

GENERAL

Spotlight | Dr. Nandita Shah, Founder of SHARAN

We recently had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Nandita Shah, the Founder of SHARAN, an organisation aimed at helping people heal themselves and the planet by connecting to animals and nature. Besides being a vegan doctor and the author of *Reversing Diabetes in 21 Days*, she's also a strong advocate for animal rights.

Deeply moved by the impact of her work on the health of thousands of individuals, we were keen to ask her some questions about her journey.

We hope this inspires you too!



Why did you choose to become a vegan doctor?

N: I became a doctor with the intention of reducing suffering. When I saw the intense suffering that we were causing to other living beings, I knew I had to turn vegan because I could not ignore it anymore. The beauty is that when we stop creating suffering, our health improves! I also recognised that in general medicines never cure lifestyle diseases but the body always works to heal, given the right input. This inspired me to start SHARAN (Sanctuary for Health And Reconnection to Animals and Nature), an organisation committed to promoting healthy, ecologically sustainable and compassionate lifestyles in a holistic manner.

HC: Can you tell us a bit about SHARAN, the journey leading up to starting this venture, and how it has grown?

N: It all started with the desire of having a farm sanctuary—a place where I could have rescued farm animals and organise school trips and family holidays so that people could see that farm animals are no different than our pets. While I was looking for such a place, one of my friends told me about Farm Sanctuary in upstate New York. I immediately applied to them as an intern for a month and learned a lot.

But destiny had a different role for me. I found the perfect land for the sanctuary and yet I missed the opportunity to buy it—by chance or fate. I was told by a friend that I should instead use my skills as a doctor to spread the message of veganism, and that's when I realized I could. I came back from New York and started SHARAN single-handedly, with the belief that if my work was meaningful it would grow and people would join. And the rest is history.

HC: What's SHARAN's most inspiring success story so far?

N: That's really hard to say. In 17 years we have had *so many* that I wouldn't know where to begin.

HC: What does veganism mean to you?

N: To me, veganism is about causing the minimum harm possible—not just to humans or other living beings (animals) but also to nature. We're encroaching on more and more natural habitat which means animals are getting less and less place to survive. Billions of animals are crowded on factory farms whereas we humans have bigger (and sometimes, even multiple) homes. The more we have that we do not need the more someone else is deprived. So I really appreciate Mahatma Gandhi's quote: "There's more than enough for everyone's need but not everyone's greed." Every time we take more than we need we are depriving another. And veganism, to me, means avoiding that greed to the extent possible.

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HC: When did you go vegan? And why did you choose to? Was it difficult at the time?

N: I first started going vegan in the early 1980s when I heard about the cruelty of the dairy industry. At that time I didn't know the word 'vegan' and I wasn't 100% vegan. I still consumed some things that were cooked in butter or ghee or maybe made with dairy or eggs. It was a chance meeting with Ranjit Konkar, who was then the editor of Beauty Without Cruelty (India) that pushed me to a 100% vegan path in the early 2000s. He refused to eat something which had butter in it and that inspired me to be strict myself.

HC: What is the biggest challenge you've faced in your life as a vegan and have you overcome any of them?

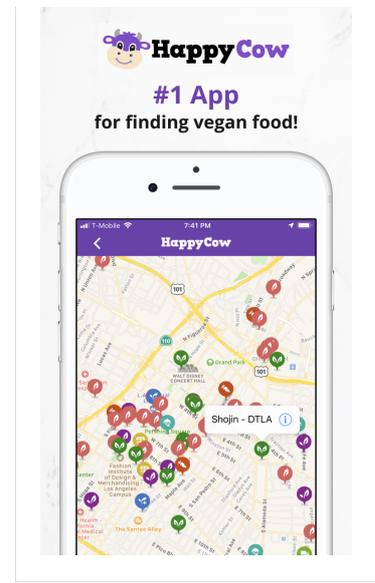
N: I would say the biggest challenge is learning to accept that most people are living according to their conditioning, which makes them indifferent to the cruelty that they are a part of. Ignorance is indeed bliss. I believe that I've been able to overcome this by learning, by experience, different ways to inspire people to be aware of what's happening.

HC: What's your favourite vegan dish?

N: My favorite vegan dish is a green smoothie. I would rather start every day with a green smoothie than anything else in the world. Why do I like it? It's unbelievably delicious, nutritious, raw, easy to make, and satisfying. Now, I know that there are lots of recipes for green smoothies and I do not endorse most of them. I truly find some of them lack the delicious element of my smoothie or they are not as nutritious. So here is my recipe!



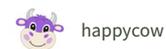
(Visit the SHARAN website for many more healthy vegan recipes like these.)



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HC: What would be your advice to new / aspiring vegans?

N: Veganism is a lifestyle and to spread this lifestyle requires almost every single skill under the sun! So I do believe that anyone can do the things that I did, but in their own unique ways.



Does this conversation inspire you to make changes in your own life, too? Well, then you've reached the right place! The following articles surely will help you along your journey:

- **Can Going Vegan Change Your Life?**
- **Time-Saving Vegan Cooking Tips For Beginners**
- **Best Online Groups To Join If You're A New Vegan**

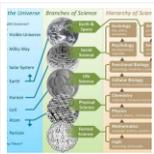
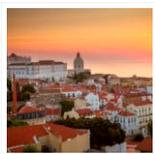
And if you like reading about others' vegan journeys, don't miss these interviews:

- **Spotlight | Aviram Rozin, Founder of Sadhana Forest**
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About SAMYUKTA KARTIK

Sam's deep love for animals opened her eyes to veganism in 2015. Ever since, she's been committed to promoting kindness towards animals and contributing to a better world—be it through food, action, or words. She is a trained vegan chef (who loves veganizing the 'impossible'), previously a small business owner, now a member of the HappyCow team, a digital nomad, and an artist at heart. Sam is passionate about many things under the sun, from music to alternative education, health and fitness, and all things handmade.

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