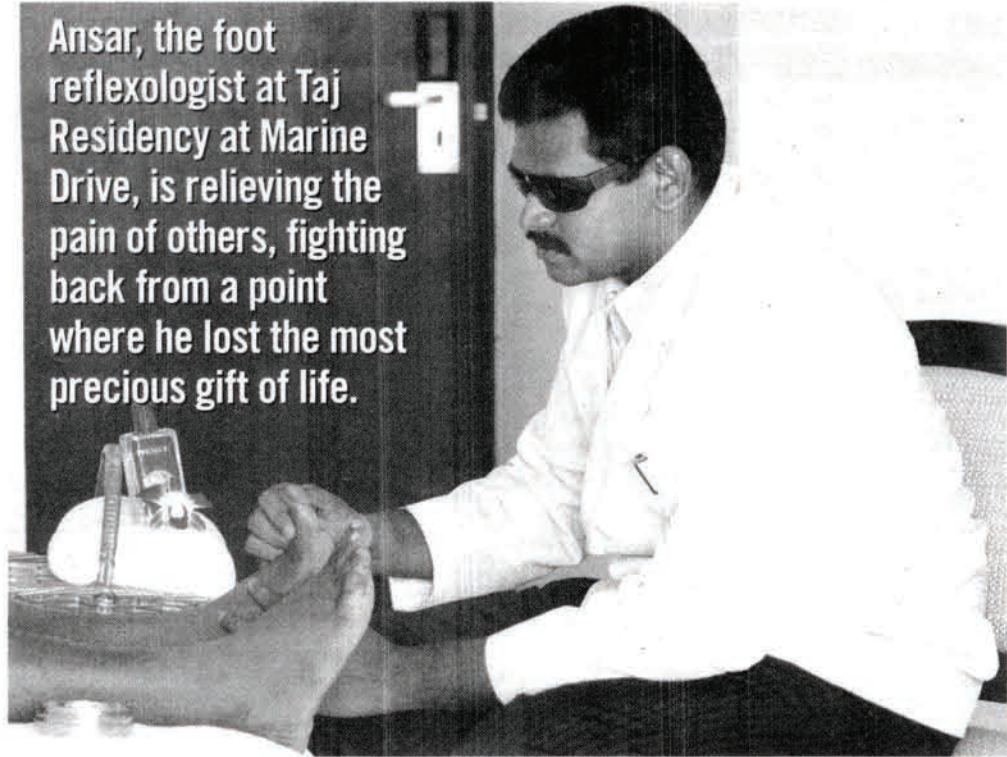


Ansar, the foot reflexologist at Taj Residency at Marine Drive, is relieving the pain of others, fighting back from a point where he lost the most precious gift of life.



Express: P.K. Rajeev Prasad

## Paradise regained

By Sudha Nambudiri  
Kochi, Dec 17

Turning blind one fine morning was a reality, hard to come to terms with for Ansar. But from there, he negotiated a tough terrain and is today bringing relief to others from physical pain! Ansar, the foot reflexologist at Taj Residency at Marine Drive, can massage your ailment away by working on the feet alone! His work requires supple hands and tremendous concentration, but he has picked the gauntlet with confidence. "My massage works effectively on those with sciatica problems, stomach pain, stress-related complaints and diabetes," he says.

A trained masseur in panchakarma, Swedish massage and yoga, Ansar had been working at ayurvedic centres when life took a cruel turn, making him blind. "God must have known that I would be turning blind in my twenties which was why he gave me this gift," says Ansar.

Ansar is on call for guests of the hotel and does foot massage in the

privacy of their room where the guest can feel relaxed. He has a basket which contains a lotion, a towel and a cream. "No medicine is applied. The solution lies in the way the foot is massaged," he tells, showing where the sensitive points of various parts of the body like sinus regions, sciatica, stomach, kidneys, shoulders etc reach beneath the foot." The massage extends from half-an-hour to an hour. "It is very helpful for those who are tired, unable to sleep and suffer from a jet lag or severe exhaustion."

He has been there at the hotel for a couple of months now and is already a familiar face among the guests. When he joined the hotel, Ansar walked around on all floors to find his way with the help of another guy. Now all he needs to know is the room number and he reaches there on his own.

"Many guests who are on business trips ask for my services whenever they come here," he says. Acknowledging his abilities, the Taj management has arranged a poolside facility for Ansar to do foot massages for

those who don't stay at the hotel. "Even people in the city can call up the hotel and avail my services at the hotel," he says.

So how does he manage life? "My timings here are from 9 am to 7 pm. I come from my home at Aluva by bus and get down at Menaka stop. There's always someone to help me cross the road and slowly I make it here."

Ansar talks of the days when he turned blind. "I caught conjunctivitis and my eyes developed an allergy to the medicine that was administered. Initially the eyes turned red but the complications took me to the point of becoming blind. For many days I just sat at home, frustrated and down, wondering how I would go on with life as a blind man."

He then got in touch with the Society for Rehabilitation of the Visually Handicapped (SRVC) and asked them to help him out with a job so that he could become independent. "It was through SRVC that I got an opening at the Taj group," says Ansar, spreading light all around him with a beaming face.

## Ansar's insight

Ansar was like you and me. Going about life with family, friends and colleagues. Trained as a qualified masseur from Jayendra Saraswathy Ayurveda College, Chennai, he worked in different ayurveda centres until the day he found that he had gone completely blind. "It was an allergy caused by a medicine I took when I was hit by conjunctivitis," he says. After the initial shock and depression, Ansar bounced back to life by becoming a foot reflexologist at the Taj Residency, Kochi. "I'm in my twenties and I've a long way to go," says the young man who always greets people with a smile. Ansar, who learnt foot treatment from a specialist in Mumbai, says "God must have known that I would become blind at some point of time. Hence he made me learn this art."



## the man with the magic hands

By Shevlin Sebastian

In C A Ansar's visitor's notebook, Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor wrote: "You are a remarkable human being and do your work with great care, hard effort, and good knowledge of what you are doing." Another entry is by Leslie Lewis, of Colonial Cousins fame: "You are very focused and dedicated to your work. God bless you!"

The man in question, Ansar, works at the five-star Gateway Hotel in the coastal city of Kochi. His speciality: foot reflexology. Some years ago, Ansar, 28, began suffering from redness in his eyes. Despite treatment there was a sudden deterioration. Soon, glaucoma set in, and Ansar lost his sight in 2007.

By this time he had learnt foot reflexology but fell into a depression. Fortunately, he met M C Roy, project head for the Society for the Rehabilitation of the Visually Challenged at Kochi. "I told Ansar he is young and there is no

point staying at home. There are many ways a disabled person can earn a living."

Roy met the general manager of The Gateway, and told him that because the young man was visually challenged he could do the foot reflexology in a customer's room. "The guest does not have to worry about his attire and could continue to enjoy his privacy," he says. So, Ansar was hired.

Today, two years later, on an average he has seven customers a day. Ansar spends an hour with each person. "And all are satisfied," says K S Reejesh, who is in charge of the hotel's health club. "He is known as the man with the magic hands."

Ansar's future plans include setting up a training school for visually challenged people so that they can learn foot reflexology. "There is a big demand and there are not enough people for the job," he says with a smile.

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