



DAANA NEWSLETTER



February 2021 | Volume 1, Issue 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meet Our Alumni

Chase Your Dreams

Black History Month ~
Hyderabad Edition

Pandemic Wedding
2021

Yaadein

Clickable links in **RED**



Winter Storm Uri ~ Chicago, IL
Feb 2021. PC: Altaf Aman

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Hema Malini

Let's see where do I start? Lets go to the beginning. The story goes something like this... second of three children, born on a September night, 49 years ago, after my parents came home from a movie in Vizag!! They wanted to name me after Goddess Lakshmi and asked my grandmother for a name suggestion. So, she goes through the entrffire Lakshmi "sahasra namam" (that is 1000 of them) and picks HEMA MALINI!! Now imagine how brutal my high school was (yep the never-ending Dharamji references, Basanti jokes...)



Coming to my journey to medical school. I believe I was destined to be a doctor. I was good at math and was set on going to AVN college (oldest junior/degree college in Vizag, set in beautiful Hawa Mahal) for inter and becoming an engineer. I didn't get into the MPC program in that college but got into BiPC program. My dad wanted to make a few phone calls but the fifteen year old rebellious me said "absolutely not! I'll take what I got on my own". Two years later, I narrowly missed seat in AMC. Parents wanted to send me to Kolar Medical School along with my best friend. A stubborn teen with misguided pride said no again and got enrolled in agricultural BSc. Three, four months into the course my dad drops by saying we have to go to Hyderabad tonight, Deccan is enrolling based on EAMCET rank. So that's how I landed in Hyderabad for the first time in my life.

Five wonderful years at DCMS & along with an MBBS degree, I gained 6 soul sisters, who till date are instrumental in keeping me sane. We call ourselves RAKSHAA! My journey through Deccan wasn't easy by any means. In hindsight I feel I was not emotionally ready for a life away from family. The homesickness and the demands of anatomy got to me. Lost six months and my self worth took a beating but by God's grace and with the help of my friends and unwavering support from my parents and siblings, I persevered.

After graduation I went back to Vizag for internship. Started working in a local hospital as duty doctor and preparing for PG & in comes Sunil! Sath phere later, sath samundar par, landed in Pittsburgh! New country, new life, places to see, things to do but as Faiz saab put it "aur bhi dukh hain duniya mein mohabbat ke siva"... ring in the test prep, USMLE exams phase. I thought I had everything figured. Took the exams, applied for residency, our daughter was born, we got our green card & life couldn't be any happier... until match results brought me down to my knees! Picked myself up, knocked on every professor's door at U Pitt cancer institute. Two researchers at Graduate School of Public Health took me in. My friend Aparna was doing residency at Wayne State at that time & she got me observership at Detroit Medical Center and VA hospital that summer. Two months

I stayed in Detroit while my husband took care of my daughter with the help of friends. I used to travel back to Pittsburgh every weekend on a greyhound bus from downtown Detroit to Pittsburgh! What a humbling experience it was. It shed light on a side of America that I would've never seen otherwise. After the observership, I took the GRE & enrolled in MPH program at Pitt. Best decision of my life! Those who knew me say campus life gave me a "personality make over"! Next time around, not only the recommendation letters from the doctors at WSU and researchers at Pitt were stronger, I was more confident and enjoyed the interviews. I got into internal medicine residency at Muhlenberg hospital in NJ. When we graduated, the hospital was in talks with a hospitalist group from a nearby hospital. Me and two other friends decided to start our own group instead of working for someone else. First business plan I ever wrote! Establishing our own corporation right off residency is the most fulfilling experience, not only because it gave me the joy of a successful career but also the flexibility and independence I needed to be a soccer mom. 16 years later I'm very content professionally and personally! None of this would've been possible without the constant support of my husband.

Coming to personal life, I settled in suburbia with my husband Sunil a sports nerd/walking encyclopedia and my two children Srihitha (the Bernie bro) and Srihan (the singer, music creator who I wish spends a little less time on garage band). So, never a dull day at the dinner table. I enjoy music and poetry.

