

Home > Calcutta (Kolkata), General > Jillian Haslam, under the stairs to Entrepreneur, Author and Motivational Speaker

Jillian Haslam, under the stairs to Entrepreneur, Author and Motivational Speaker

December 29, 2016 Rangan Datta Go to comments Leave a comment

The story of Jillian Haslam From living under the stairs to Entrepreneur, Author and Motivational Speaker

It was almost mid night of Christmas Eve and Santa Clause, accompanied by a Anglo Indian lady, was giving gifts to the street kids in Kolkata.



Jillian Haslam and Santa Clause with a street kid in Kolkata

Nothing much unusual and Kolkata. The city has seen many such foreign charity. But there was a twist in this in this charity!!! The lady who accompanied the smartly dressed Santa Cause, has spent a childhood in Kolkata.



Jillian and Santa distribute gifts and blankets, Kolkata

Her days in Kolkata were not spent in posh apartments or villas but on road sides in similar conditions of the kids, who were receiving the gifts from her.

This is the story of Jillian Haslam a present day resident of London and Entrepreneur, Author and Motivational Speaker.

She was born in Kolkata of British parents. His father Roland Terrence Haslam was of pure British lineage while her mother Margaret Haslam was of British - Armenian lineage.

Both of them stayed back in India after independence and both had a previous marriage, which didn't work. The couple had a total of 10 children out of which only 6, including Jillian, survived beyond infancy.

Jillian was born in 1970 and was the fifth (third of the surviving) sibling of her parents. Her dad at that time was working in a tyre company as a mechanical engineer.

He had his first heart attack, soon after Jillian was born. Jillian's mother took him to the Salvation Amy Hospital for free treatment.



Jillian Haslam

As her father recovered and her mother tried desperately to makes ends meet, infant Jillian spent most of the time in the care of a family friend.

But Ronald recovered soon, although not fully, and in 1972 Vanessa was born. Thing move for better, as in 1974 both Ronald and Margaret were offered jobs in a newly established English Medium school in Dum Dum. The couple moved to Dum Dum, with the two young siblings and along with their eldest sister Dona, who was just in her teens.



Jillian next to the stairs in Princep Street, she lived undet it with her mother and younger sister Vanessa

After a long time the family had a proper home but sadly there good old days were numbered. It was 1976 and the Naxalites were still a force in Bengal, and Naxalites threatened to kidnap Dona, who had turned out to be a beautiful teenage girl.



L: Showing her old neighborhood and R: Meeting old friend in Kidderpore, Kolkata

The family left Dum Dum in the dead of the night, assisted by a few friendly locals, leaving almost there entire possessions behind. It was during the train journey to Kolkata Ronald had her second heart attack and had a temporary loss of vision.

After reaching Kolkata Ronald was again put in the care of Salvation Army and a family friend volunteered to keep Dona in safe custody.



Meeting old friends in Kidderpore, the Parida family

Margaret finally arranged for an accommodation (it was barely an accommodation) for herself and the two kids under a stairs in Princep Street.

The sisters, who provided the accommodation, lived in a tiny room above the stairs. They expected Margaret to work for them for free.

In spite of her best efforts the sisters were never satisfied with her work and used to beat her up on a daily basis. It was the worst days for the two sisters aged 6 and 4 years, as they survived in the poorest of poor conditions, while there mother did every possible odd jobs to feed them.

Sometimes Margaret would keep the kids in the custody of a friendly lady, who lived nearby. For unknown reasons the friendly lady was not much friendly and used to torture the kids by locking them in cockroach infested toilets.

But like all neighborhoods in Kolkata there were friendly neighbors too and the friendly shop keep provided the kids with food and even milk, completely free of cost.

But our parents' marriage, despite all the terrible hardship we suffered, was one full of love.

Jillian Haslam, Indian English

Finally Ronald recovered and managed to get a job as a stenographer (he learnt shorthand during is recovery period at the Salvation Army) in a law firm and they moved to their new home in Kidderpore.



Jillian in front of the grocery shop in Kidderpore, that provided free rations

It could be hardly be called a home it was just a room measuring 10 feet by 6 feet with a varandha 4 feet wide. A cot and a chair was all the furniture they had. Three were three toilets to be shared by 3000+ odd people.

Jillian and Venassa were admitted to the nearby St. Thomas School, which not only provided free education but also free boarding.

It was in this house Neil was born and just after his birth Kolkata witnessed the notorious floods of 1978.

Although Jillan and Venassa were in the comforts of their school boarding but their parents and the newly born sibling suffered terrible and were lucky to have survived the floods.

Two years later the last of the Haslams Susan was born, she was extremely malnourished and doctors gave up all hope of her survival. But with extensive nursing from Jillian, who took a long leave from her school, Susan did survive.

As Jillian and Venassa reached their adolescence, they were subjected to all sorts of harassment from the local men. The harrasment was even more serious because of the difference of their colour of skin and their different lifestyle. Holi and Diwali were the worst time for the sisters as they were pleted with water balloons and bombs.



Jillian with her class mate from St. Thomas School

The neighbours made them dance as Dharmendra and Hema Malina in exchange for a few rupees or some food. But there were friendly neighbours too, like the local grocer, who often provided rations on loan, and the loan kept on increasing. The milkman provided free milk to the two young kids and the local eatery provided meat and roti.

