



Vivah, Nikah, Shaadi

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Seventh Grade

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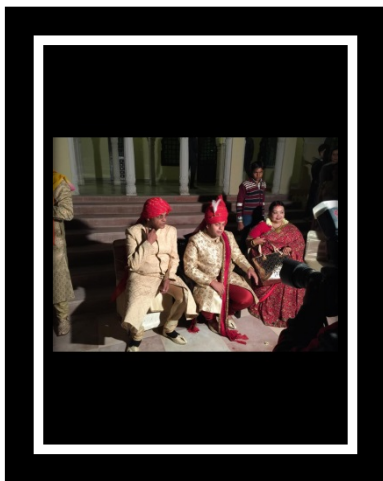
Vivah, Nikah, Shaadi

The evocative fragrance of lotus leaves and rose petals wreathed Amar Mahal in ecstasy as it cannoned blotches of strawberry rouge and merlot scarlet onto its chiffon frost walls. The palace projected a marigold ambience, hued with streaks of splintering animation as the rhythm of the dhole

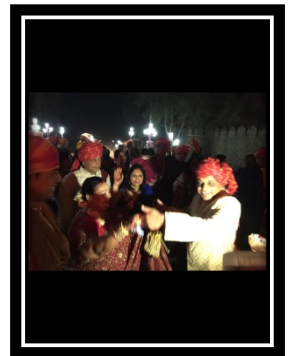


synchronized with the flailing choonis and honeyed-magenta saffas.

My cousin, Monu Bhaiya, the groom, sat shyly brushed with ruby-tiger specks on his bronzed cheeks, either mortified by our dysfunctional dancing or the fact that he was going to marry his “Jhansi ki Rani”, the love of his life today. As the grungy ginger man tied Bhaiya’s diamond-embellished, scarlet saffa, we through morsels of puffed rice and golden blossoms by the glow of the arctic, mint pools that surrounded us. My



jubilant badi mausi (aunt) was a rose of blush candy sparkling with glimmering gold while the coconut flora entwined into her silky jade hair. As Monu Bhayia ascended from the chair, the baraat, all one hundred and fifty of us, began to twirl in our mile-long line all the way to the marble steps of the palace.



“*Challo, challo!*” bellowed everyone as they sang along to the enriching melody.

“*Dhak-da-dhak-da-dhak-da-dhak!*” echoed the drums in unison.

Vivah, Nikah, Shaadi

As we descended into the darkness of the sky, our gilded jumkas and bejeweled bindis pirouetted onto the dirty canvas of Bundhelkhand's streets. Just as Bhaiya was ascending onto the horse,--

“*Aarti beta?*” my badi Mause (uncle) questioned.

“*Ji, Mause?*” I tried to communicate over my blaring family.

“*Tum yah ajao,*” he motioned for me to come to where Bhaiya was sitting in the chariot with the darling Sai Bala.

I was astonished for a flash. It was as if my brain and eyes had shut all of the pomp and



splendor away and left me tantalizing in a fantasy world of shock. *Me?* They wanted *me* to ride in the horse-drawn chariot with Bhaiya and the Sai Bala to grace the bride's family? *Me?*

“*Ji!*” I exclaimed a tad too enthusiastically.

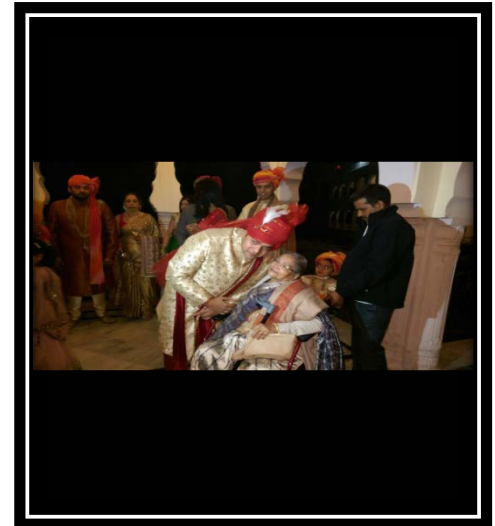
“*Haan. Julthi!*” Mause replied.

