

The Multifaceted Dr. Shel

It's All About Balance



Eight-year-old Shelena spent her childhood days as most children do – playing. But, Shelena's childhood playtime cast her in a specific role: that of a doctor. A native of India, she would don a jacket, pretending it was a lab coat, and run around the house treating her siblings. The little girl, who spent her childhood pretending that she was a physician, realized her dream and grew up to be not only a physician, but a very special one indeed.

Dr. Shelena Lalji, or Dr. Shel, as her patients and friends call her, came to the United States at age 10 for a summer vacation. She toured the country from coast to coast with 13 family members in a motor home and fell in love. “We just had the time of our lives, and we kids all wanted to stay,” recalled Dr. Shel.

That first trip to America, along with the love, guidance and support of her father and mother, had a great influence on Dr. Shel growing up. Her father, Firoz Charania, came from a poor background and became a self-made man with a successful business. A natural born entrepreneur – a character trait passed on to his daughter – Dr. Shel's father sold candy as a child at school to raise money for his family. In the 1970's, he came to Sugar Land, Texas, now home to Dr. Shel and her family, and visited the Imperial Sugar mill. Back home, he took what he learned in Texas, and started a business that was one of the largest gelatin

capsule manufacturers in India. “I'm very proud of his accomplishments,” said Dr. Shel.

Dr. Shel's mother, Nazline, greatly influenced her daughter as well with her lesson of giving. “My mother taught me to always give back to the needy,” said Dr. Shel. Nazline's dream, like Shelena's, was to be a physician, but her dream was never realized. At age sixteen, Nazline came home from school, and her mother told her to get changed because she was getting engaged. “My mother cried and cried,” said Dr. Shel because her mother's dream was to become a doctor. But though Nazline's dream of becoming a doctor was not realized, she forged ahead and created a successful, meaningful life with her new husband, raised five children and helped run their family businesses.

Shelena Becomes Dr. Shel

But Nazline's dream was to become a reality through her daughter. The family eventually moved to the United States where Dr. Shel attended middle and high school, and subsequently, Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. She earned her Doctorate of Medicine at Emory and got board certified in Obstetrics and Gynecology.

Prior to attending college, Dr. Shel and her family suffered a tragedy that changed their lives forever. Her brother, Akbar, was killed

at age 25. Due to the stress of the loss, her beloved father suffered a heart attack. While he did recover, Dr. Shel felt compelled to stay home and support her family. “I was accepted at Georgetown University, but I couldn't leave my family after we lost my brother.”

In 1997, Dr. Shel moved to Houston, single, with no friends or family members in a very big city, after receiving a substantial offer from Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital. Her first weekend in Houston, knowing no one, she went to church on Friday evening. There, she met Dr. Ayeez Lalji, a handsome dentist who was at the time the local chairman of the Ismaili Health Professional Association. He was manning a booth for the organization, and since she was new in town, Dr. Shel decided to sign up for membership in the organization. Little did she know, Dr. Shel was signing up for life when she met the man of her dreams. The rest, as they say, is history. They were engaged five months later and have been married for 12 years this June.

“Being married to Ayeez has been like a beautiful dream,” said Dr. Shel. “He is an incredible man with whom I'm excited to wake up and start a new day every day.”

While success as a physician, business owner, educator, mentor and philanthropist is a passion for Dr. Shel, her heart belongs to her family. “Ayeez has been my best friend and true love since the day we met,” said Dr. Shel.

The Laljis have two children - daughter Zoe, 9, and son Zade, 6. Zoe, or "Little Shel," is tender-hearted and wants to be a physician just like mom. "What better compliment can I get from my child?" said Dr. Shel. "Zade is extremely bright, humorous and witty. He makes me laugh all the time."

Dr. Shel's in-laws reside with her, and Dr. Shel shares a very special relationship with her mother-in-law, Gulshen Lalji. "She supports me in everything I do and helps us with our children," said Dr. Shel. "She has been - and continues to be - such an important figure in my life and the lives of our family."

The importance of women, both in her life and in her practice, is a common theme with Dr. Shel. Her sister, Shirin, is her "best girlfriend" and has been since they were young. "As women, we all need a sister-like figure," said Dr. Shel. "A friend who loves us unconditionally."

