

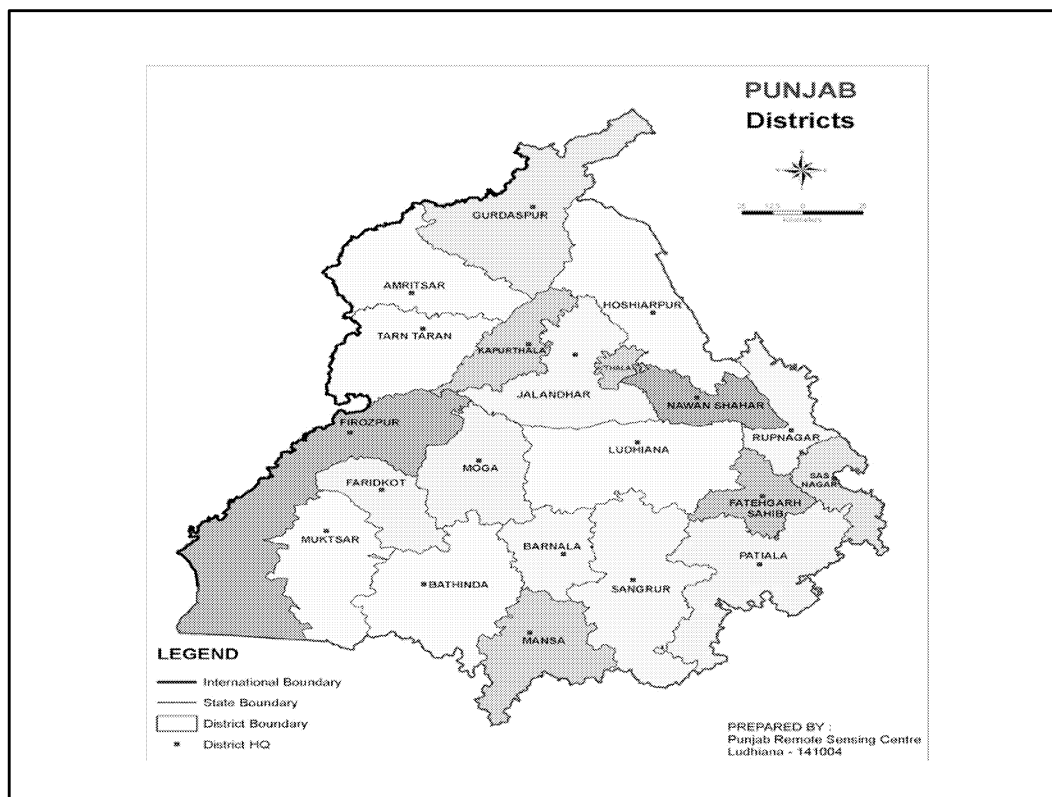


Punjabi Culture and Wedding Ceremonies

This is a brief introduction to the usual wedding customs and ceremonies practised in Punjab.

Punjab is a state, which is equivalent to a province in Canada. Punjab comprises of a bulk of our case load and hence the focus on Punjab.

There are several cities in Punjab and several sub-regions. Each region has a different dialect and different set of ceremonies. We have attempted to summarise most popular of these.

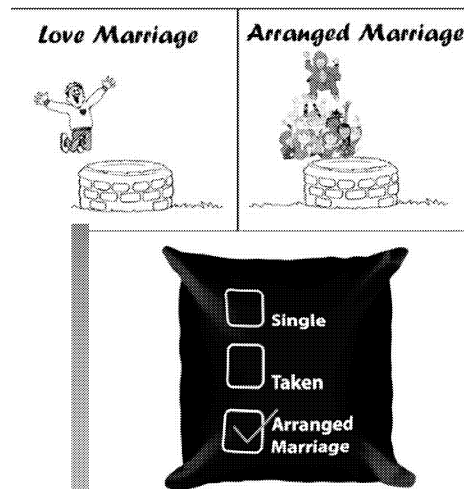


There is often a confusion between a Punjabi and a Sikh.

Most of our applicant are from the state of Punjab. Punjab is a state (province) in India whereas Sikhism is a religion, which is predominant in Punjab. However other religions like Hinduism coexist in Punjab.

Anyone with their roots in the state of Punjab is known as a Punjabi, regardless of whether they are Hindu, Sikhs, etc.

Arranged marriages or Love Marriages or Both ?



