



I was happy, secure as a child; youngest of seven sisters and a brother. Father, a doctor, retired captain, was strict; but though traditional, gave us children a lot of freedom. Brought up to be a good housewife; I was taught: religious rituals, cooking, embroidery, knitting, gardening, singing, sitar, drawing, swimming, driving, rangoli... But they all faded away when French - language and literature - transported me to a corner of France. I did BA, MA with French; and in the holidays, learnt German at the Maxmuller Bhavan. I also worked as an interpreter for foreign tourist groups, then went to France too. I taught French in school while doing MA. I had an aptitude for language-learning, which brought me a job with the Mumbai CID; who always said, "The impossible we do immediately; the incredible takes a little longer", and "Sky is the limit". In this job I learnt Arabic, Swedish, Russian, Japanese. Every difficulty - lack of teachers, books - was a challenge. I was happy, moved in educated, foreign, VIP circles, heard serious discussions, read new books, learnt thousands of new things, improved my English, became confident... my whole outlook on life changed. Then I got married to Sanjay and moved to Pune. He and his family respected, supported, loved me. I continued my job in Mumbai until the daily commuting became tiresome.

Sanjay was the one responsible for putting our feet on the road to this Language Services Bureau. He took me to see Shantanurao Kirloskar, to find a job for me. Shantanurao told me to write a report on which companies here deal in what languages; with a view to making available to them interpretation/translation services. I could not have done this work without Sanjay's help. And thus I became the head of an entirely new department with Kirloskars'. All the information we processed was technical, where accuracy of translation was important. Each word could have a hundred meanings, but to pick the right one meant a close contextual study. This was demanding but satisfying work. I went into production, maintenance, research departments and learnt the processes, machines first hand from engineers; found a way out of every difficulty. The company also gave me the impetus to do business-management courses. Shantanurao did more than inspire me to learn more languages. He gave me the incentive to work hard, be exacting, disciplined. I

understood: you don't "get" success or merit, you "earn" them.

I began with and for Kirloskars, then expanded to cover the whole country. Familiarised myself and dealt with technical information on manufacture, banking, insurance, commercial paper, legal matters, contracts, economies, taxes ... all that concerns the world of commerce and industry. But I had to make time for my children too, so eventually decided to give up the job and begin a "language bureau" that I could run from home. I still did work for the company but my time was my own and I could devote as much of it to my children as I wanted.

About 20 years ago there were no language bureaus in India that dealt with 20 languages. Even today they are few and far between. Now of course with computers, modems, faxes, e.mail I deal with companies not only all over the country, but all over the world. Earlier, we had typewriters for different languages. Now we have computers with all the necessary software. More than 150 language-people are connected to me via computers and it is easy to translate even 500, 700 pages into/from many languages quickly. I have been working for the last 8 years on training new translators and interpreters. 63% of the world's latest technical knowledge is published in languages other than English and the bitter truth is, it never reaches us, or is outdated by the time it does. That is why it is important for the new generation of students to study foreign languages. This knowledge is, of course, personally advantageous, but it is also useful to our society, our country.

One special facet of my bureau: as far as possible, I employ women, and successfully use flexi-time. All the prizes and honours that I have earned are the result of my colleagues' co-operation. And now, happily, I see my children taking an interest in this work.

---

NAME: Madhuri Datar

BORN: Pune, Maharashtra, 14.3.1947

BIO: Most people are learn to speak and write the language they grow up with fluently. Madhuri Datar possesses the unusual talent of fluency in 27 languages. She is capable of comprehending and translating complex technical as well as lay terminology from one foreign language to another. For example, her Language Services Bureau has corporate clients for whom she translates say Russian technical documents into Italian and Portuguese or Japanese. Considering that 63% of the worlds technical knowledge is available in languages other than English Madhuri's scope and knowledge of languages is no less than spectacular. She operates her Language Services Bureau in Pune.