



In 2011, **NINA FOUNDATION** introduced another award... the **WILLSTAR AWARD** (from a benevolent donor Mr. G.K.Nene in memory of his late wife Smt. Pramila<sup>tai</sup> Nene) for the one who, in the journey of life has shown courage, grit and determination to overcome all obstacles and risen high, in spite of challenges faced by him/her. He/she has the spirit, the spirit that Nina Foundation stands for.... That indomitable spirit of life and that, **“to walk together for a wonderful tomorrow”** with a head held high! A life that is truly filled with renewed hope, positivity and achievement!

**2013, this year's winner of the WILLSTAR AWARD is DR. PADMA PATIL of Akola, Maharashtra!**

Soon after her birth on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1967 in Murtijapur, district of Akola her sister, Vijayatai took over the role of 'mother' in Dr. Padma Patil's life, as her mother was diagnosed with intestinal TB and so was isolated from the rest of the family. Part of a large family with a normal childhood, rearing cattle became their new financial support system with her father having retired just then. Her parents' foresight allowed her sisters good education and thereby, financial independence. Padma completed her medical education when she stayed with her sister and qualified as an "Ayurvedacharya" with a BAMS degree. After her internship, she started working gynecologists, Drs. Hate, Murtijapur. This is where she gained some valuable experience and importance of women's health. Needless to say that during this tenure, a strong bond was established between them.... *Teen deviyaan* if one might say! And of course, their commitment to this profession made them see many new angels coming into the world..... In fact, as Vithaldas Kamat, entrepreneurial hotelier, put it..... "they created mothers".

It was difficult to find her a groom as she was dead against dowry! An exception, Dr. Dnyaneshwar Namdev Upadhyaya of Wai, who owned 40 acres of land, came forth and married Padma on June 13, 1992, after which she started a small clinic in Wai. She conceived four months into the marriage. Yes, a happy family with new dreams!

The cruel hand of fate struck their bliss when she experienced chronic pain and total numbness in the right leg into her third trimester. As basic medical facilities were unavailable, she was shifted immediately to Nagpur and attended upon by Drs. Nafade and Praful Kadu, who on the basis of a CT scan diagnosed her condition as intramedullary haematoma in the spinal cord, treatment for which brought her to Mumbai. A guardian angel in the form of Mr. Nitin Kadam, Trustee, Siddhivinayak Mandir referred her to Dr. K. E. Turel, who after studying her MRI, diagnosed her case as 'congenital arteriovenous malformation' in the spinal cord and, to begin with, immediately had the foetus removed and placed in an incubator. Dr. Turel magnanimously arranged for free hospital stay considering her financial duress. Her son, Chaitanya, the new bundle of joy in her life saw the light of day on July 4, 1993. As Og Mandino put it "I will love the light- for it shows me the way, yet I will endure the darkness- for it will show me the stars".

Dr. Turel was, to her then, divinity in human form! On July 6, she underwent dorsal spinal angiography that reflected a need for neurosurgery on July 8<sup>th</sup>, before which she was shown her baby for the first time. This brought a new hope, lease and reason to live. She was determined that nothing, yes nothing, would paralyse her spirit. "Don't be pushed by your problems but led by your dreams" was her inner call. Her neuro-rehab angels, Roshan Wania and Miss Rovania pumped up her mental power by their unstinted moral support (*tyaanchyaa doctors kudnakhoopmanasikdhairyamilaale*). In fact, Dr. Pandya (Dr. Turel's associate) said "*abronadhona bund karo. Tumhe Everest chadhna hai*". Today, after a decade and over, she understands the depth of this statement! For, now she is successfully 'standing on her own feet'. Padma-ji, *mubarak ho aapko!* Post-operation brought new challenges in her life viz., inability to turn to the other side, catheter and manual voiding of bowels et al, which brought her back to stay at Murtijapur, her *maaheree* along with her son. Her family and son's emotional support catalysed her to sustain and meet the challenges all through her medical check-ups. Her sister, Madhuritai would help with her necessary daily physiotherapy when after 7 months she was actually able to sit up! This gift was a mixed bag for her as her family was informed that her husband had re-married, the shock of which, led to her 84-year old father passing away just 4 days later.

