

# SHARAN –SPREADING SOUND HEALTH THE NATURAL WAY

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## Abstract

Sanctuary for Health and Reconnection to Animals and Nature (SHARAN) is a non-profit organization which believes in the mission of spreading wakefulness about environment friendly holistic health measures. This eco-friendly entrepreneurial endeavour, a brain child of Dr. Nandita Shah, was started in the year 2005 solely to help people connect to animals and nature. This case examines how Dr. Nandita embarked upon her novel venture as well as the major factors that contributed to its fabulous success. The entrepreneurial and leadership skills of Dr. Nandita are also discussed here. The case focuses on the opportunity recognition and the new project creation along with the intricacies of managing a start-up campaign. It throws light on the role of women entrepreneurs and the teething problems during their journey.

**Key words:** Women entrepreneurs, environmental sustainability, non-profit organization, societal concern, eco-entrepreneur, etc.

## 1. Background

Entrepreneurs are those individuals who craft a new business venture. Entrepreneurs are professed as individuals who have a gift not only to eagle-eye business opportunities but have the propensity to renovate or convert those new opportunities into successful and money-spinning business ventures. They are the ones who intellectualize a business proposition and then pool in their efforts to make the proposition on to a success. This case study is about one such founder, a woman eco-entrepreneur Dr. Nandita Shah. The essence of her entrepreneurial venture christened as Sanctuary for Health and Reconnection to Animals and Nature (SHARAN) is “Health without medicines through veganism”. SHARAN received the “vegan of the year award in 2013” for proving to be the most notable vegan non-profit organization from Vegans Are Cool. In a nutshell, veganism is a subtle and simple philosophy of life that preaches individuals to avoid any sort of unkindness and mistreatment to animals and imbibing greener food habits.

## 2. A Road less travelled

Dr. Nandita Shah initiated her entrepreneurial venture based on the same concept of veganism in the year 2005 at the age of forty six. The hallmark of her eco-entrepreneurial venture was essentially a whole-hearted initiative to aid people to ward off or reverse certain ailments such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, hormonal problems and heart problems by means of a healthy diet. Dr Shah has a unique way of taking this forward. She does not depend on aggressive marketing gimmicks to create awareness on the therapy, rather she believes that it is more important to inspire people to think and comprehend the fact that they can themselves be instrumental in finding the remedy for the disorders. She set out to accomplish this by creating awareness among people about the truth and several associated myths and misconceptions about food. Her arguments seem hard-hitting to admit since they go against the food culture that has been followed over generations in our country. She states that all individuals are fundamentally the part of the 'whole - nature'. Also, any doings which has the potential to generate harm to the environment cannot prove to be either sustainable or beneficial to human beings or the other aspects of nature in the passage of time. The decree is straightforward. If we consume the food that is naturally meant for us, we can stay away from many diseases. She strongly believes in the concept of healthy living through holistic healing where the mind, body and the spirit are together. The body and the mind act in accord. As physical symptoms bespeak the state of mind, so does the mind do the condition of the physical health. Medical treatment should take into consideration the entire aspects of health in totality rather than only individual parts. This is the holistic and constructive approach. The objective of this holistic healing is to achieve long-term sustenance of health and betterment.

## 3. The entrepreneurial journey

### 3.1. Influences that fashioned her choice for SHARAN

Dr. Nandita Shah belongs to a family that profoundly believed in homeopathic treatment. Her grandfather practiced as a homeopathic doctor and as a child she always received homeopathic treatment for illnesses. She was hugely influenced by the homeopathic way of treatment since this medication did not cause any discomfort, pain or side-effects and also resulted in very effective cure. This actually enthused her to explore this gentle therapy. She therefore chose to become a homeopathic doctor. She was averse to harsh medications ever since her childhood and she extended this perception towards food and the environment too. She would always prefer healthy wholesome food over the packaged food and even eating out did not go well with her. She always preferred organically grown food over the pesticide laced options which tasted different, so whenever possible she would cherry pick only the organically grown.

### 3.2. Idea generation for the eco-entrepreneurial venture

Dr. Nandita Shah says she has chosen homeopathy as it is all about offering treatment to patients in a holistic way. The medications are prescribed specifically giving importance to individuals, rather than considering only diseases and symptoms. Dr. Shah tasted stupendous success in her career as a homeopathic doctor and thus she had a very successful stint in homeopathic practice in Mumbai. Dr. Shah carved a forte for herself and she was exceedingly popular. However, her shooting success as a medical professional made her life extremely busy. This thriving homeopathic practice in Mumbai left her with very little time to take care of her own health requirements and she was so engrossed in her profession that she marginalized her own health concerns. She made up her mind to give up her medical practice and later shifted her residence to a beautiful place which was then very famous for its natural habitat- Auroville in South India. She completely transformed her lifestyle and considered the organic way of life.

