapastha yushmaabhii sarvaan kaamaan-avaap-navaani. Om samudram vah prahi-nomi swam yonim-abhi gachchhata. Arishta asmaakam veeraa maa paraasechi matpayah.
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## 9. SIPPING OF WATER

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Lota of water.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Bride offers the water and she holds receptacle while Mantra is chanted.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om aachmaneeyam, aachmaneeyam, aachmaneeyam prati griyah taam.
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**PROCEDURE:**

The Groom receives the water and repeats after priest.

**MANTRA:**

Om prati-grihnaami.

**PROCEDURE:**

With the Mantra, he sips the water three times.

**SIGNIFICANCE:**

The Mantra asks that the Bridal couple be blessed with health, prosperity and a loving nature.

**MANTRA:**

Om aa-maagan yashasaa san-srija varchasaa. Tam-maa kuru priyam prajaanaam-adhipatim pashoonaam-arishtim tanunaam.

**10. MADHUPARKA****REQUIREMENTS:**

Madhuparka-bowl with mixture of curd, honey and ghee placed on a tray (Thali).

**PROCEDURE:**

The Bride offers the Madhuparka to the Groom. He holds receptacle while Mantra is being chanted.

**SIGNIFICANCE:**

The busy bee gathers nectar from innumerable flowers to make its honey. The sweetness of the honey is the fruit of its labour of love. The cow grazes and chews its cud all day long so as to produce the milk from which we get the curd. Both the honey and the curd are symbolic of the sweet nourishment which the earth provides. For those who labour, nature offers abundant sweet rewards.

**MANTRA:**

Om madhuparko madhuparko madhuparkah pratigrihyataam (please accept this Madhupark).

**PROCEDURE:**

He receives it while repeating after the priest

**MANTRA:**

Om prati-grihnaami.

**PROCEDURE:**

The Groom looks at the Madhuparka attentively.

**MANTRA:**

Om mitrasya twaa chakshushaa prateekshe.

Om devasya twaa savituh prasave-shvinor-baahubhyaam pooshno hastaabhyaam pratigrihnaami.

Om bhur bhuvah swah Madhu vaataa ritaayate madhu ksharanti sindhawah Madhweernah santvosha-dheeh.

Om bhur bhuva swah. Madhu nakta-mutosha so madhumat-paarthivam rajah. Madhu dyou-rastu nah pi-taa.

Om bhur bhuva swah. Madhu-maanno vanaspatir-madhumaan astu suryah Maadhveer-gaavo bhavantu nah.

**PROCEDURE:**

With the next Mantra the Groom mixes the honey, curd and ghee.

**MANTRA:**

Om namah shyaavaa-syaaya-annashane yatta aavidham tattey nish-krintaami.

**PROCEDURE:**

With each Mantra the Groom offers a drop of the Madhuparka in each of the different directions of the Thali – as indicated:

**MANTRA:**

Om vasvastwaa gayatrena chhandasaa bhakshayantu – towards east

Om rudraastwaa traishtu-bhena chhandasaa bhakshayantu – towards south

Om aadityaastwaa jaagtena chhandasaa bhakshayantu – towards west

Om vishwe-twaa aanushta-bhena chhandasaa bhakshayantu – towards north

Om bhute-bhystwaa parigrihnaami – upwards three times

**PROCEDURE:**

With the Mantra the Groom tastes the Madhuparka three times.

**MANTRA:**

Om yan madhuno madhavyam paramam rupam annaadyam. Tenaaham madhuno madhavyena paramena rupena annaadyena paramo madhavayo-annaado-aasaani.

## 11. ACHAMANA MANTRA

*(Sipping of water)*

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Lota of water with spoon	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Groom takes water in right palm. Sips the drops with the recital of Swaha.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> Purification. May our inner beings be purified. Through truth alone let us acquire our household prosperity.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> 1.1 Om amrtopastaranamasi swaha 1.2 Om amrtapidhanamasi swaha 1.3 Om satyam yasah srirmayi srih srayatam swaha
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## 12. ANGA SPARSA MANTRA

*(Touching different parts of the body)*

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Lota of water with a spoon.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Bride and Groom take a few drops of water in the left palm, wet tips of two middle fingers of right hand. After the recital of each Mantra touch the different parts of the body as indicated.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> We ask God to bless our body so that our limbs and organs remain healthy as long as we live. Water is used to symbolise purification. May we be able to discern right from wrong, discard the wrong and keep only the good.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om vangma asye'stu – touch lips Om nasorme prano'stu – touch nostrils Om aksnorme caksurastu – touch eyes Om karnayorme strotramastu – touch ears Om bahvorme balamastu – touch arms Om urvorma ojo'stu – touch thighs Om aristani me'ngani tanustanva me saha santu – sprinkle water over the body
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## 13. GAUDAAN

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Gift.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> With the Mantra, Bride hands over gift to Groom.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om gou-gou-gou prati-grihyataam
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<b>PROCEDURE:</b> The Groom receives it saying: (repeats after priest)	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> Traditionally, because of its practical and enormous domestic value, a cow was given to the bridal couple. Nowadays any suitable gift is given.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om prati-grihnaami (I accept)
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#### 14. KANYA GRAHANAM

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Bride's parents need to be present.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Parents place Bride's palm in the Groom's right palm.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om (Bride's Family Name) gotra-utpannaam immam (Bride's Name) naamneem alankritaam kanyaam prati-grinhaatu bhavaan.
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<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Groom receives Bride's palm saying: (repeats after priest)	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> Acceptance of each other and declaration that the couple will together take vows of marriage.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om prati-grihnaami
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#### 15. VASTRADANAM

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Gift of clothes.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Groom presents a gift to the Bride. With the Mantra the Bride receives the gift.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> To reciprocate the gesture of the Bride, the Groom also presents the Bride with a gift. Groom invites the Bride to share her life with him in prosperity and in so doing live in happiness until ripe old age.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om jaraam-gachchha paridhatsv-vaaso bhava-krishteenam-abhishasti-paawaa. Shatam-cha jeeva sharadah suvarchaa rayim-cha putraan-anu-sam-vyayasvaa-yushmateedam paridhatsva-vaasah. Om yaa akrintannavyan yaa atanvata yaashcha devi-tanu-nabhito tatantha. Taastwaa devir-jarase sam-vyavas-aayushmati-dam paridhatsva vaasah.
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<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Bride and Groom in prayer posture.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> Well being and longevity of the Groom.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om paridhaasyai yasho-dhaasyai deerghaayu-twaaya jaradashtirasmī. Shatam cha jeevaami sharadah purochi raayas-posham-abhisam-vyayishye. Om yashasaa maa dyaavaa-prithivee yashasendra-brihaspatee. Yasho bhagashcha maa vindadyasho maa prati-padya-taam.
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## 16. BENEDICTORY PRAYER

