

PINK CONNECTION

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UBF

**'You don't
need to have
a Plan B'**

Kanika Tekriwal
on her battle
with cancer

A Rare Legacy

Tagore collection
in a heritage
home at
Ahmedabad

**'You have to
put yourself in
uncomfortable
situations'**

T M Krishna, the rebel
Carnatic musician



BEHIND The Scenes

India is a country dear to all of us. The frustrations of living here however become all the more obvious, when you return home after a trip abroad. I am not talking of a visit to the more advanced countries in Europe or Australia. A trip to our south Asian neighbours like Thailand or Malaysia makes us realise their infrastructure is way ahead of us. (Thankfully our government, in recent times has got rid of the meaningless immigration forms, which I am not sure, served any purpose in this digital age when our personal histories are up there for all to see).

Among other things, on a recent trip to the USA, I was amazed at the efficiency of their emergency services. After a car accident, on a remote highway at that, not only do the police reach in a matter of a few minutes but so do medical personnel in ambulances. Helicopters quickly fly in and lift the accident victim to the nearest hospital, within the time-frame of what the doctors call as the 'golden hour'. (That emergency care will cost the patient and his family huge sums of money is another point). At least, this kind of emergency service is available.

In India, on the other hand, the lives of people, especially the poor, have no value at all, as we often see during train or road accidents. It takes hours before the victims receive any help, and when they do, they are taken to a local hospital whose resources are mediocre.

Every life is precious, say the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible. I just wish we would put it into practice in our everyday life. Medical professionals need to provide the same treatment to all, whether rich or poor. Good healthcare doesn't have to be about money, which is what Dr Raghu Ram proves by reaching breast healthcare to all women, irrespective of their financial status. We wish his foundation, the UBF, more success in empowering women in all sections of society.

Ratna Rao Shekar



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Kanika Tekriwal

'I didn't want cancer to get the better of me...'

At 21, Kanika Tekriwal was told she had cancer and not much time to live. That is enough to let someone buckle down and give up. This gutsy woman however refused to believe the disease would take her life, and armed herself with a positive attitude.

Eight years later, Kanika is alive and flying high. The founder and CEO of a highly successful and niche business—chartering private jets for HNIs—she even made it to the 'Asia under 30' achievers' list in the prestigious *Forbes* magazine. So buoyant is she, that she even refuses to dwell too much on the cancer, skirting it even when she is asked about it.

Incidentally, she had conceptualised and developed her business model while undergoing radiation therapy and fighting cancer. Truly, it is an inspiring story which needs to be told.

Minal Khona catches up with this cancer survivor

The word impossible is not in her dictionary. Kanika Tekriwal, who has bucked the norm in every way, has bravely overcome every challenge. Hailing from a conservative Marwari business family, she started to work at 17 years, even as she was studying. Instead of opting for a conventional marriage, she chose to study further, with the backing of her supportive parents.

Today, at 28, she is the CEO and co-founder of a successful plane and helicopter chartering service called JetSetGo. This company, founded in 2014, and often dubbed as the 'Uber' of the Indian skies, leases private aircrafts for High Net worth Individuals (HNIs) for their personal use.

Before making a mark in the Indian skies, Kanika had to first struggle and overcome cancer on the ground.

When she was just 21, routine tests for an injured hand led her to discover a lump in her neck. Several tests later, the doctor in her hometown, Bhopal, broke the devastating news to her that she was suffering from Hodgkin's Lymphoma, a cancer that affects the lymphatic system. This cancer is known to occur in people between the ages of 20-35 years. It was diagnosed by chance by a local orthopaedic and she didn't have very long to live, she was told.

It was through Google she learnt that it was a form of cancer. It was a bolt out of the blue since the family had no history of cancer too. Understandably shaken, she broke the news to her parents.

Her parents were shattered. To reconfirm the doctor's diagnosis, Kanika underwent several tests at multiple hospitals. This was in early 2011. Here, Kanika remembers being extremely positive from the start about surviving this disease.

She reminisces, "I was determined that I would not succumb to cancer. I developed a positive attitude to fight it; I did not want the cancer to get the better of me. I knew I would survive. I can understand the doctor getting it wrong, because it was not his field of

medicine per se; and he had limited exposure to the disease. I did tell him however that I would visit him decades later, not with a recurrence, but to prove I have survived the cancer."

Kanika chose Mumbai for her treatment, at her Aunt Pallavi More's suggestion. In Mumbai, she consulted an oncologist, who was extremely positive that she could get cured. Her chemo sessions were scheduled in Bhopal and occasionally, in Mumbai. Aware of what chemo could do, Kanika chopped off her long tresses and maintained a short haircut. Since her hair-fall was not severe, people didn't quite believe she had cancer, she recalls.

Her biggest takeaway from her ordeal has been not to have a plan B in life. She signs off with these words: "If you have a plan B, you will never go all out to make plan A work. Don't take no for an answer and live your life on your terms"

Recounting an anecdote, she narrates, "Once, I was flying to Mumbai for my chemo and I was carrying an excess extra bag with all my medical papers and reports. I requested the airline counter person to let me take it along without charge since I was a cancer patient. She refused to believe me until I had to show her the papers. Then, she was most apologetic and allowed me to take my extra bag."