Arranged marriages are still a norm not just in Punjab but also in India. However love marriages are becoming more and more popular especially in the metropolitan cities. Arranged marriages are not forced marriages.

The parents choose their son or daughter's future wife/husband with only a little input from the soon to be newly wed. The son or the daughter have free choice to accept or reject the suggestion. Sometimes there are relatives, acquaintances and a middle person who arrange/or initiate this process. To find the right match is an exceptionally planned activity. Parents/middle person usually looks for the following factors: The Family, Vocation, Education, Future prospects, Property/Assets Financial Status, Physical attributes, Conservative/Liberal/Horoscope and other Factors (siblings/relatives/medical history/)

In forced marriage the son or the daughter have no choice but to accept the proposal.



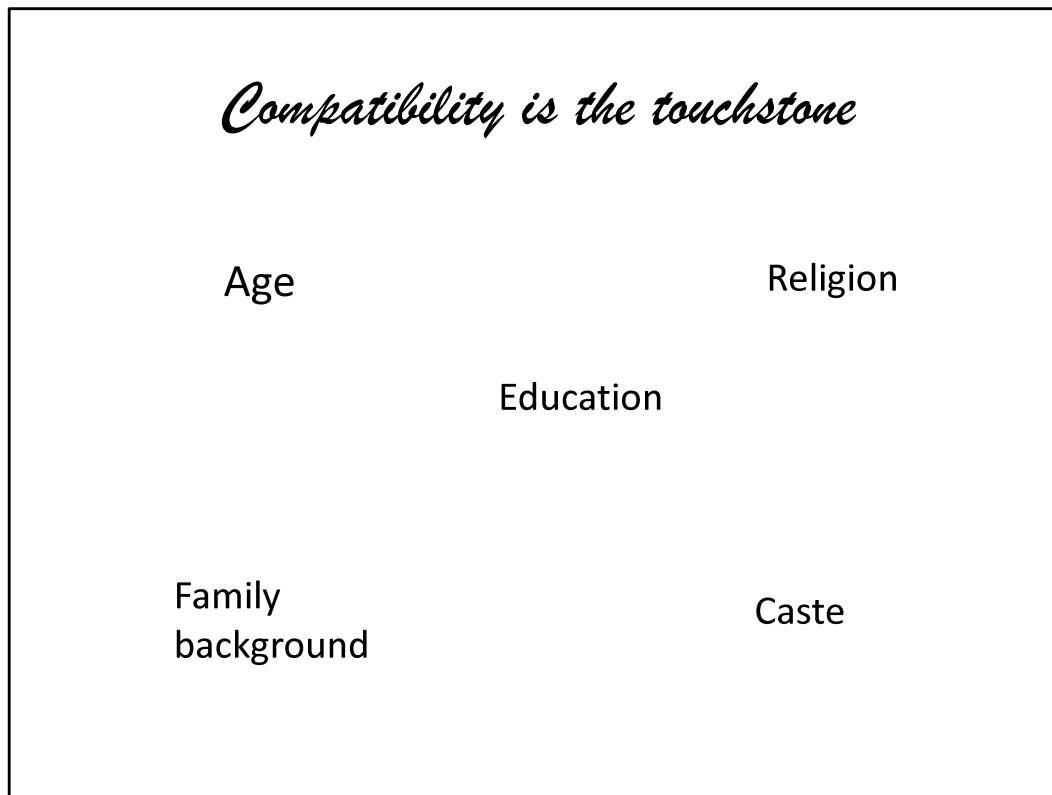
Of course choosing a life partner for someone is not easy and so in comes the matchmaker/mediator which could be, well, anybody- father's brother's friend's sister-in-law's nephew or just a family friend or distant relative. These mediators are so entrenched in our culture that these mediators are popularly called "Rishta Aunty"

Newspaper matrimonial ads are preferred by the older generation who still find using computers a bit of task. There are also professional matrimonial agencies that help in match-making.

For the rest there is online marriage sites.

Online Matrimony is an organized web based matrimonial/marriage service, facilitating wishful men and women to find their suitable life partners

Matrimonial sites are the Indian version of a dating site and are the 13th most popular activity on the internet among the 12 million urban users in India.



Family background- It is famously said that in arranged marriages the families are united before the bride and the groom. The family background and their status in the society is closely reviewed before anything else.

