

The Mehndi Party is a pre-wedding event in which the bride has mehndi, or henna, applied on her hands and feet. Mehndi comes from a plant that has cooling and medicinal properties. Henna has been used for almost more than 9000 years in many different contexts. Henna is said to have originated from Egypt, where it was used as an ingredient for perfume, cosmetics, and for customary rituals. In India, the use of henna oils/perfumes is first mentioned in texts from 6th century AD. People from warmer climates, such as the Indian subcontinent, Africa, and the Middle East, used henna paste to help keep their body cool during hot weather. This cooling property is said to help with fevers, stress, and headaches. In the context of a wedding, the mehndi is said to calm the bride's nerves. It is also said that the darker the stain of the mehndi, the more love the bride will receive from her partner and in-laws. At the party, there is lots of music, dancing, and conversation to keep the bride entertained while the mehndi is applied as it can take several hours. Guests can also have mehndi applied to their hands, though the design is much simpler and smaller than the bride's.

The Wedding:

The Hindu wedding ceremony consists of multiple small rituals that hold symbolic significance to the union of two people and their families. Each ritual is meant to provide blessings and luck to the couple as they begin their new life together.

Baraat: The Baraat is a ceremony that delivers the groom to the wedding venue. A procession of family members, groomsmen, and friends dance their way towards the wedding. This is a ceremony designed to welcome the groom and his family to the wedding location while the bride watches from afar.

Milni: After the Baraat, the bride's closest relatives welcome him by sprinkling rose water. In descending order of age, the male family members from the bride's side of the family welcome the male family members from the groom's side. This begins with the grandfathers, fathers, and then uncles and brothers. Because both families may not be perfectly balanced, cousins and other relatives may fill in spaces as needed.

Ganesh Puja: Once the groom reaches the Mandap (the altar), the priest will invoke the blessing of Lord Ganesh. This ceremony is performed to bestow good luck upon the couple and their families, seeking to ward off any obstacles that might get in the way as the couple begins their new life together.

Kanya Aagaman: Now that the wedding site has been blessed through the Ganesh Puja, the bride arrives at the Mandap. The bride is escorted by members of her family, typically by relatives on her maternal side. This signifies the acceptance of the union from the mother's side of the family.

Jaimala: This ceremony involves the exchange of garlands between the bride and groom. The exchange of flower garlands represents their acceptance of the ceremony. Traditionally, the bride presents her garland first.

Kanyadaan: Kanyadaan means “giving the bride away” in Sanskrit. The bride’s parents have their own tasks to perform during this part of the ceremony. The father will take her hand and place it into the right hand of the groom, signifying the father’s acceptance of the groom and his care of the bride. The mother of the bride will then pour sacred water over the palm of the father. This water falls through the father’s fingers and onto the joined hands of the bride and groom.

Vivaah Homa: This ritual is considered a purification moment for all the following ceremonies. The pundit (priest) will light a sacred fire in a kund (copper bowl) and use it throughout the remainder of the ceremony.

Saptapadi: The bride’s dupatta (veil) and the groom’s sash are tied together and the couple circles the fire seven times. Each circle around the fire represents a specific blessing requested from the gods. It is also said that each round represents a lifetime that the couple will be together.