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Master of Ceremonies welcomes the guests.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Priest asks audience to join in prayer.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> Audience becomes witnesses to the ceremony. They bless and sanction the marriage.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om bur bhuvah swah. Tatsavitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi. Dhiyo yo nah pracodayat.
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## 17. GARLANDING

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Garlands.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> The Bride and Groom face each other.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> With the Mantra Bride garlands Groom.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om saman-jantu vishve devaah samaapo hridayaani nou. Sam maatarishwaa sam-dhaataasamu-dreshtree dadhaatu nou.
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<b>PROCEDURE:</b> With the Mantra Groom garlands Bride.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om yadaishi manasaa dooram disho-anupava-maano vaa. Hiranya-parno vaikarnah sa-twaa man-manasaam karotu, asou.
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## 18. DECLARATION

Bride and Groom repeat after priest:  
We accept / each other / of our own volition / Our hearts / are one.  
Like the elements, / the waters / and the air / the sun / and the wind / may we / accepting each other / be  
ever united / and work in harmony / common in purpose / and with one mind.

### PROCEDURE:

Bride and Groom walk around the Havan Kund (Groom clasping Bride's right hand).

### MANTRA:

Om bhur-bhuvah swah. Aghora-chakshur-patighn-yedhi shivaa pashubhyah sumanaah-suvarchaah.  
Virah-sude-vrikaamaa syonaa shanno bhav dwipade sham chatushpade.  
Om bhur bhuvah swah. Saa-nah pooshaa shiva-tamaa-mairaya saa-na uroo ushatee vihara. Yasyaam-  
ushantah prah-raam shepham yasyaam-ukaamaa bahavo nivishtyai.

### PROCEDURE:

They take their seats – the Bride on the right-hand side of the Groom.

### SIGNIFICANCE:

Together we undertake to perform the rites of our marriage ceremony.

### MANTRA:

Bride – Om pra-mey patiyaanah panthaah kalpataam shivaa arishta patilokam gameyam.

## HAVAN

## 19. ACHAMANA MANTRA

*(Sipping of water)*

### REQUIREMENTS:

Lota of water.

### PROCEDURE:

Bride and Groom take water in right palms. At the end of each Mantra sip the water.

### SIGNIFICANCE:

Purification. May our inner beings be purified. Let that which comes from below (the earth) and from above (heavens) be purifying. Through truth alone let us acquire our household prosperity.

### MANTRA:

Om amrtopastaranamasi swaha  
Om amrtapidhanamasi swaha  
Om satyam yasah sirmayi srih srayatam swaha

## 20. ANGA SPARSHA MANTRA

*(Touching different parts of the body)*

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Lota of water.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Bride and Groom take a few drops of water in the left palm, wet tips of two middle fingers of right hand. At the end of each Mantra touch the different parts of the body as indicated:	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> We ask God to bless our body so that our limbs and organs may function effectively as long as we live. Water is used to symbolise purification. May we be able to discern right from wrong, discard the wrong and keep only the good.
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### MANTRA:

Om vangma asye'stu – touch lips  
Om nasorme prano'stu – touch nostrils  
Om aksnorme caksurastu – touch eyes  
Om karnayorme srotramastu – touch ears  
Om bahvorme balamastu – touch arms  
Om uvorma ojo'stu – touch thighs  
Om aristani me'ngani tanustanva me saha santu – sprinkle water over the body

## 21. AGNYADHANA MANTRA

*(Lighting of Fire)*

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Spoon with camphor on it. Havan Kund with wood arranged.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> With Mantra set the camphor alight. Place the camphor in the Havan Kund. Adjust the pieces of wood in the Havan Kund if necessary.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> May all three worlds be illumined. Through this Yajna may the expansive heaven and the great earth sustain us. Let us awake, arise, and become enlightened. Then only will we fulfil our honorable desires. This sit the performers and light the flame of the Yajna.
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### MANTRA:

Set camphor alight – Om bhurbhuvah swah  
Place camphor in Havan Kund – Om bhurbhuvah swardyaauriva bhumma prthiviva varimna.  
Tasyaste prthivi devayajani prsthe'gnim annadamannadyaya dadhe.  
Adjust pieces of wood if necessary – Om udbudhyaswagne prati jagrhi tvamistapurte sansrje thamayanca. Asmint sadhaste adhyuttarasmin viswe deva yajamanasca sidata.

## 22. SAMIDADHANA MANTRA

*(Placing of the fire-wood)*

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Three pieces of wood, the ends of each dipped in ghee.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> With the following three Mantras, place each piece of wood in the fire:	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> May we be blessed with good children, animals, knowledge, lustre, and nourishment. May the ghee and wood kindle this Yajna. May they light the Agni in us. The well dried wood and ghee burn bright, spreading its light. Like the fire is made bright with the ghee and wood so may our lives be nourished with happiness.
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### MANTRA:

Om ayanta idhma atma jatavedastenedhyaswa vardhaswa ceddhavarddhaya casman prajaya pasuhbhir  
brahma varcasenannadyena samedhaya swaha. Idamagnaye jatavedase idanna mama.

Om samidhagnim duvasyata ghrtair bodhayata tithim. Asmin havya juhutana.

Om susamidhaya socise ghrtam tivram juhutana. Agnaye jatavedase swaha. Idamagnaye jatavedase  
idanna mama.

Om tantwa samidbhirangiro ghrtena varddhayamasi. Brhacchoca-yavisthya swaha. Idamagnaye'ngirase  
idanna mama.

## 23. GHRITAHUTI MANTRA

*(Offering of ghee)*

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Bowl with ghee and spoon.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Offer ghee into the fire after Swaha.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> As this Agni burns forth bright and splendid so may our lives be enlightened.
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### MANTRA:

Om ayanta idhma atma jatavedastenedhyaswa vardhaswa ceddhavarddhaya casman prajaya pasubhir  
brahma varcasenannadyena samedhaya swaha. Idamagnaye jatavedase idanna mama.

