

The Vedic Wedding: Origins, Tradition and Practice

A.V. Srinivasan

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Over the last three decades, A.V. Srinivasan has officiated at many weddings for Hindus in the U.S.; even more have approached him for advice about incorporating the Vedic tradition into their ceremonies. Seeing a growing demand from young Hindus interested in the meanings of the Vedic rituals, Srinivasan has created a lovingly illustrated guide to the Vedic wedding.

Srinivasan begins with an introduction to the Vedic concept of marriage as a friendship. A brief treatment of the ideas of *dharmapatni* elucidates the Hindu marriage philosophy. The author next reviews the origin of the Vedic wedding, including the premise that the bride is symbolically Surya (daughter of the sun god) who was once married to the moon god, but now reborn as a human is ready to marry a man.

With these preliminaries completed, Srinivasan comes to the true crux of the book, the traditions and customs associated with the wedding, as well as a description of the wedding itself. The author covers such preliminaries as performing *pujas* (prayers) to the family godhead, the rehearsal, and preparing the *mantap*, or sacred space in which the wedding takes place. He describes in some detail the preparatory chants, greetings, and processions.

For the wedding ceremony itself, Srinivasan has provided a four-column layout across a two-page spread. On the far left is a description of the action, then a column with the Sanskrit, the same text given in Latin characters for pronunciation, and the English translation. It is an elegant and user-friendly method for deepening understanding of the mantras used in the wedding.

Appendices provide additional ceremonies that may be included and materials designed to ease wedding planning, including a family data form, wedding materials list, sample program, and advice for setting up the planning and coordination. Other appendices introduce the Vedic calendar and suggest *pujas*. One particularly fascinating section covers the meaning of the various clothes and jewelry worn by the bridal couple.

Srinivasan is a warm and steady guide, offering knowledge and reassurance in equal parts. He has created a marvelous resource for Hindus wishing to hold a traditional wedding or adapt these traditions—the author himself has officiated at several interfaith weddings where the Vedic tradition combined beautifully with those of other faiths. While the primary audience will be those planning weddings, readers with a general interest in India or Hindu practices will also enjoy this charming book.

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