



THE HINDU WEDDING PROCEUDRE

A Hindu wedding is a religious ceremony performed in accordance with rites laid down in Vedas, Sutras and Puranas, which are ancient Hindu Scriptures. A Hindu wedding consists of a series of independent rituals, each of which has a deeper religious and spiritual significance.

1) **GANESH PUJA** (Worship of Lord Ganesh)

Before undertaking any auspicious celebration, Hindus pray to Lord Ganesh, the deity of peace & remover of obstacles. The puja (prayer) is undertaken asking Him for His blessings & asking Him to prevail during the ceremony & throughout the lives of Newlyweds.

2) **GAURIHAR PUJA** (Worship of Goddess Gauri)

Gauri is the wife of the Lord Shiva. Gauri & Shiva are a model of an ideally wedded couple whose life is to be emulated. In Hindu mythology, they are the father and mother of the world. The bride worships Gauri & is then led to the Mandap (marriage hall).

3) **MADHUPARKA** (Welcoming Of the Groom)

Bride's family welcomes the Bridegroom & his family. The mother of a bride places a Tilak (sandalwood paste) on Groom's forehead & offers him sweets. She then offers him a coconut for Good Health & prosperity. The Groom is escorted to the Mandap by the bride's father where the ritual of welcoming the groom (Madhuparka) takes place.

4) **MANGALASHTAK** (Wedding Hymns)

A decorative shawl (Antarpaat) is held between the Bride & Groom until the auspicious moment of their union, while the priest chants eight Hymns. At the end of the each verse, the assembled guests shower coloured rice or flower petals on the couple and wish them happiness. Garlands are then exchanged by the couple to signify their mutual acceptance as husband & wife.

5) **KANYADAN** (Giving away of the Bride)

The Bride's parents give away their daughter by placing her hand in the Groom's. He then takes a vow whilst holding the bride's hand. This is known as Hasta-Melap, which signifies the union of the two souls. Water which is consecrated at the time of Ganesh Puja is poured by the bride's mother into her husband's hands. From there it flows into the groom's hands, then to the bride's hands and finally into a large plate. This signifies the union of the two families.

6) **MANGALSUTRA BHANDHAN** (Wearing of a wedding necklace)

The Groom places the Mangalsutra, the traditional gold wedding necklace with black beads with a pendant, around bride's neck. Rings can also be exchanged at this time if required).

7) **VIVAHA HOM and LAJA HOM** (Taking oaths in front of fire)

Fire is the agent through whom offerings are made to the Gods who live in the skies. A sacred fire is kindled as a divine witness & sanctifier of Hindu rites; the marriage ceremony is performed in front of it. The groom takes an important oath at this time. Offerings of ghee (clarified milk fat) and puffed rice are made by the couple into the fire.

8) GANTHI BANDHAN

A knot is tied between the bride's Sari & the Groom's shawl to symbolise that they are joined together for life.

9) MANGAL PHERA - Vivaha Homa and Laja Homa: (Circumambulating the Fire four times). The couple make offerings to gods via Agni, the God of Fire. They then hold each other's hand & walk around the Fire four times. The Phera's (circumambulation) represent

Dharma (inculcating Moral values)

Artha (attaining Prosperity)

Kama (obtaining married bliss)

And Moksha (union with God)

At the end of each phera, the bride steps on a stone. This signifies that in spite of all the difficulties, she remains steadfast just like a rock, unshaken in a storm. Puffed rice is offered to the sacred fire symbolising prosperity & unity amongst the two families.

10) SAPTA -PADI (Seven vows taken by the couple)

This is the final wedding ritual. The couple takes 7 symbolic steps together to promise each other a lifetime of friendship & fidelity.

- 1) By the first step, let our love become firm.
- 2) By the Second step, we promise to provide each other with courage & strength and sharing in both happiness & sorrow.
- 3) By the Third step, we promise to love each other with honesty, devotion & faithfulness.
- 4) By the Fourth step, we promise to build a home of comfort & security.
- 5) By the Fifth step, we promise through love & trust to bring children to our family.
- 6) By the Sixth step, we pray for a long life together.
- 7) By the Seventh step, you assure me of your lifelong friendship & cooperation.

The Sapta-Padi ceremony concludes with a prayer that the union is indissoluble. At the end of this ceremony, the bride and groom are declared husband & wife by the priest.

11) SINDOOR (Red auspicious powder)

The Groom puts Sindoor in the parting of bride's hair to welcome her into his life as his eternal partner.

12) ASHIRVAAD (Blessings)

The Bride and Groom place sweets in each other's mouth, once again sealing the marriage & nourishment of body & soul. The Newlyweds are blessed first by the priest, then their parents & family members for a happy and long married life.

13) MONITUM & SIGNING OF THE CERTIFICATES

Finally, in accordance with the Section 46 of the Marriage Act 1961, the celebrant must say the following, also known as monitum, to the persons getting married.

I am duly authorised by law to solemnise marriages according to Australian Law

Before you are joined in marriage in my presence and in the presence of these witnesses, I am to remind you the solemn and binding nature of the relationship into which you are now about to enter.

Marriage, according to law in Australia, is the union of 2 people, to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life.

After these words are said, the celebrant then asks for 2 witnesses who are over 18 years of age to come forward.

The couple finally sign the marriage certificates witnessed by two friends and the priest. The priest then declares that they are now officially married.