

Looking Ahead



Harshith Dharmadasa is the Director at Nawaloka Holdings, Managing Director of Ceyoka and Chairman of Millennium Housing Developers. He overlooks diverse sectors that range from medical to real-estate and agriculture. Hailing from a family that has shaped the business field in Sri Lanka, Harshith Dharmadasa continues that legacy by forging ahead, introducing new technologies and innovations for the benefit of the people of this country.

By Udeshi Amarasinghe. Assisted by Nawya Ponnampuruma

Nawaloka Hospitals is a respected name in Sri Lanka, and has always been the first to introduce new technologies in terms of medical facilities to the country. Can you elaborate on this?

I believe we revolutionised the health care sector in Sri Lanka, because until Nawaloka Hospitals came in and started the concept of having a fully multi-speciality hospital, previously many of the others were nursing homes. We were the first to establish a multi-speciality hospital in Sri Lanka. In terms of technology, we were the first to introduce the CT scanner and MRI to Sri Lanka in the late 1980s. We are still the leader in advanced technology and even today, we continue that trend, because if you look at the last five years, we introduced many firsts in technology in this sector. The resolutions and the imagining that we have are much superior to anywhere else in the country.

We introduced the first and fastest 640 Slice CT Scanner to Sri Lanka which was the first in South Asia as well. We introduced the first digital mammography which is painless. Many women do not test themselves because of the pain in relation to scanning. Therefore, we introduced a more advanced machine that is less painful for the patient. We introduced the fibro scan which is the only painless and non-invasive liver scanning machine.

I Believe We Revolutionised The Health Care Sector In Sri Lanka... We Were The First To Establish A Multi-Speciality Hospital In The Country.

In terms of surgical procedures, we performed the first cardiac surgery, first live donor liver transplant and the first lung transplant in Sri Lanka. We have achieved many firsts in this manner and we continue to maintain our standards because we continue to incorporate technological advancements in every aspect of our work.

Nawaloka is a full-fledged hospital with all medical and surgical units. Can you elaborate on the extent of Nawaloka Hospital?

Nawaloka Hospitals is multi-specialised therefore there is no sector that we are not involved in. I would say, from the OPD to the ETU we have cardiology, neuro, oncology, prenatal care, palliative care, geriatric care, pain management, skin care clinics and dementia clinics among others. We are basically focused on all the main specialities that all the major hospitals in the world have.

Nawaloka also has medical centres in selected locations. Can you elaborate on this?

The medical centres specialise in channelling and laboratory testing, while all other

major specialities are handled in Colombo. We have a 50-bed fully fledged hospital in Negombo.

We felt that as Nawaloka is known as the people's hospital, our customer base is from the entire island. There may be other hospitals and medical centres, but they prefer our brand. We decided to establish ourselves in other cities as we felt that it was time for us to go to the customer.

Nawaloka is also the first to provide online facilities such as bill payments and scan/report appointments. What was the thinking behind this and what other new facilities are in the pipeline?

We have customers coming from various parts of the country. As such we wanted to make it easier for the patients. That is why we wanted to have all these processes available online. One of the most recent things we are looking at is the PAC system, which is a patient archive and communication system. This is applicable for radiology products such as MRI, CT scans and X-rays where a consultant from anywhere in the world can access the records and make a decision immediately. We will be the first to introduce this system to Sri Lanka and it will help the patients in a great way. This will be launched this year.

A specialist centre is being constructed, can you tell us the services and facilities that will be offered at this centre?

It is a 14-storey building with an investment of three billion rupees. It will have 550 parking slots and most of our channelling services will be moved to that building. We will have a modular system where each speciality will be separated. We are expecting the building to be completed in April 2017.

Nawaloka Hospitals caters to all patient requirements; can you elaborate on the staff and the consultants?

From the inception we have had our own nursing training school. We have about 100 nurses passing out every year due to which we are proud to say that we have the best nursing care in Sri Lanka. We know this because the best specialists prefer to consult at Nawaloka because of our well-trained staff. Our Intensive Care Units are the best in the country. All the consultants that come here are the best in their respective fields and that is reflected in our channelling because we have the

highest volumes in the island.

