



VIDYA & MICAH
JULY 10, 2016



ॐ श्री गणेशाय नमः
ב"ה

WEDDING OF

**VIDYA KALYANI
SANTOSH**

Daughter of
Kumari Cowsik Santosh &
S. Santosh

TO

**MICAH SCOTT
HERSTAND**

Son of
Judith Chicorel Herstand &
Marc David Herstand

**JULY 10, 2016
BINGHAMTON, NY**

SHALOM & SHANTI

A NOTE FROM VIDYA & MICAH

Our Value for Religion

If you have ever wished that one of us would stop arguing with you, you will be glad to know that we have both found someone else to argue with now. Before we committed to each other, we spent countless hours challenging each other's personal dogmas. What we discovered is a shared foundation of values.

Hinduism and Judaism help us to find the extraordinary in the ordinary. They provide us community with others in the struggle of life. In our spiritual journey together, we have designated a prayer space in our home, we express gratitude for our food with *Brahmārpaṇam* and *HaMotzi*, and we attend both Hindu and Jewish temples.

Hinduism implores us to confront ourselves—to find the self-acceptance that will allow us to love others with full hearts. It reminds us of our connection to everyone and everything—that the divine is omni-present. The tradition specifically eschews a one-size-fits-all approach, freeing us to make our own path. Through meditation, service, song, and study, we do the Work that allows us to do our work.

Judaism's idea of *tikkun olam*—repairing the world—inspires us to action. The story of Jews is a story of struggle, and suffering in silence is not a Jewish virtue. By retelling the inspiring journey of the Jewish people through music and holidays, we are compelled to advocate for all those in need. For until we are all free, none of us is free.

Our Value for Tradition

In our home, we will celebrate Pongal and Passover, Deepavali and Chanukah; season our food with fried mustard seeds and break challah bread on Friday nights; and (mostly) follow the Indian and Jewish

rules of hygiene. We are both fortunate enough to have inherited the wisdom of our ancient cultures through their traditions.

When we partake in these traditions, we benefit in more than one way. First, our parents like us more for it. We are also able to employ a time-tested approach to life. Finally, we develop our sense of identity through connection to those who came before us, and we preserve these traditions for those who come after us.

But, we also recognize the struggle to balance ancient customs with modern life. We are activists. We dream of changing the world, one Facebook post at a time. We believe one's role should not be based on social category, but rather on individual potential. Traditions encapsulate not only the wisdom of our ancestors, but also their social structure. Because we take responsibility for the values we live by and pass on, we find it necessary to make reforms that respect the essence of our traditions while aligning them with our ideals and way of life. It is with all this in mind that we have curated today's ceremony with care and devotion.

Thank you for supporting us in our journey as individuals, and now as a new family. We welcome your thoughts and hope you will always challenge us to live with love and awareness. We look forward to sharing both of our cultures with all of you today and for many years to come.

With love and gratitude,

Vidya & Micah

VIVĀHA: THE HINDU WEDDING

WEDDING PARTY

Bride's Company

WOMAN OF HONOR
Haima Varadan Marlier

Sadashiv Santosh
Shrihari Santosh
Sandhya Vasan
Antonia Gabor
John Witty III

Groom's Company

BEST MAN
Ari Herstand

Saurabh Saluja
Amy Draheim
Josh Megdell
Gershon Askenazy
Katherine Filaseta

OFFICIANTS

Shivachariar (Priest) Ravichandran Saravanan
Dean Zemel, Circuit Court Commissioner & Head Mensch

ORDER OF SERVICE

Hindu wedding ceremony
Intermission
Unity ceremony
Jewish wedding ceremony

Lunch to follow

Please switch off your phones, cameras, and other devices
to be fully present with us during the ceremony.

At times playful and at times pious, the Hindu wedding is a celebration of the coming together of two souls, two families, and their interconnection with the divinity of all creation.

The greater part of the Hindu wedding ritual comes from the Vedas, ancient spiritual knowledge revealed to sages in India at least 6,000 years ago. In this culture, marriage was looked upon not as an end in itself, but as a means for the inner growth of the human personality through love and commitment. Vedic peoples found in marriage an answer to the universal yearning for understanding and intimacy on the spiritual, emotional, and physical levels.

From the *mālai mātral* (when the couple are hoisted onto relatives' shoulders to compete in a garland exchange) to the *saptapadi* (the “seven steps” they take reciting poetic vows communicating their inseparable connection) to *āśīrvādam* (the blessings of their parents and elders), we will see Vidya and Micah partake fully, equally, and reciprocally in all rituals, rejoicing in their history and their sanctity.

MĀLAI MĀTRAL: EXCHANGE OF GARLANDS

As soon as the bride and groom arrive, they first express their mutual consent and acceptance of each other by exchanging flower garlands. We share a moment of levity—literally—when they are lifted onto the shoulders of their uncles to see who can garland the other first.

