

## **Dr. Raghu Ram Pillarisetti OBE**

*MS, FRCS (England), FRCS (Edinburgh), FRCS (Glasgow), FRCS (Ireland),  
FACS (USA), Hon. FRCS (England), Hon. FRCS (Thailand), Hon. FCSSL (Sri Lanka)  
Hon. Fellow, The Association of Surgeons of Great Britain & Ireland*

**Padma Shri conferred by Hon'ble President of India (2015)**

**Dr. B.C. Roy National award conferred by Hon'ble President of India (2016)**

**OBE (Officer of the Most excellent Order of British Empire) - appointed by  
Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II (2021)**

### **Contact details**

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### **Reference – Wikipedia page**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raghu\\_Ram\\_Pillarisetti](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raghu_Ram_Pillarisetti)

### **Qualifications**

**MBBS:** Siddhartha Medical College, Vijayawada, India - 1991

**MS (General Surgery)** - Kasturba Medical College, Mangalore, India - 1995

**FRCS (Edinburgh)** - 1997

**FRCS (Glasgow)** - 1997

**FRCS (Ireland)** - 1997

**FRCS (England)** - 2010

Fellowship ad eundem conferred by the Royal College of Surgeons of England

**FACS** (The American College of Surgeons) – 2014

**Honorary Fellowship conferred by The Royal College of Surgeons of Thailand**

Hon. FRCS (Thailand) – 2019

**Honorary Fellowship conferred by The College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka**

Hon. FCSSL (Sri Lanka) – 2020

**Honorary Fellowship conferred by The Association of Surgeons of Great Britain & Ireland** - 2021

**Honorary Fellowship conferred by The Royal College of Surgeons of England**

Hon. FRCS (England) - 2022

## Appointments

### Current:

- Founder, CEO and Director of Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation (2007 – present)
- Founding Director & Consultant Surgeon, KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases, KIMS Hospitals, Secunderabad, India (October 2007 – to date)
- Chairman, Academic Advisory Board, Administrative Staff College of India (2020)

### Previous:

- President, The Association of Surgeons of India (2020)
- International Surgical Advisor, The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (2012 – 2020)
- Convenor, International Affairs, The Association of Surgeons of India (2017 – 2018 & 2009 - 2012)
- President, The Association of Breast Surgeons of India (2015 – 2017)
- Founder Honorary Secretary, The Association of Breast Surgeons of India (2011 – 2013)
- Member, National Executive Committee, The Association of Surgeons of India (2013 – 2015)
- Joint Editor, Indian Journal of Surgical Oncology (2010 – 2014)
- Member, National Executive Committee (2009 - 2010) and Overseas Coordinator (2005 – 2008), Indian Association of Surgical Oncology

## The unique achievements of a visionary

Amongst the foremost surgeons in the Asia Pacific region, Dr. Raghu Ram Pillarisetti has revolutionised breast cancer care in India through a series of innovative measures. This disease ranks as the number one cancer among Indian women with around one in 22 women affected, half of whom will die from the disease.

He established **South Asia's First comprehensive Breast Health Centre** and founded a charitable Foundation to raise awareness of the disease nationwide. He implemented **South Asia's largest population-based screening programme** in the southern Indian states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh – this programme is currently being rolled out nationwide.

**Inspired by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India's digital India dream**, he developed the **World's First breast health mobile phone app** in **English & 11 commonly spoken Indian languages**, making women across the nation more aware about importance of early detection in a country where the subject is considered to be a 'taboo' – so far, it has been downloaded by thousands of people all across India. He launched the **world's first Life size augmented integrated reality for breast cancer awareness** to further achieve the mission to transform breast cancer from a "closet" issue to a much commonly discussed one, particularly in rural India, where more than 70% of our population reside.

He **adopted a remote village** in the southern Indian State of Telangana (Ibrahimpur), where he has provided life-changing equipment and facilities through his **personal philanthropy**.

He is one of the **youngest surgeons elected to have served as President of The Association of Surgeons of India (ASI)** for the year 2020, polling the highest number of votes and securing the biggest ever landslide margin in the 83 years history of the Organisation. ASI is **Asia Pacific's largest and the World's second largest Surgical Organisation** representing practicing surgeons and surgical trainees in India.

He was recognized in **Queen Elizabeth II's 2021 New Year's Honours** list that has been published in the "London Gazette" – the Official publication of the Crown on 30 Dec. 2020. He achieved the rare distinction of becoming **one of the youngest Surgeons of Indian origin in over 100 years** to be honoured by Her Majesty, The Queen with an **OBE – Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire**. This is the **second highest ranking Order of the British Empire award** (excluding a Knighthood) conferred in recognition of his outstanding services towards *"improving breast cancer care and surgical education in India and to UK/India relations"*. Instituted in 1917 by King George V, The Queens Honours are amongst the most prestigious awards worldwide.

In recognition of his outstanding academic track record, innovative initiatives that have transformed Breast healthcare in India & life transforming philanthropy in his adopted Village, he was conferred the prestigious **Padma Shri** by Hon'ble President of India (2015) making him one of the youngest surgeons to have been bestowed one of the highest civilian awards of the land. He is also one of the youngest Surgeons to be conferred '**Dr. B.C Roy National Award**' by Hon'ble President of India (2016), which is the highest recognition that can be achieved by a doctor practicing Medicine in India. He is the youngest ever recipient of the **International Gold Medal** in the 516 years history of the **Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh** (2013). He is one of the youngest to have delivered **Col. Pandalai Oration** (2018) instituted by The Association of Surgeons of India, which is the **highest academic honour that can be achieved by a surgeon practicing in India**.

Alongside many prestigious professional awards worldwide, he is a **Fellow** of the **American College of Surgeons** and **all four surgical Royal Colleges** in the British Isles - Edinburgh, England, Glasgow & Ireland. He was conferred **Honorary FRCS** by the Royal College of Surgeons of **Thailand** (2019) & **Honorary Fellowship** of the College of Surgeons of **Sri Lanka** (2020).

He achieved the unique distinction to become the **first surgeon of Indian origin in over 100 years** to be conferred with the **Honorary Fellowship of The Association of Surgeons of Great Britain & Ireland (2021)**, which is the single largest Organisation in Europe that represents the surgical fraternity in the British Isles. He also achieved the rare distinction to become the **youngest surgeon of Indian origin in over 400 years** to be conferred **Hon. FRCS** by the **Royal College of Surgeons of England (2022)**.