After I was placed onto the grand chariot, we began our descent into the bride's palace. The chariot's glow, enriched by the dragon flames of canary and lemon, was glittered with fuchsia-crested swirls and loops. In front of the horse-drawn chariot, were ten feet of dazzling lamps clasped by two women on each side wearing dull, cotton saris. The lanterns gave off butter-tangerine hues that electrified the simplicity of the women's bodies. In front of the lights, was the baraat that was now jostling and screaming to the big band on the movable stage that was warning everyone that we were approaching.

Vivah, Nikah, Shaadi

Choti Mausi (aunt) and chota Mause (uncle) led everyone in the traditional Indian moves. The rhythm immersed in melodic chants throbbing to the bulle's and taps of our limbs. We swung our arms up in the humid air as we made our way to the entrance of the palace where the bride's family stood cheering in excitement.

Havoc wreaked everywhere. Well, havoc it would seem to normal people however, typical for my family. We were already three-hours late, and the elder, stout man had just begun to tie my saffa. A swarm of monarchs surged through my stomach up into my throat giving a prickly sensation. My heart was pounding like a gallant eagle beating its wings through the crystalline air of the blue skies while my bronzed hands were saturated in balmy sweat. My love and her family must have been waiting for hours by now. Flashy lights and cameras surrounded us while my family began throwing puffed rice and golden blossoms towards my direction oblivious to the time; they were just bursting with bliss, especially my nani ji. The dhole began beating a prancing rhythm as I was motioned to begin advancing to the entrance of the palace. The crowd behind me let loose each step I took, shaking and swaying to the beat. It seemed as if the more rowdy they became, the more stressed and nervous I became. I was going to marry the love of my life today, and I was already three hours late.



“*Aakash, uper jao!*” my father screamed over the chatter of the people.

“*Ji, Papa! Abhi jahengye!*” I replied back as he went to get Aarti for the chariot.

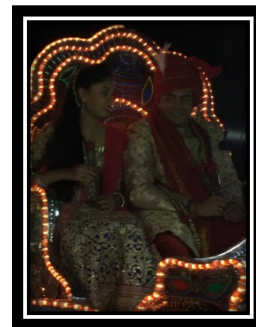
Vivah, Nikah, Shaadi

The chariot was gorgeous; just as my darling Pooja is. The aura of spicy citrus reminded me of her glowing honey-butter skin. The fuchsia crests symbolized her rosy cheeks while the golden wheels represented her hypnotic—

“*Monu Bhaiya! Monu Bhaiya!*” my cousin, Aarti, persisted as she tried to get my attention.

“*Kya wah? Aap teek hai?*” she worriedly asked as the chariot began to move.

“*Haan. Just nervous hai. Pooja must have been waiting for a long time,*” I confess.



“*Kuchne ho ga. Aap bus relax kijia aur enjoy kur dho. This day won't come again!*” she beams.

“*Haan. True hai,*” I figured.

“*Ahh! Aap kya khari hai?*” I ask pain-stricken.

“*Tum mara bal both thick hai aur zaada pins chaye!*” the stylist exclaims.

“*Teek hai. Julthi kar do!*” I wail in frustration.

My family and I were supposed to be ready and waiting for Aakash’s family over three hours ago. Yet, my lips are still nude while my face foundationless. To make matters even worse, my gold jewelry is weighing me down into a Christmas ornament while my bridal lengha is tugging at my sides, its jewels scratching the outer-side of my legs.

Aakash and his family must be here already, wondering where we are. They must think we’ve all run away. As I begin to deepen into my depressing thoughts, mother enters the room.

Vivah, Nikah, Shaadi

“Ma, kya wah?” I ask.



“Aaj, tum shaadi kharinge. Aur, tum himesha chelle jahengye!” she sniffed while tears welled up in her eyes.

