

# PINK CONNECTION



Vol 3 Issue 2 Nov '16 - Jan '17

**Anjali Sharma**

For the love of street dogs

**Neerja Malik**

Cancer survivor to counsellor  
for cancer patients

## Old-world Charm of Orchha



# BEHIND The Scenes

I have a friend in the social sector who loathes lapping up praise for the work his organisation does with under-privileged girls and suicide prone small farmers. He demurs philosophically pointing out that it is easier to do good than prevent evil.

Initially, the meaning behind his reasoning eluded me. Until, I began to read about the abuse of senior citizens and animals on Facebook, which are somewhat graphic these days. In one post, I saw security staff ill-treating elderly women in a senior citizen's home in the USA. I thought, well, it's happening in America and then I read reports in our own newspapers of children starving and locking up their old and helpless parents, or forcing them to sign their properties over to them. If this is not wanton evil, what is, I wondered.

This is how I felt until I read (and continue to read) of violence towards street dogs in India. The case of medical students in Madras swinging a pup by its tail and throwing her off a high-storey building was widely reported. In Hyderabad itself, we had youngsters burning street dogs and taking mobile pictures of the cruelty, like it was something to be proud of. Then, we have owners who abandon their pet dogs either because they have lost interest in them or realise they are so much trouble. These acts of mindless cruelty have nothing to do with being educated or not educated. We may have assumed that the boys who burnt the pups were uneducated street urchins but how can you explain the behaviour of the medical students, who flung a pup down? Or, what about the upper middle-class, who do not lack staff or money and heartlessly abandon their pets on the streets? What goes on in the minds of humans when they indulge in such evil? Is evil then inherent in us?

I am not sure about this but when I read about someone like Anjali Sharma, who sticks her neck out on behalf of street dogs, I can only applaud. Or, take the case of Dr Raghuram, who spends so much of his time and money, to spread awareness about breast cancer. I can then only think of the good that pervades the world.

Maybe, both good and evil is within us. Then, shouldn't Diwali be the time to destroy the darkness within us?

Ratna Rao Shekar



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## Meet Miss Sunshine

They say God tests your faith and gives you problems that you can handle. But, what happens when he keeps tossing them at you – in the form of miscarriages, a stillborn baby, breast cancer at the age of 44; and once again the dreaded Big C, seven years later? You overcome, you think positive, continue to believe in him; and then become a counsellor for cancer patients! That, in a nutshell, is the story of Neerja Malik, who, at the age of 62, is an inspirational speaker and full-time counsellor to others going through a similar trauma. **Minal Khona** on the cheerful, sunny cancer survivor

Photographs: **Arun Kumar**

When her hair fell off, Neerja made light of that too. Standing in her balcony, she would pull out clumps, doing the 'He loves me, he loves me not' routine. Neerja was simply not going to let the cancer pull her down. And, when people asked whether she had been to Tirupati on seeing her shaven head, she would reply in the affirmative

Her life is like a movie thriller but interspersed with humour. For the Chennai-based Neerja Malik talks about her life with such candour, making light of her battle with cancer. She has such a sunny disposition that at the end of an extremely long telephonic conversation, you feel uplifted by this woman's inner strength and positive thinking.

To Neerja, positivity is everything. She even narrates an incident which happened to her many years ago to emphasise the importance of steering clear of negative thoughts.

In the eighties, her husband and she were living in London, as he was an export manager with Hindustan Lever. She had accompanied him to Los Angeles on his work since some of her cousins lived in California. "One evening, all of us cousins, their kids, spouses and in-laws, were chatting about our family members who had cancer. And, I just said, I wonder who will be next," she recounts. An aunt

was diagnosed with cancer next, soon after, followed by Neerja.

Though cancer was prevalent on both sides of her family, Neerja had not got any checks done. It was because she believed that thinking about it and fearing its arrival, would make it happen for sure. On the other hand, not worrying about it till it actually happened meant she didn't have to live in fear. She recalls, "The year my twins, who were born to me after a series of miscarriages and a still born child, were to turn seven, in February 1998, I felt a pea-sized lump in my left breast." And, she decided to check it since her paternal grandparents, her father's sisters and their daughters, her mother's sisters – have all had some form of cancer. Some died of cancer too.

Sure enough, the tests revealed that it was cancer, and Neerja says she didn't react for a while. "When we were driving back in the car, a friend called to confirm a lunch appointment. My husband told her that I had just been diagnosed with breast cancer and I wouldn't be able to come. That is when it hit me, and I gave my husband one *mukka* on his arm and said, why did you tell her?" she remembers.

