

Hansa learned and Hansa smiled

As Hansa sat in her ESL class that day listening to her energetic, enthusiastic and ever smiling teacher end the day, she felt a sense of triumph. Today she had learnt about happiness. Hansa was born into a family of five boys and girls. Little Hansa always loved the idea of going to school, but that wasn't to happen in her life so easily. Mom gave her a choice between either going to the school that was very far away by bus or eating for a week. Though Hansa always chose "school" over "food", her mother simply knew better. So Hansa didn't have much of a memory of school. However, her memories surrounded her happiness at home. Her home was a tiny one room little structure. Her young sad mother had to travel very long to go to work to earn enough food to feed Hansa, her brothers and sisters. Mother used to cook food for all of them, and lock them up safely inside the house everyday when she went to work. The brothers and sisters managed to eat, play, stay safe and build their world of fun and frolic within those four walls. Hansa had clear memories of taking care of her younger siblings right from a very young age. These skills were to make her a "skilled" mother in the later years of her life....who knew! Just doing all the household chores to perfection made her happy.

Understand the statistics: *Genetics determine about 50% of your happiness level. 10% comes from external factors like health and income. The rest is up to you. If you weren't born happy, you have to work harder at it.*

As time went by, life started getting tougher, a little every day. Until one day, her mother told Hansa also to go to work with her. She learnt about her mother's job in just one day. Even easier was to understand the tricks of the trade that would make her earn enough to feed the family. Hansa

thought she had learnt it all. She cooked very well, cleaned even better, did the dishes, washed the clothes of the entire family. Everyone loved her work. But in the farm where she worked with her mother, they were paid by the weight of the fruits they picked. They picked guavas, blueberries and watermelons. Picking watermelons made more sense. But those people at the farm were very clever. They knew that watermelons weighed more than the blue berries. So each fruit was weighed separately before they counted the money out for mom at the end of the day. Oh how she wished those scales would show a higher number and help her mother get a bonus for the day. The bonus would mean that maybe she and her brothers and sisters would get to enjoy “Halwa”. She had vague memories of her mom stopping to buy ingredients for the halwa on some special days. There were never more than two such days in a year. Halwa was a sweet dish prepared from roasting wheat flour, sugar, almonds and lots and lots of melted butter. Hansa had learnt how to make it even better. When her mom wasn't watching and if they had it, she poured in some fresh honey borrowed from the neighbours. No matter how many water melons she picked, the scale never seemed to want to show that. Her mom never got that bonus. But Hansa thought about the halwa and that made her the usual happy person that she was.

Surround yourself with beauty: *Happiness is mainly an inside job. However, a beautifully decorated office or home can improve your mood. Beautify the room you spend most of your time in. Beautify your mind with happy thoughts.*

Years went by and Hansa turned twenty four. Her mother decided to marry Hansa off. Hansa didn't know who she was going to get married to. But that was alright. All the girls she knew got married to strangers. That was the norm. She didn't want to leave her familiar world. Though sometimes she

cried silently at the terror of going to live with a complete stranger, she always tried to make an effort to push out unhappy thoughts from her mind.

Smile even if you're faking: *Health experts say that smiling release natural painkillers. These may help you fight off colds and flus. A fake smile is better than no smile.*

Finally, she got married. Before she got to make friends with the stranger that she was married to , he left her with his mother and went away to Canada. Life with her mother in law wasn't easy. Hansa put to use all the skills she had learnt to make her mother in law happy. She tried cooking, cleaning, washing, doing the laundry....just about everything that she knew. But it didn't work for her. Despite all her hardships, at the end of the day, Hansa would think happy thoughts in her head. She thought of her siblings, of all the fun they had in that one room house they grew up in, the halwa they got once in a while and she would drift off into happy sleep.

End your day well: *Always end your day or activity on a happy note. This is the part you will remember and share with the world.*

After about three years and some short visits, her husband sponsored her to move to Canada with her brand new bundle of joy. A beautiful little baby girl had come into Hansa's life. Since Hansa didn't grow up reading fairy tales, she had no idea that there existed a fairyland called Canada. She had never heard of "education for all children" or "women's rights" or "equality and equity". With each new word Hansa learned at the LINC program, she learned about a new way of life. ..a life where fairytales happened every day. She had got her second chance at education. The letters soon turned

into words and the words into sentences. Each sentence seemed to spin a little magic in her life. She was discovering new abilities in herself every single day. She gave public performances now. The performances came in the form of reading out a short story her friend had written, of “role playing” a doctor and a patient in front of the class and of practising a phone conversation. This smiling English teacher who went around the class making sure everyone understood the article called “A Prescription for Happiness”, Hansa smiled uncontrollably. This teacher reminded her of the angel she had heard about in the stories told by her grandmother. She must have had the same face. For now, she was showing her road to more happiness. In a country that holds up freedom for all and a stable future for her daughter, Hansa felt totally happy and grateful for all that life had brought to her. Through this article on happiness her teacher had helped her write her own life story.

Count your blessings: *Even on bad days you have to be grateful. Experts recommend keeping a gratitude journal. For best results, count your blessings before you go to sleep.*