

MARRIED TO THE INDUSTRY: A HUSBAND SPEAKS

By SHAILENDRA SHARMA,
formerly a naval aviator,
who now pilots the big jets for Air India

I do not know how many people are lucky enough to find smooth sailing through life (incidentally, I used to work for the Indian Navy), but with a wife working hard at a career in the hotel industry, the seas can sometimes get choppy. Still, as far as my experience goes, things have generally gone favourably for us and we have been able to manage the fourteen years of our married life pretty easily.

Despite my best efforts to keep away from my wife's place of work and her job, opportunities did come my way to have a close look at the hotel industry. Despite all the glamour that the industry has to offer, it is actually hard and steady work and, if you are dedicated to your work and your establishment, as my wife happens to be, then it becomes a way of life for you. It is no wonder, therefore, that I came in contact with people who worked long hours but took it in their stride.

Luckily, many favourable factors have contributed to making our experience rather enjoyable. First, by the time we got married, my wife was the Executive Housekeeper and so had no shift duties. To my mind, this one single factor made things quite easy for us. Then, the fact that we were at Goa, a holiday resort where life went

on at its own lazy pace, made things still easier.

Again, since I was a pilot with the Indian Navy and our places of work were just two kilometres apart, I had a fair amount of free time on my hands. This enabled us to manage things pretty well by sharing the work at home, including bringing up our two children without much help from relatives and friends.

No doubt, we did have to cut down a bit on socialising with friends so as to be with our children during most of our non-working time. We were also fortunate that we could manage to remain together in spite of our professions being poles apart in their nature. Things would have been really difficult if that was not the case.

It would be very unfair if I did not mention the role of my wife — who is a real go-getter and an organiser par excellence — in making our married life a success story. Although she would discuss some of the problems and tensions at her workplace with me, most of the times she was able to sort out things on her own. Being a perfectionist, she just cannot tolerate laxity



Alka Sharma, Executive Housekeeper at The Oberoi, Bombay with husband Shailendra

even in her home, so the upkeep of the house had to be on par with the housekeeping standards in a hotel. Since she would in no case compromise on such things, one had to just accept it.

When we shifted to Bombay and to a bigger property in this megapolis six years ago, things became very different and the work pressures increased. What makes it still manageable is the fact that the children are grown up now and mostly can look after themselves. If this shift to the city had occurred five to six years earlier, it could have proven pretty tough for us.

I do not really know how many people can be as lucky as we have been and, therefore, I cannot say that life with a wife working in the hotel industry can be judged from my yardstick.