After the news sank in, Neerja, who was a young 44 years at that time, went to see an oncologist, who had treated other members of her family. Based on the reports, some doctors had told her that her chances of survival were 25 per cent, as her cancer was an aggressive one. They advised her to head to the US or France for treatment. "I refused to go abroad for treatment. My entire support system was here, why should I take a chance and go abroad? That is when I cried – for three straight days – I wept. Then, I got myself together and decided I was going to face it and I would live for my children," reveals Neerja. Meanwhile, she had told her children what was wrong with her.

Neerja got her tests done in Chennai and insisted her last three chemo and radiation therapies be done simultaneously, so that she could be with the twins to celebrate their seventh birthday in July that year.

When her hair fell off, Neerja made light of that too. Standing in her





*Neerja in her home in Chennai: Being positive is everything*

“I decided to get treated in India. My entire support system was here, why should I take a chance and go abroad? That is when I cried – for three straight days – I wept. Then, I got myself together and decided I was going to face it and I would live for my children,” reveals Neerja

balcony, she would pull out clumps, doing the ‘He loves me, he loves me not’ routine. Neerja was simply not going to let the cancer pull her down. And, when people asked whether she had been to Tirupati on seeing her shaven head, she would reply in the affirmative. In November that year, Neerja did visit the famous Lord Balaji temple, and she climbed the mountain on foot. “I had to say thanks and I didn’t think it was right to lie in his name and then not actually go there. So, I went to the temple, and I shaved my head again,” she recalls. Today, when she is counselling patients, she advises them to use the same reason for their shaven heads in case they don’t want to reveal they have cancer – a visit to Lord Balaji’s abode – Tirupati.

When Neerja was in hospital, a few cancer counsellors would drop in and talk to her, to make her feel better. It was then that she decided to start something similar in Chennai where she lives. But, one of the counsellors informed her that she had to be cancer

free for five years before she could start anything, and that upset her greatly. Life however, works in strange ways.

That same year, her uncle called and asked her to meet his friend from Kolkata, who was coming to Chennai for cancer treatment. She recalls, “When I went to his room, he was slouched on the bed, looking depressed. His wife was also there, crying into her dupatta. I started advising him, to be positive and how he must not fear the disease but face it. And, within 20 minutes, he was sitting back, resting his arm on the back of the bed, looking every inch the Pathan he was. His wife too was pepped up and was scrambling around, wanting to make me a cup of tea.” She had found her calling.

That is how Neerja started off as a counsellor. Soon, doctors who had treated her started referring her to their patients. Other patients she had counselled would also refer her. Finally, she set up a Cancer Support



*Ladies in Pink: Neerja and other breast cancer conquerors walk the ramp along with Pooja Bedi at the Pink Ribbon Evening, organised by UBF in Hyderabad*

Group on International Women's Day – March 8, 2004. She points out, "Had I listened to the counsellor, I would have lost out on many years of experience; and more importantly, I would not have had the chance to help so many people."

In November 2004, Neerja felt a familiar lump in her right breast one night, when she turned to sleep on her stomach. She woke up her husband and told him about it. He suggested they get it checked the next day. Typically, the way the day unfolded reflects her attitude towards the disease.

Neerja recounts, "When my friends or family would ask me in the mornings where I was headed, my usual reply would be – to the hospital. Because counselling is confidential, no one would ever ask me the identity of the patient. That morning, it so happened, I was speaking to a friend with whom I had made plans for lunch and a movie. I told her, I was headed to the hospital. Strangely, she asked me, 'Who is the patient?' I said it was me."

Her friend instantly replied that she would meet her at the hospital and she was there before her. She also arranged for two other friends to be with Neerja while the mammogram and ultrasound tests were done. "My

oncologist promised to have my results by the evening, and we all toodled off, to lunch, where I informed my other friends about it; and then went to see *Mughal-e-Azam*, in Eastman colour!" she reminisces.

Incidentally, a doughty Neerja was counselling even while she was in hospital fighting her own cancer. She points out, "I had asked people to contact me when they need me; and that can be any time of the day or night. I remember I was having my chemo done and I had a bunch of people around me, and there I was, giving my *gyan*."

Around the same time, Neerja's family, who are scattered everywhere, was planning a family reunion in Chennai. She had made arrangements for their accommodation at Fisherman's Cove. When they heard she had cancer again, they thought of cancelling the programme. She insisted however that they should come as it would cheer her up.

