

BEING MARRIED TO A THOMIAN

“Thomians Hunt in Packs; Never Alone”

My journey through life with my Thomian began with this hunt. In an era when mobile phones, SMS, e-mails and Facebook were unheard of, the hunt was indeed a difficult task. Therefore, this hunt was meticulously planned out at a house located right opposite Bishop's College (whoever designed it, bless his dear departed soul, certainly had the best interest of young Thomians in mind for it has a large balcony overlooking the grounds of Bishop's College).

Date of the Hunt: 31st October 1981

Venue: Food Fair, Bishop's College. To cut a long story short, my knight in his shining armour descended on the fair grounds with his pack and, at the end of the day, it was a time for rejoice for one, drowning of sorrows down Nippon Way for another, and a long sprint towards the urky waters of the Beria for yet another! This pack needs special mention – *Sleepy, The Centenary Legend, The Kink* a.k.a *NGO Type* and *Obelix*, for they have always been beside my Thomian and I from our early days of loitering at bus halts in the scorching sun, gallons of lime juice at Cream House, every cinema in Colombo, Big Matches, Fun Fairs and parties to this day, through good times and bad. In fact, these guys persuaded me to contribute my memoirs to be published in the Souvenir, which commemorates half a century of their existence (very brave, I should say, given all that I could divulge).

My courtship with my Thomian was near perfection, he being the most attentive and gallant boyfriend, romancing me with flowers, love letters, cards and gifts; so much so that when I decided to marry him, I thought my life was to be one long fairy tale romance. Mistake #1: The metamorphosis from Romantic Boyfriend to typical Thomian Husband is so speedy, I doubt even a chameleon could change its colour that fast (though I'm constantly told by him that I got a better deal than most!).

Then I thought I could pick any day in the calendar for our wedding date and, being the naive fool that I was, I picked the 11th of MARCH! Mistake – I mean – BIG MISTAKE. I should have realized the things to come when on the day of my wedding, I saw male cousins pick pocketing the bridegroom as hat collection and then encountered the bad omen of running into the Thora Cycle Parade near Galle Face. Though our wedding anniversary always fell during the Big Match, it wasn't too bad in the first few years with the pack and the rest of the pals scattered around perusing girls, studies and careers; I had my man to myself.

Then suddenly, they're about to hit 30 and they realize that youth is passing them by; time to get back to College, school boy antics, Big Matches, etc. Frantic phone calls, reviving of batch groups, appointing committee members and organizing the most important stag nights take top priority. This all begins as early as January. A word of advice to all young ladies who have captured Thomian hearts – do not plan anything in the first quarter of the year, OR BE FOREVER

DOOMED! The organizing of this stag needs at least a dozen meetings at the SSC where booze flows and discussing the date, venue, food and drinks takes only about an hour and the rest of the night is dedicated to organizing the much anticipated appearance of the *exotic unfeathered types*! In the sheer excitement of this event, the husband forgets there is a wife at home, let alone a wedding anniversary! Sad but true! But it was okay, at least I had him by me at the match even though he and his pals were boozed out of their minds and generally making a public spectacle of themselves. Then, my Thomian hits 40. Suddenly he gets dragged into the organizing committee of the Royal-Thomian, and there ends my wedding anniversary forever! With me safely ensconced in the most boring VIP Enclosure (which reminds me of the A. F. Raymond Funeral Parlour), my duty-conscious hubby struts around SSC proudly wearing his Thora hat and badge, being ever so helpful to every lady he comes across! At the end of the match, he's too tired to stand on his two feet, let alone anything else. No hope of postponed celebrations either – the 50 Over is around the corner, and then the guys *have* to meet up to drink a farewell to all the batch mates who have descended for the Big Match from all corners of the Earth. Come April, wedding anniversaries are long forgotten.

