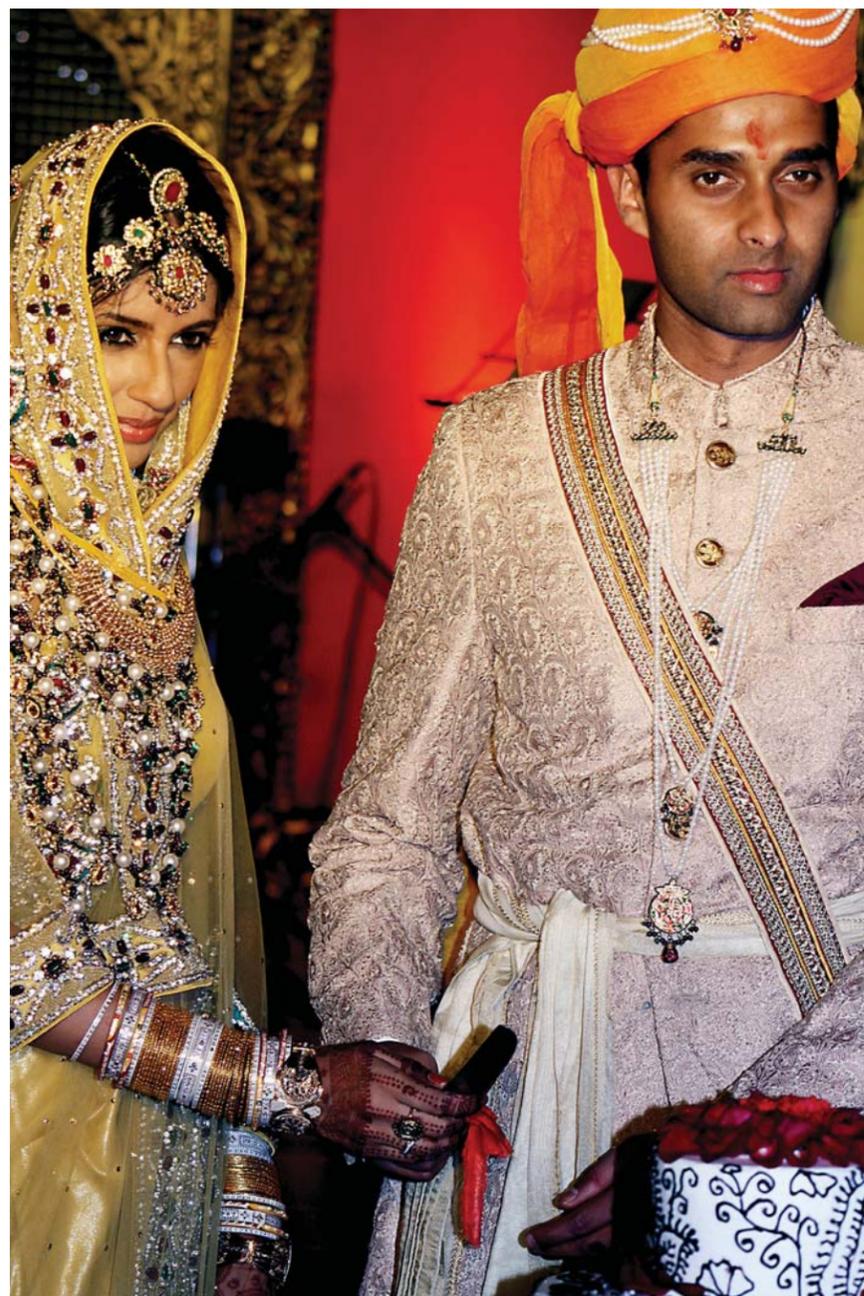


ANTHROPOLOGY

A ROYAL NIGHTMIRROR

THE TRUE STORY OF INDIAN SUPERMODEL AND BANSWARA ROYAL

ANJHULA MYA SINGH BAIS' WEDDING BELLS TO WEDDING HELL



photography by CIMMARON SINGH

Whether they'd like to admit it or not, most everyone dreams of their wedding day. Men typically think of the perfect girl and women about their ring and dress. Admittedly, I didn't fall into the latter category. For me our wedding was the symbolic unification of two people looking in the same direction, ready to take the world by storm and create value. Life, as they say, gives you the test first and then teaches you the lesson.

Dubbed by some as avant-garde and by others a reformist, our wedding undoubtedly had unique touches atypical to the "traditional Indian Wedding." For starters, despite the privileged backgrounds both my husband's family and I came from (Times of India dubbed our union one of the Top 5 Weddings of 2010), my husband, industrialist Satish Selvanathan, and I were determined to know the names of each and every one of our guests and to greet them at the gates of the palace as they arrived. This flew in the face of the thousand people plus weddings we attend with regularity.



