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# BIG CITY, BIG LOVE

Three couples who found their happily-ever-after in  
New York walk down memory lane with *Vogue*

Photographed by KEVIN TRAGESER Styled by MATTHEW REINHOLD

## ROOPA UNNIKRISHNAN AND SREENATH SREENIVASAN

With a disarming chuckle, Sreenath Sreenivasan, 42, chief digital officer at Columbia University, declares he's the world's best-behaved husband—a requirement when you're married to a competitive rifle shooter. "She can shoot, her dad can shoot and her mom won a state shooting championship when she was pregnant," reveals the tech journalist, sharing a smile with his Arjuna Award-winning wife, Roopa Unnikrishnan, 41. "I still have the rifle," she adds.

Sprawled on a couch in their Upper West Side flat, the couple recount their first date over 14 years ago, during a sweltering Manhattan afternoon complete with a meal at Tom's Restaurant (of *Seinfeld* fame). "At least eight people [had] told me I needed to meet this guy," says Roopa, who arrived in the city, armed with an MBA from the University of Oxford, just as Sreenath was laying the groundwork for his brainchild, the South Asian Journalists Association (SAJA). "But we both had exit strategies. Sree told me he had cousins to entertain, and I said I had a friend visiting," she says. "Three hours later, I don't know what happened to any of them."

Despite both having roots in Kerala, the couple reveal wildly different upbringings. The son of a diplomat, Sreenath was born in Japan and crisscrossed the globe with his family, living in Fiji, Russia, Bhutan and America before attending St Stephen's College in Delhi. These days, in >

## ROOPA AND SREENATH'S LITTLE BLACK BOOK

**'Our' spot in New York:** "Riverside Park. It used to be a place where we jogged when it was just the two of us. Now the four of us often bike here together."

**Romantic night out:** "A meal at our new favourite Indian restaurant, Junoon, followed by a show at one of the city's comedy clubs." [Junoonnyc.com](http://Junoonnyc.com)

ON SREENATH: SHIRT, ERMENEGILDO ZEGNA; PULLOVER, DRIES VAN NOTEN; TROUSERS, RALPH LAUREN; SHOES, GIORGIO ARMANI. ON ROOPA: DRESS, SAINT JOHN; BLAZER, GIORGIO ARMANI; SHOES, CHURCH'S; EARRINGS, NECKLACE, BOTH POTTY & WATCH, CARTIER



addition to juggling academic duties at Columbia's journalism school and overseeing SAJA, he leads Columbia's online education initiatives, is dubbed Tweeter-in-Chief, and can boast a social media footprint so expansive that he's restricted from adding any more friends on Facebook. Roopa, a management strategist who recently launched an independent consulting practice, was raised in Chennai. Encouraged to pursue rifle-shooting by her father, a senior police official, she also packed in a Rhodes scholarship in 1996. "My dad insisted there was more to life than just studying," she says.

The couple share a similar philosophy when it comes to their nine-year-old twins, Durga and Krishna. Hindi classes, swimming lessons and weekly trips to New York institutions ensure their lives are filled with different experiences. "Our idea of America isn't about the house with the white picket fence," says Sreenath. A recent outing involved a stroll along the High Line, the charming park built on a freight rail line, above the city's west side. "We try something new every weekend—otherwise what's the point of living in New York City?" he muses. —Aarti Virani

## PRIYA SHUKLA AND RALPH TOTOONCHIE

Priya Shukla and Ralph Totoonchie were introduced in a yellow cab by a common friend. As the car sped downtown, both felt an instant attraction. "Here was this beautiful Indian woman with an Australian accent, sitting beside me in a New York cab. I was immediately drawn to her," says Ralph.

Shukla, 33, grew up in Sydney, Australia, before New York became home in 2004. "I loved the pace and creativity of this city," she says. "I knew I had to move here one day." After a stint in Los Angeles, she was hired by Vera Wang as vice-president of public relations in 2006. Ralph, 35, an American of Lebanese descent, is vice-president in leveraged finance at Deutsche Bank. Their worlds have been distinct right from the start, but that's just brought them closer. "We had the right balance of being different yet similar," says Priya. It was only her mother who needed a little convincing. "She always wanted me to marry an Indian. But when I took Ralph to meet her for the first time he asked for chaat and won her over."

After two years of dating, in 2007, Ralph proposed outside an Upper East Side jeweller with Priya's dream ring. They picked the Rainbow Room, with its panorama of the Manhattan skyline from the rooftop of Rockefeller Center, for the vows. "We wanted our guests to experience the same affection we have for New York," she explains. The food was catered by one of their favourite haunts, Cipriani, the dress customised by Vera Wang.

In their Park Avenue apartment, Ralph points out the Empire State Building from the dining table. With a view like this, it's no surprise that most nights they order in—usually Korean from Franchia or Lebanese from Balade. "I always hide presents I get Priya in the oven because I know she'll never look there," he jokes, mentioning a Chanel handbag and Hermès cuffs he's stashed there in the past.

This year, they celebrate their sixth anniversary. Although married life has been busy, with long hours and hectic

### PRIYA AND RALPH'S LITTLE BLACK BOOK

**'Our' spot in New York:** "The Reservoir in Central Park: an instant getaway from frenetic urban life."

**Romantic night out:** "Dinner at La Esquina, The Mercer Kitchen or ABC Kitchen, followed by drinks at SoHo House." [Esquinanyc.com](http://Esquinanyc.com); [Th Mercerkitchen.com](http://Th Mercerkitchen.com); [Abckitchennyc.com](http://Abckitchennyc.com); [Sohohouseny.com](http://Sohohouseny.com)

