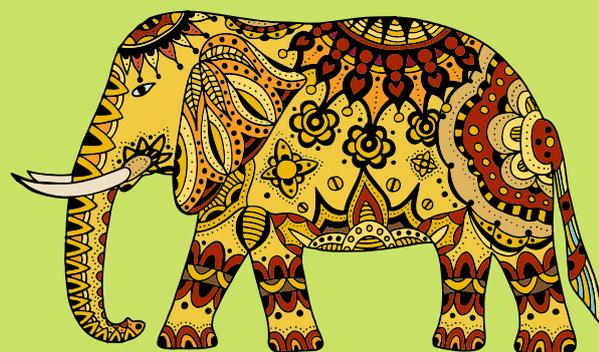




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WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE UK INDIAN WEDDING INDUSTRY?

Event Gurus perspective

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Everyone is invited...wait wait wait!

by Heena Solanki, Director - Event Gurus

As most sectors have plans in place for the easing of lockdown, what are the plans for the Indian Wedding industry? The events industry is in disarray and many businesses associated with this sector are in a precarious situation, as social distancing has direct impact on networking and bringing people together.

Now an all year-round business, the wedding season would have truly been in full swing. Suppliers would be busy preparing, working tirelessly to deliver products and services, fine-tuning requirements for their clients, which would have been booked over a year in advance. Suppliers themselves would have started preparing and purchasing specific items to achieve that personalised touch for their clients.

Happy and excited couples would be in the throes of planning their BIG day, drained, tired and pulling out their hair as the event draws closer and the final pieces of the jigsaw puzzle come together to showcase the 'Wedding of the Year'. Over the years these events have become lavish affairs, not just for the couple but the whole family and society. An Indian wedding is never just about the Bride and Groom!

Then to add a little extra masala in the form of Coronavirus - couples and families are in despair, unable to go ahead with the wedding of their dreams and the entire wedding/events industry is disrupted. The pandemic was not only spreading the virus, pandemonium struck all those couples families who were set to hit go on their plans.



From the time a child is born parents always dream about and plan the next stage in their child's life leading to their biggest project...the wedding day! Parents have expectations that the 'Big Day' will be delivered in a certain way, with a specific setup, planned playlist of music and the right types of food. Not straight forward, Indian weddings have many moving parts. Majority have multiple suppliers delivering this dream from venues, caterers, DJ's, florists and photographers, to videographers, priests, make-up artists, decorators, AV, planners, beverage providers. The list is endless.

I have seen the industry evolve over the past 20 years from simple and meaningful to grand designs, increased numbers of events, creative photography and videography with drones, Bollywood style changing the number of outfits, crazy speeches, firework displays and designer flower arrangements. As this fairy tale unfolds the true essence of what a wedding should be has been lost. In these challenging times the couples are asking themselves now what the basics requirements are to get the wedding done?

With the challenges of social distancing in current times how will the basic human desires to connect and bring people together be replaced through online platforms? Physical interaction plays such an integral role with Indian Weddings, traditions and rituals, for which technology cannot compensate. Therefore, what does this new normal mean for Indian Weddings?

Grab yourself a chai and sit back whilst I give you my new perspective on the new era for the Indian Wedding Industry.

The Future

Whilst growing up all the weddings and events I attended were conducted in the same format. Spotting a gap in the market I created a business to offer something unique in the industry. Alongside this the clientele was changing. Clients were wanting more grand Mandaps, stylist venues, lavish food options that guest don't have the capacity to consume it all. Cue the Bollywood saga unfold before us enters the trendy priest with drama and theatrics set against a backdrop of Bollywood music favourites, the perfectly coordinated families with outfits right down from grandparents to babies, and lastly lights camera action - photographers and videographers lined up in prime location to capture the memory of a lifetime.

This is all about to change! Welcome to the 'The Micro Wedding'. I know Asians don't like this word 'micro' because everything has to be big, bigger and biggest.

But in all reality there will be no grand wedding with 500+ guests gathering, until a vaccine is found. It's a great time to go back to basics and assess what is really important. Government guidelines will play an important role in setting the path forward for couples in deciding the type of venue, the number and specific guest attending. With Covid 19 threatening to push back many couples wedding plans, I believe there is a real opportunity with the Micro Wedding for couples to forge ahead and look to the future. So, what are the top considerations for organising the perfect Mirco Wedding?

Market Presence

The Indian Wedding industry that was thought to be recession proof, was not called a Big Fat Indian Wedding aimlessly.

- Estimated 1.4 million people of Indian descent living in the country
- Staggering GBP 12 billion to be reported being spent in the wedding industry (Business Insider).
- The destination wedding market is growing at exponential levels, year on year this option being considered more and more.
- Couples are becoming part of this trend either because UK cannot always guarantee the weather and the open air backdrop which is breath-taking missed out on.
- These new trends are enticing couples to spend more and dream more.
- To deliver an average wedding would cost anywhere upwards of £40,000.
- To deliver a show stopper wedding would cost anywhere upwards of £100,000.

