

Customs add flavor to nuptials

BY ANGIE SCHAFFER

Not every wedding looks like "Father of the Bride."

Swans, white dresses and a showering of bird seed may characterize many of the weddings that take place.

But some weddings go beyond the traditional white dress and Saturday afternoon ceremony to stay in line with cultural traditions.

Jambor Vishwanatha and his wife, Lavanya, of Omaha, decided 16 years ago to marry after being introduced by their families.

"We went out for a week, and then we decided to get married," Jambor Vishwanatha said.

"We had a choice."

Theirs was one of many arranged marriages performed in Southern India, the couple's original home. Arranged marriages are the norm there.

A Hindu wedding ceremony in Southern India typically lasts three days.

On the first day, the bride's family goes to the home of the groom's family to invite and accompany them to the site of the wedding.

That night, gifts are exchanged, and the bride's family prepares a dinner to make the groom's family feel comfortable.

The second day is the actual wedding ceremony where the bride, dressed in a silk sari, and the groom, wearing traditional Indian clothing, walk seven times around a fire and vow to be together for the rest of their lives.

On the third day, the groom's family holds a banquet for the bride's family as a sign of gratitude for the union.

A wedding held in the Baha'i Faith has two requirements: that all living parents approve of the marriage and that the couple obtain a marriage license if the state's law requires one.

After that, the actual ceremony is mostly the choice of the couple.

"The couple needs to say a

vow to each other that verily we will abide by the will of God," said Ruth Hansen, member of Lincoln's Baha'i Faith.

Two witnesses approved by the local spiritual assembly must hear the vows in order for them to be valid, as the Baha'i Faith does not have clergy, Hansen said.

In Mengjun Bai's native China, wedding ceremonies last several hours and celebrations go on for three days.

The wedding ceremony begins with the couple washing themselves for God. After that, they are greeted by both sets of parents, Bai said.

A priest marries the couple, then the bride addresses the audience, telling how the couple met and plans for the future.

Weddings in the Mormon church follow a more simplistic approach.

"There is no pomp and circumstance. ... It is a very solemn, spiritual ceremony," said Mick Smith, president of the Lincoln Institute of Religion.

"We went out for a week, and then we decided to get married. We had a choice."

Jambor Vishwanatha
Omaha resident

Although some weddings may take place in the church, the church body encourages temple weddings, which are ceremonies held in the "house of the Lord here upon the earth," Smith said.

Only "worthy" members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints may enter the temple, so guests attending such a wedding are restricted, he said.

"You shouldn't be marrying until death, you should be marrying for eternity," Smith said. "The couple is sealed together for time and all eternity."

Consultants help advise busy brides

BY LISA BEHRNS

Planning a perfect wedding can be stressful.

In planning her wedding, Carla Keller of Omaha said she was trying to do it all at once.

Keller said she began wedding preparations while working full-time and taking a full load of classes.

"My plans weren't working, and I began hating my wedding," she said.

But help is available for busy couples in the form of wedding consultants.

Teresa Furnas, owner of A

Bridal Trousseau, works with other professionals to give brides advice and guidance.

The advantage of having a consultant is to save money, avoid trouble and maintain peace of mind, Furnas said.

A Bridal Trousseau is staffed with full-time professionals who are able to help the bride and her wedding party with everything from selecting the perfect dress to questions with invitations.

"It's like an all-day spa for the bride," said Furnas, who encourages brides to bring along their girlfriends.

"We don't sell packages but

personalized combinations," Furnas said. The goal of consultants is to reflect the wishes of the bride, she said.

Jennifer Schutz, owner of the Bridal Gown Outlet, runs a retail and consulting store and also teaches a class at Southeast Community College.

The two-hour class is designed to explain what questions brides should ask and includes information on signing contracts.

Many brides like to plan their own weddings and are trying to educate themselves, Schutz said.

"The more you know, the less stress you have," Schutz said.

A Bridal Trousseau and the Bridal Gown Outlet provide free consulting to clients, but most wedding consultants charge around \$25 an hour for their services, Schutz said.

"The more you know, the less stress you have."

Jennifer Schutz
Bridal Gown Outlet owner

Some theme weddings are easier to pull off with the help of a consultant, she said.

One outdoor wedding she helped with was a breakfast ceremony that included the family dog and cat as ring bearers. Then, it started raining.

Schutz was able to hand out umbrellas to the guests and the ceremony continued.

Furnas advises new brides to "do things as soon as possible, go with things you like and don't look back."

Karen Thompson
Target Guest Service Team leader

Wedding registry helpful tool

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gun to record their choices. Target, at 333 N 48th St. and 5330 S. 56th St., offers a similar registration process.

Computer terminals marked Club Wedd provide access for the couple as well as for friends and family searching for gifts, said Karen Thompson, Target Guest Service Team Leader.

"The system is incredibly user-friendly," Thompson said. "Plus, our information is online and at every store nationwide."

Both Target and Bed Bath & Beyond provide the couple with an information pack to help prepare for its wedding and registry cards to include in invitations.

Each registry is different. Some couple's list is two or three pages in length, while others may reach 16 or 17, Knuth said.

Housewares, domestics and kitchen items are usually the most popular areas, but some lists have a little of everything, Thompson said.

"Tools, grills, movies and gag gifts are often popular as well," Thompson said. "Some people like to give more fun gifts."

Online sites, such as www.weddingnetwork.com and www.modernbride.com, offer alternatives to the traditional kitchenware gifts.

While providing couples a place to register with more than 100 retailers, many gifts are available for the couple who have everything.

For adventurous couples, an option is to register for a hot air balloon flight, which ranges in price from \$50 to \$450; a white water expedition, which costs between \$100 and \$400 or a weekend diving package in Miami Beach, which goes for \$549.


Other gifts include theater tickets and golf packages.

For Witt, cooking classes

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