In fact, Neerja had a chemo session on December 15 and her family arrived on December 27, a day after the tsunami hit the Indian coast. She remembers being in bed, her mother rushing to her bedside, while her father, a retired officer of the Indian Navy, came into her room balancing a shaking jug in

his hand, saying it was a tsunami. Neerja says she had never heard the word before and because everything was shaking, her mother thought she was having a seizure.

When she counsels cancer patients, the spirited Neerja narrates her own experiences with hairfall, chemotherapy, radiation etc. She knows what it all feels like and is able to empathise with them. It rings all too true for the patients when they listen to Neerja. She worked in a hospital for four hours a day, five days a week. She says, "They used to fix the hours I had to come in; but they kept shifting them around. First it was 10-2, then 11-4 and then 3-7. I didn't mind, but my question was that if a patient has a biopsy scheduled for 10 in the morning, he or she is not going to make another trip just to meet me in the evening. Finally, last year, in October, I quit and started seeing patients at home. I charge a fee, and mostly, I end up counselling their family members too."

Neerja's sojourn with cancer, her teaching background and her outgoing personality made it easy for her to become an inspirational speaker. She gives talks to corporates, at leadership conclaves, in various associations and at health and cancer forums.

In 2010, Neerja participated in a fashion show held to promote breast cancer awareness by the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation. She can still remember the excitement she had felt walking the ramp. "My heart was racing as all of us, breast cancer survivors, got ready to do the catwalk. But, what really shone beyond all these efforts, the awards and the speeches is that breast cancer is curable. I think Dr Raghuram is doing wonderful work, relentlessly spreading the word about breast cancer," she says.

Her book, called *I Inspire*, as told to Megha Bajaj, is an insightful window into her eventful life and her own battle with cancer. It is commendable that, despite all that life has thrown at her, Neerja remains cheerful, laughs often, continues to believe in everything positive and her faith in the almighty remains unshaken. Surely, one has to pick a leaf out of her book. ■



# For the Love of Dogs

A random act of kindness – feeding stray dogs in her area – led this passionate woman to change the way she lived. Anjali Sharma has dedicated the last 25 years, even sacrificing full-time jobs so that she can take care of strays in Chennai. Fostering over 100 dogs today, she lives in the outskirts of the city

Text: **Minal Khona** Photographs: **Arun Kumar**

Imagine not going home for 20 years to meet loved ones; and only because there is no one to care for your adopted stray dogs. It must not be easy to live on a minuscule income and depend on the largesse of others for food to feed a pack of 100 stray dogs.

Yet, that is what the gutsy Anjali Sharma, a Chennai resident does. Having moved from Delhi to Chennai 25 years ago to pursue a career, she ended up becoming a saviour for man's most loyal friend. She had always loved dogs, even as a child, she recalls. This passionate dog lover found it difficult to turn a blind eye to the malnourished and skinny strays she saw daily all over Chennai, on roadsides, near garbage bins and outside parks. So, she started feeding and taking them under her wing one by one and soon her "family" grew.

Anjali would use up most of her income to feed strays, not just the ones who lived with her, but others on the street too. A practice she continues to this day.

"At first, my landlord was extremely accommodating. Once, I had 10 dogs living in my room. But then, the house owner's family was growing and he needed the space, so I was forced to look for another place. But, nobody was willing to give a single woman with 20 dogs a place to rent," Anjali recalls. After living for short periods in different places, her dad and

sister pitched in the money, and helped her to build a house on a plot of land she had bought in Red Hills, on the outskirts of Chennai.

Over the years, Anjali has worked in several jobs – in the airline industry, the hospitality business, travel agencies, selling golf club memberships, guest relations and insurance. "What stayed constant was my love for dogs," she asserts. Anjali cannot explain her love for stray dogs. "I don't know why, but I gravitated towards them. I used to feed them and get them neutered as well. Earlier, even after I moved into my house, I used to work. But then, I used to get exhausted after work and the dogs got neglected. I could not find time to look after them well, and if one fell sick, I wouldn't notice immediately. So, I decided to quit my job," reveals Anjali.

Today, she makes a living as a freelance writer, and writes a column in a newspaper. Anjali has now set up an NGO – The Animal Society of Chennai – and willingly picks up any sick or injured animal, people call and inform her about. She moves around in a minivan bought from the money she received from a trust, now defunct. There is a fund being raised for her NGO on the fundraising online platform [milaap.org](http://milaap.org), which she plans to use for buying a bigger vehicle in the future. Her friends keep donating small amounts ranging from Rs 10,000-Rs 20,000, and generous hotels like Barbeque Nation and the



Anjali feeding street dogs food donated by hotels in Chennai

Park Hotel provide their leftover food to her. So, her dogs eat rotis and paneer based dishes spiced with masalas but her puppies eat dog food which she buys.