Age – In an arranged marriage early marriage is usually preferred. By the time you are in your twenties, you are regarded as ideal for marriage. The boy is always supposed to be older than the girl. 5-7 years older for the male is the norm but it can vary, depending on the other considerations. But that being said, it is increasingly common to see the reducing age-gap and that the woman is slightly older than the man, but anything more than a couple of years is a red signal.

Religion- In an arranged marriage, the couple must to be from the same religion and preferably from the same caste. However in some families, marriages between Hindus and Sikhs is prevalent, but even in those cases the caste has to be kept in mind

Education- Education is important but in the grand scheme of things that is the one of the first things to be overlooked.

Compatibility

Marital Status

Financial Stability / Vocation

Horoscope- (born under the wrong star)

Marital status – This is one of the things that are of prime importance in an arranged marriage. Single are matched with singles; divorced men will be matched with divorced women/ widows/ spinsters who are past the marriageable age.

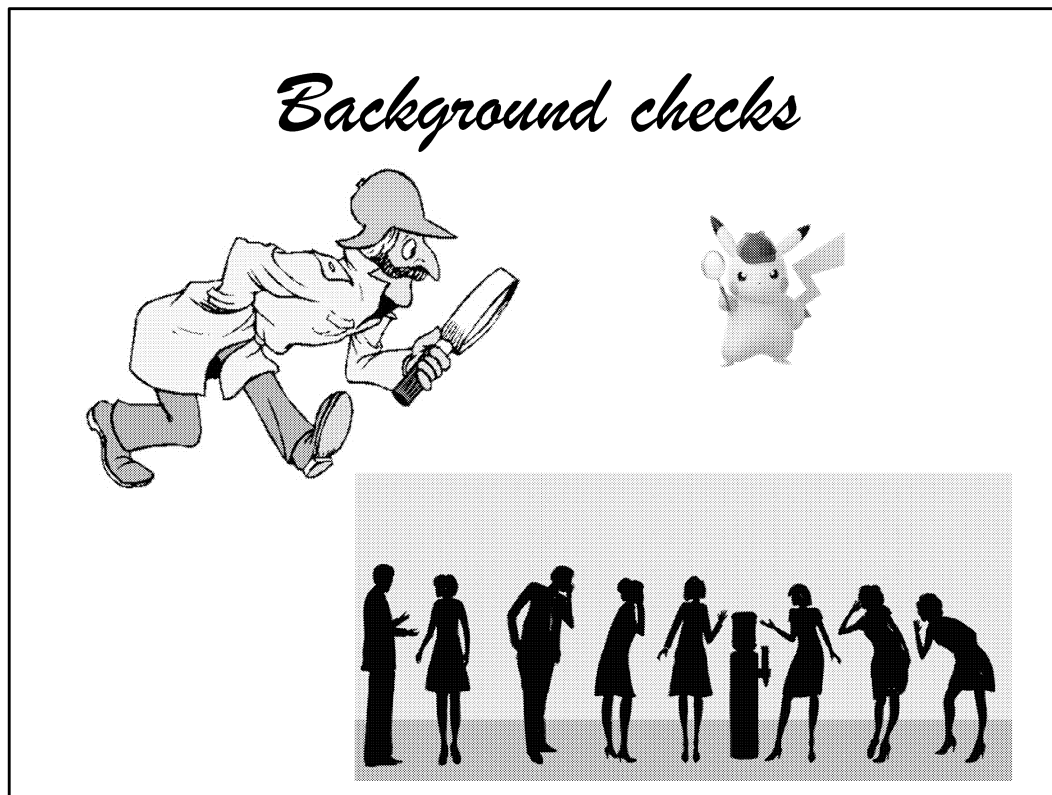
Compatibility in marital status is overlooked for some really strong consideration – like a really rich family or match from Canada or UK. Older , divorced men have a better chance of getting married to younger single women.

But a divorced woman with kids getting married to a single man- cause for concern.

A growing trend of questionable marriage is couples meeting online. Then suddenly the sponsor in Canada flies to meet the applicant in India and they are married within a few weeks of meeting each other in person.

Finances- Very important

Horoscope- Matching the horoscope is quite common in Hindu weddings. You would come across the word Manglik quite often which simply means that the person was born under the wrong star which makes him/her unlucky for their partner.



Background checks are really important in an arranged marriage. Inquiries are made at the groom/bride's place of residence; neighbours would be consulted; at times even detectives are hired.

