

The return flight



It was 10.15 a.m. on September 6, 2011. Capt. Ronald Nagar was waiting for his entry pass outside the Delhi High Court, when a bomb went off just outside the window issuing entry passes to senior citizens. The next moment, the 62-year-old pilot of Kingfisher Airlines found himself lying in a pool of blood. He was conscious, but totally disoriented as his ear drums had sustained a severe shock in the blast.

Nagar could not move his right arm and legs as pellets had shattered his bones. One nail pierced through his spectacles and fractured the orbit of his eye. Soon, a police van took him to the nearby hospital, where he was rushed to the ICU.

His wife, Kathleen, who was at home with their 13-year-old son, heard of the accident from their lawyer. "I couldn't think of anything but how to find him at the earliest, so I immediately switched on the television," she says.

In an hour, she located him at Ram Manohar Lohiya Hospital. The first thing she wanted to do was shift him to another hospital. "He needed immediate medical attention and there was a chaos at the hospital," says Kathleen. After a lot of legal hassle and paperwork, by afternoon, Nagar was brought to the Max Super Speciality Hospital, where he underwent a 14-hour-long surgery. The initial two hours went into cleaning the debris, nails and pellets that had pierced the skin on his face, legs and right arm. "That was the most critical phase of the surgery," says Dr Sunil Choudhary, a senior reconstructive surgeon at Max. "Even a minute residue of the blast can cause gangrene, necessitating the amputation of the limb."

The next 12 hours were critical. Doctors fixed his fractured

SANJAY AHLAWAT



Capt. Ronald Nagar, 62

Blast victim

What helped

Only the lower half of his body was injured. Efficient first aid and high-end antibiotics kept infection under control.

bones with 4 K wires (steel wires) and covered them with flesh and muscle grafts taken from his thigh. Then they put a platinum mesh to support the orbit and the socket of the eye.

The toughest part was to get Nagar walking again. Three weeks after the accident, when he was asked to get up from his bed, "he actually had a cold flash and fainted," says Choudhary. "But he did not give up. He tried after another two hours, and this time he walked."

His will power has paid off: Nagar now runs on a treadmill and drives his car. And every time he

does something courageous, he texts his doctor. "Keeping him informed gives me the strength to do better," says Nagar, who hopes to get into the cockpit soon.

Choudhary feels that in such complicated cases, the will power of both the patient and the doctor counts. Nagar had been strong-willed through the treatment and always believed that he would soon be back on his feet. And that inspired his doctor. "Nagar's messages motivate me to perform even better on such complicated cases," says Choudhary. "I often share his messages with other patients. He has become a role model." ●