# Swaagatam

**Welcome to Amanda and Ganesh’s Vivah Sanskara!**

According to the Sanatan Dharma, there are sixteen primary religious rites to be performed by every Hindu. These are called Sanskaras, with marriage (Vivah) being one of the most important. Marriage is a conceptual union between a man and woman for life, and is religiously solemnized. It not only binds two hearts together but also two families as well. For the strength to love obey and to understand, humble supplications are made by the bride and groom at the time of marriage. A married couple living according to the dictates of Dharma, pooling their mental and physical resources together to have a successful married life, can achieve nothing but complete marital bliss.

## Baraat Swaagat/Milaap

The marriage celebration commences with the arrival of Ganesh (the Groom), his family and friends, in a procession called the Baraat. Amanda’s family welcomes Ganesh and the Baraat with the recitation of Vedic mantras. After reciting the Vedic mantras the two fathers embrace signifying the acceptance of the union between the two families.

## Dwaar Puja

Prayers are offered to Lord Ganesha, who is the remover of all obstacles and a symbol of peace, friendship, and happiness. These prayers purify and bless the surroundings and also provide an atmosphere of tranquility to perform the ceremonies. Here the groom is formally welcomed and the Bride’s father presents gift to Ganesh.

## Parchan

Amanda’s Mother and other married women of her family welcome Ganesh. They perform rituals showering him with grains and aarti, representing prosperity, love, and adoration. Small balls of flour are thrown in all directions, to ward off any negative forces.

## Janwaas

Ganesh and his Baraat are offered a comfortable place to rest while they enjoy refreshments and sweets until they are called to the Mandap (wedding shrine).

## Imli Ghotaaway

Amanda enters the Mandap accompanied by her mother and mamoos (maternal uncles) Anand and Dyanand Kalladeen, and receives her mother’s blessings before her marriage.

## Devta Puja

Amanda takes her place on a specially prepared seat under the Mandap and prays to Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles, and Mother Lakshmi, Goddess of happiness and prosperity, Gowri Mata, and Agni Devta, seeking their blessings on this very special occasion.

## Taag-Paath/Raksha Sutra

The older brother of Ganesh, garlands Amanda with a mala of woolen threads symbolizing his promise to protect her at all times and treat her as his own sister. He vows to protect her through all adversities, which may occur in her family life. He also presents her with gifts from Ganesh’s family.

Amanda exits the Mandap with her mother.

## Var Puja

Ganesh is welcomed to the Mandap, for the first time, accompanied by Amanda’s father and the baraat. Amanda’s father then welcomes Ganesh by first offering him a seat. Ganesh is honored as Amanda’s father feeds him Madhuparaka (a mixture of dhai, ghee, and honey). This is symbolic of a happy and joyful union. Prayers are offered to Lord Ganesha, the lord of good beginnings and remover of all obstacles.

## Samamjama

Escorted by her parents and sister-in-law (Bijal Harri-Das), Amanda makes her grand entrance to the Mandap, officially commencing the wedding ceremony.

## Kanyaadaan

The Bride’s parents prepare to give her away. They formally offer the hand of their daughter to Ganesh. Ganesh then accepts Amanda’s hand in marriage. Amanda now takes her place besides Ganesh, on his right side. “For the obtaining of absolute happiness as the consequence of Kanyadaan, for purifying, proceeding, and succeeding generations through the progeny in our daughter, and for the propitiation of Lakshmi and Vishnu, we give our precious Amanda to you Ganesh, to cherish, love, and care for life-long, in accordance with our sacred Dharmic principles.”

## Gaathi Bandhan

To complete the symbolic union, the nuptial knot is tied (Amanda and Ganesh have portions of their garments tied together.) This tying of the knot symbolizes togetherness in mind, thought, and action.

## Paaw Puja

As a form of purification as well as to express their gratitude, Amanda and Ganesh make offerings of ghee and mixed herbs to the sacramental fire. The Bride’s parents will then give their blessings to the couple by presenting them with gifts and washing their feet.

## Agni Hotra/Havan

The sacred fire symbolizes the eternal and omnipresent God, as witness to the wedding ceremony. Amanda touches Ganesh’s hands as they make offerings to God in the form of Agni (fire).