Life is full of second chances and opportunities - recognize them, focus & keep faith. Success will follow.

Before I conclude I want to share my dad's (a true rags to riches man) words...

"Adhrushtam asamarduluki amma, manam kashtajeevulam vijayam vethukuntu vasthundi!!"

(luck is for the less capable dear, we are hard workers success/victory comes searching for us)

Hema Malini



Chase Your Dreams

Samia Owais (13yrs, Gr 8)

d/o Safia Jaffer '96 batch

I believe that everybody should choose their dreams and live the life they always wanted. Life is not about pleasing everyone or running

after money. You are the main protagonist of your life, and you get to decide who you want to be and how you want to live. People tend to live according to society's expectations and run after money. They do not put a second thought to think they are not going to live forever.

Studies have shown that only 30% of people live happily because they live the life they want. Studies have also shown that people who tend to change themselves to live up to society's expectations are likely to fall into depression. We need to look beyond society's expectations and focus on what we want in our lives as people. It is not the society which is living your life. It is you. You are the one living, and you have control over your decisions, so why not follow your dreams?

Money is a significant factor people tend to run after. They spend their whole life trying to earn money so they can be rich. Being rich doesn't always mean

happiness. People choose their career choices according to occupations' income. People force their children to become doctors, teachers, and engineers. It is looked down on anyone who wants to be a hairstylist or a driver. This is because the income is not high. People die over money and would do anything to earn even a single penny. Money, money, money that is the biggest goal in people's lives. Money may buy materialistic things, but it cannot afford happiness, joy, and a positive life approach.

You do not live forever, so why bother living the life you do not want and not following your dreams. 'YOLO' is a saying which means, 'you only live once'. This saying caused many people to start living the life they want and stop running after money or expectations.

I believe living the life you want is very important. Life without dreams is like a lamp without a light. You should chase your dreams like a dog chases a bone. Life is not all about owning the most prominent house or owning the most expensive car. It is what you want it to be. Together we can make a difference in people's lives by persuading them to live up to their expectations, their ways, and follow their dreams.

Everybody should chase their dreams and live the life they always wanted!



Black History Month ~ Hyderabad Edition

Airah Salam (13yr) d/o Afshan Khan '96 batch

My parents come from Hyderabad and my exposure to Hyderabad comes from snippet visits in summers. I am attempting to start the editorial series to spark interest among DAANA community to keep Hyderabadi culture/ heritage alive.

Considering this being Black History Month, I looked into black history in Hyderabad. This is all research based but interesting to read. I got to find out all about the history regarding Africans and their influential impact on Hyderabad. Let me just say, this article will astonish you on history forgotten in your stories you tell your kids about your homeland! Wait until you find out about how, why, and when Africans first came to Hyderabad.

The Habshi is known as an ethnic group that are solely Africans. They can also be known as Afro Indians or Siddi. Today I'm gonna mention them as The Habshi and Siddi. Habshi were slaves who came from the Slave Trade we all know today. Primarily they were Muslims, and a few were Christians and Hindus. They were brought to Indian chiefs because they were shown as loyal and had contained physical prowess. Many Habshis served as generals, governors, and soldiers predominantly in the Muslim kingdoms. So to speak, Habshi speak local languages and practice religions well known all around India.

While many Habshi have merged in our local communities, its important not to forget what they brought to us. Places and communities were named after the Habshi. For example, Habshiguda, Siddipet and AC guards. AC Guards stands for African Cavalry Guards (in the Asif Jahi Nizam of Hyderabad's army) where most Siddi soldiers were housed.

How often do you find yourself at home and whenever you think of pain, the solution is always Zinda Tilismath? When advertising this product, Zinda Tilismath used Siddi soldier figures on their product's box to promote it. Since the Siddi were known to have a strong physical appearance, Zinda Tillismath portrayed the strength of Siddi soldiers. This guaranteed good health and reliability. My mom's reactions was not as different as yours right now. This left an enthusiasm in our mind to share with others!

