

## **The Hindu wedding ceremony**

Subha Vivaha or ceremonial marriage seeks to unite two souls housed by two separate bodies into one spirit. The rituals performed in the ceremony are rooted in Vedic tradition which dates back thousands of years. The wedding is conducted in Sanskrit and then translated in English. Gujarati and Hindu as per the family's wishes.

### **Ganesh Pooja – A prayer to Lord Ganesh**

Before the wedding ceremony begins, a prayer is offered to Lord Ganesh to ask for his blessing and for all obstacles to be removed. This is undertaken by the bride.

### **Pokwanu -Arrival & welcoming of the groom**

The groom arrives at the wedding with his family and friends. They are formally greeted by the bride's family and friends. The bride's mother then applies tilak (red vermilion powder) on the groom's forehead. The groom then steps on a down on a clay pot breaking it into pieces demonstrating that he has the power to overcome all the obstacles that the couple may face in their married life. He is then escorted to the mandap where the marriage ceremony is held.

### **Kanya Aagman – Arrival of the bride**

Bride, led by her maternal uncles, enters the Mandap where a veil of white cloth (Antarpat) is held in front of groom to prevent him from seeing her. Whilst chanting the verses (Manglashtak) the veil is removed, bride and groom exchange garlands (Jai-Mala). Note, The bride offers the first garland and by doing so declares she has chosen the groom at free will. The groom then returns the compliment by offering her a garland in return as a welcome and promise to look after her.

### **Madhuparka – The couple's feet are washed**

The right foot of the bride and groom is washed as a sign of respect. The bride is regarded as the representative of the goddess Laxami and the groom of god Vishnu.

### **Kumbha Sthapana Brahmin – Priest invites gods to witness ceremony**

The priest invites Lord Ganesh, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva to bless and to witness the ceremony.

### **Hastamelap/Kanyadan -Giving away the bride**

The bride's parents express their wishes to give away their daughter in marriage. They do this by placing their daughter's right hand in the groom's right hand. The couple are advised to remember the Supreme Lord and look upon each other with respect and compassion. They are advised to be righteous and to show goodwill and affection towards each other's families.

### **Cheda Chedi**

The bride's sister/cousin sister takes the groom and bride's clothes and ties a knot symbolizing eternal love. May this love always be tied and stay strong regardless of any difficulties that they face in life.

### **Barmala**

A long garland made of colourful thread placed on the groom and the bride as a symbol of blessing from both parents.

### **Haven – A small fire is lit**

A small fire is lit. The couple offer prayers to Agni (lord of fire) symbolizing light, power and purity by placing Ghee (Purified butter), in the flames. These prayers hold special importance, for it is Agni that dispels darkness and ignorance from our lives and leads us to eternal light and knowledge.

### **Mangal Fera - Circle the holy fire**

The couple circle the holy fire four times with their wedding scarves tied together. The four circles symbolize the four basic goals of Hindu life:

**Dharma-** Morality, Ethics and Goodness

**Artha-** Wealth and Prosperity

**Karma-** Love, Fertility and Family

**Moksha-** Spiritual Liberation through Self-realization

### **Saptapadi- Seven Steps**

**Seven steps are taken together by the bride and groom signifying the following seven vows:**

**Step 1:** To share happiness and sadness, pleasure and pain

**Step 2:** To look after our family and loved ones

**Step 3:** To forever be devoted to each other, maintaining our moral responsibilities

**Step 4:** To enjoy the good times as well as the bad

**Step 5:** To care for one another's future physical needs for the duration of our lives together

**Step 6:** To remain true and forever faithful to one another

**Step 7:** To endorse and demonstrate helpfulness, charitable and righteous behavior

### **Sindur- Apply red vermilion powder to bride**

The groom applies sindoor (red vermilion powder) on the bride's hair symbolizing her as a married woman.

### **Mangal Sutra Dharan – Groom offers necklace to the bride**

A golden necklace is offered by the groom to the bride. The black beads signify protection from evil power, to protect their marriage life. Similar idea to an English wedding, where a wedding ring is presented instead.

### **Kansar – Bride and groom exchange sweets**

The groom applies sindoor (red vermilion powder) on the bride's hair symbolizing her as a married woman.

### **Akhand Saubhagyavati – Married women offer their blessings**

Four married women, two from each side of the couple's family greet them and whisper good wishes into the bride's ear.

### **Vidai - Farewell to the bride**

The Vidai is a very emotional part of the ceremony. The bride and groom depart and the bride's family sees her off. The bride bids a tearful farewell to her family as she leaves her parent's home to build a new life.