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"The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge," said Bertrand Russell, but when challenged with precarity, it may be difficult for one to call upon both these forces. Dr Abha Majumdar's life proves otherwise. Born into a humble family in Jalandhar, it is the precarity and difficulty of life that led her to call upon the double forces of knowledge and love to heal and grow.

As a child, she witnessed the sickness and death of her father and later the struggles of her mother as she made sure that all her children got the best of education. The experience of caring for her sick father had greatly influenced young Abha and she became inclined towards the medical profession. Despite the several challenges that her family faced, Dr Abha excelled as a student in school and later at medical school, where she also met her future husband Dr. Gautam Majumdar.

Dr Abha's life exemplifies what the results of patience, hardwork and perseverance can be. She approached every situation in life with an open mind and the determination to resolve it, not only for herself but also for her family, her friends and for the world and that is what is brought her true success, not just professionally but also personally.

Today, as Director and Head of the Centre for IVF and Human Reproduction at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, she is a source of inspiration to many. From her patients, who are grateful for her intervention in their life, to her family members who laud her for her wisdom, to young medical students who continue to be awestruck by her range of wisdom and knowledge of the medical field; Dr Abha Majumdar exemplifies the fact that hard work and perseverance can bring one success in one's chosen field, whatever be one's personal circumstances. That one can lead the good life inspired by love and guided by knowledge by adopting an attitude of acceptance and determination to the trying circumstances of life.

As a writer, editor, translator and a former humanitarian worker, I have personally had the pleasure of editing this book on the life of Dr Abha Majumdar and every turn in her life has been an inspiration for me learn from. I am particularly impressed by her disciplined yet warm demeanour, her gentle nature and manner which pushes one towards achieving perfection and greater heights, without ever losing her sense of compassion.

I hope the story of her life will inspire many to pursue their dreams and continue to persevere in their chosen field of study and work.

Elsa S. Mathews 13th September 2020





ABHA MAJUMDAR

Dr Abha Majumdar (née Agarwal) was born on 12th November 1952 in her maternal grandmother's house in Jalandhar in a simple & loving family. As was the common practice at that time, she was delivered at home.

Her family lived in the district of Naihati in West Bengal. Her father Mr Virendra Kumar Agarwal worked with the Goenka's at 'Hukum Chand Jute Mills' then as a procurement manager. Her mother, Daya Agarwal, was a housewife. She was second of the four children that the Agarwals had. The eldest was Suman, followed by Abha, Achla and finally Anupam who was nine years younger than her. She was a student of Auxilium Convent school.

She had a very happy childhood. Her father, Virendra Kumar Agarwal was a very social and progressive person who had made many friends amongst his British colleagues while working at 'Hukum Chand Jute Mills' in Naihati in West Bengal in the 1940's. Abha has very vivid memories of one grand birthday party organized by her parents in the 1950s, for her and her sister Achla together, as the two birthdays happened to be one after the other. Recalling memories of their birthday celebrations, she says there were games for children, presents for all the winners, cake-cutting, music, balloons, decorations and very tasty food from Flurys in Kolkata and mother's kitchen. Little did she know then that this would be her first & last birthday celebration for a long time.

Dr. Abha also remembers her father as a very good looking, stylish, and emotional human being. He was a natural flautist and owned hundreds of music records which he enjoyed listening to on the gramophone. He was also a genius in making electrical gadgets in his self made workshop to spend his spare time.

His outlook towards life & softness made a deep and lasting impact in the growing mind of Abha.









THE TURNING POINT

When Abha was nine years old her father left his job from Naihati. After staying for a year at their ancestral home in Farrukhabad, a small town in Uttar Pradesh, the family moved to Kanpur where her father got a new job. However, soon her father's health began to deteriorate. Even as a child, Dr Abha was a very sensitive girl. In Kanpur often her father during his illness would wake up in the middle of the night wailing with nausea. She as a 10 year old child would wake and sit up to rub his back to soothe his nausea. She understood the reasons for his discomfort and frequent wailing in the night only much later, when she became a doctor. Her father had suffered from severe hypertension, diabetes and kidney failure.

As a child, Abha was a frail and thin girl and she also suffered from ill-health. Yet, some of the fondest memories of her life are during those days of illhealth which she recalled with misty eyes.

"When my mother injected me with medicines like penicillin my father would narrate stories to distract me from the pain," she says.

Dr Abha with great pride recalls her mother's strength and perseverance, with which she looked after the family. She still wonders how her mother learnt to give injections as it was unusual for women to learn such skills at that time.

After about two years, Abha's father expired and the family moved back to their ancestral house in Farrukhabad. It was tough for her mother to assert herself in a household in which women were not considered equals. However, she remained emotionally and mentally strong and made sure that all her children received good education. "Though she could not teach us as we got promoted to higher classes but she never stopped giving us the lesson of being truthful and honest in life. "Dr Abha recalls, 'I have never experienced or seen anyone more honest or pure in my life than my mother to an extent that at times, she was considered foolish by some people' says Abha.

IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES

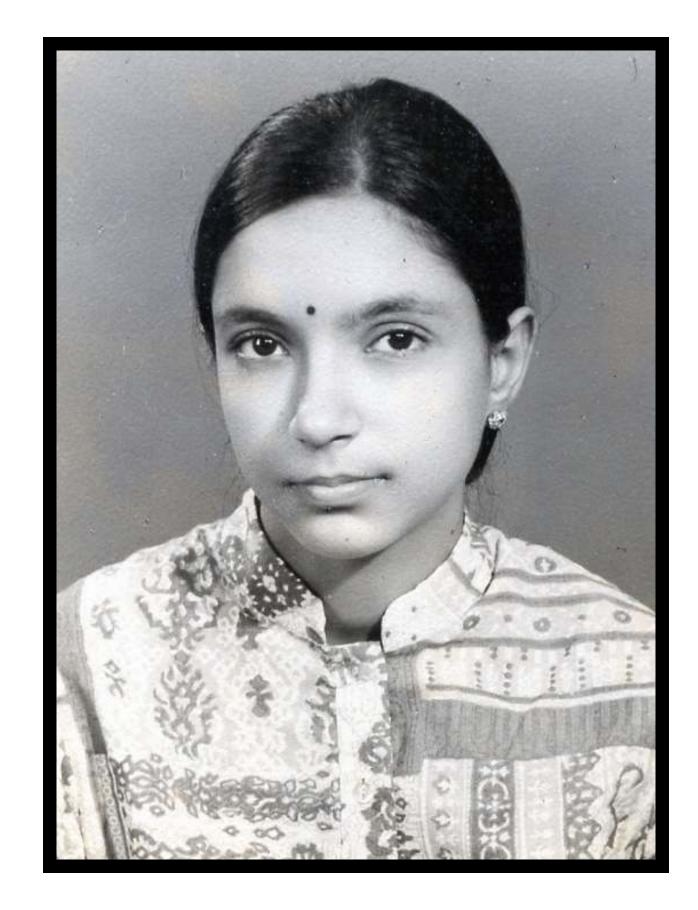
Though Abha's mother was not a working woman and had completed only basic schooling, she understood the importance of education. It was because of their mother's insight that all her children were educated, despite living in an environment where studies were not important and the educational options available were limited.