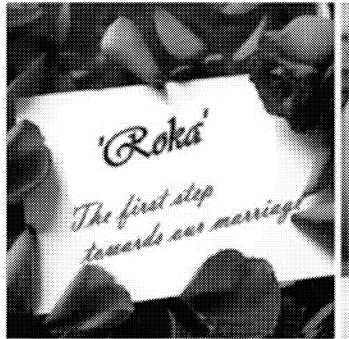
. With the advent of the age of internet, inquiries are becoming more detailed.

The first meeting



The first meeting will be at the bride's place of residence or mostly at some neutral place like a restaurant or even at a Gurudwara. At the first meeting the prospective bride and groom are given an opportunity to talk in private. In more modern families the couple may be given an opportunity to meet a couple of times before deciding; else they can talk on phone before they decide.

Roka ceremony = commitment



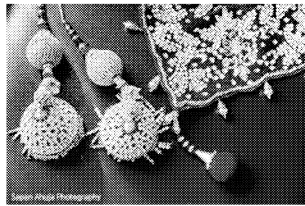
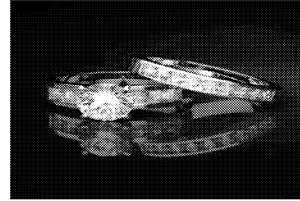
If the boy and the girl agree to the alliance, the first ceremony is called the roka ceremony. Roka simply means that the relationship is fixed. Dry fruits, sweets and gifts are exchanged between both the families.

Shagan = Wedding announcement



This is performed either at groom's house or at a party hall. In this ceremony, the bride's father/brother applied red ceremonial powder called *tilak* on the boy's forehead and gives him sweets. This is equivalent to announcing the wedding to all and sundry.

Chunni and ring ceremony

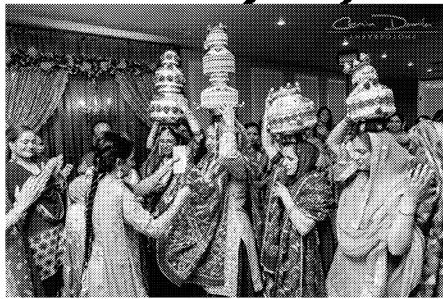


Chunni- In this family the groom's family gifts a red duppatta or sari to the bride and some jewellery. This is the announcement by the boy's side of the family that the girl in question is their future daughter-in-law.

This is followed by the ring ceremony- the exchanging of rings. Exchanging rings is not a traditional ritual but it has found its place in the modern settings.

The difference between the Roka and the Shagun and Chunni ceremony is the level of commitment and the involvement of society. Roka is low-key while Shagun and chunni are elaborate.

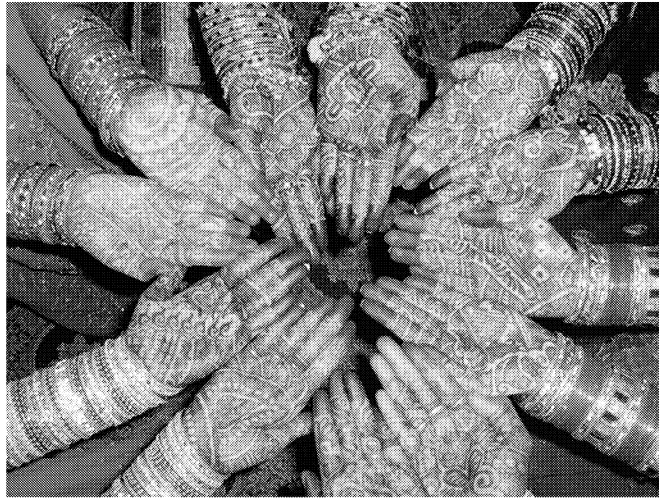
Sangeet ceremony or Jaago=wedding crier



Few days before the wedding the families get together to tap their feet and express their joy for the would-be couple. Dancing and singing of traditional songs is common.

Jaago was a way to inform the villagers of the upcoming wedding and to invite the whole village to the wedding -like town crier.

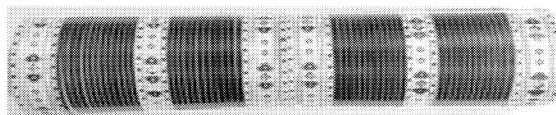
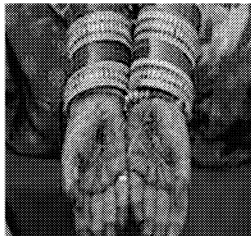
Mehndi Ceremony



The bride's sister in law or brother in law brings henna which is then applied by a professional or any family member on the hands and feet of bride.