Today, six years later, Kanika talks about her ordeal with a high degree of positivity. She remembers, "It is not as if I did not suffer or that the chemo and radiation did not take their toll on me. I used to sleep 14-18 hours a day after the treatment. My parents aged ten years in the ten months that I fought the cancer. Never once did I believe that I would succumb to it.

And, at home, I would be the clown, making light of my cancer, so that my parents would feel better."

Kanika was not the kind to brood over her cancer and wallow in self-pity. She says, "I didn't sit and think about why it was happening to me or what would I do if it returned. I became mentally tougher and did not let my mind dwell on the what-ifs. I started working on what I would do after I recovered." It is perhaps the optimism of youth that made her take it all in her stride. The only challenge she faces to date is the weight she gained. She says, "I gained 24 kilos as a side effect. I am still trying to work it off."

The life-changing announcement that she had cancer proved to be the game-changer for Kanika on all counts. She used her recovery time to work on an idea she had incubated for years—leasing out private aircrafts. An early encounter with a helicopter landing on the terrace of her home, when she was a child, made her fall in love with flying. She had also worked in the airline industry as part of her academic projects.

During her long painful hours of cancer therapy, which lasted for nine months, she worked on her business model for a private aviation



Kanika Tekriwal: Brimming with optimism

company. And, to reinforce her sense of positivity, she would announce to her family that she would make it to *Forbes* magazine in five years. Well, she can tick that one on her wish-list as done because Kanika did make it to the magazine, when she was featured in their 'Asia under 30' achievers' list. She was also featured in the BBC's list of 100 most inspiring women in the world.

Kanika finished her last radiation therapy session on November 30, 2011, and the next day, on December 1, she flew out to Delhi to start her new life. Though, her parents were against it, wanting her to give herself more time to recover, she convinced her father. When she had explained the business idea to him the first time, he actually thought she was creating an app or a game. Once he realised how serious she was, he became her biggest supporter and even encouraged her to do an MBA in UK.

Unusually, after completing her treatment, she discontinued her medicines, and went back to eating her normal diet and has been cancer free to date. "I stopped medication after the last month of radiation. I eat everything and do not require medicines either," asserts Kanika. She faithfully does her annual check-ups however.

After she was back doing her MBA from the UK, Kanika set up her company JetSetGo. Today, her company has contracts running into millions of dollars, and has been valued at Rs 100 crore. When she started, she had a plane in the sky every week; today, there is one up in the air all day, every day of the week. She manages the assets—private planes—belonging to HNIs; and her company takes care of the maintenance, security, catering, staff etc. The aircraft owner gets a return on his asset, which otherwise would have been languishing inside an airport hangar. Her clients include industrialists, cricketers, and Bollywood stars and since discretion is crucial, she does not reveal the identities of her clientele.



Touching the skies: The successful, young CEO never lets anything get her down

Kanika started JetSetGo with the aim of wanting to change the experience of flying in a private jet. She also wanted to make it economical and simplify the process. Her previous exposure to the aviation industry helped her. She points out, "People who used private

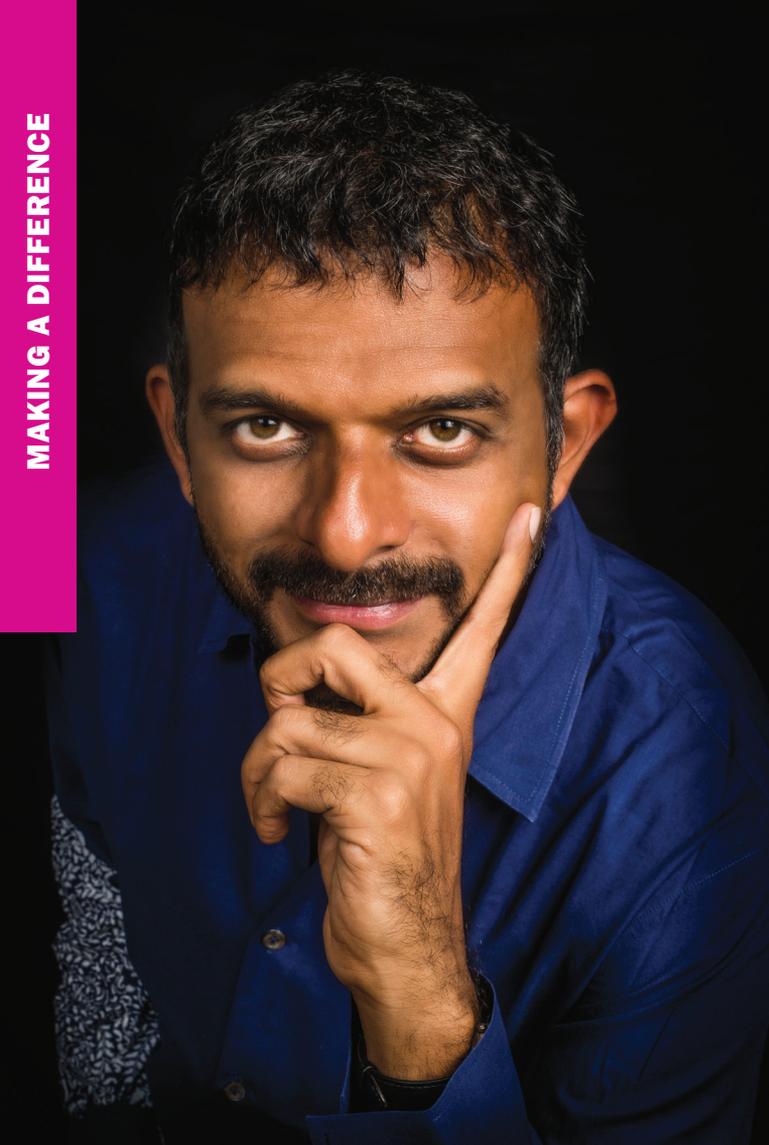
the need however for transparency and a service provider who took care of everything, including a pricing system that did not involve hidden costs."