With an important 'un coming around next March I thought enough was enough, so I put my foot down and told my Thomian; "You get out of that organizing committee next year, or it'll be the last wedding anniversary!" Surprise surprise, he says, "I won't get out of the committee, but I give you my word, I'll spend the entire day alone with you." Still naïve and foolish after 25 years, I believed him till I found out that my crafty husband had already done his homework and knew that the next Big Match wouldn't be played on the 11th of March – thus, the promise. Who else but a Thomian husband would be so cunning and clever?

It's no easy task being married to a Thomian. There are cardinal rules to be observed. The first being: S. Thomas' College is sacred, any thing or person associated with it is Divine, and saying a word against the above mentioned is sacrilege. A certain newspaper is banned at home, and a certain fair news editor is regularly lambasted for publishing an exaggerated truth about S. Thomas' College. That's how passionate the love for S. Thomas' College is, and the wife *has* to share that passion whether she likes it or not.

Then there is the rather embarrassing situation that I'm faced with when a male friend is introduced to my husband. The first question he asks is, "Were you at College?" (Thomians have this cool assumption that whoever invented the English language invented the word "College" solely for the school of the good S. Thomas'). While the introduced party tries to fathom which school is being referred to, my hubby realizes that this is no Thomian, and therefore this lesser mortal doesn't deserve his superior attention and wears a totally bored look on his face, and I'm left feeling so embarrassed I wish the world could split open and swallow me up.

A good Thomian wife also needs to be a good actress. This is especially useful when you are required to listen to the same old stories about life at the school by the sea repeated at every Thomian gathering. You have to look amused, amazed, laugh at the correct cue, smile and applaud at every stupid antic. This is rather painful because you've heard it all a thousand times

and can repeat it backwards if required. The same goes at outside gatherings where the Thomian husband boasts of heroic deeds and fun had at Mount, little realizing that these things happen at every boys school and they probably had more fun, being in close proximity to all the “happening” girls schools in Colombo.

I also have to live with the knowledge that not only I, but most of the female population, adore my husband. Ladies of all ages, shapes and size; from top corporates to flying types to sales girls, they all love him. I think it’s the “Yes Ma’am, No Ma’am, Thanks Ma’am, Three bags full Ma’am” sort of politeness that does it. The neighboring Keells Super nearly declared a day of mourning when my husband came down with Chicken Pox; that’s how sad the girls were of his plight. I realized that this “charm” is taught to Thomians from Kindergarten, and they pass from College being maestros at it, when I see history repeat itself at home where my son charms his way through every female he meets, including certain principals of girls’ schools he intrudes while trucking! Amazing!!

Writing of the Chicken Pox episode, ladies, remember way back to when we listened wide eyed to our young Thomian heroes brag about the many battles they got into, bloodied and broken but still fighting to the end till the rivals ran away in mortal fear? How they could take the entire Royal College single handed? Marry a Thomian and you will realize in a few weeks that it’s only “Macho Talk”. For aren’t they the biggest babies when sick? Mine mourns and groans at the slightest ache or pain and is the neediest patient ever, I doubt even Florence Nightingale would have the patience to put up with him.

But having said all that, would I exchange my Thomian husband for any man, king or emperor in the world? NEVER! I am ever grateful for his uniquely Thomian traits of honesty, integrity, faithfulness and loyalty, which in turn has made me too a better person for having being with him and sharing a life with him.

Through my Thomian husband I also inherited the **pack**, the brothers I never had, of whom my husband, children and I could always count on. Their families have become our closest friends and they have stood by us during the passage of time through all life’s joys and sorrows. Thank you, guys!

The Thomian brotherhood is indeed amazing. Every Thomian friend has enriched our lives in some way and I’m very thankful for this bond of friendship. The knowledge that there is always a Thomian out there to lean on is a great strength indeed.

I am sure I speak on behalf of all the wonderful ladies who are married to the Class of ’76 when I say we are indeed honored to be your wives and we wish you love, laughter, good health and a longevity on this special day when you celebrate 50 years of a glorious life!

I am, and always will be proud to be a Thomian Wife.

Shamila Jayasinha