

Bronxville Living

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**LOCAL CHILDREN'S DENTIST'S
COMPELLING STORY**

**HOME DESIGN, BACK TO SCHOOL,
EVENTS AND MORE**

Cover Photo by Jacqueline deMontravel

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A STORY TO MAKE YOU SMILE

By Renuka Rao Bijoor

Photography by Jacqueline deMontravel
and family photos by Renuka Rao Bijoor

I write this brief biography from Scotland. I returned here after 25 years to revisit places, experiences and memories that helped shape me. It reminded me that my life has been an incredible journey. How one can never stop dreaming and never stop believing in ourselves and reaching for the stars.

I have had the distinct good fortune of being given the opportunity to train and work in three continents - Asia, Europe and North America. The breadth of knowledge and experience I have been able to amass from this very unique trajectory is invaluable and irreplaceable. Possibilities are always endless. Small mindedness or fear of failing should not stop us from reaching out and taking the next step that could catapult life out from the ordinary to the extraordinary. And that is exactly what happened to me.

As the youngest child of four growing up in the busy metropolis of Bombay, I was exposed to a convent school education. It was a childhood rich with experiences thanks to my talented mother and caring father. I consider it a beautiful gift to have been born into my family. Very early on, it was imposed upon me that it was only education that mattered. And, with education, it not only meant book work but learning about people, cultures and keeping an open mind about learning about life in general. Realizing that everyone had a story that could be a learning lesson.

Although I would have loved to be a speech and language therapist, my parents insisted that I pursue an education in dentistry. I am eternally grateful because it gave me the opportunity to be financially independent, which has been the maxim of my life. I think the best gift one could give a child, especially a daughter, is education. It gives her the ability to always be financially independent.

I graduated from one of the best schools for dentistry in India. Under my parents' gentle nudge, I trained with one of the best oral and maxillofacial surgeons in the country and earned my masters degree in oral surgery. After taking a bank loan to facilitate the purchase of all the dental equipment, I set up my private practice in August 1989. My practice consisted of all aspects of oral Surgery but I found oral implantology a fascinating field and soon was placing a ton of very successful implants.



Which led me to receive my the fellowship diploma from the International Congress of Oral Implantology, and when I received this award in 1995, I was told that I was the first Indian woman to receive this honor! This gave me the impetus to take a leap from a comfortable life in private practice in Bombay, where I was reigning queen, to traverse the seas and pursue further training in Oral Surgery in the United Kingdom. Britain has always been open to training qualifying foreign dentists as this system also helps them run their National Health Service in return.

I trained for three years from 1996 to 1999, working in various hospitals, and completing the very competitive exams in dentistry and oral surgery from the Royal College of Surgeons of England and Ireland. Armed with all these accolades, I was set to return home to Bombay when my mother masterminded a meeting with an engineer of Indian origin in New York. I had visited the U.S. several times but never intended on settling there. The promise of finally having a family, to stop kissing toads, prompted me to go meet him. Presto! I decided to move lock, stock and barrel to New York to start my life with my new husband, taking a leap of faith, going back to dental school in accordance with the laws in the U.S., in order to get the license to work as a dentist.

One hiccup, my marriage failed. Thus I was 'implanted' in a foreign country with a young son, mortgage for a small house, divorce attorney payments, student loans et al. Somehow, we managed — just the two of us. Life continued and my son is now 23 years old, in medical school, and I remarried about 12 years ago.

What have I learned? Don't limit yourself, believe in yourself and all possibilities. Have faith in God. Stop to smell the flowers. Avoid negativity. Seize every day. Try and smile more. You never know what promise is hidden behind a very deceptively simple opportunity to be kind and thoughtful. Such an outlook will open up a world of possibilities.

In the U.S., once I earned my DDS degree from Columbia College of Dental Medicine in 2003, I switched specialties and continued training in Pediatric Dentistry at Columbia University Medical Center, graduating in 2005. In 2014, I procured the Executive Master's Degree in Public Health from Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health.

Although I did have to sacrifice a fulfilling and lucrative career as an oral surgeon, I am blessed with the chance to help adorable children and try to make their dental experiences as pleasant as possible. I am proud of the cutting edge dentistry services I provide. As a laser dentist, I avoid shots and drills, and my extensive training helps diagnose and address problems in children with sleep deprivation and impaired growth of the orofacial structures.

I also follow my father's dictum of volunteering a significant portion of my time each week. Even during the days when I was a struggling new dentist, I carved out time during the week to volunteer as it gives me such immense satisfaction and fulfillment to give back. There's my philanthropic work for Columbia College of Dental Medicine, my alma mater, where I have been Voluntary Assistant Clinical Professor for the past 20 years. I also volunteer for our dental profession as part of various committees and councils on the local, state and national levels and will soon be installed as the President of the Ninth district Dental Association which consists of five counties. I have been on the board of two local Chambers of Commerce and engaging with the local community is very important to me.

All in all, I am grateful for an enriched life thus far. I have been fortunate to have lived in so many different places and have met the most fascinating people all over the world. However, I am proud of my heritage and upbringing but am eternally appreciative of the chance that God and the United States gave me to reinvent myself and not only survive, but triumph. I hope to always remember this and stay humble.

