# Om Shri Ganeshay Namah

The Hindu wedding ceremony is based on ancient traditions and rituals originating from the Vedas, the Sanskrit books of knowledge that form the foundation of Hinduism. This sacred ceremony unites two individuals so firmly that they become one spirit despite retaining separate bodies, enabling them to begin their life together.

The ceremony takes place in a mandap (wedding pavilion) built to represent the universe. The four pillars of the mandap signify Jaimini and Varun’s parents. During the ceremony, the priest recites Sanskrit verses from the Vedas, and performs symbolic rituals in the presence of Lord Agni (Fire), representing the divine and impartial witness to the vows taken by the Jaimini and Varun.

Baraat **Groom’s Procession**

The wedding celebrations begin when Varun arrives, accompanied by his family and friends, in a lively procession filled with song and dance.

Swagatam **Welcome**

Jaimini’s family receives Varun and his family upon their arrival for the wedding ceremony. The Bride’s mother performs welcome rituals and gives her blessings. Varun is then asked to step on an earthen pot symbolizing his willingness to take on life’s challenges and wonders before being led to the mandap by Jaimini’s parents for the wedding ceremony.

Shri Ganesh Pooja **Invocation of the Lord**

The ceremony commences with Jaimini’s parents, Niranjan and Amita, performing a prayer to Lord Ganesh asking that all obstacles be removed on Jaimini and Varun’s path to happiness.

Var Raja Pooja **The Groom’s Reception**

The Bride’s parents receive the Groom with an offering of honey, curd, and butter signifying the sweetness of the marriage sacrament and the sweetness of life. The priest seeks confirmation from Varun that he is ready, willing, and wanting to make this commitment of marriage. In anticipation of Jaimini’s arrival, her brothers raise an antarpat (white curtain) in front of Varun symbolizing traditional barriers and the physical world that separates the Bride and Groom.

Kanya Aagman **The Arrival of the Bride**

The bride walks towards marriage, hand-in-hand with her Mamas (maternal uncles). Mangalshtak (a sacred hymn) is recited and she is seated in the mandap.

Jai Mala and Sankalpa **Exchange of Garlands and Announcement**

The antarpat is removed and Jaimini and Varun exchange garlands to signify their acceptance of each other as life partners. The priest, on behalf of both familes, announces the time and place of the wedding as well as their ancestries to establish proper identities.

Kanya Daan **Giving Away of the Bride**

Niranjan and Amita give their daughter Jaimini (kanya), who is their most precious gift (daan) on earth, to Varun and ask him to love and respect her as his life-long partner.

Hasta Melap **Joining of the Hands**

The couple is united as Jaimini’s right hand is placed in Varun’s right hand. The priest endorses this Pani Grahan (Hasta Melap or Joining of the Hands) by reciting hymns. A Var Mala (twisted, raw, cotton garland with twenty four threads) is placed on the Bride and Groom by their parents and relatives as an endorsement of the union. A lace is tied to the garments of the couple (Granthi Bandhan) signifying unity.

Mangal Fera **Holy Circling of the Fire**

The priest lights the sacred fire (Agni Sthapan) invoking the presence of Lord Agni, who is the Divine energy and an impartial witness to the wedding ceremony. Jaimini’s brother, Chirag, places rice into the couple’s hand signifying the bride’s transition to her new family. The couple circles the holy fire four times. Each completed circle signifies one of the four essential aspects of life according to the Vedic philosophy – duty and ethics, wealth and prosperity, love and family, and spiritual liberation.

Sapta Padi **The Seven Steps**

The couple takes seven steps together representing seven vows of commitment they are making towards each other – sustenance, strength, prosperity, progeny, fidelity, harmony, and lifelong friendship. Jaimini and Varun are now married and seek blessings from Lord Vishnu, the Preserver, and his consort Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth.

## Mangal Sutra and Sindoor Daan

Varun places a Mangal Sutra (black-beaded gold necklace) around Jaimini’s neck and applies Sindoor (red vermillion) to her forehead. These are the traditional symbols of a Hindu married woman. At this time, Jaimini and Varun will also exchange wedding rings.

Akhand Saubhagyavati **Advice from Married Women**

Married women from Jaimini and Varun’s families whisper good wishes in Jaimini’s ear and bless the Bride with an unbroken wedded life.

Kansar Bhojan **Offering of Sweets**

The couple feed each other sweets signifying their first meal together as husband and wife and demonstrating that they will share all things in life.

Ashirvaad **Blessings**

The priest declares the Bride and Groom as husband and wife and blesses the newlyweds with a happy and prosperous life together. He asks the congregation to join him in showering the couple with blessings and good wishes. The couple then seeks blessings from family and friends as the ceremony concludes.

Vidaai **Farewell**

After lunch is the Vidaai ceremony. The Vidaai is a touching and emotional farewell to Jaimini by her family and friends as she begins her new life with Varun and his family. Jaimini throws handfuls of rice over her head, signifying that she is returning all that her parents have given her over the years and praying that the house of her childhood remains prosperous and happy.