Abha was enrolled in Swami Ramanand Balika Vidyalaya where she studied till class 12th. Though it was an ordinary school, it was the only one that offered science as an option in Farrukhabad. In those days, the city of Farrukhabad had no colleges and all the schools had very basic facilities. Classrooms had rugs on the floor and children used to write on slates. Career options were limited for girls, as they could either become teachers or doctors.

Life was tough for young Abha and her siblings, but she emerged victorious from every challenge that life threw at her. An incident that occurred during her senior secondary exams still remains etched in her mind. The evening before the Biology exam, the children came back from school to find, their mother had a fall and had fractured her foot. Abha and her younger sister, with the help of her uncle carried their mother to the hospital. Her foot was plastered, and they came back home late in the evening.

Having spent the whole night looking after her mother Abha got no time to study for the final biology exam, to be held next morning of her 12th board. When the results were out she was in for a pleasant surprise. Her overwhelmed school principal called her on the common home phone from the exam directorate's office to inform that Abha had topped the district. Abha had scored the highest marks in Biology in the State of Uttar Pradesh. In fact, she had secured 4 distinctions out of 5 subjects which meant more than 75 % marks which was very rare in those days, especially in a school in which a student had never ever passed in first division, i.e., score above 60 %. This was just the beginning of her achievements.







PAVING THE WAY

Soon, Abha's elder sister Suman got married. Abha, Achla and Anupam grew up together and bonded very well. However, life was very indecisive for all the three brothers and sisters. Someone had to pave the way forward. The onus fell on Abha as she was the eldest of the 3 siblings after their elder sister Suman was married.

In those days, there was no science college in Farrukhabad for higher education. The only two career options for girls to study further was to do graduation and become a teacher or go into medicine. After seeing her brilliant results in Class 12, all teachers suggested that she should take the Pre-Medical Test (PMT). It was a difficult decision to take as Abha's family was economically weak. Despite, these reservations, a shy Abha went along with another family friend in Farrukhabad who's son was appearing for the exam, which were held separately for all colleges in UP.

After the exam, with no access to the newspaper, there was no way of finding out the whether Abha had been successful or not. By hearsay, the family came to know that results were out and classes had begun in most medical colleges. It was decided that she would stay in Farrukhabad and do graduation.

But her stars had something else in store for her. Soon she started receiving selection letters from different medical colleges. The first letter that she received was from Lala Lajpat Rai Medical College (LLRM), Meerut. The elated family set out for Meerut. On the way, the family stopped in Delhi. At their aunt's house they came to know that the results of the Agra medical college pre medical test had just been declared and she had been selected in Sarojini Naidu Medical College (SNMC) also. She had also topped in the PMT amongst all girls and was on second position amongst all boys and girls. At the same time her name had also appeared on the list of Lady Harding Medical College in Delhi where there was only one seat for a student outside Delhi state.

Abha decided to join SMMC, Agra. Her aunt Shanti decided to support Abha's mother's endeavour to provide her with higher education. She facilitated this by providing Abha a scholarship from "Sunderlal Aggarwal Charitable Trust" from her father-in-law's trust. Much later in life, this support was to inspire Dr Abha to open a trust in her own mother name 'Daya Agarwal Education Trust' to support financially weak students specially girls for their education.



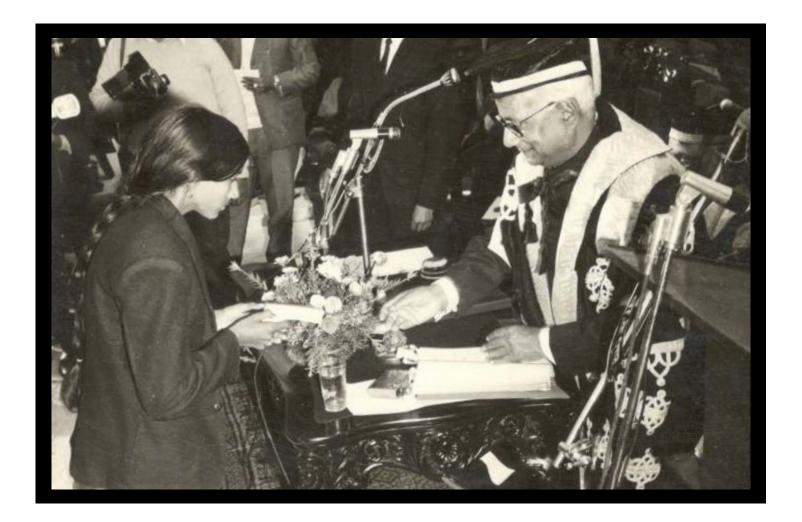
STUDENTS YEARS

In 1970, Abha started pursuing medicine at the S.N. Medical College, Agra. It was here that her rigour and dedication in the field of medicine came to the fore. She worked hard and devoted herself completely to the subject. However, despite being a conscientious student, Abha's life at the Medical College was not without its fair share of adventure and fun.

In college, young Abha learnt to play badminton and table tennis and even paint flawlessly. Her sister Achla was also a student of B.Sc & M.Sc at Agra College. Both Achla and Abha would meet in the evenings at the hostel lawns and chat for hours sharing all what happened during the day with each other. There were even times when Abha completed Achla's incomplete diagrams.

Her younger brother was very dear to her and she always found ways to have him with her so that she could feed him things, he loved to eat. When her younger brother Anupam visited Agra, Abha hid him under the bed every time the guard came to make his rounds as boys were not allowed in girls hostel. She would sneak him in & out of the hostel when the chowkidar was running errands.

Nevertheless, Abha exceled in her studies. She graduated as a topper in 1974. During the prize distribution ceremony, the Vice Chancellor, who was awarding prizes, asked her to stay on the stage after she received 5-6 medals one after another as he realized she had many more to receive. In fact, she had won 14 medals and achieved honours in 9 out of 10 subjects & many book prizes in each semester during the MBBS tenure.



Apart from these, she also won the Chancellor's Medal for the best student of the university and President's silver medal for the best girl medical graduate in 1974.