To earn a living to look after her son and mother, Padma started giving tuitions in Maths and Science. With determination and affirmed commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of her goal, her self-focus shifted to her son with the same desire and passion when she relocated to Murtijapur where Chaitanya started his early schooling.

However, a pressure sore brought her back to Mumbai for another surgery. A failed effort to run a STD/PCO booth with hired help, she returned to coaching classes that were lucrative which afforded her a hired help to look after her son and herself. Dr. Bharat Shah treated her for the pressure sores that continued for over a decade. In 2008, a DSA test reflected arteriovenous malformation again, for which the charity commissioner organized financial aid for her dysfunctional colostomy, which thank God, was successful.

Sound advice came from the Patwari of Karanja who helped her claim legal rights for her son, Chaitanya, son and heir of Dr. Dnyaneshwar Upadhye, by which 2 acres of land was given to him. Padma then applied for a legal divorce and also got total custody of her son.

Chaitanya's distinction in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> std. Board exams shadowed the death of her mother, recurring bedsores and new problem in the spinal cord. Property had to be sold to fulfil Chaitanya's dream of pursuing engineering studies, for which he relocated to Amravati. Being alone once again, dejection and depression found expression in her poems that she never shared with anyone as they were too sad. It is true that if a door closes many windows open. So was it with Padmatai!

She chanced to meet Rajashri Patil of the Helpers Of The Handicapped Institute in Kolhapur. Telephonic relationships with her and her BAMS, classmate, Maya Modhe, gave her more moral support. Maya and her husband set up a small clinic for her at her home which not only encouraged her to move on further but also allowed her to renew ties with her old batch mates who promised to help her out. It was Rajashri Patil who introduced her to Nina Foundation and, as dependable as she is, Ketna, gave her a patient hearing and sourced both professional and financial help for her. So, we see that Padma's life was a 3-D film, that of desertion (by her husband who also was father of her child), dejection and thereby, depression. However, Nina Foundation converted her 'flop film' at life's box-office into that of a 'hit film' by converting her 3-Ds into determination, diligence and dignity!

Many more windows opened. Mr. Ramesh Ghevade Upavibhagiya Adhikari, Murtijapur arranged for her "Antyoday Ration Card" for subsidized food grains from Swasta Dhanya Sanghatna and Patwari Sanghatna arranged for her medical costs. Chaitanya enrolled in the Sinhgad Academy Of Engineering At Pune. Contribution for his fees came through her 5 sisters: Prema, Vijaya, Sunanda, Madhuri, and Aruna, Mrs. Sinha, Chaitanya's std. 10 teacher and her BAMS classmates, to whom she is eternally grateful.

Life has taught her that challenges should be met with courage. She discovered happiness in her understanding son, family, friends and her students. She was invited for the KBC audition, too. Today she lives her life independently and on her own terms with dignity, courage, determination, faith and a strong support network. Her perseverance and attitude is a potent inspiration to others. As a cheerleader, she inspires and guides other SCI-s. Today, her hallmark is "don't survive, instead thrive". We, at Nina Foundation applaud her willpower and fighting spirit. She is truly ..... **EK DHADASEE YASHASVINI!**

Trustee Dr. Parinaz Humranwala read the citation being awarded to **Dr. Padma Patil**. Kreate Advertising team produced a beautiful film that gave a bird's eye-view of the persona of Dr. Padma Patil, was screened for the audience. They also designed the coveted Willstar Trophy. Shri Madhu Narang, Managing Director Of Better Services crafted and sponsored the beautiful Rockstar Trophy, this year, too. Honoured Chief Guest of the evening, Shrimati Rajashri-ji Birla awarded the Willstar Trophy, citation and a purse to her. Here too, a popper gun that burst out tinsel heralded the birth of a NEW WILLSTAR for the year 2013. After which, Dr. Padma Patil gave her acceptance speech. Her son, Chaitanya was invited on the podium to be a shareholder of her joy, too! Flashbulbs completed the photo sessions that captured all these precious moments!

Three cheers for our  **3rd WILLSTAR, DR. PADMA PATIL.....**

**HIP HIP HURRAY!**  **HIP HIP HURRAY!**  **HIP HIP HURRAY!** 