



# Shameek Popat



I am a little addicted to learning



## Multi-award winning private dentist Shameek Popat talks to Versha Miyanger about what drives him to reach those heady heights and what it was that got the ball rolling

**L**ike so many young Asians in the 1980s Shameek was always expected to follow a professional path and study to have a 'typical career' such as a doctor, dentist or accountant. 'When I take time to consider my parents' expectations,' he recalled. 'I realise that it was a direct consequence of their own personal experiences. Our parents had to work hard to start over and make a new life in another country. I guess my career in dentistry was as a consequence of living in Manchester with my uncle who is a qualified, practising dentist who enjoyed what he did in Stockport. My brother and I lived with him during our then 'O' levels and 'A' levels and as impressionable young boys, followed his profession.' Indeed this was a blessing in disguise, since Shameek had fallen in love with the art of dentistry. 'It suits my skillset and my desire for precision and perfection in everything I do.'

### ROSEBANK DENTAL

After graduating from Guys, he worked in a couple of practices and qualified for his MFGDP in 1998, before buying Rosebank Dental Practice in 2002. Rosebank is a well-respected and state-of-the-art private practice in Chorleywood, Hertfordshire. 'When I bought the practice it was a run-down, part-time local practice with one dentist. When I saw it, I loved it immediately, I realised the possible potential. I knew that I wanted to build a dental practice that looked beautiful and provide the best quality world class dentistry to this wonderful suburb of London.'

Today that vision is a reality. Rosebank is a fully private operation practicing comprehensive dentistry that involves all fields of dentistry. 'In recent years, the practice has been totally refurbished and looks beautiful' he explained. 'It is a pleasure to come to work in a nice environment with a really lovely hardworking and professional team that I am really proud of. Building a successful, loyal and talented team is one of the hardest parts of the job. Over the last 11 years I have worked hard to establish the practice and carve a niche for



Shameek and the Rosebank Dental team

myself. I started developing my skills through further education and attended many courses to further my skill base. I believe in the old adage that 'knowledge is power'. The more we know about our field, the greater the difference we can make in our patients life. Along the way I have met various inspirational people who I have aspired to and also many of my contemporary peers, who have all played a part in shaping my dentistry that I practice today. Mentors like John Kois, Ken Harris, Frank Spear, Didier Dietschi, John Cranham, Ian Buckle, Pascal Magne to name a few. These are just some of my esteemed colleagues that I have had the pleasure to learn from and work alongside. These guys are what I call shortcuts. They make my learning journey effective and efficient,' he adds.

### PUSHING THE LIMITS

Shameek is a strong believer in the idea that he is able to offer all his patients full comprehensive dentistry. 'I have to confess, that I am a little addicted to learning and constantly improving myself' he admits. 'I guess I live by the rule - the more technique I have, the less I have to worry about. I not only use all the brain I have, but all that I can borrow as dentistry does not stand still. To continue to be at the front of the pack, means you have to commit yourself to improving, else you get left behind.'

Having participated in so many learning journeys, Shameek decided that he had to have a clear focus and choose effectively what path to follow. Inspired by John Kois, who put a fire in his belly, Shameek realised that he could not practice effective cosmetic dentistry without functional-based theory. He therefore set upon a five-year goal at The Kois Centre in Seattle. 'I take great pleasure in presenting a treatment plan to a patient with multi layers of requirements and weaving the treatment with specialist knowledge,' he said. 'Comprehensive dentistry that involves interdisciplinary planning with my orthodontist, periodontist and oral surgeon and coming up with a foolproof treatment plan that can change a person's life. It's great fun brainstorming a practical treatment plan in accordance with the patient's wishes. The key to successful and predictable dentistry starts with the comprehensive exam, thoughtful planning, and a commitment to give your best.'

I love the tale of the woodcutters: Woodcutter A cuts wood all day. Woodcutter B keeps stopping and sitting down. At the end of the day, Woodcutter B has three times more wood than Woodcutter A. Woodcutter A asks "how could this happen? You were resting all day!" Woodcutter B says "I wasn't resting. I was sharpening my saw." Take time

# and constantly improving myself

to sharpen your skills, your tools, and your resources, and you will be more productive. I get my motivation from going to courses, hearing my peers speak and learning from them. This is what put's the fire in my belly because like any job the embers need to be fed for that fire to glow brightly.

I am a self-confessed learning junkie. When I am not studying or attending courses, I am reading in my spare time. I love reading. I think what I do, is take the best of everything that I learn and read and help it to develop myself.

