**BIRTHDAY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**BHARAT RAMCHANDANI**

Hello everyone!!! Today represents a very notable occasion in our family... My sister, Shalu, is celebrating a wonderful milestone... **FIFTY** years on this earth.... **FIFTY** years bringing joy, care, compassion and love to her family and friends... **FIFTY** years of being my older, dedicated, strong, caring, inspirational sister.... oh... and **FIFTY** years of threatening me with **THOSE NAILS!**! (**Wait for the laugh**). ... I have a feeling that if I say **THAT** number **ONE MORE TIME**.... I will be seeing those nails come at me again!!! ... just like in the good old days!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

All jokes aside, it has been a privilege to grow up with Shalu... to be guided by her... yes.. guided. she taught me so much.... **INCLUDING** how to shave.... come to think of it, how did **SHE** know how to shave a beard back then when we were kids???? **HMMMMMM** (**wait for the laugh**)... I was protected by her... challenged by her, which made me stronger. I’ve witnessed her being a devoted daughter and sister as well as becoming the loving, giving wife, mother, and friend she is today.... Growing up, we were very close... we **HAD** to be... in order to engage in all of those fights!!! Looking back, I am sure we both see the humor in our “drama....”. She, probably more than me, saw that humor.... and, of course, guess who always won those battles??? (**Point to your sister, roll your eyes, and await for the laugh**).

Siblings are truly special people. If we’re lucky enough, and apparently about eighty percent of us has either a brother or sister, we grow up with an instant companion... or not... No matter what we went through.. no matter how we fought.. or argued.. or competed or played, I believe we both **always knew**... and **still know**.... that the connection between us is unbreakable and unique... no one else on this planet shared the very similar point of view we both experienced as the children of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Ramchandani... and that alone makes Shalu so special to me. It’s been said that a sibling represents a person’s past, present, and future. I believe that’s so true of the two of us. I also believe it’s true that no matter how old we are fortunate to become, being with each other immediately takes us back to our youth.. our roots.. our true home. No matter how far we travel.. no matter what we achieve, Shalu represents for me the deepest sense of **home**. One of my favorite expressions comes from an English poet... “I am part of all that I have met.” How lucky we all are to have Shalu be such an important part of our lives!!

And now, as Shalu has spent her adult life finding her way in the world, she has taken the teachings, devotion, love and compassion instilled in us by our parents and has shared it with her husband Anil and their two beautiful daughters, my nieces, Aneesha and Aashna.... As we believe that the life we currently live is a reward for the good deeds done in our past lives, it is pretty clear that in her previous lives, Shalu lived an exemplary existence.... so much so that the gods even repeatedly forgave her for all the times she tried... and succeeded.. in fighting with me.. **YES**, Shalu... I am going to mention it **AGAIN**... (**Wait for the laugh**). Even with all of **THAT**... the heavens provide and Shalu has been blessed with gifts beyond measure... her happy home.. her loving family.. her terrific friends.... they all reflect Shalu’s deep appreciation of life and of the people important to her.... and that she and Anil are blessed to really live their “best lives” is a testament to their characters. I don’t know anyone that loves a vacation... caring for family and friends....feeding them... entertaining all of us... sharing the gifts of life, more than Shalu... and although, because of circumstances, she and I cannot currently be physically near each other, we are with each other every day... in heart, mind... spirit... and, of course, Face Time... (**Wait for the laugh**). While we may have been “close” before.. in order to fight.... now we are close in the best sense of the word.. it’s a deeper, more mature closeness, earned over time. We speak every day.. we share our hopes and dreams and concerns.... I see the way she cares for our father, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I am **SURE** that this world is a better place with Shalu \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in it, and that makes me very happy indeed. Although our mother, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ passed on many years ago, I just know she is watching over us and is very, very proud of the woman Shalu has become.. upholding our family’s traditions while creating new ones for her daughters to learn and share with **their** future generations.

Shalu.. birthdays are a time for much more than celebration.. although who doesn’t love a great party like this one??? Birthdays are a time to look back, pay tribute to relationships and those that are special in our lives.... to acknowledge past accomplishments and set new goals and dreams for the future.... today you will make many wishes.... my wish for you is that they **ALL** come true.... May you live the next fifty.... sixty.. seventy years in good health, with love, humor, respect, and prosperity. May you have more happiness and fulfillment than you might have ever dreamed of. May you continue to take the life lessons we learned as children and share the light with all of those you meet. Have a wonderful, happy, meaningful birthday!!! Thank you all!!!