



Rev. Ann Fuller

The Buddha considered marriage to be a social relationship rather than a religious sacrament, so consequently there are no prescriptions for the wedding ceremony in Buddhist scripture. There are apparently vows that can be used that come from the *Sigilovdda Sutta*, but in my opinion they are not terribly relevant or practical for a modern partnership.

Neither has Buddhism as a religion developed any rules or regulations regarding weddings throughout the centuries. Buddhist weddings around the world reflect the indigenous culture in which they are being performed rather than consist of traditions and practices specific to any school of Buddhist religious instruction.

That being said, there are indeed ways you can incorporate your Buddhist spirituality into your wedding ceremony thereby creating a Buddhist wedding. The following was written for a Buddhist couple in contemporary American society and should not be considered "the" Buddhist wedding ceremony.

- Presentation of the Couple
- Opening Words and Presentation of the Altar
- Exchange of Gifts
- The Buddha's sermon at Rajagaha; verses 19-22
- Exchange of Vows
- Blessing and Exchange of the Rings
- The Reading of the Mangala Sutta
- Declaration of Marriage

This wedding assumes the presence of a table upon which a statue of Buddha resides and around which a marriage altar is assembled.

Presentation of the Couple

Do you come here this day with the intent to pledge yourselves in a sincere effort to create a harmonious relationship until death you do part? ~ *We do.*

Opening Words and Preparation of the Altar

We gather this day to bear witness to the marriage vows (Bride) and (Groom) make to one another. We have been invited here because of our regard for them and their regard for us. (Bride) and (Groom) have already made an internal bond in their hearts which today they proclaim for all to acknowledge and respect.



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At this time I invite _____ and _____ (family representatives) to come forward and light these two candles representing the bride and groom's families.

Will _____ (person of bride's choosing) please come place the flowers before the candles?

Will _____ (person of groom's choosing) please come light the incense?

We pray for compassion and supreme inner peace

May we love all beings without exception finding wisdom in the Buddha's teaching.

May we speak words of loving kindness.

May we be well and seek to nourish rather than deplete.

May we be lamps to illumine the darkness.

May all be fulfilled with joy and a happy spirit.

Exchange of Gifts

The bride presents the groom with a tray containing three items: incense, wine, fruit, tea, cake, meat, flowers, grain or jewelry. The groom accepts the items and places them on the altar.

The groom presents the bride with a tray containing three items: incense, wine, fruit, tea, cake, meat, flowers, grain or jewelry. The bride accepts the items and places them on the altar.

Reading

A reading from The Buddha's sermon at Rajagaha; verses 19-22

Do not deceive, do not despise each other anywhere. Do not be angry nor bear secret resentments; for as a mother will risk her life and watches over her child, so boundless be your love to all, so tender, kind and mild. Cherish good will right and left, early and late, and without hindrance, without stint, be free of hate and envy, while standing and walking and sitting down, whatever you have in mind, the rule of life that is always best is to be loving-kind. Gifts are great, founding temples is meritorious, meditations and religious exercises pacify the heart, comprehension of the truth leads to Nirvana, but greater than all is loving kindness. As the light of the moon is sixteen times stronger than the light of all the stars, so loving kindness is sixteen times more efficacious in liberating the heart than all other religious accomplishments taken together.



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Exchange of Vows

(Bride) and (Groom), do you pledge to help each other develop and strengthen your hearts and minds, cultivating compassion, enthusiasm, patience, concentration and wisdom as you encounter the inevitable changes, expected and unexpected, welcome and unwelcome in your journey through life together? ~
We do.

Please turn to one another, join hands and in so doing join your hearts. (Bride), please repeat after me as you look in (Groom's) eyes.

*I, (Bride) pledge to be true to my self,
to cultivate virtuous thoughts and deeds
and support you in doing the same.
I vow to be gracious and grateful,
compassionate and forgiving.
I will trust in you and trust in all being.
I recognize the interconnectedness of all existence
and the special nature of our union.
I vow to grow with you in the dharma.*

(Groom), please repeat after me as you look in (Bride's) eyes.

*I, (Groom) pledge to be true to my self,
to cultivate virtuous thoughts and deeds
and support you in doing the same.
I vow to be gracious and grateful,
compassionate and forgiving.
I will trust in you and trust in all being.
I recognize the interconnectedness of all existence
and the special nature of our union.
I vow to grow with you in the dharma.*

Blessing and Exchange of the Rings

The circle is a natural symbol of eternity as it has no beginning and no end. We place the ring on the left hand because it constitutes a direct path to the heart, a traditional metaphor for love and devotion. Its presence reminds us of the vows we have made and their relationship to the emotional seat of the heart.

We ask that these rings that will forever grace the hands of (Bride) and (Groom) be blessed. May they reside on the hands of the lover, the caregiver, the companion and the guide. May (Bride) and (Groom) wear these rings as a symbol of their unity.



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(Groom), please place the ring on (Bride's) left hand.

(Bride), please place the ring on (Groom's) left hand.

Do you accept the gifts of these rings as a reminder to always strive to remember your own Buddha nature and the Buddha nature of all living beings? Do you accept them as tokens of the responsibility to remain aware that all things are temporary, but through diligence and optimism you can create a relationship with the utmost potential for lasting happiness? ~ *We do.*

The Reading of the Mangala Sutta

At this time I invite _____ (person special to the Bride and Groom) to come forward to read the Mangala Sutta.

(While the Mangala Sutta is being read, the Bride and Groom join hands and circle the altar eight times representing the Noble Eightfold Path)

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Exalted One was dwelling at Anathapindika's monastery, in Jeta's Grove, near Savatthi. Now when the night was far spent, a certain deity whose surpassing splendor illuminated the entire Jeta Grove, came to the presence of the Exalted One and, drawing near, respectfully saluted him and stood at one side. Standing thus, he addressed the Exalted One in verse: "Many deities and men, yearning after good, have pondered on blessings. Pray, tell me the greatest blessing!"

[The Buddha:]

"Not to associate with the foolish, but to associate with the wise; and to honor those who are worthy of honor — this is the greatest blessing. To reside in a suitable locality, to have done meritorious actions in the past and to set oneself in the right course— this is the greatest blessing. To have much learning, to be skillful in handicraft, well-trained in discipline, and to be of good speech — this is the greatest blessing. To support mother and father, to cherish wife and children, and to be engaged in peaceful occupation — this is the greatest blessing. To be generous in giving, to be righteous in conduct, to help one's relatives, and to be blameless in action — this is the greatest blessing. To loathe more evil and abstain from it, to refrain from intoxicants, and to be steadfast in virtue — this is the greatest blessing. To be respectful, humble, contented and grateful; and to listen to the Dhamma on due occasions — this is the greatest blessing. To be patient and obedient, to associate with monks and to have religious discussions on due occasions — this is the greatest blessing. Self-restraint, a holy and chaste life, the perception of the Noble Truths and the realisation of Nibbana — this is the greatest blessing. A mind unruffled by the vagaries of fortune, from sorrow freed, from defilements cleansed, from fear liberated — this is the greatest blessing. Those who thus abide, ever remain invincible, in happiness established. These are the greatest blessings."



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Declaration of Marriage

In accord with the laws of the state of Florida, it is my joy and honor to pronounce (Bride) and (Groom) are husband and wife. Please seal your marriage with a kiss.

Brevard Minister