

Ritika & Prakhar's Pre-Wedding and Wedding ceremonies and their significance

24th February, 2020

- 1- **12 Noon - Mehndi** : Mehndi or henna is hindi name of plant *Lawsonia inermis*. Henna plant leaves have been known to have healthy effect on skin. When Henna leaf paste is applied on hands and feet, it leaves dark red color within few hours of drying. Mehndi ceremony is a Shringaar (Beautification) ceremony, aimed at ritualistically beautifying the bride and groom and preparing them for their wedding day. It begins with the arrival of Mehndi from the groom's side after poojan (worship to god) for the bride. Mehndi ceremony is held a day before the actual wedding, the Mehndi ceremony is a fun-filled, nostalgic sit-down for the bride and groom, their cousins, siblings, friends, aunts and others. This is their day, filled with fun, laughter, songs, dances and games as each sit down for decoration with Mehndi over their hands and feet.
- 2- **1900 hrs - Sangeet** : A day before the actual wedding day, the families of both groom and bride celebrate the evening with music and dance program. Various solo, duet and group dance performances over traditional and Bollywood music are performed by families and friends. The music and dance filled evening sets the perfect mood for the wedding day.

25th February, 2020

- 3- **1000 hrs - Tilkotsav** : Tilak is a hindi word meaning a holy red colour vermilion mark put on the forehead of groom. Tilkotsav or Tilak ceremony is a pre-wedding ceremony. The ceremony is usually held in the groom's residence before the actual wedding. Father, Brother and cousins of bride visit groom's residence with Fruits, sweets and some gifts for groom. They also carry a white loin cloth, which is having the palm imprints of the bride with yellow colour prepared with turmeric paste. This is also a symbol of bride's acceptance of the wedding proposal and invitation to the groom to come for the wedding ceremony. A pooja (worship of god) is performed by the family priests, who chant hymns to bless the groom. The vermilion colour Tilak is applied by the bride's brother on the forehead of groom. This blesses the groom with good luck and prosperity.
- 4- **1130 hrs - Chooda** : Among the sweet and unforgettable memories of an Indian wedding, one ritual that holds a special position is the Chooda ceremony. Traditionally, a set of 21 bangles in red/maroon and white/ivory is selected for this ceremony by the bride's maternal uncle (mama) and aunt (mami). They gift the chooda to the bride during the ceremony. A puja (prayer) or havan is usually organised during the chooda ceremony. The bangles are first purified with milk and rose petals. Before it is put on the bride's wrist by her maternal uncle, all the close relatives touch the chooda as a mark of their blessings. The bride's sisters and friends tie the kalire to her chooda. They are golden or silver in colour. The significance is to provide good wishes to the bride and to remind her of her cousins and friends whom she is going to leave behind when she gets married.

5- **12 Noon - Haldi** : Haldi is hindi name for Turmeric. Turmeric is auspicious and has a special significance in Indian rituals. In the Indian cuisine, haldi or turmeric holds a special place of honour in our homes. It has anti-inflammatory and other healing properties, because of which it has become a popular medicine. And, it holds the most important place in Indian traditions. In Indian weddings, this amazing ingredient has an entire ceremony to its name. This ceremony is performed in the morning of the wedding day. A paste of haldi is applied on the bride and the groom's body before their wedding - by mother, aunts and sisters at their respective places. The mixture is believed to bless them before the wedding. After Haldi ceremony, they are only meeting each other during Jaimala ceremony.

6- **1700 hrs - Sehra bandi** : Sehra is the head-dress to be worn by the groom for wedding. Once the groom gets ready in wedding dress in the evening, the Sehra is tied in a small ceremony by groom's uncle. After sehra bandi, groom visit the temple and then joined by all the family members, relatives and friends at a place outside the house to carry out the Baraat (wedding) procession.

