

WITH MEGAN DOHERTY

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To the top of the world - in a pretty sari

HAVE you spotted a walker making her way up and down Canberra's peaks in a sari on Sunday mornings?

It is Canberra child and adolescent psychiatrist Dr Anu Thirupathy, who is training to achieve a very specific goal.

The Yarralumla mum of two is trekking to the Mount Everest Base Camp in September - and intending to conquer it while wearing a sari.

Anu says the sari is an "elegant and timeless" garment that makes her feel like she's back in India when she's wearing it.

'I want to push myself out of my comfort zone'

Wearing one on her way to the Everest Base Camp (altitude 5364m), across rugged terrain and all kinds of weather conditions, is a personal challenge and a dream come true.

"The last few years, I've wanted to push myself out of my comfort zone," she said.

The 45-year-old also wants to "keep doing things that make your life interesting".

She's already run 10km in a sari in last year's *The Canberra Times* Marathon Festival.

And completed 100 consecutive days of running around her neighbourhood. No matter how tired she was after work or what the weather was like.

And she's pushed herself in other ways. Such as entering an international beauty pageant.

Anu last year entered the the Haut Monde Mrs India Worldwide pageant, finishing as a finalist in the competition in Dubai.

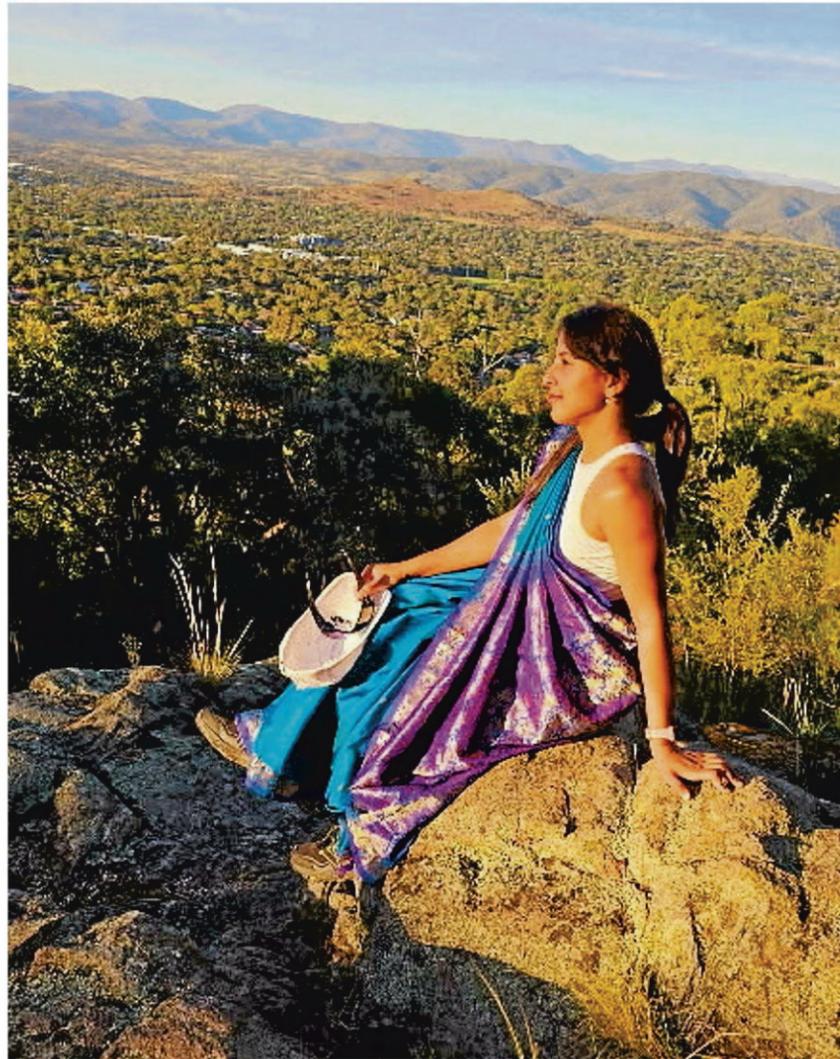
It was more than she ever anticipated.

"It was totally a different experience and quite an enriching one," she said.

"I learnt more about myself, about having confidence."

