

# Wedding in saudi arabia

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In Saudi Arabia, wedding marks the beginning of a new life. Men and women who decide to get married will throw out their old clothing and buy new ones (Wedding Customs). They attribute new life by means of having new properties and things. Marriage is also sacred and calling the couple bride and groom is a very common way. The best way to call them is by looking upon them as man and wife. Choosing a spouse in Saudi Arabia is never easy before. The tradition of arranged marriage was a big issue for the Arabs (Monger 11).

The most common basis of choosing the best spouse is by examining the wealth of the family and how powerful they are in the society. Tribal alliances are also another basis for the marriage that's why there are instances when a man is married to his first cousin (Monger 11). At present, this tradition is still followed but the good thing is that brides are now allowed to choose their potential mates. The basis for their choice should be the properties and assets that the man could provide her as they establish their own family (Wells 171).

Marital foundation in Saudi Arabia is often based on the Sharia law or on what is written in the Quran (Robertson). Cultural barriers can be solved if the couple is really willing to pay tribute to the culture of Saudi Arabia. Despite of the many changes in customs and traditions in marriage, women in Saudi Arabia are strictly prohibited to marry men who are not Arabs. They are only permitted to marry a non-Arab once they are given consent by the King. " This holds true if the Arab is not a citizen of a country belonging to the Gulf Cooperation Council" (Robertson).

Westerners are qualified to marry an Arab woman only if they came from rich families and who will decide to live outside the country right after their wedding. In the case of marrying a male Arab, a woman should ready herself to submit her life not only to her husband but to his family as well. “ Parents of the husband to be have a huge amount of influence over the couple” (Robertson). Dating is not part of the culture in Saudi Arabia; most couples are based on the choice of the bride’s mother (Monger 11). She will decide if a man is the best match for her daughter.

There are also instances when matchmakers are paid to find the perfect husband for a female Arab. A woman must also marry for the sake of her welfare and safety (Kavanwal). Female are well treasured in the culture of Saudi Arabia, the men around them should look after them and give all their needs which includes clothing, food, shelter and protection (Robertson). “ Caring for a woman becomes burdensome, and traditionally, women are married as soon as possible” (Kavanwal), Saudi women marry much younger than expected.

If a 10 year old girl gets married, it is not a big deal for her family as long as the groom is capable of providing all her needs (Wells 171). The most common age for a Saudi woman to get married is between the age of 16 to 18 while the groom is between 16-20. There is such a thing as polygamous households where a young bride will end up as a junior wife because she married a much older man (Wells 172). For those who marry more than one wife, the traditional view is because they wanted to have more children and in order to satisfy the sexual needs of husbands.

In this fast changing world, the western part of the world greatly influenced the people of Saudi Arabia. Arabs are now open to international influence like making oil sales and reinventing the wedding tradition with a different twist. Marriage has become more expensive and detailed based on the preference of the couple. For wealthy families, wedding is frenzy in Saudi Arabia.

Women will begin competing for attention because they are adorned with splendid accessories which are mostly expensive (Wells 172). A traditional wedding in Saudi Arabia is always accompanied by an engagement party.

This is celebrated by means of introducing the bride and the groom to each other. The bride to be is expected to be as beautiful as possible. Her hair is arranged like a camel's hump and is piled up. Her skin is painted white, her eyes painted with black circles and her nails manicured to perfection (Kavanwal). She sits on a table and waits for her groom and the groom's family like a figurine on display. There are rare instances wherein a bride is allowed to speak over the meal and decides if she wants to marry the groom chosen by her family.

Once an agreement is made, the detail of the wedding will be discussed by both parties including the contract, the dowry and what should be done with the properties once the couples decides to divorce (Wells, 172). The dowry or mahr in Islamic language is paid by the groom to the bride's family as a sign of good intention for his wife to be. In the earlier times, it is paid by means of camels, sheep or goats but at present the dowry is paid by means of money in Riyal currency (Monger 105). The amount of dowry depends on the social status of the family of the bride.

The more influential the family, the higher is the dowry to be paid. Court registry is now part of the marriage in Saudi Arabia. A contract is based on the negotiation of the groom and a male representative from the bride's family. A witness will attest the validity of the contract under the Sharia law. After the document is signed, the marriage is considered valid and binding. The marriage contract can also include prenuptial agreements like children custodies, divorce, and permission of wife to travel outside the country and if marriage should be terminated in case the husband dies (Wells 172).

