

## **Celebrating a lifetime of ongoing achievement**

Celebrating Ketna Mehta is not a celebration of spinal cord injury, of building an institution, or of the many awards and accolades she has received. Celebrating Ketna Mehta is a celebration of exuberance, enthusiasm, and joie de vivre in its most unadulterated form.

From a very young age, Ketna was known for her love for the outdoors. It was no surprise to anyone, therefore, that on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1995, she was paragliding. What began as a rather characteristic adventure would become the adventure of a lifetime. An unfortunate accident led to Ketna becoming paralysed.

For a go-getter who could never sit in one place for too long to become dependent on those around her for even the most quotidian of tasks was a difficult reality to accept. In the months that followed, she learnt to manage this new reality and even insisted on learning how to climb the stairs using the handrails for support. A mere five years after her accident, Ketna had not only found her footing but had found the path she would follow for the next 20+ years. "I always had the support and love of my family to lean on," she says. "So I decided I would treat everyone like my family treats me." The seeds of Nina Foundation were sown in 2000, when Ketna came forward to sponsor a local sports tournament for paraplegics. Shortly after, the magazine One World was born in 2001 with the vision to enable, educate and empower people with spinal cord injuries (SCIs). In the years since, Nina Foundation has hosted Spinal Cord Awareness Days on 25<sup>th</sup> June, organised medical camps and weekly OPDs, offered peer mentorship, provided home-based and virtual rehabilitation services, and organised outbound programs like taking SCIs to places of worship. 2024 also marked the 17<sup>th</sup> year of Nina Foundation participating in the Tata Mumbai marathon!

If Nina Foundation's initiatives seem diverse, it is because they are. Unfettered by organisational limitations, Ketna's focus is simple – address all the gaps felt by persons with SCI in India today. Push her a little further and her response is far more personal. "I want Nina's heart to be in every person with SCI. I want them to have her hope."

Today, Nina Foundation is defined by its ethos. The organisation is singularly focused on impact, prioritising those who need it the most. Accompanying this focus on impact is an unwavering eye for detail. "When we plan an event, I make sure the security guard knows to smile at everyone coming in," she describes. Time and time again, it was evident that *what* Ketna does is only eclipsed by *how* she does it.

To celebrate Ketna Mehta's life is to celebrate innovation and resilience, and a vision to build a community around a shared mission. More than anything else, it is a celebration of curiosity, generosity and positivity. It is these traits that define Ketna. It is these strokes that paint her legacy.