These days it is a big business. One would expect to see elaborate designs of henna of the bride's hands, arms, legs and feet. If the design is not elaborate, it is a sign that something is not right. Henna takes typically a week to ten days to lighten.

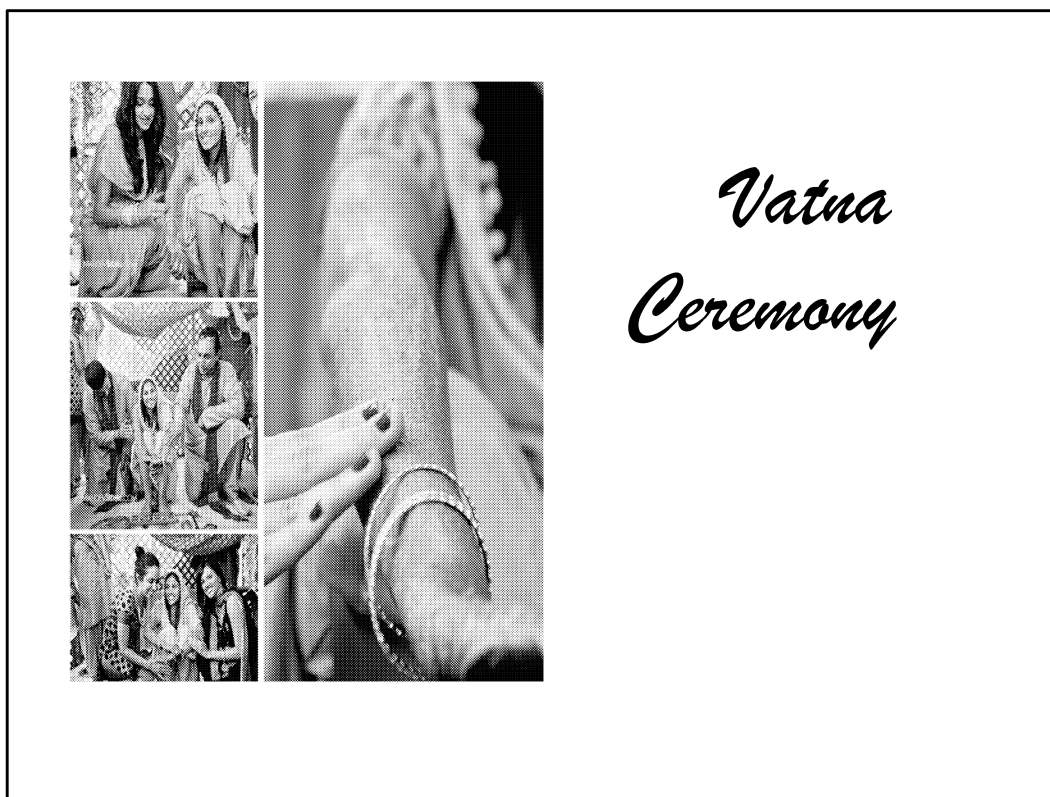
Chooru Ceremony (ceremonial red bangles)



The girl's maternal uncle buys the choora and puts it on to the bride's hand. Chooru is a set of red and white ivory or plastic bangles (since ivory is banned, bone or plastic alternative are used) which the **bride is supposed to wear at least for 5 weeks** (some brides wear the choora upto 1 year).

Groom is likely to know when the choora was removed as there is small ceremony around it.

A woman would typically be wearing these red bangles on her honeymoon.



The Vatna ceremony takes place a few days before the wedding; sometimes on the day of the wedding. In the early hours of the morning, a paste of turmeric, sandal, *besan* (chickpea flour) and rosewater is applied on the bride's body. The bride is then scrubbed clean under the shade of a Bagh (handmade cotton cloth with phulkari work).

A similar ceremony takes place in groom's house. Bride and groom are not supposed to meet each other after this ceremony and in some castes, they are not allowed to step outside the house after this ceremony has taken place.

