



D-DAY!

Weddings are glitzy, gala gatherings

Marriages are made in HEAVEN, it is said. However, the demanding part of weddings is that couples/ newlyweds indeed live on earth. But, before the man and wife embark on their new life in the fullest sense of the word, the marriage ceremony has to take place for which numerous arrangements ought to be made. Not only should these aspects be taken care of, with literally no room for any goof-ups on account of oversight, they have to be just as perfect as they can ever be.

In the olden days, families of the bride and the groom managed most of these things on their own. But, with nuclear families becoming the norm and time turning into a big luxury, this became practically impossible. Mainly, it was the unavailability of enough number of relatives as opposed to the times when joint families were common that made it impossible to have own people to oversee the crucial arrangements.

Along with the changing times, preferences too have undergone a subtle shift. And the innovative spirit of mankind has triumphed in the context of Indian weddings as well. Consequently, event management companies, wedding planners and bridal boutiques that offer customised wedding finery to both brides as well as grooms have become indispensable part of marriage functions in the current scenario. And time-consuming preparations like drawing up the menu for the wedding feast, sifting through endless varieties of garments to finalise the attire for brides and grooms, sending out invites, including special invites, are fully taken care of by these ultra professionals. Besides, arranging photographers/ videographers, doing up the marriage venue and even providing conveyance facilities to marriage parties can be safely left to them.

Most importantly, stiff competition has ensured that the rates charged by these event management companies and wedding planners are highly competitive. And their services can be availed for all types of marriages -- right from no-frills ones to the big, fat, glitzy nuptials.



MACHOOOS INTERNATIONAL

Ace lensman SARATH RAJ'S dream venture is a class act

For a small-town boy, who hails from Nedumangad in rural Thiruvananthapuram, photographer Sarath Raj has indeed come a long way. As is the case with stories of self-made success, there is the 'inspite of' angle to this thrilling tale as well of finally making it through dogged pursuit of one's ultimate dream.

Says Sarath, "I belong to an ordinary family. Due to this, money was always a problem when I started out. Also, there was hardly anyone around, a mentor if you like, to show the way forward and help plan my career. But, luckily for me things fell into place and I can now hardly believe the giant strides I have made in my professional career."

Machooos International founded by Sarath Raj over 10 years ago is now one of the top names in business. Classy wedding shoots are the company's speciality and Machooos has covered over 3,000 marriages until now. Sarath Raj pioneered online wedding albums in Kerala. The company recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of its founding at a gala function in the state capital. "Actor Ahana was the chief guest at the well-attended function. Though we moved into our new premises situated opposite the Salvation Army school at Kowdiar only three years ago, Machooos International has been in the business for well over a decade now," said Sarath.

Slick professionalism and human connect -- a chat with Sarath Raj can convince anyone about his amiable nature and cheerful disposition -- ensured that the company rose up among those in the wedding photography business in no time. "Within five days of covering a marriage function, we will provide soft copies to clients to choose from. After the clients have picked their



favourites, the hard copy -- the photo album -- will be ready latest by six weeks. We also provide online access to clients as a follow-up," he said.

Besides Sarath, who is the chief photographer, Machooos has 20 lensmen in its ranks. Destination photography, which is the current rage, is another speciality of Machooos. "One of our teams got back from abroad only recently after covering a destination wedding there. Our charges include round-the-way fare with accommodation being provided by the client," he said. Maternity and newborn photoshoot too are undertaken by Machooos.

According to Sarath, he is one of the more lucky ones who gets to do what he likes most for a living. "God has indeed been quite kind to me. He has endowed me with a pair of eyes capable of picking out bewitching moments that can never be recreated and which will forever be lost. But, through my clicks these moments can be preserved for posterity to live and relive them," he said.

Sarath is open about his penchant for candid photography, which is also his area of expertise. He also does not make any bones about his total lack of interest in traditional photography. His body of work -- Sarath has posted several of his wedding shoots on social media -- has earned him a huge following online.

Fired up by the runaway success of his venture, Sarath is all set to open a branch of Machooos

at Nagercoil. The groundwork, including the location, has been completed and the company will commence operations there very soon.

The widespread acclaim and encouragement for his work have spurred Sarath to aim higher. He has chalked out plans to extend his footprint across the country. As part of this, a total of 10 studios will be established nationwide. In the short-term, the talented auteur is looking to set up three studios in leading cities in Kerala in the next two years.

Interestingly, Sarath Raj, who studied commerce, was initially a website designer. He even set up Abstract Developers Web designing company with his friend Deepu, which he ran for two years. "I found my calling in photography and set up Machooos Wedding Planners at Nedumangad in 2012. Within five years, we moved into our present premises at Kowdiar. Now, we are a leading name in the field," he affirmed.