## The beginning of his life's calling

After completing his Basic Surgical Training in India, he went to the United Kingdom in 1997 and successfully obtained structured Higher Surgical Training and subspecialty training in Oncoplastic Breast Surgery at world renowned centres of excellence in the UK.

But in 2002 came a defining moment: his mother, Dr Ushalakshmi, a renowned Gynaecologist from Hyderabad, was diagnosed with breast cancer. The unexpected diagnosis of someone close to him, coupled with huge disparity in breast cancer care across India, became the turning point in his life. In spite of the fact that he had rewarding career opportunities in the United Kingdom, he relocated to India in 2007. Over the past 14 years, he has been working with missionary zeal towards bringing about revolutionary changes to the delivery of breast health care in the country where he was born and raised. His remarkable accomplishments whilst in the UK formed the starting point for his life in India.

He arrived home in 2007 with three goals:

1. To establish a dedicated centre for breast health.
2. To establish a 'not for profit' breast cancer foundation to create awareness about the importance of early detection & implement a population-based breast cancer screening programme with the specific goal of reaching out to the underprivileged community
3. To establish breast surgery as a subspecialty in India

He has achieved two out of these three aims and has paved the way for the third one.

### **1. Dedicated Centre for Breast Health**

Demonstrating extraordinary leadership, he conceived, designed and established **South Asia's first free-standing, purpose-built and comprehensive Breast Health Centre** in Hyderabad, the capital city of the southern Indian State of Telangana (2007). KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases ([www.breastcancerindia.org](http://www.breastcancerindia.org)) was established under the auspices of KIMS Hospital, which one of the largest Private Hospital group in South India. He designed the Breast Centre based on the best aspects of the Royal Marsden, Cardiff and Nottingham breast Centres in the UK and Van Nuy's Centre in the USA.

Clinical assessment, breast imaging, breast biopsy and counseling are all done in a unit that is dedicated to the management of all types of breast disease, both benign and malignant, by a committed multidisciplinary team. Named after his mother, KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases has made significant and meaningful difference to many lives for well over ten years, in addition to bringing about a revolutionary change in the way '**Breast Health Centre** is understood in the Indian subcontinent.

Just as a stethoscope is absolutely essential for a Physician in clinical practice, the Radiologist & Pathologist are the “eyes and ears” for a Surgeon exclusively practicing the art & science of breast surgery. His work experience in the UK has made him aware of the fundamental fact that a Radiologist trained Breast imaging & image guided procedures is the “nerve centre” for the Breast Centre. Therefore, well before returning to India, he facilitated training for his Radiology Colleague from KIMS Hospitals at the Breast Radiology division in St George’s University Hospitals NHS Trust, London. As 9 out of 10 breast health issues are not cancers, the essential function of the Breast Centre is to be able to reassure the vast majority of women who are ‘worried well’, in addition to diagnosing accurately and treating those who have breast cancer with evidence based protocols.

This happens through seamless “team working” between the Surgeon, Radiologist & Pathologist to provide best possible care to women presenting to the Breast Centre.

The first port of call for a patient at the Breast Centre can sometimes be a Radiographer who does the Mammography. Reassuring the lady who presents for the test and getting to understand the various nuances in positioning the patient and other related knowledge is very important. Recognizing this often neglected aspect, he had arranged for two Radiographers (who came in turns) from the Jarvis Breast Screening Centre in Guildford (one of the foremost Screening Centres in the UK) to train the breast radiographers at KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases.

Equally, in order to ensure quality assurance in Mammography reporting, he had also arranged for a senior Consultant Breast Radiologist from the same Centre in the UK to spend some time in Hyderabad to “double read” the first 950 screening mammograms that were reported by my Colleague at KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases. A specially designed Bus equipped with Mammography and Ultrasound machine was hired from his own resources. Meticulous coordination with various prominent work places in Hyderabad ensured that close to 1000 Screening Mammograms were performed in women over the age of 40 years in this mobile Bus over a three-month period between October – December 2007. **Mobile Screening was not new to India in 2007. However, large scale mobile screening in collaboration with one of the most respected breast screening centres in the UK, was the first initiative of its kind in India.**



*Mobile Breast Screening Unit. Radiographer from Jarvis Screening Unit, UK  
950 free screening mammograms over a three month period (October – December 2007)*

“Early detection of breast cancer” has been his focus from day 1. Well before relocating to India, he had convinced the KIMS Hospitals Management to invest in “early detection”. In 2007, KIMS Hospitals acquired **South India’s first & India’s second full field digital mammography system**. At that time, Digital Mammography Unit, priced at USD 260, 000 (ten times more expensive than conventional mammography system), was considered to be a revolutionary advance. The principal advantages being its ability to detect very early subtle changes in the breast particularly in younger women with dense breasts with much greater accuracy in addition to significantly less discomfort & minimal radiation when compared to conventional mammography system. As majority of breast cancers in India are diagnosed between 40 – 60 years, the Digital mammography Unit at KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases was not only the “talk of the town”, but soon became the ‘talk of the Country’. Several Hospitals & Diagnostic Centres across India, that were initially skeptical about this technology, soon embraced it wholeheartedly.

**Full Field Digital Mammography**  
**South India’s First & Second Unit in India**  
**(2007)**



Investing in technology is fruitful only when the “man behind the machine” is well trained. The eyes need to be trained to focus upon picking up early subtle changes on a mammogram. In an endeavour to empower Radiologists, Surgeons & Pathologists to develop greater accuracy in detecting early breast cancers, he invited Professor Laszlo Tabar, the world-renowned breast Radiologist from Sweden to conduct his highly sought-after three-day courses in Hyderabad. Professor Tabar is widely considered to be the ‘godfather’ of breast radiology, and is credited with having demonstrated for the first time the benefit of breast screening in saving lives through his landmark publications. His courses, which are normally held in Sweden and the USA, are extremely expensive.

Funds were raised to heavily subsidise the breast radiology training courses that were held for the first time in India (Hyderabad) in partnership with KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases and Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation, for three consecutive years in 2010, 2011 and 2012. **After these courses were held, the concept of Breast Radiology evolved in India, which led to the formation of a national organisation – The Breast Imaging Society of India (BISI)** in 2012, inspiring many radiologists across India to take up breast radiology as a career. This initiative has also paved the way towards improving standards of breast radiology services throughout the country.

