

Christian Marriage in India

The second largest religious minority in India is that of Christians. Christianity was traditionally brought to India through St. Thomas long before it was brought to the United Kingdom. Christian practice in India is very varied, but here are some suggestions for study.

Christian women often wear saris and may wear red rather than white, as this is the traditional wedding colour in India.

A *Mangalsutra* and a ring for the bride is gifted to her by the groom's family. Some women wear the mangalsutra, or thread of good will, which is a necklace worn specifically by married women as a symbol of their marriage. The groom ties it around the bride's neck to indicate that he receives her from her father. It is most commonly made from two strings of small black beads with a cross pendant, usually of gold.

In the past, a woman would never remove her mangalsutra unless she were widowed, when it would be cut off. Nowadays, the tradition is less strict, and some women do not wear it at all.

It is common among Indian Christians for the best man to pull a cord, releasing a shower of tiny coloured thermocole balls over the married couple, which is very similar to the throwing of vermilion coloured grains of rice thrown during the traditional Hindu ceremony.

The traditional Christian form of greeting by saying 'Peace be with you' is accompanied by the joining of hands which is an adaptation of the Hindu practice of 'Namaste'.

Indian Christians often carry garlands to church, and place them upon crosses and icons, just as Hindus garland deities.

Use this information to help your discussion about those things that are central to a marriage and those that will change depending on the cultural context.

What is the most important part of a wedding ceremony, and why?

