

## **COVID-19 Survivor Showcase - Rajiv Singh's Inspirational Story**

Inspiration has special worth these days. Gloom casts a shadow on everything as COVID-19 has been interrupting normal life for many months now. It has been forcing people into fear, disillusionment and dwindling hope. Amidst this there are some uplifting stories; some beacons of hope. ~~Incomes are low and the joys of consumer purchases like restaurant outings, trips to the mall, and sports activities are all but halted. Still, there are some beacons of hope.~~

The story of Rajiv Singh, Senior VP at multi-billion dollar tech company, is one such story. Rajiv battled COVID, and won against the odds. His story is one of pure fibre and mettle, and a will to overcome life's challenges.

Rajiv returned home from a long overseas business trip in early March of 2020. As is the standard, he immediately went into self-quarantine. India went into lockdown soon after, and he started working from home. A couple of months later, he developed a high fever with a cough. His family was stuck in New York City due to lockdown in the US, and he was left to take care of himself in Mumbai.

Rajiv was under the impression that it was a viral fever due to change of weather, or perhaps low immunity related issues due to exhaustion from work. He shared his symptoms with a local physician over Whatsapp and was treated for a viral cold. His fever did not subside, and soon breathing problems surfaced. A COVID test was ordered which came back positive. This is where his story of sheer determination begins.

Rajiv realized that he had an uphill battle before him. He was facing difficulty which he was determined he must overcome at all costs.

Typical of his attitude towards life since his childhood, Rajiv was ready for war with tools that had held him in great stead throughout his career. You see, Rajiv had already overcome some steep challenges in his life through his mettle alone. He had a lifelong mission to contribute to society and to excel at everything he did.

For instance, he was the brains and the brawn behind India's first payment system, that was conceptualized and built for reaching banking payment services to underserved citizens and

touching the lives of millions of Indians . It was a sheer challenge, the mindset he faced from Indian banks and the bureaucracy to allow the license for such a service. When he took the solution to them, he was met by a brick wall. Everyone told him that it was not needed, that India was running fine without it. Yet, he persevered, working alone and uphill to convince their restrained mentality that it was not only something that had worked in other countries, but that it could work for India too and be mutually beneficial for both the banks as well as their customers. Finally, Rajiv changed India by breaking through the barrier and convincing banks to adopt the solution. Indicash remains a testament to Rajiv Singh's persevering attitude.

He also had a youth which inspired extreme determination in him. Rajiv attended Scindia School in Gwalior, one of India's best public schools. Growing up at a boarding school forged a self reliant and a competitive nature at an impressionable age. It's all about excellence, hard work, and courage, and it is no coincidence that Rajiv embodies all 3.

All this was to come into play during his personal battle with COVID-19.

The battle started with a steep challenge right off the bat. Alone in Mumbai, and so sick he was delirious, Rajiv had to find a hospital to take him in. At first he did not gain admittance anywhere, all hospitals were full with COVID patients. With some luck and through a connection, he found one. He had to pack his bags, get ready, and board the ambulance despite his delirium and extremely low energy. This in itself was very trying.

At the hospital, Rajiv's temperature reached a dangerous 104 degrees, and he was moved the same night to the ICU. The doctor felt that his condition was grim. His oxygen saturation levels had dropped dangerously low, and all health parameters were negative. His situation was already rife with problems.

At this time, in the ICU, Rajiv was continuously provided life saving antibiotics and oxygen for 4 days to save his life. Closer examination found that more than 50% of his lungs were not functioning and that he had pneumonia. The fight against COVID-19 was intense now, and it was a challenge to stay alive. What kept Rajiv going was his determination, honed over years of working against huge obstacles.

Although it did not reach normal values, his oxygen saturation improved, and his fierce resolve to defeat COVID-19 increased. He said to himself "I will not die of this virus." He had to win this battle!

At this time , he had survived with the oxygen support. .The doctor asked him if he still needed oxygen support. Something told Rajiv that he needed, now, to fight the battle from within. He told the doctors that he would not continue with medical oxygen. Instead, he started breathing exercises that he learned in Yoga while still in the ICU. Yoga techniques like 'anulom-vilom' (translated, 'alternating breathing') which belong to the 'pranayama' discipline of yoga enabled him to bring his oxygen saturation level much closer to normal. ~~,-and-He~~ He was winning the battle!

All this while , his family managed to keep in touch from the US and speaking with him at every opportunity possible in the ICU. Prayers of family and friends continued round the clock.

Since he was not yet cured of corona virus. The doctor decided, then, to administer HCQ (Hydroxychloroquine) medicine to aid his recovery. But, it led to a huge drop in his blood pressure.

Rajiv sensed a life and death situation. He told himself staunchly that he will fight and that he will win and defeat the illness. He reminded himself that “one can only create an invincible self after defeating a great enemy.” While his health parameters were negative, his resolve stayed strong.

The doctor then ordered steroids, which brought his health parameters back to normal. Feeling much better, and feeling that he was now definitely winning the battle, Rajiv’s attention turned to others in the ICU. He prayed that all the other people in the ICU recover. This was no prayer in vain; prayer born of weakness. This was a prayer born of strength, for it was with strength that Rajiv defeated the illness a few days later when he tested Covid negative.

Rajiv had won the fight. He states that surviving this experience has meant a new life for him. He said that he will “reach out to form connections of hope with one individual after another and fulfill the mission of (his) life with confidence and courage at every step.”

Rajiv’s advice to everyone is that “nothing can match the strength of those whose lives have been shaped and forged through challenging and overcoming hardships. Such people fear nothing. To cultivate such an invincible core is itself victory.”

The story was intense at every turn, and the moral very enlightening. It is courage, determination, and sheer will that moves a person through their challenges in life. Difficulties,

once overcome, teach a man to face life head on. And, life is not easy, but it is worth it when you try your best.

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