

PINK CONNECTION

UBF

Vol 4 Issue 4 May - July '18

Shamlu Dudeja

Reviving Bengal's Kantha

Tholubommata

A Theater of Shadows

**Not Stumped by
Cancer**
Cricketer Keya Roy



BEHIND The Scenes

These days, we have become social media addicts spending hours on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and the like. At one time, we were singing praises of social media as it shrunk the global world that seemed to be in the palm of our hands. The wonder and triumph of the age of internet was astounding.

But more recently, and increasingly questions are being raised about digital media. For one, even while digital media shrank the world and brought all of us closer, on the downside, it has distanced us from the immediate world around us. We may be in touch with our cousins in Colorado, but somehow we have lost touch with the sister in the same city.

For another, our main source of news and information these days is the social media. The younger generation especially does not think it is necessary to read newspapers or magazines (which has sounded the death knell for us, print journalists) and their go-to for news is Twitter or FB. We know how our surfing patterns and likes

and dislikes are being sold without our knowledge. What to me is even more scary is that so many of my friends, even intelligent ones forward messages that are at best fake news. Remember the photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi touching the Saudi Prince's feet that was widely circulated on Whatsapp, and that was later found to have been photo-shopped? Or the constant forwards I get of how a stock market crash is imminent, or of reams of news on Sreedevi's death?

The phenomena of fake news is becoming rampant. I urge our readers to go easy on circulating such news, especially those on health matters. I constantly get forwards of how if you drank Apple cider vinegar you'll lose weight or if you ate cinnamon daily you'd keep BP away. Health is a serious business, and we not only have to be wary of such advice but stop and think before we circulate them.

We assure you, nothing in this newsletter is downloaded, but rather our writers have met them to put together the lives and struggles of women we have featured. This is a small newsletter, and we hope to fight fake news in this manner.

Ratna Rao Shekar



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A quarterly round up of news and events at the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation

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Batting Against Cancer

Sometimes life throws you a googly that comes out of nowhere. That is exactly what happened to one of India's women cricketers. A vegetarian all her life, physically fit and active due to her long career as a cricket player, Keya Roy was stumped at first when she was diagnosed with cancer of the endometrial lining. However, this brave, sportive woman fought the cancer with lot of determination. This is her story, narrated by **Minal Khona**

Keya Roy was the first woman to make a century in the history of women's cricket in India. It was at the National Women's Cricket Championship played in Gorakhpur in 1977. She has been a stellar performer, known for her sixes and boundaries having represented India at international tournaments. Keya enjoyed a long innings in the game having played till the early 90s; and is today, a selector for the West Bengal Under-19 women's team besides mentoring women cricketers. She works in the Eastern Railway, as well.

Kolkata-based Keya also happens to be a cancer survivor. Except for her maternal grandmother, who died of oesophageal cancer, when Keya was four, no one on either side of her family had cancer. Moreover, Keya has always had a healthy lifestyle—being

"I really couldn't believe I had cancer. I have always been healthy, never had any major illnesses, I don't eat junk food, no animal protein – so I wondered how I got cancer"

physically fit, vegetarian abstaining even from onions and garlic. That part confused her, the most, during her tryst with cancer last year. She says, "I really couldn't believe I had cancer. I have always been healthy, never had any major illnesses, I don't eat junk food, no animal protein—so I wondered how I got cancer." She candidly adds, "I have always been well-built since childhood being on the heavier side, but I was very fit and agile. No matter how much I played or exercised, I could never lose weight."

She recounts how it all began in vivid detail. "Towards the end of 2016, I was on the field at a practice session and I felt an ache in my back. It was radiating towards the pelvic area. I went to the bathroom and I noticed some reddish

discharge. The pain vanished after a while and I got engrossed in the game. I was 55 at that time and my menopause had happened four years ago. The pain returned shortly after and so did the discharge. I went with my husband to see a gynaecologist. He prescribed a lot of tests and most of them were clear. The only hiccup was with the Trans Vaginal Sonography or TVS—it showed that the wall of my uterus was thicker than normal."

She went for a hysteroscopy, a cervical biopsy, a D and C (Dilation and Curettage); this was on February 16, 2017. The biopsy showed no malignancy but complex endometrial hyperplasia with atypia. This indicated that there was something wrong with the uterus.

Keya recalls, "The doctors did not mention cancer at this stage. They wanted to perform a frozen biopsy during the hysterectomy. After the biopsy report, they advised surgery. During the surgery, they would decide which organs to retain and which ones to remove."