TATYANA MERENYUK dress
BALLY sandals
JEWELMAK cuff and earrings



Both of us have zero use for another Swarovski vase, or any such wedding present for that matter. Being fully aware of the condition of many parts of the world, we elected that in lieu of presents, donations be made to Concern Worldwide, a leader in fighting global hunger, The Sri Lanka Initiative Fund which helps displaced refugees of the civil war, and The Great Football Give-away which gives footballs to orphaned children in Africa; the ethos being that every child should have a chance at playing and having fun.

Our wedding was set to take place in the palace of The Deogarh royal family in Rajasthan India. Their marketing arm, Consortium Ltd and Nomads in Luxury (luxury tent operators), understood all this to mean that we were prime targets for extortion. From day one as a female, I battled nine times the rate on everything from rental cars to even the priest. (Priests incidentally are not paid anything in India; it is supposed to be a religious service). All the mistreatment and extortion was caught on camera. Many eye witnesses can lay testimony to the fact that Davinder Singh, owner of Nomads in Luxury, said I either paid him the equivalent of \$10,000 dollars or "he would pull the electricity to the event and vacate all 200 guests at my wedding." These guests included heads of state, royalty, Bollywood actors, politicians and athletes. The vendors admitted later to googling both our families for our "financial capabilities" and felt confident that we could more than "provide" hence they proceeded with their plan.

TADASHI SHOJI dress

FENA clutch

ALEXANDRE HERCHCOVITZ X MELISSA heels

How I felt as a bride was hard to describe, but completely transcending this was our concern for our guests. These corrupt vendors were unprepared for an educated female to challenge them and I wasn't going to give up the fight. I rang the tent vendor back and said "You have a choice, either the function goes on, or I have enough Black Label for every third person. I will dock an Ipod and have a party anyway." They were banking on the fact that I would care what society would say and that I would bend at any cost to save face and avoid a showdown. In fact my closest friend called from abroad and said to me "Anjhula I don't want your wedding to be ruined, just pay him the amount, it's not that much." My husband and I believe one absolutely has to be the change one wants to see and tired of a corrupt India, we put our foot down.



TADASHI SHOJI dress

LARUICCI necklace

ALEXANDRE HERCHCOVITZ X MELISSA heels



We underestimated their desperation. When all the guests left on the last day of the wedding on 24th of October 2010, the vendors came up to our tent and asked for a signed, blank cheque. I thought I had misheard. When we refused, what followed were three thugs stopping our SUV, forcing us out, and marching us up to the reception. Following that was the threat of a gun to our head for 16 hours as they tried to negotiate with us. For the first two hours they held a group of 20 of our closest friends in a separate area; an area which was originally intended as a holding point for a tiger safari we were intended to embark on. Once I negotiated the 20 guests release, I turned around and decided it was time to make a move. My husband and I were so traumatized inside but as the Buddhist saying goes "A sword in the hands of a coward is useless." We stood our ground as they got drunk, surrounded my husband and said, "You guys just sign the cheque, its nothing to you, youre so wealthy." As they taunted us, I chanted in my head to reach their heart. I kept saying "it's not about the money, how can you do this to another human being?" Forcibly confine them in a palace with our car and driver impounded, the gates padlocked shut and the threat of a gun? It has always been and will always be about each person's humanism.

After 16 hours of being held hostage, at 6:30am the next day they gave up because we would not budge. We did not retaliate with anger, with counter threats or with cowardice. We were compassionate and we were firm.

After the whole ordeal was over and we arrived in the United States, the Indian police (being under the Deogarh fiefdom) decided to change their story and said nothing had ever happened. This does not daunt me because challenges portend growth and the evolving of the mind and spirit especially in the name of justice. People who knew what happened have told me to sweep it under the rug and "pretend everything is fine and nothing happened." To be silent is to consent. It's a grave mistake to think, "Well it's not my problem" when in fact yes, it is. Everything in this world is interdependent. Our environments are a reflection of ourselves and most parts of the world are not reflecting positively. These days, punishment comes in the form of social media. My voice keeps becoming stronger, so much so that the very people who captured us have even gone so far to offered to pay us hush money. If and when this does happen, I will take that grand admission of guilt and donate to the money charity. After all, life is about cause and effect.



CELESTINO COUTURE dress
PONO BY JOAN GOODMAN belt
CARLOS MIELE heels

I refuse to use the connections my husband and I may possess simply because we were lucky enough to be born into such privileged lives. I fought the good old' hard way. We will never be the same, but I see that as a brilliant thing. We have a BD and AD in our lives. Before Deogarh and After Deogarh. Satish and I fear nothing now and have expanded our lives phenomenally in 2011 with creativity and meeting amazing people. We look forward to implementing the anti-corruption trust we have founded and turning any poison into medicine.



CELESTINO COUTURE dress
PONO BY JOAN GOODMAN belt



CELESTINO COUTURE dress
RALPH LAUREN COLLECTION heels
photographed by **ZACH GROSS**
model **ANJHULA MYA SINGH BAIS**
styled by **CAMERON CARPENTER**
hair stylist **AMANDA SELA**
makeup artist **BOBBY GUTIERREZ**
location **THE RUSHMORE**