

SAYING 'I DO', ON THEIR OWN TERMS

WITH RIDERS Young couples are writing their own wedding vows as they seek to personalise weddings, lay down some ground rules

Riddhi Doshi

riddhi.doshi@hindustantimes.com

For some, it's the dream of recreating that perfect, tearjerker Hollywood wedding. For others, it's an attempt to bring ancient ceremonies into the 21st century. Still others just want to ensure everyone's on the same page, right from the start.

For various reasons, Indian couples are increasingly writing their own vows, reciting them during the wedding pooja, mouthing them to each other silently during their pheras, or calling them out amid giggles at the reception.

"The trend has been brought here by NRIs," says wedding planner Candice Pereira, co-founder of Marry Me Weddings. "Personalised wedding vows are, of course, a phenomenon in the West."

Ironically, the practice is catching on not among Christians but mainly within the Hindu community, since the Church in India is fairly strict about retaining the official vows.

In the Hindu ceremonies too, the original vows remain, the priest chanting them in Sanskrit as is the norm and couples adding their own promises later.

"Most couples don't understand the Arabic and Sanskrit vows, so it's about time people began exchanging their own promises," says sociologist Kamala Ganesh. "Some of the vows also date back to a more patriarchal time, and are therefore more one-sided. With changing times, there is a need to include new vows for the new Indian woman."

Marriage counsellor Deepti Makhija says the personalised vows also help young couples, especially those in arranged marriages, verbalise exactly what they expect from their new arrangement — such as personal space or mutual respect for each other's families. "When you create your own vows, you also tend to take more responsibility for fulfilling them," says Makhija.



'I VOW TO SHARE THE HOUSEWORK'

Journalist Dheera Majumder, 25, and advertising professional Amitava Mitra, 28, married in January and exchanged their own vows a day later, in a special ceremony planned by the couple. "In today's reality, the responsibilities that each partner has to play are quite different from what it was ages ago, when these vows were made," says Dheera. "Sometimes people take marriage too casually and that is when the problem begins. We take our relationship and expectations from each other very seriously."

THE VOWS

- To listen to each other patiently and discuss everything before reaching a conclusion
- To learn to strike a balance between work and personal life
- To share responsibilities, whether in housework, financial aspects or other respects

'I VOW TO GIVE YOU PERSONAL SPACE...'

Businesswoman Hiral Shah, 26, and her husband Dipesh, 30, who heads his own stockbroking firm, were introduced through their families and dated for three months before their December 2009

wedding. "We clicked instantly," says Hiral. "And one thing we discovered we had in common was a love for soap opera Friends." So, for their wedding, the couple decided to write their own vows and recite them after the traditional four pheras of the Gujarati wedding. "We were very careful not to disclose the vows to each other before the wedding day," says Hiral, laughing. "And it really made our wedding seem more personal, more like our own memory."

THE VOWS

- To respect each other's families.
- To give each other space and allow each other to spend time with their respective friends
- If either dies young, for the other to remarry
- When they have a baby, for Dipesh to quit drinking and smoking for at least a few years

'I VOW TO RESPECT YOUR FAMILY...'

Public relations executive Grishma Shah, 27, was introduced to engineer Raj Sanghavi, 29, by her family and the two were married in June 2010. A few months before their wedding, the couple decided to write their own vows and exchange these on chits during the pheras. "The priest did explain each traditional vow," says Shah. "But we thought it was necessary to verbalise a few basic expectations, which if not fulfilled could cause problems later on."

THE VOWS

- To trust one other
- To discuss problems and grievances

with one other

'I VOW TO HELP YOU SETTLE IN THE US'

Binita Bhutta, a market research freelancer from Mumbai, and scientist Nirav Vora will tie the knot on February 11. Vora has lived in the US for 11 years and Binita has always lived in Mumbai. "During our wedding ceremony, we will be saying our own vows too, and I have asked him to take a vow to help me settle down there. He cannot be annoyed with me and give up if I struggle to adjust."