There was a panel of three doctors attending to Keya. The frozen biopsy report revealed that she had endometrium adenocarcinoma—in other words, cancer of the endometrial lining. Understandably, Keya was shocked, and depressed. In fact, she admits that the cancer recovery has been as hard as fighting the depression. The latter is still an ongoing battle, she admits.

She adds, "Even before the surgery, I knew something was wrong. When it was confirmed that it was cancer, I was in tears. I kept wondering how it could have happened. I cried a lot, and no one knew how I felt or how I faced the fact that I had cancer."

As they say, however, guardian angels walk among us. In Keya's case, it was a Grade 1 officer of the Indian Railways by the name of Amitabh Mukherjee. Keya says, "He was like a God. He had lost his father and brother to cancer, so he would talk to me or WhatsApp me to keep my spirits up. He forced me to think positive and advised me about the dos and don'ts. Today, he is the Financial Director of Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL). He would call me every day and cheer me up when I was at home after the surgery."

The doctors finally removed the ovaries, fallopian tubes and the lymph nodes in her pelvic region and cervix.

She was advised 25 sessions of radiation therapy and two sessions of chemotherapy if required. And, since she would get medical benefits from the railways, she was advised to get her treatment done at Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai.

Keya reveals, "I was quite apprehensive about going to Mumbai. Amitabh arranged my stay at the Railway Officers' guest house for a few days, so I could meet the doctors. The hospital was so crowded but the doctors and nurses were handling everything so well. In fact, you could ask the same question 20 times and they would answer you with a smile every time."

Keya was asked to undergo a biopsy again and when the results tallied, she was sent to the radiation oncologist. To her good fortune, he was a sports lover. He would visit her during her radiation treatments and chat with her. She recalls, "At that time, the women's cricket World Cup was on in England and he would come and chat about Jhulan's bowling or how Mithali batted. Since I had come from Kolkata and could not stay indefinitely, he preponed my treatment by two days. He patiently explained how it worked, what would happen, the side-effects etc."

Despite it all, the treatment was anything but a cakewalk for Keya. The protocol demanded that before radiation, she drink a litre of water and not urinate for 45 minutes. After her surgery in Kolkata, Keya suffered from incontinence.

Candidly she explains, "If my bladder was not full, they could not give me the radiation therapy. But since I could not hold it in, sometimes I would urinate right there. The *maushis* (women attendants) would clean me up with a smile and say '*Koi baat nahin, hum saaf kar lenge*'. (No problem, we will clean it up) I am really thankful to the entire team who looked after me, because at every stage I was made to feel extremely comfortable."



Free of cancer now, Keya Roy is back to mentoring young cricketers...but she continues to battle with the side-effects of medication

After a few sessions of radiation therapy, the nausea and vomiting started; this was followed by a burning sensation while urinating and then came the diarrhoea. She says, "I could not control my bowel movements and would visit the toilet at least 30 times a day. I stopped eating and ate mashed, boiled potato with salt. I could not take buttermilk. After the therapy sessions ended, I used to drink lots of water, fruit juices and ate only rice and curds. I could not eat a single chilli because spicy food made my stomach ache." During the treatment, Keya stayed at the Bengali Association in Navi Mumbai. Initially, her brother and husband accompanied her, and her husband took care of her. He was used to her taking care of him, now it was the other way around.

The diarrhoea continued as long as the therapy did and though Keya lived on mostly crackers and water, she lost only about three kilos. Doctors would keep

her spirits up and insisted they wanted to see her back in the field, mentoring young sportswomen.

All through her ordeal, Keya had several people batting for her. Her office colleagues and Amitabh Mukherji; her

"Yuvraj Singh is my idol. I had heard and read about his fight with cancer, and every time, I would be depressed, I would tell myself, if he can do it, so can I!"

brother Shyamal Roy, who is a journalist and his wife Dollu Roy; her sister Chandralekha Bhowmick and Keya's husband, Shankar Nath Chakraborty. If she felt sick while at work, colleagues would insist she rest. To keep her from

getting depressed, her husband, who is a very caring man, took her for outings and trips which cheered her up.

Her biggest inspiration, however, has been Yuvraj Singh, the cricketer who battled cancer and won. She has never met him but says, "Yuvraj Singh is my idol. I had heard and read about his fight with cancer, and every time, I felt depressed, I would tell myself, if he can do it, so can I."

Today, though she is cancer free, 2017, has not been an easy one for Keya. Fighting depression, and all the side-effects such as headaches, diarrhoea, loss of appetite and fatigue have worn her out. She plans to start swimming this summer to stay fit, though she is not completely out of her depression. But, the sportswoman in her is still happiest when she is out there on the field guiding young women in cricket. In this battle with cancer, Keya can very easily be judged as the 'woman of the match'. ■

The Baroma of Kantha



Shamlu Dudeja is close to 80 years now, and despite her many ailments, she rose above the many setbacks in her life, including a bout of breast cancer, to promote Bengal's *kantha* embroidery globally. Simultaneously, she was able to provide the women involved in this craft, a means of livelihood through her forum SHE (Self Help Enterprise). These women look up to their '*didi*', their *baroma* (aunt) who has empowered them in so many ways.