Her company has grown 100 percent every month since its inception. The investors in her company include Puneet Dalmia, of the Dalmia Group of Companies and YouWeCan Ventures, promoted by cricketer Yuvraj Singh. They met at his house for a photo shoot, and they got chatting and he realised she had cancer too. Kanika's company supports children suffering from cancer, by providing treatment, medications and finding the right doctor, etc.

It is challenging to run a company, which is a pioneer in its field. Nothing fazes this determined young lady. Her biggest takeaway from her ordeal has been not to have a plan B in life. She signs off with these words: "If you have a plan B, you will never go all out to make plan A work. Don't take no for an answer and live your life on your terms." ■

"My parents aged ten years in the ten months that I fought the cancer. Never once did I believe that I would succumb to it. And, at home, I would be the clown, making light of my cancer, so that my parents would feel better"

jets used to have a hard time dealing with the charter brokers and the flight operators. Since the industry in India is still very nascent, hiring a private jet was not a seamless experience. I saw



J Keshav Ram

T M Krishna

The iconoclast musician

This new-gen, Carnatic musician T M Krishna is most famous for trying to democratise Carnatic music and make it accessible to everyone. He believes art forms are trapped inside issues of caste and community, and all these hierarchies are inbuilt.

In an interaction with **Kavitha Shanmugam** in Chennai, this free-thinking musician talks about what makes him such a challenger of traditional beliefs, a champion of inclusive music and a writer, unafraid to speak out ...

He is Chennai's best known non-conformist. This Ramon Magsaysay Award winner is regarded as the genius who rattled the foundations of the Carnatic music world by questioning its brahmin domination. Not satisfied with flouting established norms, at every opportunity, he works hard to bring Carnatic music to the masses, and also actively encouraged all other forms of music. Thodar Madabusi (T M) Krishna has come to be recognised for being the champion of "inclusive music".

Seated at his favourite corner inside the popular Chennai café, Chamiers, the handsome, light-eyed Krishna comes across as combative and intelligent. The kind, who will never be content to let the world go by but will always be an interventionist. The one, who unerringly zeroes in on sensitive issues that people blithely brush aside or pretend do not exist.

The Chennai Carnatic music world was thrown into a flutter, when he walked out of the acclaimed December Marghazi festival, rebelling against the brahmin domination of the music fest.

The Carnatic music world was already upset with Krishna for "messing with" the established format of a Carnatic concert. Since 2008, questioning the reasons behind who makes the

decision about presenting a concert in a particular way, he would play the fast-paced varnam in the middle or at the end of a concert. A varnam is customarily played at the start of a concert as a warm-up. Trained by vidwans Seetharama Sarma, Chingleput Ranganathan and the legendary Semmanagudi Srinivasa Iyer, Krishna gave his first concert when he was just 12-years-old. Today, he has fine-tuned and even sung an Islamic text by Nagur Hanifa at a Carnatic concert. The Carnatic vidwans and his purist rasikas seethed with anger and were shocked at his behaviour.

Krishna was relentless. He decided to take Carnatic music to a kuppam (fisherman's colony) by organising an outdoor music festival called Urur Olcott Kuppam. Held at a fisherman's colony near Elliots Beach in Chennai every year, it is quite the event in the city's music calendar. It has just completed its third edition. More recently, he teamed up with the Jogappas, a transgender community in Bengaluru for a music concert. He also brought the poetry of the much maligned and banned Tamil author Perumal Murugan on stage.

In the face of heavy criticism, he journeyed to Sri Lanka's war-torn Killonochi province after the civil war to perform.

At 51, after years of ruffling feathers in the music world, Krishna admits he continues his battle to blur caste boundaries

in Carnatic music with the same passion as before. “I just keep pushing, prodding and try to be as honest as possible. I believe that it is condescending to say just Carnatic music is on a higher plane. All kinds of music, be it parayattam or Jogappas music, need to be celebrated and enjoyed.”

Krishna admits to ‘a lot of’ introspection before he started to fly in the face of the sacred and the sacrosanct in Carnatic music. First, he asked himself “philosophical and political questions” on not just the way he sang but about what or who determines the content in Carnatic music?

“I asked why are certain art forms not accepted, why is one art form superior to another? Why are certain art forms not celebrated like others? It is not just a matter of taste,” he argues. Krishna went on to put down all these dichotomies he experienced in his interactions with his singing and the Carnatic music world, in a book called *A Southern Music—The Karnatik Story*, which was released by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and Chairman of Kalakshetra, Gopalkrishna Gandhi.