## 24. JALASINCANA MANTRA

*(Sprinkling of water around the fire)*

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Receptacle with water.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> With these Mantras, sprinkle a little water in each direction of the Kund as indicated:	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> May all co-operate in the fulfilment of the Yajna, may it be blessed by all, performed with unity of purpose. May the performers of Yajna enjoy prosperity. May we be purified. May we be granted sweet speech.
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**MANTRA:**

Om adite'numanyaswa – east  
Om anumate'numanyaswa – west  
Om saraswatyanumanyaswa – north  
Om deva savitah prasuva yajnam prasuva yajnapatim bhagaya. Divyo gandharvah ketapuh ketannah punatu vacaspatir vacannah swadatu – clockwise all directions.

**25. PRADHANA HOMA**

*Mantras of Marriage Ceremony*

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Ghee, Samagri.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Offerings of ghee and Samagri after the word Swaha.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> May this couple, as husband and wife, work together as friends in attaining marriage bliss.
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**MANTRA:**

Om bhur bhuvah swah. Twam-aryamaa bhavasi yat-kaneenaam naama swadhaavan guhyam vibharshi-Anjanti mitram sudhitam-na gobhiryad-dampati samanasa krinoshi swaahaa. Idmagnaye – Idam na mum.

**26. RASTRABHRIT**

*(First Five Mantras)*

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Ghee, Samagri.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Offerings of ghee and Samagri after Swaha.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> May the seasons, the sun, moon and all the elements be favourable to us in achieving our goals of married life.
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**MANTRA:**

Om ritaa-shaad rita-dhaamaagnir-gandharvah. Sa-na idam brahma kshatram paatu tasmai swaahaa vaat. Idam-ritaa-shaaherita-dhaame agnaye dandharvaay – Idam na mum.  
Om ritaa-shaad rita-dhaamaagnir-gandharva-tasyou-shodhayo-apsaraso mudo naama. Tabhyah swaahaa. Idam-oshadhibhyo-apsarobhyo maudbhyah – Idam na mum.  
Om samhito vishwasaamaa suryo dandarvah. Sa-na idam brahma kshatram paatu tasmai swaahaa vaat. Idam samhitaaya vishwa-saamne suryaay gandharvaay – Idam na mum.  
Om sam-hito vishwa-saamaa suryo gandharva-tasya mareechayo-apsarasa aayuvo naama. Taabhyah swaahaa. Idam mareechibhyo-apsarobhya-aayubhayah. Idanna mum.  
Om sushumnah surya-rashmi-chandramaa gandharvah. Sa-na idam brahma kshatram paatu tasmai swaahaa vaat. Idam sushumnaaya surya-rashmaye Chandra-mase gandharvaaya – Idanna mum.

## 27. JAYA HOMA

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Ghee, Samagri.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Offerings of ghee and Samagri after Swaha.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> May this couple, as husband and wife, work together in attaining marital bliss.
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MANTRA:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Om chittam cha swaahaa. Idam chittaaya – Idanna mum. Om chittishcha-swaahaa. Idam chittyai – Idanna mum. Om aakutam-cha swaahaa. Idamaakutaayaa – Idanna mum. Om aakutishcha swaahaa. Idam-aakutyai – Idanna mum. Om vijyaatam cha swaahaa. Idam vijyaataaya – Idanna mum. Om vijyaatam cha swaahaa. Idam vijyaataaya – Idanna mum. Om vijyaatishcha swaahaa. Idam vijyaatyai – Idanna mum. Om manashcha swaahaa. Idam manase – Idanna mum. Om shakva-rishcha swaahaa. Idam shakvaribhyah – Idanna mum. Om darshashcha swaahaa. Idam darshaaya – Idanna mum. Om pournamaasam cha swaahaa. Idam pournamaasaay – Idanna mum. Om brihachcha swaahaa. Idam brihate – Idanna mum. Om rathantara cha swaahaa. Idan rathantaraaya – Idanna mum. Om prajaapati-jayaa-nindraay vrishno praa-yachha-dugrah pritnaa-jayeshu. Tasmai vishah sama-namanta sarvaa sa ugrah sa e-havyo babhuva swaahaa. Idam prajaa-pataye jaya-nindraaya-Idanna mum.</p>
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## 28. ABHYATANA

*(First Five Mantras)*

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Ghee, Samagri.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Offerings of ghee and Samagri after Swaha.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> May this couple, as husband and wife, work together in partnership to attain happiness in their marriage.
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MANTRA:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Om agnir-bhutaanaam – adhipatih sa-maava-twasmin brahman-yasmin kshatre-syaamaa-shiahyasyaam puro-dhaayaam-asmin karmanyasyaam deva-hutyaam swaahaa. Idmagnaye bhutaanaam-adhipataye-Idanna mum. Om indro jyesthaanaam-adhipatih sa-maa-vatwasmin brahmanyasmin kshatre-syaamaa-shishyasyaam puro-dhaayaam-asmin karmanyasyaam devahutyaam swaahaa.</p>
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<p>Idam-indraaya jyesthaanaam-adhipataye – Idanna mum.  Om yamah prithivyaa-adhipatih sa-maavatvasmin brahmanyasmin kshatre-syaamaa shishyasyaam puro-  dhaayaamasmin karmanyasyaam deva-hutyaam swaahaa.  Idam yamaaya prithivyaa adhipataye – Idanna mum.  Om vaayurvanta-rikshasyaadhipatih sa-maava-twasmin brahmanyasmin kshatre-syaamaa-shishyasyaam  puro-dhaayaam smin karmanyasyaam deva-hutyam swaahaa.  Idam vaayave antariksha-syaadhipataye – Idanna mum.  Om suryo divo-adhipatih sa-maavatwasmin brahmanyasmin kshatre-syaamaa-shishya-syaam puro-  dhaayaamasmin karmanya-syaam deva-hutyaam swaahaa.  Idam suryaay-divo-adhipataye – Idanna mum.</p>
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## 29. EIGHT VISHESHA AHUTIS.