“Aure, ne Ma! Mera ghar himesha renghe mera ghar! Aap aur Papa himesha renghe meri ma-baap. Rao muth!” I pleaded. *How could she ever think I would leave them once I became married?*

Ma, Papa, aur Abishek are always going to be my family. I would never leave them. Suddenly, a realization dawned on me. While I was busy worrying about my appearance, my family was busy sobbing at the thought of me going away. My inner-self instantly became a puddle of mellifluous tears.

“Aure, Pooja don’t cry. Aap ka makeup ruin ho jahengye,” Ma spoke.

“Ne. Hum ka se rao hai? I’m just going to miss everyone,” I confess.

“Chello beta. Tum ready ho jao,” Ma said as she began to exit the room.

“Wait! Ma, bring one sweet for me?” I ask gingerly smiling through my cherry lipstick.

“You will never change Pooja beta!” Ma laughed as she began to quest into my jalebi escapade.

As we are approaching the bride’s family standing at the steps of the Raj Mahal Palace, I am literally put into a state of awe. Everyone is screaming and shouting out of pure joy. Little children are throwing roses to me while my cousins and brothers are being crowned with golden flowers strewn around their necks. I felt like a celebrity being graced at the red carpet even though I hadn’t been exposed to trace of fame in all my thirteen-years of living, and it wasn’t

Vivah, Nikah, Shaadi

my wedding. Then, the bride's closest cousins hoisted Monu Bhaiya up in the air while we all laughed and clapped.

After my family made our customary "fashionably-late" entrance, I proceeded towards the courtyard. The courtyard was lavishly decorated and spanned the size of a football-field. At the very front, stood a colossal stage decorated with fresh flowers, lights, and a silk, golden-rose couch. Wonderful aromas instantly surged up through my nose sprinkling my mouth with tantalizing cravings. Everywhere I looked there was delicacies challenging my weak inner-self. Dahi-ka-patasha, kebab-roll, aloo-tikki, pani-puri, dahi-vada, paratha, chaat, and many other chows filled me with ecstasy. The crunchy, butter puris, the cream-spiced yogurt, the velvety potatoes, and the tangy meetha chutney of the patashas made me melt at the sight of it.

Suddenly, the crowd became quiet. Aunties and uncles dropped their tandoori kebabs and little children stopped frolicking. The music switched from a modern melody to a native drum beat. The bride was coming!

Pooja advanced to the stage where Aakash was waiting. She walked under a gilded, scarlet cloth held up by her dearest family members.

"Oh my god! There she comes! She looks like a regal empress. Is my hair okay? Oh, how beautiful she is!" I exclaimed. How long must I have made her wait? Oh, I hope she'll forgive me. I can't wait to marry her!



Vivah, Nikah, Shaadi

As I began approaching the stage, I noticed how handsome my Aakash looked. I hope I didn't make him wait too long and that he'll forgive me. I cannot wait to become Mrs. Pooja Aakash Prasad!



As Pooja took her seat beside me, I was hesitant to begin our first conversation on our wedding day with the words: "Please forgive me. It was my family's fault!" Yet, I faced the chance of losing my wife before she really became my wife!

"What? I wanted you to forgive me because I thought we were late!" Pooja replied astonished.

"What? No, no." I chuckled.

"This will be a great story for our kids!" Pooja beamed as we came together.

Pooja Bhabhi and Monu Bhayia looked gorgeous together. His **dynamic** looks complemented her **charming** personality. For a moment everything seemed frozen in time due to the sheer perfectness of everything surrounding me.

Vivah, Nikah, Shaadi

I guess family truly is one of nature's greatest masterpieces.



Vivah, Nikah, Shaadi

I would like to thank each and every person who took the time out of their hectic schedules to read this story that is very dear to my heart. I would like to especially thank my librarian, Mrs. Lane, for being so understanding and helpful and my past mentors that have encouraged my passion for writing.

Vivah, Nikah, Shaadi

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Vivah, Nikah, Shaadi