

## **One doesn't need feet but courage to fly high!**

by Mrs. Santosh Jhanjee



When goals are alive, the land feels like open sky!  
One doesn't need feet, but courage, to fly high!

My story is that of courage and firm resolve! A story that starts on the land and ends high up in the sky! My story is that of a journey that I first embarked on, on 18th August 1985. With me was my family- my husband Ramesh, and two sons: 16 year old Rajan and 15 year old Rajat. My mind was full of confidence and a firm resolve, and my pocket had only \$20!

I felt blessed. The single most goal in life was to help my kids succeed so that the sky was the only limit for them. In the beginning I did not have any interest in coming to USA but after all it is called a 'land of opportunity' and I wanted to pursue my dream at any cost. Though a little reluctant I landed on the US soil in that August of 1985. That was the start of my journey.. One full of bitter-sweet moments.

The first day we arrived in US, we dropped off our luggage at my sister Sudha's place and headed out the door to find work. We had all decided that whatever work we can get, even if it meant cheap labor like cutting stones on the streets, we will take it. Though I have had a huge extended family here in US and all of them wanted to help, it didn't fit in with my upbringing to ask for help or be a dependent on anybody.

My older son soon got a job at a Scarpelli's family restaurant as a dishwasher. My husband also landed a job as a dishwasher at Dayton's and finally my younger son too got an hourly job. The days of our life started crawling at a slow pace.

Both the kids started going to school in September 1985. They used to study during the day and work the nights. In November 1985 we moved from my sister's house to a subsidized apartment building. There was a Children's Home Society daycare at the foot of that building. As soon as we moved I walked in there one day and started an hourly on-call basis job at the daycare. Life was catching speed, though rather slowly. Two years went by. Both boys started attending University of Minnesota. My husband got a good job in a government agency. I also became a full time employee at the daycare however, I was still looking for a better job. Kids were both focused on their studies now and they stopped working. They had bagged a number of scholarships that paid for their college education. But the destination was not even close yet!

My younger son Rajat, did a summer job at Fairview hospital's corporate office that summer. At the end of summer he was going to stop working and go back to school. I asked him if I can do 'that job'. He requested his superior and suggested that 'my mom will come and work here from tomorrow as I go back to school'! I went in and interviewed for the job. I was very apprehensive at first if I will be able to do an office job well? Everything was new for me. New system, unknown people, foreign language (American English)! I found it very difficult. I had never ever touched even a calculator, let alone a computer, in my life before! I was confused by the phone system and didn't know which button connected to which number. On top of that it was a challenge to get used to the severe winters here. I used to change two buses to get to office in ice, rain and snow storms. There were so many instances when I slipped on the icy streets and broke my bones. But I was so committed to doing my work right and on time that once I reached my office I did not get up from my desk, even for lunch break or any other break.

Hardwork and honesty always pays off. My manager Kim and director Judy appreciated my commitment to work, and always positively encouraged me and taught me all the skills very patiently and lovingly. Thank you Kim and Judy!

Time passed pretty quickly now and my confidence knew no bounds. I learned the work fast and was enjoying doing it so much that every six months I got promoted. The epitome was in February 1991 when I got the 'Best Employee Award'!

I worked there for 25 years and in 2010 I took retirement (only because a fractured foot was interfering with my commute to work!) and now I also wanted to enjoy my life on my terms!

Today I have everything in life including peace and happiness! Both my kids are well-settled in life. My husband breathed his last in 1999. Today I am here living the American dream because all my extended family provided immense support, without which, we would not have been able to survive here! Thank you to my family! God bless!



