

# Gift of my life

By **SHALINI DON KAHATAPETIYA**

I SAW him standing among all his friends who had studied with him at Universiti Putra Malaysia. Physically he was there, but his mind was on his three children.

Completing his course was indeed a great achievement for him. As a father, he has humble pride, not because of his own success but because he has set a great example for us, his children.

Soon, the doors to the huge, decorated hall flew opened. I squeezed in with the crowd and sat down in the centre of the hall with my mother, grandmother, sister and brother. Within minutes, all the seats were taken by hundreds of people.

My mind drifted from my noisy surroundings to a very solemn and peaceful wonderland of my own. It is going to be a new beginning with a new thrilling spirit, which I call the "Don Spirit".

Suddenly, there was melodious music in the air, which drew everyone's attention. The ceremony had begun.

I quickly took out my brand new digital camera because I didn't want any fragment of that special day to slip through my fingers. I wanted all the moments to stay in the grip of my palm forever.

There was an announcement and everyone stood up as the chancellor, followed by the heads of department, walked into the hall. Then came the graduates dressed in their marvellous robes, and black mortar boards. Cameras flashed around me.

And there he was with a broad, sweet smile etched on his face. Beneath that smile, I could feel the motivation that had kept him going.

"Gamini Don, Masters in Education TESL." I will never forget those six words ... There was loud applause as he walked up the stage, one step at a time. He approached the chancellor and bowed to receive the scroll that he so truly deserved.

My siblings and I jumped for joy because



Proud graduate Gamini Don, who personifies the can-do spirit for his daughter.

there is nothing more joyful to us than seeing our father succeed in his life. It was certainly a memorable day for us.

He has finally made it after years of hard work. He came from a simple, average-income family and has given us not just comfort and wealth, but also the motivation and determination to live a dignified life.

We are indeed his inspiration for everything and he is our strength in whatever we do. He is not only a wonderful father but also a teacher of high calibre, with a great vision. Most importantly, he is the gift of my life.