Sarath Raj and wife Arunima J T Nair with daughter Parvanendhu

CLICKS TO FAME

- Wedding of actor K R Vijaya's grandson
- Marriage of Dr I M Vijayan's nephew
- Overseas assignments : Malaysia, Singapore
- Coversong direction (More than 10)
- Fashion portfolio
- Covered over 3,000+ weddings
- Maternity and newborn photoshoot

Company website : www.machooos.com
Personal profile : www.machooos.com

BLACK BEAUTY BRIDAL

Embrace the Era Of Elegance

A joint venture of the husband-wife team of Senthil Soman and Shruthy R Surendran, Black Beauty Bridal boutique for women, men and children has been making waves among fashionistas and the general public in Thiruvananthapuram. The boutique's meteoric success -- it has outlets at Overbridge behind Jayalakshmi Silks and at Techno Valley near Infosys on Kazhakoottam-Kulathoor Road -- is all the more creditable given the fact that neither of its co-founders is a couturier by profession. However, Senthil Soman and Shruthy R Surendran's sense of style and eye to judge which fabrics and colours will complement a garment have more than made up for the fact that they have not received any formal training in fashion designing.

Black Beauty Bridal boutique offers elevated boutique shopping experience for everything from suits & sherpas for men, semi stitched lehengas, readymade gowns and kurtas to fashion



jewellery along with much sought-after customised apparel for life's special moments.

Understanding the needs of customers and the ability to convey ideas and thought with a great deal of clarity have greatly contributed to the success of the boutique. On-time delivery is indeed the icing on the cake. The customer friendly approach of showroom staff, which helps create strong vibes during interactions, has invited fulsome praise from clients as shown by the testimonials.

Black Beauty Bridal boutique does not believe in imposing its ideas on customers. Rather the founders believe in collaborating customers' ideas with their (founders') suggestions to get a refined and more desired outcome. The emphasis is on creative ways to make the clothing stand out without overshooting the budget.

Nowadays customers are pretty well informed before turning up for discussions on the costume. They come with ready reference patterns and images of the attire they desire, unlike those of yesteryear.

On one hand, this approach from customers makes things easy for us, but on the other this can prove equally challenging since it's not only the dress which customers have in mind, but they also visualise themselves wearing it instead of the model.

While designing a dress the top priority is always for ensuring that the pricing is competitive. There are budget sensitive customers who come with a preconceived notion

about the tentative price of the dress and when they realise the actual price they are taken aback.

A major highlight of Black Beauty Bridal boutique is that our products have an emotional connect and are tailored to a budget; that's why our occasion wear range starts from a modest ₹10k.

Contact : +91 81370 37012



WEDDING COLLECTION

- Ideal for Mehndi/Haldi and reception. The going rate for these also start from ₹15k for which customers will have to shell out at least ₹25 -- 40k for the likes in the open market.
- Currently, efforts are under way to widen Black Beauty Bridal boutique's online footprint for domestic and overseas customers to address the huge number of enquiries for the same. As of now, this is being done on a pilot basis for select customers in New Zealand, UK, US and Canada.

INFINITY EVENTS

Turning Life's Beautiful Moments All the More 'Event'ful



type of wedding they have in mind, the choice of colour, whether a particular theme is desired etc," said Sarath Viswam.

"Also, based on requirements, we will help draw up a menu and will arrange for leading caterers from Kerala to take care of the food part. Over and above this, even conveyance can be arranged for marriage parties," he added.

Infinity Events has a core team of 10 to 12 people to assist Sarath Viswam in executing the task to perfection. At the time of the function, around 20 people, who are recruited as part-time staff by the company, will be present at the venue to ensure that even minor issues are addressed properly.

Sarath Viswam is pretty clear on why Infinity Events should be the top choice for those on the lookout for event management companies that can deliver. "Pedigree, track record and trustworthiness earned as a result of 22 years of quality performance. Because, when it's a major function like that of your child's marriage, people will never want to take chances. Most of the clients have extremely hectic schedules, with hardly any time to spare. Not only that, they want to ensure value for money. We undertake weddings that have budgets ranging from ₹5lakh to ₹50lakh-one crore," he said.

ting, beach weddings continue to remain a rage.

It's the romantic appeal of the endless expanse of the ocean in the background coupled with the beauty of star-spangled sky on clear nights that make these wedding receptions irresistible to most couples.

"We arrange weddings, which are tailor-made to the needs of clients. Prospective clients, who want to avail themselves of our service, should get in touch with us at least 3 months before the scheduled date of the wedding. Following this, our people will hold discussions with clients on the



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—Sarath Viswam, Managing Director

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