Up until 2007, practicing the art & science of oncoplastic breast conserving surgery was at a nascent stage in India. During the late 1990s, this concept emerged as one of the most interesting and challenging advances in breast surgery, which involves removal of cancer, and equally, aims to ensure best possible cosmetic outcome in women undergoing breast conserving surgery. It has been his **earnest endeavor to popularize oncoplastic breast conserving surgery ever since the Breast Centre was established**. Women who underwent these procedures at KIMS Hospitals were very forthcoming in sharing their experience in public platforms, and equally, proactive support from the print and electronic media has enabled me to engage and empower the community at large about the fact that more women can indeed be offered breast conserving surgery with excellent aesthetic outcomes.

The Chapter on ‘Oncoplastic Breast Surgery’ published in the 32<sup>nd</sup> edition of Recent Advances in Surgery (the hugely successful & well established series edited by Irving Taylor & CD Johnson), which was reprinted in the Indian Journal of Surgery[12] set the tone for this new and upcoming subspecialty & techniques gaining widespread acceptance in India. Over the years, with active contribution from likeminded colleagues, oncoplastic breast surgery has become part & parcel of scientific programmes in major conferences all across the Country.



*Mrs Jeannie Mulford, Breast cancer 'conqueror' & Mr David Mulford, United States Ambassador to India interacting with Dr Ushalakshmi @ KIMS – USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases (2008)*



*Sir Richard Stagg, British High Commissioner to India and Mr Mike Nithavrianakis, British Deputy High Commissioner to South India @ KIMS – USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases (2011)*



*Sir Dominic Asquith, British High Commissioner to India interacting with patients @ KIMS–USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases (201)*



## 2. Breast Cancer Foundation & advocacy

### Advocacy

Breast cancer is the commonest cancer affecting women in India. Due to lack of awareness, absence of a robust nationwide population based breast cancer screening programme and inequitable cancer care, the vast majority present in advanced stages with poor survival. In many parts of the country, it is still a 'closet' issue that is not talked about. With a vision to make breast cancer an openly discussed one, and empower women about the importance of early detection of breast cancer in addition to spreading the message of Hope, Survival and Courage to those who have fought breast cancer, he founded **Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation** as a '**not for profit**' Charity in 2007 ([www.ubf.org.in](http://www.ubf.org.in)). To honour his mother's struggle & applaud her strength in the fight against breast cancer, the Foundation bears her name.

Right from day 1, the Foundation liaised closely with Breast Cancer Care UK (merged currently with Breast Cancer Now), Britain's largest UK-wide charity in providing information, care and support to people affected with breast cancer or other breast health concerns in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. I was able to incorporate all the successes of this widely respected UK charity into the Foundation's activities.

Under the auspices of the Foundation, he launched The "**Pink Ribbon Campaign**", which is a one of its kind large-scale breast cancer awareness drive across the southern Indian states of Telangana & Andhra Pradesh. For well over a decade (2007 – 2021), this impactful campaign spearheaded through a number of unique & innovative initiatives championed by the Foundation made a huge impact, creating the much needed awareness about importance of early detection.

No stone was left unturned in accomplishing this goal. Several celebrity breast cancer 'conquerors' & celebrities from all walks of life from India and abroad lent their support to this worthy cause. Over the past 14 years, the campaign has addressed more than 3,000 organisations across India and has been regularly featured prominently in print & electronic media.

### **Pink Ribbon Walk**

In order to take this campaign into the community, since 2008, the Foundation has been organising the 2 km Pink Ribbon Walk, which is held on the first Sunday of October to mark the beginning of international breast cancer awareness month. People from all walks of life, including breast cancer 'conquerors' and their families have been participating in these walks – the number of enthusiastic participants has been significantly increasing year on year, starting from a few hundreds in 2008 to several thousands in 2019. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the Walk was not held in 2020. A special effort is always made to involve women from a conservative background living in the old city. Over the years, this initiative has become a "benchmark annual calendar event" during the international breast cancer awareness month in Hyderabad and other cities and towns in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

After the Foundation introduced the innovative Pink Ribbon Walk in 2008, it is very gratifying that many NGOs and Hospitals in the region have embarked upon conducting similar programmes not only for breast cancer awareness, but for other illnesses as well, which also desperately need urgent attention. This speaks volumes of the “Pink Ribbon Campaign” that has enthused individuals, Organisations and Institutions to take up & spearhead impactful awareness activities.