### 3.3. Naissance of SHARAN

Dr. Nandita Shah is the Founder, Director, and a trustee of SHARAN. SHARAN was founded by her in 2005 with the sole mission of helping people connect to animals and nature. She holds on to the belief that everyone is connected to everything else. She believed that the concept of healing is nothing but to 'achieve being whole.' Dr. Shah first became vegan because of ethical issues and she was deeply distressed by the suffering caused to animals in this regard. Her compassion for animals and her regard for her own health prompted her to become a vegan and champion the cause of sustainability in the environment. Dr. Shah was fanatical towards promoting veganism and hence she founded NGO called "SHARAN." SHARAN kick -started its operations for the first time from Auroville, a global township in Pondicherry. Dr. Shah chose Auroville, as organic farming was already in practice there and that she was accustomed to the place too. Dr Shah's passion for health, environment and her compassion for animals converged when she started SHARAN in 2005. Instinctively, humans are inclined to eat vegetables and fruits, even though they have strayed too far away from that. She links the three elements, plant food, environment and sustainability, at the core of SHARAN.

### 3.4. Early approaches

Dr. Shah began SHARAN as an organization with educational motives with speeches and lectures on veganism and on the health benefits of a plant based diet. She named her seminars as the "Peas Vs Pills". This was followed by cooking classes on vegan food. In 2009, SHARAN continued its efforts by collaborating with PCRM to conduct a few insightful talks and seminars by Dr. Neal Barnard, who is instrumental in chalking out the "Reversing Diabetes Programme." Reversing diabetes programme was a twenty one day programme meant for doctors, hospital staff and even the common man.

## 4. The Entrepreneur

Dr. Nandita Shah is a risk taker. She dared to go against the time tested norms which are so deep rooted in Indian culture and vouched to champion the cause of veganism and make it an easily acceptable phenomenon - all single handedly. This unaided hard work certainly speaks volumes of her grit and determination. The event of a single woman at the age of forty-six doing business is not an easy path in a country like India. Dr. Nandita, however, starkly dismisses this notion as a myth and she confidently says "it's all in the mind." The entrepreneur within Dr. Nandita is an amazing combination of nerves of steel on one hand and loads of compassion for animals on the other. A brief conversation and a small spend of time with Dr. Nandita Shah can have a lasting effect on our way of life and food notions and, influence our beliefs greatly about 'eating healthy'. She stands by her belief, passion and, remains committed to giving her undivided attention to this cause along with the top most preference to quality overlooking the monetary benefits. She believes that a vast population of individuals can restore to health by eating the right food.

## 5. The Road Ahead

When questioned about her future plans, Dr Shah says, "The goal is to gradually reach out to a bigger mass, and to see the days when the need for our workshops will cease to exist! We would also love to bring out books on the subject of veganism so that we can connect with a wider audience." She adds up, "Eat only plants or mostly plants, whole or mostly whole food and organic. You should eat only when you are hungry." The suggestions are powerful but difficult to implement at all times. She says that it is indeed a challenge to remain vegan while on wheels, yet it isn't impossible to stick to the diet. She clarifies, "As a vegan, I definitely face difficulties and challenges during travelling. But it's not impossible to follow these guidelines. Gradually you learn to adapt and know to order the right items which are not found on the menu. It becomes a habit too, as it happens with being a vegetarian." She has been criticized by many that organic food was an expensive option. Since its inception SHARAN has been instrumental in influencing more than 20000 people across the globe.

## 6. Conclusion

If we consume the food that is naturally meant for us, we can stay away from many diseases. As physical symptoms bespeak the state of mind, so does the mind do the condition of the physical health. Dr. Nandita Shah belongs to a family that profoundly believed in homeopathic treatment. Her grandfather practiced as a homeopathic doctor and as a child she always received homeopathic treatment for illnesses. Dr. Nandita Shah says she has chosen homeopathy as it is all about offering treatment to patients in a holistic way. Dr. Nandita Shah is the Founder, Director, and a trustee of SHARAN. SHARAN was founded by her in 2005 with the sole mission of helping people connect to animals and nature. Shah began SHARAN as an organization with educational motives with speeches and lectures on veganism and on the health benefits of a plant based diet. In 2009, SHARAN continued its efforts by

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## 7. Reference

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The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine is a research based organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. The organisation promotes veganism, preventive medicine, and alternatives. It was founded in 1985 by Neal D Barnard

[www.sharan.org](http://www.sharan.org).

