

# PINK CONNECTION

UBF

Issue 39: Oct - Dec '24

**Dr Kotha  
Ushalakshmi**

A Guiding Light

**Museum  
of Meenakari  
Heritage**

shimmers in  
Jaipur

**Making wishes  
come true:**

Geetanjali Chopra



# BEHIND The Scenes

I find all over the world we are losing the human connection. In America, where I was visiting recently, I found friends and family don't connect in any meaningful way at all. I thought it strange when my daughter told me that grand-parents have to make an appointment and seek permission from their daughter or son to visit their grand-children! They would drop off food at the door, never daring to intrude on their children's privacy.

In India, we don't think twice about dropping off kids at their grand-parents so that they can be fed. Or, a fond grand-mom will drop in with favourite food for her daughter, and stay over to help her with the housework.

In the US, young couples think of it as interference if you so much as rearrange the cushions in their home! We have so many factors going against us in the country, the chaos and the indiscipline but one thing is for sure, as individuals we are not lacking in humanity. We always go that extra mile for the family.

I take the example of Dr Raghu Ram and his wife Dr Vyjayanthi, who left their lucrative careers in London to be with his parents, especially with his mother, who was then diagnosed with breast cancer. When you commend him on how well he took care of his mother, Dr Raghu Ram only smiles and says, they took care of me when I was young, now I have to take care of them.

How blessed are parents to have such a son, and how blessed he is, to be able to care for his parents in their sunset years! Dr Raghu Ram also points out that his two sons are lucky since they got to interact with their grand-parents. The values they imparted to them are surely beyond any academic learning.

*Pink Connexion* mourns the passing away of the indomitable Dr Ushalakshmi, a benign presence of the Foundation and all that Dr Raghu Ram undertakes.

Ratna Rao Shekar



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DIARY

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# My Indomitable Mother



For Dr Raghu Ram, his mother Dr Ushalakshmi was the inspiration and motivation behind a one-of-a-kind breast cancer magazine 'Pink', as well as for many of his innovative ventures in breast cancer care. She will, however, continue to be his guiding light for 'the show must go on'.

Here, he pays a moving and heartfelt tribute to his late mother



सत्यमेव जयते

प्रधान मंत्री  
Prime Minister

New Delhi  
आश्विन 25, शक संवत् 1946  
17 October, 2024

**Dr. P. Raghu Ram Ji,**

The news of the passing away of your mother, Dr. Kotha Ushalakshmi Garu has left me with a deep sense of grief and sadness. The loss of a mother is an irreparable one.

As is said, 'मातुर्लोके मार्दवं साम्यशून्यम्', the tenderness of a mother's heart is unparalleled in this world.

A dedicated and empathetic gynaecologist, Dr. Kotha Ushalakshmi Garu retained an abiding commitment to further the health and well-being of women. She touched countless lives through the manner in which she treated and healed people.

Dr. Kotha Ushalakshmi Garu was deeply caring and sensitive. The warmth and kindness with which she nurtured and nourished the family will always remain etched in everyone's heart.

I am sure that she will continue to live on in memories. She will always be fondly remembered by one and all.

In what is truly the most difficult phase in your life, I convey my deepest condolences and sympathies. My thoughts and prayers are with the family, well-wishers and admirers.

May you be blessed with the fortitude to bear this grievous loss.

Om Shanti!

(Narendra Modi)

## BEHIND The Scenes

We live in cynical times. We are suspicious of people around us especially those in public life like politicians and doctors. We expect all politicians to be devious and less than honest, and we suspect doctors exist not to cure and comfort but to make money out of us by prescribing unnecessary procedures.

My experience of politicians is limited but having edited a magazine for doctors in the past, I have nothing but admiration for doctors who go to great lengths to help a suffering patient. I believe, medicine is not a profession but a calling and one becomes a doctor because you want to be there for someone in pain.

I know many physicians who have gone beyond their work to set up institutions and foundations. Right here, we have Dr Raghuram a well-known surgeon, a brilliant one at that, who returned to India after seeing the scarce facilities available for breast cancer patients. It was at this time his mother, Dr Ushalakshmi, a gynaecologist was diagnosed with breast cancer. Apart from rescuing his own mother, he wanted to save other women by early detection and cure. With that singular idea, he put his money and efforts into setting up the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation (UBF) and is today, a prominent figure in Hyderabad for his efforts in raising awareness for his cause. Incidentally, he is among the few breast cancer surgeons in the country.

As the editor of a newsletter published by Dr Raghuram, my praise of the good doctor may be suspect. But I admire him for aiming to reach gynaecologists with this 'pink' newsletter. In his words, it will be the first point of contact for a patient with breast cancer.

Maybe, we should set aside our all-pervading cynicism in a material world, and acknowledge the goodness of people like Dr Raghuram! Good people doing good work do exist in quiet corners of our world.

