

Welcome to Isha and Anant's wedding on December 9th and 10th in Kolkata, India

About Indian Marwari Wedding

A Marwari wedding, like all Indian weddings, is celebrated with a lot of enthusiasm and exuberance. These weddings are also very grand and colorful. Authentic Marwari weddings are a throwback to the ages of the Vedas and the great Indian sears who described the rituals in great details in the Vedas.

But you should not even for once think that these rituals have become antediluvian. Strangely, they are still very relevant to the Indian context because there is a deep philosophical and scientific logic behind each of them.

And frankly speaking, without these quaint rituals, a Marwari wedding would be incomplete!

Marwari or Rajasthani weddings are strong rooted in culture and tradition, and so have a beautiful heritage quality about them that's worth knowing about. The wedding is an elaborate, regal and vibrant affair. Let's take a look at traditional Marwari wedding rituals and customs:

1. Mehendi

In Indian weddings, a lot of emphasis is given on customs and rituals and the same is reflected in the Mehndi ceremony before marriage. Mehendi is one of the sixteen adornments of the bride and her beauty is incomplete without it. Mehndi ceremony usually takes place just before marriage. According to the ritual, the bride does not step out of the house after this ceremony.

The Mehendi Ceremony generally takes place the day before the wedding, in the morning. The bride and the groom's family observe this ritual separately at their own residences. It is traditionally a women centric ceremony with the men of the family generally not participating. The outfits preferred for the ceremony are simple, in light colors, nothing too flashy.

Use of Mehendi in a pre-wedding ritual is not just cosmetic but has deep underlying scientific reasons behind it. Henna is known for its cooling properties and is supposed to calm the bride's nerves when applied to her hands and feet.

2.Tilak Ceremony

It can be said that the commencement of the wedding alliance begins from this ceremony itself. Indian Hindu weddings are very traditional and particular with regard to respective customs and traditions.

In India, the bridegroom and his family is placed in high regard. Therefore, after they get ready for the wedding the first ceremony which locks the seal is Tilak ceremony. It is usually attended by the male members of both the families. The father of the bride along with other associates visits the house of the groom. There he applies the auspicious tilak on the forehead of the groom to ensure that he is finally ready for marriage and also that the bride's family has accepted him as their would-be son in law.

A small event also takes place, wherein the priest chants prayers to seek blessings of the Lord. After this the brother of the bride applies tilak to the groom as a mark of respect and acceptance. He then endows him with gifts such as clothes, sweets, fruits, flowers, garlands and token money. All the other male members of the bride's family such as uncles, cousins etc also perform the same ritual to state their loving approval of the groom. The ceremony is followed by refreshments to celebrate the new accord between the duo families.

3. Sangeet

One of the most talked about pre-wedding events, the Sangeet, is a celebration of coming together of the two families in the union of their children. The ceremony offers respite from all the hectic seriousness of the wedding preparations.

Sangeet is celebrated by both the bride's and the groom's family together at a common venue. A grand stage is set where the performances take place. The choreographers teach cool dance steps to the entire relative bandwagon. The relatives perform in pairs or in groups. Generally the bride's and groom's parents have a set. Several sets of uncle and aunties from each side also prepare dance performances to popular Bollywood tunes. The sisters and brothers from each side will generally dance in groups or will perform skits. Even the bride and the groom take part in the performance, dancing to romantic numbers. DJs are hired to create an ambience where guest can dance their hearts out.

4. Haldaat or Haldi Ceremony

In Indian culture, *haldi* or turmeric holds a special place of honour. It is known for its anti-inflammatory and other healing properties, because of which it has become popular as a medicine as well. And, one area where it holds the most important place is when it comes to Indian traditions. In Indian weddings, this amazing ingredient has an entire ceremony to its name.

The *haldi* ceremony is the one in which a paste of *haldi* (*turmeric*) is applied on the bride and the groom's body before their wedding. This ceremony is held at both the bride and the groom's place, on the morning of the wedding day.

Why haldi holds such a special place?

1. To keep buri nazar (evil eye) away
2. The colour is auspicious
3. For that extra glow on the skin
4. As an antiseptic

5. Nikasi & Baraat

Nikasi – Just before the groom heads out for the wedding venue, an elaborate ritual involving tying of a headgear known as Sehra is practiced. The Sehra is tied around the groom's head and is either made of flowers or zari dangles or sometimes even with strings of pearls. This covers the groom's face. The Sehra is traditionally tied by the groom's brother-in-law, his sister's husband. His sister-in-law, brother's wife, then applies kajal from her eyes on the side of the groom's face to ward off evil energy. She also ties golden thread on the reins of the mare that the groom is supposed to mount.

Baraat – Baraat refers to the wedding procession accompanying the groom as he sets off for the wedding venue. He rides on a mare and has to carry a sword, a traditional reminder of the royal and military heritage of the region.

6. Varmala

The Varmala Ceremony, also referred to as Jaimala, is the commencement of the Hindu wedding, serving as the first time the Bride and Groom meet before starting the wedding ceremony. Mala is the Hindi word for garland, usually consisting of flowers bunched together on a string. The exchange represents the acceptance and union of their forthcoming nuptials.

7. Phera

Here, the bride and the groom go around the sacred fire seven times. For the first three Pheras, the bride precedes the groom, and during the last four she follows the groom around the fire. They utter the seven sacred vows of marriage while taking the Pheras and this seals their intent to stay together for the rest of their lives.

8. Bidai

The newlyweds then proceed to leave the bride's paternal home (the marriage venue) and leave for the groom's home. The bride's family bids her a tearful goodbye. A coconut is placed under the wheel of the car, which is supposed to be crushed once the car starts, bringing good omen for the trip. The bride lifts her veil for the first time in front of her husband and he gifts her a piece of jewelry.