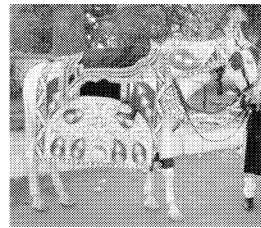
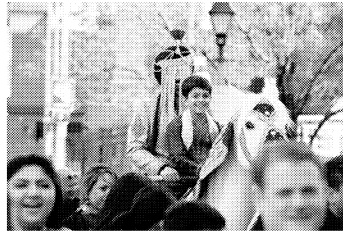
Sehrabandi



A *Sehra* is the head gear tied to a groom's turban the morning of the wedding, accompanied by the *Surma* ceremony-where *kajal* or '*surma*' is put in the groom's eye (or just a spot in the corner) by the sister in law. The '*Sehra*' is traditionally tied by the groom's sisters, and is meant to be the male equivalent of the veil or 'ghoonghat' for brides.

After the groom has dressed up in his wedding clothes, a puja (prayer service) is performed. Thereafter, the groom's sister ties the sehra on the groom's head. After the completion of *Sehrabandi* ceremony, all those who witness the function give gifts and cash to the boy as a token of good luck.

Rituals of the Wedding- presence of close family members



In Punjabi weddings, close relatives are dressed in their finest and are seen prominently in the weddings. They are usually at the forefront at the main rituals like **Surma puwai** (Putting Kohl in the groom's eyes, usually done by sister-in laws); **Vagan baandhni** (decoration of the groom's mare, a custom usually done by sisters), etc.

It is highly unusual for close family members to be absent from the wedding ceremony and there is usually a very strong reason to miss the wedding.

Milni ceremony



On reaching the bride's house or the Marriage hall the Milni ceremony is held. Milni ceremony is a ritual in which the **corresponding relatives of both families embrace each other, exchanging garlands (and gifts) and having their photographs taken.** e.g. the brother of bride will embrace brother of groom, father with father, etc.

This is a form of introduction and a sort of ice-breaker between the couple's relatives' who are meeting each other for the first time.

Entry to the Marriage hall & Jutti Chupai (Hiding the Shoes)



This is a game played at the bride's house (or marriage hall) . The sisters of the bride block the entrance door as the new groom arrives and demand exorbitant amount of entry money.

On similar lines, when the couple reach the Gurudwara for the `pheras`, the groom removes his shoes. **The brides' sisters hide his shoes** and after the ceremonial going around the holy book is completed- they demand a preposterous sum of money in exchange for his shoes.

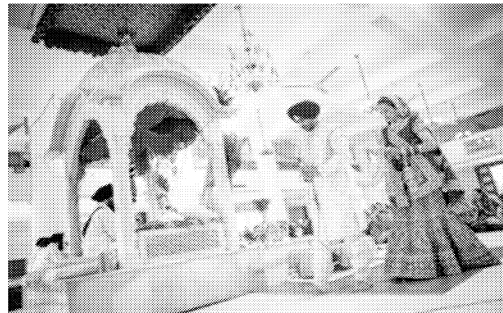
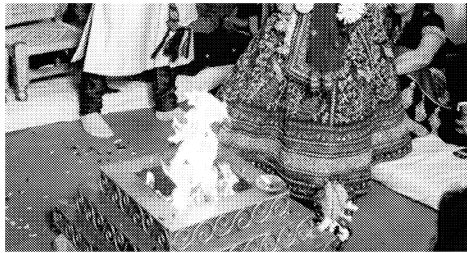
This is again a ritual that helps to lighten the mood and add fun to the wedding.

Jaimala



The bride and the groom stand on a stage and exchange a garland of red and white flowers. The garland is usually very heavy and elaborate.

