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TOUGH TIMES DON'T LAST, TOUGH PEOPLE DO..

A DISTINGUISHED NRI
ENTREPRENEUR AND A LEADING
NAME IN THE FIELD OF HEALTHCARE
MANJU SHARMA, THE
CO-CHAIRPERSON AND MANAGING
DIRECTOR OF ETERNAL HOSPITAL, SET
UP ONE OF THE MOST ADVANCED
HEALTH CARE CENTRES OF THE STATE
ALL FROM SCRATCH

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PICS: ASHOK SHARMA

By **SAMEER FERNANDEZ**

Manju Sharma's life story is a tale of courage, commitment and sacrifice. Born and brought up in Myanmar, Manju had a childhood that was both privileged and also had its share of sacrifices and struggles. Her parents, mother Indira Kaul and father a World War II veteran, Nand Lal Kaul gave her the best childhood that she could ask for. "I am what I am because of my parents. Even while we had everything in life my parents kept me grounded, not allowing us children to take anything for granted ever in life," recalls Manju. "My mother was the Iron Lady of my life. She taught me how to fight, how to stay my course and to never give up. My father was the strongest man I had ever met. He would always tell me to be satisfied in whatever we had. If we needed more, we would have to work hard and earn it for ourselves," says Manju. My mother was a very strict and disciplined person and father was the most honest and hard working man I know. I am thankful that I got the best of both the worlds, recalls Manju.

While they were in Burma, the family was doing very well for themselves. Those were some of the best times the family had seen. However, when they moved to Delhi somehow things didn't work out quite well and there was a bad phase that the family had to go through. "Though I was small, I think that was the best learning of my life. Suddenly bad times came upon us,

yet I never went through any kind of inferiority complex because I had seen the best times and things. I was certain that if the good times weren't there forever, these bad times too wouldn't last," recalls Manju Sharma.

WHEN EHCC WAS BORN

Manju Sharma completed her education in Jaipur. She got married and moved to USA along with her husband, renowned cardiologist Dr. Samin Sharma. She stayed there for about 35 years. It was in the year 2007 when the then Chief Minister of the state Vasundhara Raje was in New York that the idea of EHCC was born.

In 2009, land was allotted for a state of the art healthcare centre in Jaipur. "Though there was land that was allotted to Dr. Sharma who couldn't leave his work in US and there was this situation upon us where we were wondering who would see to this project and ensure its completion. So I volunteered and told him that I would take up this project," shares she.

"From the time I decided to take up the project, my experience didn't begin on a very encouraging note. Everyone was sceptical about me going to India and starting the project. Out of their care and concern for me, even my family members didn't quite encourage me as I didn't have any experience in construction and had been living in the US for 35 years. But amidst all the disbelief my mother was the only one who believed in me and encouraged me. Hers was the only voice of consent. I



was very happy with the entire journey though. My family too gave me their support,” says Manju.

Unfortunately two years into the project, Manju lost her Mother in an accident and she was left all alone. Her mother was her strongest supporter. “I didn’t expect something like this to happen. It was the scariest moment of my life and I didn’t know how I would do this anymore,” shares she.

However, in spite of all the setbacks, Manju Sharma took up the daunting task of setting up one of the best healthcare centres of the city. “I feel so happy in saying that I managed doing this in the most ethical way despite contradictory inputs and yet thankfully everything worked out. The experience just reinforced my belief in the fact that one should stand firmly on their principles. Contrary to people’s belief, one can achieve whatever they want honestly. It is important that one puts forward their concepts, ideologies and dreams to people in an uncompromising manner. In the long run people will respect you for that,” adds Manju.

An affiliate of Mount Sinai Hospital New York, Eternal Hospital over the years has become a boon for the community and it is one of the leading health care units and research insti-

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tutions of not just the city but the state. Under Manju Sharma's leadership Eternal Hospital has also added a new tertiary care centre which brings together state-of-the art medical infrastructure, cutting edge technology and a highly integrated and comprehensive information system. The Hospital and the able team of doctors and professionals are constantly on a quest of exploring and developing new therapies in the field of healthcare. With a focus on healthcare it has evolved into an organization that combines medical research with excellence in patient care.

THE NEXT MISSION

Having achieved all she dreamt of, Manju Sharma now wants to reach out to people who do not have easy access to good healthcare services. "There are so many people who cannot come to the hospital but we can go to them. There are many people of the country who are still deprived of good healthcare services in the rural areas and I would like to reach out to them and give them our best. May be this could be EHCC's most wonderful legacy," says Manju.

THE CHALLENGES

It wasn't easy for someone who lived a major part of their life outside the country to come here and set up a Hospital from scratch. "There was a lot of resistance that I had to face initially, more so because I was a woman and had not been living in the country for years. There were numerous occasions when people tried to negatively influence me as I was a woman but I was determined to see this project through. The more people criticized and riled me the more resolute I was in building this Hospital. Someone some time back asked me if I was very attached to this Hospital and without a thought I said no. If I have to leave all of this I would leave it at that moment. I am completely detached from all the work I am doing. I just believe in giving my unconditional best as long as I am here. I just take one day at a time," says Manju.

Manju Sharma strongly believes in working hard. Taking each day as it comes and in the process of setting up Eternal Hospital she has overcome the biggest of challenges. "I have always believed that there is a power that is working for me and that power is my Mother. She always told me to re-invent myself and stay relevant," says Manju. Being at the helm of affairs, she has been responsible not only for care inside the institution, but also for the health of the community around on the whole.





THE AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Eternal Hospital was recently granted the coveted accreditation by JCI (Joint Commission International) in January 2019 for international healthcare quality standards for patient care and organisational management.

“We were working at strengthening our processes for the JCI Audit scheduled in the second week of January 2019. There was also an external advisor with his team who worked with us for a year. I recall that while the team worked hard, there was still a lot to be done by October 2018 and at one point of time it seemed that we might miss the accreditation,” says Manju Sharma.

“There were just 45 days to go before the JCI audit, but I decided that I would do all I can to get this because it was my dream that this Hospital should be a JCI accredited Hospital. This month and a half was the most gruelling time at Eternal Hospital. We worked night and day stretching our working hours seeing to the smallest of details of every department of the hospital,” says she. “There was so much of work that had to be done. There were operations, clinical services, the doctors, statutory compliances all in all about 600 points that we would be assessed upon. I wanted the affiliation at the first shot itself. We got the affiliation at the first shot and it was satisfying that our hard work paid off.”

Manju Sharma’s efforts in the field of healthcare have earned her






many accolades including RANA (Rajasthan Association of North America) New York awarded her the Leadership, Compassion and Creativity award in recognition of her passion to provide world class healthcare in Rajasthan, Shaksiyat Awards 2014 for outstanding performance in medical field, Business Rankers Women Achievers Award 2017 for best business woman in health and wellness, Icons of Health by The Times of India for innovator and game changer in the field of Community Services and Healthcare, etc.

OTHER INTERESTS

Life is not just about work for Manju Sharma. In spite of her busy schedule she still manages to take out time for her hobbies and interests that include Yoga, Meditation and Singing.

FINDING THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

“I don’t expect any accolades or appreciation from anybody not even my family members. I only expect my patients to give me my accolades. My biggest feedback is when a sick person leaves happy and smiling from this Hospital. Setting up this Hospital has made me realise my purpose in life. I am just doing what God has chosen me to do and he is the one who will decide if what I have done is right or wrong,” says Manju 



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