Despite her achievements in medical college, she did not lose sight of her responsibilities at home. In 1975, when she was awarded 2,000 INR by Pfizer Pharmaceuticals for topping her college, the first thing that Abha bought was a fridge for her mother.

While the two sisters, Abha and Achla were academically inclined, their youngest brother Anupam was not able to develop an interest in studies. When her mother gave up on their younger brother, Abha left her internship in Agra and decided to go back to Farrukhabad to give

proper attention to her brother's studies. She stayed in Farukkhabad for a year and helped her little brother Anupam understand his subjects by creating interest and clarity towards them.

This was a turning point in his life too. He worked hard on his own with no coaching and got into IIT Kharagpur. He later went to the US, to pursue Masters in Computer Science. He presently holds a good position in General Motors as a Senior Manager.

Reminiscing about that time when Abha tightened her control over her younger brother Anupam he says, "That turned my life around and I give her credit for putting me on track. I realized later she had become my mother in so many ways."

"Yesterday is not ours to recover but today and tomorrow are ours to win or lose. Do your little bit of good where you are; it is those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."

Dr. Abha











FALLING IN LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Abha's pursuit of knowledge and excellence led her to pursue from the same medical college master in Obstetrics & Gynaecology. She was a shy girl always avoided people & their questions. One winter afternoon during her first year of studies, a young handsome man named Dr. Gautam Majumdar happened to lay eyes on her and was head over heels in love with her. Her soft eyes and beautiful face drew Gautam's attention. The thing that lured him the most was her intellect. Her 'topper' image bewildered him.



her post-graduation. She requested him to convince his son for the same. Her future father-in-law understood and made his son understand Abha's need to complete her studies before the wedding.

Abha and Gautam courted for a year. Each day they promised each other they wouldn't meet everyday as they needed to study hard for the approaching exams, but they would still end up meeting, talking and visiting various places in Agra like Fatehpur Sikri, Sikandra Fort, Itmad-ud-Daulah's tomb & the Taj.

Dr Abha's desire to complete her postgraduation was completed and it was time for wedding bells to ring. Dr Abha and Dr Gautam got married on 1st February 1979 and moved to Kolkata (then Calcutta).

Once, he saw her going through a viva-voce, he understood why she was the topper. She was ready with the answer even before the question ended. Finally, one day he came forward and asked her to be friends with him. It was then that their affair started.

They began to exchange secret notes, with the breakfast boy in the hostel playing the messenger. One day Dr Gautam took Dr. Abha to the Taj Mahal on a borrowed scooter and proposed marriage to her. While both of them were madly in love with each other and saw a future together, it was mandatory for them to convince their parents, Abha was from a baniya family and Gautam a Bengali brahman. Pleasantly with only little persuasion their parents agreed for their marriage.

However, DrAbha wanted to complete her studies before she entered matrimony. She secretly wrote a letter to Dr. Gautam's dad stating that she would get married only after completing





LIFE IN LIBYA

After marriage, Dr. Abha and Dr. Gautum Majumdar stayed in Kolkata for few months. Abha adjusted very easily to Gautam's Bengali family. She became known as the 'Popular Non-Bengali Bahu' as she became a perfect homemaker and made a special place in the hearts of everybody in her in-law's house, apart from gaining popularity as a good doctor.

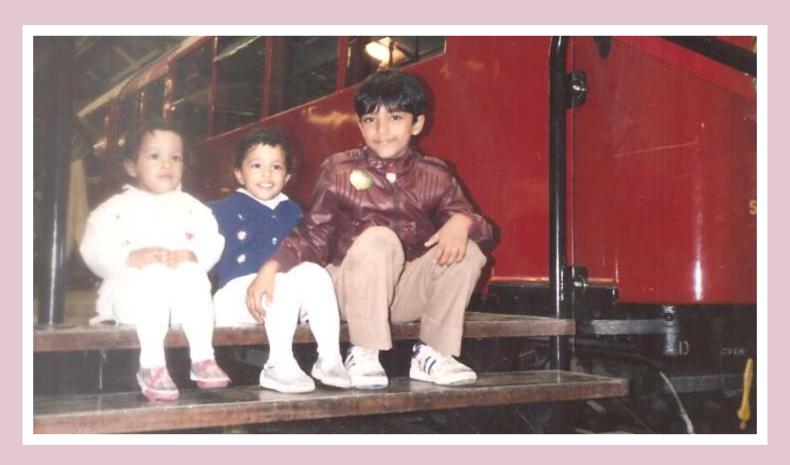
She was working as ADMO in Southern Eastern Railways at the time of birth of their first child Gaurav in December 1979. In 1981, she left her job from Railway Hospital Charadharpur as she and her husband had got an offer to work in Libya. She was appointed as Specialist Grade 1 in obstetrics and gynecology at the Central Referral Hospital at Misurata, where she worked for five-and-a-half years.

Life in Libya was a learning experience for Abha as she learnt to manage both home and work together. Every day, after a hard day at work she came home and cooked for her little family.

She gained insight into Libyan society. She realized Libyans did not consent for caesareans as women wanted more children and caesareans could restrict their options of having children later. Libyan women never revealed to the doctor as to how many caesareans they have had before. The women were huge and so were the babies. Here, Dr Abha learnt techniques in obstetrics which she would never had a chance to learn in India like internal podalic versions, destructive operations and the European methods of performing surgeries and caesareans. It was here that she grew interested in infertility management and started reading about reproductive endocrinology, but most of all, she learnt to take responsibility without the guidance of her seniors.

In 1986, with the birth of her twin daughters Aastha and Pooja, her family responsibilities doubled. The Majumdars then decided to return to India as it became increasingly difficult for them to cope.





