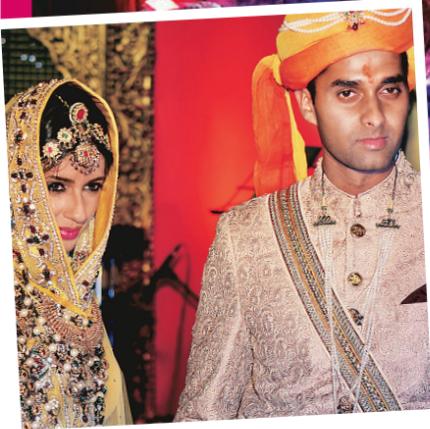


fashion ADDICT

Model Anjhula Mya Bais married Srilankan industrialist Satish Selvanathan at the Deogarh fort last year



Fairytale HICCUPS

Beware! Your perfect dream destination wedding can turn into a horrid nightmare ...

IT'S that time of the year again when everybody jostles for venue hall spaces, florists, caterers and pundits. It's the wedding season, the multi crore industry that thrives on the ultimate Indian fantasy: The Big Fat Indian Wedding. However, because of the sheer scope and eternal nature of the business, a murkier side and underbelly has emerged. I can recall my wedding nightmare with the practiced patience of one who has shared the tale more than once. My Investor husband Satish Selvanathan and I got married at Deogarh Mahal in Deogarh, Rajasthan last October.

From the beginning I should have had an inkling of what these vendors and the marketing arm of the palace were up to. Our tent vendors asked for a bribe before the Sangeet function or threatened to pull the electricity and vacate the guests who had attended from over 28 countries. This was caught on tape and in front of witnesses. I am forced to conclude that they were planning this from the beginning, they had no where near the capacity to hold a wedding of our size and nature but lied throughout about everything from the time it takes to get to the venue to even how much the pundit cost. In the end when we refused to give the money, they finally became despondent and tired and let us go. One of the photographers in a mad rush to find a replacement assistant hired a novice who ended up selling our wedding photos online. In the end with higher and more significant levels of corruption occupying my attention, I used my Buddhist compassion to finally forgive and move on.

My story is not an isolated

instance. Sonal Kalra, an NRI living and working in New York also planned a wedding in Delhi. She had signed a contract with the same tent vendor who created the tents on the set of *Monsoon Wedding*. One week before the wedding, the tent vendor backed out with no explanation. She shares, "In complete shock we told him that he signed a contract, but he shrugged it off saying there's nothing we can do." "With less than four days before the wedding during peak season, there were no vendors available. The tent vendor said he could recommend a guy, who did it for ten times the cost." Sonal's investment banker husband, Akshay paid \$40,000 for the tents. It was only later that the cou-

ple found that both vendors were in the plan together.

Ann Lawlor, PR specialist with the Lawlor Group in New York points out that this is not a phenomenon only circumscribed by India. "The wedding business is a really ugly business. Like the baby industry, wedding vendors and experts prey on the vulnerability and sentimentality that comes along with the occasion and charge exorbitant prices that are not justified safe in the knowledge that people will pay because they are caught up in the 'once in a lifetime moment'." Lawlor furthers this by giving the Waldorf Astoria as an example. "One of New York City's most prestigious hotels, the Waldorf has a wait list of three years. I

know of people who have accepted bribes and bumped people off their reserved dates and accommodated others."

Karpurna Brijraj of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia said that she and her husband looked into the possibility of hosting their wedding at the Neemrana Fort on the outskirts of New Delhi. "The staff were so non committal, demanding obscene amounts of money ahead of time with no guarantee of any services." We tried Deogarh and they never responded to one email which made us suspicious that these places which are touted as supposed 'heritage hotels' really didn't care about customer service. India being renowned for its hospitality will continue to be affected if mechanisms are not put into place to check corruption. Though the Deogarh police have pretended not to receive an FIR report, we are looking forward to a meeting with the Rajasthan CM by the end of the year.

If something doesn't feel right it probably is not, one should do their research, double check and get references. By speaking out about our own experience, more people are empowered to create and experience the wedding they always imagined and deserved.



ANJHULA MYA BAIS

Model, Psychologist, Philanthropist

Lust Have

Good things come in pears. Gordonmax, the leading luxury jewellery brand from Singapore brings yet another classy and elegant collection, Poire, to India. The collection embraces the style of modern classics and pear cut diamonds with timeless appeal. Vivid yellow and clear pear shape smart diamonds, set in 925 silver and plated in 18K white gold. The designs fuses contemporary forms with traditional workmanship.

