

In Conversation with Dr. Nandita Shah- Author, Holistic Health Expert and Founder of SHARAN

Enigmatic Horizon

A Conversation with
Dr. Nandita Shah
Author and Holistic
Health Expert



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Interviewed by Priyal Dholakia

Written and edited by Priyal Dholakia

Dr. Nandita Shah is one of the most well-known figures in the realm of holistic health and wellness in India. She is a recipient of the Nari Shakti Puraskar from the Government of India for her contribution to holistic health. As the esteemed founder of SHARAN (Sanctuary for Health and Reconnection to Animals and Nature), an internationally recognised organisation promoting plant-based nutrition and sustainable living, Dr. Shah has dedicated her life to transforming the health and well-being of individuals and communities alike. She is also a prolific author, educator, and advocate for vegan living. Let us hear her thoughts on her inspiring journey, how to conquer prevailing health challenges, promoting the cause of veganism, and a lot more!

First of all, we would like to know about your journey. When and how did you decide to enter the healthcare sector?

I have always been interested in holistic health since my childhood. I had pretty clear views because my parents were also quite health-conscious. And that is what led me to pursue a homoeopathic education instead of an allopathic one. While I was on that journey, I came to realise that medications never really cure us; they can only temporarily relieve our symptoms. If we do not remove the cause of the illness, we can never get results. Once I started realising that, I started developing an interest in holistic food as well, because I thought that the biggest challenge we are facing right now is that people are not eating the food that nature has designed for us to eat, and that is why we are falling sick.

How did your writing career begin?

I started writing because I wanted to let people know about the benefits of holistic health. I began by writing small articles and emails centred around healthy living. Then one fine day, Penguin approached me with the idea of writing a book. I had been thinking of writing one myself too. So when the suggestion came about, I happily decided to go ahead and do it.

What led you to touch upon this subject of diabetes and address it in your book, *Reversing Diabetes in 21 Days*?

Well, my primary aim was to address an issue that is relevant to the lives of people. It is said that every third adult in India is diabetic, which implies that it is a widely prevalent health concern afflicting a large number of people. So, this is what prompted me to address it in my book. The book covers everything that we need to know about alleviating the disease. It also contains measures that a person can take to gain immediate results.

What are the biggest challenges in the healthcare sector today?

There are multiple challenges. A major one is that the patients are not fully aware of many aspects related to their health. This is because our schools and colleges fail to provide us with proper health education. In addition,

the media, advertising, and marketing spread a lot of false information. As a result, we can see that the consumption of animal products is increasingly on the rise. On top of that, the consumption of packaged foods is also increasing. These processed foods come with a whole lot of sugar, salt, harmful fats, MSG, and milk powder. These five ingredients pose the biggest enemies to our health. Moreover, the makers of these foods add a lot of artificial flavours, seasonings, and synthetic additives to the food to make it more appealing and attractive to consumers. This further exerts harmful effects on our health at large.

We would like to know about your journey towards veganism.

I was already a vegetarian, but when I became aware of the atrocities taking place in the dairy industry, I became more conscious of my choices. The suffering and cruelty that animals endure in order to meet our needs also moved me. So these considerations led me to embrace the path of veganism.

Do you feel that veganism will gain acceptance in India, as milk and milk products are an integral part of the diet and the economy?

According to me, people primarily turn to veganism for three good reasons. One, because they are touched by the cruelty happening to animals. The second is to elevate their health, because truly, a lot of people out there are losing their lives due to chronic diseases like cancer and preventable diseases like heart attack and diabetes. And third, for environmental purposes, because if we continue animal consumption at the pace we are doing right now, we would be headed towards deeply dark times for the world ahead. So, basically, I think that the right education and awareness are important. It is like a snowball effect. If one person becomes vegan, then people around them will also become vegan, and in that way, we can reach a critical mass.

Although science and technology have reached their peak today, people are getting sicker and sicker. What would you say about it?

Yes, that is true. Nowadays, due to wrong dietary practices, a lot of people

out there are falling prey to chronic diseases. This is because people, at large, are eating the wrong kinds of foods, which makes them fall sick. If we just stop consuming animal products, 50 percent of the illnesses will go away. And if we can make all the food whole, that is another 25 percent. So, if we can simply make all the food organic, it is hard to get sick.

Today, mental health problems are becoming a huge issue. What do you think is the reason behind this, and what can be done?

Yes, hormones, in our body like adrenaline, dopamine, endorphins, serotonin, oxytocin, control our emotions. If we consume any form of animal flesh or animal secretions like milk or eggs, we consume their secretions or hormones. In addition, the animals raised for food are distressed, lonely, forsaken, fearful and anxious. So, of course, it is going to give rise to the same kind of emotions in us. As a result, eating the right kind of food will solve more than half of these challenges.

We have come to know that you are part of the Auroville community. We would like to know more about Auroville and your experience.

I am based in Auroville, but my work is less needed here. This is because people here are generally more conscious and aware of their food choices.

Do you think the government is doing enough to promote holistic health, or are they mostly catering to the pharma companies?

So yeah, of course, the government is making efforts to promote holistic health. They felicitated me with the Nari Shakti Puraskar for my work in health care. It testifies that holistic health is being encouraged to some extent. However, a significant chunk of resources are also being directed towards pharmaceuticals to cater to their interests too, because that is where the money lies. So, we can say it is a mixed bag.

It was a pleasure to talk to you. Thank you so much for your time!

The pleasure is mine! Thank you!

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