To feed her pack of dogs, and give them medicines and neuter them she requires Rs 25,000 a month. The Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals also helps her with the neutering but it costs Rs 1,500 a month to neuter one dog.

Like most other animal activists, Anjali lacks funds and manpower support. Meagre resources is a major stumbling block in Anjali's work with strays, as she needs to build an extra room in her house to be able to provide space for 100 dogs now. She also requires a bigger, better vehicle which can house more dogs. Moreover, her biggest challenge today is to find reliable help. "If I keep a Nepali guy as a security person-cum-caretaker, I need to make place for his accommodation," she says.

Anjali frets over the fate of her four-legged friends all the time. She says, "I have no one I can trust these dogs with. I have not been to Delhi in 20 years to meet my parents, though my dad is unwell. I have an aunt who has cancer but I cannot even leave this place even for a day. What if I fall sick, what if something happens to me? Who will look after these poor dogs?"

Since her "home" for the strays is located in a far-flung area of the city, she is unable to find a single volunteer for a few weeks. Anjali looks after pets that heartless people have abandoned too; and her motley crowd includes a blind dog and some pure breeds. She also picks up stray pups from the streets. Recently, a woman gave her a pup with paralysed hind legs. She had picked up a pomeranian roaming around aimlessly on the roads. "He was sick, skinny, and his fur was

grey, almost black. I cleaned him up, looked after him and he looks healthy now," she recounts.

Recently, a spate of incidents related to animal cruelty emerged in the public eye. Two medical students in Chennai threw a pup from a terrace and shot the horrific episode on their phone. Another person left a Great Dane tied by the roadside in Chennai, till he starved to death. An industrialist in Kerala is paying people to kill stray dogs; while a man in Pune beat up a mother and daughter for feeding the puppies of a stray dog that died outside their apartment gate.

What does Anjali make of all this? She admits it disturbs her greatly and she has brushed up on the laws regarding animal rights. She says, "The Animal Welfare Board of India has published a list of rules. Besides reporting such people to the cops, animal lovers should put up the rules in every housing society, so people don't ill-treat dogs. It is illegal to kill or relocate dogs and if anyone is doing so, confront them. As a society, human beings are cruel and this has to stop."

Anjali relates an anecdote. "Once, an IAS officer called the municipality personnel and had the local strays in his area removed. I went and got them back, he did it again. Then, I went to his house, shot a picture of his name plate and confronted him. I told him what the laws were and that he should not do it again. He backed off, because I wrote to Maneka Gandhi about him," narrates Anjali.

"Most people don't have a problem with strays, unless they are rabid or are turning dangerous, which is rare," she points out. Anjali, who is single, has dedicated her life to dogs. There are not many people out there who will give up everything in their life to care for man's furry friend. ■

The Animal Welfare Board of India has a list of rules about what is permissible and what is not. Besides reporting such people to the cops, animal lovers should put up the rules in every housing society, so people don't ill-treat dogs