What makes him such an interrogator, a contrarian? “My constant questioning comes from my school and home. I studied in J Krishnamurti’s school. That says it all. We learnt how to frame questions, from an intelligent question about a formula or about economics to difficult life-changing

questions at school. After all, how to frame a question determines everything doesn’t it?” he asks.

At home, there were fierce debates about everything at the dinner table. “My home, and my school shaped me. Today, I am not scared about asking a question. Neither am I nervous about not being accepted by any group,” says Krishna.

That explains why he shrugs off the brickbats, which come his way often for going against the system. On his “loud statement” made by staying away from the Marghazi fest, he says, “The December music season is a massive symptom of what ails Carnatic music. Every year, it is the same people who play and the same audience who attend the concert. Common people are not part of it. I believe, if you allow larger communities to participate, interesting perspectives can emerge. Otherwise, it is a monolithic culture. What is so sacrosanct and hi-brow about Carnatic music? I will not return to the music season until the changes happen.”

The rest of the year, Krishna sings in the Chennai sabhas. Recently, he held a two-day music fest at the Raga Sudha Hall in the Brahmin heartland—Mylapore—for the first time on marginalised art forms. “We had art forms such as silambattam, parayattam and gaana being performed on a Carnatic sabha stage. The audience loved it. I am just trying to get all art forms together to reach as many people as possible. Only then can hierarchies be

“I believe that it is condescending to say just Carnatic music is on a higher plane. All kinds of music, be it parayattam or Jogappas music, need to be celebrated and enjoyed”



Well-known Carnatic singer T M Krishna is a champion of inclusive music

TM Krishna on whether Vedic chants heal pain and diseases like cancer

It is fair to accept music therapy does play a role in healing. Why just Vedic chants, it can also be Christian hymns or Koranic verses. The sonic quality of anything can have calming powers and change the way hormones are released since pain comes from the way hormones are released too. It can definitely help in relieving pain, maybe, trigger your immune system to respond. But, to connect this to a specific culture or religion is deeply problematic to me. What may be healing for some may not work for another person.

Vedic chants are beautiful; they have a consonant and vowel connection that probably helps in healing. To say, however, that only soft Carnatic music can heal is a fraud. For someone, it can be Metallica, some may find Simon and Garfunkel or Ilaiyaraaja music, calming.

Vedic chants may culturally work for you. Some get disturbed with the tanpura sound. That is bizarre to me because tanpura is the life breath of my music. Some cannot listen to classical Carnatic music, while others breathe it. Music can be a strong aid to recovery but if someone tells me raga *Anandabhairavi* reduces diabetes, that is rubbish. *Gayatri Mantra* might foster positivism but I can also read your text and get positive. You cannot correlate an aesthetic experience with cure or make a scientific correlation with something intangible. I am unwilling to accept music can be a cure by itself; it can enable many things, such as enabling your willpower to fight and give you inner strength. However, it cannot cure a disease.

broken,” asserts Krishna, who writes thought-provoking articles in newspapers and online news websites on a wide range of topics.

This music fest was held on the sidelines of his annual Urur Olcott Kuppam concert initiative. Held in the open beach, this fest draws huge crowds. “The atmosphere is great, listening to music with such a diverse crowd. It is a fabulous experience,” admits Krishna.

All art forms are presented in this concert such as Tamil Rock (with Raghu Dixit), classical music with Unnikrishnan, gaana, koothu, kuchipudi and more. The philosophy behind the festival says Krishna, is to bring diverse people together and through art, understand each other’s difficulties and share in larger conversations. “These interactions have actually prompted us to tackle some of the civic problems facing the kuppam,” this activist-musician points out.

Krishna is also involved with many other projects aimed at making Carnatic music accessible to everyone. Along with his musician wife Sangeetha Sivakumar, he encourages children from public schools to learn Carnatic music.

Fifteen children from four public schools in Chennai are selected from class 7 to learn Carnatic music.

Krishna explains, “This programme, aimed at creating access to Carnatic music for children from different backgrounds, is going on for the past one and half years. We use this opportunity to change the way Carnatic music is taught. The kids come from a world different from the Carnatic world but sing beautifully. They may not become Carnatic musicians but the classes will open possibilities for them.”

They are working on another project archiving the art forms of marginalised communities like the Irula community near Coimbatore.

Krishna also works with the transgender community, the Jogappas. They are a small transgender subculture, in north Karnataka and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, who are dedicated to the goddess Yellamma. They make a living by Joga (begging), singing and dancing.

Points out Krishna, “The Jogappas are a musical community. There is a lot of angst inside them because they are often abused by the system. Their songs are addressed to goddess Yellamma. It is beautiful devotional music. We do what I call, conversational concerts to bring Carnatic and Jogappas music on the same platform. It has been an incredible learning process for me.”

Krishna admits to being influenced by the late philosopher J Krishnamurti, despite not having read much of his works. “What an incredible thinker. I like J Krishnamurti’s philosophy about pathlessness, the idea of journeying through life without being trapped in one path. He came up with some honest ways of being reflective as a human being.”