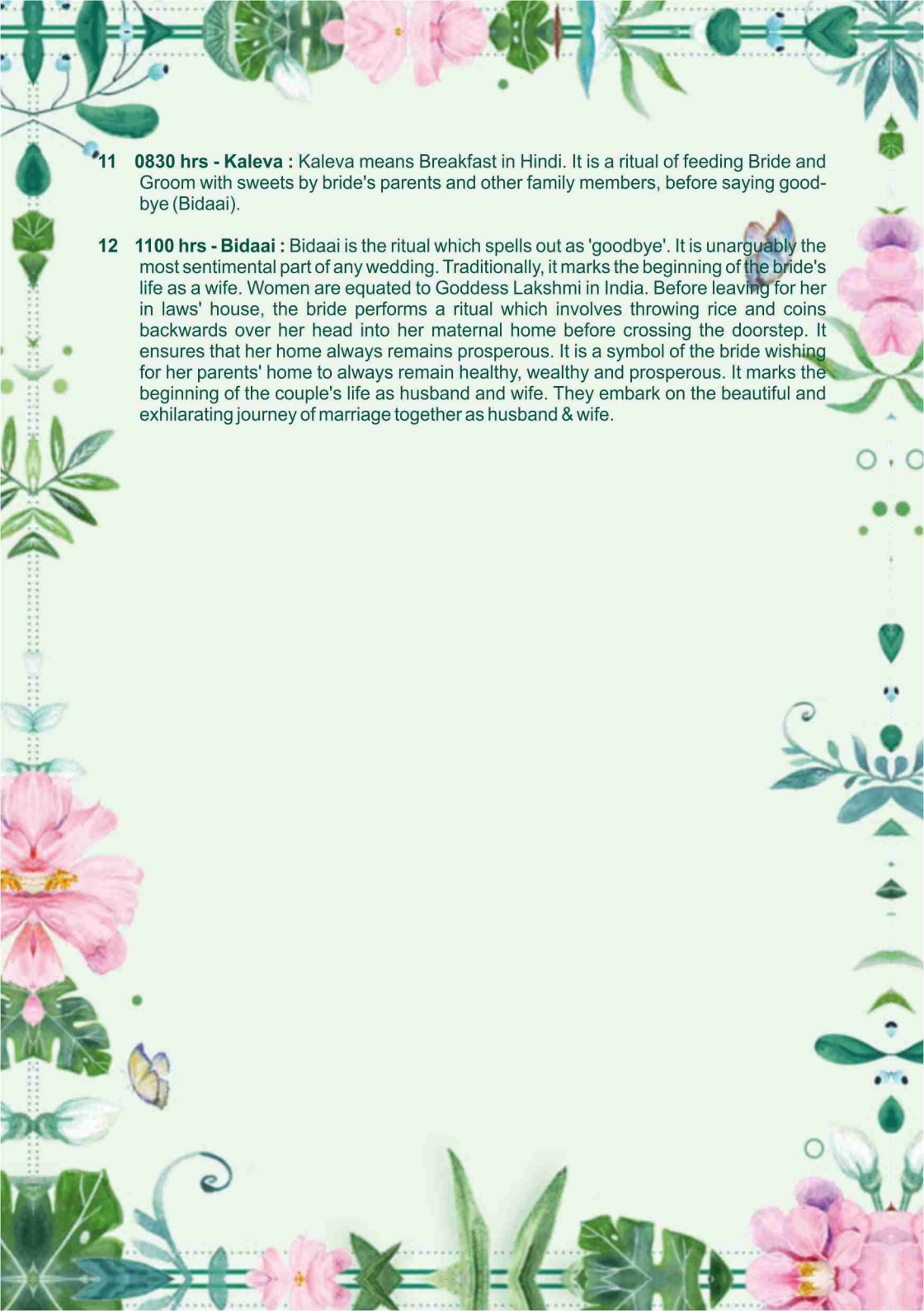
7- **1800 hrs - Baraat** : The groom rides on a decorated Buggy (Rath) driven by horses. All his relatives and friends move dancing with music played by well dresses band and move towards the Wedding hall in a procession. Usually, some distance is traveled in a procession from outside the wedding venue before it reaches to the wedding place for reception of the baraat.

8- **2000 hrs - Milni, Dwarchaar (Reception of Baraat)** : The wedding ceremony begins by the brides' family welcoming the groom and his family. When the procession reaches the wedding venue, bride's father, brother and close relatives welcome the groom and all the accompanying guests. There is a formal introduction among bride's and groom's parents, their brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts. A prayer is then read to Lord Ganesh (the elephant god) to shower blessings and remove obstacles from the ceremony if any.

