WEDDING SPEECH

FOR

ISMET ZAHEED

Hello everyone!!! I am Ismet, and I am the very proud father of the groom, Ikram. It is an honor to be here with my family…. my wife, Renuka, and our daughter and son-in-law, Dahneena and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ have made this trip to witness this rite of passage and to welcome Sanah to our family. We’ve traveled all the way from Canada to witness and share this moment, and being here makes me realize several things…. We are all citizens of the world, life truly is a journey, and it is through the love of family and the shared experiences and milestones that we truly realize what it means to be alive.

Some say that to travel is to take a journey into **oneself** and to learn the meaning of life through the human adventure. It was a wise man that reminded us that it is important to **focus** on **the journey** and not the destination. (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) Although I must say that if you’ve experienced some Canadian winters, going to a tropical **destination** has its advantages!! (**And wait for the laugh**). Throughout our lives we, the Zaheed family have traveled… for pleasure… for opportunity… for discovery. We migrated to North America when our children were young and we may live in Canada, but so much of our hearts are here in India. We’ve raised our family in Ontario, but our heritage and traditions are alive in our homes, our souls, and our lives, and although we claim Canada for our citizenship, our beings find comfort in the traditions of our culture and that is why we are here.

Part of the journey that Renuka and I have shared is experiencing the blessings and gifts of parenthood. We have two wonderful children: our daughter Dahneena who has blessed us with the fruits of **her** life journey with our son-in-law, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and our very special grandchildren, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And then we have our son, Ikram (**If you want to make a little joke you can say**). Of course we have always believed that he was a very rare and special person: humble, handsome, filled with integrity and a sense of responsibility and duty, and now, thanks to Sanah, we have confirmation!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). The great English writer Anne Bronte, herself part of a prolific and close family once noted, “If you would have your son to walk honorably through the world, you must not attempt to clear the stones from his path, but teach him to walk firmly over them-not insist upon leading him by the hand, but let him learn to go alone.” Considering that Ikram’s chosen career is as a police officer, I would have to admit that Renuka and I might have left some pretty large rocks in his path!! (**Wait for the laugh**) But all jokes aside, he has made us very proud parents indeed. There is really only one wish that we, as Ikram’s parents have had for him, and that would be that he find a wonderful young woman, settle down, marry, and begin their journey into future generations of Zaheed’s and Rajkumari’s… and with Sanah comes the fulfillment of our dreams.

We had always heard that police officers look after “their own” and apparently Ikram has some very dedicated and observant friends, and one introduced our bride and groom. Although most of us can imagine that few young women might be suitable for the adored, revered, precious son in such a tradtitional family, I have to say that once we met Sanah we realized that ikram had “hit the jackpot.” She is as beautiful as she is sweet, as compassionate as she is caring to her patients and those for whom she gives such great care as a nurse, and she clearly loves our son. We gave our blessings almost immediately… of course it would have been sooner had we been introduced earlier…. but it’s always a good idea for the “happy couple” to really know in their hearts that theirs is a union for life.

Our son Ikram is a brave and dedicated police officer. He is prepared to face crisis each moment he is on duty as he protects and defends his community. He has trained for years and has the instincts of a true hero…. and apparently this background was almost not quite enough for him to summon up the courage to meet his future father-in-law…. (**Wait for the laugh**). Was he nervous??? Yes!!! Was he in a flop sweat??? Yes!!! Was he determined to ask for Sanah’s hand??? Yes!!!! So Ikram drew on his inner reserves as he prepared to meet his intended’s father. I guess while some may see his nerves as the sign of panic, we prefer to think that this was a true sign that meeting Sanah’s father was one of the most important things he would do on his journey to this moment and to his marriage. It is also a testament to Ikram’s courage and self-restraint that the “bottle” he brought for Sanah’s father remained unopened and full in spite of his incredible case of nerves! Someone once said that love makes the world go round, but Ikram, alcohol usually makes the room spin, so it’s an admirable thing that you met Sanah’s father awake and alert!! (**Wait for the laugh**)

And here we are as two beautiful, loving and devoted young people find their place together on the continuing journey of life. Sanah, we want you to know that we are proud to call you our daughter and we are happy to extend our family to include your father, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and your sisters, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Although your mother is not here physically, we all know that she lives within all of you and we are so thankful that she and your father have left the stones on your path that have made you such a loving, giving, wise, and compassionate soul.

When we think of the meaning of your names, we have clear clues into your combined character. Sanah, your name conjures up definitions like “beloved,” “skillful,” “radiant,” and “elegant,” all words that adequately describe you. In Arabic the name can also mean “illumination.” Your last name Rajkumari can mean “princess.” The name Ikram means “esteemed veneration.” Had either of you known all of this when you were children, it might have been a burden to live up to such beautiful images of the descriptions of two beings…. but you didn’t and you inherited your name legacies naturally, as if it was your destiny to be those things. And it is also your destiny to be together.

The name Zaheed can mean contemplative, introspective, thoughtful, so let me add this. The American author John Steinbeck has written, ”A journey is a person in itself; no two are alike. And all plans, safeguards, policing, and coercion are fruitless. We find that after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us.” To Sanah and Ikram, it is now your turn to take this trip of a lifetime together. Allow this part of your life journey to find you happy and healthy, dedicated to building the future and family together. May the two of you know only fair weather and a friendly course, but remember that if the road gets rocky, you know how to withstand that as well. You both have what it takes to live a complete and meaningful life, and that is with each other.

Congratulations! We love you!