Now I Value Life, Relationships and People More Than Ever

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To my surprise and my family's and friends' shock, I was diagnosed with cancer in my right kidney in early 2014, at age 35. This happened a month after I ran a full marathon in Mumbai and a week after I played the first match of my organization's cricket tournament.

On February 27, I passed blood in my urine, which was an alarming situation for me. The initial blood, urine and ultrasound tests showed that everything was normal, hence no one was sure why I was passing blood. The other thing that worried the doctors was that I had absolutely no pain anywhere. But once the CT scan was done, the radiologist confirmed a large growth inside the kidney, a cancer called renal cell carcinoma (RCC). The growth was the size of a golf ball inside my right kidney and taking up more than half of it.

It was really a tough time for my family, since all the doctors were suggesting major surgery with a possibility of me loosing the right kidney. However, the final call about removing it would be made only on the operating table once the doctors had opened me up.

The biggest worry for me was the fear of losing me that I saw in my parents' and my friends' eyes. It became a motivating factor for me, since I had to stand in front of them and give them assurance that it was not a dead end and that I would soon be fine. After lots of preliminary tests conducted by various doctors, I was declared fit for surgery.

Finally the day came when the surgery was performed. As expected, the right kidney could not be saved and had to be removed, along with a ureter, lymph node, three arteries, four veins and some peripheral tissue. I experienced excessive bleeding during the surgery and had to be given more than two bottles of blood. Obviously, this increased the heartbeat of my parents and my well-wishers waiting to hear the news that all was well. Eventually I came out after a successful surgery.

I still have a long road ahead, since there are more tests to be conducted and I need to be monitored closely to ensure that the cancer has not spread to other parts of my body. This requires CT scans of the chest, liver and bones, which need to be done every three months for the next five years. A negative result may change the course of the treatment, but I am hopeful that

everything will be fine.

A month after surgery I was so low on energy that I needed to rest even after climbing two stairs. That was when I realized that this was taking away my mental as well as my physical strength, and that I needed to slowly start walking and regaining my confidence. I was terrified about the fact that two months ago I was running a marathon and now it was difficult to even stand for 10 minutes. But I held myself together, and after another three weeks I was able to stand and walk—although getting up to the same stamina took its own time. The key is not to give up at any stage.

I went back to running and completed a half marathon in November 2014, eight months after the surgery. I then went to Mumbai to complete another full marathon in January 2015. The next landmark was when I hit the cricket pitch at the end of January, 333 days after the operation, to play my first corporate tournament post-surgery. I cannot forget the welcome my team gave me when I joined them—and needless to say, I did not disappoint them and scored runs when my team needed them the most!

The purpose of sharing this story is that I found lots of cancer patients in the hospital who required help in terms of counseling. The disease takes a lot from you, not only physically and mentally but emotionally as well. The word “cancer” is so scary that some people tend to lose the battle even before it starts. I really consider myself lucky that God gave me a warning (since the bleeding happened only for two days and then stopped) and that I had a very supportive family and friends. I would like to contribute as much as I can and maybe help change someone’s attitude towards life. I strongly believe that if I can do it, why can’t they?

What is the most surprising thing you’ve learned about yourself?

That people really get inspired and look up to me because of the way I fought cancer, but I think I had no other option but to fight it.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Be positive and everything will fall into place.

Who do you admire most?

Yuvraj Singh and Lance Armstrong.

What drives you to do what you do?

There is one life and I want live my passions of riding, running and travelling, and at the same time help the needy. If you are able to motivate even one person, I think your job is done.

If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be?

Actually nothing. Cancer made me a better person, and for every mistake I made, I learned a lot and it helped me move ahead more strongly. Now I value life, relationships and people more than ever I did.

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