

All About My Bridal Chuda

'Chuda' or 'Chooda' is an integral part of Punjabi wedding. For me its the favorite of all pre-wedding ceremonies. I can still remember each and every moment of it.

By Eva Mukhija 'Chuda' or 'Chooda' is an integral part of Punjabi wedding. For me its the favorite of all pre-wedding ceremonies. I can still remember each and every moment of it.

This ceremony is performed on the day of wedding. The bride to be takes bath with water brought from a temple and sits for this ceremony. A 'puja' is performed by a priest. Chooda is a set of red/maroon and cream bangles with rich and intricate work on it. This is brought by the girl's maternal uncle and aunt. The interesting part is that the girl is not supposed to see it before wearing. So it is kept covered with unboiled ('kachcha') milk in a pan. Originally, these bangles were made of ivory, but nowadays ivory has been replaced by plastic or lac. The girl's uncle makes her wear them. Once she wears them, everyone present touches it and gives her wishes for a successful married life.

Traditionally, the girl is supposed to wear it for 1.25 months or 1.25 years. A span of 1.25 is considered auspicious in almost all Punjabi traditions. But if the lady gets pregnant while she is wearing Chooda, she is required to get it off before delivery of the baby. Gradually, people have become less stringent and girls wear it as long as they want.

Its been part of me since past 1 year and 3 months and now the time has come to get apart from it. This was one thing which always made me feel like a new bride throughout the entire span of my first year of marriage. I admit I enjoyed the gaze of ladies around in the market -appreciative of its beauty at one time and jealous (yes, I could see that) at other. I loved flaunting it. Consciously, unconsciously I have compared it with any newly wed bride's that I encountered. For me, mine was always the best :) Am sure that would be the feeling with everyone of those. I have spent long looking at the amazing patterns formed by the light reflected through the stones embedded in the bangles.

But now, the time has come to get it off. The ceremony is known as 'barhaana' (move forward) in Punjabi. Its considered inauspicious to say 'utaarana' (remove). Its exactly 10 days to go today. And the very thought of going on without it saddens me.

The 'barhaana' ceremony is generally not as elaborate as the one of wearing it. On an auspicious day (generally the priest is asked for an appropriate date), the girl wears new clothes which are supposed to be given to her by her mother. A set of clothes is also gifted to the husband and mother in law by the girl's parents. An elder lady of the family puts 'gur' (jaggery) and ' chawal' (rice) in the girl's lap. These are supposed to be cooked and distributed to the relatives, the next day of the ceremony. Then the lady take off the bangles from the girl's wrists and replaces them with pink/red glass bangles and a gold bangle. Then 'waarna' (a gesture in which some money is revolved around the head and given to a poor. This is meant to keep all bad omen away) is performed for the girl. The bangles are then covered with a piece of red cloth and either given to a priest in temple or they are made to flow in a river (' jal parwah')