In the same vein, he goes on to add, “If you can be as open as possible, you risk exposure, and, you can get to know yourself. You have to put yourself in uncomfortable positions, I think that is the best way to move,” he asserts. Ruefully, he admits that his prodigious energy prods him “to go on and on” to fight for what he thinks is right.

This is precisely why the Carnatic world cannot wish T M Krishna away. He is unstoppable. ■

“The December music season is a massive symptom of what ails Carnatic music. Every year, it is the same people who play and the same audience who attend the concert. Common people are not part of it”

The Tagore Legacy

Emerges out of the Shadows

The Indian art movement flourished and thrived under the patronage of the Tagore family of Bengal. They were also big art collectors. In the 30s, the inimitable Tagore art collection was bought by the late industrialist, the textile giant Kasturbai Lalbhai from Ahmedabad. Today, this priceless private collection is housed in Lalbhai's refurbished ancestral home, which has been converted into a museum for the world to enjoy.

Anil Mulchandani visits Ahmedabad's new address for art: the Kasturbhai Lalbhai Museum to feast his eyes on the Tagore collection which was once stashed away in boxes

Photos: **Dinesh Shukla**

The Tagore family from Bengal is known for building an art movement that flourished in India during the early 1900s. This movement also significantly impacted modern art in India. The private art collection of the Tagore family is now on public display at the Kasturbhai Lalbhai Museum, housed in the 112-year-old ancestral home of the Lalbhai family in Ahmedabad.

This historic house-museum is situated in Shahibaug, which happens to be the precise location where emperor Shah Jahan, as Prince Khurram had built a Mughal palace. As the first member of the Indian civil services, author and composer Satyendranath Tagore stayed in this palace, with his brother Rabindranath Tagore, who penned some of his early works while staying in Shahibaug. By the early-20th century, when the textile industry was booming in Ahmedabad, most textile mill owners moved to Shahibaug and built their mansions here.



Many prominent architects of British India, and later European modernists and India's own master architects, were commissioned to construct some of these mansions. One of the landmarks in Shahibaug is also the Retreat complex, owned by the Sarabhai family, which houses the Calico Museum of Textiles since the 1980s.

A short distance from the Retreat, the Lalbhai family's ancestral house looms among gardens with an Indo-European façade and colonnade. Built in the early 1900s, the mansion was the residence of Lalbhai Dalpatbhai, one of the first generation textile mill owners, who founded the Saraspur cotton mill in 1896, thus beginning the family's foray into manufacturing textiles. His son Kasturbhai Lalbhai is credited with developing the Lalbhai Group of Mills and foraying into chemicals.

The centerpiece of the collection is the illuminated book, *Khamasa* of Nizami Ganjavi, a Persian poet, which has remarkable Persian calligraphy and miniatures

In an exclusive interview, Jayshree Lalbhai, who along with her husband Sanjay Lalbhai converted this family house to a museum, explains how the prestigious Tagore collection came into the possession of the Lalbhai family.

She recounts, "In the years between 1930s and 40s, the Tagore family put up their art collection for sale. The idea was to sell it as a collection and not as individual pieces. Kasturbhai Lalbhai was not an art connoisseur. But, a family member, Srimati Hutheesingh, who had studied in Santiniketan married Soumendranath Tagore, and this connection led to Kasturbhai buying the valuable collection to prevent it from being taken out of India."

Jayshree and her husband decided to exhibit a selection from this art

collection which was kept in boxes in their ancestral house. This house has been recently opened as a museum, along with the adjoining staff building designed in the 1930s by Claude Batley, an English architect. Batley, who as practitioner, teacher and President of the Indian Institute of Architects from 1921 to 1923, was instrumental in the development of modern architecture in India in the first half of the 20th C. The staff building exhibits the family's contemporary arts collection.

"The idea was to make this complex an art and culture hub," points out Jayshree Lalbhai.

Well-known conservationist architect Rahul Mehrotra was commissioned to renovate the property, Pramod Kumar, managing director, Eka Resources, was given the work of archiving and cataloguing the collection and the National Institute of Design (NID) team was involved in the design of the museum.

"The brief to the teams was that the look of the historic house was to be maintained, with the pieces evocatively displayed as they would be in such a museum. We did not want it to look like a conventional museum," adds Jayshree Lalbhai.

The drawing room fitted with furniture as it would be in a house, showcases sculptures like Chola

bronzes, Pala stone sculptures and a Gandharva bust. Shiva-Parvati bronzes are housed in a wooden shrine that is part of the hall. There is also a pichvai, the religious Vaishnava paintings on one of the walls.

Other Rooms in the museum exhibit miniature paintings from the Pahari, Mughal and Rajasthani schools. The centerpiece of the collection is the illuminated book, *Khamasa* of Nizami Ganjavi, a Persian poet, which has remarkable Persian calligraphy and miniatures. This is encased in a cabinet adapted for the purpose of exhibiting this illuminated manuscript. Visitors can leaf through the manuscript on a tablet.

Another example of how the ancestral furniture has been deployed to exhibit the art pieces, is the display of 18th century Rasamanjari paintings by artists from the Punjab Pahari tradition from Nurpur on a dressing table. A Devi painting is displayed on a tiered table top.

Next to the grand stairway is a display of Tibetan Buddhist art like thangkhas and idols.