Ratna Rao Shekar



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*Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi autographs the editorial page of the inaugural issue of Pink Connexion (August 2014)*

**A**mma, who has been my guiding force, left this world in October. It does seem like it is a coincidence that she passed away during the breast cancer awareness month—a campaign that has been very close to her heart over the past 22 years, ever since she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

She made me realise through her breast cancer journey that I'm meant to be in my motherland, India (Bharat) and not in the UK.

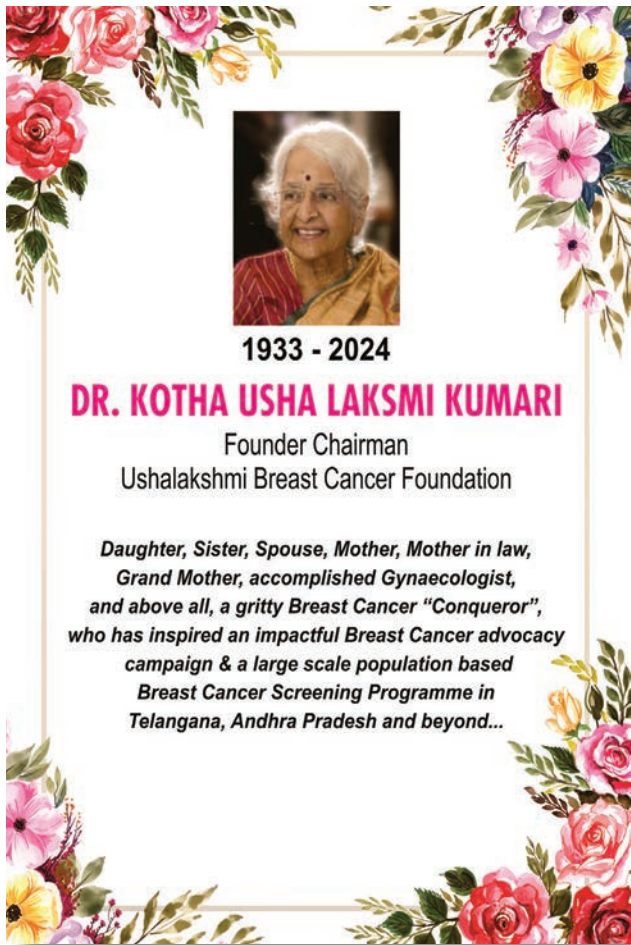
Her name is attached to both Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation and KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases at KIMS hospitals, for which, I have been showered with all the divine blessings.

Undeniably, the 'body of work' done in Amma's name through the Foundation and the Breast Centre over the past 17 years, has disrupted breast cancer care in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and beyond.

And, as for me, I got my identity through the work done in her name.

I distinctly remember the glow on Amma's face when Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi recently autographed the editorial page of the very first quarterly issue of *Pink Connexion*, which was first launched ten years ago.

In the run up to the breast cancer awareness month 2024, Chief Minister of Telangana, Anumula Revanth Reddy had



1933 - 2024

**DR. KOTHA USHA LAKSMI KUMARI**

Founder Chairman  
Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation

*Daughter, Sister, Spouse, Mother, Mother in law,  
Grand Mother, accomplished Gynaecologist,  
and above all, a gritty Breast Cancer "Conqueror",  
who has inspired an impactful Breast Cancer advocacy  
campaign & a large scale population based  
Breast Cancer Screening Programme in  
Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and beyond...*



**REFLECTION**

Was it the echo of my land and the imprint it cast  
Or, was it the fag end of my search that would no more last...

Was it all that I gathered, all that was so material  
Had today lost out to the clarion call that stood so immaterial...

The discovery of purpose of life happened  
when the cause found the voice in my mother's illness...

The harder I tried to hold the call within  
the stronger the urge to "Go" delved in  
They all told me not to go  
for, I could see what they could not...

It wasn't about what I have  
It was all about what I didn't  
It wasn't about what I have done  
It was about what I could have done...

At the end of the day, when I celebrate LIFE  
it's not about what I did...  
It's going to be all about what I wanted to do and DID!!!  
For I am a traveler with a skill  
and shall move with a destined will...

Paths are laid and made  
It's time debts of my land need to be repaid  
To serve those who need my hand  
reaching out deep in my far away land...

I held my immaterial tight -  
my skill, my knowledge, my experience ...  
and consciously let the material slip by  
for a Mother & Motherland that meant far more to me...

Without my life partner's support  
this vision would never have materialised...

Do I have words to thank Lord almighty?  
I salute my parents & Vyjayanthi  
who transformed my dream into reality...

