

Unnerved by pernicious ovarian cancer, yet smiling and standing unbeaten like a champion, Manisha Koirala has been setting a true example of courage and inner faith. Enwrapped by a philosophy of benign coexistence, she has earned a name for herself as a motivational speaker as well, alongside her almost thirty years' long ornamented career as an actor. On her sixth year of living a cancer-free life, the Bollywood diva shares her tales of hardship and wisdom with Star Showbiz.

Rafi Hossain: Thank you for giving us your time! How are you, Manisha?

Manisha Koirala: Thanks for having me. I am doing fine!

Rafi: I hope I am not wrong to put it this way that, you have been given a 'second innings' in your life. How do you feel about this?

Manisha: I do feel that I have been given a 'second innings' in life, which means a second innings to everything. A SECOND CHANCE FOR EVERYTHING! In my first innings, I did not realize that perhaps no human being is indeed prepared to acknowledge their own mortality. We see death as a particular phenomenon that happens to others, but we fail to grasp the idea that it is what is going to happen to us, too. And once we do comprehend that, it takes a huge toll on us. We are mostly complacent, thinking – 'So what, I can correct it next time!' But when you encounter your ultimate fatal fate, it hits you very hard. 'So all is going to go like that?' you wonder. Life is here, right now. But I may not have it forever. And so as long as I have my life, I want to be the best I can, in everything. Be it my work, my family, my friends, or be it any other possible equation with other human beings – I just want to grab life. I want to embrace it with both arms, and live to the fullest possible. This has been the philosophy so far for my second chapter in life. And interestingly, I feel that now I live a happier, and much more committed life than I did before.

Rafi: So you have been through a journey of learnings?

Manisha: Yes, absolutely, I have learned a lot throughout my phase of struggles. I think I had a lot of blessings from people, everywhere, for

which I am utterly grateful.

Rafi: I am sure writing a book on your intricate experiences has not been a part of the plan since the beginning. Tell us more about your coming up with the amazing literary piece.

Manisha: The reason I wanted to share my stories was because I realized that there must be many people who face such difficult hurdles and challenges in their lives. And there really is nothing for them to fall back on. Sometimes if they are lucky, they have a family and enough friends to help them share their sorrows, lend a hand to carry the burden life has put over them. But if they are not lucky, and there are many who are not, where would they go? My book *Healed* has initially been for those forlorn people. It is for people who are remonstrating their challenges all alone. A number of great books helped me to regain myself in the time of crisis. Rather often than not, I would be reading books on this matter. I have been learning how some people managed to survive after going through hell on earth, where did they find the courage, and what did they do that most other people fail to do in similar circumstances. So the basic target was to plant seeds of hope where it was necessary. I only hope that *Healed* will be able to form a slight novelty in their lives. Here I have to clarify that, it indeed is a book on cancer opening up my eyes for a new life, but the book is also equally on gaining a different perspective and seeing life from a different angle.

Rafi: Does it mean that you are not considering it as any sort of autobiography of yourself?

Manisha: Yes, it is not an autobiography. It is more like a tale of my lessons.

A light cast on the mistakes I made, and what I have learned from that. This book is about overcoming the restraints of your life, and being honest about it. It is about earning yourself an authenticity, and realizing that you can lie to the whole world but you cannot lie to yourself. It is a funny thing, that we lie to ourselves the most. In my book, I have discussed about owning up the self, if one wishes to attain a good life. So you can say that the book has a major take on character building. It intends to navigate the readers to lead to a fulfilled life. When I was lying in bed, sick, unsure of my fate, I used to ask myself, 'If I had a second chance, what would I do?' The beauty of life

is that, we all do make plans for the upcoming sunrise, although we are never sure whether we will be witnessing it or not in the first place. Everything hardly goes according to our plans. So we actually need to navigate ourselves to find out what works better for us, and how it happens to do so. Reality is always going to be unpredictable. The only thing I can do about it is being true to myself. It was that particular phase of my life when I had decided that, no matter what, I am going to be true to myself.

Rafi: Tell us, how do you see the '#MeToo Movement'? What are your thoughts on the impact it has left so far?

Manisha: I am completely in for women empowerment. I am in for safer work environment. I support punishing the criminals who are proven guilty of sexual harassments. Having said that, I have a huge question mark against the trial by social media and I am not sure whether it is fair or not. It has been just about time women stood up and spoke for their rightful demands. We must have a stronger support for this backed by the law enforcements. But accusing people out of nowhere on social media, according to my views, is not the most appropriate way. Things have to be justified before they are being made public. Justice should be equal for both a man and a woman. I believe in equality and justice, and I hope that prevails!

Rafi: Thank you so much! It has been a great pleasure to have you with us!

Manisha: Thank you!

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By Tasbir Iftexhar

