

Pinaki Mazumder's Toast at Monika's Wedding Reception

As we assemble here today to celebrate Monika and Tom's wedding, I recall the wedding masque in Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*. The wedding venue was set on an abandoned island where Prospero, the deposed Duke of Milan, spent 12 years in exile along with his daughter, Miranda. In order to restore Miranda's rightful place in the heartland of Europe as she approached a marriageable age, Prospero used his magic power to raise a thunderstorm in order to lure King Alonso and Prince Ferdinand of Naples into the island by causing a shipwreck. Prospero reclaimed his Dukedom from the King, who had ousted him once, and then organized Miranda's marriage with Prince Ferdinand on the island.

In his masterpiece, Shakespeare captured the eternal rapport between a father and his daughter as she blossoms from a toddler into a young woman. *The Tempest* also embodies the essence of the Indian arranged marriage system that has been practiced for thousands of years. In the play, Prospero conjured the tempest after waiting for 12 years until Miranda attained an eligible age. Similarly, parents of marriageable daughters in India compose eloquent matrimonial ads to summon a virtual tempest when several thousand letters pour down from the families of potential grooms. Marriages are believed to be made in Heaven. Therefore, wading through the waves of letters, a divine match is discovered after meticulously scrutinizing the astrological charts of the prospective couple. When my wedding bells tolled, I had to also abide by this "leap-of-faith" doctrine that my ancestors had honored from one generation to the next.

However, Monika was born in USA with maverick spirits of Frank Sinatra's "My Way". As she passed her milestones from a chatterbox, miss congeniality donning "Everyone Loves Monika", to an impetuous teenager when we prayed and prayed, and finally to this beautiful day in her life, we learned to embrace American customs and values. Perhaps, this enlightening process of Americanization that we the first generation immigrants undergo, as our children grow up by melding multiple cultures and customs, is the ultimate reward of our American journey.

About two years ago, in one fateful night Monika called me at around 10 O'clock to tell that she would be bringing Tom Parker to our home within the next hour. My mind turned into a cocktail of reactions and emotions by churning my memory of Hollywood movies. My reactions turned from apprehensions in "Guess Who is coming to Dinner" to joys mingled with sadness for traditions in "Fiddler on the Roof". My emotions raced from tinges of envy in "Father of the Bride" to a bit of circumspect in "Meet the Parents". Sadhana and I had our maiden meeting with Tom on that night, and then we had several close encounters at various places. Tom and Monika put us at ease allaying our fears and anxieties.

Then, one day, when I was busy writing a research paper, Tom gingerly approached my study desk. He hunched a bit with knees somewhat crooked to seek my blessing and

approval before he proposed to Monika for marriage inside the mystique ambiance of Chicago's Shedd Aquarium. A new milestone was reached as Mazumder traditions morphed. A match for Monika was found without a proverbial tempest. For the past eighteen months, Sadhana and I elatedly witnessed how enthusiastically Monika and Tom had worked together to organize every aspect of their wedding. The tremendous amount of efforts and emotions they have invested will be permanently etched in their memories, and will refresh their wedding vows as they share their lives and grow together.

Before we raise the toast, Sadhana and I would like to express our sincere thanks to Kathy, Tom Senior, Annie, and Robert for warmly embracing our loving daughter in their family. Our sincere thanks to all of you for gathering here today to bless this lovely couple and share rejoice. Our special thanks go to Monika's bridesmaids and numerous friends for their companionship, guidance, and assistance for many years as Monika grew up with them.

Now, let us raise the toast "To the Bride and Groom".



