

A visual journey through Vivah Panchami



By
Anuradha Kodagoda



The Festival of Vivah Panchami recently illuminated Janakpurdham, a city in Nepal revered as the birthplace of Sita, the beloved consort of Rama from the epic Ramayana. This sacred destination, steeped in Hindu mythology is believed to be the ancient city of Mithila, once ruled by King Janak, Sita's father. The wedding of Rama and Sita is commemorated here every year, drawing thousands to celebrate their union. Last December, we had the privilege of capturing the essence of the festivities during the auspicious dates of December 5 and 6, which marked the fifth day of Shukla Paksha in the month of Margashirsha. Join us as we share our visual journey through the celebrations of Vivah Panchami in Janakpurdham.



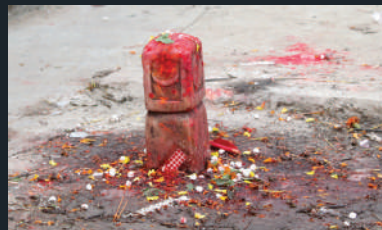
Women participating in the Vivah Panchami celebration wear Sindoor with pride, their foreheads adorned with vibrant hues that symbolise love and devotion. The contrast of their colourful attire against the backdrop of the economically challenged rural landscape of Janakpurdham speaks volumes. Despite the visible hardship and poor hygienic conditions, these women radiate strength and joy, finding solace and entertainment in these cultural rituals. For them, the celebration is not just a ritual; it is a cherished moment of connection and community, a chance to escape daily struggles while honouring the sacred traditions that bind their lives together.



Worshipping trees and stones, pouring Sindoor over them and tying blessed coins to trees are common sights during this Festival.



A Sindoor seller near the Janaki Mandir in Janakpurdham displays a colourful array of powders that embody the spirit of devotion, while at the same stall she also offers a striking selection of modern cosmetics, showcasing the coexistence of tradition and contemporary beauty.



A group of women gaze at distant historical ruins, capturing a snapshot of Janakpurdham today. It's as if they are reminiscing about a glorious past while turning their backs on the reality of poverty and a hopeful future that feels just out of reach.



Hail Hanuman!

This is the famous Janaki Mandir at night. The Mughal architecture, adorned with intricate decorations that are beautifully visible during the day gets obscured by the neon disco lighting, which initially made us laugh as it reminded us of Disneyland in Moscow.