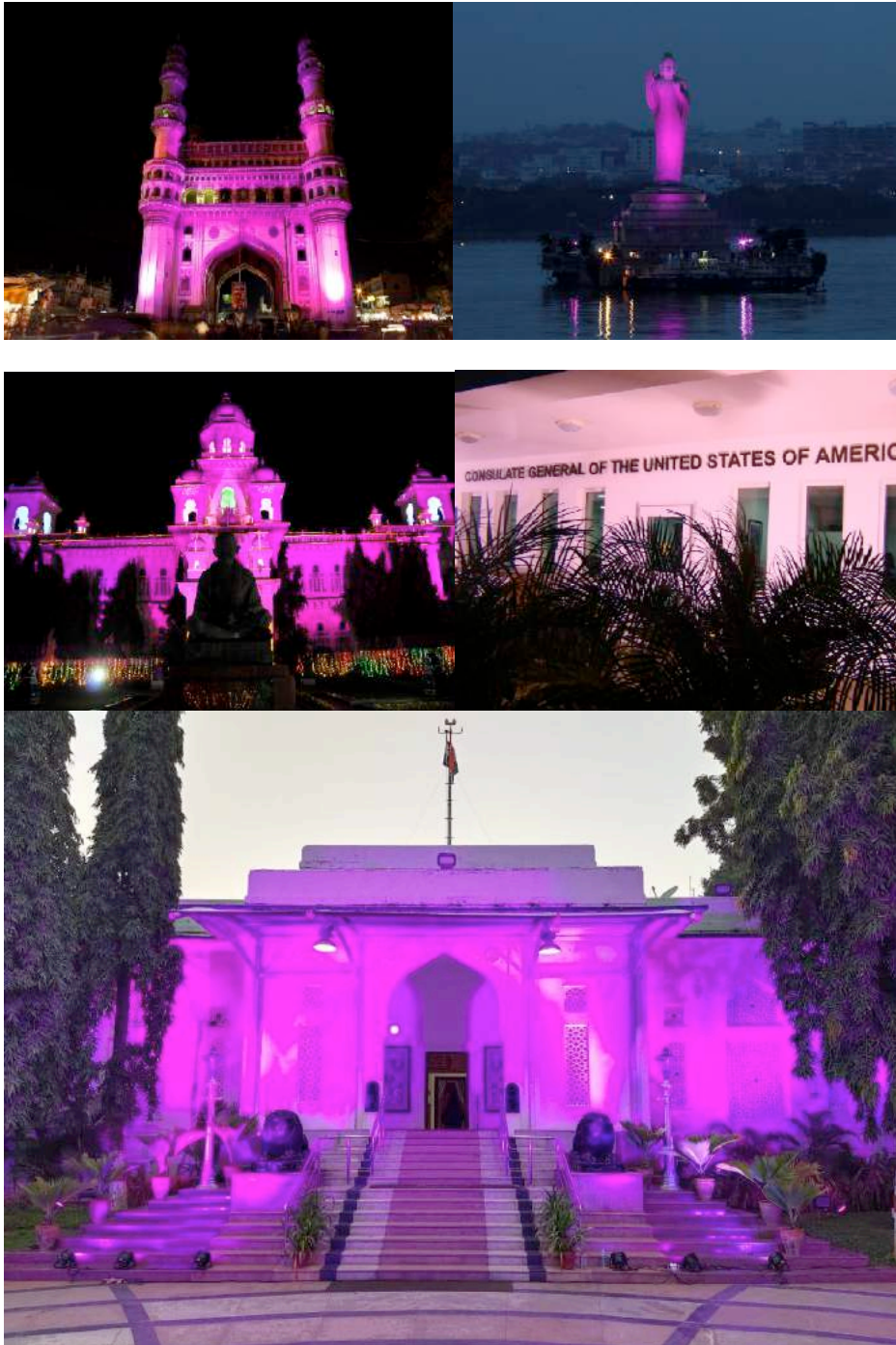


*Glimpses from Pink Ribbon Walks held in Hyderabad, Warangal, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam in October (International Breast cancer awareness month) – major cities and towns in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh (2008 - 2019)*

## **Paint the city Pink**

“Paint the City Pink” campaign was launched in 2010, in which the historic monuments and prominent buildings in Hyderabad are illuminated in pink to reinforce the message of early detection during international breast cancer awareness month. Over the past 10 years, the iconic 400-year-old Charminar, the majestic Buddha statue in the lake by the city centre, the IMAx theatre, US consulate building, Ravindra Bharathi (the state auditorium for public events), the 115-year-old Legislative Assembly (the seat of State legislature in Telangana) and Rajiv Gandhi International Hyderabad Airport (one of the largest airports in the country) turned pink in October.

Inspired by this impactful decade long campaign, the Hon’ble Governor of Telangana gave permission to the Foundation to illuminate Raj Bhavan in Pink on the last day of October 2020. Hyderabad is the only city in Asia pacific region where several monuments and historic buildings have been lit up in pink annually, consistently for ten consecutive years.



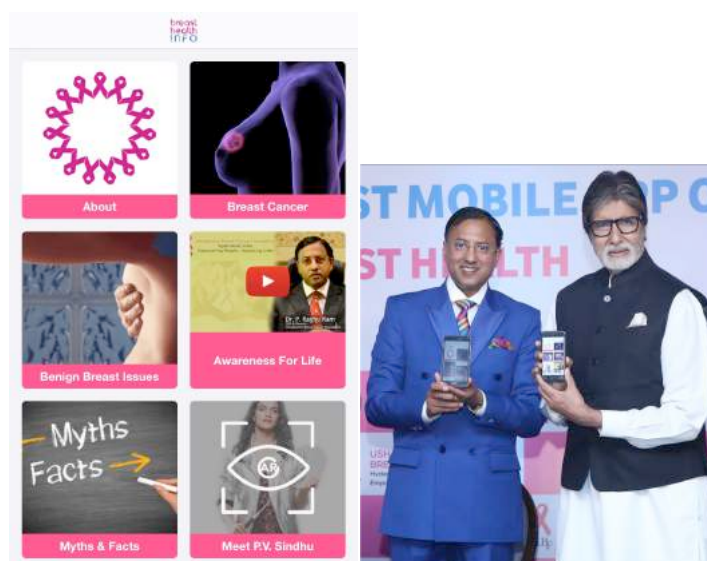
*'Paint the City Pink Campaign' (October) - Charminar, Buddha statue, Legislative Assembly, United States of America Consulate, Raj Bhavan & many other prominent buildings in Hyderabad illuminated in PINK during International Breast cancer awareness month (2010 – 2020)*

**Pink Ribbon Evening (2008 – 2020)**

Several celebrities & breast cancer 'conquerors' from all walks of life featured in annual editions of innovative 'Pink ribbon Evenings' organised by the Foundation during the month of October (International Breast Cancer awareness month), which attracted attention of the community to the cause of 'early detection'.

## World's first mobile app on Breast Health in 12 languages

Inspired by Prime Minister of India's dream of Digital India, the Foundation developed the **World's first mobile app on breast health** in English & 11 commonly spoken Indian languages (*Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali, Marathi, Oriya & Assamese*). The mobile application, "**ABCs OF BREAST HEALTH**", which is freely downloadable in both Apple and Google play store provides information about every aspect of breast cancer and benign non cancer breast health issues explained in simple easy to understand format. The aim of this landmark initiative, which was launched in 2017 is to counsel, guide & educate people across the nation about various aspects of Breast health so that they are well informed & better prepared, thus filling a huge void in breast health care in South Asia.



*World's first mobile app on Breast health launched by Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, one of India's icons (2017)*

### Links for free download



<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/abcs-of-breast-health/id1482487468>



<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=devatech.kims.avantari>

### World's first life size augmented reality for breast cancer awareness

As an adjunct to the landmark mobile app launched in 2017, in an initiative for the first time in the world, life size augmented reality technology has been integrated in the mobile app to spread the message of early detection of breast cancer to a large section of people.

