

Pioneer in promoting beauty and health

VLCC was founded in 1989 by Vandana Luthra, a pioneer in promoting beauty, health and empowerment for women. It started off with a Transformation Centre in New Delhi, India and today it spans across 16 countries with over 300 locations across 121 cities. The founder was awarded the Padma Shri for her contribution to Trade & Industry in 2013. Vandana Luthra also featured thrice in Fortune Magazine's list of '50 Most Powerful Women in Business in India.' This week, Star Lifestyle caught up with her to know more about VLCC's story, how it came about, what it does and what the future holds for it.

We'd like to begin by understanding how the concept of VLCC came about. What incident or series of incidents made you think that something like this was needed?

It was in Germany that the seeds were sown for my future business. I was accompanying my father on his official trip to Germany where I met his friends - a husband-wife duo running a health centre in that country. Theirs was a great combination, with one being a nutritionist and the other a cosmetologist. They had a great influence on my decision to enter into the business of beauty and wellness. From the start, I was clear in my mind that whatever venture I get into should benefit society and be accessible to all segments. VLCC is a manifestation of that dream. The reason why I started VLCC was to make health and beauty accessible to all. So my transformation centre is open to everyone who needs any slimming, skin and hair related solution. That's the reason why most of our centres are located just off the high street, close to residential communities or in community centres within residential colonies.

VLCC had very humble beginnings-starting from a garage. This itself is a fascinating narrative. Along with this, what other challenges did you face?

I started VLCC with a simple dream. I wanted to create an environment where people felt supported and nurtured, where they would be encouraged to achieve their full potential. I envisioned a place that inspired people to be the best versions of themselves, for themselves.

Being an entrepreneur, that too in the late-eighties, was an uphill journey for me. Not only was the beauty and wellness services industry in its infancy, people were unwilling to take my work seriously as I was a woman. While people were familiar with the ubiquitous 'beauty parlour', the idea of a holistic wellness solutions provider which combined scientific weight management programmes with advanced skin and hair treatments was new. Being in what was largely an unorganised mom-and-pop shop kind of sector, I struggled to raise capital - private equity was a relatively alien concept, and banks were wary of something that was hardly deemed as scalable and sustainable

Initially, how did people respond to

VLCC and how is the reaction different now.

I had to be persistent and assertive to convince people about the value proposition of my business. It took a while to convince them that my venture had a scalable, sustainable business model. We worked on developing a unique business model for the company, one which is widely used

if she does not know the importance of nutrition, improve her children's eating habits and promote an active lifestyle, her children will grow up to have various health problems. Diet and exercise are equally important. But most importantly, people should be educated from childhood, because it's all about habits. VLCC is a global knowledge brand for wellness.



today (especially in the hospitality industry), called infrastructure facility management. That was the turning point in the business. Finally, patience and hard work paid off.

From what age must we begin instilling the notions and importance of wellness in our children?

Specifically, what lifestyle habits must we encourage/discourage?

Wellness is not a luxury, it is a necessity. A woman is the role model for her children;

Just exercising isn't enough. For me, health equates to happiness, which is equal to being a confident person. And slimming or, rather, looking good boosts confidence.

One of VLCC's biggest asset is the DNA Fit. How and why was this brought about?

A study on weight management conducted by Stanford University found that people who eat and exercise according to their genetic predisposition tend to lose two-and-a-half times as much weight as compared to those who do not. So, while a low-fat diet might work for some people, others might benefit more by including fat in their diet but going slow on carbohydrates. This explains why two individuals might obtain vastly different results by following a particular diet or weight loss plan even if their body mass index, or BMI, metabolic rate, body composition, lifestyles and dietary habits are more or less similar. This is why individuals on genotype-appropriate diets lose more body weight compared to those on diets not matched to their genotype or on a traditional, one-size-fits-all model. On this premise, VLCC started offering 'DNA Slim', a weight loss solution based on the genetic analysis of an individual.

Currently, VLCC is about to launch the Thermage technique. This is brand new for the Bangladeshi market. We want to know how this non-invasive procedure would work.

Thermage is a non-invasive radiofrequency therapy that can address the look and feel of aging skin on many areas of your body. Thermage treatments are customised to your needs, and typically require minimal recovery time. It restores the broken collagen.

How long would it take for the procedure to work?

The results appear only after two or three weeks; they are more permanent than other procedures. It is a great solution if you want your skin to look sleeker, smoother and younger, but can't afford a lot of time away from work or your social life.

Why is this service going to be important in the long run in terms of a person's health?

Aging affects us all the way we act, the way we feel, and definitely the way we look. But with advancements in skin care, you can have a say in the way aging affects your skin and maybe even get back to the way you looked not so long ago.

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