# Vedic Wedding Ceremony

“I knowingly accept you as you knowingly accept me. May we remain together for a hundred autumns”

At its core, this ancient ceremony unites two individual souls spiritually, mentally and physically. The bond of matrimony is sacred and the ceremony of marriage is conducted according to Vedic traditions that date back some three thousand years BC. This ceremony originated from the Vedas (which are the most sacred scriptures of Hinduism). Although the rituals have been simplified considerably in modern times, Hindu culture still attaches a deep significance to them today. Each step of the ceremony has a profound spiritual meaning and a life affirming purpose. The ceremony will be conducted in Sanskrit, one of the most ancient languages of the world and translated for you by the priest. Most of the Mantras (hymns) are taken from the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda and the Puranas. The brief description of each part of the ceremony that follows will explain the meaning of the rituals. In Hindu tradition, marriage is viewed as the second stage of the four stages of life. As well as being the union of two souls, it is also regarded as a bond between two families.

Pokwanu ***Arrival/Welcoming of the Groom***

Emily’s family formally greets Jignesh and his family and friends. Gillian (Emily’s mother) applies tilak (red vermilion powder) on Jignesh’s forehead and he then steps 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. Jignesh is then escorted to the mandap where the marriage ceremony is held.

Kanya Aagman ***Arrival of the Bride***

Emily is led by her father, David, to enter the Mandap where a veil of cloth (Antarpat) is held in front of Jignesh to prevent him from seeing her. Whilst reciting the verses (Manglashtak), the veil is removed and the bride and groom exchange garlands (Jai-Malas). Emily offers the first garland and by doing so declares she has chosen the groom at free will. Jignesh will return the compliment by offering her a garland in return as a welcome to a new life and with a promise to look after her.

## Kumbha Sthapana

The Brahmin (Priest) invites Lord Vishnu to join the ceremony. He then explains the ‘definition’ of the marriage and its commitments as outlined in the Vedic Scriptures.

### Sankalpa

*The Brahmin announces where, when and between whom the marriage is taking place.*

Hastamelap/Kanyadan ***Giving Away the Bride***

Gillian and David express their wishes to give away their daughter in marriage. They give their daughter to Jignesh by placing her right hand in his right hand. Emily and Jignesh are advised to remember the Supreme Lord and all the deities and look upon each other with respect love and compassion. They are advised to be strong and righteous and to show goodwill and affection towards each other’s families.

## Cheda Chedi

Taking the groom and brides clothes Jignesh’s female cousin, Krishna, ties the 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 colorful thread placed on the groom and the bride as a symbol of blessing from both parents.*

### Havan

*A small fire is lit. The couple offers prayers to Agni (Lord of Fire) symbolizing light, power and purity by placing Ghee (purified butter), rice and flowers in the flames. These prayers have a special importance, for it is Agni that dispels the darkness and ignorance from our lives and leads us to eternal light and knowledge.*

Mangal Fera ***Around the Holy Fire***

Emily and Jignesh circle the holy fire four times. The four feras (circles) represent the four basic goals of Hindu Life:

* **Dharma:** *Moral sense to lead a good life*
* **Artha:** *Prosperity*
* **Kama:** *Energy and passion*
* **Moksha:** *Liberation through self-realisation*

Saptapadi ***Seven Steps***

Emily and Jignesh take seven steps to symbolise the beginning of their journey together for life. The couple take seven vows as they receive blessings from the priest and everyone present:

**Step 1:** *Together we share joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. With this first step together, wherever you are, there I will be*
**Step 2:** *We shall protect our family. For our mutual contentment, we take this second step together*
**Step 3:** *We shall always be devoted to each other and to our moral duties. We will remain even tempered and sweetly spoken to one another*
**Step 4:** *We shall enjoy the good times and endure the rough ones together and with this fourth step we shall abide by our mutual wishes*
**Step 5:** *We shall await and attend to our physical needs, and with this fifth step together we will care for each other throughout our lives together*
**Step 6:** *Committed to honesty towards each other, we will forever stay faithful with this sixth step together*
**Step 7:** *We will be ready to lessen human suffering and to promote human good and charity; with this seventh step together we will act on the path of Dharma (righteousness)*

## Sindur

Jignesh places sindhoor (red vermillion powder) on Emily’s hair symbolizing her as a married woman.

## Mangal Sutra Dharan

Similar to concept of the English wedding ring, a golden necklace is presented by Jignesh to Emily. The black beads signify protection from evil. It is believed to protect their marriage, their lives and represents togetherness, love and sacred union.

## Kansar

Exchange of sweets (mithai) between the couple is a symbolic gesture that they will provide for each others needs and prosperity in their household life.

Aashirwad ***Blessings***

The priest by recitation of Vedic mantras offers sacred blessings to Emily and Jignesh. The newly wed couple at this time seeks blessing from the priest, their parents, relatives and their friends for a happily married life together.

Akhand Saubhagyavati ***Blessings from Married Women***

Invited married women from both families greet the couple and whisper good wishes (luck, prosperity and happiness in Emily’s right ear).

Vidai ***Departure***

Emily and Jignesh depart. The bride’s family sees her off. The farewell to Emily by her family is emotional, filled with tears, sorrow and joy, as she leaves her parent’s home to build a new life.