This futuristic technology has a potential for the 'celebrity and doctor' to enter into people's homes and create awareness, without actually physically being present. Launched by P.V. Sindhu, a world renowned Badminton Star in 2019, the Foundation has been conducting breast cancer awareness sessions in rural India (where more than 70% of the population reside) through this creative effort.

## **Pink Connexion**

In yet another innovative initiative to spread the message of hope, courage and survival against breast cancer, and equally, to empower people about various breast health issues, the Foundation launched '**PINK CONNEXION**' – **South Asia's first quarterly Breast health newsletter**. Since August 2014, the Foundation has been reaching out to the nation through this innovative publication, both in print and online.

Every issue focuses mainly upon:

- *A breast cancer "conqueror's" story*
- *An article on Breast Health*
- *An inspiring feature*
- *'Something else that might interest readership from all walks of life*
- *A round up of the Foundation's quarterly activities*



*The First 'Pink Connexion' cover image featuring Dr Ushalakshmi, a breast cancer 'conqueror' who have given an inspiring account of her fight against cancer (2014)*

Other issues can be accessed from the website:

<http://www.ubf.org.in/home/Pinkconnctions/>

## **Screening**

There is robust evidence to suggest that Screening Mammography ensures early detection of early breast cancer with statistically significant reduction in mortality. Over the past decade, the impactful Pink Ribbon campaign has raised awareness about the importance of early detection in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, and consequently, the number of women presenting for Screening mammography has significantly increased in the region.

Whilst opportunistic screening (where women over the age of 40 present themselves for Screening Mammogram) must be actively encouraged, population based Screening mammography is not a viable option for India. Reasons are - enormous costs, early age at diagnosis (<50 years), huge variation in mammographic reporting and quality assurance issues. Breast Self Examination (BSE) is not a useful Screening tool as it cannot be standardized. There is considerable evidence to suggest that Clinical Breast Examination (CBE) performed by trained Healthcare Workers is a valuable alternative Screening method. CBE downsizes tumour size, and equally, provides an excellent opportunity to create awareness about importance of early detection.

Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation in partnership with the Governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh has implemented **South Asia's largest** Clinical Breast Examination (CBE) based Breast Cancer Screening Programme in rural Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, which has very limited access to Mammography services.

Underprivileged women in rural India are innately shy of doctors and reluctant to discuss anything as intimate as breast care. Therefore, the Governments of the two States were approached with a request to utilise the expertise of existing healthcare workers. Both the State Governments readily agreed to the proposal. Core trainers in both the states were identified and trained to perform CBE under the auspices of the Foundation. These core trainers further trained all other healthcare workers across the region. Specifically prepared audio visual aids in English & Regional language (Telugu) were used to empower Healthcare workers before imparting 'hands on' training.

### **Link to training film (English version)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjwcvePhROo>

Between 2012 – 2016, **200,000 underprivileged women** between the ages of 35 and 65, spread across **4,000 villages** in the region have been screened for early signs of breast cancer by way of CBE performed by 3,750 trained healthcare workers, employed with the Governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. 392 breast cancers detected through this initiative have been **treated free of charge** through the State Government-funded Aarogyasri scheme.

Typically, an awareness film is played out by Healthcare Workers to women assembled at the Village Community Centre in Regional language (Telugu) prior to undertaking CBE based Screening. The film, in simple language, explains the risk factors, symptoms, preventive aspects, basics of treatment & inspiring messages from breast cancer 'conquerors' and Healthcare workers.

Link to 'awareness film' (English version)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHlamm6SHz8&feature=youtu.be>



*Launch of the screening programme in Telangana by the Health Secretary, Government of Telangana (2012)*



*Launch of the screening programme in Andhra Pradesh by the Chief Minister, Government of Andhra Pradesh (2012)*



*Training & empowering women being educated in the Village Community Centre*

**This milestone project made national impact in 2016** and a high-powered Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Group (TAG) set up by the Government of India's Union Ministry of Health, of which he was a member, approved the proposal to implement CBE based Breast cancer Screening Programme all over India. This initiative is currently being rolled out nationwide.

### 3. Establish Breast Surgery as a subspecialty in India

Up until 2011, there was no dedicated Surgical Society that focused exclusively upon issues surrounding breast disease. Recognizing the need to standardize the delivery of breast healthcare in India, he garnered support from colleagues majorly practicing breast surgery and was the principal driving force in establishing **The Association of Breast Surgeons of India (ABSI)** in 2011, which is the First & only Organisation in South Asia that represents General Surgeons, Surgical Oncologists & Plastic Surgeons treating patients with Breast Disease. ABSI was established along similar lines to The Association of Breast Surgeons in the UK & The American Society of Breast Surgeons. The formation of ABSI ([www.absi.in](http://www.absi.in)) in many ways is the first step towards developing breast surgery as a distinct subspecialty in India.

Editorial: Indian Journal of Surgery – ABSI celebrating 10 positively eventful years

Link: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12262-021-03099-0>



#### **ABSI Training Module, ABSI-UK Fellowship Programme & ABSI Guidelines**

During his term as ABSI President (2015 – 2017), '**ABSI Training Module**' was launched in twelve cities and towns all over India. This pan India training module initiated in 2016 achieved the objective of imparting standardized teaching to trainees and surgeons regarding management of patients presenting with various breast disorders.

During the same period, he had also spearheaded the '**ABSI-UK Fellowship Programme**', which allows surgical trainees from India selected on merit to obtain 'hands on' one year subspecialty training in breast centres of excellence in the UK. Commenced in 2016, several trainees from India have completed their training in the UK & have since returned back to India.

In developing countries like India, there is a need to develop the guidelines to streamline the management of breast cancer. To address this issue, during his Presidential term, an expert panel was assembled to discuss and arrive at a consensus statement to provide community oncologists practical guidelines on the management of breast cancer in India. The mandate was to develop practical consensus recommendations applicable globally with emphasis on countries with limited resources. A Questionnaire was developed by a panel of experts from academia and ABSI, and these were in sync with the St. Gallen Consensus panel questions which suited to Indian needs and included limitations to evaluation, surgical treatment, surgical pathology, and adjuvant/neo-adjuvant treatment. Each question was projected to panel of experts and audience. Voting through 'voting pads' was done by both expert panel and audience simultaneously during ABSICON 2016 (annual conference of ABSI).



