

# Hindu Celebrations

## Introduction:

For the Muslims, marriage is seen as a **legal and social contract**. A proposal from the groom's family is sent to the bride's family. If they accept the proposal, the ceremony is held at the bride's home. The groom and his party of men are seated in the front yard while the bride and the women are seated at the back.

## Hindu weddings

Firstly, we must note that strict principles are applied. The entire arrangement is an elaborate affair. The ceremony is seen as the most important one for the couple and it is of course the most expensive!



*Hindu wedding scene*

Arranged marriages were very common and accepted as the norm. The first step is for the bride's father or uncle or brother to offer the prospective groom a silver or brass bowl with food and jewelry item in it. If the man accepts it, it is a signal that he is willing to marry the daughter (or sister or niece). So a few days later the

prospective groom's family showers the girl's family with gifts only these are deposited in her lap instead of being handed to her in a bowl. The day of the marriage is determined by astrological means. Interestingly, the marriage should not be solemnized during the planting or reaping season.

On the day of the wedding the bridegroom travels to the bride's house amidst a happy dancing procession (**barat**) of relatives and friends. The 'on foot' procession includes a musical band. The groom is the centerpiece of the procession. He rides on a tastefully decorated horse or car at the rear of the procession. Ceremonies are held at nights and the route to the bride's home is well lit to add to the gaiety of the event.

On arrival at the bride's home, the groom is met at the entrance and is welcomed by his mother-in-law. He stands there until his bride appears surrounded by her sisters and friends. She welcomes her husband by placing a garland around his neck. He then places one around hers and the ceremony begins. Both the bride and the groom are in traditional dress: **sari and kurta**. More often than not, the groom wears a turban. The bride's sari is usually red or a vibrant pink.



*A woman dressed in a Silk-Sari*



*A man dressed in a Kurta*

Songs welcoming the groom are sung and the blessing of the future couple follows. The wedding ceremony is usually conducted in an open area under a specially built canopy, the posts of which have been wrapped with banana and mango leaves.

Prayer is a very important part of the ceremony. This is usually done after the giving away of the bride by the parents. The prayer area (**vedi**) is in the center with a fire pot, jug of water and a small plate with an oil lamp. Fire, sky, earth, water, and air are important witnesses to a Hindu wedding ceremony. We must note however, that a number of marriages in Trinidad took place in temples.

The couple walks around the fire seven times signifying the seven virtues of marriage. Three of these are: compatibility, understanding and good health. They say their vows amidst the chanting of the mantras by the priests.

The symbolic hair parting exercise is an important part of the ceremony. The husband puts powder on the hair parting of his wife while she puts powder on his forehead. The wedding necklace and toe rings are put on the bride. She is expected to wear these and the powder on her hair until she is widowed.