9- **2100 hrs - Jai Mala** : After the Groom reaches the wedding hall, he is accompanied to the stage by bride's brother. Then bride enters the hall accompanied by her sisters and friends in colorful dresses. On the stage, groom and bride exchange the garlands (Mala) and all the guests shower the flower petals on couple to bless them. This ceremony, indicates their agreement for the wedding to begin. Although, this tradition was based on the bride and groom not seeing each other before, it is now just seen as part of the welcoming ceremony.

26th February, 2020

10- **0100 hrs - Phera** : Saat Phera (seven rounds of holy fire) is the most important part of the Hindu wedding. The time of phera in the night is as per the Muhurat (auspicious time) pre-determined by the priest. There are many small ceremonies within this wedding ceremony, which may last for 2-3 hours. There is a role of bride's and groom's parents, brother, sister-in-law, sister etc. in these ceremonies. Bride and groom first get ready in their new attire and reach the vedika (fire place) for auspicious wedding. They chant mantra (vows) and walk around the holy fire together and pray for a happy future and successful life together by praying to various Hindu deities. Each phera (round) has a different vow, which is read out by the priest. At the end of the seventh phera, priest announces the couple as husband and wife. Finally, the groom puts the sindoor (vermillion) on the hair-parting of bride and places "mangalsutra" (special necklace worn by married women) around bride's neck.

- 
- 11 **0830 hrs - Kaleva** : Kaleva means Breakfast in Hindi. It is a ritual of feeding Bride and Groom with sweets by bride's parents and other family members, before saying good-bye (Bidaai).
- 12 **1100 hrs - Bidaai** : Bidaai is the ritual which spells out as 'goodbye'. It is unarguably the most sentimental part of any wedding. Traditionally, it marks the beginning of the bride's life as a wife. Women are equated to Goddess Lakshmi in India. Before leaving for her in laws' house, the bride performs a ritual which involves throwing rice and coins backwards over her head into her maternal home before crossing the doorstep. It ensures that her home always remains prosperous. It is a symbol of the bride wishing for her parents' home to always remain healthy, wealthy and prosperous. It marks the beginning of the couple's life as husband and wife. They embark on the beautiful and exhilarating journey of marriage together as husband & wife.

SEVEN VOWS

- **FIRST PHERA - PRAYER FOR FOOD AND NOURISHMENTS**

With God as our guide, let us take the first step to live with honor and respect. Let us walk together so we get food"

The first stage of the SaatPhera, the couple prays that the Hindu deities provide them with food that nourishes the couple so that they can live together with respect and honor for one another.

- **SECOND PHERA - STRENGTH**

Let us be happy and enjoy life. Let us walk together so we grow together in strength,"

The couple pledge to grow as one in mental, physical and spiritual strengths so that they can enjoy and share their life together.

- **THIRD PHERA - PROSPERITY**

Let us share joys and pains together. Let us walk together so we get wealth."

At this stage of the vows, the couple promises to earn an honest living so that they can live comfortably. Both bride and groom promises to stay faithful to each other and respect one another

- **FOURTH PHERA - FAMILY**

Let us not forget parents and elders. Let us walk together so we get happiness by sharing our joys and sorrows,"

In this phera, the couple promises to take care of their elders to maintain a strong family relationship.

- **FIFTH PHERA - PROGENY**

Let us observe all acts of charity. Let us walk together so we have family"

The fifth vow the couple make is to be blessed with healthy children who are kind and courageous and that the bride and groom will fulfill and provide all aspects of their children lives with education, love and care as well as values of live.

- **SIXTH PHERA - HEALTH**

Let us live a long and peaceful life. Let us walk together so we have joy"

With the sixth vow, the couple pray that neither of them will suffer from ill health and that their future is calm and balanced together.

- **SEVENTH PHERA - LOVE, FRIENDSHIP AND TRUST**

Let us be friends with love and sacrifice. Let us walk together so we have friendship"

In the final step of the SaatPhera, the couple promise to live a life of love, friendship and mutual trust. The Saat Phera makes the marriage eternal and the couple are now officially announced as husband and wife.