

“Cancer is like a stallion: either you ride the stallion, or the stallion is going to ride on you.”

— Shrenik Shah, Stage IV Laryngeal Cancer Survivor, 6x TEDx Speaker & Global Goodwill Ambassador

When I step on the stage, an exhilarating hush envelops the audience, filled with anticipation.

My journey is a powerful testament to resilience, amplified by my innovative use of assistive technology and life experience. Over 10,000 days since cancer silenced my voice, my story demonstrates that purpose can triumph over silence.

Twenty-seven years ago, after being diagnosed with advanced vocal cord cancer and facing a complete larynx removal, I, as a chemistry graduate from Ahmedabad, India, chose hope over despair.

I Lost My Voice

The daily life becomes SILENT without SPOKEN WORDS, causing catastrophic situations filled with sheer helplessness, personally, socially, professionally, financially, for the self, and family.

I encountered such an alarming problem 28 years ago at 44, at the peak of my entrepreneurial career as an international marketer, where vocal communication is essential.

I lost my natural voice for a lifetime to stage IV vocal cord cancer (never smoked, consumed tobacco, non-alcoholic, and strict vegetarian) back in September '97. For three long months, I was forced to communicate using pen and paper, which was cumbersome and deeply frustrating. I was advised to speak by placing a hand-held “electrolarynx,” a device, under my chin and pressing the button. I learned by myself, practising for a week.