## MULTI-AWARD WINNING

Shameek's commitment to his profession has awarded him many prizes. He has won an impressive number of national awards, among them, 'Best Practice in the South East' (Dentistry Awards 2009) and 'Private Dentist of the Year' (Private Dentistry Awards 2010). 'My determination not to compromise patient care drives me to further my goals. In life we either have results or reasons why we don't have results.' Shameek now sits on the boards of judges and is a mentor to students from all around the world.

'I am very proud and humbled to have received many awards - it helps me to reinforce my commitment to dentistry and it feels good to have the acknowledgement from your peers and mentors that your work is of the highest standards. My proudest academic achievement though, has to be graduating from The Kois Centre in Seattle, as only the third UK graduate to receive this honour and thereafter qualifying as only the second UK dentist to be a Kois

mentor. John Kois, my mentor and my friend, has taught me many things. Professionally, I am a better dentist because of him. I have spent the last six years of this learning journey, pushing the boundaries of development - make no mistake, the boundaries keep moving and changing - and so we as professionals must continue to move and change with it. Though have to admit now, that I get more satisfaction and pride if my children achieve something rather than anything I achieve! Nothing feels you with as much pride as their success, nothing makes you suffer like their defeats. I feel more alive watching them do their best.'

## RELAXATION

'It is so difficult getting the work/life balance right', he said. 'Professionally, when the opportunities come you have to grasp them, whilst you are young enough and keen enough to make good use of them. You do not want to regret not taking them when you had the chance. To get anywhere in life you have to work hard and to get better, you have to work harder than the next person - let no one fool you that it is an easy journey. On the other hand life seems to be speeding past. Every possible spare moment I have, I spend with my family. Having experienced the loss of my mother recently, I have re-evaluated my priorities. There are always challenges in life, but without them we would not sit down and create solutions. Life is all about learning from every experience and our kids grow up so quickly. My children are my relaxation. They are all keen sportspeople - so we spend many weekends at tennis tournaments and on the sidelines of the football pitch cheering them on. My only bone of contention is that - as a passionate Liverpool FC fan - I am being tested constantly for my loyalty to my club, as my little boy who plays for the Watford junior academy, is an equally passionate Watford FC fan!

## REFLECTION

With so many achievements over the years it is surprising that Shameek has any regrets. 'I remember graduating and thinking that the world was my oyster. But upon reflection, I realise now that my arrogance of graduating kept me happy to stay within my box. I wish I had started my journey earlier. I spent the first few years after graduating enjoying



the spoils of working without pushing ahead to new territory. I wish I had heard and met John Kois earlier.'

So what does Shameek make of the future of dentistry? 'The profession seems to go in cycles with occlusion being in vogue in the sixties, then periodontics in the seventies, bonding in the eighties, then veneers and whitening in the nineties and noughties. Then it was occlusion again and now bonding and orthodontics are in vogue. Digital scanners and CAD/CAM technology are probably the future. Computer technology is unstoppable with computer power doubling every two years, so it's going to take over how we work but I am enjoying learning about snoring and sleep apnoea, though it's not as sexy!' Personally, I wish to raise as much money as I can for leukaemia and lymphoma research. My mother fought a brave battle against leukaemia for two years and lost that fight a few months back. She was treated and looked after really well by our hospitals here in London and I would like to help them by raising as much money as I can to help them fight this terrible disease.'

## LOOKING UP TO THE EXPERTS

Are there any dental professionals Shameek admires? 'Francoise Rene Auguste Chateaubriand said, "A master in the Art of Living draws no sharp distinction between his work and his play; his labour and his leisure; his mind and his body; his education and his recreation. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence through whatever he is doing, and leaves others to determine whether he is working or playing. To himself, he always appears to be doing both," says Shameek. 'John Kois and Ken Harris embody this and anyone else who works with this philosophy gets my respect.'

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## SHAMEEK POPAT

**Position:** Principal dentist at Rosebank Dental Practice, Mentor at Kois Center, Mentor for CCADS

**Qualifications:** BDS(Lond), MFGDP(UK)

**Family:** Wife and three children

**Lives:** Chorleywood, Hertfordshire

**Dental interests:** Comprehensive dentistry, which involves a true bridging of all the dental disciplines - oral surgery, orthodontics, endodontics, restorative/ cosmetic and periodontics

**Interests outside of dentistry:** Reading, travelling, football, cricket and skiing.