

The Varying Styles of Native Gowns



From India

The bride of India is wed in her own home, exchanging vows with her husband-to-be in front of a sacred fire, the symbol of Light and Power in the Hindu faith. The typical bridal costume in India consists of a beautiful "ghagra" (skirt), with blouse and the "ornhi," or mantle, worn gracefully on the head.



... Lapland

The Lapland bride is wed in dark blue, with many shawls tied over her shoulders. The top shawl is usually white. Women guests at the wedding ceremony also wear white shawls (the traditional garb for all solemn occasions). The number of shawls worn by the bride is somewhat of a status symbol. Paralleling the American custom of wearing "something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue," the Finnish Lapp girls must wear "one bought, one got, one stolen, the rest borrowed."



... Japan

Traditional Japanese bridal attire consists of a very ornate kimono with flowing sleeves that reach down to the floor. Often the gown is made of rich silk brocade with a great deal of embroidery using gold and silver threads. The "obi" or sash is also of silver and gold brocade, very elaborately tied in back. The bride wears the traditional hairdo, elaborately arranged, lacquered and piled high.

Wedding Beauty in All Cultures

The "something new" is "something old" in this year's wedding planning. Old fashioned romance is the key to 1978 bridal fashions and festivities, from flower-brimmed hats to petal-strewn aisles, layers of lace and shimmering satin to elegant morning coats and tuxedos of Byronesque grace and style.

Along with this return to romance, there is also a return to individual ethnic traditions and customs in today's weddings.

People all over the country are taking a revitalized interest in searching out their "roots," and what better way to express the family's cultural inheritance — or the meeting of two wonderfully different backgrounds — than in that most vital and meaningful family event of all, the wedding.

Incorporating ethnic traditions, customs and even dress into the modern marriage ceremony is not as involved and unusual a process as one might think. No matter where one travels in the world, weddings are found to be a constant source of joy for people in all places.

The individual customs may vary, the languages may have different words for expressing the vows, the dress, the food and the festivities may follow different styles and patterns, but the beauty of the wedding ceremony lies in its universal significance — the world-wide affirmation of hope, love and unity that it represents.

Some brides may be escorted to the altar by their father, some may march to their wedding service on the arm of their groom, some may be led in procession by a high-ranking member of the community or a family elder, but all brides and grooms are joined in

marriage in the company of their families and friends.

Almost every culture has its traditional wedding apparel for both the bride and the groom. Some couples are married in traditional ethnic dress whose origins date back hundreds, even thousands of years. Some brides go to the altar in the same gown that their mother or grandmother wore. Others will either design and sew their own wedding dress or choose a gown of very special appeal to them from the current collection of

retail bridal wear.

But whether the bride chooses to wed in a modern "bridal gown" or a family heirloom of ethnic origin, all brides share the desire to marry in attire that will make the occasion truly memorable.

In some parts of the world a bride may still bring her dowry with her to her marriage, a symbol of her collected contributions to her new life — but almost everywhere brides and grooms receive a welcome array of thoughtful presents along with many good wishes to help start them on their life together.



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