**RAGHU RAM**

*My 'poetic' thoughts in a far away land (UK) after deciding to relocate to India,  
when my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer (2007)*

**PINK POWER RUN**



Dr Kotha Ushalakshmi being felicitated by Revanth Reddy—Chief Minister of Telangana and Mrs Sudha Reddy—chairperson, Sudha Reddy Foundation

felicitated Amma for inspiring a transformative breast cancer advocacy movement in the Telugu States, and that day was a special one.

Vyjayanthi and I feel extremely fortunate that our children, Sai and Krishna, have had the unique opportunity to experience the warmth of Amma's affection.

Truly, the greatest legacy that anyone can leave behind is to positively impact the lives of others. Amma's glorious life well and truly epitomises this statement.

Link to a Reflection celebrating Amma's 91 positively eventful years...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwYf0s5xVNU>



**M Venkaiah Naidu**  
@MvenkaiahNaidu

The demise of renowned gynaecologist & obstetrician Dr. Kotha Ushalakshmi recently, has saddened many of us who knew her & her eminent oncologist-son, Dr. Raghuram well. Incidentally, a brave breast Cancer survivor, Dr. Ushalakshmi left for her heavenly abode during the the Breast Cancer awareness month (October), a cause which she championed ardently over the past 22 years

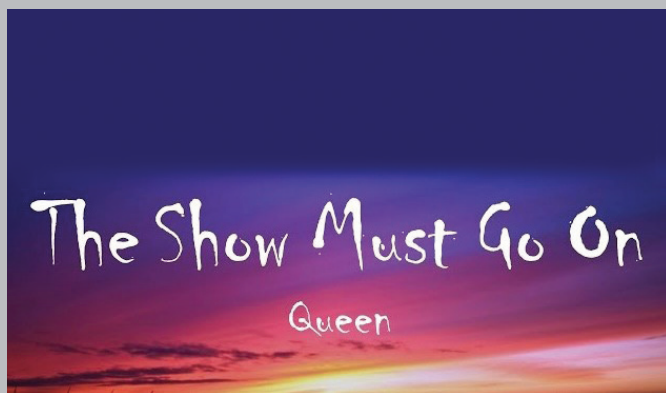


Dr. Ushalakshmi founded the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation, a 'not for profit Breast cancer Charity in September 2007 with a vision to empower women & educate them on the importance of early detection of Breast cancer & establish a population-based Breast Cancer Screening Programme.

Her worthy son, Dr. Raghu Ram, a Padma Shri awardee, Founding Director of KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases at KIMS Hospitals & CEO, Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation left his lucrative career opportunities in the UK & relocated to Bharat & has been serving his motherland with dedication for 17 years now.

Treading in the footsteps of his distinguished mother, Dr. Raghu Ram stands as an inspiration to younger generation of doctors.

*M Venkaiah Naidu, former vice-president of India's remarks on X*



### The Promise

I believe the good work must continue, the show must go on...

I shall work to the best of my abilities in taking forward the 'body of work' done in Amma's name with even more determination and focused actions. And, that's a promise I make to her indomitable soul.

**Dr Raghu Ram**

# Geetanjali Chopra:

## Sprinkling smiles, blessings and good cheer



Geetanjali Chopra, an academic working for a reputed think tank in Delhi, gave it all up to start an NGO—Wishes and Blessings—to help people fulfill their wishes, even if it involves celebrating a birthday or a festival like Holi. Her NGO also helps children access education and women suffering from domestic abuse.

**Nivedita Choudhuri** catches up with this inspiring social worker

**G**eetanjali Chopra's aim is ridiculously simple. She wants to spread blessings and fulfill the wishes of under-privileged by connecting them with donors. Since its inception in 2014, her NGO—Wishes and Blessings—has transformed millions of lives and made a lasting impact on many belonging to the economically weaker sections of society in the country.

So, what motivates this extremely approachable and affable academic turned social worker? Chopra, it seems, is purely driven by the need to provide positive change in society.



Chopra seems to be purely driven by the need to bring about positive change in society

### Lasting impression

Born into a Punjabi family in Delhi, Chopra had a normal childhood. “I was not born with the vision of establishing an NGO. However, birthdays and festivals such as Holi and Diwali were always spent with children from a school for the visually impaired,” she recalls in a conversation with *Pink*.

“One incident left a lasting impression on my mind when I was eight or nine years old and I had gone to the school for the visually impaired. This child tugged at my heartstrings when she asked *mera birthday kab hoga?* I was puzzled, as I had always taken birthdays for granted. Birthdays meant cakes, parties, balloons. How can a child not know when their birthday is or enjoy all the stuff that goes with it, I wondered,” she recounts.