On another floor, you can come across the works of the Bengal artists, who represented the art movement often referred to as Bengal Revivalism, led by the Tagores. They were artists like Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mookherjee, Mukul Dey,



Krishna Lila miniatures in Pahari style



The drawing room with its collection of sculptures and devotional art

Kshitindranath Mazumdar, Sarada Ukil, M.A.R. Chugtai and Asit Haldar.

The themes of these paintings are Indian—of history, religion, family, nationalism, social issues—and they followed the principles of painting they could discern in India’s historical art forms like the Buddhist frescoes of Ajanta, miniatures and temple sculptures. Rejecting oil painting as being British or western, they used water colour, tempera and ink,

gouache, the Japanese wash technique, graphic art, print-making, lithography, drypoint etching, etc.

There are works here of Mukul Chandra Dey, a student of Rabindranath Tagore’s Santiniketan and a pioneer of the drypoint etching in India. They include portraits of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. The Ramayana paintings by Nandalal Bose are displayed on a table case.



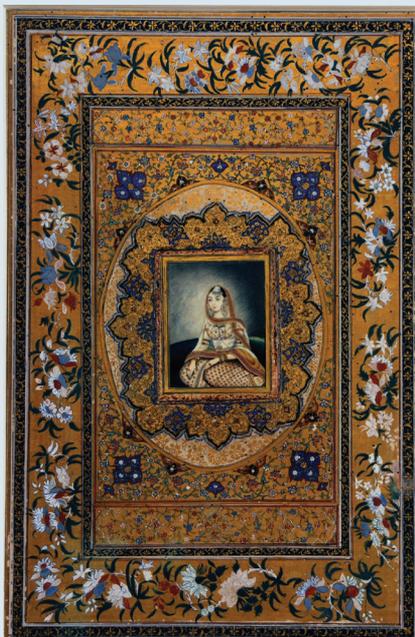
Metal crafts and bidriware at the museum

postcards from students of the Tagores to their gurus. These are displayed in a cabinet inspired by the vacuum-tube radios of the 1920s.

“The museum has no tickets or entry fee. Visitors are taken on a guided tour of the collection. There are only limits on the number of visitors at any given time to ensure that the art pieces get minimum exposure to light or dust,” explains Jayshree Lalbhai.

In the future, the family proposes to make this historic museum depict the long history of their own family over many generations, and a cultural centre for events.

With its innovative and creative use of household furniture in exhibition design, this museum can be an inspiration for “historic house museums” in India, which unlike the west, are few and far between. ■



An exquisite Mughal miniature painting

With its innovative and creative use of household furniture in exhibition design, this museum can be an inspiration for “historic house museums” in India, which unlike the west, are few and far between

Gaganendranath Tagore’s cubist art is also found here. Works by Hemendranath Mazumdar focus on his popular theme—Bengali women draped in a saree.

One of the most moving exhibits in the museum is that of the hand-painted

UBF Diary

May 2017

Dr Raghu Ram features in the Common Law Entrance Test!

This was a question asked in the national level Common Law Entrance Test (CLAT) held in May this year. The picture is an extract from a 'practice question paper' in February 2017. The same question got repeated in the final CLAT held all over India.



In the Memory of a People's Doctor

Dr Raghu Ram delivered the prestigious Dr Satyapal Tuli Memorial Oration held under the auspices of the Indian Medical Association in Hyderabad. He spoke about 'what to do' and 'what not to do' in the assessment and management of non-cancerous conditions of the breast and breast cancer.

Born almost 100 years ago in 1919, Dr Satyapal Tuli was a distinguished doctor, who moved from Punjab to Hyderabad in 1949. He was often referred to as 'peoples' doctor'.



Dr P Raghu Ram, after garlanding the picture of Dr Satya Pal Tuli, along with the office bearers of the IMA, Hyderabad division

June 2017

Pan India multi-centre clinical trial takes off



Dr P Raghu Ram, has been appointed as principal investigator, for a multi-centre clinical trial to assess the efficacy of a blood test to detect breast cancer based upon a disruptive technology—the Mammo Alert system—developed by POC Medical Systems Pvt. Limited (Silicon Valley, California). It will be a quick and low-cost blood test. This trial is being conducted at multiple centres across India such as KIMS Hospitals and Indo American Cancer Centre, (Hyderabad), Manipal Hospitals (Bengaluru), Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences (Kochi), Maulana Azad Medical College (New Delhi), Tata Medical Centre (Kolkata) and HCG Cancer Hospital (Ahmedabad).



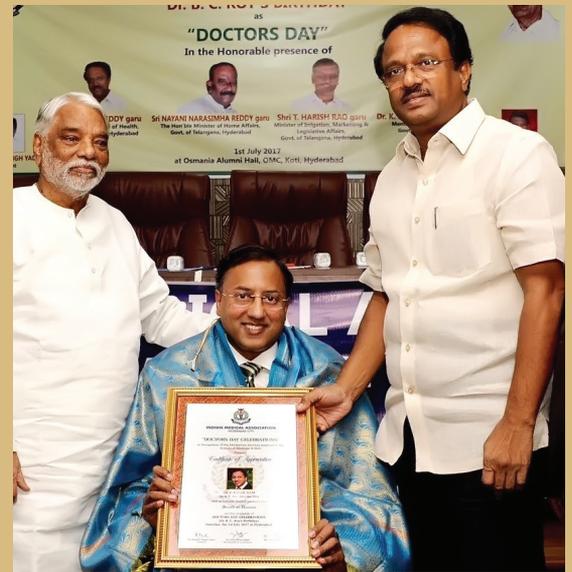
Dr C Laxma Reddy, health minister, Telangana, and equally, N Chandrababu Naidu, chief minister and Dr Kamineni Srinivas, health minister, AP applauded the initiative and expressed interest in conducting population based breast cancer screening using the disruptive technology, as a pilot project, in a few districts in Telangana and AP.

