

Reading Ex. > Hindu Marriage Rituals



According to Hindu Sastra there are four stages of life, of which *Grahashta Ashram* or married life signifies the second stage. It begins when a man and a woman come together and marry. In India, marriage is treated as an institution, which teaches the actual values of life. Every stage in life has its own charm and a married life is no exception. In India, a marriage is usually **arranged** by the respective parents of the bride and the groom and follows various steps. Marriage among Hindus is considered a union of two souls and of two families.

Hindu Marriage Rituals & Customs

A Hindu wedding not only involves the bride and groom but the entire community, friends, family, and relatives as everybody participates in their coming together of the to-be couple. The first and the foremost step is the selection of the bride and the bridegroom. While in love marriages a boy and a girl themselves select their life partner, it is crucial when it comes to arranged marriages. Talking about arranged marriages in the Hindu custom, the parents select the prospective bride/groom for their son/daughter.

6A After the selection procedure is over, the family members of both the girl and boy ask the priest to suggest an **auspicious** date for the engagement of the two also known as *misri* or ring ceremony. **6B** Since India boasts of diverse cultures and traditions, the engagement ceremony rituals differ from region to region and community to community. **6C** In the betrothal ceremony, the to-be bride, and the groom exchange wedding rings among each other. **6D** Sweets and garlands are also exchanged between the couple.

After the festive spirit of engagement, the next important ritual is the *mehndi party*. **7A** It is believed that the color of mehndi signifies the essence of love in a marriage, so it is put on bride's hand to **strengthen** that bond of love. **7B** The bride's family and friends mainly celebrate this ceremony. **7C** The female friends and family

members of the bride rejoice and celebrate this occasion, as henna gets painted on her hands and feet. **7D** Singing traditional songs and dancing to the beat of music forms a major part of this ritual.

Among the other important rituals is the *Sangeet party*, wherein all the family members and friends of the bride and groom celebrate, by singing and dancing the night away. Along with song and dance there are arrangements for food and drink. A large affair, Sangeet party is most popular among Punjabis, Marwaris and Gujaratis, although most of the regions today also practice this ritual. *Chari puja* is also another important religious ceremony, which is **performed** on the eve of the wedding day at the groom and bride's place separately.

On the morning of the wedding day, *Pithi* or *Haldi*, the cleansing ceremony is practiced during which the bride and bridegroom are pasted with turmeric powder in their respective homes, as a part of their beautification process. Talking about the actual marriage ceremonies, the Hindu wedding mostly takes place in a tent, which is beautifully decorated with flowers. The main Hindu wedding ceremony is a long and elaborate affair, which lasts for several hours and is attended by relatives, close friends, and some acquaintances.

One of the most significant rituals the bride and the groom perform is the *Saptapadi* or *saat phere* around a pit of fire signifying God Agni. While the couple takes the seven circles around the fire in an enclosed seating area called *mandap*, the priest or *purohit* recites the mantras and speak of the real essence and significance of marriage.

During this time the groom also applies *sindoor* on the center parting of the bride's hair and puts a *mangalsutra* around her neck. Both *sindoor* and *mangalsutra* have strong religious implications and are sacred symbols of a married woman to show her commitment with her husband.

Test taken and adapted from <http://weddings.iloveindia.com/indian-weddings/hindu-marriage/hindu-marriage-rituals.html>

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Vocabulary Clues > Choose the best answer that may replace each word in bold.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1. arranged > | a. classified | b. planned | c. managed | d. accepted |
| 2. auspicious > | a. promising | b. affordable | c. superstitious | d. exact |
| 3. strengthen > | a. purify | b. close | c. make stronger | d. establish |
| 4. performed > | a. made | b. organized | c. practiced | d. celebrated |
| 5. acquaintances > | a. authorities | b. neighbors | c. contacts | d. parents |

Inserting sentences into passages

Look at the four squares [■] that indicate where the following sentence can be added to the third paragraph of the text.

6. However, the basic of all the rituals, mentioned here, form an indispensable part of Hindu wedding.

Look at the four squares [■] that indicate where the following sentence can be added to the fourth paragraph of the text.

7. Apart from the bride, the family members also get their hands painted with henna.

Order a sequence of events > Organize the 7-step process of an Indian wedding correctly. Use numbers (1-7).

- | | | |
|--|---------------------|------------------------------|
| _____ Betrothal ceremony | _____ Mendhi party | _____ Misri or ring ceremony |
| _____ Pithi or Haldi | _____ Sangeet party | _____ Wedding ceremony |
| _____ Selection of the bride and the groom | | |

Identifying facts > Decide if the following statements are TRUE, FALSE or NOT GIVEN.

15. For Hindu Sastra the married life represents the second most important stage of life. _____
16. In the Hindi tradition a marriage implies only the bond between the groom and the bride. _____
17. The bride and the groom cannot choose a date for their engagement. _____
18. The wedding rings are bought for the groom's family or the groom himself. _____
19. The henna is applied only on the bride's hands. _____
20. The ceremony that involves the seven rounds is one of the most important features. _____
21. The cleansing ceremony must be performed during all the morning of the wedding day. _____
22. The *sindoor* is worn by the groom during the wedding. _____

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