The survey answers were used as the basis for formulating the consensus statement. This **first of its kind initiative has been published in the Indian Journal of Surgery**, which provides ready-to-use practical consensus recommendations for breast cancer management.

*(Reference: Indian Solutions for Indian Problems - Association of Breast Surgeons of India (ABSI) Practical Consensus Statement, Recommendations, and Guidelines for the Treatment of Breast Cancer in India. Indian J Surg (August 2017) 79(4):275–285. Link - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5549057/>*

## **Academic contributions to the development of breast surgery**

In addition to publishing several **editorials** and **articles in peer-reviewed journals**, he has contributed **five chapters to four books on surgery**. Over the past two decades, he has delivered several Orations/Guest lectures, and equally, conducted various Symposia/Panel Discussions on various aspects of Breast Disease at National & International Meetings. His pioneering work in India has been recognised with invitations to deliver Key Note addresses/Guest lectures & Orations world over. The presentations focus upon the innovative & unique initiatives that he has been spearheading to improve breast healthcare in India.

- *American Society of Breast Surgeons (2014)*
- *Association of Breast Surgeons in the UK (2015)*
- *The Association of Breast Surgeons of Australia & New Zealand (2016)*
- *College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka (2017 – Tony Gabriel Memorial Oration)*
- *Royal College of Surgeons of Thailand (2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019)*
- *Malaysian College of Surgeons (2019)*
- *Philippine College of Surgeons (2019)*
- *Japan Surgical Society (2020)*
- *Chinese College of Surgeons (2019, 2020)*
- *Association of Surgeons of Great Britain & Ireland (2021)*
- *Royal College of Surgeons of England (2022)*

He achieved the rare honour of being invited to deliver the **Colonel Pandalai Oration** (Chennai, 2018), which has been instituted in memory of Col. Pandalai, the founder president of the ASI. This is the **highest academic honour that can be achieved by a Surgeon practicing in India**.

*He was handpicked to deliver several other prestigious orations in India, which include – Distinguished Lecture –US Chapter of International Society of Surgery @ American College of Surgeons annual Clinical Congress (2021), Dr. K.C. Mahajan Oration (2020), Dr. T.S. Jairam Lecture (2020), Dr. Lalit Mohan Oration (2020), Dr. Ram Bali Sinha Oration (2020), Berhampur Oration (2020), Dr. K.P. Prabhu Memorial Oration (2019), Madras Medical College Institute Day Oration (2019), Dr AK Chary Memorial Oration (2018), Dr. R. Prasad Memorial Oration (2018), Dr M.J. Mehtha Oration (2018), Professor C. Williams Oration (2018), Dr Kodali Varaprasad Memorial Oration (2017), ABSI Presidential Oration (2017), Satyapal Tuli Memorial Oration (2017), Ghatge Memorial Oration (2015), 'Dr TVS Chalapathi Rao Memorial Oration (2015), International Medical Sciences Academy Oration (2012) & Prof. Krishnamurthy Golden Independence Commemorative Oration (2011).*

## Improving standards of Surgical Education in India

### 1. Royal College Courses, Examinations and Training

In a determined effort to help surgeons from the Indian subcontinent prepare for the Intercollegiate final MRCS examinations conducted by the Surgical Royal Colleges, he has conducted twelve annual overseas courses in Hyderabad since 2000. Held under the auspices of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCS Ed), these courses have helped well over 2,000 doctors – ***the highest number of courses ever held by the Royal College outside the UK.***

Since 2008, he has been convening annually the Overseas Intercollegiate Final MRCS Examinations in Hyderabad on behalf of Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and Royal College of Surgeons of England, thereby sparing the need for doctors to visit the UK. **MRCS Examinations were held in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for the first time in the 500 years' history of RCS (Edinburgh) and RCS (England) – two of the oldest surgical colleges in the world.**

As International Surgical Advisor for the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, he has been providing strategic direction to the Royal College's academic activities in the Indian subcontinent since 2012.



*Dr Pillarisetti - Local Convenor with RCS England examiners at Intercollegiate final MRCS Examinations, Hyderabad (January 2018)*

In 2013, all the four Royal Colleges in the British Isles (Edinburgh, England, Glasgow and Ireland) announced the introduction of a new suite of Intercollegiate Fellowship Examinations for the international surgical community – FRCS (Int), which has the same standard with the existing UK/Ireland Intercollegiate Fellowship examination.

Based upon Dr Pillarisetti's track record, he was invited to host the first ever RCS Ed badged overseas course that prepares surgeons sitting the final component of the newly formatted FRCS (Int) examination. This three-day landmark course was held for the first time outside the British Isles at KIMS Hospital in Hyderabad (2013 and 2014)

2. Contribution to The Association of Surgeons of India (ASI) – the largest organisation in South Asia, representing close to 30,000 surgeons across the country.

Established in 1938, **The Association of Surgeons of India** is widely considered to be the 'voice for Surgery' in India. Starting from a humble beginning with 112 members, the Association of Surgeons of India has grown phenomenally and is currently the **largest surgical Association in Asia Pacific region and the second largest in the world** after The American College of Surgeons (which is the world's largest surgical body).

With Academics, Education & Training as his top priorities, he launched a number of skill based Courses for Surgical trainees during his Presidential term in 2020 (*ASI Basic Surgical Skills Course, ASI Critical Care Course, ASI Basic Laparoscopic Skills Course, ASI Anastomosis Skills Course & ASI Communication Skills Course*). 15 Courses were delivered in various parts of India over a three month period (January – March 2020).

In an earnest endeavor to enable trainees to present their work at international meetings whilst pursuing their MS/DNB Course, he has been successful in convincing key opinion makers and leaders in overseas surgical associations to create a time slot for trainees from India to present at their meetings. Arrangements were in place including funding for trainees to present at the 120th annual Congress of Japan Surgical Society in Tokyo (August 2020), 54th annual Scientific Congress of College of Surgeons of Malaysia in Penang (August 2020), 49th Annual Scientific Congress of College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka in Colombo (November 2020) and at the 106th Annual Clinical Congress of The American College of Surgeons in Chicago (October 2020). However, due to the ongoing pandemic, this initiative has been postponed to 2022.