Dr Raghu Ram, Sanjeev Saxena and Ramana Tadevallli (POC Medical Systems Ltd, USA) with the Hon'ble Chief Minister and Health Minister, Government of AP and Health Minister, Government of Telangana

Doctors Day Felicitation



Dr B Bhaskar Rao, MD and CEO of KIMS Hospitals felicitating Dr Raghu Ram on being conferred the award



Dr C Laxma Reddy, Health Minister, Govt of Telangana felicitating Dr Raghu Ram

Dr Raghu Ram was felicitated, on Doctor’s Day on July 1 by Dr C Laxma Reddy, Health Minister, Govt. of Telangana at a function held under the auspices of the Indian Medical Association in Hyderabad, on being conferred the prestigious Dr B C Roy national award by the President of India for the year 2016. The award was given for his ‘Outstanding service to socio-medical relief’—the only doctor from Telangana to be recognised for this honour in 2016. The doctor also is the youngest surgeon ever from the Telugu States to have received this highest recognition.

First-Ever Breast Imaging and Intervention Course in the Telugu states at KIMS hospitals



Dr Bijal Jankaria and Dr Bhagyam Raghavan, Executive Committee members of BISI lighting the lamp. Also seen are Dr Raghu Ram (President ABSI), Dr Kakarla Subba Rao (Chief Guest) and Dr Jwala Srikala (Organising Secretary)

The value of breast imaging for a breast surgeon, is similar to the importance, a physician gives to a stethoscope. The mid-term CME (continuing medical education) of the Breast Imaging Society of India (BISI) was organised by KIMS Hospitals in association with The Association of Breast Surgeons of India (ABSI) on July 2, 2017. This was the first-ever joint academic activity conducted by BISI, in association with ABSI and the first educational programme on breast imaging and interventions in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Over 130 delegates, both radiologists and surgeons from all over India attended the conference, which was inaugurated by Dr Kakarla Subba Rao, a world renowned radiologist.



The conference faculty

Going Digital with Breast Healthcare



In his quarterly column, **Dr P Raghu Ram** explains in detail about how UBF developed the world's first mobile application, which empowers women about every aspect of breast health in twelve languages

How did you get the idea of developing a breast health mobile app? How daunting was the prospect of creating an app, which caters to users across 12 languages?

An Indian woman succumbs to breast cancer every ten minutes in India. Consider the figures: the number of deaths per year has risen to 70,000 and with 150,000 new cases being diagnosed every year, the incidence of breast cancer has overtaken cervical cancer, to become the most common cancer affecting women in India.

In many parts of India, breast cancer is a taboo subject – a 'closet' issue not openly discussed. Due to the lack of awareness, more than 60 per cent of breast cancers reach the advanced stages, with most succumbing within a year of being diagnosed.

To create breast cancer awareness, since 2007, the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation along with Breast Cancer Care, UK (the largest breast cancer charity in United Kingdom) has printed and distributed 100,000 information booklets, about every aspect of breast health in English and Telugu, across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

A couple of months after I was conferred the Padma Shri award in March 2015, our Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Digital India campaign. Inspired by his ambitious aim to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy, and equally, encouraged by the enormous impact and heightened levels of breast health awareness, generated over the past decade (2007 – 2017) through our information booklets in the Telugu States, UBF embarked upon creating a mobile app in 12 languages (English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Oriya and Assamese).

I was clear in my mind that to reach a wider audience across the country (both rural and urban), I had to make information

about breast health available in all the most commonly spoken Indian languages. I set myself a couple of years to accomplish this project. Considering the number of languages involved, it was indeed a daunting exercise involving a lot of modifications to the core content, to make it simple and easy-to-understand. I am delighted that it was launched well within the target period of two years.

Did you over-simplify the app content to make an average net user understand the subject?

Absolutely. I was particular that the information should be presented in an easily understandable manner, with lots of images supporting the text. Further, I realised it is important to make the app interesting as well. Anyone downloading the app is daily presented with 'five common myths' relating to breast health to assess the user's knowledge on the subject.

You get scores for your answers and the correct answers (i.e. evidence based facts) are provided at once. This simple, yet effective initiative aims to keep the user interested, engaged and enthused, ensuring they return to the app regularly.

What are the significant advantages of using the digital format to create breast cancer awareness?

With nearly 90 per cent of the households in India having access to smartphones, and equally, with the launch of Prime Minister's Digital India campaign, I am sure this app will reach a large number all over India. This app can help them to pick up the different aspects of breast health in a short period of time.

