

relationships

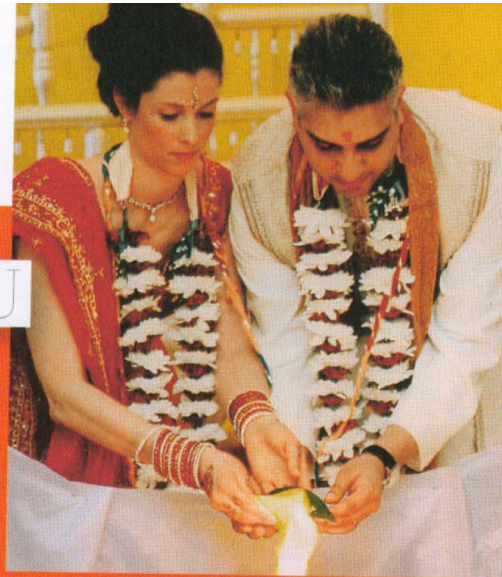
ANGLICAN+HINDU

Linda Sorensen, 38, a full-time mother, married Raj Khatri, 35, a banker, in April 2007. Linda is an Anglican while Raj is a Hindu. Linda says:

Originally Raj and I were going to have an Indian wedding in London and a civil ceremony to follow. But I was torn. I'd always envisioned getting married in a white dress, but the idea of a red *lengha* (the dress Hindu brides wear) also appealed to me. In the end, we decided to have two traditional weddings instead.

First, we got married at Chelsea Old Church in London, in a Christian ceremony. It was amazing to walk down the aisle and see so many women wearing saris in an Anglican church and both sides of the family singing hymns. The vicar was so welcoming to everyone.

After that ceremony, our guests boarded a vintage double-decker London bus and we moved on to The Lanesborough hotel, where the Hindu ceremony was held. I went upstairs and



changed from my white wedding dress into the red *lengha* and put on lots of bangles.

It's traditional for Indian brides to have henna patterns (*mendi*) on their hands, but I didn't want that as I'd have had to wear the henna during the Christian ceremony, which I wanted to look traditionally English. Instead I wore *hastakala* (skin jewellery), in matching vibrant red and metallic colours, which acted like *mendi* but were removable. Some of my friends also changed into saris.

The sharing of faiths between the two families felt unique to us and it was very touching. At the welcoming ceremony, Raj arrived with his family and friends and was

greeted by my mother and family. My mother then welcomed Raj by marking his forehead with *kumkum* (red powder signifying good luck). My mum was brought up a devout Catholic, so to see her being so open-minded about taking part in this really moved me.

I met with the Hindu priest beforehand, to go over the symbolic gestures to be performed. For instance, at one point, Raj's sister tied my dress to his scarf, creating a marriage knot, binding us together. At another point, Raj and I had to offer food to the sacred fire then feed each other as a sign of affection. Herbs and ghee were burned to create an atmosphere of purity.

Although our faiths had never been an issue between us, to be able to bring both sets of families and religions together to share our day was magical. It was the best day of my life.

Our daughter Kira is only one, but we've decided to raise her to observe both faiths and we will give her the option to select which faith/faiths she wants to continue observing when she is older and understands it all. She was christened in London at Chelsea Old Church and has celebrated Diwali and Christmas.