ŪNJAL: SWING CEREMONY

The couple are seated on a swing, symbolically signifying that will jointly face the successes and setbacks of life together. The matriarchs of their families serenade and nurture them, praying for their good fortune.

GAṆEŚA PŪJA: OFFERING TO LORD GAṆEŚA

Hindus begin any occasion, big or small, with a *pūja* (prayer) for success. Gathered under the *maṇḍapam* (wedding canopy) each family invokes the divine power within to overcome any obstacles that stand between us and our goals. This aspect of Góḍ is symbolized by Ganesa, the lovable, elephantine embodiment of success.

PUNYĀHAVĀCANAM: WORDS FOR AN AUSPICIOUS DAY

These mantras are chanted for the purification of all aspects of the ritual, allowing us to see the entire ceremony as sacred.

RAKSHĀBANDHAN: PROTECTIVE BINDING

A cotton cord is tied around the wrists of the bride and groom for their symbolic protection.

SANKALPAM: DECLARING OUR INTENTIONS

The families announce their intent to undertake the rituals uniting the couple, and the cosmic time and place of this ceremony per the positions of the sun, stars, and planets.

PRAVARAM: INTRODUCING THE BRIDE AND GROOM

Vidya and Micah are introduced with their names and their maternal and paternal lineage. Then, a fire is lit. In Hindu pujas, fire is the immortal guest bearing witness to the prayers of the aspirants.

MĀNGALYA DHĀRAṆAM: WEARING THE AUSPICIOUS

Throughout India, the *mangal sūtra*, or sacred thread, is recognized as the mark of a married woman. It is tied by her groom, with a prayer for longevity. In our family tradition, the pendant bears a sun and moon, with a scale to represent balance. As such, Vidya and Micah have chosen to exchange necklaces as a daily reminder of their bond and balance.

SAPTAPADI: SEVEN STEPS

The most important ritual of the Hindu wedding is the *saptapadi*, seven steps around the sacred fire. Vidya and Micah take these steps together, as they will continue to do throughout their journey. With each step, they say a prayer in search of a fruitful and happy life. After the seventh step, they are considered officially married. Finally, they take ancient Vedic vows to live and breathe as partners, completely united and inseverable.

PRADHĀNA HOMAM: THE PRINCIPAL OFFERING

Together, Vidya and Micah ask that the whole universe—the sun, the ocean, the very elements themselves—bear witness to and bless their union.

LĀJA HOMAM: OFFERING OF PUFFED RICE

The couple offer puffed rice and ghee (clarified butter) into the sacred fire and then do *pradakṣiṇa* (circumambulation) around the fire. The bride—traditionally alone, but today along with the groom—stands on a stone, which embodies the qualities of stability and strength. Standing there, they chant a mantra seeking these qualities in themselves and in each other. This ritual is repeated three times.

HṚDAYA SPARŚA: TOUCHING OF HEARTS

Each with a hand on the heart of the other, Vidya and Micah promise to be of one heart and one mind, respecting each other's feelings and thoughts.

ĀŚĪRVĀDAM: BLESSINGS

Finally, Vidya and Micah seek the blessings of their parents and elders.

UNITY CEREMONY

It is often said that you don't just marry a person—you marry their family. In this spirit, the two families unite to bless Vidya and Micah.

PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

Vidya and Micah carry to the wedding canopy the Bhagavad Gita and the Tanach, the holy books that grace the shelves of their home. They pot a plant of omavalli, a medicinal plant, to remind them that health is cultivated first in the home. Their parents water it to recall the love and nurturing they have given to bring the couple to this occasion.

BLESSING FOR A MARRIAGE

Vidya and Micah's brothers, Ari Herstand, Shrihari Santosh, and Sadashiv Santosh, read a blessing by the poet James Dillet Freedman.

IN LOVING MEMORY

We remember Vidya's father, Santosh, who was a loving husband, parent, and friend. His tender affection is still felt today by all those who knew him.

PRAYERS ACKNOWLEDGING ONENESS

*Om pūrṇamadah pūrṇamidam pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvasiṣyate
Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ*

Om—That is infinite; this is infinite;
From the infinite, the infinite becomes manifest;
When infinite is separated from infinite,
The infinite indeed remains.
Om—Peace, peace, peace

“If we take something from something, the source is supposed to be diminished in its content to the extent of that which has been taken away from it. This is common arithmetic... If the world has come from God, some part of God must have gone to constitute this world and, to that extent, God must be less. Is it so? The Upanishad says it is not so. If we take away infinite from infinite, the Infinite is not reduced in any way, because one cannot take away anything from the Infinite. After the emanation of this full universe from the full Origin, the Fullness still continues to be as it was, undiminished.”