In his capacity as Convenor, International Affairs for the Association of Surgeons of India (2017 – 2018), Dr Pillarisetti has played a key role in fostering a close relationship between the ASI and Surgical Associations all over the world. Since October 2017, in partnership with The Royal College of Surgeons of England, he has paved the way for many bright young surgeons from the Indian subcontinent, who have recently completed their basic surgical training, to obtain two years' 'hands on' advanced subspecialty training at centres of excellence in the UK through the Royal College of Surgeons of England's International Surgical Training Programme (ISTP) initiative.

Out of some 250 trainees who have applied thus far, 55 trainees from all over India have been selected for obtaining advanced training at various NHS centres of excellence in the following specialties – Breast Surgery, ENT Surgery, General Surgery, Neurosurgery, Plastic Surgery, Trauma/Orthopaedics, Urology and Vascular surgery.



*A joint initiative of ASI with RCS England - Empowering surgical trainees from all over India at this Session held in Hyderabad (Jan. 2018).*

With a focus on introducing and exposing surgical trainees from India to world-renowned surgeons in the UK, he successfully conducted a joint academic meeting of the Association of Surgeons of India in partnership with The Royal College of Surgeons of England in Hyderabad (July 2017) and with The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in Vijayawada (July 2018).

Eager to promote mutual academic, surgical and professional exchange, as Overseas Coordinator for ASI (2009 – 2012), he proposed and coordinated the formation of the UK and Ireland Chapter of ASI. It has brought together surgeons of Indian origin living in the British Isles and encouraged them to contribute actively to the academic activities of ASI.

He achieved the unique distinction of becoming the youngest surgeon ever from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to be elected onto the National Executive Committee of ASI, which is the highest governing body of the Association (2013 – 2015).

In 2014, he played a pivotal role as Organising Secretary in arranging the Annual Conference of ASI (ASICON 2014) in Hyderabad, which was attended by well over 6,000 surgeons from all over India and abroad. This Congress has been widely recognised by peers as the best organised Annual Conference ever held in the history of ASI.

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As Overseas Coordinator for IASO (2005 – 2008), he was instrumental in forging a closer relationship between IASO and the British Association of Surgical Oncology (BASO), the equivalent association for surgical oncologists in the United Kingdom.

### **COVID 19 Response @ ASI**

During the months of April, May & June 2020, in his capacity as President, The Association of Surgeons of India, he championed a major fund-raising movement raising over Rs 1, 25, 00, 000 (Rs 1 Crore 25 lakhs)) from the surgical fraternity and organised the procurement/delivery of the much needed Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for healthcare professionals across India, which was in acute shortage at that time. **UNICEF India invited him to feature in their COVID 19 awareness campaign and his message was posted on UNICEF India's social media pages on 20 April 2020.** In July - August 2020, in partnership with Amway India, he coordinated delivery of 12,000 hand sanitizers, which were made available to frontline healthcare workers in 47 COVID designated Government Hospitals in 16 cities and towns across India (Delhi, Amritsar, Jaipur, Lucknow, Mumbai, Pune, Indore Patna, Ranchi, Guwahati, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kurnool & Vijayawada).

In May 2021, to address the rapidly rising infections and deaths associated with COVID 19 in Rural India, he embarked upon the “**COVID-19 Pink Ribbon Mask Campaign**” in Telangana. The aim of this initiative is to ensure the much-needed protection from COVID 19 in rural regions of the State of Telangana, and equally, create awareness about importance of early detection of breast cancer through the ‘pink’ coloured cloth masks (a colour that represents breast cancer awareness). **20, 000 masks have been distributed to residents in all the ten villages in Narayanraopet Mandal (Siddipet) in Telangana.**

## **Personal Philanthropy**

At a personal level, he **adopted Ibrahimpur**, a remote village in the Southern Indian State of Telangana. Since 2015, he has championed a number of **life transforming initiatives** in the hamlet through a very generous philanthropic contribution (**USD 150, 000**), which attracted local, regional & national appreciation.

From his own resources, he provided:

- ❖ A study room to help the student community in the village prepare for competitive examinations, with state-of-the-art internet facilities
- ❖ A dining room at the village school, so students do not have to eat their lunch in the open compound, particularly during summer
- ❖ A modern crematorium, which is also being used by people from surrounding villages
- ❖ Home solar system, which provides reliable source of 100% free electricity to the poorest of the poor 26 homes in the village

- ❖ 46 sheds for all the 46 families with cattle; constructed in the outskirts of the village, these minimise cattle-borne infections in the community (a first of its kind initiative in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh)
- ❖ A community library, which provides access to newspapers, magazines, and books, in addition to an internet cafe for residents. This space will also be used to conduct targeted awareness sessions by community healthcare workers using the audio-visual facilities in the library.
- ❖ A community function hall that can host 200 people which can be used by residents of the village for weddings and other large family functions.
- ❖ A modern open Gym to ensure people exercise regularly and look after their health
- ❖ Funding of tuitions after school hours – a unique initiative to ensure the underprivileged school children secure good marks in exams.



. Dining room and internet access for the school, solar panels, new crematorium in Ibrahimpur



*Inauguration of cattle shed in the village outskirts, a first of its kind initiative in the state of Telangana by Mr Harish Rao, Honourable Cabinet Minister in Ibrahimpur (2018) Top right – Dr. Pillarisetti and The Minister with one of the cattle shed beneficiaries*

## The Swachh Bharath' campaign, aimed at making India clean

Inspired by a letter written by the Prime Minister of India in September 2017 urging Dr Pillarisetti to dedicate some time to 'the Swachh Bharath' campaign, aimed at making India clean, he spearheaded a **cleanliness drive in his adopted village - Ibrahimpur**, which is now considered to be one of the cleanest villages in the state of Telangana. The village has received many local, regional & national awards for cleanliness by the Government of Telangana.



*Dr. Pillarisetti at work alongside residents of Ibrahimpur in ensuring a swachh (clean) village (2017)*



## Letter from Prime Minister of India



प्रधान मंत्री  
Prime Minister

New Delhi  
09 September, 2017

**Dr. Raghu Ram Pillarisetti ji,**

I am writing to you on a subject that is very close to Mahatma Gandhi's heart- *Swachhata* or cleanliness.

In the coming days, we will commemorate *Gandhi Jayanti*. An inspiration to billions across generations and borders, Mahatma Gandhi recognized that our attitude towards cleanliness also reflects our attitude towards society. Bapu believed in achieving cleanliness through community participation.

