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Shot in the hand, she got up and guided hotel guests to safety

Shweta Desai : Mumbai, Wed Nov 25 2009, 11:42 hrs



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At the sight of two men, dressed in black and with AK-47s slung around their necks, Dinaz Sharma's first instinct was to shut the glass door of Kandahar Restaurant at Oberoi Hotel.

Seconds after the hostess and manager tried, the gunmen shot at her and through the door, entered the premises and killed many guests. Sharma, though wounded, still guided many guests in her restaurant to safety.

"My first instinct was to save the guests and shutting the door seemed the only option," says Sharma. She not only saved many but came back to work on the third day, her arm in a sling.

On the night of 26/11, the Indian specialty restaurant was packed, all 82 seats occupied and some guests in queue. Sharma was attending to them when they heard loud thuds. "We thought it was loud crackers but then saw the two gunmen," she said.

Without a second thought, Sharma ran to shut the glass door. The gunmen saw her struggle and shot at her, exploding a blood vessel in her left hand.

Bleeding, she got up and took her guests to safety. She and other staff members ran towards the service entrance, down four flights and to Trident. Around 20 guests were not quick enough; the terrorists rounded them up to the 19th floor, lined them up and shot them.

Those who escaped were later taken to Regal Room and Sharma to Bombay Hospital. Taking seven stitches at Breach Candy Hospital, Sharma preferred to get back at work.

"She had her arm in a sling and the wounds were raw. We screamed at her but she insisted on working," recalls a colleague. "I couldn't stay at home at such a time," she says.

She is amongst the earliest women in the city's hotel industry, having joined Oberoi as a stewardess in 1972 at its coffee shop. While Oberoi and its restaurants are being reconstructed, Sharma is working at India Jones. "Oberoi is not a hotel for me, it's my home," she says.

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