Lastly, the Goma music and traditional dance Siddi brought with them still remains with us today. To really bring this history close to home, it's also known as the Marfa-Arabic duff. As a child, when I entered the shaadi-khana, I would instantly dance and pull my little sister with me to embarrass my whole family. The rhythm and the excitement it brought was so delightful, that the desire for food after a long car ride had vanished. I heard the upbeat tempo of this authentic music playing, but I never once thought about where this music originated. A shaadi cannot be complete without everyone dancing on the streets to the drums banging for the newly wed couple.

In conclusion and honor of Black History Month, we should never forget that India didn't only consist of the people we think of today. Just like America, India has many people of African origins as well. Although many Habshi or Siddi living in India today have merged with inter marriages, their impact still remains with us! Have any other related stories to share?



Editor's note:

About 300,000 Siddis or Habshis inhabit the Indian subcontinent in various states, with **Karnataka, Gujarat and Hyderabad in India and Makran and Karachi in Pakistan** as the main population centers.

A very famous Siddi (some of our generation might be **familiar with**) was **Jamal ud-Din Yaqut**, who was an African **Siddi** slave-turned-nobleman who was a close confidant of **Razia Sultana**, the first and only female monarch of the **Delhi Sultanate in India**.



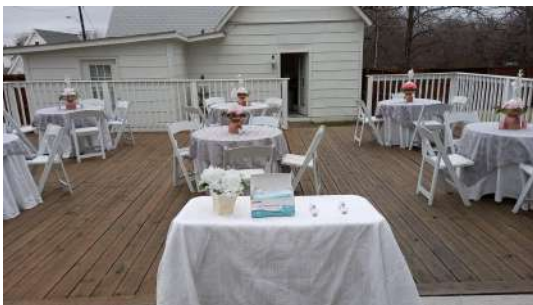
A PANDEMIC WEDDING 2021

by Munira Vajih (Birjees- First batch)



A dream wedding is a bride's dream and every parent's hope. In my case, being a single mom (Alhamdulillah), I achieved something big - planning both daughters' weddings within a span of 5yrs, all alone. I have no words to thank my family and friends for all the help and duas. For me it was next to impossible to handle all this so smoothly with limited budget in mind. Though it was tough, my daughters are my backbone and they did a fabulous job in helping me organize all arrangements - from decorations to full setup, and it was everyone's duas and family support that I could make everything happen smoothly and perfectly, during this mid-pandemic time.

Preparing for my daughter Fatema's wedding mid-pandemic, I had to work out expectations vs. reality - safety being of utmost importance. The wedding served as a lesson that the best of plans can be re-planned by the Mercy of Allah. We found a venue with a spacious area, inside and outside and set up tables (keeping social distancing in mind). One of our alumni helped me to arrange for the best catering place, as I am from Houston and wedding was in Plano TX. Food was excellent, and everyone enjoyed. There were so many people I wanted to invite, but reduced the guest list to family and few other close, local friends. Before the guests were to arrive it started raining! As we all know, even with the best of intentions, sometimes you need to improvise! The family sprang into action, dried sheets which were laid outside and redid placements in big halls. By the time guests arrived we were all ready; décor, backdrop, carpet and sheets in big halls for sitting arrangements for guests, keeping social distancing. As each person entered, hand sanitizer was applied, temperature checks were done, and extra masks were kept as a backup. Mask and distancing being utmost priority, tables were set for individual family members. The wedding was small, but intimate and full of love & family. The morning after the wedding, my daughter texted me "Mom, you made my dream come true."