<p><b>REQUIREMENTS:</b>  Ghee, Samagri.</p>	<p><b>PROCEDURE:</b>  Offerings of ghee and Samagri  after Swaha.</p>	<p><b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b>  Prayer for longevity and freedom  from impediments in attaining har-  mony in marriage.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>MANTRA:</b></p> <p>Om agniraitu prathamam devataanaam so-asyai prajaam munchatu mrityu-paashaat. Tedayam raajaa varu-  no-anumanyataam yatheyam stree poutramagham na-rodaat swaahaa. Idamagnaye – Idanna mum.  Om imam-agni-straayataam gaarha-patyah prajaam-asyai nayatu deergham-aayuh. Ashunyo-pastha  jeevataam-astu maataa poutram-aanand-mabhivi-budhyataam-iyam swaahaa. Idmagnaye-idanna mum.  Om swasti no-agne diva prithivyaa vishwaani dhehyathaa yajatra. Yadasyaam mayi divi jaatam pra-  shastam tadasmaasu dravinam dhehi chitram swaahaa. Idmagnaye – Idanna mum.  Om sugannu panthaam pradishann ehi jyotishmadhye hyajaranna aayuh. Apaitu mrityu-ram-mritama ma  aagaad vaivasvato no-abhayam krinotu swaahaa. Idam vaivasvataay-idanna mum.  Om param mrityu anuparehi panthaam yatra no anya itaro devayaanaat. Chakshushmate shrinvate tey  braveemi maa nah prajaam reerishamo ta-veeran-swaahaa. Idam mrityave-idanna mum.  Om dyouste prishtham rakshatu vaayu-ru-ru ashvinou cha. Stananan-dhayaste putraan-savitaabhi-  rakshatwaa-vaasasah paridhaanaad brihaspatir-vishve devaa abhi-rakshantu pashchaat swaahaa. Idam  vishvebhyo devebhyah – idanna mum.  Om maa tey griheshu nishi ghosha utthaat-anyatra twadru-datyah samvishantu maatwam rudatyura  aavishthaa jeevapatnee patiloke viraajam pashyanti prajaam sumanasya – maanaam swaahaa. Idmagnaye  – Idanna mum.  Om aprajasyam poutra-martyam-paapmaana-mutavaa agham. Sheershna-sraja-mivonmuchya dvishad-  bhyah prati-munchaami paasham swaahaa. Idmagnaye – Idanna mum.</p>
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## 30. THE SACRED VOWS OF MARRIAGE

<p><b>REQUIREMENTS:</b>  Translation of vows (English or any  other language).</p>	<p><b>PROCEDURE:</b>  Her right palm (upward) in his left (upward) and his right palm  on top (downward). The six vows are chanted in Sanskrit by the  priest. They are then recited in English and repeated by the  Groom and Bride.</p>
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### **MANTRA:**

Om gribhnaami tey sou-bhagatwaay hastam mayaa-patyaa jara-dashti-yathaa-sah. Bhago aryamaa savitaa purandhi-mahyam twaadur-gaarha-patyaay devaah.  
Om bhagaste hastam-agrabheet savitaa hastam-agrabheet. Patni twamasi dharmanaa-aham grihatistave.  
Om mame-yamastu poshyaa mahyam twaadaad brihaspatih.  
Mayaa patyaa prajaavati sham jeeva sharadah shatam.  
Om twashtaa vaaso vyadadhaachchhu-bhe-kam brihaspateh prashishaa kaveenaam. Tenemaam naareem savitaa bhagashcha suryaam-iva pari-dhattaam prajayaa.  
Om idraagni dyaavaa-prithivee maatarishvaa mitraa-varunaa bhago ashvinobhaa. Brihaspatir-maruto brahm soma imam naareem prajayaa vardhayantu.  
Om aham vi-shyaami mayi-rupa-masyaa vedadit pasyanmanasah kulaayam. Na-steya-madmi manaso-damuchye swayam shrathnaano varunasya paashaan.

### **MARRIAGE VOWS**

1. We accept / each other's hand / in marriage / for our mutual / well-being / and prosperity. / Our elders / have entrusted us / to each other./ We promise / to honour / their faith / in us.
2. From now on / having solemnly / declared ourselves / husband and wife / may we fulfill / all our / household obligations.
3. Let us be faithful to each other./ May we, / enjoying matrimonial bliss, / live a hundred autumns / and more.
4. Living in harmony / with the elements, / the sun and the wind, / the earth / and the waters, / as declared / by the great Saints / and Sages, / may we / take care / of each other's needs.
5. Abounding with / nature's wealth, / may our house / be blessed / with good fortune. / May we be blessed / with healthy children.
6. We promise / to love / and be kind / to each other. / We will always / remain faithful / and loyal. / May our marriage / be tempered with love / and justice always. / May we / never do anything / to harm / each other.

#### **PROCEDURE:**

Bride and Groom circumambulate the Kund while the following Mantra is being recited. Groom's brother follows the couple with Lota in his hand.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE:**

The couple compare the duality of Male and Female to the balancing opposites witnessed in the Laws of the Universe e.g. day and night, hot and cold, water and fire, Heaven and Earth, etc. and they pray for longevity. Their marriage symbolises the unity of these pairs, and should similarly embody the completeness of creation.

### **MANTRA:**

Om amo-hamasmi saa-twam saa twamasya-amo-aham. Saama-aham-asmi riktvam dyouraham prithivee twam taaveva vivahaavahai sah reto dadhaavihai. Prajaam prajanayaavahai putraan vindaavahai bahoon.  
Tey santu jaradashtayah sampriyou rochi shnu su-manasya-maanou. Pashyem sharadah shatam jeevem sharadah shatam shrinuyaam sharadah shatam.



### 31. SHILAROHANA

*(Stepping on stone)*

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Piece of rock.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> The Bridal couple place their right feet on stone.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> May our marriage, firm as this granite, the rock of Himalaya, weather the storms and seasons, and yet stand tall, mighty and proud.
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#### MANTRA:

Om aaroha-imam-ashmaanam-ashmeva twam sthira bhava. Abhitishtha pritanayato-avabaadhasva prita-naayatah.

### 32. LAJAHOMA

*(Parched Rice offerings)*

The Parched Rice that has been brought by the Bride and Groom is mixed in a plate / Thali.

<b>REQUIREMENT:</b> Parched Rice.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> The Bride's brother puts Parched Rice in palms of Bride which are placed on that of the Groom. The rice is offered in three parts – one with each Mantra. This is followed by the circumambulation.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. May the separation of the Bride from her family and entry to the Groom's family be a happy one.</li><li>2. Long life and prosperity for the Bride in her newfound family.</li><li>3. Affection and prosperity between the couple. Just as the Parched Rice, which when mixed, cannot be set apart, so may this union be.</li></ol>
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#### LAJAHOMA – 1

#### MANTRA:

Om aryamanam deva kanyaa agnim-ayakshata. Sa no aryamaa devah preto munchatu maa pateh swaahaa.  
Idam aryamne agnaye – idanna mum.

Om iyam naaree-papbrute laajaa-naava-pantikaa. Aayushmaan astu mey pati-redhantaam jyaatayo mama swaahaa. Idmagnaye – idanna mum.

Om imam-laajaanaava-paamyagnou samriddhi-karan tava. Mum tubhyam cha samvananam tad-agni-anumanyataam-iyam swaahaa. Idmagnaye-idanna mum.