I truly believe that every soul deserves happiness and happiness is not just an effect but a cause that we work for. The various treats, cultural outings and trips provide short-lived but immeasurable happiness to the under-privileged. The moment when a child cuts a birthday cake – perhaps for the first time in their life – provides a joy like no other

“I went to the school for the visually impaired year after year with my grandfather, ML Chopra. Then, I lost him in 2012. I was struggling to come to terms with the loss. I had to go back to the school though for my *dadu*. It was an overwhelming moment for me but I fought back my emotions and asked the children if I could do anything for them. I was taken aback totally when the children said they wanted to play Holi,” shares Chopra, who was a Fellow at the Think Tank Centre for Policy Research in Delhi at that time.

She was perplexed by the request as the children were nearly 90 to 100 per cent blind. However, she went about finding donors who could fulfill this request.

### Vision for life

Chopra says, “There was also a question at the back of my mind that was nagging me—why have they asked me, I thought. Anyway, I sent out messages on Yahoo Groups to colleagues. Within a short while, my desk in office was flooded with envelopes full of cash. Somebody had left a message that read: Go for it—we are with you.”

“I bought coloured powders, Frooti and *gujhia* from the money that had been donated. Then, I went to the school for the visually impaired and the children were able to play Holi to their hearts’ content. This was in March 2014. I experienced pure bliss such as I had never experienced before. It was truly an eye-opening moment for me. The blind children had actually given me my vision for life,” she says.

“Organising Holi celebrations for visually impaired children is the most interesting wish I have fulfilled so far. In fact, I was

not really a fan of Holi but became one after this incident,” points out Chopra.

At the back of her mind, plans started to take shape. She knew now that she wanted to set up an organisation that can help people fulfil their wishes.

Her parents were “perplexed” by this “wish” of hers and her decision to switch careers. She had graduated from Lady Shri Ram College for Women—Delhi University and had followed that up with a masters degree in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU).

She had a PhD from JNU as well and degrees in law from Utrecht University, Holland and San Remo, Italy. The enterprising lady was teaching, researching, writing books and worked as a journalist as well.

Chopra remembers, “My family wondered why I wanted to give up everything I had worked so hard for to achieve and start something new. Eventually, they came around and Wishes and Blessings took shape in April 2014.”

#### **NGO takes shape**

She has been associated with the NGO full-time since 2016. Headquartered in New Delhi, Wishes and Blessings has nearly two dozen centres spread across six states and they work on a range of issues, including elderly care, food security, education, etc., besides making people’s wishes come true.

Headquartered in New Delhi, Wishes and Blessings has nearly two dozen centres spread across six states and they work on a range of issues, including elderly care, food security, education, etc., besides making people’s wishes come true

“One of our initiatives is ‘Birthday Manao’. Somehow, the question from the visually impaired child on when their birthday had left a lasting impression on my mind. I went back to the school for the visually impaired and identified children whose birthdays were coming up. Then I made arrangements for their birthdays to be celebrated. My team and I believe that happy moments should not be confined to a privileged few,” Chopra says.

Through their other initiatives such as Movie Dates, Special Treats and Festive Celebrations, Wishes and Blessings helps to satisfy the wishes of the disadvantaged sections of society.

She adds, “The Special Treats come under the umbrella term we have coined called Happiness for All. I truly believe that every soul deserves happiness and happiness is not just an effect but a cause that we work for. The various treats, cultural outings and trips provide short-lived but immeasurable happiness to the under-privileged. The moment when a child



*Geetanjali Chopra*

cuts a birthday cake—perhaps for the first time in their life—provides a joy like no other.”

Providing accessible education to deprived children and those with disabilities is another goal of Wishes and Blessings. This is accomplished by a string of programmes such as Street to School, Journey to a New Class and Sponsor a Childhood. There are success stories galore.

#### **Street to School**

Rita (name changed), a child of a couple who are daily wagers, grew up on the streets of Delhi. Wishes and Blessings found her near one of their day care centres and took her under their wing. She was given quality education, wholesome food and opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities under the Street to School programme. Soon after she enrolled, Rita developed a liking for football. After undergoing training for many years, Rita now plays football at the national level.

“The Street to School initiative is one which makes a child who has grown up on the streets ready to attend school. Such children may find it difficult to adjust to their new surroundings if they are admitted to school directly without any prior training. The Street to School initiative teaches them to hold a pencil, use a toilet, write, etc.,” says Chopra.

Another initiative is the Daily Meals Programme, under which 2,000 hot and nutritious meals are provided three times a day in schools, orphanages and residential homes. Ration kits are provided in areas where hot meals can’t be served. So far, more than 70 lakh meals have been served to beneficiaries.

#### **Customised requests**

Protecting the elderly from abuse is another cause that the NGO takes up. To this end, two old-age homes have been



*Protecting the elderly from abuse is another cause that the NGO takes up*

established in Delhi and Vrindavan as part of the Mann ka Tilak scheme.

