



*Monique  
& Surag*

*Saturday, October 9th 2010*

**Vivaha : Hindu Wedding Ceremony**

A traditional Hindu wedding ceremony, called Vivaha in Sanskrit, marks the sacred union in mind, body and spirit of two individuals. The marriage also celebrates the bond created by two families as they help the bride and groom embark on their new life together. Vivaha is one of the sixteen Hindu Samskaraas, or sacraments.

The ceremony takes place under a mandap, or wedding canopy, which represents the universe. Four pots in the four corners of the mandap represent the Earth and the cardinal directions - north, south, east, and west. The mandap pillars represent the four parents whose support strengthens the couple and whose role in raising the bride and groom is indispensable. Flowers represent beauty and joy, while grains represent the food necessary to sustain life. The fire, which represents Agni, the god of fire, is divine witness to the union and brings the couple warmth throughout their life together.

**Baraat : Arrival of the Groom**

Surag arrives on a white horse, surrounded by family and friends who sing and dance in a joyous procession to the wedding venue. A drummer marks the beat with the double-sided dhol.

**Pokhana : Welcoming of the Groom**

The bride's mother, Indu, greets Surag warmly beneath the arch and marks his forehead with a red tilak, a symbol of wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. She then performs aarti, a prayer ceremony.

**Navkar Mantra: Jain Prayer**

The Navkar Mantra is recited to mark the beginning of the auspicious occasion. It is the most sacred of Jain verses, invoking the blessings of five parameshthis : the Arihant (enlightened, perfected souls), the Siddha (liberated souls, those free of all Karmas), the Aachaarya (heads of congregations), the Upaahyaya (ascetic teachers), and the Sadhus (ascetic aspirants).

**Ganesh Puja and Madhupark : Prayer to Ganesh**

The wedding ceremony begins with the worship of the elephant-headed god Ganesh. He is revered for removing obstacles and providing good luck and knowledge. The bride's father, Mahendra, marks Surag's forehead with red tilak and offers him madhupark, a sweet mixture of yogurt, honey, sugar, and ghee. The mixture symbolizes the sweetness the couple will experience during the wedding ceremony and life. Monique's parents wash Surag's feet in honor of the god Narayan - the creator and destroyer of the universe, the essence of all beings, and the master of past, present, and future.

**Shakochar**

The priest invokes the memory and blessings of the respective fathers, and paternal grandfathers of the bride and groom: Mahendra Jain, Hiralal Raison, Ishwarbhai Patel and Jethabhai Patel.

**Kanya Agman : Arrival of the Bride**

Rohan escorts Monique to the mandap where she sits facing the groom. The groom's sisters, Beena and Ena, hold a translucent cloth, called an antarpata, in front of Surag's face to show that the bride and groom are still separate individuals. They lower the antarpata to signify the removal of physical, emotional, and spiritual barriers between the pair.

**Jaymala : Exchange of Garlands**

Monique and Surag exchange garlands of flowers to show their acceptance of one another, their mutual respect, trust, and love, and the surrender of their individual egos. In Hindu tradition, this is akin to the exchange of wedding rings.

**Hastmelap : Joining of Hands**

Their daughter's hand in marriage is the most precious gift parents can bestow on a groom. Indu and Mahendra place Monique's right hand in the upturned palm of Surag's right hand. Monique's parents make a request that Surag and his family nurture, value, and care for their daughter.

Indu and Mahendra place a handwoven loop of cotton around the couple's necks. The loop, called a varmala, has no seams - no beginning and no end. The continuous cotton loop binds the couple together in a union that will have no interruptions and no end.

**Granthi Bandhan : Tying of the Matrimonial Knot**

Surag's mother, Sandhya, ties together one end of Surag's scarf and one corner of Monique's sari with a white cloth that contains a betel nut, coins, rice, grass, and flowers, which represent longevity, economic prosperity, fertility, and happiness. The knot reminds the betrothed that their abilities, virtues, and all other aspects of life are much stronger when combined.

**Agni Puja: Lighting of the Sacred Fire**

To bless the couple's union, the priest lights the holy fire. Agni dispels the darkness and ignorance human beings so often experience to show the path to knowledge and eternal life. The light and heat of the fire will sustain the couple and bring them the comfort of mutual understanding.

**Mangal Phera : Circling of the Sacred Fire**

The couple walks around the holy fire four times while holding hands. Surag leads the first three times, and Monique leads the final time. Each lap, or phera, symbolizes one of the four goals of married life.

- Dharma To lead a life guided by a moral compass and a sense of purpose
- Artha To achieve prosperity, happiness, and wealth
- Kama To live passionately and enjoy life's pleasures
- Moksha To achieve enlightenment and salvation

During each phera, Monique and Surag each touch their right foot to a rock that lies along the path. The rock represents the obstacles they may face during the course of their life together and reminds the couple that together they can overcome adversity. At the start of each phera, Rohan puts rice into Monique and Surag's hands to convey his support and his wish that the couple live a long, prosperous life.

According to tradition, whoever sits down first after the final phera will be head of the household.

### **Saptapadi : The Seven Vows**

Monique and Surag take their first seven steps together as a married couple. With each step, they each touch the big toe of the right foot to a supari, or betel nut, and make a promise to each other.

- We will share our time, wealth, and energy with our family, friends, and those in need.
- We will share each other's strengths and ideals.
- We will work hard to build a life together.
- We will help one another find happiness and achieve our dreams.
- We will raise responsible, strong, virtuous children.
- We will cherish each other in sickness and in health and in happiness and in sorrow.
- We will devote ourselves to one another in mind, body, and spirit and remain lifelong partners in all that we do.

### **Akhand Saubhagyavati : Blessing of Married Women**

Married women whisper blessings and wishes of eternal happiness into Monique's right ear. Mangalsutra and Sindoor: Sacred Necklace and Vermilion Powder Surag places the mangalsutra, or sacred necklace, around Monique's neck to show his enduring commitment. He then rubs the part in the bride's hair with sindoor, or vermilion powder, the traditional mark of a married woman. At this time, Monique and Surag exchange rings.

### **Kansar Bhojan: Exchange of Sweets**

Kansar bhojan is the couple's first meal together. Monique and Surag offer sweets to one another to symbolize their union.

### **Aashirvaad: Blessings**

Monique and Surag seek blessings from God, their parents and elderly relatives by bowing at their feet. The couple receives the blessings of all those assembled and are showered with rice and flowers. The priest then declares the couple husband and wife.

### **Vidai: Farewell to the Bride**

The Vidai is one of the most emotional parts of a Hindu wedding ceremony. Now that Monique and Surag are married, she bids farewell to her family. She throws a fistful of rice behind her shoulder wishing her childhood home happiness and prosperity and begins her new life with Surag.

### **Thank you**

The Jain and Patel families sincerely thank you all for joining us in our celebration today. We feel blessed to have the love of such wonderful family and friends, which has led to the happiness that we share today.