**PRADAKSHINA – 1**  
(First circumambulation)

**MANTRA:**

Om saraswati predamavasubhage vaajaneevati – Yaantwaa vishwasya bhutasya prajaayaam-  
asyaam-agratah. Yasyaam bhutam sambhavad-yasyaam vishwamidam jagat. Taamadya  
gaathaam gaasyaami yaa streenaam-uttamam yashah.

**LAJAHOMA – 2**

**MANTRA:**

Om aryamanam deva kanyaa agnim-ayakshata. Sa no aryamaa devah preto munchatu maa pateh swaahaa.  
Idam aryamne agnaye – idanna mum.  
Om iyam naaree-papbrute laajaa-naava-pantikaa. Aayushmaan astu mey pati-redhantaam jyaatayo mama  
swaahaa. Idmagnaye – idanna mum.  
Om imam-laajaanaava-paamyagnousamriddhi-karan tava. Mum tubhyam cha samvananam tad-agni-  
anumanyataam-iyam swaahaa. Idmagnaye-idanna mum.

**PRADAKSHINA – 2**  
(Second circumambulation)

**MANTRA:**

Om tubhya-magre paryavahan-suryaam vah-ketunaa sah. Punah patibhyo jaayaam daa agney prajayaa  
sah.

**LAJAHOMA – 3**

**MANTRA:**

Om aryamanam deva kanyaa agnim-ayakshata. Sa no aryamaa devah preto munchatu maa pateh swaahaa.  
Idam aryamne agnaye – idanna mum.  
Om iyam naaree-papbrute laajaa-naava-pantikaa. Aayushmaan astu mey pati-redhantaam jyaatayo mama  
swaahaa. Idmagnaye – idanna mum.  
Om imam-laajaanaava-paamyagnou samriddhi-karan tava. Mum tubhyam cha samvananam tad-agni-  
anumanyataam-iyam swaahaa. Idmagnaye-idanna mum.

**PRADAKSHINA – 3**  
(Third circumambulation)

**MANTRA:**

Om kanyalaa pitribhyah patilokam yateeyamapa deekshaa-mayashtha. Kanyaa utat-twayaa vayaam dhaar-  
aa udanyaa ivati-gaahe-mahi dwishah.

**PROCEDURE:**

Parched Rice in Bride's palm only (foot on stone). Bride offers Parched Rice after mantra.

**MANTRA:**

Om bhagaay swaahaa. Idam bhagaay-idanna mum.

**PROCEDURE:**

Groom offers oblation of ghee (foot on stone).

**MANTRA:**

Om prajaapataye swaahaa. Idam prajaapateye-idanna mum.

**35. KESH VIMOCHAN & GRANTHI BANDHAN**

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b>	<b>PROCEDURE:</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b>
Member of Bride's party with ribbon and pin.	Bride stands on right-hand side of Groom.	Release of Bride from parental authority. Tying of knot symbolises the bond of marriage and commitment to the rules of Grihas-ta.

**MANTRA:**

Om pratvaamunchaami varunasya paashaad yena-twaa-avadhnaa-savitaa sushevah. Ritasya yonyou sukritasya loke-srishtam twaa sah patyaa dadhaami.  
Om preto munchaami naamutah subadhaam-utaskaram. Yatheyamindra midhvah suputraa subhagaa-sati.

**36. SAPTAPADI**

*(Taking of seven steps)*

**PROCEDURE:**

With a knot tied between the garments of the Bride and Bridegroom, the couple take seven steps. Groom clasps right hand of Bride. Each step with Mantra.  
Encircle Kund – return to seats – Bride on left side.

**MANTRA:**

Groom: Maa savyena dakshinam-atikraama  
*Speaking thus, the Groom permits the Bride to walk placing her right foot forward and:*  
Groom: Om esha-padi bhava saa maam-anuvratee bhava vishunustwaa nayatu putraan vindaavahai bahoonste santu jaradashtayah.  
  
Om oorjey dwipadi bhava – *move the 2<sup>nd</sup> step forward with the mantra.*  
Om raayasposhaay tripadi bhava – *move the 3<sup>rd</sup> step forward with the mantra.*

Om mayobhavaay chatushpadi bhava – *move the 4<sup>th</sup> step forward with the mantra.*  
 Om prajaabhyah panchpadi bhava – *move the 5<sup>th</sup> step forward with the mantra.*  
 Om ritubhyah shatpadi bhava – *move the 6<sup>th</sup> step forward with the mantra.*  
 Om sakhe saptapadi bhava – *move the 7<sup>th</sup> step forward with the mantra.*

### 37. DIRGHAYU

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Lota of water with mango leaf.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Groom's brother sprinkles water on the couple.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> For auspiciousness, coolness and tranquility to prevail at all times.
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#### MANTRA:

Om aapo hishthaa mayo-bhuvastaa na-oorje dadhaatana. Mahe ranaay chakshase.  
 Yo vah shivatamo rasatasya bhaajaya-te-hanah. Ushatee-riva-maatarah.  
 Tasmaan aram gamaam vo yasya kshayaay jinvatha. Aapo janayatha cha na.  
 Om aapah shivaah shivatamaah shaantaah shaant-tamaa-staaste krinvantu bsheshajam.

### 38. SURYADARSHAN

*(Prayer for Longevity)*

<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Couple stand in prayer – hands in Namaste pose while priest recites Mantra.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> Couple pray for harmony and goodwill in their lives. They concentrate on the sun which symbolises long life.
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#### MANTRA:

Om tachchakshur-devahitam purastaa-shukra-munchcharat. Pashyema sharadah shatam jeevema sharadah shatam shrinuyaama sharadah shatam pra-bravaama sharadah shatam-deenaah syaamaa sharadah shatam bhuyashcha sharadah shataat.

### 39. SINDUR

*(Optional)*

<b>REQUIREMENT:</b> Sindur	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> With the assistance of an elder relative, the Groom puts Sindur into the Mang-line of parted hair of the Bride while the Mantra is chanted.	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> We commit ourselves to this vow whole-heartedly. May our minds, thoughts and speech be directed to each other in unity.
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#### MANTRA:

Om mum vrate tey hridayam dadhaami mum chittamanu chitaam tey astu. Mum vaachame-kamanaa jushasva prajaapatishthwa niyunaktu mahyam.

## 40. EXCHANGE OF RINGS / MANGAL SUTRA

(Optional)

### PROCEDURE:

While Mantra is being recited the Groom places the ring on Bride's ring finger; then Bride puts ring on Groom's ring finger. The Mantra may be repeated while Groom places the Mangal Sutra around the Bride's neck.

