

**A few words by Robert
on the occasion of his wedding to Aam
on 12 February 2002**

Today is a joyful occasion for us and I would like to begin by saying thank-you.

Firstly, Aam and I are especially grateful to God. As most of you know, the road leading to where we are today has not been easy. Our love for each other is surpassed only by our faith in God. Through many trials, we have placed our trust in Him and we believe that today would not have been possible without Him. We give Him thanks and dedicate our lives to Him.

Secondly, we want to thank our children - Joel, who unfortunately could not be here today as he is studying in the US, Peter, and Julia. For those of you who are parents, you will know that it is not easy being parents to teenagers, but they will tell you - with a certain amount of truth - that it is not easy being teenagers with parents who apparently were born at least 300 years ago. We can only apologise to them for the mistakes that we have made, assure them of our love for them, wish them luck with their own teenagers, and thank them for putting up with us.

Thirdly, we want to thank you, our family and friends, for being here and for your support. I especially want to thank you for welcoming Aam and for making her feel part of the family.

Fourthly, I want to thank Aam's family, who cannot be here today due to the distance. However, I have met several of them, and even those whom I have not met, have sent messages of support. We hope soon to move to Indonesia, so it is wonderful to know that I will go from one loving family to another.

And lastly, but certainly not least, I want to thank my beautiful bride. Our love has deepened over time to the point where we find it difficult to be apart. We often feel that our lives together are like a fairy tale because we get on so well. She has become my best friend and I could not manage life without her. So - to me luv - I say thank you with all my heart.

Rudyard Kipling wrote in one of his poems: "East is east, west is west, and never the twain shall meet". Aam is from the east and I am from the west - on the surface, it is not only distance that separates us. Different cultures, languages, and religions are elements that make us different - but they do not make us indifferent. There are other areas where we share many similarities; we both come from a large family and have experienced the joy, and occasional pain, of growing up with many siblings. Aam has lived many years in the west, and I have lived many years in the east - giving each of us an understanding of what it is like to live away from our homes, as well as an ability to understand others in different cultures. We both share a desire to help those less fortunate than ourselves - I have done this through a long career of humanitarian service; Aam has done this through work with individuals and with charities. However, perhaps most importantly, while we belong to different religions, we both share a belief in the same God, and it is this belief that supports us and guides us in our lives.

Today, we have had readings from both the Bible and the Qu'ran. This symbolises not only our different religions, but also what draws us together. As the world comes to terms with the aftermath of September 11th, Aam and I hope that, together, we can become an example of not what makes us different and separates us, but what makes us similar and draws us together as individuals, as communities, as countries, as citizens of the world. If we all truly believe in our God, then we must all work together in a spirit of reconciliation to find those elements that bind us together rather than those things which set us apart.

If there is one thing that Aam and I would like you to take away from today, it is that love conquers everything and is the most potent force for the survival of our world. Without love, we are nothing. With love, we can work wonders in the name of God.

Thank you for loving us.