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'QR codes were used to access new chapters'

CYNERA RODRICKS

BACK in December 2019, when the term Coronavirus was just a distant thought to India, I had already cautioned my hospital staff and started laying down strict protocols, to make the hospital COVID-19 ready. As part of the profession, it is my duty to be up-to-date about what's happening in the medical field. Initially, I just kept reading articles and reports about the virus affecting people in China, but as reports came from other countries as well, I tracked it as a global medical development. I realised instantly that this virus was a potential threat to the world at large and inevitable.

Even as I was writing down protocols for the hospital, Penguin reached out to me, asking me to write a book. But, I refused as I was busy preparing the hospital to deal with the novel Coronavirus. It was then that Penguin suggested I write a book on the pandemic.

That's how I wrote *The Coronavirus: What you Need to Know about the Global Pandemic*, which has been co-authored by my son Dr Swapneil Parikh [who is a physician] and Maherra Desai [who is a clinical psychologist and medical researcher].

They spent 18 hours every day writing, and the book was ready in two-and-a-half-weeks. This was written way before India was knocked out by the pandemic, and the book tapped into the scientific, historical, social, political and economic aspects of COVID-19.

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Even then I had realised that a vaccine was our only saviour in the pandemic and so, had formulated a chapter on treatment and vaccination. I made note of the paranoia surrounding this pandemic, and decided to curate a list of dos and don'ts and myths of the virus



AUTHORED INDIA'S FIRST COVID-19 BOOK

Dr Rajesh Parikh wrote the book along with his son Dr Swapneil Parikh, a physician, and Maherra Desai, a clinical psychologist and medical researcher. **PIC/PRADEEP DHIVAR**

a chapter on treatment and vaccination. I made note of the paranoia surrounding this pandemic, and decided to curate a list of dos and don'ts and myths related to the virus. Dr Desai addressed the misinformation, xenophobia, racism, and the concerning stigma associated with COVID-19 among other social evils, which played on

people's minds. Our efforts made the book a perfect guide to give people serious advice on how to keep oneself safe from the deadly virus, and attempts to picture the world after COVID-19.

It was first published online in April 2020, in the middle of the lockdown and the hard copy was made available only post July.

While we wanted to publish in other countries, with new information coming in about the virus every day, publishers were concerned if the book would get outdated. This was a very valid point. We all were aware that this virus was here to stay and over time, it would also mutate. Therefore, I

came up with an idea of attaching a QR code at the back of the book. When readers finish reading the book, they can scan the code and will get updated chapters of the book. We also gave them the option of being notified each time a new chapter was uploaded. We thought of doing this for a year.

There were many notable predictions mentioned in this book, out of which over 40 stood true. Today, the book is being translated into 24 languages across the world. I have also written another book, *The Vaccine Book*, which is also the first of its kind in the world.

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LAUNCHED FIRST RESTAURANT IN MUMBAI POST LOCKDOWN

Vishal Karia, co-owner of Epitome, was supposed to launch Epitome on March 19 last year. The venue opened to public on October 5. **PIC/ASHISH RAJE**



Vishal Karia, 45, Mumbai

Hospitality entrepreneur, co-owner of resto-bar Epitome

'October launch footfalls came as a pleasant surprise'

ANJUMASKERI

EPITOME was supposed to launch on March 19 last year, but the Coronavirus-induced lockdown derailed our plans. We postponed the opening to a later date, hoping that the lockdown would end in a matter of two months or so. It did not. When the curbs were finally eased and restaurants were allowed to operate eight months later, we jumped at the opportunity. There was no point waiting further—October 5 is when we opened our doors to patrons.

Prior to this, a group of staff

continued to stay at the restaurant, which thankfully is large. They didn't have a place to go to in the lockdown and we didn't want them to join the hordes of migrants whose plight was well documented. We asked them to spend those intervening months doing food trials at the venue. Which is why when we launched, we were fairly confident about our menu and what we are putting on the table. I was clear about our target audience: we wanted the crème de la crème. Because I belong to the Jain community, the food we offer at the lounge is strictly vegetarian.

I didn't have great expectations about the turnout on day one. I thought a few tables would be occupied, and these guests—acquaintances and friends—would arrive out of courtesy. To our surprise, the footfalls were impressive. People were fed up of being cooped up at home.

Despite the lull that Todi Mills in Lower Parel has seen since the 2017 Kamala Mills fire, I had my heart set on the location. The other notable establishments that once stood here had done phenomenally well. And I don't see why we can't do it again. If I'm not faring well, it's because I'm going wrong somewhere and not because of the location. Todi Mills has always had great walk-ins. We now have a reason to have them back.

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