### MANTRA:

Swasti na indro vrdha sravah swasti nah pusa viswavedah. Swasti nastarksyo aristanemih swasti no brhaspatir dadhatu.

## 41. PRATAHKALA MANTRA

### PROCEDURE:

Offerings of ghee and Samagri.

### SIGNIFICANCE:

Let the sun, rising at dawn, permeate this creation and our being. Let it vanquish darkness in all its forms.

### MANTRA:

Om suryo jyotir jyotih suryah swaha.  
Om suryo varco jyotirvarcah swaha.  
Om jyotih suryah suryo jyotih swaha.  
Om sajurdevena savitra sajurusasendravatya jusanah suryo vetu swaha.

## 42. SAYANKALA MANTRA

### PROCEDURE:

Offerings of ghee and Samagri.

### SIGNIFICANCE:

Let Agni, kindling the stars of the night, grant me life.

### MANTRA:

Om agnir jyotir jyotir agnih swaha.  
Om agnir varco jyotir varcah swaha.  
Om agnir jyotir jyotiragnih (silently) swaha.  
Om sajur devena savitra saju ratryendravatya jusano agnirvetu swaha.

## 43. PRATAH – SAYANKALA

### PROCEDURE:

Offerings of ghee and Samagri.

### SIGNIFICANCE:

1. This Earth (Bhu) is sustained by Agni, the life force (Prana) of all beings.
2. The atmosphere (Bhuva) is characterised by Vayu, the air (Apana) or fluidity of the mid region.
3. The Heaven (Svah) is permeated by Aditya, the sun whose subtle light (Vyana) permeates all the

regions.

4. Earth, atmosphere and heaven; Agni, Vayu and Aditya; Prana, Apana and Vyana; are the three triads that respectively characterise one another and constitute creation.
5. Knowledge – Jyoti the nectar of immortality – is Brahma pervading the earth, atmosphere and heaven as Om.
6. The knowledge our ancestors and learned ones prayed for, with that knowledge make me wise, dear God.
7. O God (Savitar) Remove all vices, Grant me that which is good.  
O Luminous Splendour, Lead us onto the noble path; You know our thoughts and deeds; remove our sins and vices; we offer our salutations to You.

#### **MANTRA:**

(Offerings to be made both in the morning and the evening. Offer amagri and ghee with each mantra).

Om bhuragnaye pranaya swaha. Idamagnaye pranaya idanna mama.

Om bhuvanayave'panaya swaha. Idam vayave'panaya idanna mama.

Om swaradityaya vyanaya swaha. Idamadityaya vyanaya idanna mama.

Om bhurbhuvah swaragni vayvadityebhyah pranapanavyanebhyah swaha. Idmagni vayvadiyebhyah pranapanavyanebhyah idanna mama.

Om apo jyotiraso'mrtam brahma bhurbhuvah swarom swaha.

Om yam medham devaganah pitarascopasate, taya mamadya medhaya'gne medhavinam kuru swaha.

Om viswani deva savitar duritani parasuva, yad bhadran tanna asuva swaha.

Om agne naya supatha raye asman viswani deva vayunani vidwan. Yuyodhyasmajjuhuranameno bhuy-  
istante nama uktim vidhema.

#### **44. PURNAHUTI**

##### **SIGNIFICANCE:**

May all our wishes be fulfilled, may this creation be replete.

##### **MANTRA:**

Om sarvam vai purnam swaha. (three times)

#### **45. SUMANGALI ASHANSAN**

##### **SIGNIFICANCE:**

Groom asks all to look upon the Bride, receive her well and be kind and friendly to her.

##### **MANTRA:**

Sumangaleeriyam vadhurimaam sameta pashyata. Saubhaagyam-asyai datwaa-yaathaa-stam viparetana.

## 46. ASHIRVAD – BLESSINGS

<b>REQUIREMENTS:</b> Flowers for blessings.	<b>PROCEDURE:</b> Everyone to rise. Close relatives to stand on the stage. Relatives to repeat Mantras:	<b>SIGNIFICANCE:</b> Wish the Bride and Groom happiness, joy, good health and prosperity.
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<b>MANTRA:</b> Om soubhaagyam-astu. Om shubham bhavatu.
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## 47. SHANTI PATHA

<b>MANTRA:</b> Om Dyauh santirantariksam santih prthivi santirapah santirosadhayah santih. Vanaspatayah santir viswedevah santirbrahma santih sarvam santih santireva santih sa ma santiredhi. Om Santih Santih Santih.
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## CONCLUSION:

Vote of thanks to the priest and others. Bride and Groom proceed to the reception area where the wedding guests congratulate and bless them.

## VEDA KATHA

(Material recommended for the Katha usually done on day preceding the wedding).

There are two sides to the life of an individual viz. personal and social. The Hindu religion recognises the importance of the individual and social aspects of life. The *Varna Vyavastha* (classification of society) is the Vedic formula for the different stages of our life. While the *Ashrama Vyavastha* (four stages of life) is a system for the furtherance of individual pursuits.

The Vedic ideal of a life-span of hundred years serves as the basis for a classification of *Ashramas*. The Mantra – *jivema sharadah shatam* – is a prayer for life of a hundred years. It is for this reason that each of the four stages of life is expected to cover about twenty-five years. The four *ashrams* are *Brahmacharya* (celibacy – study and discipline), *Grihastha* (householder), *Vanaprastha* (partial renunciation) and *Sannyasa* (complete renunciation).

### Brahmacharya Ashrama

The early years of one's life are meant to be devoted mainly to educational pursuits. These formative years are the first of the four stages of life and is known as the *Brahmacharya Ashrama*. *Brahma* has two meanings – Knowledge and God. *Brahmacharya* may be interpreted as pursuing the path of knowledge or seeking to realise God. A student is expected to acquire knowledge for material progress. Spiritual development and a knowledge of the scriptures is also included. Living one's life according to one's religion is inculcated from a young age.

*Brahmacharya* also means practising self-control. The student observes celibacy and abstains from any behaviour that excited the passions. One's life must be disciplined for one to derive the maximum benefit as a student. The student's discipline is acquired by self-control. The imposition of good conduct and a rigorous lifestyle is essential to enable the student to become strong mentally and physically. Until he reaches maturity, the lifestyle of the student is governed by strict discipline.

