



AN INDIAN AT HEART

Posy Chisholm Feick Writes a Spectacular Book on Indian Weddings

By PREETI THANDI

Vigorous beats of the dhol rocked the Royal Ontario Museum and the glitter, splendour and finery of an Indian wedding came alive. Posy Chisholm Feick's spectacular new book on Indian weddings, "The Sacred Fire" was launched on Wednesday, October 16 amid lavish celebrations. The former Toronto journalist attended eight different weddings in Jaipur, Calcutta, Mumbai and Delhi to capture the vivid colours, vibrancy and excitement of an Indian wedding which breathes

through every page of "The Sacred Fire." "I feel like all the big brides myself," said Ms. Feick dressed as a Punjabi bride in a gorgeous bright red suit and ardently sought out by an army of well wishers and media persons from all across the world. "I feel like eight brides in one," she said.

The unique launch involved creating the Indian wedding experience for all the guests. An exquisitely decorated mandap, traditional canopies, ceremonial flowers, a small pandal

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Recreation of a Hindu marriage

for mehndi application, turban and saree tying booths were all part of the brightly transformed ROM. Popular Bollywood numbers played in the backdrop to make the experience real. Sanjay Agnihotri and Gautam Sharma of Suhaag magazine were instrumental in bringing together all the elements required to create the wedding ambience. This included a short enactment of the ceremony by local models. A troupe of bhangra dancers accompanied by a dhol announce the arrival of the barat and the groom. An ornately dressed bride waits with her friends, garlands are exchanged. The pandit chants the mantras and performs the ceremony. Turbaned servers passed around goodies which included traditional mithai including barfi and rasogullas.

"I really wanted Toronto to understand why I loved India so much," said Ms. Feick who first visited India when she was just nine years old and has been going back ever since. "I madly fell in love with India, she says. Ms. Feick describes the whole feeling of being in India like being at home. "The wonderful feeling that I get from the whole of India, from the people. It is something that never happens anywhere else in the world," she says.

The book reflects both Posy's life long affection for India as well as her deep knowledge of India's diverse cultures. "I always wanted to do a book about all the different castes in India. I wanted to bring together all the different kinds of weddings - Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh... Marriages in India - arranged mar-

riages really work. It is a happy country."

"The Sacred Fire" strings together eight different kinds of weddings - Rajput, Buddhist, Kayastha, Sikh, Muslim and also those from Calcutta, Agra and Delhi. The 128 page colourful book reveals the rich diversity of the customs and practices in South Asian weddings which Posy brings alive together with her colleague the talented photographer, Sheila McKinnon. The book will be available at ROM shops and Indigo bookstores. The proceeds from the sale will be donated to The Royal Ontario Museum's South Asia Endowment Fund and the Balika Sadan Children's Centre in Jaipur.

Ms. Feick who danced in tune with the dhol beats said jokingly that her next marriage is going to be an



"I am an Indian at heart." - Posy



Traditional Hindu bride

Indian. She owns a huge collection of Indian dresses. "I pretend to be an Indian," she says. "I am an Indian at heart."

Posy's journalism career began with the Chatelaine magazine as fashion and beauty editor. She hosted two hourly shows on CBC. She later became the Toronto Telegram's Rome based foreign correspondent in the sixties. She is the Chairman of the Guggenheim Museum's Membership Committee and has been awarded the prestigious "Dame of the First Class of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta" for her work with the Italian orphans.

Ms. Feick also runs an orphanage in India. She calls it a Royal Orphanage. In fact her book features a wedding that she helped to co-ordinate for an untouchable girl in India.

A modest lady herself, Posy expressed her thankfulness to her publicist, Janet James and Greg Albrecht of Barque Communications, who were closely involved in the co-ordination of the launch and to all her friends who came out to wish her from all over the world. "It is such a pleasure tonight," she said.

With all of her all years of experience and insight Ms. Feick feels that there is one thing of utmost value - "I wish everybody could be born as positive as I am," she says. "But if you're not born positive, you can be positive, first thing when you get out of bed in the morning. If you start your day being positive it will work through all of your life." Δ