Customised charity requests are also dealt with, keeping in mind the specific wishes of the donors and beneficiaries.

For instance, once a benefactor—out of personal reasons—wished to support a diabetic child. The programmes are not limited in their scope and they can be transformed to support genuine ideas and needs.

Through its empowerment programme, Sahas, survivors of domestic abuse are given help. Tailoring, stitching and other skills are taught to survivors of abuse, who are encouraged to rebuild their lives and chalk out their own paths and achieve economic independence.

Wishes and Blessings has done invaluable work in providing relief intervention. Providing help during Covid, or during extreme temperatures in winters and summers, floods and natural or manmade disasters, the NGO is always at hand. For instance, ambulances were provided during the Covid relief operations and there are cool sherbet drives to slake the thirst of parched souls during hot summers in Delhi.



*My team and I believe that happy moments should not be confined to a privileged few, for every soul deserves happiness, says Chopra*



Caps, sweaters, shawls and jackets are provided to the needy during chilly winters. In over 10 years of operation, the NGO has implemented projects in Delhi and states such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan, spreading more than 60 lakh smiles in the process.

### **Challenges galore**

Of course, the journey has its challenges. She points out, "There seems to be a trust deficit in social work per se. Sometimes, I get asked 'why only women' if a project is aimed at women only. Sometimes I feel I should consolidate but then there is also a desire to reach out to more beneficiaries and create more smiles. I am very well supported by my father, a chartered accountant, who advises me on financial matters. My husband also pitches in to help with regulatory issues." A dedicated team also helps Chopra to stay on course to be able to fulfil her life's mission—to spread cheer and happiness all around.

In the end, Chopra says, "I feel blessed that I have been able to fulfil wishes. It's a satisfaction that I cannot describe in words." ■

# Paying ode to Meenakari craft

HERITAGE



The newly-opened Museum of Meenakari Heritage (MOMH) in Jaipur has been curated by well known jewellery designer Sunita Shekhawat and historian Dr Usha Balakrishnan. In this museum, which is one of its kind, you can find exquisite meenakari reproductions, soak in the spellbinding magic of an age-old technique and embark on a captivating journey through centuries of artistic mastery

**Mallik Thatipalli**

Photographs Courtesy: The Museum of Meenakari Heritage, Jaipur

Turban ornaments studded with a stunning combination of gemstones and enamels, bird pendants from the mid-18th century and enamel boxes inlaid with precious stones – these are just some of the eye-catching pieces of jewellery on display at the newly-opened Museum of Meenakari Heritage in Jaipur.

Founded by jewellery designer Sunita Shekhawat as a state-of-the-art permanent gallery that preserves and celebrates the rich tapestry of meenakari, this is a one-of-its-kind preserve of a traditional Indian art form.

Conceptualised and curated by scholar and art historian Usha R Balakrishnan, this museum pays homage to the mastery and skill of countless artisans who have carried this art form through centuries. It is then little wonder that it took five years for the museum to come to fruition.

#### The museum

Spread over 2,200 sq ft, the collection includes over 120 reproductions of jewellery pieces along with 300 images obtained from 15 museums across the world including the British Museum, the Al-Thani Collection, Victoria & Albert Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art among others.



The museum is housed in Shekhawati Haveli, a hand-carved structure with a Jodhpur red sandstone facade. Designed by Siddharth Das Studio and built by Studio Lotus, the MOMH's architectural grandeur complements its artistic treasures, offering visitors a sensory feast for the eyes.

The haveli itself is shaped by Rajputana, Mughal and Art Deco influences with handpainted ceilings and latticed jharokhas (carved windows).

This pioneering initiative aims to showcase meenakari or enamel work, an ancient Persian craft that thrives in Jaipur, celebrated for its vibrant and elaborate designs adorning metal surfaces such as gold and silver.

#### A time-honoured craft

The art of meenakari or enamel work is an age-old technique known for its vibrant and intricate designs on metal surfaces. While enamel work originated in Persia, it has flourished in India, particularly in Rajasthan where it has been passed down through the generations and got deeply embedded in the region's artistic legacy.



The art of meenakari or enamel work is an age-old technique renowned for its vibrant and intricate designs on metal surfaces. While enamel work originated in Persia, it has flourished in India, particularly in Rajasthan





Building a dream: Digvijay, Sunita and Niharika Shekhawat, the founders of the museum share a passion for the meenakari craft



## Design Dialogues: Painting Meets Enamelling

In the ateliers, painters often collaborated closely with goldsmiths, architects, sculptors, weavers and other artists. As such, the designer, or *chitera*, who laid out the motifs to be enamelled was often the miniature artist. The painting on top portrays the Bijapur Sultan Ibrahim 'Adil Shah riding a horse on a hawking expedition, with a lush landscape and two cranes in the background. The painting at the bottom, also from Bijapur, depicts a young man seated in an open landscape featuring a craggy mountain and a white palace in the distance. Both these scenes frequently appear in Bijapuri painting.