### **Grihastha Ashrama**

By the end of the *Brahmacharya Ashrama*, the individual has been prepared to enter the next stage of life. This stage of the householder is called the *Grihastha Ashrama*. The individual then becomes *Grihasthi* or householder after undergoing a religious marriage ceremony or *Vivaha Sanskar*. The husband and wife establish a home. This is the beginning of a family. When children are born, the parents have to cope with the growing responsibilities of a home. In this way, one generation follows the other and the *Grihastha Ashrama* provides for the needs of the family in particular and society in general. It is important for there to be love, harmony and trust between husband and wife.

A livelihood is essential for the upkeep of the family. The parents have to provide for the needs of the children. The care of elderly parents also becomes an important obligation. When the children reach adulthood, they in turn take on family responsibilities just as their parents had done.

The responsibility of the householder is not restricted to the family but it encompasses certain needs of society as well. Among the four *Ashramas*, it is only the householder who is privileged to participate in the economic life of a country. All servants, students, saints, sages and even domesticated animals depend on the householder for their sustenance. By means of taxation, the government of a country obtains revenue for essential expenditure. Voluntary contributions are also made by the householders for the purpose of education, welfare and religion. The *Manusmriti* states that just as the waters of tributaries and rivers ultimately come to rest in the ocean, the three other *Ashramas* depend on the *Grihastha Ashrama* for their sustenance.

### **PANCH MAHA YAJNA**

For a successful married life, where the householder caters for the larger family of society, there are five (Pancha) obligations which because of their importance are called "Maha Yajna". Yajna here is not taken in the narrow sense of a fire into which Samagri and ghee are offered. Here "Yajna" means a greater sacrifice – an altruism – that benefits society.

1. Brahma Yajna  
Daily prayer and meditation; study of scripture.
2. Deva Yajna (Havan)  
Performance of Havan which includes our reverence to nature and expression of gratitude for all that we have.
3. Pitri Yajna  
Respecting our elders and parents for all that they have done for us. Our obligations and commitments to them, enduring that their needs are catered for. Acknowledging their role as custodians of our family values and traditions – for transmitting these values through the generations.



4. Atithi Yajna

Hospitality to those who arrive unannounced – the beggar, the teacher, the one asking for donations for our Ashramas and Satsangs, representatives of our religious and cultural organisations who are visiting is asking for our help or disseminating knowledge of our culture and religion.

5. Bhut Yajna

The Care for domesticated animals and pets. This can be translated into support for societies that care for our animals – pets and wild life. We need to volunteer our services and help in any way possible organisations that help preserve our environment and all the birds and beasts in it.

### **Vanaprastha Ashrama**

*Vanaprastha* is the third stage in life when a person takes leave of his family responsibilities to live in the forest, or in quietude where he can practise religious discipline. The time for this stage arrives when the children are in a position to live independently. *Vanaprastha* is a life of retirement. The relinquishing of family duties, the severing of worldly attachments and a self-imposed discipline of austerity and meditation are the requirements of the *Vanaprastha Ashrama*. Today, it is not possible to retire to the forest. Any simple abode removed from the family ought to serve the purpose of practising the required discipline.

An important purpose in the life of the *Vanaprasthi* is to be of service to humanity. The *Vanaprasthu* is expected to renounce all worldly attachments and maintain a self-imposed discipline. There are no personal means of livelihood. In this stage one's motives are altruistic and all services are free of any expectations. A *Vanaprasthi* is expected to live on a retirement or old age pension if other sources of income are not available. Since the life of a *Vanaprasthi* is based on austerity, financial needs are not supposed to be extravagant.

### **Sannyasa Ashrama**

*Sannyasa* means the complete renunciation of all worldly attachments. A person is governed in life by three main desires. They are children, wealth and fame. According to the *Shatapath Brahmana*, a *Sannyasi* has to renounce all of these. A *Sannyasi* becomes free from these desires when all worldly desires and attachments are renounced. The mind is withdrawn from all the sources of pleasure and sorrow. The mind should then be saturated with holiness and spiritual knowledge.

Although a *Sannyasi* is generally preoccupied with meditation and yoga, there has to be a keen awareness of the duty to serve humanity. There should be no bond of kinship with any person. The saying that applies in this stage is *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, that is, all of humanity is treated as family. One is not moved by love or hate. The *Vanaprasthi* leads the world along the path of truth and rectitude without fear or favour. The purpose of life is to contribute to the peace and happiness of humanity by dispelling ignorance and enabling the individual to awaken the divinity that lies within.

By adhering to the four *Ashramas*, an individual progresses in life as prescribed by our *Dharma*. It is natural for a person to be preoccupied with worldly matters in the *Grihastha Ashrama* as this carries the responsibility of the material needs of society. Marriage must not only be viewed as the union of two individuals, but rather as a step towards the fulfillment of certain responsibilities to the family and to society. It is in this light that a couple enter the *Grihastha Ashrama* with the performance of the *Vivah Sanskar*.

The *Grihastha Ashrama* is the most important of the four *ashramas* and it carries with it tremendous responsibility. The *Rishis* have stated that *Grihastha Ashrama* alone equals the weight of the other three *ashramas* together. Manu, the great Sanskrit scholar, says: “As all life depends on air, similarly all the *ashramas* look to the *ashrama* of the householder for support.” Since it is the responsibility of the householder to feed and clothe those in the other *ashramas*, he or she is regarded as occupying a position of distinct importance.

### **An Equal Half**

What is the position of the wife in this important *ashrama*? Until such time as a man has a wife, he is said to be incomplete. The Mantra – *ardham bharya manushasya* – “Half of man is his wife” indicates her importance. In the Puranas, the description of God as *ardha nari – ishwara* – half male and half female – expresses this ideal of unity. It depicts the inseparable nature of husband and wife. Husband and wife can be described as two banks of the river of household.

The household is the ever-flowing source from which the state finds its revenue, and society, its sustenance. In this stage of life the householder tills the earth and keeps green the fields which provide fruit and grain in abundance.

### **Heaven and Earth**

In the Vedas the description of the union between husband and wife is a unique one. During the course of the wedding ceremony, the Bride says: “*I am heaven and you are earth. As these two face each other and are drawn together at all times, so may we be drawn to each other.*” During the ceremony, the two are brought together by the tying of a knot. This knot is not just the tying together of two pieces of cloth, but a symbolic bonding of two hearts.

