

Arrival of the Bridegroom's Procession

The arrival of the *baraat* (the procession of the bridegroom that consists of his immediate as well as extended family and sometimes also a band¹) is a very important part of the wedding day since it marks the official initiation of the wedding. The bride's family has to be well-prepared in advance to welcome them in a hospitable and as grand a manner as possible.

The car of the groom, which has some of his family members, leads the procession and stops right outside the wedding hall/garden². As the groom emerges from the car the bride's family stand ready to welcome them. While the rest of the family stands aligned with trays of rose petals, garlands and bracelets³ of flowers (mostly the women) to welcome them, the bride's brothers/father and uncle step forward to greet the groom and proceed to put a garland of roses and jasmines around his neck.

If a band accompanies the procession, as it does in this case, it enters first, playing the trumpet and flute more commonly, and is followed by a member of the bride's family leading the groom in through the path which leads to the stage⁴ where the bride and groom are supposed to sit together.⁵ The groom is accompanied and followed by the rest of his family and friends in a manner similar to a procession. As they enter first the men and boys from the bride's family who are standing at the head of the line with garlands to put around the necks of the male members of the groom's family. As the procession moves forward the women and girls from the bride's side (who form the majority of the group standing to welcome the groom's relatives) throw rose petals on both male (especially lots on the groom) and female members of the family, as well as placing garlands around the necks of the close female relatives of the groom. Often times they also offer the older women (those who are married or old enough to be of marrying age) bracelets of jasmine flowers to wear throughout the wedding.

¹ Usually one dressed in traditional attire playing *dhol*s (local drums) and trumpets.

² Pakistani weddings are usually held in special wedding halls or garden areas which are rented for the occasion.

³ These are usually made of jasmine petals. The bracelet is like a huge bangle.

⁴ During many Pakistani weddings the groom and bride generally sit on a specially decorated stage where relatives come to congratulate them and photos are taken by photographers.

⁵ Occasionally depending on the family's religious beliefs the male and female seating is segregated and they sit in their respective seating areas.

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