Dr. Shel believes that female friendships are vital to women, and her commitment to caring for women comes from a personal place. When she was 30 years old, Dr. Shel lost one of her dearest friends to suicide, and the tragedy impacted her tremendously. "Losing Rekha is one of the reasons why I work so hard to empower women," explained Dr. Shel. "I strongly believe that as women, we shouldn't let anything or anyone take away our self-esteem and our love for life and its blessings."

Caring for Women . . . Completely

Although her work as an OB/GYN for nine years was extremely satisfying and rewarding, Dr. Shel felt compelled to broaden her scope of services and treat the whole woman. In 2006, she opened her current business - Dr. Shel Wellness & Medical Spa - in Sugar Land, Texas. A hands-on physician, Dr. Shel formed relationships with her patients that not only allowed her to help them, but provided her with important information about their lives. Soon, she began to notice trends in women's health issues. Her patients complained of common symptoms: fatigue, weight gain, irritability, mood swings, low libido, hair loss, and hot flashes. "Many women suffer from these symptoms beginning in their 30's and well into their menopausal years," explained Dr. Shel.

With this valuable information, Dr. Shel developed protocols, many times including both traditional and alternative treatments, to help her patients achieve what she found was



their common goal: "to give them their lives back." Dr. Shel incorporated Bio Identical Hormone Replacement Therapy (BHRT), hormones that are biologically identical to what your body naturally produces, derived from natural plant sources. This method of replacing the body's hormones - estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, thyroid, cortisol, etc. - with natural instead of synthetic hormones proved to be an affective alternative treatment. "I hear over and over from my patients, 'Thank you for giving me my life back.'"

Dr. Shel found that once women felt better, they were ready to focus on looking better, practice yoga, eat healthier, take supplements and focus on mind and spirit. "Women are becoming much more involved in their care overall and are taking an educated interest in what's out there," explained Dr. Shel.

With a care regimen in place, once again, Dr. Shel's patients helped her define what they needed. "Once women feel their best, they are ready to look their best." She thus began offering aesthetic services including injectables, advanced laser and spa services. Dr. Shel found that her patients appreciated the dramatic results without incurring the expense and recovery time of surgical procedures. Laser rejuvenation, laser photofacials, Botox®, Juvederm™, Radiesse® and similar procedures offer patients the ability to "be refreshed, rejuvenated and reaffirmed," said Dr. Shel.

Dr. Shel's philosophy centers around doing what's best for the individual patient - whether it is inner or outer wellness - and doing it well. "When people hear the name Dr. Shel, I want them to think 'trust' - somebody who cares about who they are today and how they can be the best that they want to be." Client and friend Cynthia von Tesmar said, "I met Dr. Shel in January 2008 as she spoke to an

audience of 20 women."

In her role as an educator and motivational speaker, Dr. Shel speaks to many women's groups throughout the year. She is a national trainer and speaker for the Cutera® Laser systems along with several wellness companies. "I take every opportunity I can to educate women on living the best and most balanced life possible."

"Shelena feels as though it is her job to help cure everyone's health problems," said Ayeez. "Professionally, she is the most caring medical professional I have ever met. She is the answer to all of my dreams. Shelena is an incredible wife, and a very involved, caring and nurturing mother to our two children."

"During my first appointment, Dr. Shel became more intimate with my needs than even I was, due to the nature of her questioning," said von Tesmar, who soon became a patient of Dr. Shel's. "I found myself feeling well-protected, understood, and thoroughly supported. Her bedside manner embodies the true essence of a woman's needs and causes us to simply want more. Dr. Shel has become my saving grace with respect to knowing the importance of health and wellness and how we women should never give up on taking care of us first in order to have the energy to take care of others."

Dr. Shel's Philosophy - Balance

Women taking care of themselves first is a priority that Dr. Shel instills in her patients. "We can't take care of everything we need to take care of if we don't take care of ourselves first," said Dr. Shel who believes balance is the key to health and wellness. "My own biggest personal challenge is living a balanced life."

