



# STRENGTH — in — DIVERSITY

Our world is composed of and strengthened by many ethnicities, beliefs, cultures and personalities. Every human, breathing soul begins life in the same way, by being born. Some are born into wealth, some into meager means, but hopefully love exists and prevails. The trick is for each individual to grow into adulthood with experiences that shape and mold him or her in a positive light.

Sujata Chaudhry is one of those babies who grew into womanhood out of sheer will and with the love of her family. She knows the value of holding a positive multicultural view of life, and she has a deep desire to assist individuals and businesses in becoming more culturally aware.

Born into poverty in Bombay, India, with no running water, Sujata and her younger and older sisters lived with their parents, where they learned the value of hard work and family. “My parents were in an arranged marriage. They were introduced on a Thursday and married that following Sunday when my mom was 20 and my dad was 25,” she related. “My mother was one of five siblings, and my father one of six. He was seen as the golden child, and he was very good in school at that time, when many could not afford to send their children to school. My father was an apprentice; his mentor helped him become an engineer

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# Sujata Chaudhry

and he supported his family financially. He helped them rise above poverty, from homes with no sewage or water.”

## Determination to Succeed

Her father wanted to give his family the American dream, so he moved them to England and later to America. India, a former British colony, had gained its independence by this time. He did not see Sujata when she was born in 1966, but went ahead to England to find a job. Due to his color and accent, even though he was an engineer, he was not accepted. Eventually he saved enough money to bring Sujata, her mother and sister to England.

“My first memory was all of us living in this room my father rented in someone else’s home in England for a little while. We then rented a home and shared a kitchen with someone. When we wanted to take a shower we had to put coins in a meter for hot water,” she recalled. “My sisters and I had to shovel coal into a furnace outside for heat. Basically, it was an amazing journey and I thank my parents. The reason I am here is because my parents wanted to take us out of the judgment of poverty. The only way to fight that cultural sensitivity issue was to go to school and get a job, and be smart and talented.”

Her father passed away 21 years ago. As a Gujarati civil/structural engineer, he ended his career as the director of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Her mother still lives in Carlisle, where she has made a life for herself. Sujata calls this her home town, for all intents and purposes, as she never lived anywhere else for more than five years. Having lived in so many different locations, she grew up speaking fluent Gujarati and Hindi, and she learned to speak English upon her move to England.

## Building Her Foundation

Sujata’s formal education credentials include a BS/BA with a concentration in statistics and marketing from Shippensburg University and Penn State University and a master’s in education, graduating summa cum laude from Duquesne University. “I graduated from college and began working with the Navy as a market analyst on a program dealing with international countries. The program dealt with selling refurbished military parts and recycling them for use by other countries. I worked there for a few years, and then went to work for AMP, Inc., which is now TYCO,” she explained. “I was a sales engineer with them and my key role was working with IBM to design PC boards. This happened because of my background and experiences. I understood what it took to work with people from other countries, so I worked to bridge

that gap, whether it was in the way they processed information, ran meetings or communicated. Having seen my parents do it, I was sensitive to it in the workplace.”

This is where she recognized that her path was to become a global educator, so she earned her master’s degree in education because she believes people need to understand how critical it is to be able to navigate successfully in a culturally diverse work world. With today’s rapidly changing technology, everyone is experiencing the challenges that come along with conducting business in a global economy.

## A Multicultural World View

“Borders are becoming a thing of the past and the U.S. is becoming more and more culturally diverse. In fact, the Census Bureau says that by 2050, Caucasians will be the majority minority. There is so much strength in diversity!” she exclaimed. “Why would you want someone in your company to behave, think and create exactly like the other members of the group? Diversity inspires creativity, growth and profitability.”

Sujata is owner and president of the consulting company Tangible Development LLC, where she helps organizations overcome communication challenges in order to expand internationally, attract and retain their global workforce, and increase their profitability by serving multicultural clients. She designs and provides customized intercultural training programs and consulting services to decrease risk and increase opportunities; her services help leadership, management and employees work more effectively with multinational clients, customers and colleagues. Sujata’s consulting company prepares clients and their employees to negotiate and do business with a wide variety of cultures. She has worked with industry leaders in finance, property management, hospitality, non-profit, healthcare and science and technology. She presents a variety of workshops and seminars, including one titled Holy Cow...How Not to Offend a Hindu and Other Cultures.

## Community Role Model

She gives back to her Albany community in numerous capacities. She has served on the executive committee and board for the Tricity India Association, of which she is a life member and contributor, and has served as an advisor for its youth organization. She is also an active member of the Hindu Cultural Center. Recently she helped the Indian Sixty Plus group with bridging cultural perceptions on health-related topics. She also served on the Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce board and chaired the 2014 Women’s Business Council, and she remains an active committee

*“Relationships* inspire me daily! And people. When I think about it in the big picture, you can’t live without them, whether it’s professional, personal or your relationship with yourself. It’s not always easy but it’s worth it. Watching and understanding people inspires me. I value my relationships across the board. All the sacrifices my parents made leaving India to start a new life for my sisters and me, facing the challenges of growing up a third culture kid, and combining my corporate experience, perspectives and education led me to start this company six years ago. When I train my clients to lead with cultural intelligence, the foundation of people skills that are critical to success in today’s global environment, I do it with the knowledge of having lived it.”



member. She served on the Tech Valley Connect and Women@Work Connect advisory boards, and she is currently a member of the American Red Cross of NENY and Girls Inc. boards.

Sujata is married and has a daughter who recently graduated from college and a son entering college in the fall. “As a mother of a 21-year-old daughter, I understand how important it is to be a strong female role model. We all feel insecure and fear failure, but every now and then we need to step back and view ourselves through the supporting eyes of others!” she recommended. “We as women are so hard on ourselves that when someone says, ‘Wow, you did a great job,’ we immediately wonder how we could have done an even better job instead of accepting the accolade and saying thank you. I tell my daughter she should embrace her strengths and be proud.”

Her hobbies revolve around her desire to stay fit and active. She danced in college, and when her son started driving, she decided to get back into it, with Latin and rhythm dance being her favorites. She also tries to run every day, and loves cooking. “I enjoy fusion cooking and expressing my love for food from different countries. My kids and husband are foodies too!” she smiled.

#### **Walking the Talk**

What inspires Sujata? Her response is emphatic. “Relationships inspire me daily! And people. When I think about it in the big picture, you can’t live without them, whether it’s professional, personal or your relationship with yourself. It’s not always easy but it’s worth it. Watching and understanding people inspires me. I value my relationships across the board. All the sacrifices my parents made leaving India to start a new life for my sisters and me, facing the challenges of growing up a third culture kid, and combining my corporate experience, perspectives and education led me to start this company six years ago.

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*For more insight on the incredible work this insightful woman does, visit [tangible-development.com](http://tangible-development.com).*