—Swami Krishnananda, Divine Life Society

*Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai echad
Barukh sheim k'vod malkhuto l'olam va'ed*

Hear, O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One!
Blessed is God's glorious majesty forever and ever.

“The idea that ‘God is One’ means not only that there is one God, but that God and the whole of creation are only oneness. There is nothing apart from God. Nothing exists outside of [God]; everything that we perceive, every particle of existence, is nothing but a veiled manifestation of God.”

—Chabad.org

THE JEWISH WEDDING

Jewish weddings reflect the coming together of two halves of the same soul. It is said that prior to birth the bride and groom were one. Just as the first human, Adam, consisted of all sexes and genders, so too did Micah and Vidya exist as one amalgamated creation prior to birth. Marriage, then, is their reuniting. Together, they are one, whole, unbroken being.

Micah and Vidya hope that this ceremony will not only bring them closer spiritually, but also give them the strength to do the work of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). In the spirit of Reform Judaism, you will see them participate equally in traditions that were historically segregated by gender: the seven circles, giving of a ring, and breaking of glass. Micah and Vidya will share the roles of breadwinner and homemaker throughout their lives and so they find it important that their wedding reflects this.

ERUSIN: THE BETROTHAL

The beginning of the Jewish wedding is traditionally called the *Kiddushin* (sanctification) in which the bride is purified and acquired by the groom. Micah and Vidya instead refer to this part of the ceremony as the *Erusin*, or engagement. Together, they will partake in traditional rituals, but with the purpose of acquiring a partnership, not one or the other.

THE KETUBAH: MARRIAGE CONTRACT

Just prior to entering the ceremony space, the bride and groom and two witnesses signed the *ketubah*, or marriage contract. While this contract would have traditionally been a commitment by the groom on behalf of the bride's welfare, Vidya and Micah's *ketubah* is a mutual covenant. Micah's great uncle Theodore Herstand will read the *ketubah* during the ceremony.

SEVEN CIRCLES

In the *Ashkenazi* (Jews of Eastern European ancestry) tradition, the bride walks around the groom seven times. Today, Micah and Vidya will each walk around each other three times, recalling the three betrothals between God and the people Israel. They will then make a seventh circle around each other, recalling the seven circles that brought down the walls of Jericho. With these circles, Micah and Vidya hope to bring down any walls that remain between them.

Micah's brother Ari will play Oseh Shalom on guitar.

RING CEREMONY

Traditionally, only the groom would present a ring to the bride, as a token of acquisition. Today, Micah and Vidya will exchange rings as a reminder of their partnership and as a symbolic "pooling of resources" in which they mark themselves as having agreed to share in their prosperity.

NISSUIN: THE MARRIAGE

This part of the ceremony marks the beginning of the marriage. While Micah and Vidya have been committed to each other with the *Erusin*, they now receive the blessing of their elders to make a home together.

SHEHECHEYANU

The *Shehecheyanu* is a blessing thanking God for enabling us all to reach this joyous day.

VOWS

Not exactly a Jewish tradition, but often included in modern Jewish ceremonies, Micah and Vidya share vows that they have written. To strengthen these vows, all those gathered vow also to support them.

SHEVA BRACHOT: SEVEN BLESSINGS

The heart of a Jewish wedding, the *Sheva Brachot* (seven blessings) are said on behalf of the couple. Under the shelter of a *tallit* (prayer shawl), Micah and Vidya receive seven blessings describing the miracle and joy of creation, so that they might too rejoice. The Sheva Brachot will be chanted in Hebrew by Micah's cousin, Ricky Behar, who leads the Sephardic Jewish Community in Detroit.

BLESSING FROM THE PARENTS

A *Sephardic* (Jews of Spanish ancestry) custom, Micah and Vidya are blessed by their parents.

SHARING WINE

Micah and Vidya share a glass of wine that was blessed in the first benediction of the Sheva Brachot. This wine represents all the sweetness they will share in their new life together.

BREAKING OF THE GLASS

Micah and Vidya will each break a glass to acknowledge the fragility of marriage and of the world they are tasked with improving together. Just as the glass cannot be put back together once broken, Micah and Vidya are irrevocably transformed after today. After the glasses break, family and friends sing a song for good luck:

Siman tov umazal tov, Umazal tov vesiman tov (x3)

Yebe lanu.

Yebe lanu, yebe lanu, Ulechol Yisrael. (x2)

YICHUD

Micah and Vidya share a private moment before all their guests overtake them with love.

"LOVE IS LOVE IS LOVE IS LOVE IS LOVE IS
LOVE CANNOT BE KILLED OR SWEEP ASIDE"

—*Lin-Manuel Miranda*