The pendant attributed to the Deccan, was possibly made in Bijapur. It showcases an oval nephrite jade tablet encased in gold, displaying two birds perched on a branch adorned with leaves and three Chinese clouds above, all embellished with carved rubies and emeralds. The gold reverse is decorated with a blend of painted, *champlevé* and *basse-taille* enamel, portraying a horseman and a lion in a landscape with palaces and craggy hills. The foreground depicts a river or green grass with cranes and ducks. Several plant forms are engraved in the gold ground under the translucent green enamel of the river, while the landscape and rider are engraved in the gold ground under the translucent green enamel of the river, while the landscape and rider are enamelled in opaque white, with outline details painted in black and yellow. The striking resemblance between the paintings and the enamelled scene on the pendant is conspicuous.

The landscape motif may have come from European sources, such as Dutch and Portuguese prints and paintings that could have reached the Deccan via Goa. The jewel's design is reminiscent of sixteenth-century European hat badges that were popular at the time.



The stunning interiors of the Museum of Meenakari Heritage

The art form of meenakari employs vitreous glass to decorate jewellery. The manner in which Indian artisans have drawn designs and motifs from nature, developed their own palette of colours and painstakingly beautify jewels with enamel is special. The process is detailed, time-consuming and requires an immense amount of skill and knowledge.

In a chat with *Pink*, historian Dr Usha Balakrishnan explains, "The beauty of wearing a piece of jewellery decorated not only with gemstones but with an entire garden of flowers and birds on the back is really special. It binds the wearer with the natural environment. Meenakari stands out, because the manner in which it is done in India is unique and special and not done anywhere else in the world."

The museum plays a crucial role in both preservation and documentation through meticulous study of the physical artefacts, archiving historical styles and motifs, and the recording of oral histories related to the craft. The range of objects on display and their design – from sarpech (turban ornament) to kada (bracelet) or the paandaan (betel leaf box) showcase a diverse culmination of styles.

Walking through the gallery, one encounters a selection of handpicked pieces, each representing a distinct era. From miniature paintings dating back to the Jacobean era to 17th-century artworks that serve as the muse for Indian meenakari artisans, every detail from the past is thoughtfully elucidated, enabling art enthusiasts and scholars alike to grasp their significance.

Additionally, the gallery offers insights into the intricate process of crafting meenakari jewellery in India. It traces the journey of each jewellery piece, detailing how artisans with specialised skills such as the naqash (designer), sonar (goldsmith), gharaiwala (engraver), minakar (enameller), and kundansaz (gem-setter) collaborated to bring forth a singular, resplendent creation.

When you ask the founder, Sunita Shekhawat about her favourite piece, she says, "My favourite piece from my collection is the traditional parrot motif, elaborately decorated with polkis, south-sea pearls, and green enamels, together with a brief touch of green and red meenakari around the parrots."

#### **Passion for craft**

The museum brings to life the dual aspects of preservation and celebration of the art. There is also the recording of oral histories related to the craft. Asked about the reason she started the museum, Sunita shares, "Since it's a privately owned museum, there was no compulsion involved, but it's our passion for the craft of meenakari which encouraged us to establish it."

Founded by jewellery designer Sunita Shekhawat as a state-of-the-art permanent gallery that preserves and celebrates the rich tapestry of meenakari, this is a one-of-its-kind preserve of a traditional Indian art form



While the majority of the original meenakari jewellery pieces showcased in the gallery reside in private collections or international museums, Sunita Shekhawat and her team of highly skilled artisans have meticulously recreated reproductions of the enamelled artifacts, ensuring the faithful preservation of even the smallest details.

Private museums are showing the way forward for conservation of India's unique heritage - as in this case and the Amrapali museum.

"The meenakari museum showcases only one aspect of the vast heritage of India's jewellery tradition. I hope that the government wakes up and facilitates documentation of collections in public museums, temples, monasteries etc., and allows us to share India's heritage and design tradition with the world at large," notes Usha.

And, she adds, "I also hope that other private entities will see the importance and value of such a venture - and follow in Sunita Shekhawat's path and support the establishment of such small private museums all around the country."

Unique in every sense of the world, this museum is a coming together of skill and perseverance with one goal: to ensure that a traditional artform is safeguarded for the future.



Working together to safeguard a beautiful traditional artform: Sunitha and Niharika Shekhawat with curator Usha Balkrishnan



# UBF Diary

July 2024

## Spiritual teacher visits UBF



Dr Raghu Ram welcomes BK Shivani didi

We were truly blessed and fortunate to have BK Shivani didi, the respected and famous spiritual mentor, who belongs to the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual Organisation, visit KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases at KIMS Hospitals on July 25.

