

My Space Odyssey

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My Stellar Journey : It was my childhood dream to become an Astronomer and keep looking endlessly at the stars. As a child, I would sometimes do star-gazing, and it was my beloved Father who inspired me continuously to dream big! Later on, I also aspired to become a Space Scientist, and reach out to the stars.

My Dad had his own Foundry in Belgaum, and as a kid, I would follow him and go with him to watch the extraction and processing of cast-iron and mild-steel. So I knew at that time that I will become an Engineer in the future. My Father has always been my principal Mentor and my relentless guide.

I was extremely good at Academics, particularly in - Science & Mathematics, and would invariably score 100 on 100!

Later on, I secured a Merit Seat and got admission for Electronics & Telecommunications Engineering.

After completing my technical studies with a First Class, I did my first job in Industry. It was a Techno-Market Research on Sensors & Transducers for the prestigious TIFAC, DST (GoI). Subsequently, I worked in ELECTRONICA Mechatronics, Pune - as R&D Officer. However, I realised that my true calling was in Academics.

So I started teaching Technical subjects. But then, I did not get a permanent job, perhaps because I did not belong to any reservation/category.

At that time, I decided to become an Informal Educator. And so I started teaching subjects like - Aviation Engg, Avionics, etc., for the Aeronautical Engineering Course. That was when NASA happened, and the tables actually turned! I got selected for the prestigious NASA-Honeywell Space Educators' Training Program, and after that, there was no looking back!

All those who had kind of side-lined me, started knowing my capabilities, potential and calibre, because, there at NASA, nobody asked about my Caste or Religion, etc. I got there on my own merit, and successfully completed this Training.

While at NASA, I received training that is precursor to the Astronauts' training. I learnt a lot of Physics, Mathematics & Technical knowledge. And I also got a unique, once-in-a-life experience! I underwent micro-gravity and Mission- Simulation Training, and this was the turning point of my life!

Well, I have no regrets about anything, except that - it took me a dozen years of struggle and hardwork, to get here. I never used an elevator - on the contrary, I have always used the staircase. Therefore, it took a very long time for me to arrive at my final destination. However today, when I look back, I feel I got what I've always dreamt of, because, I did not become a typical Professor. Besides, I am self-made, and I got global exposure because of NASA.

Most importantly, I did not walk on a path created by others, but I have created my own PATH! Being a woman, there were a few challenges. However, I overcame them. I visited NASA 6 times, and all my visits have been sponsored and I keep getting invitations, again and again!

Presently, I also get invitations to give Interviews of Television Channels, namely - DOORDARSHAN Sahyadri, TV9, SAAM TV, Jai Maharashtra, ABP Mazha, News18, Zee24 Taas, India TV, LOKSHAAHI, AM News, and so on, to share my expertise on Cosmology, Space Technology, etc.

Presently -I am a Space Educator, a Science & Technology Communicator and a Researcher.

I mentor and guide youngsters, who take up Astronomy/Cosmology or Space Education.

I'm the Founder of ASTRO-EDU, PUNE - an Academy that promotes and conducts various educational activities like- Technical Lectures/Popular Talks, Star-gazing Events/Camps, Seminars, Workshops, etc.

