



dr dilip gahankari

JENI BONE TALKS TO A PASSIONATE SURGEON SPECIALISING IN HANDS, TRAUMA, BIRTH DEFECTS AND COMPLEX RECONSTRUCTIONS.

I WAS born in a little country town in central India about 800kms from Bombay (Mumbai). Our house had no electricity so I carried out my studies under the street lamp and kerosene lamps which was a challenge in summer when temperatures reached 40 degrees. My pushbike was the most expensive item I owned. My father believed that books, education and travel were more important than luxuries. We got free yearly train passes by virtue of his employment in railways and however financially strapped we were, we would still spend two weeks holidaying around the country.

I took out a loan and then was awarded a scholarship to study medicine, I also tutored school kids to earn some money. Towards the end of residency, the only way I could keep up with the job, studies and all my commitments and still graduate was to only sleep once every two days. I had no telephone, air-conditioning, fridge or car until I became a doctor. This upbringing taught me how little you need to be happy and it instilled in me the value of life and resources. I learned to respect the underprivileged and uneducated. I am constantly reminded of my dad's words: "Never let anybody decide what you are worth, only you can direct your own life." He told me if people laugh at your dream, they only reveal their own ignorance.

I wanted to be an engineer, but my father said: "Be a doctor and help people". Surgeons are trusted to carry out procedures on patients that improve their lives and sometimes even save their lives. Plastic surgery has a life changing influence and

it's a joy to touch other people's lives in this way. I feel privileged to be able to observe the incredible world of what lies under the human skin, enroute to removing a cancerous growth or repairing a critical problem.

A major part of enjoying your life is to help others enjoy their lives. Undertaking volunteer work in third world or underprivileged communities makes you appreciate the little things in life that most of us take for granted. Millions of impoverished children around the world do not have access to basic medical care, let alone the reconstructive plastic surgery they need to lead normal, productive lives.

You have to be prepared to work long hours, usually 12-16 hour days. The environment forces you to be very creative and resourceful with what is available and not allow what you lack to impact your positive attitude. But the work you do is valuable, greatly appreciated and it carries its own rewards. You don't have to speak the same language to communicate. Patients express themselves with a simple touch or gesture that conveys sincere gratitude.

Being a father has changed my life. I am consumed with the cuteness of a new kid, and generally life just seems absolutely, perfectly wonderful. Nothing in the world could have prepared me for this feeling, this absolute enthrallment with what is essentially a helpless midget. I am happier and more proud than I have ever been in my entire life.

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