Despite her hectic schedule, she went out of her way to directly come to the hospital from the airport and she spent an hour interacting with patients and the staff at the breast centre. She had an aura of peace and calm about her which was comforting and uplifting.



Shivani didi interacts with patients and staff at the Breast Centre



## Awareness session: Demystifying breast health



On August 23, Dr Raghu Ram spoke to the spouses of officers in the army and frontline soldiers at the Military College of Electronics and Mechanical Engineering (MCEME) Auditorium in Secunderabad. He spoke on the 'ABCs of Breast Health - What every woman must know', a talk that demystified the common myths linked to various aspects of breast health, backed with evidence-based facts. It was all explained in a simple easy-to-understand format using a PowerPoint presentation.

He also emphasised the importance of early detection of breast cancer and the role of regular annual screening mammograms from the age of 40 to ensure early detection, which is the only way we can save lives from the most common cancer affecting women in our country.

Notably, Dr Raghu Ram delivered the lecture in Hindi and the Q & A session exceeded the duration of his address. After the lecture, he was felicitated by Rachana Varshney, the spouse of Lt Gen Neeraj Varshney, Commandant, MCEME.



Mrs Rachana Varshney felicitating Dr Raghu Ram



Huge gathering at MCEME auditorium

## Rare Honour



*Dr Raghu Ram being conferred Hon. Fellowship by His Royal Highness Tuanku Muhriz*

On August 26, Dr Raghu Ram Pillarisetti, founding director, KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases from Hyderabad, achieved the unique distinction of being conferred the Honorary Fellowship of International Society of Surgery (ISS) by His Royal Highness Tuanku Muhriz, a distinguished member of the royal family and the Chief Ruler of Negri Sembilan, a state in western Malaysia.

Dr Raghu Ram is the youngest ever, first and the only surgeon from the Indian subcontinent in the 122- year-old history of this prestigious organisation to get this highest recognition. This honour was given during the opening ceremony at the 50th Golden Jubilee World Congress of Surgery being hosted by the International Society of Surgery & College of Surgeons of Malaysia at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

More than 1,500 surgeons from over 30 countries participated in this four-day scientific extravaganza from August 26 to August 29, 2024.

### **The International Society of Surgery**

Founded in 1902, the International Society of Surgery is

one of the most renowned surgical organisations and its members include distinguished surgeons from all over the world.

Dr Raghu Ram received this award alongside two other world-renowned surgeons - Prof Ernest Gene Moore from USA and Professor Akira Miyauchi from Japan.

Reference: [LINK](#) to world-renowned surgeons who have received Honorary Fellowship of the International Society of Surgery in the past 122 years (1902 –2023)

<https://www.iss-sic.com/honorary-fellow-full-listing>

### **Rich Tributes**

Paying rich tributes to Dr Raghu Ram, Prof Cheng Har, President and Prof Ken Boffard, Secretary General of International Society of Surgery stated in their letter, “We would like to congratulate you on this great honour. The International Society of Surgery presents the prestigious honorary membership to you with the greatest appreciation of your life-long endeavours to significantly improve the art and science of breast surgery in India”.



World-renowned surgeons - Prof Ernest Gene Moore from USA and Professor Akira Miyauchi from Japan alongside Dr Raghu Ram from India. They were conferred the Honorary Fellowship

On receiving the award, Dr Raghu Ram said, "I am deeply grateful and incredibly humbled to accept this high honour conferred by His Royal Highness Tuanku Muhriz. I dedicate this astonishing moment and tremendous recognition to my motherland, my family, and to my patients who have given me the unique privilege to be involved in their care."

"I owe a deep sense of gratitude to my colleagues, friends and the government of India for their extraordinary support. This high honour has well and truly added fire in my belly to make an even greater impact to further improve breast healthcare in my motherland—India (Bharat)."

Link to Honorary Fellowship Ceremony

<https://youtu.be/kuJrILZsn18?si=UOK5JCgYqvPRUyRD>

September 2024



## Chief Guest

On September 15, Dr Raghu Ram was the chief guest at the 47th annual conference of Andhra Pradesh Chapter of Association of Surgeons of India (APASICON 2024).

He addressed surgeons and trainees from Andhra Pradesh during the inaugural ceremony of the conference, which was held in Rajahmundry.

October 2024

## Busting myths - 'Conversations at The Quorum'

On October 9, Dr Raghu Ram participated in an interactive event, 'Conversations at The Quorum', to discuss on the subject, 'ABCs of Breast Cancer, what every woman must know' in Hyderabad.



Uma Sudhir introducing the guests at the session



Uma Sudhir and Ananda Shankar interacting with a Breast Cancer 'conqueror'

This session with Dr Raghu Ram and Ananda Shankar Jayant, well known classical dancer and breast cancer 'conqueror' was moderated by Uma Sudhir, executive editor (south India) at NDTV.



