



Wedding Garland (Varmala)

Varmala (wedding garlands) are made from artificial flowers and other decorative objects.

As part of the wedding ceremony the groom is taken to a raised stage where the *varmala ritual* is performed. The bride enters, escorted by her sisters and friends and stands next to the bridegroom. The bride and the groom exchange their flower garlands by putting it around each other's neck. *Varmala* carries an important symbolic significance as it implies the mutual acceptance (by both the bride and the groom) of each other and their future as husband and wife.

During the ceremony everyone has fun. Often the male relatives of the groom lift him high into the air so that the bride is not able to put the *varmala* around his neck! At this, the male members of the bride's family lift the bride and the two groups try to persuade each other to let either the bride or the groom down. According to the traditions, the bride must put the garland around the neck of the groom first.