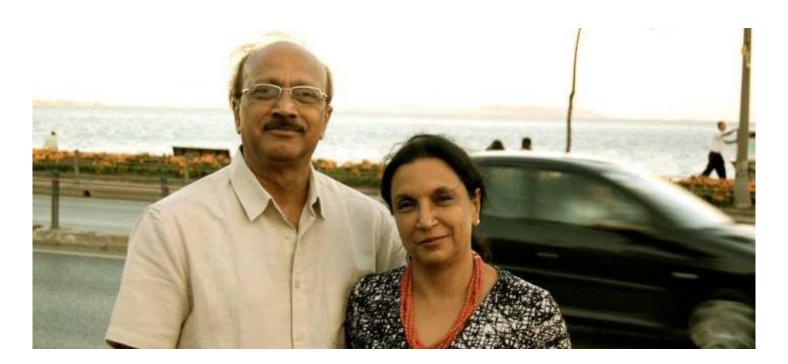
BACK TO INDIA

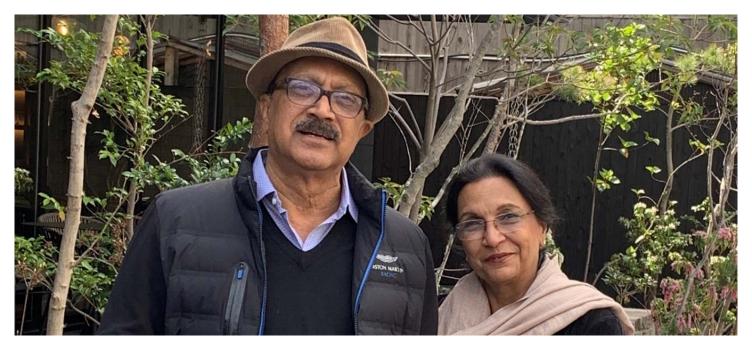
In January 1987, the Majumdars returned to India with their three children. They wanted to settle down either in Indore or Dehradun which were known as very quaint cities with good education facilities as Delhi intimidated them. With the support of her husband's elder brother, and on his insistence Dr. Abha applied for a job in four leading hospitals in Delhi, Moolchand hospital, Tirath Ram Shah Hospital, Batra Hospital and Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

Within two days of applying, she received an offer from Sir Ganga Ram Hospital to join in the capacity of Junior Consultant in Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology. She was supposed to join from the 1st of February, which also happened to be their wedding anniversary. Such was the relief of getting a job as well as apprehension of the unknown days to come that their anniversary day slipped off the memory of both. Later that day when her sister called to wish her on her anniversary, she ended up responding,

"thanks for the wishes didi, I would be joining my job from tomorrow."

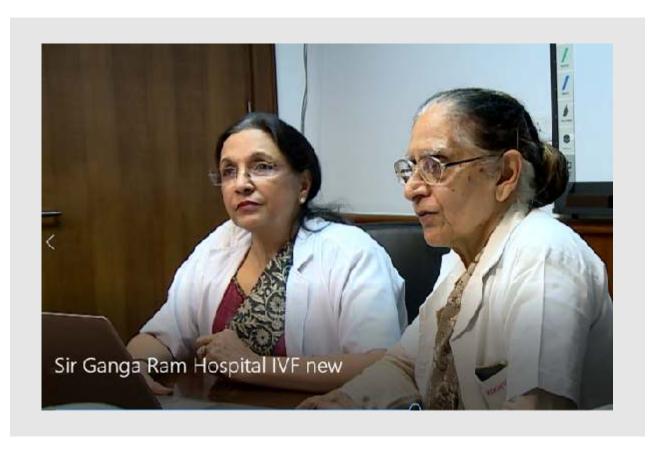
Her sister laughed at her reply and exclaimed that they had forgotten their wedding anniversary for that year. Dr Abha joined the hospital on 2nd February, 1987. Her journey with Sir Ganga Ram Hospital had begun.











AT SIR GANGA RAM HOSPITAL

It was not easy for Dr Abha to work with the experienced clinicians of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, especially after having worked in Libya for the last five years and not having pursued a senior residency after her MS. She was not aware of the recent developments in her field.

Yet, she did not allow her inexperience to come in the way of her quality of work. She bought several different types of books on surgery. She began to consult books on advanced medicine and soon was able to improve her understanding in the areas in which she was unfamiliar with. Her surgical skills and confidence also grew with time.

One of her seniors in the medical college had once said, while operating

'incision should be like the first line of a painting'

which she inculcated in her surgeries ever after. Dr Trilochan Singh, a senior surgeon in the department of general surgery, sent all the new residents to watch her operate. To quote his words

'go and see how neatly surgery can be done'

speaks a lot about the quality of surgery performed by her.

She also enlivened the weekly academic sessions of her own department with pertinent questions, that all junior students would feel inspired by.





MAKING BABIES

In India, the first baby, through In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) was born in in 1978. The credit for this went to Dr Subhash Mukherjee. However, due to a number of reasons his achievement remained obscured. It was only in 1986, when the second IVF baby was born in Mumbai (then Bombay) with the efforts of T.C. Anand Kumar and Dr Indira Hinduja at KEM hospital, Mumbai that the use of IVF as a way to help infertile couples became widely understood.

The medical community in India was only waking up to the wonder of IVF. Having taken note of DrAbha's interest in treating infertile couples, Dr Bhandari, the head of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology department, entrusted her with the task of starting the IVF unit at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital. The other two members of the team were her senior Dr Mohinder Kochhar, appointed as senior consultant after being

retired as medical superintendent of Kasturba Hospital and Dr. Raj Gaur a Ph.D in genetics who had retired from AIIMS.

With this team of three persons, the IVF unit was started in 1990 and as luck would have it their first success came soon after in February 1991.

Soon the unit became known as the Centre of IVF and Human Reproduction. Its primary objective was to provide comprehensive state-of-the-art fertility and reproductive health care in a personalized and friendly environment. All services to tackle infertility were made available under one roof whether it was the most advanced medical or surgical treatment or it was IUI or IVF. The unit was a boon to infertile couples as it gave them easy access to treatments. Soon, the department became a trusted centre where couples could easily access information, counseling and treatment for infertility.



Dr. Abha along with her senior, Dr. Kochhar and Dr. Gaur delivered the first IVF baby, baby Garva, in north India on 21 September 1991.

The IVF unit marked 10 years of the first successful IVF in 2001 and 20 years in 2011. A grand celebration was held to mark this day with actress Deepti Naval as guest of honour as she was working for women empowerment.

In 2016, another grand celebration was held when Garva completed 25 years of age. The year also marked 25 years for the centre. The young and handsome Garva Marwah and his mother did not hesitate to let the world know that he was conceived through process of IVF. Having been a product of this advanced technology, he now wants to document his life and upload it on Youtube.

Meanwhile, Dr Abha's fame began to spread. She emerged as a well-known commentator on health and fertility on prominent news channels like AajTak, NDTV, India TV, Lok Sabha TV, Rajya Sabha TV, World TV and CNN-IBN. She has also featured on radio channels like Red FM and Vividh Bharati to spread awareness about fertility issues as well as to answer queries from listeners.







