

# Kabir's Mounj

7 July 2024 11am, Salisbury

The ceremony to be performed today is a traditional Hindu coming-of-age ceremony, somewhat akin to a confirmation or a bar mitsvah. It signifies the time in a child's life when they are to leave home to go to their *guru's* (teacher's) *ashram* (hermitage) to start their studentship (religious, physical, and philosophical education).

We will be performing the ceremony in the style of *Jnana Prabodhini*, a reform movement that seeks to rationalise and simplify Hindu religious traditions.

This ceremony is commonly known by three names;

1. **Upanayan** ("leading towards"): as it signifies the time the child is going away from home and towards their guru.
2. **Mounji-bandhana**, often shortened to '**Mounj**' or '**Munja**' ("the tying of a thread made from long grass"): this signifies the thread that will tie the only piece of clothing Kabir will take from home as he leaves his worldly goods and home comforts behind.
3. **Vratibandhan** ([the act of] "taking a binding oath"): signifying that ceremony is one where the child takes a binding oath of *brahmacharya* (studentship) and the code of conduct it entails.

The ceremony will be performed in Classical Sanskrit and in Marathi (with some explanations in English).

Kabir's grandmother, Daya, who is a qualified priest, will be officiating.

## Prologue

The ceremony, like most Hindu ceremonies, will begin by inviting the gods. Every ritual starts with an invocation to Ganapati (Ganesh), symbolised by a betel nut, and the Marathe household goddess.

Kabir, Krupa, and Vihung, then state the purpose of today's ceremony, and the area where the ritual is to take place will be consecrated with *akshata* (rice grains coloured with vermilion).

## Part 1. Guidance

In the first part of the ceremony, the priest, Daya, will explain to Kabir the meaning of this ceremony, the undertaking he is about to embark upon at this stage in life - to enter *Brahmacharyashram* (the life-stage [*ashram*] of the study [*acharya*] of the true nature of god [*Brahma*], often referred to simply as youth, studentship, or bachelorhood).

Kabir, Krupa and Vihung, will then request Daya to take Kabir through the process.

## Part 2. Taking the Vow

Daya will explain to Kabir the code of conduct of a *brahmachari*. This includes

- Balanced diet, actions, and emotions
- Control of senses
- Prayer and meditation
- Study and discourse
- Service to the community

Kabir will then take a vow to follow these principles. This vow is made in the presence of *agni* (holy fire) representing the sun, which is considered the ultimate witness to all vows.

## Part 3. The Sacred Thread

Once Kabir takes his vow, Daya will sanctify a sacred thread and give it to him. The thread symbolises the vow taken today and is to be worn, a reminder of this vow, for the rest of his life.

## Part 4. Gayatri Upasana

Daya will teach the Kabir (and all attendants) the Gayatri Mantra (see the attached sheet), a prayer to be chanted daily here onwards.

## Part 5. Farewell

Kabir, as he symbolically leaves his parent's house, will be given a cloth and a staff. He will ask for food to take with him on his journey. This food symbolises everything (physical, emotional and spiritual) his parents have given to him so far. It also symbolises that from now on he will only live on what his guru, and broader society, will provide for him.

# Gayatri Mantra

To Be Said During Part 4

ॐ भूः	<i>Om Bhu-hu</i>	(O Earth)
ॐ भुवः	<i>Om Bhu-va-ha</i>	(O Space )
ॐ स्वः	<i>Om Swa-ha</i>	(O Sun)
ॐ महः	<i>Om Maha-ha</i>	(O Millions of Suns)
ॐ जनः	<i>Om Jana-ha</i>	(O Galaxy)
ॐ तपः	<i>Om Tapa-ha</i>	(O Infinite Galaxies)
ॐ सत्यम्	<i>Om Satyam</i>	(O Truth)
ॐ तत्सवितुः वरेण्यं	<i>Om Tatsa-Vitu-hu Warenyam</i>	
भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि	<i>Bhar-go Dewasya Dheemahi</i>	
धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात्	<i>Dheeyo Yo Na-ha Prachodayat</i>	

(We contemplate the most radiant  
lustre of the Supreme, the God.  
May he inspire our intellect)