I had a very tough life raising my kids, as their dadiyaal was western style and I am a conservative desi. I am from the first batch of DCMS. After graduation, I did Senior Residency for a year at Niloufer hospital. I got a PG seat in Gulbarga but, due to pregnancy complications, I had to discontinue. I worked as an ER physician in Jeddah (only with kids) for 7 years, as my Green Card was in process. Alhamdulillah, it was a blessing as I could go to Haram every week - those days were the best days of my life. Working in Jeddah was very challenging too as I had to fight in court against my kafeel; that is another

chapter of my life. I had victory there too, Alhamdulillah. I think, if one is determined to do something, one can do it, by Grace of Allah. When I came to US, my Green-Card was lost in mail and I was an Alien for many years till all paperwork was done from scratch. I took it as a blessing and spent time with kids focusing on their tarbiyat and deen. During that time I had no permit to work, so I volunteered in hospitals, senior living facilities, helped to set up Iraqi refugee madrasa and cooked food for refugees and mosque events. When I got my Green-Card I did my Masters in Health Administration & Gerontology.



My elder daughter once wrote to me “Mom, if I spent my entire life writing a book on your strength, I could still not do justice. You're an inspiration for all of us and we are forever in your debt”.



May Allah keep all kids happy and on Sirat-al Mustakheem. Ameen.



YAADEIN

Mohammed Shah Iftekar Ali
'92 batch

How do we remember our teachers (apart from their teaching)?

Dr Baig (Principal) - For his birthday celebrations and friendly rebukes. Almost every speech of his started with “Tum logan sab paagal hai”

Dr Muhajir (Anatomy) - For his impeccable safari suits and Ray-Bans. Most of his talks started with “Fortunately or unfortunately, all of you are going to become doctors. But what is the use?”

Dr Wajahath (Anatomy) - For his strict attitude towards latecomers and chronic absentees. “Konsi picture gaye thay miya kal?”

Dr Sikander (Physiology) - For his good teaching but strict discipline. He once caught me napping in first row and said “Janaab, aap to had kar derain. Sab se saamne baitkeich?”

Dr Abdul Qader (Pharmacology) - “If you are not interested, everybody is welcome to go”

Dr Amar Singh (Forensic) - For his not-so-subtle descriptions of sensitive topics.

Dr Wigg (Medicine) - For his tendency for ear pulling and slapping, irrespective of boys or girls!

Dr Jain (ENT) - For his extremely slow reflexes. In fact, he loved to remain seated in his favorite chair in the dept.

Dr Kareem (SPM) - For kicking out the maximum number of boys from class.

Dr Mohammed Ali (Medicine) - For his targeting girls with difficult questions (“what is Felty’s Syndrome, madam?”)

Dr Zainab (Ob/gyn) - For her traditional Hyderabad grandma look but impeccable English. She surprised me in final viva with the question “What are the failure rates of different modes of contraception, bete?”

Dr Aijaz Hussain (Surgery) - For his daily post-rounds parties. We, of course, being in Dr Azher Hussain’s unit, could only smell the mirchis and the samosas!

Dr Faiz (Pharmacology) - He somehow reminded me of Thompson and Thomson from Tintin comics. Impeccably dressed, he drove a huge contessa, with colorful flowers in the rear window.

Dr Azmatullah Shareef (Surgery) - For his vintage Morris car with doors that opened in the opposite direction.

Dr Azher Hussain (Surgery) - For his aggressive style (“Kya jee! Amma hoke nai dekhe? Yeh bachche ki ek goli nai hai na!”)

Dr Abdul Ali (Biochem) - For showing us what fun it is to harass teachers. Even his serious outbursts would evoke laughter. In fact, his was the only class we used to

Editors' message:

After an encouraging response to the inaugural DAANA Newsletter, we are pleased to present to you the February 2021 edition. We wish to express our heartfelt thanks to all the contributors so far & look forward to even more participation from our alumni & families' community. We hope readers & writers alike, treat this as a safe, non-judgemental space to share their thoughts, feelings & experiences. Thank you.

Afshan Khan '96 & Aiman Muneer '96

PS. send your contributions, suggestions & feedback to daananewsletter@gmail.com