

Best of Both Worlds

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Growing up I, like many young girls, fantasized about my future life. I thought about finishing school and becoming a doctor and of course about meeting someone special and living happily ever after. The dreams we have as children are shaped by many things. Sometimes I pictured myself like my mom (taking great care of my kids, being an expert cook and managing my house well). Other times I thought about being a busy career woman (seeing patients, doing research, and publishing articles). There was always a battle in my mind between these two visions. Little did I know that my marriage would become the bridge between them and the foundation for success in all facets of life.

When I thought about “settling down”, many ideas came to mind. I could try to meet someone at school, get a contact through friends, search the many overwhelming internet sites with full biodata or ask my parents. In fact I ended up trying each of these methods at some point. It was certainly frustrating at times. Having been born and brought up in the U.S., I was surrounded by colleagues talking about dating and boyfriends. And although many young Indians here are discouraged from taking part in or even thinking about these things it isn't easy when you are trying to fit into the crowd. In the end I was lucky enough to be introduced via a friend of a friend of the family to my future husband. And thus began the story of an “ABCD” and an “FOB” who looked past the incorrect stereotypical labels and became life partners.

I really feel that my marriage has become the backbone of everything good in my life because my husband supports me at home, at work and in all other settings. It is because of both the similarities and differences in our upbringing that we really do now share the best of both worlds. My husband was brought up in

Hyderabad and I was brought up in NJ. I think we formed an immediate bond because of the similar family values we were taught despite being on opposite sides of the globe. Ideas like respect for elders, affection and sharing with siblings and helping out at home were like invisible ties between us. Just as there are these strong ideals that bind us together, there are also many differences that keep life fun and challenging. I think this is what has made our marriage stronger and better each day.

Life together is constantly evolving and improving but always a wonderful blend of east and west. I was intimidated at first by the idea of cooking because I never had time for it in medical school. Now we spend most days of the week eating home made papu, charu and kuras (although I admit my mom still sends supplies at times!) and experiment on the other days with all the many cuisines NYC has to offer. We see trying new things as an adventure and share in the work and fun of it. Similarly we enjoy both Indian and American music, movies, clothes and culture. Even our social circle is a mix of Indian born, American born Indians and great people of all different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. All of this variety truly is a gift because we are always sharing bits of life that we each grew up with and turning them into our new joint experience.

One thing that has made it so much easier for us to merge our lives together is our family. Our decision to get married in India stemmed largely from our mutual desire to have as many family members (especially grandparents) with us as possible. I did miss my friends who couldn't fly overseas, but I would not trade the experience of getting married in India for anything. We were fortunate enough to share very similar family backgrounds and could therefore have a very traditional wedding that followed both families' customs. There were many details of the

wedding I hadn't learned before (like many young people both here and in India) but it was incredibly meaningful to take part in a ceremony with so much cultural and religious history behind it. It was also amazing to have so much love and support from both our families. I was definitely a little intimidated meeting my mamagaru and attagaru for the first time (along with all the other aunts, uncles and cousins) because my husband is the only boy to carry on the family name in a big close-knit family. I could feel the tremendous responsibility to do well and live up to everyone's expectations. And of course being from the U.S. I was worried about what everyone would think – would my broken Telugu be a huge disappointment and in general would I be "Indian" enough? During the marriage time I started to feel already how much my new family cared for me. I was welcomed with so much warmth. This has only continued to grow since then with each meeting. My in-laws stayed with us recently for about four months. I was so worried before they came about cooking and making them happy and comfortable. My friends from work didn't

understand how it was possible to even have our parents stay with us for "so long". But because of how I was raised I recognized my duty and with time I have come to feel that I actually have gained a second set of parents who love me like I'm their own daughter. And between all the aunts, uncles and cousins I also have many other new "moms", "dads", "brothers" and "sisters" who love us and will always be there for us.

As we think about the next phase of life (including having and raising kids of our own) we can count our many blessings. We have been given so many gifts by our families and friends which we will hopefully be able to pass on to our own children. We will try to give them many visions for their own futures. We will share bits of our own individual experiences and our joint ones. We will give them food, language, clothes and culture. But more importantly we will give them things that span across the continents like values, respect, love and affection. These will hopefully help them become their own unique and priceless blend of both worlds



**DON'T WORRY MOM, I AM NOT JOINING
THAT KIND OF A REVOLUTION... I SAID
I AM JOINING THE LIFE-STYLE REVOLUTION!**