# UBF Diary

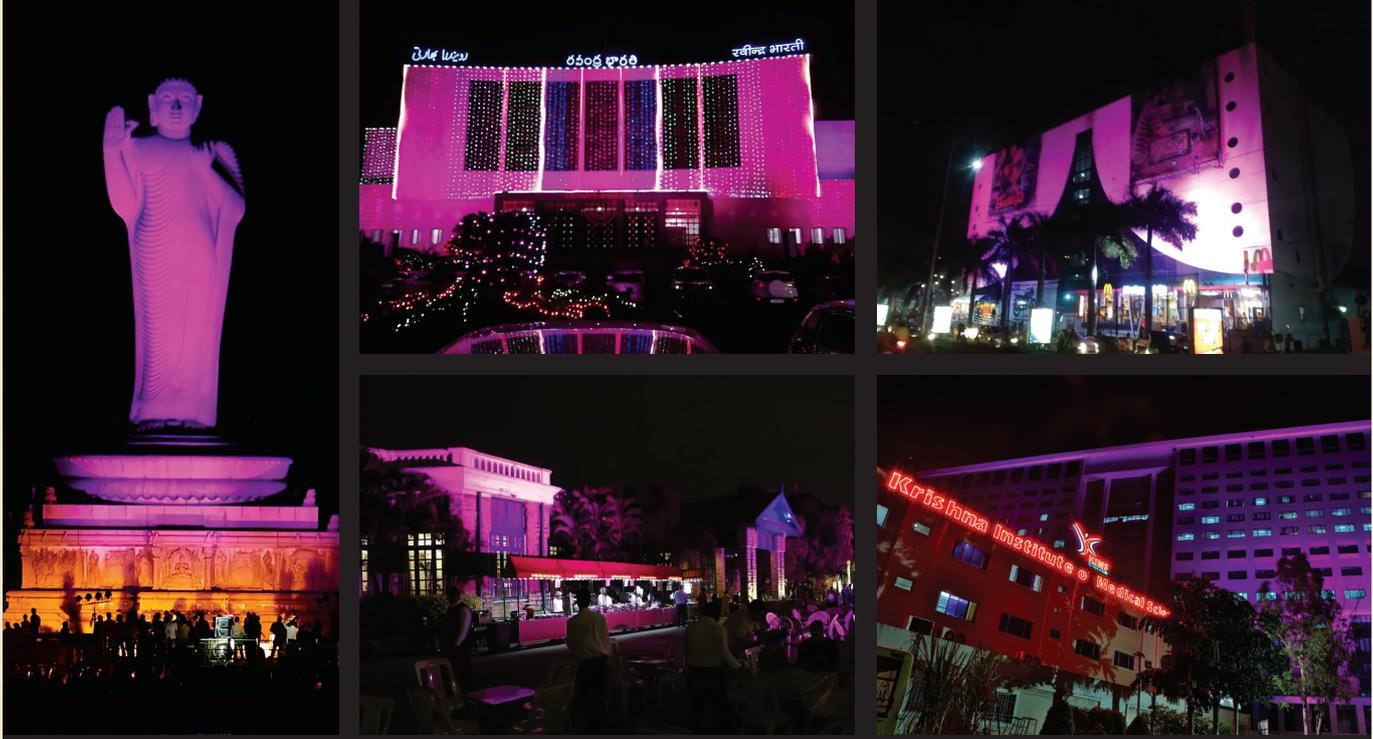
September 2016

## Imparting the ABC of Breast Health with the Eenadu Group



A two week non-stop rain paused briefly almost in support of the Pink Ribbon Campaign 2016. Firstly, more than 400 people from all walks of life enthusiastically turned up to attend a three hour “breast health awareness” programme, organised by the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation and the Eenadu group, on Sunday, September 25. Sailaja Kiron, MD, Margadarsi Chit funds and Kalanjali/Brisah inaugurated the programme. Each and every aspect of breast health was explained in a simple and clear-cut manner. Other speakers like Sridevi Jasti talked on the role of nutrition in cancer prevention and during cancer treatment, while Sharmila Rao stressed on the role of meditation during and after cancer as a treatment and its effect on the body, mind and soul.

## Hyderabad Awash in ‘Pink’ For Seventh Year in a Row



The only city in South Asia which boasts of a record number of historic buildings and monuments, the city glowed in pink light once again this year on September 30. Hyderabad stands tall for lighting up in pink every year, and has done for the last seven years, in solidarity for breast cancer awareness. None other than the iconic Charminar, the Buddha Statue, Ravindra Bharati, Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Secunderabad Club, KIMS Hospitals and Radio Mirchi office switched to pink lights to mark the beginning of the International Breast Cancer Awareness month.

## Cancer Survivors Conquer the Ramp at the Pink Ribbon Evening



Breast cancer conquerors with their spouses



Mr S K Joshi, Special Chief Secretary, Govt of Telangana with his wife, Mrs Anuradha Joshi (breast cancer conqueror)



Mr Saumen Chakraborty with his wife, Mrs Madhumita Chakraborty (breast cancer conqueror)



Dr P Raghuram addressing the gathering as the managing committee members of the Secunderabad Club look on

History was scripted at the 138-year-old Secunderabad Club, when for the first time ever in India, on October 1, breast cancer survivors walked the ramp with their spouses to emphasise the importance of family support to survive cancer and to reinforce the message that it is the spouse's duty to ensure the women in their families, get a mammogram once a year after they turn 40. This would help detect breast cancer very early and save lives.

