

1. **Welcome**

The Hindu wedding ceremony is based on traditions and rituals originating over forty centuries ago from the Sanskrit books of knowledge, known as the Vedas, which form the basis of Hinduism.

The ceremony takes place in a “mandap” (wedding canopy), which is built to represent the universe. Pots in the four corners of the *mandap* represent the earth and its four directions. The four pillars signify the four parents and their roles in raising the bride and groom. The flowers signify beauty and joy. The grains represent the food necessary to sustain life. The fire, representing Agni (God of Fire) is the divine witness of this union and brings warmth through the couple’s life.

2. **Vara Agamanam**

The groom and his family members are given a warm reception by the bride’s family at the entrance, while the officiating priest chants “vedic mantras”.

3. **Gowri Pooja**

In a private ceremony before the start of the wedding, the bride performs a pooja to invoke the blessings of Goddess Gowri, the icon of an ideal wife for a long, prosperous and happy married life.

4. **Ganesh Pooja**

The ceremony begins with a prayer to Lord Ganesha, the remover of all obstacles. Ganesh Pooja is performed by the groom in the mandap by offering his prayers to Lord Ganesha, wishing for a successful marriage and requesting all impediments to be removed from their lives.

5. **Punyavachan**

TBD for Script

6. **Vara Pooja and Madhuparka**

In Hindu weddings, the groom is considered to be the personification of “Lord Vishnu - The Protector” and therefore, the bride’s father pays his respect and welcomes the groom (Vara) to the mandap.

7. **Vadhu Pravesha**

In a custom typical of the bride’s state in Maharashtra, the bride’s maternal uncle accompanies the bride to the mandap, as the bride holds a coconut, a symbol of purity. When the bride (Vadhu) is brought to the mandap, a curtain, called the “antarpata,” is placed between the bride and groom, so that they do not see each other till the auspicious time, the “muhurtam.”

8. **Antarpata, Mala Dharana and Jeelakarra-bellam**

At the auspicious time, the bride and groom place a paste of brown sugar, turmeric powder and cumin on each other’s heads; the three ingredients of the mixture represent their commitment to share their life through sweet and bitter times. The antarpata between the bride and the groom is then removed, signifying that the two separate individuals are now united in marriage. After that, the couple exchange floral garlands. The exchange of garlands is their formal acceptance of each other’s hand in marriage, and it is meant to signify the unification.

9. **Kanya Daan**

In this ritual, the bride accepts her change from an unmarried to a married woman by putting turmeric on her hands. Kanya Daan literally means, “giving of the bride.” The parents of the bride place the hands of their daughter in the hands of the groom. The bride’s parents ask the groom to accept their daughter as his equal partner throughout life.

10. Managalasutra Dharana

The “mangalasutra” is a sacred necklace that is the equivalent of a wedding band in western tradition. The mangalasutra is tied around the neck of the bride with three knots to represent the unification of two souls on three planes - physical, mental and spiritual.

11. Panigrahana

This literally means “holding of hands” to symbolize the groom’s acceptance of the bride. “Vedic Chants” are recited to confirm this acceptance and his promise to never hide anything from her. Normally, the bride holds her right hand fingers into a conical form upwards and the groom holds it in his right hand downwards by surrounding all her fingers.

12. Granthi Bandhana

The sisters of groom ties a knot between the bride’s sari and the groom’s scarf as a symbol of their strength and creation of a new entity. Five articles - a coin, flowers, green grass, turmeric, and rice grains are tied in the knot. The coin represents the joint ownership of the earnings, and property. Flowers in the knot apprise the couple of the necessity to be always smiling, relaxed and radiate happiness, and fragrance of virtues, so that their company is enjoyable. The grass symbolizes an everlasting and active feeling of love. The turmeric symbolizes the physical and mental health of the couple and is intended to let each spouse constantly strive to improve the health of their partner and never act to create emotional stress for the other. The rice grains are added as a reminder of the couple’s responsibilities towards their family and society.

13. Laaja Homa and Vivah Havan

In this ritual, the bride’s brother gives the bride three handfuls of puffed rice, and the groom adds a drop of butter as he recites five “vedic mantras.” At the end of each “mantra,” the bride offers the rice to the ceremonial fire and prays to “Yama”- the God of Death, that he grant the groom a long life filled with health, happiness, prosperity, and happy, long marriage.

14. Shilarohana

This ritual depicts the courage, stability, and determination that the bride will need in her new life as a married woman. The husband helps her to step onto a stone as both counsel each other to prepare for a new family with the stone representing strength and trust. This also signifies that the relationship between the couple is to be unshakeable and that the bride’s position in their household is very crucial.

15. Saptapadi

A very important part of the wedding is the homage paid by the couple to “Agni,” the fire God. The couple, with the wedding knot in place, takes seven steps, or “Saptapadi,” together circling the fire, feeding it with butter and twigs as sacrificial fuel. Each step is an oath the bride and groom make to

each other, and is an important part of the ceremony with God as a guide. With the first step, for plenty of pure and nourishing food; With the second step, for the mental, physical and spiritual strength to lead a healthy life; With the third step, for preserving wealth and prosperity in life; With the fourth step, for attainment of happiness and harmony by mutual love and trust in all walks of life; With the fifth step, for the welfare of all living beings in the Universe and pray for virtuous, noble, and heroic children; With the sixth step, for a long, joyous life and togetherness forever; With the seventh and last step, for understanding, companionship, loyalty and unity.

After the seventh step, the groom says to the bride: “With seven steps, we have become friends. Let me reach for your friendship. Let me not be severed from your friendship. Let your friendship not be severed from me.” Only after the seven steps, the couple is announced as husband and wife.

16.

Kaan Pilan

17. Toe Ring Wearing

18.

Aarthi Ashirwada and Veda Mantra

As a symbol of wholeness and unending commitment, the husband and wife exchange rings. The newly married couple then seeks the blessings of the priest, family and friends. The family and friends bestow their blessings by showering them with flower petals and “akshata,” the colored rice grains.

19.

Arundhati and Sapta Rishi Darshan