### **The Child is the Moon**

As the earth makes the sun its central point and revolves around it, similarly the lives of the husband and wife revolve around each other. Through the vows and pledges taken, they light up each others lives and allow their virtues to pass onto their children. The husband is like the sun, the wife is like the earth and the child is like the moon. While the sun’s rays are cast directly on the moon and may be harsh, the earth’s light which is cast on the moon is soft and serene. The best qualities of both parents are meant to be reflected in their children. For this to happen, the relationship between husband and wife must be based on truth since truth alone provides an honest bond between husband and wife. This is the meaning of one of the Mantras: “*Badhnami sathya grathina manascha hridayanchate – with this knot of truth, I tie your heart and mind to mine.*”

### **Patni Twamasi Dharmani**

During the wedding ceremony, when the Groom accepts the Bride’s hand, he uses the words “*husband and wife*” – he declares *dharma* as the basis of the new relationship. The Groom says: *patni twamasi dharmana aham patistava*. You will notice that, even literally, the word *dharma* is central to this Mantra. The Groom states: “*In dharma I am your husband and in dharma you are my wife.*” Therefore in *Vedic Dharma*, the words *pati* (husband) and *patni* (wife) always have the qualifying word *dharma* viz. *dhar-mapati* and *dharmapatni*.

### **Protection of Dharma**

The Sanskrit words *pati* and *patni* derive from the same root meaning “to protect”. *Pati* and *patni* both mean protector. What then has to be protected? In the Mantra above, both these words are preceded by *dharma*, which emphasises the protection of *Dharma*. Both husband and wife pledge to protect *Dharma*. Therefore, it becomes the duty of the wife and husband to carry out the vows of *Dharma*. When King Janaka offered the hand of his daughter Sita to Rama, he said, “*Iyam Sita mama suta saha dharma chari tava*” – “*this, my daughter Sita, will be your partner in the path of Dharma.*” Relationships based on *Dharma* become everlasting. Therefore, in order to fulfil the duties of *Grihastha*, the Bride and the Groom must protect their *Dharma*.

This world is fraught with many difficulties. Therefore the wife and husband need to support each other. Both are partners in the performance of religious duties (*dharma*), striving for wealth (*artha*), enjoyment of pleasure (*kama*) and attainment of liberation (*moksha*). She is the raft on the ocean of life. A loving spouse is a true friend in times of need.

### **Protection of the Wife**

Even though the liberated women of our modern times may not admit it, women need to be protected. They are often the unfortunate and helpless victims of unscrupulous males. While every religion speaks righteously of the rights of women, the abuse of women all over the world increases at an alarming rate. Women are physically weaker than men. They are nurtured in a world that is patriarchal – male dominated. This makes her tender by nature and she becomes subdued to the extent that often she is unable to resist even though she is able and wishes to assert her individuality.

Since men are perpetrators of inhumanity to women, it is the bounden duty of every man to respect women and ensure they are protected. Women must feel safe and secure. Only then can they fulfil all that they are expected to do. Besides sexual abuse, women are also subjected to physical abuse, often in the very homes where they are supposed to be respected as mothers and revered as *Lakshmi*. It is pathetic that men should choose to display their cowardly valour on innocent women or make them victims of their lust.

While it rests on all respectable men to deal ruthlessly with those who commit these heinous crimes against women, mothers themselves unconsciously sometimes breed such attitudes in their sons. The undue importance given to the birth of a son, the privileges that sons enjoy over the daughters, no son should do household chores, depriving girls of education, denying daughters rights to careers – all these perpetuate male dominance and female subservience. In matters of religion as well, it is often the women who are bitterly opposed to fellow women becoming priests or occupying any position of authority or status anywhere.

Is it not the mother-in-law who often torments the daughter-in-law through the influence she wields over her son? Once again, we are forced to admit even the upliftment of the women lies in her own hands. She must nurture in her son the absolute respect for women as his equals. He will grow with respect for them and never deny them their rightful place in society. This is what the upholding of the *Dharma* of marriage truly means. Once this ideal is achieved there will be no need for the protection of women.

### **Independent Family Life**

The values of society and the family have changed drastically in present times. Now, when the son begins to earn and gets married, he lives independently of his parents. At present, the small flats that are built in the suburbs do not cater for more than a single nuclear family.

In this new climate, the Hindu joint family has disintegrated. After marriage, newly wedded couples opt to live on their own and enjoy the independence they cherish. The couple believe that in this way family conflicts are minimised.

In this style of independent living one aspect is neglected – the responsibility of the couple towards their aging parents. The parents have brought up their children with great love and care. To do this, they had to undergo many hardships. How can one forget one's parents? It is the religious duty (*dharma*) of the child to make sure that the parents are not left destitute to struggle in their old age. Therefore, the married couple have to make arrangements for them. The rewards of caring for one's parents is greater than the independence of a nuclear family.

Independence leads to a purely self centered mentality and has little generosity or charity in it. Any person living in society, with the interests of fellow beings at heart, has to suppress his/her individual independence. As a social being, an individual has commitments to society and family, commitments from which there can be no escape. After all, life is about sharing and this demands sacrifices on the part of the individual. If one cannot make sacrifices for one's parents, then there is little left to life.

For the newly wedded couple, there are definite advantages of living with parents. When the couple go to work, it is better to leave the young, innocent baby in the loving hands of the grandparents than those of a servant. The love that grandparents give to grandchildren can never be compared with the services of a paid servant. Through the influence of the grandparents, the children learn to speak their mother tongue, know their culture, understand their customs and appreciate the traditional values that have been passed down over the generations. If the husband, wife or child becomes ill, then the best care is made available by the experience of understanding and loving grandparents who take care of all the needs of the home. Their presence is solace enough to take the couple through their difficult times.

Young couples love social outings: weddings, parties, going to the cinema, etc. On such occasions, the parents feel assured knowing that the children are safe with the grandparents. If the young couple have a little patience, they will learn that the reward of living with their parents is tremendous. The youth of today have to reflect on family values. They are beginning to realise the ill-effects of the modern tehnocratic age and are finding it difficult to cope with the tremendous stress and strain it creates. Nothing beats going back home and to a loving family and good values.

### **Conclusion**

Marriages today are subject to the most trying tests and it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep marriages together. At one time divorce was unheard of in the Indian community but today it has become quite acceptable. Young couples scoff at traditional practices and opt for a more exciting and audacious spirit that charms the mind and takes to flights of fantasy. Marriage is seen as an old and boring institution which shackles one's being and stifles the soul.

While the attractions of modern living are very enticing and easily lure the unsuspecting mind, there is the need to stop and look at the outrageous and revolutionary world that the new generations wish to create. Drugs, AIDS, child abuse, teenage pregnancy, suicide and gang violence is what we see. Fortunately, not everyone is caught in this frightening frenzy. It is encouraging for parents when their children uphold their traditions by marrying in the traditional manner and when they uphold good old family values and virtues.