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Knowing how to achieve balance in your life is not only difficult, it's subjective. "Balance is different for everyone," said Dr. Shel. Knowing when to dive in and when to say no is the challenge. "As a woman, I understand and appreciate what we as women face. So many exciting, professional opportunities have thankfully opened up recently for me," said Dr. Shel. "I could decide to do all of them, but then I wouldn't have the balance I need." In order to ensure balance in her own life, this year Dr. Shel schedules days off to write her book, meditate, exercise, catch up with girlfriends and have lunch with her kids at school. "These are the things that I want – and need – to do for me. And that's what I tell my patients – do that for you. My biggest challenge is to balance my life so that I'm being a great wife, a great mother, a great professional, a great physician, a great spokesperson, a great media person, a great author – a great whatever . . . the titles can go on and on. But, I need to not forget what it is I want and need to satisfy and nourish my soul."

Although Dr. Shel and her husband are very involved in community organizations, the causes that have always pulled at her heart are the ones that "take care of women and children." The Laljis have supported,

both financially and through volunteerism, numerous organizations including the American Cancer Society, the CASA Foundation, the Fort Bend Women's Center, the Aga Khan Foundation U.S.A., and the Tackle Autism Foundation. Dr. Shel spent a year as the Regional Vice Chairperson with the Aga Khan Foundation – a year that Ayeez was essentially both mom and dad to Zoe and Zade because of the time commitment required. "It was a tremendous commitment and sacrifice on Ayeez's part," said Dr. Shel, "and one I am so proud of. Ayeez's support, sacrifice and unwavering love allowed me to work with this incredible organization that empowers so many around the world." She and her husband also started the Lalji Foundation through which they contribute to many worthwhile organizations.

Currently, in between patients and being a wife, mother, philanthropist and educator, Dr. Shel is working on two books. The first is an inspirational book dedicated to empowering women to live their best life. The other is designed to teach men and women both how to live a healthy life, while balancing mind, body and soul with Bio Identical Hormones, nutritional supplementation, healthy eating and exercise. "It's something people can read and say: 'I can do this,'" said Dr. Shel. "I tell my female audience how to prevent cancer and chronic diseases in themselves and their families. My next book will focus on women

in their 40's. For me, the 40's have been my best years yet! By age 40, we know what's important and what's not."

Dr. Shel also plans on launching her product line, now available at Dr. Shel Wellness & Medical Spa, to retail outlets throughout the country. Her product line features several high quality products including private label nutritional supplements and skin-care products, some under the name "ZoZa" in celebration of her children. In addition, she is a Wellness Spokesperson for Smoothie King Franchises Inc. Dr. Shel's Choice smoothies were launched in 2009 in over 25 Smoothie King locations throughout Houston with the plan to roll out the smoothies nationally in 2010. Additionally, the 25 Houston area Smoothie Kings will begin carrying Dr. Shel's nutritional supplements this year.

Of all of her accomplishments and endeavors, Dr. Shel feels her greatest achievement is her family. "I truly value and appreciate my husband and children. Ayeez is an extremely loving husband. He is my strongest supporter and my most honest critic. He gives me the ability to follow my passion completely." And while family is most important, for Dr. Shel, patients are also categorized as family. "I feel so blessed to have had a positive impact on the lives of my patients. They have given me tremendous knowledge and satisfaction over the years. They are why I do what I do." **f**

Dr. Shel Institute for Wellness & Aesthetics

In 2009, Dr. Shel began an initiative to reach professionals world-wide with comprehensive, professional educational opportunities on wellness. "My goal with the Institute is to spread the word about wellness throughout the world. We have a lot of patients that fly in both nationally and internationally, and I feel blessed; however, I'd like to train doctors to offer that care to the rest of the world, to incorporate the best of traditional and alternative medicines in their practices. When we put it all together, we can impact lives – not just give out medication. We can improve both longevity and quality of life."

Dedicated to providing expert training that is creative, transferable, and consistent in a positive and informative environment, the Dr. Shel Institute for Wellness & Aesthetics focuses on comprehensive skill building based on developmental research and clinical application.

The Institute provides hands-on training and workshops that teach applications of the Cutera® Laser systems, Botox® and dermal fillers along with cutting-edge wellness procedures and protocols. In addition, the Institute teaches medical professionals key components in marketing, maintaining and/or growing their practices.

"Dr. Shel Institute for Wellness & Aesthetics is the cornerstone of a successful practice. Our mission is not only to empower, but to educate and plant seeds of knowledge into every professional who takes part in our programs."

For more information on the Dr. Shel Institute for Wellness & Aesthetics or Dr. Shel Wellness & Medical Spa, visit www.drshel.com or call 281.313.SHEL (7435). **f**