Jillian completed school in 1987 and moved to Delhi were she joined her first job in an export house. After switching several jobs she finally joined the Bank of America in 1995. On the other hand her mother was diagnosed with cancer and Jillian took her to Delhi. But with years of neglect and the damage was already beyond repair, she breathd her last in September 1993 in Delhi.

I have, until this day never met a woman so strong and so astoundingly courageous and it fill me with tremendous pride and gratitude to realise that, above all, that amazing tower of strength was my mother.

Jillian Haslam on her mother

She joined Bank of America as executive secretary to the CEO but in a short span of time was promoted to the post of president and head of the charity and diversity network and continued with her charitable work.

Jillian met with her husband in Bank of America and got married in 2000, the same year she left for England with her husband and younger siblings.



L: Awards received by Jillian, R: Jillan's book cover of Indian English

Although Jillian has settled in England over over a decade and half her heart remains in Kolkata, where she keeps coming back every year. She continues with her charitable work and is well known for her motivational speeches.

She has received awards and recognition from all over the world and also have penned a book titled "Indian English, A Memoir" Recently the Hollywood has planned a movie on the life of Jillian Haslam.

Special Thanks:

- Jillian Haslam for sharing her life story with me
My friend Abhijit Ganguly or introducing Jillian Haslam to me

Share this:



3 bloggers like this.

Related

- Ghost Walk of Esplanade and Dalhouse Square, Calcutta (Kolkata) In "Calcutta (Kolkata)"
Neveh Shalome Synagogue, Kolkata (Calcutta) In "Calcutta (Kolkata) Jews"
Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF) 2016, Literally Heritage Walk In "Calcutta (Kolkata)"

Calcutta (Kolkata), General
Calcutta, Indian English, Jillian Haslam, Kidderpore, Kolkata, Princep Street

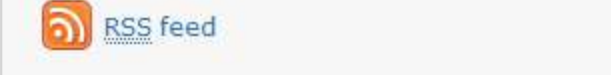
Leave a comment Trackback Trackbacks (0) Comments (0)

No comments yet.

Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...

Rajwada, Maheshwar Fort, Abode of Ahilya Bai



This blog is supported by Calcutta Walks:



Blogroll

- My Personal Website

Blog Index:

- India Travel Pages:
Kolkata (Calcutta)
West Bengal (Excluding Kolkata)
Andhra Pradesh (AP) & Telengana
Delhi
Jammu & Kashmir (J&K)
Jharkhand
Madhya Pradesh (MP)
Orissa
Sikkim

Foreign Travel Pages:

- Bangladesh
Croatia
Nepal

Travel Review:

- Hotel Review
Restaurant & Food Festival Review
Travel Accessory Review

Non Travel Pages:

- Book Review
Photo Publication
Food
Testimonial

Top Posts & Pages

- Happy Street, Fun and Games on Park Street, Kolkata
Jal Mahotsav, Hanuwantiya, Madhya Pradesh (MP)
Bawali Rajbari, Budge Budge, 24 Pargans (South)
Bandel ~ Church and Imbarara
Chinese Breakfast, Old Chinatown (Tiretta Bazar), Calcutta (Kolkata)
Kalna Rajbari Complex, Ambika Kalna
West Bengal (Excluding Calcutta)
Europe along the Hooghly, Serampore, Chandannagar, Chinsurah and Bandel
Jillian Haslam, under the stairs to Entrepreneur, Author and Motivational Speaker
Marble Rocks and Dhuandhar Falls, Bhedaghat, Jabalpur, MP

Flickr Photos



More Photos

Blog Stats

618,715 people accidentally bumped into my blog

Visitors from around the world

Table with 2 columns showing visitor counts from various countries like USA, India, etc.



IndiBlogger Rank

IndiBlogger Rank widget showing a score of 81/100 and a star rating.

Top Travel Blogger by Holiday



LionsHome

LionsHome widget with a 3.5 star rating.

Kolkata Bloggers



Follow Blog via Email

Form for entering email address to receive blog notifications.

Categories

Select Category dropdown menu.

Archives

Select Month dropdown menu.

December 2016

Calendar for December 2016 showing days of the week and dates.

< Nov

- 49 Bengali Regiment aatpur Achipur Amitava Ghosh Andhra Pradesh antpur Armenian Church Armenian Community Bengal Temple Bengal Terracotta Bholanath Dham Bishnupur Bow Barracks Calcutta Calcutta Chinese Community Calcutta Churches Calcutta heritage Building Calcutta Maidan Chinatown Chinese Breakfast Chinsurah Chinpur Road Churches of Calcutta Churches of Kolkata Croatia Croatia FAM Day Trips from Calcutta (Kolkata) Delhi Delhi Architecture East Sikkim Fam Trip Fanush GPO Hooghly Hyderabad J&K Jammu & Kashmir Jet Wings Kolkata King Tomislav Square Kolkata Chinatown Kolkata Churches Kolkata Heritage Building Kolkata Maiden Kurseong Madhya Pradesh Magen David Synagogue Mandu Mehrauli MP Nadia Nanking Restaurant Narmada River Orissa Phanus Phanush Photo Publication Photowalk Rath Sikkim Silk Route St. John's Church Stained Glass Tangra Terracotta Terracotta Panel The Telegraph Tiretta Bazar Travelogue Weekend trip Kolkata World War I Writers' Building Zaqreb