

The lady next door



Preeti Zachariah tracks a day in the life of an everyday woman in Chennai

“She’s not just a pretty face. She’s got everything it takes. She’s mother of the human race. She’s not just a pretty face,” crooned Shania Twain in her song about what women are and can be: mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, homemakers, caregivers, decision-makers, working professionals, artists, sportspeople, defence personnel, in service and so much more. And these roles aren’t mutually independent of each other — the woman of today toggles role after role, trying her best to do justice to each one, in that limited time-frame of 24 hours. How does she do it?

We find out, by following one such woman ahead of Woman’s Day, tomorrow, March 8. Meet Rochelle Simon (42), project manager at a language centre, married for 22 years to Ajay Simon and mother of two boys, Arnold (21) and Ronald (18). Rochelle loves what she does, enjoys meeting new people and nurturing a creative spark through writing, craft and reading. Her husband is her biggest support system, she says, while her boys (and Stealthy, the dog), ensure there isn’t a dull moment at home (“I am constantly in referee mode with them”) “I am a good delegator, both at home and at work; that really helps,” she says, adding that, “In a day, anything can come up and I know I have to be mentally prepared for it.”

Rochelle’s Day:



Wake up: 7 a.m.

“I need a cup of tea to get me up; I am really grouchy without it,” she says. “Ajay, my husband knows it and he is up before me to see that I get that steaming cup.”



Breakfast: 8.30 a.m.

“Well breakfast is usually a hurried bite, but we make it a point to eat together. That is family time; we catch up and plan the day ahead.”



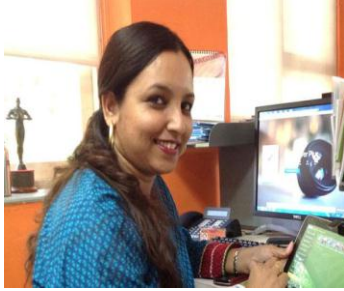
Send off the boys: 8.45 a.m

“That’s when I expend most of my energy. Both of them are bad with time. I’m the annoying alarm clock constantly hurrying them out of bed, into the bathroom and out of the house,” she laughs.



Leave for work: 9 a.m.

“I leave before Ajay does. Since mornings are always rushed, I plan what I am going to wear and choose shoes and accessories a day earlier.”



Work: 9.30 a.m.

“My work day begins with checking email, allotting tasks for the day, prioritising urgent things, planning meetings. Some days are more hectic than others, but I manage to unwind during my lunch break.”



Leave work: 5.30 p.m.

“If I manage to get out by 5.30, I miss rush hour traffic. I’m really grateful to Ajay for gifting me my bike; not only does it help me save time, it gives me the independence to go where I want to. I often stop by at stores to pick up groceries and produce on the way back.”



Time with husband: 6 p.m.

“My husband is my best friend. This time we spend together over a cup of tea is very important to us.”



Church: 6.30 p.m.

“Going to church in the evening really calms me down and gives me the energy to carry on. I don’t necessarily attend mass, but I always walk down there to say a prayer. I also have an incredible support system there.”



Cook dinner: 7.30 p.m.

“I’m really grateful to have the sort of domestic help I do. They are very regular, and I don’t have to worry too much when they are there.”



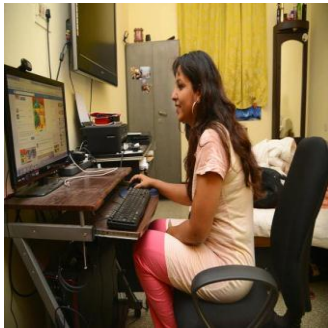
Dinner: 8 p.m.

“Dinner isn’t always a regular sit-down meal. We eat when we are hungry — I do as soon as food is made, Ajay eats in front of the television and my children eat when they get back from college or tuitions.”



Crochet: 9 p.m.

“It gives you something to do and is a huge stress buster. It also gives you a lot of satisfaction to have created something nice. I try to pick up a new hobby every year — started with make-up, then jewellery making and crocheting. I wanted to start baking this year, but I haven’t yet gotten there.”



Online engagements: 10 p.m.

“I check Facebook, chat with friends and relatives who are far away, check my page and put up new stuff. Sometimes I blog, write poetry or participate in office creative-writing contests.”