Lavan Phere

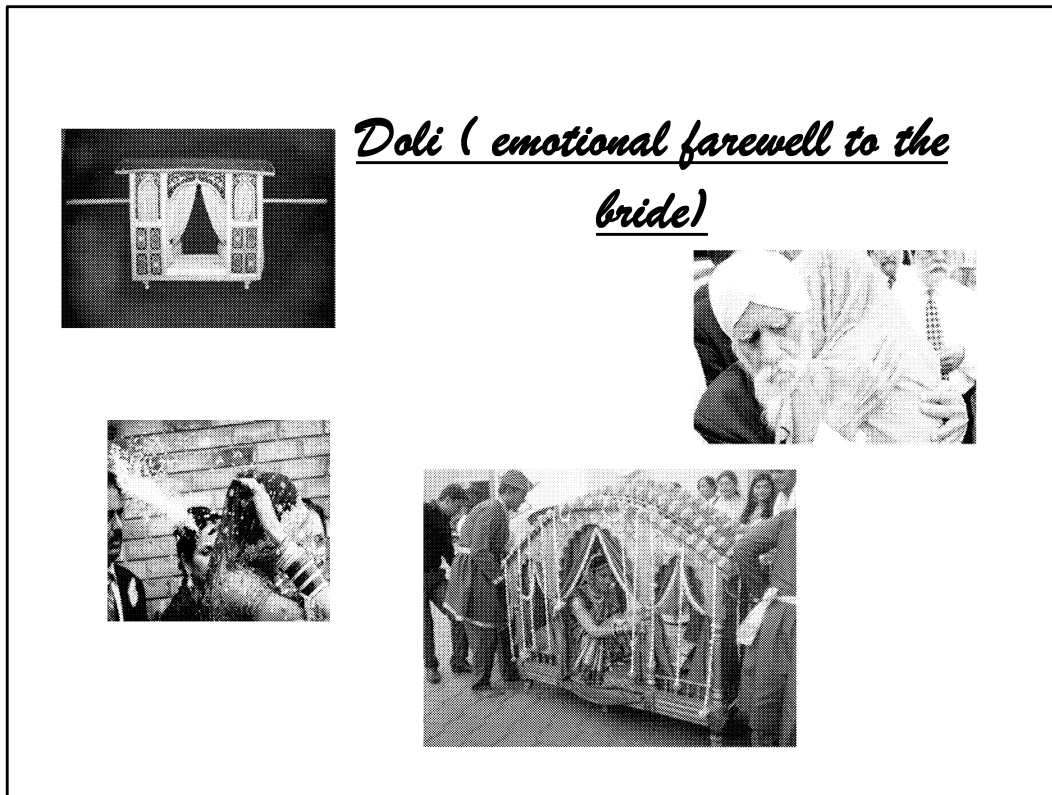


Pheras/ Phere (circumambulations) mean going around the holy fire or the Holy Book.

Hindus go around the Holy fire and Sikhs go around the Holy book. There are usually 7 circumambulations in Hindu weddings and 4 circumambulations in Sikh weddings.

Going around the holy book is almost always **completed before noon as per prescribed Sikh norms or at the most** before late afternoon.

But if it is a Hindu Punjabi wedding, the Pheras would take place at night, which is the usual practice.



Doli is bidding farewell to the bride after the wedding. It is a very emotional affair for the bride's family.

As the bride departs from her parent's house, **she throws back handful of rice over her shoulder**, thereby wishing prosperity for her parents and family, which she leaves behind. One would see sombre expressions on the face of the family and the bride.

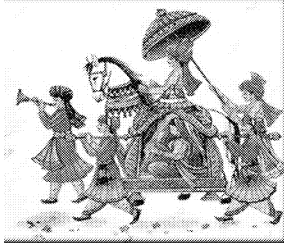


Mooh Dikhai



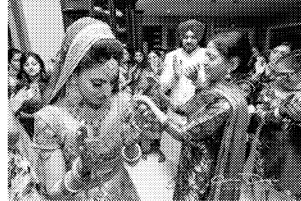
Mooh dikhai is the formal introduction of the new bride to the rest of the family/ neighbours and the general society. The mother-in-law gives the bride jewellery, cash and gifts. The other relatives also give presents and cash to the bride.

Phera Dalna (Visiting Parents)