**Uma Sudhir**  
@umasudhir

I would strongly recommend that both men & women should attend this session at [#TheQuorum](#) Wednesday Oct 9 at 7 pm... Come, listen, ask & get answers; Go back well-informed about what you need to do for yourself and your loved ones [#DemystifyBreastCancer](#) [#BreastCancerAwarenessMonth](#)



**Ananda S Jayant**    
@anandasjayant

Thankyou [@RRPillarsetti](#) for untiringly continuing to bring awareness to breast cancer and for making me a small part of this journey and to [@umasudhir](#) for moderating this conversation in your inimitable style

The event was aimed at busting myths, spreading hope and courage—it was meant for people who had questions and needed answers about various aspects relating to diagnosis and treatment of Breast Cancer. Later tweeting about the event, Uma Sudhir, wrote in her post that it

was ‘enlightening’ to be in conversation with two Padma Shri awardees—Dr Raghu Ram and Ananda Shankar, and praised the doctor for ‘keeping it simple, clear, busting myths and giving confidence’. While Ananda, she wrote, ‘spoke from the heart sharing her inspirational personal journey’.

September 2024

## Telangana Raj Bhavan goes ‘Pink’ for the 5th consecutive year



October is recognised as International Breast Cancer Awareness month the world over.

To commemorate this occasion, for the 5th consecutive year, Telangana Raj Bhavan was illuminated in the colour ‘Pink’ by the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation.

Telangana Raj Bhavan is the only Raj Bhavan in the country that has been turning pink consistently since 2020 in support of breast cancer awareness. Started during the COVID pandemic year, this unique endeavour undertaken by the Foundation aims to create awareness about the importance of early detection, and equally,



*Jishnu Dev Varma appreciating the unique initiatives of the Foundation and displaying the most recent issue of Pink Connexion (August 2024 issue), which featured the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi on the cover page*



L-R: Seshagiri Rao, Bhavani Shankar, Telangana Governor—Jishnu Dev Varma with Dr Raghu Ram expressing rock solid support to the Pink Ribbon Campaign

spread the message of hope, courage and determination in the fight against the most common cancer affecting women in India.

Just before the Illumination, Jishnu Dev Varma, governor of Telangana met Dr P Raghu Ram, founder and CEO of Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation and expressed his condolences on the passing away of Dr Ushalakshmi, the founder chairman and inspiration behind UBF. He paid rich tributes to Dr Raghu Ram’s outstanding efforts

over the past 17 years towards creating the much-needed awareness about the importance of early detection through a number of innovative projects.

Speaking on this occasion, Dr Raghu Ram, who has been spearheading the Pink Ribbon Campaign said, “Very grateful to Hon’ble Governor for permitting the Foundation to illuminate Raj Bhavan in ‘Pink’ - it is a powerful way to attract attention and raise awareness about the commonest cancer affecting women in India.”



Buddha statue, Charminar, Durgam Cheruvu cable bridge, KIMS Hospitals and THub turned Pink



**Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation**

Hyderabad, India

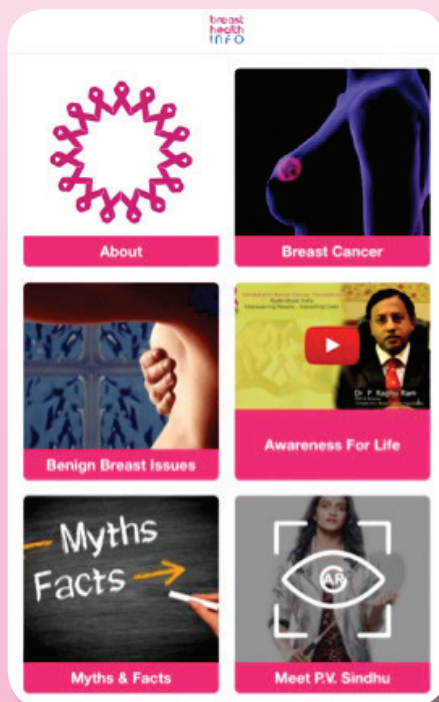
*Empowering people...impacting lives*

[www.ubf.org.in](http://www.ubf.org.in)

## World's first mobile app on breast health in 12 languages

(English, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali, Marathi, Oriya & Assamese).

### 'ABCs OF BREAST HEALTH'



Launched by Mr Amitabh Bachchan (2017)

**An initiative of the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation**

#### LINKS FOR FREE DOWNLOAD

**App store**

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

**Google play store**

[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.avantari.breasthealth&pcampaignid=web\\_share](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.avantari.breasthealth&pcampaignid=web_share)