Sharia Law allows male Arabs to marry up to four wives (Kavanwal). But he must assure the family of the wife that he can support everything and provide a good life to all of his wives and children. Now that the modern period is costly, more and more Saudi men prefer marrying 1 wife only. The cost of getting married is never easy because it includes many things and practices (Kavanwal). Signing the marriage contract in the court is not the only basis of marriage in Saudi. It should be incorporated by a henna party where the wedding events are held for the bride and another party for the groom (Robertson).

Henna parties are intended for the bride only (Monger 150). It is usually done before the wedding and a sugaring is done where all body hairs are removed from the bride. There are also instances where female circumcision is done during henna parties. If the sugaring was not able to remove all the hair from the bride's body, the groom has the right to divorce her because this is a sign of dishonoring and displeasing him (Kavanwal). The groom on his wedding night will wear white colored clothes and covers himself with a Bisht

(Wedding Customs). The bride on the other hand wears an abaya that covers her hair (Kavanwal).

The bride wears a long white gown while the bridesmaids are dressed in red which signifies youth and virginity. Guests are all female and the only male present is the groom (Wells 172). The wedding also includes the gift ceremony where the groom gives his offering to the bride which is usually a piece of jewelry that is equivalent to the price of the dowry. The celebration of the wedding is based on the generosity of the groom and his family. Meanwhile the gentlemen and other male relatives are gathered in one room as they sip coffee or tea (Wells172).

After the wedding rites, the groom will pay respect to his relatives as he comes with his father and sits with them to drink some coffee before they leave (Robertson). The same thing goes with the bride who will come with her mother and also drink with her relatives. The said ritual is done to release the stress of the newly weds (Wedding Customs). This will ensure them that their new life will be free of any struggles and be well prepared in facing the new life. In most cities of Saudi Arabia, wedding should be celebrated very well by letting other people know that a special event is going on.

This is done by the bridegroom and his friends who will go to the party hall which is usually located near the groom's house. His friend on the other hand will take their cars and honk its horns while flashing the headlights so that neighbors and other people will know that a wedding party is being held (Wedding Customs). Cake cutting is also present in the wedding culture of

Saudi Arabia. The said ceremony is the symbolic representation of how couples will look after each other (Wedding Customs). Marriage marks the beginning of a more intimate relationship between the bride and the groom because they are expected to take care of one another.

The cake cutting ceremony is done by the bride and the groom who walks towards the table where their wedding cake is placed (Robertson). The guest gives way for them and with astonishment they will witness how the bride gets his bride's hand and they will hold the knife together. They will cut a small portion of the cake and the groom will take a piece of the cake and allow his bride to take a bit of the piece (Monger 49). The bride will also do the same thing as she holds another piece and let her groom eat it. After the cake ceremony, the crowd will start rejoicing for them (Monger 49).

Marriage customs in Saudi Arabia also includes the part where the bride and groom goes to their wedding tent or most commonly known as the honeymoon. If the groom is not capable of paying his own apartment, he has the alternative to take his wife and live with his parents. The house of the newly weds are comprised of the groom's siblings and other relatives. Nevertheless, male and female are segregated as much as possible even at home (Kavanwal). Marriage under the culture of Saudi Arabia is quite complicated especially if the woman is not an Arab.

Living with the groom is often associated with the fact that the woman will also live with families and relatives of the male Arab. Extended family is a typical scenario in Saudi Arabia. Since women are not allowed to socialize with men, the only circle of friends of the wife will be those who are related

to her husband like his relatives for example (Robertson). This becomes a problem for foreigners who are married to male Arabs especially if they are not familiar with the language of Saudi Arabia. Females are not allowed to go out, drive and take public transportation if they are not accompanied by relatives or their children (Robertson).

The goal of marriage in Saudi Arabia is to establish a family that is stable and happy (Wells 172). Although there are lots of expectations from the family of the bride and groom, husband and wife also struggle to meet their romantic fulfillment. The most vital factor in their marriage is financial stability and social standing. This is the main reason why most marriages in Saudi are prearranged and marrying one's cousin is common. Being aware of each other's family background will ensure that the risk of having bad family life is avoided.