What are your thoughts on the medical sector in Sri Lanka?

We have an ageing population, as such there is a dire need to cater to this demand. As the private sector we feel that we too should contribute to this need. That is why we launched our geriatric service, home nursing and elderly care.

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We feel that it's the right time for Sri Lanka to enter medical tourism. We are looking at government support as well in order to establish this sector. In terms of technology and consultants we have the best in world. Medical tourism is something we are very keen to look at.

You are the Managing Director of Ceyoka, which focuses on diverse sectors. Can you elaborate on the various areas and the services and facilities offered?

We have many verticals at Ceyoka. We originally started by being a pharmaceutical distribution company. Right now we distribute pharmaceuticals island-wide and we provide medical and diagnostic equipment as well. We also supply flavouring to the tea industry and engage in insulation and water proofing. Nawaloka Trading comes under the umbrella of Ceyoka and specialises in MEP concepts where we do large scale air conditioning projects for the commercial sector, solar power net metering and prime and stand-by power generators. We also provide lighting solutions

My Grandfather Started The Business And My Father Continued To Bring This Legacy To Greater Success. I Had Great Insight On How They Think And Behave. That Has Helped Me Greatly.

The company, Agro Business is into agricultural machinery and equipment such as tractors, water pumps, sprays, harvesting equipment, rotavators and any other requirement. Koala provides integrated solutions in furniture and interiors. We also provide lighting solutions.

All these sectors are doing very well and most of the companies are market leaders in their respective fields. We are happy with our performance thus far.

Millennium Housing comes under your purview as well. Can you elaborate on the projects completed thus far and the projects in the pipeline?

Millennium Housing was one of the first companies in Sri Lanka to build small townships. We started in Athurugiriya, and have completed up to 1,600 houses up to now. Ja-Ela is another venture where we have completed about 800 houses. We have also completed projects in Piliyandala and Homagama. In future we will look at further housing projects in Ja-Ela, Wattala, Homagama, Piliyandala and Siddamulla.

We recently embarked into the apartment sector as well. We launched our first project on Edmonton Road in Kirulaponne and it was sold out within the first two weeks. We commenced work on Millennium Nawala Road, Colombo 5 which is a 64-unit project.

With urbanisation and the increased demand for service sector employment, there is a great requirement for housing and apartments. There is great potential in the housing and real-estate sector.

How do you manage such diverse portfolios?

Partly thanks to my genes because my grandfather started the business and my father continued to bring this legacy to greater success. I had great insight on how they think and behave. That has helped me greatly. The other important aspect is that I have been blessed with an excellent team to work with and I feel that I have the ability to get the best out of them.

Soon after I left school while pursuing my further studies my father made me work in a company that was specialising in trading. Once I got involved in that I started working on the pharmaceutical distribution lines. After ten years I was appointed to the board of Nawaloka Hospitals. While on the board I worked on the acquisition of Millennium Housing and Nation Lanka Finance. We recently started the Nawaloka College and I am a part of that as well. We have many plans in that area as well.

I am passionate in everything I pursue and do and I always think win/win is the only way to continuity. I am passionate about my drive for excellence and this has made me set up successful businesses and partnerships, which have progressed and set up trendsetters to follow. I feel the business we are in like Healthcare, Education and Construction are in line with the future of the country. I am a patriotic person and I would like to do my part for the future generation.

Future plans?

Our focus is on the multi-speciality centre, which incurs an immense cost. Once that is completed we want to build more hospitals outside of Colombo. With the success of the Negombo hospital we want to introduce more hospitals in the outskirts of the country to take our care to them too. In terms of Ceyoka we are looking at establishing a pharmaceutical plant to manufacture our own pharmaceutical lines because we have been doing the distribution for about 15 years. We know the brands that can move, and then we want to go to the next phase, which is manufacturing. In agriculture we are carefully looking into the export sector; especially tea and spices. And in the housing sector we are looking at prefabricated housing, because with the shortage of labour it will save on construction time. We are looking very strongly at this sector. In terms of Nawaloka College, since a large amount of students go overseas for education, we want to bring a masters programme and full degree completion in Sri Lanka and save foreign exchange.