# The Hindu Wedding Ceremony

The Hindu wedding is a sacrament solemnized in accordance with the Hindu Scriptures (Vedas) which date back over 5,000 years. The ceremony, which is performed in the ancient Indian language of Sanskrit, consists of a sequence of rituals meant to unite two souls eternally. The wedding takes place in the Kalyana Mandapam (wedding pavilion), which is built to symbolize the Universe. According to the Vedas, the Universe is surrounded by twenty-seven constellations, protected by nine planets, and guided by laws given by the lords of the eight quarters of the world.

## Sequence of Auspicious Rituals

### Gowri Pooja

Upon arrival to the temple, the bride offers prayers to the Goddess Gowri Devi, who represents power and womanhood.

### Kaasi Yaathra & Swaagatham - Greeting of the Groom

This event signifies the possible conflict in the Groom’s mind about entering married life. The brother of the bride convinces the groom about the significance of the life a householder and the virtues of the bride, and escorts him to the Kalyana Mandapam. The Groom is welcomed ceremoniously to the assemblage by ladies from the bride’s party.

### Ganapathi Pooja

It is customary to offer a prayer to Lord Ganapathi (Remover of Obstacles) at the beginning of every Hindu Ceremony. He ensures that the marriage rituals will take place without impediments and that the bride and groom will share a happy life together.

### Punyaahavachanam - Purification

A special vessel (Kalasam) is prepared and all of the sacred rivers are invited to contribute their waters to fill this vessel. This water is then used to sanctify the materials and the site of the ceremony, while chanting Vedic hymns. According to Hindu tradition, this must be done in the presence of Agni (the Holy Fire), and the invited guests.

### Raksha Bandhanam

Mantras and hymns are chanted by the priest to protect the bride and groom against any evil spirits during the ceremony. A yellow thread (Raksha) is tied to the wrists of the bride and the groom to offer them protection.

### Vadhu Kalyana Vedika Pravesam - Arrival of the Bride

The bride, accompanied by her friends and close members of her family, is escorted to the Kalyana Mandapam. The bride’s parents receive the bride, who arrives with a purnakumbha, a coconut decorated with pasupu and kumkum. The bride will be seated between her parents and in front of the bridegroom, and a screen is placed between the bride and groom.

### Kanya Daanam - Giving away the Bride

The parents of the bride offer her hand to the bridegroom in marriage, placing the care of their cherished daughter in his hands. The groom accepts the bride as his equal partner and agrees to marry her.

### Sumuhurtham

At the exact auspicious moment, a paste made from cumin seed and brown sugar is placed by the bride and the groom on each other’s head, with the cloth screen still in place. Following this, the screen is removed, and they look at each other. The couple is now married. The paste is believed to signify a harmonious mental union.

### Maangalya Dharanam - Tying of the Sacred Thread

A gold pendant (Mangalasutra) strung on a sacred thread is tied around the neck of the bride with three knots in Maangalyadharana. The three knots represent the Trimurthis, or the Holy Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara). This is a significant movement in Hindu ceremony.

### Maaladhaarana

The bride and the bridegroom exchange festive garlands.

### Talambraalu - Akshathaaropanam

The bride and the groom joyously shower each other with turmeric coated rice to ensure long life, prosperity, and happiness.

### Brahma Mudi

The ends of the saree pallu of the bride and the uttariya of the groom are tied together, signifying the union of their souls in the presence of elders.

### Aashirvaadam

The priest recites selected hymns from the Hindu scriptures invoking blessings of all the Gods, and wishes prosperity to the newlyweds as well as those who witnessed the ceremony. The bride and the groom bow their heads first to God, then to the priest, and finally to their parents and elders seeking blessings from all present. Turmeric-coated rice is sprinkled on the heads of the newlyweds by all the elders, and everyone present blesses the couple.

### Vivaha Homam

Agni, who is the messenger to the heavens and is symbolized by the light and fire, is invited and worshipped by the bride & groom. They offer rice into the fire and pray for their happiness and prosperity.

### Saptapadi (Seven Steps) & Agni Pradarshinam

The bride and groom hold hands and walk seven steps around the sacred fire symbolizing the seven marital vows. The bride and bridegroom make promises to each other in front of the seven Rishis (holy sages) who are invoked for the occasion.

* The first step for togetherness, respect, honor, and prosperity.
* The second step to develop physical and emotional health and strength.
* The third step to bless them with longevity of life.
* The fourth step to acquire knowledge, happiness, and harmony.
* The fifth step to bless them with healthy children.
* The sixth step to enjoy cheerful seasons together.
* The seventh step to symbolize mutual love, friendship, and companionship.

### Mangala Haarati

The ceremony ends when the friends of the family bring the sacred lights to the newlyweds and wish them happiness and prosperity.

### Arundhati Darshanam

The priest points out in the sky to the bride and the groom the seven stars representing seven Rishis and the star Arundhathi. The couple prays to obtain their blessings.