## RCS England puts Hyderabad on the World Map



Dr P Raghuram, local convenor with Prof Peter Brennen, Chairman, Intercollegiate MRCS Board from London (left). A group picture with the examiners, mostly from the UK, at the exam centre in Hyderabad



**Hyderabad Walks  
The Breast Cancer Talk**

The slogan 'Does Your Heart Beat for the Early Detection of Cancer' resonated with 'Hyderabadis', as an unprecedented crowd participated in the eighth annual edition of the '2K Pink Ribbon Walk' organised by the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation (UBF) & KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases along with The Association of Breast Surgeons of India on October 2.

The walk was flagged off by the well-known actor, Regina Cassandra along with Madhumita Chakraborty (a young breast cancer conqueror), Mr Krishnaiiah, chairman, KIMS, Dr Bhaskar Rao, CEO, KIMS, Mr Padmanabhaiah, chairman, ASCI, Mr Ramesh Prasinad, chairman, LV Prasad group and Mr Andrew McAllister, British Deputy High Commissioner.

Breast cancer 'conquerors' and their families walked with a huge student contingent from the old city and with thousands others in support of the Pink Ribbon Campaign. The aim of the Pink Ribbon Walk is to create awareness about the importance of the early detection of breast cancer, salute survivors in their fight against breast cancer, and equally, spread the message of hope, courage and survival in the battle against breast cancer.





# Orchha

## Walking with the Gods

In the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh, bordering Uttar Pradesh is the magnificent historic town of Orchha, which boasts of some of India's finest art on the Ramayana. **Anil Mulchandani** describes the artistic heritage and old-world charm of Orchha and its temples dedicated to Rama

Photographs: **Dinesh Shukla**

The tiny town of Orchha sits like an ornate gem in the midst of the rocky, barren landscape of Bundelkhand. This erstwhile capital of the Bundela rulers, located on the banks of the Betwa river, is steeped in history and famous for its fortified palace complexes, Lord Rama and Lord Vishnu temples and monuments, built way back in the 16th and 17th century.

The ancient town of Orchha is also rich in art, which had flourished in the 16th century, when the area was ruled by the Bundela Rajputs. Their style of art, which belonged to the famous Central Indian School thrived in places like Malwa and later, in Bundelkhand. Some of the country's best paintings of the *Ramayana* can be found in the Orchha palaces and inside one of the town's stunning, religious architectural marvels, the Lakshmi Narayan Temple.

Orchha is also a popular pilgrimage centre for Lord Rama's devotees

because it hosts the historic Ram Raja Temple or Orchha Dham, one of the rare temples in India which depicts Lord Rama, as a king and as a god.

The origins of Orchha date back to the 16th century, when the powerful Bundela Rajputs made it their capital. The surrounding landscape was suitable for building forts, which was essential due to the invasions of the Sultans and the Mughals.

It was Raja Rudra Pratap, who built the impressive fort of Orchha. The Rajput Bundela ruler Madhukar Shah's close ties with the Mughal emperor Akbar, helped to enhance the fortunes of Orchha. Over a span of 22 years, Madhukar Shah's successor Vir Singh Deo too erected numerous forts and palaces at Orchha, Datia, Jhansi and other centres of Bundelkhand.

Hindi poet and scholar Keshavdas Mishra (1555-1617), who wrote literary works like *Rasik Priya* and *Ramchandrika*, was part of the courts

of Madhukar Shah and Vir Singh. His creative writings inspired the *Ramayana* and Krishna paintings which adorn Orchha's palaces and temples.

The Orchha and Datia style of painting called "Bundeli Kalam", developed as miniatures and frescos; and included illustrations of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, and the vividly coloured paintings of Vishnu's ten avatars. The natural landscape of the area also worked as an apt setting for many paintings from the *Ramayana*. Courtly scenes of a richly attired Rama were probably inspired by the life at Orchha's palaces. Typically, the Orchha painting featured a limited number of shades – red, ochre, blue, green, yellow, white, black and grey. The paintings can be found in every corner of the temples and monuments, on the ceilings, walls, niches, brackets, arches and lintels. Some of the impressive paintings show scenes like Lord Rama's coronation, his journey to the forest and Sita's abduction by Ravana.

The Orchha fort made up of the palaces, are found on an island circled by the Betwa river. A bridge leads to the palaces, the Raja Mahal (or Raj Mahal) and the Jahangir Mahal, which are magnificent examples of the rich artistic and aesthetic achievements of the Bundela Rajputs.

The Jahangir Mahal was built by Bir Singh Deo as a monumental welcome present for the Mughal emperor Jahangir, when he paid a state visit to Orchha in the 17th century. The Raja Mahal, the abode of the kings and queens, built in 1554 and completed in 1591, followed the Rajput style. The structure is filled with courtyards, the royal quarters built in rows and crowned at the top by domes and turrets. The most favoured queen's apartment was found on the ground floor situated around an open courtyard.