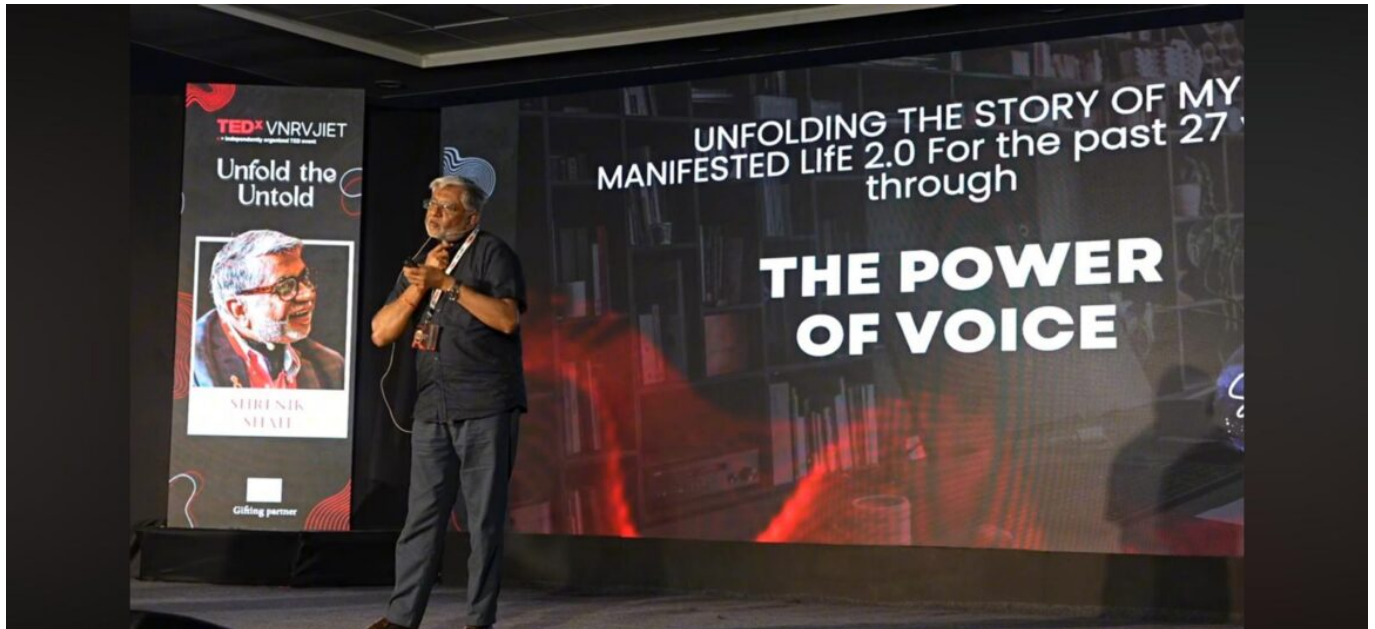
Undergoing Cancer Treatment in India

Despite all the challenges that I have to face due to my illness, I was fortunate to receive my treatment in India. Here we have the most advanced and highly dedicated cancer treatment centres and infrastructures available, right from diagnosis to performing comprehensive all-organ complex procedures, including advanced robotic surgeries and radiation therapy, including Proton therapy, Clinical and pathological, liquid biopsy, as well as advanced Chemotherapies. The skills of our oncologists are on par with those available globally.

I Found my Voice

In 2011 found my voice — not the one I was born with, but the one that speaks louder, travels farther, and touches hearts across borders. Losing my natural voice didn't silence me; it taught me that true expression comes from the soul, not the vocal cords.

When I began my journey as a public speaker, the road was anything but smooth. Speaking without a natural voice often meant wrestling with doubt, and sometimes, doubt spoke louder than faith. The irony was cruel: my voice, now reborn through technology and willpower, was initially rejected by audiences who couldn't look past the difference.



But instead of retreating, I chose to embrace that rejection. I made it fuel for my determination. Each “no” became a spark that strengthened my courage, refined my message, and deepened my connection with others. Over time, the very voice once dismissed became my greatest strength, the voice that built an enterprise, inspired thousands, and proved that silence, too, can roar.

Counselling my first cancer patient in 2011 changed everything. Since then, I’ve had the privilege of connecting with countless people across the world — patients, survivors, caregivers — each reminding me why I began.

Sometimes I still wonder, *Is my message reaching? Is it making a difference?* And then I read a single message that says, ***“Your story gave me hope.”*** Those words echo louder than any applause.

I am now celebrating the 29th year of my re-engineered life 2.0, a stage IV laryngeal cancer survivor with no vocal cords and no excuses. Through my talks and workshops, I’ve had the honour of impacting over 100,000 lives globally. From standing on six TEDx stages, one of which ranked among the **top 10 TEDx talks worldwide**, to watching my journey light up **Times Square in New York**, each milestone reminds me that purpose speaks louder than sound.



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24th August 2025

That journey has led me to serve as a Global Goodwill Ambassador, Leadership Coach, and Patient Advocate, among other roles. I'm deeply humbled to have been recognised with the **Patient Leader Hero Award (USA)**, chosen from over 21,000 global nominations. Yet, beyond every accolade lies a single, unshakable truth that even a voiceless story can still move hearts, shape hope, and redefine what it means to be truly heard.

At seventy-three, I stand with gratitude, still SPEAKING, still learning, and still believing that courage, once found, can move the world. I often remind people that ***"silence may steal a voice, but it can't steal a story."*** My mission is to create spaces where those facing life's hardest challenges can find strength, purpose, and belonging. Because I believe that ***"every ending reveals a lever"***, a chance to lift ourselves toward new beginnings. My goal is simple yet profound: to help millions transform fear into purposeful action.



So, when you listen to me speak, listen closely — for in the space where sound once lived, you might just hear a voice powerful enough to bend the future... and perhaps your own story, too.

Call to Action

- **Voice Rehabilitation:** I urge cancer hospitals and policymakers to make post-laryngectomy voice rehabilitation mandatory. My 10,000-day journey with the *bionic voice* stands as living proof of what's possible when recovery includes the power to communicate.
- **Corporate Inclusivity:** Encourage workplaces to offer platforms and speaking opportunities for survivors, empowering them to rebuild independent, sustainable lives — personally, socially, and financially.
- **Awareness & Advocacy:** Launch stronger campaigns on cancer prevention, survivorship, and life beyond treatment — because healing does not end when treatment does.