Bapu also believed strongly that *Swachhata* is for each of us to practice. Inspired by his noble thoughts, and a faith in the spirit of 125 crore Indians, let us renew our pledge towards cleanliness. **Let us ensure that the coming days are about living the Mantra of 'Swachhata Hi Seva.'** Leading up to *Gandhi Jayanti*, we can encourage wide spread support for, and participation in cleanliness initiatives across India.

**A clean India is the most noble service we can do for the poor, downtrodden and the marginalised.** Unclean surroundings adversely impact the weaker sections of society even more.

Your contribution to the field of medicine has helped the nation attain distinction in the healthcare sector globally as well as provided relief to the ailing. Your involvement in the cleanliness initiative would be instrumental in building a clean and healthy India.

I personally invite you to lend your support to the '*Swachhata Hi Seva*' movement and dedicate some time for the cause of a Swachh Bharat. Your participation will further inspire others to be a part of the movement. You can share your experience with me on the Narendra Modi Mobile App.

Let us all come together for cleanliness, pay a fitting tribute to Bapu and work towards building a New India.

Jai Hind!

Yours,

(Narendra Modi)

## Other Philanthropic initiatives

Over the past 14 years (2007 – 2021), he has made several other substantial contributions (**USD 100, 000**) towards various charitable initiatives as outlined below:

- ❖ Government of Andhra Pradesh towards implementing the population based Breast Cancer Screening for underprivileged women in the State (2012).
- ❖ Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation towards treating underprivileged women affected with breast cancer (2007 – to date).
- ❖ Red cross Society towards installation of water purification system in Narasimhapuram village (Nalgonda District, State of Telangana), which is one of the worst affected Village by endemic Fluorosis, a disabling chronic condition affecting teeth and skeletal system (2012).
- ❖ Flood relief fund to Red Cross, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Staff flood relief fund at Association of Surgeons of India in Chennai (Tamil Nadu State in India) and to rehabilitation of earthquake victims in Nepal (2009, 2013 & 2015).
- ❖ LV Prasad Eye Institute – a world renowned non Governmental not for profit Eye care Centre primarily located in Hyderabad with 176 branches spread across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The donation was made towards subsidizing treatment for non-paying underprivileged patients in rural areas and towards an active ongoing Research Programme (2016).
- ❖ In an endeavor to reach out to the permanent office staff serving The Association of Surgeons of India for several years, from his personal resources, he procured a robust Health Insurance policy for them & their immediate families and pledged to annually renew the policies for the next five years until (2020 – 2025).

## A life in film

Dr Nikhil Kaushik, a consultant eye surgeon based in Wrexham (United Kingdom), was inspired to make a Bollywood film about Dr. Raghu Ram Pillarisetti's life. The film, '*Bhasvishya - The Future*', centres on the bold decision taken by Dr. Pillarisetti and his wife, Dr Vyjayanthi, to relocate to India, despite having settled status and lucrative career opportunities in the UK. It explores the broader issue of medical migration between India and the UK.

Exactly ten years after its release (2016), the film was celebrated again at a red-carpet event in Hyderabad (India).

Dear Editor

## Medical Migration

International Medical Graduates provide much valued service to the NHS in the UK. Most overseas graduates come to the UK for training and plan to stay here for a short period but then opportunities open up for permanent career posts and settlement in the UK. Balancing personal and professional opportunities between the comforts of a developed nation versus the challenges one may have to face on return to their homeland is never easy.



There are many who return to their homeland. There are some who return but then come back to the UK because of the inability to adjust to a system that is so differently executed that one is unable to adjust to. There are a few who carefully weigh up the choices between a promising career in the UK and the harsh reality of hard and competitive professional life in countries such as India.

It has been a decade since I explored professional migration between India and the UK, in a Bollywood style film, "Bhavishya-The Future". Drs Raghu and Vyjayanthi, active members of the North Wales division of BIDA was one such couple, who carefully considered and weighed up their choices, with Raghu being on the verge of being appointed a Consultant Surgeon and Vyjayanthi pursuing a career in the field of IVF. Their thoughts and considerations were reflected in the screenplay of my film.

Raghu and Vyjayanthi have been back in their native Hyderabad for over a decade now and have been involved with the state of the art KIMS hospitals, with Raghu having conceived and designed and established KIMS-USHALAXMI Centre for Breast Diseases, the subcontinent's first free standing purpose built comprehensive Breast Health Centre, while Dr Vyjayanthi heads the single largest fertility Centre in Telangana & Andhra Pradesh.

I was pleasantly surprised to be invited to a symposium focusing on Professional migration, acknowledging Drs Raghu and Vyjayanthi's dedicated service and celebrating a decade of the film "Bhavishya-The Future". A well attended symposium, on the 14th April 2016, heard from several participants from medical as well as other professions, detailing difficulties they faced on return to India as well as the joy of being back home. Most speakers highly valued their association and time spent in the UK.

As I left Hyderabad hearing so much good about the British NHS, I wondered why we in the UK are not very satisfied with it. Why many of our senior professionals feel marginalised and junior trainees feel undervalued. In despondence many are considering resigning and emigrating. I wonder if those leaving the UK, will possibly return and bring to the NHS something like what Drs Raghu and Vyjayanthi took with them from the UK to India. Their example and the message from my film 'Bhavishya-The Future', that the Future is not a fixed point and that medical migration is and will always remain relevant to the benefit of global health!

Mr Nikhil Kaushik

FRCOphth  
Consultant Ophthalmologist  
Wrexham Maelor Hospital



1ay 2016

**Letter to the Editor, BIDA News Review, United Kingdom, May 2016**

## Conclusion

Dr Raghu Ram Pillarisetti's distinguished academic tract record, love for his motherland and passion for social service are very strong characteristics of the Man. He has been an advocate of best practices in his chosen field, coupled with a human touch and many altruistic values. His significant contribution towards improving breast healthcare and surgical education in India through his strong links with the United Kingdom, have been his trademarks.

Announcing his return to India in 2007, Dr. Pillarisetti stated:

*"I would like to echo JF Kennedy's words to his fellow Americans that relate to Indians through a very poignant and thought-provoking speech given by late Dr Abdul Kalam, the former President of India – **'Ask what we can do for India and do what has to be done to make India what America and other Western countries are today.'***