Fragments of mirror inlay and colourful paintings, some still in good condition, can still be spotted on the walls and ceilings. There are scenes of Lord Rama and Sita seated in full splendour in their court, with the three brothers alongside them, and Hanuman and Jambavan (the Bear King) in attendance. A path leads from the palace to the Lakshmi Narayan

temple, which sits like a crown on top of a rocky hillock, west of the centre of Orchha. This splendid temple, frozen in time, holds some of the finest paintings which however belong to a later period. The paintings depict scenes from the *Ramayana* – like Rama breaking the bow at Sita's *swayamvar*; Parasurama's meeting with Rama;

**Orchha is also a popular pilgrimage center for Lord Rama's devotees because it hosts the historic Ram Raja Temple or Orchha Dham, one of the rare temples in India which depicts Lord Rama, as a king and as a god**

Rama, Sita and Lakshman setting off into the forest on their exile and Rama and Lakshman killing the demon painted in ochre and grey shades, among others. There is a folkish Ramllela style to these paintings.

In the heart of the town, the Ram Raja Temple is found inside a marble-tiled courtyard. Legend goes that the temple was built by Madhukar Shah as the

queen's palace first. But, a Rama idol brought by the queen from Ayodhya could not be removed from the spot where she had set it down and so it became a temple.

The Ram Raja Temple today is an important place of pilgrimage, receiving devotees in hundreds. The numbers rise dramatically during the celebrations of Makar Sankranti, Vasant Panchami, Shivratri, Ram Navami, Dusshera, Diwali, Kartik Purnima and Vivaha Panchami. Devotees believe that Lord Rama told the queen that he was happy with her prayers and she could ask for a boon. At this point, the queen requested Lord Rama to travel with her in child form from Ayodhya to Orchha. Lord Rama agreed but he put forth three conditions: "I will travel only on Pukh Nakshatra. When Pukh Nakshatra ends, I will stop and resume only when Pukh Nakshatra sets in again. In this manner, I will travel from Ayodhya to Orchha on foot along with a group of sages. Secondly, once I reach Orchha, I will be the king of Orchha. Thirdly, (since the child form of Lord Rama will travel in the queen's lap), the first place you seat me will be my final place of stay and will become famous as Ramraj."



The elegant multi-layered Jahangir Mahal is an excellent example of Bundela Rajput architecture



A vivid painting at the Raja Mahal shows Rama and Sita enthroned in his court with three brothers in attendance, and the devout Hanuman and Sugriva in front of the godly couple.

The queen agreed to all the conditions and started her journey to Orchha with baby Rama in her lap. Since the queen travelled only in Pukh Nakshtra, it took her eight months and twenty-seven days to reach Orchha on foot.

After she set the idol down in the palace, Lord Rama, according to the conditions, refused to budge from the royal apartments and it had to be converted into a temple. This is a unique temple where Lord Rama is worshipped as a king. The speciality of this temple is that Lord Rama has a sword in his right hand, and a shield in the other. Lord Rama is seated in the *padmasan* (lotus position) form, with the left leg crossed over the right thigh. The *teeka* or *tilak* is applied on Lord Rama's left toe after the main prayers.

Dominating the townscape with its towering pointed spires soaring above the seven-storied magnificent structure, Chaturbhuj Mandir was

meant to house this Lord Ram's icon found in the Ram Raja Mandir. Chaturbhuj, which literally means "one with four arms", is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. It has arched balconies,

**Orchha is the destination for anyone who is fascinated by the *Ramayana* story. You can find everything here from medieval art to folklore, religious rituals and, at times, even the theatrical re-enactment of the *Ramayana* – the Ramlila**

and is a good example of the Bundela style of architecture, which in itself is inspired by the Mughal and Rajput styles. A guard of honour is held every

day, a royal repast and an armed salutation are offered daily. Diwali is celebrated here with rituals and folk dances.

Given its close association with *Ramayana* in art and folklore, Orchha has a small but unique museum called Saket Ramayan Kala Sangrahalaya. It is the country's first museum to display the traditional arts associated with the *Ramayana*. Built by the Madhya Pradesh government's Adivasi Lok Kala Parishad, the *Ramayana* is represented here in different art formats like illustrations, masks, puppet and textiles. It has an interesting collection of *Ramayana* themed folk art including Mithila paintings from Bihar, Cherial Pattam and Kalamkari from Andhra, Chrakathi art from Maharashtra, Patta Chitra from Odisha, Patua from West Bengal, and colourful masks from Odisha. The Adivasi Lok Kala Parishad has collected material on *Ramayana* performances from India, Thailand, Bali and other lands.