Anu and her husband, a Canberra anaesthetist, have a son, 15, and a daughter, 10.

Her training for the 12-day trek to the Mount Everest Base Camp includes a planned hike up Mount Kosciuszko to see how cold-weather clothes mix with the sari.



Dr Anu Thirupathy at the top of Mount Taylor in her sari. Pictures supplied

She's making sure to do everything she can to prepare.

"I want to enjoy the trek - not just survive it," she said.

Friends sometimes accompany her on her training hikes around Canberra - and she's starting to inspire them as well.

"A couple are thinking about going to do the Mount Everest Base Camp trek," she said.

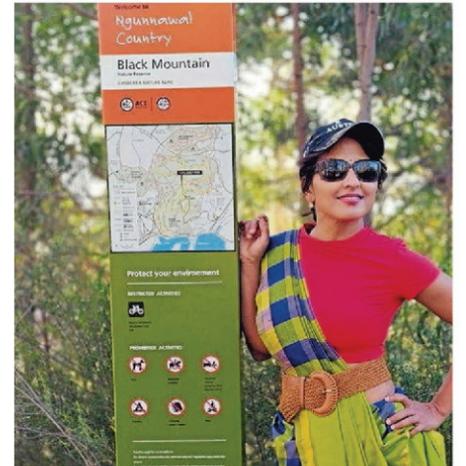
'Enjoy the journey'

In her work as a child and adolescent psychiatrist, Anu often tells her young patients to visualise goals.

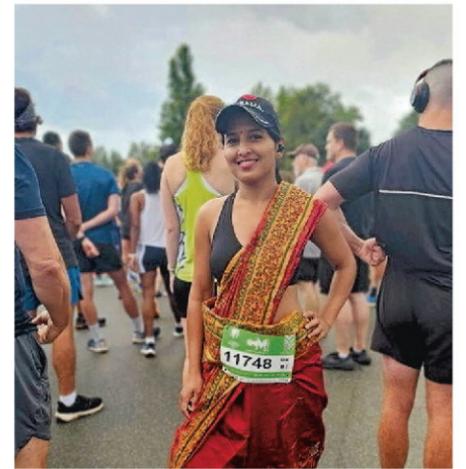
She also tells them it's not so much the destination, but the journey.

And she is enjoying hers, one step at a time. In a beautiful, colourful sari.

"Being alive is the greatest gift, so embrace every moment and celebrate life," Anu said.



Tackling Black Mountain.



This time running in a sari in The Canberra Times Marathon Festival.

Being alive is the greatest gift, so embrace every moment and celebrate life

Canberra child and adolescent psychiatrist Dr Anu Thirupathy

Queanbeyan's Ammar is NSW Pharmacist of the Year

QUEANBEYAN'S Ammar Altayib has been named the NSW Pharmacist of the Year. The father-of-four was awarded the honour by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia two decades after he fled Sudan looking for a better life.

Humble as ever, Ammar said he most wanted his award to show other migrants and refugees that success was possible in Australia.

"That's the most important thing," he said. "As well as making my family proud."

Ammar is now chief pharmacist at the Queanbeyan Hospital as well as working Saturdays at the Queanbeyan Pharmacy. He is also a leader in the Queanbeyan community, the "unofficial Imam of Queanbeyan", teaching Arabic and

leading prayers.

He was most recently nominated for a patient safety award from the Southern NSW Local Health District. Ammar fled to Australia from war-torn Sudan when he was 17.

He believes he is the only Sudanese-born pharmacist working in the public health system in Australia.

Ammar said being named the top pharmacist in NSW was an honour - and a responsibility.

"Beyond the joy and happiness, there is a lot of anxiety. There is a weight on my shoulders now," he said.

Being a role model and showing other migrants and refugees what was possible was important to him.

"I hope it makes them feel that they can contribute," he said.

"If they feel isolated or that they don't belong, they can see me as a role model and that they can have a successful career in Australia."

As well as everything else, Ammar is also a PhD candidate, exploring the future of health care in the face of Australia's ageing population.

That included the possibility of more in-home care and initiatives such as Urgent Care Clinics, to reduce the demand on hospital emergency departments.

Ammar will be speaking about his research at the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases annual scientific meeting at the Hyatt Hotel in April.



Queanbeyan pharmacist Ammar Altayib. Picture by Elesia Kurtz