

The Story of my Marriage

by Rachita Gupta



Hi, my name is Rachita. I'm from India but moved to the USA with my husband last year. We came directly to Chicago and are enjoying so much living here at Park Tower.

Some of my new acquaintances seem interested in knowing more about Indian culture and traditions, particularly the colorful Indian weddings, rituals and celebrations. So, if I may, I'll use my own wedding story to illustrate. Here we go!

My husband is Mr. Rahul Gupta. Both he and I were born and raised in New Delhi, the capital city of India. We worked there too, I in advertising and he as a software engineer. At the time of our marriage I was 24 and Rahul was 27.

What you call extended families are "joint families" in India. Before marrying, Rahul and I lived with our respective parents, grandparents, brother, sister and their families – all in same house! Like most Indians, our religion is Hindu. But traditions, language, food, and culture vary from region to region. Ours was a North Indian Hindu wedding.

The Meeting

Yes, you will all want to know – ours was an arranged marriage. My father met Rahul and his family through a mutual friend. After getting to know them a little, and asking some probing questions, he arranged for the two families to meet on a Sunday morning in late January, 2017.

That was Rahul's and my first meeting, too, and we spoke privately in a corner for 10 or 15 minutes. Though nervous, we exchanged pleasantries and managed to ask some general questions about life goals, hobbies, and so forth. All went well. We agreed to marry, and our families exchanged sweets and gifts.

Here are the ceremonies and rituals that, taken together, comprised our wedding.

The Roka Ceremony

The word "roka" means to stop. This ceremony is to officially let family and friends know that the search has stopped, that we've found our suitable partners. A highlight is the groom's mother giving to the future bride a piece of heirloom jewelry as a sign of acceptance into her family.

The Engagement or Ring Ceremony

Unlike in Western traditions, the exchange of rings is done in an engagement function before the marriage. Another tradition – having the couple's wedding day clothes and jewelry gifted by their respective in-laws – also took place that day. It was a spectacular event attended by more than 350 guests, with choreographed performances by Rahul, myself, our parents, siblings and other family members.



The Haldi and Mehendi Ceremonies

Hindu weddings generally occur shortly after engagement. Ours was in early May, 2017. The day before our wedding ceremony, haldi – a yellow turmeric powder that also beautifies – was applied to my face, hands and feet by the married women in my family, along with yogurt to make my hair smooth and silky. The whole while they sang songs to bring good fortune. A big festive event also occurred at Rahul's home, also with dancing and much good cheer.



In a separate, intimate ritual the same day, beautiful and intricate Mehendi designs were applied to my hands and feet using henna, a rich, red-brown stain. Henna has cultural and traditional importance in India, with special significance to married women.

The Bhaat Ceremony

On the morning of the wedding, my maternal uncle brought gifts, sweets and jewelry for Rahul and me, showing love for his niece and new nephew.

The Wedding Ceremony

A Hindu wedding starts in the evening and continues through the next morning. It begins with a **Baraat**, the groom arriving by horse or carriage and accompanied by his family and friends. This is done with great pomp, including a band, dancing and fireworks.

The groom's party is welcomed by the bride's mother. There follow a series of small but meaningful rituals, the first of which is the **Aarti** in which light from wicks soaked in purified butter is offered to the deities. A wedding feast is then served to the entire gathering which, in our case, numbered nearly 500.

Next comes the **Kanyadaan** ritual at which the bride's father presents his daughter to the groom, entrusting him with her future well-being.

Sometime after midnight, the couple is seated in front of a sacred fire where, in the presence of their families, they perform the **Saat Pheras** ritual, or seven vows that signify their union for seven lives. This essential commitment is then validated by the priest, who ties them together with a sacred knot.

The groom then applies sindoor, a bright red cosmetic, to the bride's face. It can be elaborate or just a red dot on the forehead. Either way, it is a token of their marriage and shows the world that she is a married woman.

The wedding ceremony is now complete, but departing is also special. In the **Vidaai** ritual, the bride takes leave – usually tearfully – to live with her new husband at the home of her in-laws. In so doing, she tosses rice over her shoulders to thank her parents for their loving care. **(Continued next page)**



Then, in the **Griha Pravesh** ritual, she is welcomed into her new home by her mother-in-law and other women, this amid traditions such as games by which family members get to know one another.

Yes, there was a honeymoon. A few days later, we flew to Greece, a beautiful country that we had never before visited.



As I mentioned at the beginning, Rahul works in software engineering. His company, headquartered in New Delhi, has offices in other countries, and last year he was fortunate enough to be posted to Chicago. While that meant I had to give up my job in advertising, I am thrilled to be here with him.

Time will tell what comes next for us, but for sure our marriage was a life-altering event. In our current home away from home, we participate in Social Committee events and look forward to meeting even more of our new neighbors. **TTT**

Questions and comments sent to bobshamo@rcn.com will be forwarded to Rachita.

Going Green

More Than Some, Less Than Others

Park Tower's waste removal contractor, Republic Services, reports on a year-to-date basis how much of our waste was recyclable and how much had to go to landfill. As of June, our waste so far this year totaled 211 tons, with just 27 tons of it recyclable. Divide the smaller number by the larger one, and you get just under 13% of our waste having been recycled and, hopefully, repurposed into newly-manufactured products.



13% looks pretty good compared with Chicago as a whole, which this summer is recycling just 8% of residential waste (WBEZ podcase, [Curious City](#)). But then, the same source reports that in San Francisco, where recycling and composting is mandatory, that number is 80%! **TTT**

Read page 10 for more on Going Green. And online readers, click [here](#) to see Republic's estimate of how many trees; gallons of oil, gasoline and water; kilowatts of electricity; and yards of landfill were saved by Park Tower's 27 tons (13%) of recyclables.

From Our Readers

Just What You (May) Need

Ever have a lamp in a hard-to-reach location? Or perhaps a virtually unreachable router/modem that sometimes needs to be rebooted? Here are two variations on a theme – extension cords with remote switches “in-line” between the plug and the socket.



Var 1 (left) is for when the wall outlet is within reach but the appliance is not, and Var 2 for when both the outlet and the appliance are inaccessible. With either type, the switch can be pulled to a comfortable location for activating by foot (Var 1) or by hand (Var 2). **TTT**



Thanks, Jim Jardine, for this solution.

Oh yes, that 2020 Census Form ..

Have you mailed yours in? Everyone living in the United States is required by law to be counted by September 30 (that deadline having been extended due to the coronavirus).



The information requested is so important. It will provide the data that determines for the next 10 years how voting districts are drawn, the number of legislators representing us in Congress, and how tax dollars will be distributed to states and cities.

If you don't remember receiving the form, or mislaid it, go to [2020Census.gov](https://www.census.gov) and fill out another one. Not to worry, duplicates will be discarded. “Uncle Sam” needs you!



Thanks to the several readers who suggested we include this reminder.