Orchha is the destination for anyone who is fascinated by the *Ramayana* story. You can find everything here from medieval art to folklore, religious rituals and, at times, even the theatrical re-enactment of the *Ramayana* – the Ramlila. The town of Orchha is wrapped up in an old-world charm, which is beautiful as it is mesmerising. It is like journeying back to a grand era, where gods appeared before humans and walked among them. What can be more spectacular? ■



The Rai Praveen Palace was named after a courtesan in the 1670s

# Triple Assessment: Gold Standard for Breast Cancer Diagnosis



In his quarterly column, **Dr P Raghuram** discusses the importance of 'triple assessment' to get a definitive diagnosis of breast cancer. Besides throwing light on the best modalities of treating breast cancer

*Forty-two-year old Preeti (name changed) noticed a lump in her right breast which was three months old. After taking the triple assessment, she was diagnosed with breast cancer*

## What is breast cancer and where does it arise?

Breast tissue is made up of ducts and lobules. And, breast cancer occurs when a single cell in the breast starts to divide and grows in an abnormal way.

There are different types of breast cancer – also known as carcinoma. Broadly, breast cancer arising from the ducts is referred to as 'ductal carcinoma' (most common) and cancer arising from the lobules is referred to as 'lobular carcinoma'. It is important that doctors have an accurate diagnosis so that they can plan the most appropriate treatment for the individual.

## How common is breast cancer?

Breast cancer is the most common cancer worldwide. In India, with over 150,000 new cases being diagnosed each year, it has overtaken cervical cancer to become the most common cancer affecting women in India. Compared to the western world where most breast cancers are diagnosed over the age of 50, the vast majority of breast cancers in India are occurring between the ages of 40 – 50 years.

## How is breast cancer diagnosed?

To get an accurate diagnosis of breast cancer, the patient has to undergo what is known as the 'triple assessment', which includes a clinical breast examination, breast imaging (mammogram, i.e. x-ray of the breasts and breast ultrasound scan) and ultrasound guided needle biopsy of the lump. These results will be evaluated and a definitive diagnosis of breast cancer can be obtained, in most cases.

## Is 'triple assessment' essential in the evaluation of every breast lump?

Yes, triple assessment (clinical breast examination, breast imaging and ideally, ultrasound guided core needle biopsy) accurately excludes or indeed confirms breast cancer in most circumstances, thus sparing the need for a woman to have an open surgery to obtain a diagnosis.

## What is the difference between stage and grade of cancer?

The diagnosis of breast cancer does not automatically mean that it has or will spread; just that it has the potential to spread.

The potential for cancer to spread is referred to as grade of cancer. Breast cancer is graded as 1, 2 or 3. In general, a lower grade (grade 1) indicates a slowly growing cancer, while a higher grade (grade 3) indicates a rapidly-growing cancer.

The extent of the spread of cancer is known as the stage of the disease.

Stage 1: Tumour less than 2 cms. No spread

Stage 2: Tumour 2 to 5 cms, with or without lymph node involvement. No spread to other parts of the body

Stage 3: Tumour more than 5cms or tumour any size but is fixed either to the chest wall, muscle or skin

Stage 4: Tumour any size, lymph nodes may or may not be involved, but cancer has spread to other parts of the body

(Source: International Union Against Cancer – UICC)

## Do specialist breast centres improve breast cancer care?

Yes. It is a well-recognised fact that improved outcomes for breast diseases, and indeed, breast cancer, can be achieved if specialists with a declared interest and training in breast diseases manage these patients in dedicated comprehensive breast centres.

## What is the purpose of treating breast cancer?

- To remove the cancerous area from the breast and any affected lymph nodes in the arm pit
- Destroy any cancerous cells that might have already spread from the breast into the body through the blood stream or the lymphatic system

## What are the modalities available for treating breast cancer?

There are essentially four modalities to treat breast cancer. Surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and hormone therapy. It is important to remember that not all patients would require all the modalities of treatment. A multi-disciplinary team would decide upon the best treatment plan for an individual after taking into consideration various factors (patient and tumour characteristics).



**Happiness is a choice,  
with or without cancer.**

Karvy salutes the survivors and a million other battling with breast cancer.