Your personal venue

With social distancing measures set to continue and government guidelines allowing smaller gatherings as lockdown measures are eased, we can start to look innovatively at venue sourcing. Why not start with considering your own home or back garden for that intimate wedding?

Benefits:

- Cost is reduced
- More intimate setting
- Meaningful place
- Able to manage and control social distancing



Other points to consider:

Destination Wedding would create the perfect backdrop.

But the risk associated is high - you will need to have a clear understanding about the host country, area and their restrictions including quarantine rules. Not to mention being re-quarantined when entering back in the UK. A major factor to consider is the guest list, which I have covered further on. A lot of couples are pushing dates to 2021 now and hope things will be back to normal. Book everything with caution and remember there is no 'normal' now, just a 'new normal'!

The Royal Banquet

No matter how perfect everything is, the one thing that makes or breaks the event and what people always remember, is the food. Yes it would have been great to serve 5 canapés, give the guest a five course dining experience, and create a dessert counter with 15 varieties. With Covid 19 on our plate this presents a number of challenges when it comes to delivering this. However, there are innovative ways to create that gastronomical experience in a risk free environment. The Royal Banquet could move away from buffet tables and table service and be replaced with luxury pre-packed Thali's and drinks. Let's keep the menu simple but delicious.

Benefits:

- Reduces the movement of people
- Eliminate cross contamination
- Quality of food is not compromised

Luxury of time

As we all know with large luxurious venues which come at a high cost, every hour over is charged for. Often couples are rushed to conduct their ceremonies in a given time frame. The Micro Wedding alleviates the stress.

Benefits:

- Having more time
- Connect with the true meaning of the puja/mantras
- More personal
- Priests are not pressurised on time

Other points to consider:

The priest can social distance and conduct the ceremony with hand sanitiser as their new tool along with the puja items. Oh and don't be surprised if some priest will be wearing a mask. Priests can do their ceremony the way it should be done and in completeness.

Décor: Less is more

With venues becoming more intimate, restrictions on guest numbers will continue and government guidelines will evolve. The need for excessive decor such as copious numbers of mandap pillars, flower aisles, aisle staging, trees, water features, LED screens will be restricted.

Benefits:

- Reduce cost
- Minimalist elegant deco
- Having the basic necessities

Other points of consider:

Decor companies can adapt to basic requirements and provide something simple and elegant. If you feel brave you can create something simple yourself. Google masi is full of ideas and knowledge!

Just come to Event Gurus we have options available.



Every one is invited

In our culture it's really important to reciprocate hospitality and our wedding invite extends far beyond the immediate family. In the absence of physical presence from guests outside our family, technology plays an instrumental role allowing those people to share your special day with you.

As the government guidelines are constantly being reviewed the best option would be to consider e-invites over printed invites that might end up going unused.

Benefits:

- There is no restriction in inviting people online
- Covid 19 risk factor is reduced
- No Printing and postage cost
- No waste
- Your contribution to Sustainability
- Adaptive to changing environment

Other points to consider:

It's also really important to understand who has underlying health conditions, who is vulnerable and who are key workers. Bringing them together in what maybe a restricted numbered environment brings risks to all.

Online platforms eliminates these risk yet they are part of the experience.

Bride and Grooms will still have the option to share Gift lists or contribute or even setup a donation page for the NHS Covid-19 campaign or charity of your choice.



Capturing your personal and special moments

Videographers and photographers are two suppliers that can comply with social distancing measures. Make the most of capturing those special moments when afforded the luxury of time in your personal space.

Benefits:

- Embrace technology to create virtual backdrops
- Quality time to take quirky memorable family shots
- No time restrictions
- Opportunity to capture memorable moments in your personal setting

Other points for consider:

Instead of glamorous Pre-wedding shoots consider a Post-wedding shoot negotiated in the package. Once travel restrictions are lifted couples can still travel far to places on their bucket list to create memorable portraits with their life partner.

The group photo's... oh yes that big headache! Who get's on the list, who stands with who, who won't stand with who, who will read the list, when to do the photo's before or after lunch. This would be shredded in less than half the time.

Looking your best

Brides getting married this year would have gone to India to do their shopping between November and February. Variations in lehengas, ruffles, no ruffles, tiers and layers by Amit Aggarwal, angelic and chic sleeves by Falguni Shane, bling is back with Tarun Tahiliani and Manish Malhotra bringing back the sequins trend, flower power is taking more of a prominence not just on the bride but the clothes as well, eccentric designer blouses with necklines, statement sleeves and let's not get started on colour wheel for each event and theme. You can still have all this.

Benefits:

- Look at the online providers locally
- Consider mixing and matching
- Family members can reuse previous wedding saris
- Sustainability is the way forward!



There is a lot to think about and reflect on. It is a challenging time to make decisions not just by the couple, but for the families involved and their suppliers too. We all have action plans and backup plans but no one had this planned. Event Gurus are here to help plan this for you!

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