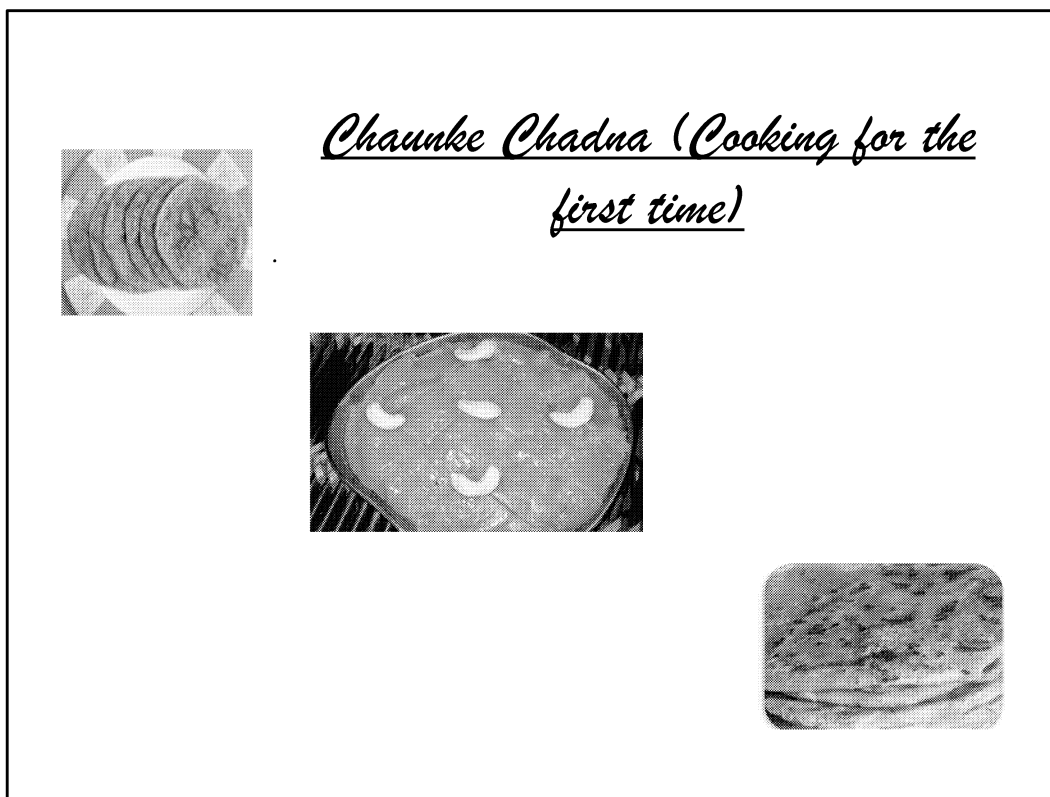
As a part of Phera Dalna ritual, the newly wedded couple visits the bride's house, the next day after marriage. Usually, the girl's brother comes to take them back to the bride's home.

Reception Party



In some sects, instead of mooh dikhai, they might have a Reception ceremony to formally introduce the bride. There is usually some function or gathering to introduce the new bride to the neighbours and relatives.

One would expect it to be a large affair especially as it is the time to show the world how successful you are and to show off your wealth and grandeur.



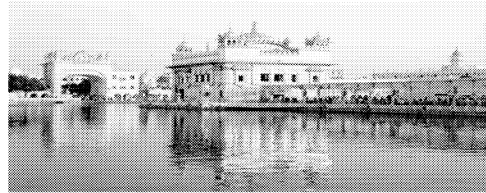
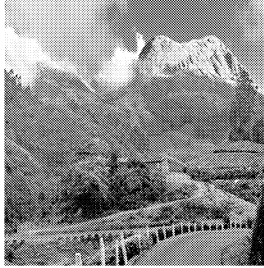
The first time that a bride enters the kitchen is also an important ritual.

Usually the bride cooks something sweet (most popular being the Kada Prasada (wheat or semolina pudding) and Mitthi Roti (Sweet Chapattis)). This dish is usually served first to the Gods and then to the elders of the house. The bride gets some shagun (money) in return

s.16(1)(b)

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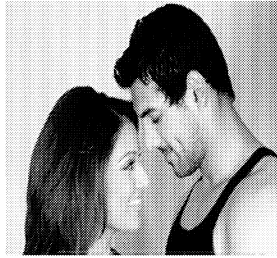
Honeymoon (Post wedding Outings)



The concept of Honeymoon did not exist in rural Punjab.

Traditionally the newly married couple would go to religious places to seek blessings of the deities. It is usual for family members to accompany them on religious outings. Couples from urban Punjab and who are well educated would most likely go alone on outing trips to the Hill Stations, etc.

It will be very odd for a Sikh couple not to visit the Golden temple after the wedding.



Living together out of the wedlock
— Conjugal/ common-law
relationship.



This is an absolute no-no in traditional Punjab. Punjab is a state with a traditional outlook in which the traditional values are held in high esteem. A young man and woman living together in their native village without getting married would most likely result in their being disbarred from the community.

Even though common-law relations are legal in India yet in rural Punjab they are looked down upon. In metropolitan cities and in places with lot of migrant population like Delhi NCR, conjugal partners/ same-sex partners are socially accepted.

Things to watch out

... in several areas especially marital status should be reviewed closely.
We have seen a rising incidence of

Weddings are celebratory occasions



Questions?

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at

Thank you.