My Opinion on IVF

Over the last three and a half decades after the first successful in vitro fertilization (IVF), the technology has been rolling forward in all directions; so that a technique which was once considered the last resort to successful fertility has almost become the first choice. Why is it so? Is IVF flawless, without complications and has the highest probability of fulfilling ones wish to correct the underlying disorder causing sub-fertility? One would argue that it is not so; IVF has a flip side-complications, side effects, failures, financial and emotional exhaustion are all part of it. But then, on the other hand, this technique is truly the only way to parenthood for a lot of medical conditions that cannot be rectified by developments within the scope of drugs and surgery. It is for this sector of patients who crave for a child, who are willing to forfeit the increased risk of congenital abnormality as well as maternal complications imposed by the technology in order to fulfil their dream of parenthood.

The IVF industry is powered by photographs of beautiful babies held by proud parents. Being childless is so traumatic for many that almost any cost seems worth paying. Indeed, the birth of a desperately wanted child is a priceless miracle for a couple who has otherwise given up all hope. The technology must continue to grow as it is one of the greatest advancements in the field of medicine where "life is created outside the human body". All we need is good and strong legislation to safeguard mothers as well as the unborn child who might get entangled in this rut of human race unknowing and unaware of the complications.



SUCH A LONG JOURNEY

Over the years, Dr Abha has held several positions in quick succession at the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital. In August 1992, she was appointed Associate Consultant in the IVF and Reproductive Medicine unit, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, then given an independent charge of the IVF unit from July 1996 onwards. She became the head of the IVF unit and Human Reproduction in September 2001 and has been the Director and Head of Centre of IVF and Human Reproduction since 2011.

However, there was a time Abha herself was not aware of her own potential.

"In medical college, I never displayed the confidence of a bright student. I was extremely tongue-tied and shy of speaking,"

she reminisces. So oblivious was she of her own capacity to excel that once in third year of medical college when one of the surgery professor announced that a girl whose name begins with letter 'A' has topped the exam for surgery, she fervently hoped that it was not her.

"The names of all other girls whose names began with 'A' were guessed by the crowd, except mine. I myself hoped that it wasn't me," she says.

But it was none other than her. In fact, her score at 96 % was so unprecedented that it was contested by the other students.

Today, anyone who hears the story of the girl from a small town who pursued medicine, because there were no other career options



available at that time and made a success out of it feels that he or she is listening to a fairy tale. The shy girl who was once scared to hear her own name called out as the winner has transformed into a confident woman and an

As member of the editorial board for NDTV she responds to several queries regarding reproductive health. She is a peer reviewer for International Journal of Human Reproductive Sciences and a member of the editorial board of World Wide IVF. She is also the member of the advisory board for Fertility Science and Research.

authority in the field of IVF.

DrAbha has also written several papers which she has presented in several national and international conferences. Some of them have also received awards in the days when conferences were rare and awards even rarer. She received CHIMCO award for a paper titled 'Correlating IVF Pregnancy outcome with basal FSH level, maximum S. Estradiol levels and number of embryos transferred', at the International Congress of Infertility and Trans-vaginal Ultrasound at Bombay in 1995 and award for paper on 'Preliminary trial correlating Trans-vaginal colour Doppler uterine artery flow imaging to pregnancy rate in donor embryo transfer cycles' at the 3rd Annual Conference of IHAR held at Agra in 1995.

She also penned many original articles, editorials, case reports in indexed journals and chapters in text books on gynaecology and infertility. Apart from that, she has been invited as a guest lecturer, panelist and moderator in several discussions as well as chaired sessions. She is regularly invited to national and international fertility meets and conferences and has participated in many free camps in rural areas that provides medical aid to the poor.



Degrees, Honours & Merits during Graduation & Post-Graduation

Degrees:

- M.B.B.S. 1970-74 Dec. S.N. Medical College, Agra University (Agra) First Position in the Batch
- MS, 1978 Dec. S.N. Medical College, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Agra University
- FICS, 1994 Sep., Fellowship Granted by International College of Surgeons (Indian Section)

Honours & Merits during Graduation and Post Graduation

- First position in the whole batch during MBBS 1970 -74
- Certificate of Honours in 9 Subjects: Anatomy, physiology, pathology, pharmacology, forensic medicine, surgery, medicine, ophthalmology and obstetrics & gynecology (Out of a Total of 10 subjects)
- 8 Book Prizes in various subjects during the MBBS tenure.
- 7 Gold Medals
- Gold Medal for the best student in the last 4 years 1975
- Gold Medal for standing 1st in the final professional exam1975
- 5 Gold Medals in all 4 subjects, final professional examination (2 in surgery)
- 7 Silver Medals, 1 Trophy & 2 Cash Prizes awarded in various Subjects during 3 Professional Examinations.
- Chancellor's Medal for the best student of the university, 1975
- President's Silver Medal for best girl medical graduate, 1975

Extra-curricular Prizes

• Runners up in table tennis doubles 1972-73



AWARDS RECEIVED AS CLINICIAN



- 1. Responsible for the First IVF baby in Northern India, conceived and delivered on the 21st of September 1991, at the Unit of IVF & reproductive Medicine at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi.
- 2. Felicitated with award by DMA on B.C.Roy's birthday, 1st July 1999, as pioneer in the field of Medical profession & for great contribution towards medical and public health.
- 3. Felicitated by 'Nations Vikas Ratan Award' on 29th April 2002 at New Delhi by Nations Economic Development & Growth Society.
- 4. Felicitated for outstanding contribution towards field of specialty by Agra Alumni Delhi branch in 2006.
- 5. Felicitated with "Chikitsa Ratna Award" by International Study Circle in 2007.
- 6. Head of the team responsible for reporting the "First IVF baby in northern India by frozen oocyte" conceived in 2008 and delivered in 2009.
- 7. Conferred the designation of Professor GRIPMER in Dec 2012 by the dean of Sir Ganga Ram Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research.
- 8. Felicitated by "Medical Excellence Award" (Life Time achievement) in Obstetrics & Gynecology by Hippocrates foundation in 2014.
- 9. Felicitated by 'Abdul Kalam gold medal' by Global Economic Progress & Research Association in 2015.
- 10. Ranked as Best Fertility and IVF Centre in Delhi, NCR & North Zone and Second best fertility and IVF Centre in India according to Times of India, All India Fertility & IVF Ranking Survey 2017 on 16th December 2016.
- 11. Felicitated by infertility committee of FOGSI on 26th January 2017 at AICOG Ahmedabad for imparting the 'highest number of advanced infertility observer ships' to gynaecologist in last 3 years at the IVF centre SGRH.
- 12. Felicitated by the Association of National Board Accredited Institutions (ANBAI & NBE) on 5th September 2017 at National Board of Examinations, New Delhias a "Distinguished DNB Teacher of Excellence" in Post Graduate Medical Education & Examinations, India.