Moreover, since training in counseling skills is not part of the Indian medical curriculum, there is little expertise when it comes to 'breaking bad news' to patients diagnosed with breast cancer, and equally, in reassuring the 'worried well'

I am absolutely delighted more than 8,000 downloaded the app within five days of launching the app. It received a rating of 4.9/5. This is a record and speaks volumes of the impact made by this world's first innovative initiative in 12 languages.

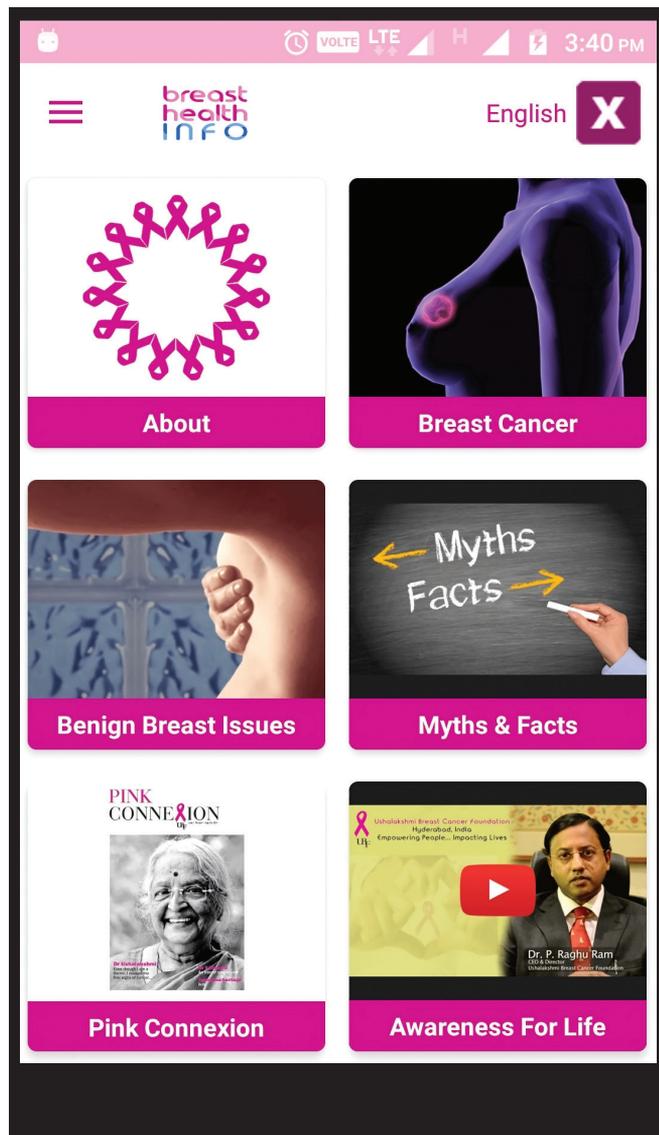
with benign breast health issues (which are far more common than breast cancer). This app aims to address each and every aspect of breast health, making people better prepared to make informed decisions.

Do you see the app as the best digital format to spread awareness about breast cancer?

I would like to quote celebrated actor Amitabh Bachchan here. While launching this app in March 2017 in Mumbai, he rightly pointed out that—“The opportunity to raise the quality of life and healthcare through digitalisation is on the cusp of a third wave of IT adoption. Understanding what patients want from digital healthcare and the best way to give it to them is vital and can help pave the way, and ‘now’ is the time for us to go all in, on digital strategies.”

What are the key features of this digital initiative?

The app is available in both Android and Apple versions, thus making it widely available for a free download. Unlike some other health-related apps, we do not engage in information capturing and collection of personal data.



I wanted the home page to be simple, user-friendly and attractive. It is the page the end user interacts with first. Hence, great care was taken to plan this page with lots of attention to detail.

The app’s home page has essentially six prominent boxes:

- First box: Information about the app
- Second box: By clicking this box, you get access to various aspects of benign non-cancer breast health issues
- Third box: Here, you get access to various aspects of breast cancer related information
- Fourth box: Common myths and facts about different aspects of breast health
- Fifth box: *Pink Connexion*—South Asia’s first quarterly breast health newsletter published by Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation (since 2014)
- Sixth box: This leads you to two breast cancer awareness films made by Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation.

The first one is a short two-minute film, with a crisp message about the importance of the early detection of breast cancer. The second film is a detailed one for 15 minutes, which conveys valuable information about prevention, early detection and the treatment modalities involved in managing breast cancer. In fact, impressed with the quality and content, the Ministry of Health, government of India, is using this film to train healthcare workers across the country in implementing pan-India population based breast cancer screening programme.

The app is receiving good reviews, what are your plans to reach more people?

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It helps that it is available in both Android and Apple versions. In the next one year, I intend to do ‘Road shows’ in 12 states in India, involving prominent people in public life to highlight the availability of the app in regional languages. Hopefully, this exercise will arouse more interest and translate to more downloads.

Impressed with Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation’s significant contribution towards improving breast healthcare in India over the past decade, Amitabh Bachchan has volunteered to lend his face and his voice to this pan-India campaign. In time, there is bound to be enormous interest in this app, thus filling a huge void in the delivery of breast healthcare in India.

For a free download, please click on the link below:

iphone users

<https://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewSoftware?id=1208874460&mt=8>

Android phone users

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



Happiness is a choice, with or without cancer.

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