



Wedding Veils Are Meant to Be Removed

Veils, even flimsy gossamer veils, form a barrier. whose removal signals intimate access. It shouldn't surprise you that veils appear both in weddings and in worship.

**Veils appear in weddings and in worship.
Their removal signals intimate access in both relationships.**

We find wedding veils in many cultures and across history, always with the same scenario: the wedding begins, the veil is taken away, the two become one, and each sees the other clearly. In some cultures, grooms don't even get a glimpse of their bride until after the wedding. Jacob had no idea that he'd married Leah instead of Rachel, because a veil hid his bride from his eyes. In today's conservative Islamic cultures, a veil hides a Muslim woman from her betrothed, and even after marriage a veil continues to separate her from all men not belonging to her family. But whether the culture is conservative or less formal, removing the veil signals a new depth of relationship.

It isn't always the bride who wears the veil. Some years ago, I was mesmerized by a newspaper photo of an Indian wedding. In the picture the bride and groom stood on opposite sides of a large veil separating them from each other. Not until someone else removed that barrier could they stand face-to-face. Then, but not before, each had full access to the other. I rather like the Indian symbolism; it suggests balanced mutuality: both are veiled from each other... and then both can see and be seen.

Only the bride wears a veil in Christian and Jewish weddings. Everyone gets to watch as the groom lifts his bride's veil, touches her lips with his own, and each of them (as in all weddings) anticipates further intimacy to come. Everyone gets to listen as they promise each other faithfulness. I love the words, and I loved saying these words (and hearing them) in my own wedding. But I think, if I could do it over again, I would add the Indian custom to our words. Someone else would remove the veil between us, and, in an instant, each of us would be unveiled to the other. How symbolic. How meaningful. How mutual. The action adds richness to the words.

I love the idea of someone else removing the veil – especially since that what God does for the wedding *He* has planned.

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This post offers content from my current book-in-progress:
Sex & Worship: The Presence of Intimacy, Passion, and Pleasure.
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