- 13. Felicitated by "Rashtriya Gaurav Gold Medal Award" by Global Economic Progress & Research Association (GRIPRA) for 'Outstanding Individual achievement in management' on 15th October 2017 at Chennai.
- 14. Felicitated by "The Economic Times on Doctor's Day Conclave 2018" for "Inspiring Gynaecologists of India" on 30th June 2018 at Delhi.
- 15. Felicitated for the highest award in the speciality of reproductive medicine by Merck and Serono pharma company on 25th Nov 2018.
- 16. Felicitated by Indian Fertility Society in IFS Haryana Chapter, Annual Conference on 19th May 2019, New Delhi as a 'Distinguished Teacher of Excellence' in Post Graduate Medical Education & Examinations at The Leela Ambience Hotel, Gurugram.
- 17. Awarded by ZEE business health care awards function on the 28th of September at the Taj Mansingh Hotel as the 'Woman leadership award 2019'.
- 18. Awarded at the Economic Times Health Care award function held at 'The Lalit' New Delhi as the "ICON of IVF of North India", her team awarded as the 'Best integrated national team of IVF', and then the most coveted award as the 'National IVF Champion of the year 2019'.
- 19. Awarded as 'Pioneer in IVF' at Indian Medical Tourism Summit held at the Taj Mansingh Hotel, Delhi on 1st February 2020.



A BRAVE DOCTOR

But the true value of Dr Abha's work lies in lives that she has saved and facilitated in very difficult medical situations which she recalls. Of all such cases she has dealt with one which still gives her goose bumps while narrating-

A woman, who had already lost two babies, was referred from Agra to stay in Delhi during the last few months of her pregnancy so that something could be done to save the mother as well as the yet to be born baby. She was diagnosed with placenta praevia and accreta, a condition wherein the placenta attaches itself too deeply and too firmly into the lower segment of the uterus, an area of uterus which has no ability to contract to stop bleeding after delivery of the baby and placenta as the rest of the uterus has.

It was a Wednesday evening. The patient insisted on staying in the hospital as a family priest had predicted that her life was in danger during that period. No beds or even trolleys were available in the labour room. Anticipating the complications which could happen in this woman's case, her surgery was already scheduled with a team of urologist and vascular surgeons for the following Friday morning.

On Wednesday night, few hours after admission in the late evening, the patient collapsed suddenly and started bleeding. Within minutes, she lost litres of blood. Her blood pressure and pulse dropped. Dr. Abha and her colleague anesthetist did not wait for anyone to help with the stretcher, they themselves took her to the operation theatre pulling the trolly. There was no time for completing their operatives formalities as taking consent for surgery. While the anesthetist started anesthesia, she performed the surgery only to find the uterus ruptured and the baby lying in a pool of blood outside the uterus. The baby was pulled out with the pediatrician waiting ready to intubate the child if it still showed any signs of life. The child was put on the ventilator and saved. However, the mother continued to bleed from inside her abdomen even after the surgery. The patient was being pumped with blood and was in a very critical condition in ICU for almost 24 hours. At 3 am next morning Dr. Abha decided to follow her gut instinct. She operated the patient again despite the refusal of the vascular surgeon to assist in the surgery as he thought there was no hope in operating such a sick patient. The ICU doctors were already advising her to documents notes of the patient's condition in detail so that medico-legal situations could be circumvented later. However, Dr. Abha felt the only hope the patient had was another surgery therefore she asked another general surgeon to assist her even though there was a very bleak chance of saving the patient's life and already abundant blood and blood products had been given to her. Eventually, after the second surgery the bleeding stopped. The patient was saved after 102 bottles of blood & blood products were given to her.

Another case in which Dr Abha proved her mettle was in the case of a twin pregnancy which was conceived by a lot of treatment. The woman went into labour at four and a half months of pregnancy and delivered one of the twin baby's. The patient was devastated and kept pleading to save the other baby. Dr. Abha had never heard or managed a case like this where delivery process could be stopped after 1 baby been born. However, she started with drugs to stop labour pains and tried to retain the second baby in the womb so that this baby could reach a stage where survival after delivery could be possible. Every passing day was a day of hope not only for the woman but also for Dr. Abha, who would spend hours reading world literature trying to find out similar cases and their management as well as any possibility of harm to mother or baby. Eventually a healthy baby boy was delivered at eight months after being sustained for 104 more days in the mother's uterus. This also happened to be the second longest prolongation of life of the second twin in utero reported in literature of the world. This baby was named Shiv by his parents, now settled in the USA.

My Opinion On Present Medical Practice

Medical profession has long evolved from the principles of altruism and duty. Doctors have earned the respect of their patients over many centuries through trust, integrity, and excellence. While medical sciences and quality of care have advanced by leaps and bounds, the doctors have begun to lose respect as a result of practices that promote competition and monetary gains. This has created an opportunity for corporations to emerge as health care providers with profitability as their main goal. Roles changed, patients became consumers, hospitals became fancy corporate businesses, entertainment became part of the treatment, and lawyers swooped in to take their share. These trends of healthcare-for-profits in the developing world are being adopted as benchmarks by developing countries such as ours, especially in the era of immense globalization where the internet dominates and information travels at the speed of light. I have witnessed these changes in my nearly 50 years in this field. I am afraid that the medical profession will lose its core purpose of care for others unless we stop competing with our collogues in other fields, are willing to forfeit monetary gains, and resort back to ethical, transparent and honest medical practices.



A PHILANTHROPIST AT HEART

"I believe in serving the poor rather than making offerings at temples," says Dr Abha.



The support she received from Sunder Lal Aggarwal Trust back in 1970 to pursue her studies in medicine and build a career for herself, inspired her. In 2012, she founded the Daya Agarwal Educational Trust, which provides financial support to meritorious students in all disciplines.

In fact, her philanthropical spirit came to the fore in the 1990s when one of her son's batch mate needed financial help to complete his M Tech. Dr. Abha, who merely earned 10-12,000 INR at that time, partly funded his education for a year which was 1,000 INR per month. In 2011, she joined an NGO named 'Earth Saviours Foundation', which is founded and run by a great philanthropist," Mr. Ravi Kalra" and which provides shelter and care for abandoned senior citizen and mentally challenged people. She supports them financially and also provides them with medical & psychological support.





She believes in helping the poor in every way and feels that people who are with lesser means including her staff should be treated with dignity and respect as well as helped whenever in need or ill health.

Deep within, she is a feminist, who stopped fasting for her husband at Karva Chauth a long time ago. She is strongly opposed to restrictions of entry placed on menstruating women by temples. She believes that menstruation is as normal as passing urine or stool, and it should not be placed as a barrier on the spiritual growth of women.



