



NORTH AMERICAN HINDU ASSOCIATION



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We are pleased to provide you with the description of the Hindu Wedding Ceremony. If you wish to duplicate the information and distribute to the guests at a Wedding, please complete the requested information on this page. The permission to reproduce is usually granted quickly.

ID# _____

Date _____

Name of the Groom: _____

Name of the Bride: _____

Wedding date: _____

If you plan to make any changes to the text, please let us know. You may substitute the actual names of the Bride and the Groom or other related parties in the text.

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May the Lord bless you with Health, Wealth, and Peace for your Good Karmas.

Jai Shree Krishna

Title Page



The Hindu

Marriage Ceremony

Groom and Bride

Date

Ceremony Priest: Name, Location of Wedding

Program

Time: To-From Wedding Ceremony

Time: To-From Reception, Photo Sessions

Time: To-From Dinner

Time: To-From Entertainment

The program can be as personalized as one wishes.



Introduction

The traditional Indian wedding customs were formatted more than 35 centuries ago. Each ceremony, each occasion, and each ritual has a deep philosophical meaning and purpose. The ceremony is performed in Sanskrit, the most ancient surviving language.

The act of marriage is the onset of Grihastha, the householder stage of life. Hindus believe that this is one of the most challenging and difficult stage of the four stages of life.

There are many versions of this marriage ceremony, each based on one of the Vedic scriptures. However, most have these common features in some order.

Significance of the Ceremonial Events

Mangal Vadya:

The auspicious wedding day begins with the Mangal Vadya, the playing of the Shahenai, a traditional reed flute- like wind instrument of Indian Classical Music, and the Nubat, the small drums.

Swagatam (Welcoming the Bridegroom):

The Groom arrives with his family and friends at the entrance to the wedding hall where he is warmly greeted by the Bride's family and friends.

The Groom is first greeted by a young maiden, the Bride's younger sister or niece, holding a water pot to quench his thirst as well as to ward off evil spirits. Next, the Bride's mother welcomes the Groom. She performs the ceremony to ward off the evil spirits he may have encountered on the way to the wedding. He is then asked to break the Saapath (the earthen clay pot) symbolizing his strength and virility. Then he is led to the Lagna Mandap (Stage) where the wedding ceremony is performed.

Bridal Entrance:

The Bride is brought to the Lagna Mandap by her Mama (maternal uncle) and is seated behind a white curtain, a symbol of traditional barriers. After the bride's father thanks the Gods, the curtain is removed and the couple exchange flower garlands. Vermala, made up of cotton threads, are bestowed upon the Bride and the Groom to proclaim acceptance of each other.



Ganesh Puja (Invocation to the Lord Ganesh & Other Gods):

The wedding ceremony begins with the worship of Lord Ganesh, the remover of all obstacles. The ceremonial offerings are also made to Varuna, Lord of the Seas. A copper vessel containing water¹, flowers², and coconut³ is worshipped. This is followed by the worship of the Lords of five basic elements of creation, namely fire, earth, water, air, and light.

Kanya Daan (Giving away of the Bride):

The Bride's parents invoke the Gods and tell the Groom, "On this Holy Occasion, we will give our daughter who is a symbol of Lakshmi, Goddess of Prosperity, to you in the presence of the Sacred Fire, friends, and relatives."

Hasta Melap (Joining of the Hands):

The couple is united by placing the Bride's right hand in the Groom's right hand. The ends of the scarves worn by the Bride and the Groom are then tied together signifying unity. The couple vows to remember the Divine; to look upon others with sympathy, love, and compassion; to be strong and righteous; and to show goodwill, respect, and affection to each other's families.

Mangal Fera (Circling the Sacred Fire):

The marriage is solemnized before the Lord Agni (the Sacred Fire). Lord Agni is the symbol of light, power, and purity and acts as the principal witness to the ceremony. The invocations and offerings are also made to Lords of the nine planets to remove all obstacles and bless the Bride and the Groom. The Bride and the Groom circle the fire four times⁴. The Groom leads the bride in the first three rounds. The Bride, representing Shakti, the Divine Energy, leads in the last round. At the end of each round the Bride's brother or cousin gives offerings for the Sacred Fire. The first three represent the material wealth of cows, silver, and gold. The last one represents the gift of the Bride herself to her new family. At the end of the ceremony, the bride stands to the groom's left, where she has taken a place closest to his heart.

Mangal Sutra and Sindoor:

The Groom offers Mangal Sutra (a sacred necklace made of black beads) to his wife and places Sindoor (a red powder) on her forehead. Both signify the mark of a married woman and symbols of his love, integrity, and devotion towards her.

¹ signifying the purity of the holy river Ganges and other holy rivers.

² signifying the beauty and pure joy.

³ signifying fertility.

⁴ signifying the four canons of Hinduism, Dharma(religious duties), Artha(worldly duties), Kama(sex or playful duties), and Moksha(spiritual duties).



Saptapadi (The Seven Steps): The Bride and the Groom take seven steps around or toward the sacred fire representing the seven principles and promises to each other⁵:

Together, we will acquire energy to share in the responsibilities of married life.

Together, we will fill our hearts with strength and courage to accomplish all the needs of our life.

Together, we will prosper and share our worldly goods and we will work for the prosperity of our family.

Together, we will cherish each other in sickness and in health; in happiness and in sorrow.

Together, we will raise strong and virtuous children.

Together, we will fill our hearts with great joy, peace, happiness, and spiritual values. And

Together, we will remain lifelong partners by this matrimony.

The Bride and the Groom are now united and seek blessings from Lord Vishnu the Preserver and his consort Lakshmi, The Goddess of Wealth.

Ashirwad (Blessings): The couple seeks blessings from the Gods, parents, and elderly relatives by bowing to their feet. Married women from the family bless the bride by whispering “Akhanda Saubhagyawati Bhav” (blessing for abiding marital happiness) in the Bride’s right ear.

Vidaai (Good-bye): The last ritual of the ceremony is where the Bride begins an important role in her life as a wife and a member of the Groom’s family. She throws a handful of rice so that the house of her childhood remains prosperous and happy.

Thanks:

We would like to thank all of you for joining us in our celebration today. We feel blessed to have the support and unconditional love of such wonderful family and friends which has led to the happiness that we share today.

Names of the Bride, Groom, Parents, etc.

⁵ Manu Smruti,3,8-10.

