

[A Bride's Sacred Pendant](#)

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The bride is dressed like a goddess, sitting very still next to the groom beneath a mountainous canopy of flowers. To the invited crowd of friends and relatives, they look magnificent - but inside they are nervous. Silently, they are both hoping everything goes right. Their thoughts race with pictures and expectations of married life, their futures and last looks at the past. But when, finally, the husband ties the mangalyam sutra (the sacred marriage pendant) around the bride's neck, a sudden quake of joy floods forth. Tension melts into waves of welcome bliss as blessings of rice shower on the newlyweds and the smoke from the homa bathes them with God's loving sanction.

The mangalyam sutra is the most important symbol of marriage for a woman. It represents the bond she and her husband have committed themselves to as they merge their lives together to build a home and raise a family.

Mangalyam is a Sanskrit word meaning "auspicious, good, propitious, fortunate and blissful." Sutra in this context, means a "thread or cord." Thus, the literal meaning of mangalyam is "auspicious thread," and many women wear its simplest form - a woven yellow thread dyed with tumeric. For most, though, it is a gold medallion whose shape, weight and markings differ between caste, community and social and financial status. It is melted by a jeweller at an auspicious hour (usually right at the bride's family's own home) and tooled following scriptural guidelines, impregnating the metal with divine energies.

The mangalyam is also a symbol of a wife's devotion to her husband and, like an amulet, is felt to hold great power in warding off any negativity attracted to the husband and to assure his long life and well-being.

The massive work, Mangalyam Sthira Rahasya, composed by the three great

exemplars of Hindu wifeness - Anasooyaa, Arundhati and Lopamudra - instructs the wife not to view the mangalyam as a mere piece of metal, but as a representative of the husband himself. Thus, the marriage medallion becomes very special to the wife, who traditionally sees God residing in her husband.

This text outlines five attitudes and duties expected of a good wife: 1) Shaanta Bhaavana advises the wife to seek contentedness, appreciate that her own karma has subtly helped attract her husband and shy from scorning him. 2) Daasya Bhaavana bids the wife to maturely adopt the pure and selfless spirit of the help-mate. 3) Sakhya Bhaavana is unreserved mutual confidence, based on deep mutual respect 4) Vaatsalya Bhaavana is the sacredness and importance of the mother-child relationship. 5) Madhuro Bhaavana insures that the amorous and intimate affections shared between the married couple are natural, and helpfully bond their psychic union.

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