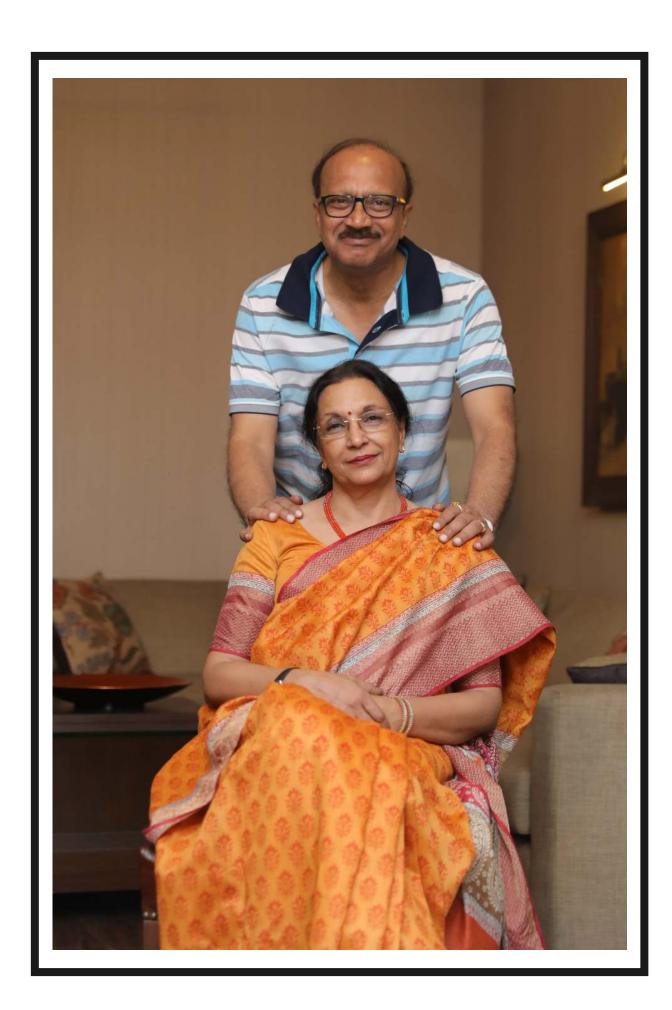




FAMILY COMES FIRST

Dr Abha cherishes the time she spends with her family. She ensures that she spends quality time with them. Her husband, Dr. Gautam Majumdar is a Pediatrician and her son Gaurav Majumdar holds a PhD in Embryology. His wife Riya works in JWT as a development manager. They are blessed with two children Sara and Siddharth, whose birth brought the whole family immense joy. Both her grandchildren were delivered by her. Dr. Abha has twin daughters Pooja and Astha who are both masters in physiotherapy and are married. Pooja is married to Sidharth Rupani who is a Regional Director for Africa, Middle East and India for a USA based company LLamasoft and Astha to Mr. Niko Piirainen, a Finance Manager, North East Sales Cluster in Fiskars.







She fondly remember's her father in-law Late Mr. Bimal Kanti Majumdar who passed away very early in 1983 in his Kolkata residence. Her mother Daya Agarwal lived with her and her family in the last decade of her life where she was looked after till 93 years of her age, till she left for her heavenly abode in October 2013. Her mother in law late Mrs. Meera Majumdar also stayed with Dr. Abha and her husband in her last few years, where she was looked after and took her last breath in November 2018.

Dr Abha is not just a doctor for the world, but also for her family. An incident which shows her mental strength and steel is when her daughter Pooja was diagnosed with fibroid of the uterus she decided to operate on her herself because she believed that if she can fight tooth and nail for her patients then it would be unfair to leave the ones she loved most in the someone's else's hand. This incident took her back to the time when she had given an injection to Pooja when she was one-and-a-half year old baby because she was ill. Later she had pricked her own arm with the needle to feel the pain, which her little baby had felt. Even though people ask her not to mix her profession with family, she follows her gut instinct. Her trust in herself became inspiration for many.

Dr Abha's family extends beyond that of her immediate blood relations. Her housekeeper, Meeta who came into her household as a young 16-year-old girl is now an integral part of the family. She has been with the family for the past 25 years. Meeta and her husband Sanjay have a daughter Priya who is being brought up in the house with the best of education and is treated like a grandchild by the family.

HER OWN SPACE

Despite achieving the heights of success in her profession Dr Abha remains grounded to her values and makes time for the simple pleasures of life.

Whenever her schedule allows she wakes up early and enjoys going for long walks with her husband in Nehru Park. She enjoys her daily cup of tea and though she is very cautious of what she eats and how fit she looks, she does enjoy biting into ajwain paratha made with designee from time to time.

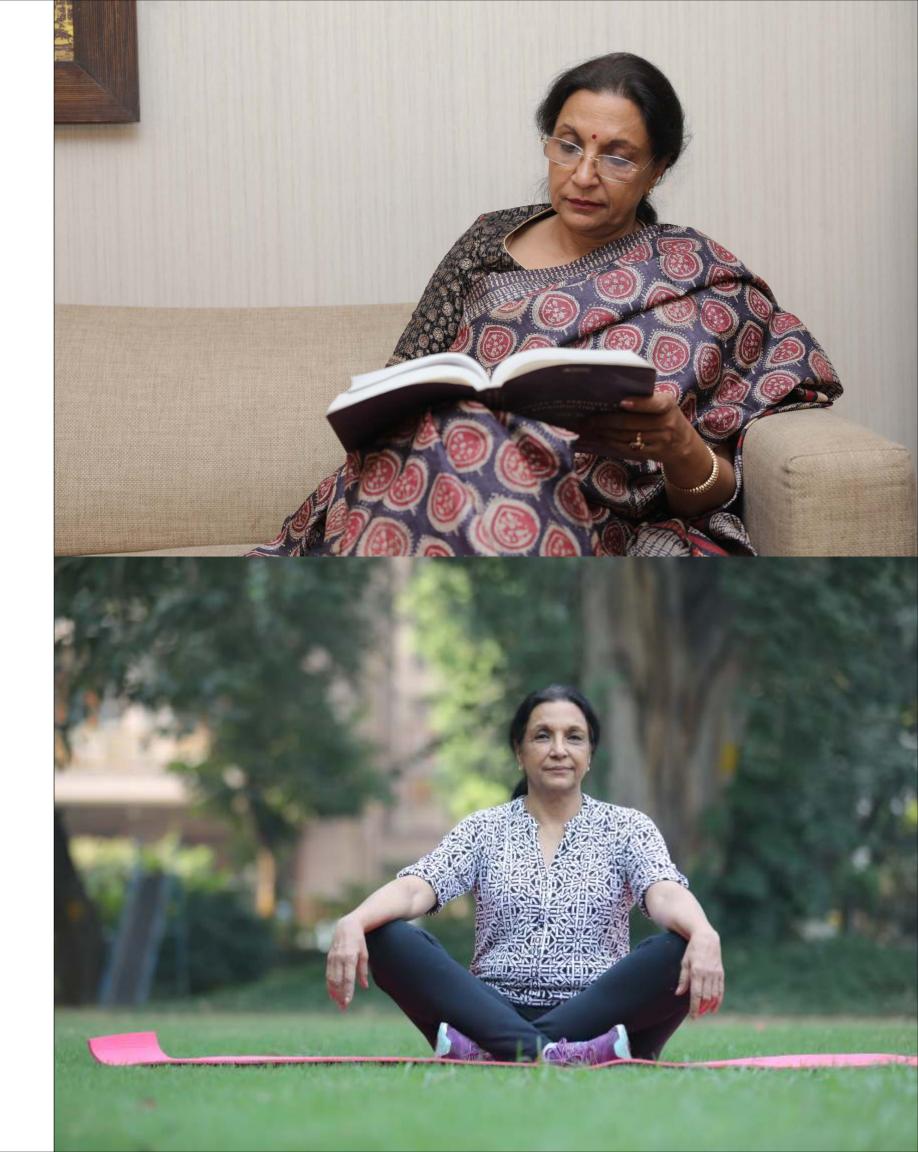
She is a connoisseur of good food and enjoys Japanese, Asian, Thai and Chinese cuisines. She loves cooking and makes sure that on festivals like Deepawali and Holi everything is cooked prim and proper, just as her mom used to do in her childhood.

