

Vegan is the way to go in Indian weddings

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Diet, fashion and now even weddings, everything is getting a vegan twist now.

It's no more considered a hippy philosophy. Nor is it an alien concept that can be scoffed at for being 'a little too extreme'. At a time when biodiversity has become an international concern, going vegan is no more a fad. From being considered an extreme form of vegetarianism, today veganism has managed to blend seamlessly into mainstream lifestyle.

Vegan weddings

Preethi and Raghav, a young South Indian couple, have decided to go for what might just be India's "first vegan wedding". "We have been involved with a lot of animal rescue and welfare organisations. And during our time with them, we've seen the atrocities animals are put through to cater to the dietary needs of humans. This act itself is inhuman at many levels, so we decided to go vegan," says bride-to-be, Preethi Shankaran, who along with fiance Raghav is taking great pains to ensure that their wedding will be a totally vegan affair! "When Raghav and I decided to go for a vegan wedding, our

parents were not too comfortable with the idea at first. Imagine a South Indian wedding with no payasam! But we took them to talks and workshops, and later they came on board," explains Preethi.

The vegan touch extends to the bridal trousseau as well. Though traditionally, a bride's attire might be considered incomplete without rich silks, Preethi has found some chic, green alternatives. "As a vegan I don't wear silk. So for my wedding, a designer friend is designing saris in rich cottons and synthetic silks. The fabrics have a sheen to them which makes the ensemble look rich. The best part is, all my bridal saris (seven of them), have come under `10,000," says the beaming bride-to-be.

The couple has created a wedding website providing information about the vegan wedding to guests, complete with the menu. And a lot of thought has gone into the same. "The desserts for instance, will include the dairy-free thengai payasam made of coconut milk. The famous South Indian filter coffee too gets a vegan twist with soy milk," says Preethi.

The couple has also requested guests to donate wedding gifts to their favourite animal welfare organisations. "To be honest, no one really uses most of the gifts received at weddings. Instead, we are requesting guests to donate something to animal welfare organisations." And yes, while Raghav might have gone down on one knee to propose marriage to Preethi, no diamonds were involved. "Romantic proposal it was, but blood diamonds are a strict no, no for us," says one half of this vegan couple.

Style file

Lady Gaga might find the meat dress quite fashionable. But an increasing number of eco conscious folk are looking at vegan fashion alternatives which do not harm flora and fauna. City designer Shraavan Kumar confirms that the number of orders for "vegan clothing" has gone up drastically. "I have many clients who come to me looking for alternatives to silk and wool. An Indian wedding is incomplete without silks in the bride's trousseau. So, we come up with other rich alternatives, which are not just cheap but also adopt a strict vegan approach. I know of a few clients who refuse to wear leather and search for eco friendly footwear," says the couturier. "In fact, most designers today have their line of eco-friendly footwear to cater to this growing number of vegans in the city," he confirms. "The beauty industry too consumes a lot of animal-based grooming products. Vegans are now opting for organic products. even though expensive, they are less harmful to you and the environment," says the designer.

A wholesome lifestyle

"Veganism is not just about food and clothing alone. It's about every consumer item that has animal product in it," says Amita Desai, executive Director, Goethe-Zentrum. "We are what we eat and it's important to know what foods are good for you and what not," says Desai, who is a vegan. "Keeping the growing trend of veganism in mind and to promote the cause at a larger level, Goethe-Zentrum is organising a 'Vegan Celebration', which will see a talk on the lifestyle by Nina Osswald, activist and vegan. There will be films on animal protection and how to lead a healthier lifestyle. We have also urged participants to bring along a homemade vegan dish," says Desai.

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