## Laawa Bhaawar

Special grains, symbolizing fertility and prosperity are offered by Ganesh and Amanda into the fire with an appeal to bear testimony to their marriage. The offerings are made whilst Ganesh and Amanda circle the fire seven times. The Bride’s Brother (Ryan) provides the grains for the couple as they circle the fire.

**The Bride Leads in Prayer**

* Amanda asks God to bless her as she leaves her family and enters into a new family.
* Amanda asks God to bless her husband and to give him a long and healthy life.
* Amanda asks God to bless herself as well as her husband with love, health, and prosperity.
* Amanda asks God to grant her as well as her husband true love and to fulfill their every desire.

**The Groom Leads in Prayer**

* Ganesh asks that the Devtas bless himself and his wife in abundance.
* Ganesh thanks God for being given a most beautiful and generous bride.
* Once again Ganesh asks God for an abundance of blessings for his new family.

## Saptapadi

Together, Amanda and Ganesh take seven steps forward - facing North. With each of the seven steps, the couple seeks God’s guidance in the vows that bind them in marriage. The seven steps are:

1. We will acquire the energy to share the responsibilities of marriage life.
2. We will fill our hearts with the strength to accomplish all the needs of our life.
3. We will work for the prosperity of our family.
4. We will cherish each other in happiness and sorrow.
5. We will raise strong and virtuous children
6. We will fill our hearts with joy, peace, and spiritual values.
7. We will always remain life partners and true friends.

## Shila Roshan

Amanda places her right foot on a stone to show that she will be as solid and unwavering as a rock in her devotion to Ganesh.

## Surya Darshan

Visualizing the Sun and looking towards it, Amanda and Ganesh pray that they should be as radiant as the Sun and that their lives should sparkle like the Sun.

## Hriday Sparsh

Ganesh places his hand on Amanda’s heart, praying that their hearts beat in unison, their minds be one, and their thoughts lead them to the highest realms of peace.

## Saat Vachan

Amanda asks Ganesh to accept seven vows before taking her rightful place on his left side. The seven vows are:

1. In all walks of charity, going to pilgrimage, performing yagnas, and all religious activities, I ask that you take me along with you so that I may share in such blessedness.
2. At any time you desire to perform worship to the deities and any time you want to perform shraadha in the name of the ancestors, I ask that you allow me to join you in such blessed acts.
3. I ask that I am given the responsibility of serving your parents and that I am allowed to care for all other things relating to our home.
4. I ask that you always provide for the proper upkeep of the household and that all of your assets be put to my disposal.
5. In the event that you have to participate in any community service, plant a garden, or build a temple, I ask that you allow me to participate with you.
6. If at any time you have to leave the home to go abroad or get involved in any business transactions, I ask that you consult me always and that my prior consent be obtained.
7. Last but not least, my seventh request is that you give your heart unto my heart, your mind united with my mind, and at no time must you look at any other woman as your wife but me and me alone.

## Var Vachan

Ganesh makes one request to Amanda.

“I ask that you promise me here in the presence of God and our family and friends that you will always upkeep your Pativrata Dharma, or wifely duties, and that you will love me with all your heart and act according to my good wishes.”

## Sindoor Dhan

Ganesh applies Sindoor to Amanda’s forehead, which she will always do for herself from this day forward. This signifies that she is a married Hindu woman. This sacred moment, a lifelong treasure to the couple is indicative of their union based upon the highest principles of Sanatan Dharma. As this moment is a most sacred one, the bride and groom must be covered while this is done.

## Jaimaala

Amanda and Ganesh garland each other to signify their own choice and acceptance of each other as life-long companions.

## Exchange of Wedding Rings

The wedding rings are blessed by the Pandit and exchanged between Ganesh and Amanda.

## Mangalsutra Daan

The Mangalsutra is a sacred necklace made up of black and gold beads. It is first blessed by the Pandit then five happily married women who are very special to the couple. Ganesh places the necklace around Amanda’s neck symbolizing unity, love, friendship, and his enduring commitment to their marriage.

## Vaamangikaran

After these requests are agreed upon by both Amanda and Ganesh, Amanda takes her rightful place on Ganesh’s left side, signifying her formally becoming his wife.

## Aashirvad (Blessings)

The priest prays for blessings from the supreme Lord for the well being of the newlyweds and of those assembled. The family showers rice and flowers on Ganesh and Amanda to bless them and wish them good luck, prosperity, and a long and happy marriage life.