She made sure that her children had complete freedom to explore the world and develop, choose the person whom they would wont to marry and live their life to the fullest.

At home, her daughters call her 'super mom' and her daughter-in-law Riya Majumdar says the loving treatment she got from Dr Abha and family made her feel like a daughter. Riya enjoys going shopping with her mother-in-law. For Riya, Dr. Abha is also an inspiration to work hard and achieve perfection in work and calls her as 'aging to perfection'.



Dr. Manchanda, who has been a family friend for more than 25 years, says that Dr. Abha is an amazing woman in every aspect. According to him, there is no better family than the Majumdars. He respects Dr. Abha as a sister. For him, she has remained grounded throughout her life, respected elders and has got success being a human first. Her impeccable devotion for family and work makes her outshine the rest of the world. The balance she has created makes her perfect in every aspect.





A HOLISTIC LIFE

Dr. Abha believes in leading a healthy life. She likes to start her day with physical trainer, walk or aerobics and sometimes plays rounds of badminton and table tennis. She also enjoys swimming, a sport that she learnt through sheer will power, while trying out different pools during the summer holidays, with her family.

She doesn't paint anymore. Her artistic abilities are now limited to the Power Point slides she makes during professional presentation. She is also an avid reader. Some of her favourite books are The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini, Roots by Alex Hailey and her most loved authors are Perry Mason, Arthur Hailey, Harold Robins and Agatha Christie. However, the first book she felt close to her heart is Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte. In her student days, she was also a voracious reader of Hindi novels. Some of her favourite writers include Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindra Nath Tagore and Usha Devi Mitra. The portrayal of women by these writers are women of character and strength who unknowingly inspired her to become a strong woman herself.

Some of her favourite public personalities are the retired police officer, social activist and politician Ms Kiran Bedi, spiritual leader B.K. Shivani, and former election commissioner of India Mr. T.N. Seshan.

She admires the current Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi as he made her see hygiene through a different point of view. She appreciates his initiatives towards opening bank account with zero balance, building toilets, demonetization and LPG for the rural households.

Dr Abha enjoys watching Bollywood films, often with her family. As a teenager she was a great fan of Sanjeev Kumar and Jaya Bahaduri. Where as now Ayushman Khurana, Rajkumar Rao, Vicky Kaushal and Ranbir Kapoor are some of her favourite actors of the current generation. The actresses she is fond of are Deepika Padukone, Kangana Ranaut and Alia Bhatt.

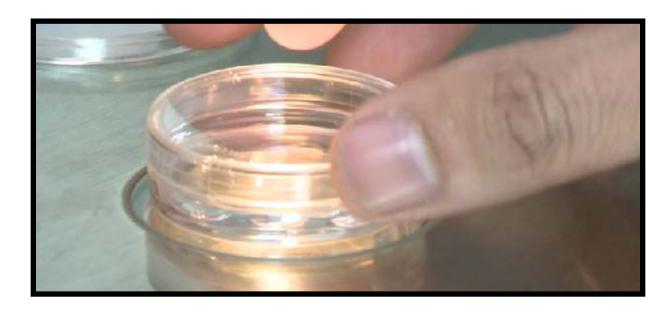
She loves to travel and recently visited United States of America, Japan, China, Switzerland, Capetown, Bangkok, Finland and Istanbul. Every year a family vacation is planned where she gets to meet her family living abroad.



ON IVF AND MEDICAL ETHICS

In the 21st century, the rate of infertility is higher than ever and having a child is an essential social norm, yet IVF is looked down upon by a lot of orthodox Indians. Whether society accepts it or not, it has become a need today. This technique essentially uses the gametes of the parents to create their own baby. It is not a treatment method to be ashamed off and should be considered as normal as getting treated for any other physical ailment.

With regard to IVF practice in India, where the treatment is fully self financed, she says "IVF should be made more affordable and its commercialisation should be stopped. Cost of drugs should be reduced, IVF facilities should be provided in government hospitals and the profit margin should be reduced. This is the only way patients would be able to afford the procedure easily."



My Lessons of Life

Looking back to a lifetime of being a doctor, a learner, a teacher, and a woman dedicated to her family and friends, she summarizes her life's learning into four simple principles that she follow passionately:

- **1. Broaden our knowledge:** We must be constant learners and push ourselves to go outside our comfort zone not assuming that we know everything.
- **2. Apply our knowledge to practice:** New evidence-based knowledge and insights gained in academic environments must be applied in medical practices. No new knowledge can come from just theories that are not battle-tested and validated in the field.
- **3. Execute with excellence:** A brilliant idea needs to be executed without which, the idea means nothing. Remember that every idea may not be successful, but success will only come from new ideas executed with excellence.
- **4. Life for Me:** She says, "As doctors, we dedicate a significant portion of our lives to our profession, but we must balance everything else we cherish including our family, relationships, religion, hobbies, and passions. It may not be easy, but we must prioritize what is important at any given moment and not put it off for another more convenient time." This is where she gets her greatest sense of fulfilment and purpose in life.