6

Nivedita Choudhuri met this intrepid lady and her daughter Malika in Kolkata recently to craft their absorbing story

Shamlu Dudeja was leading a fairly uneventful life, way back in 1986 in Kolkata, when a seven-pound tumour in her abdomen and a subsequent hysterectomy forced her to give up teaching. A resident of Kolkata with her tea broker husband Vijay since 1962, Shamlu was a child of the Partition.

Born to Sindhi parents in Karachi in 1938, Shamlu recalls travelling to Bombay by ship a couple of months after Partition in 1947, along with her father, a professor-turned-government servant, mother and two siblings. All they could bring with them were clothes and a sewing machine. Shamlu inherited the love for needlework from her mother,

who was skilled at embroidery. Educated at Miranda House and Hindu College in Delhi, she taught mathematics at Calcutta International School and at the teachers' training department of Loreto College, Kolkata in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Forced to take it easy after her tumour, Shamlu found she had loads of free time on her hands. One day, after collecting her daughter from her tennis lesson, she chanced upon a craft *mela*, where items made of *kantha* embroidery were displayed on one of the tables. It took her back to her time at Lady Irwin School in New Delhi, where her craft teacher had taught the children, the traditional quilting stitch.

Shamlu spoke to the girls manning the stall and persuaded them to accompany her to her house. Her husband had recently bought some white silk material from Madras. Shamlu drew a few paisley patterns and asked the girls to incorporate the patterns on the silk material and turn them into sarees. She lent them her silk sarees, so that they could get a hang of the basic layout. The girls were sceptical since they had never embroidered on silk before. However, they agreed to give it a try.

Originally made from old fabrics, the traditional *kantha* cloth is an example of quilting worked on multiple layers of fabric. In the past, *kanthas* were made from layers of fabrics, often, old worn sari lengths softened by wear and washing.

Shamlu's tenacity paid off, and the girls returned a couple of months later with smiles and intricately embellished sarees.



SHE's senior artisans train willing volunteers in villages about *kanthar kaaj*

In 1987, tragedy struck again when Shamlu was diagnosed with breast cancer. Her daughter Malika, who was a student of Loreto House, stepped in to take care of her mother and also do her bit to popularise *kantha* couture among the young people in Kolkata. She launched a range of *kantha* salwar-kurta ensembles and sold them to her friends. That is how Malika's *Kantha Collection* and Trading Private Limited, the marketing arm of Shamlu's enterprise, was born.

An optimistic Shamlu recovered from her illness and soon after, rallied a group of *kantha* artisans together to form the Self Help Enterprise (SHE). SHE Foundation was formalised as an NGO in 1999. Shamlu found solace in visiting the homes of the artisans and their villages. She was amazed to find so much destitution and hardship around her and began to empathise with the rural women. She started to look beyond her grief and despair and focus on improving their lot. She dedicated herself to refining their craft and giving it an edge in a competitive market.

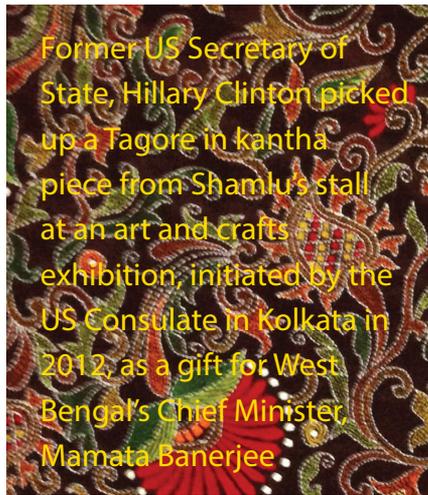
Kantha runs in the blood of every young girl in rural Bengal. These girls have innate quilting talent, inherited from their mother and grand-mothers. All SHE Foundation sought to do was foster this talent and revive the *kantha* in every home.

Over the years, SHE's senior artisans have been fanning out into the villages and training willing volunteers in the finer nuances of *kanthar kaaj* (embroidery). They are the team leaders, who travel from the SHE studio on Alipore Park Road in Kolkata to the villages and give the artistes fabrics, designs, threads and a visual picture of the final product. Colours are discussed, but the artistes have the freedom to use their initiative to create marketable textiles.

Kantha has provided *dwar pe rozi* (income at the doorstep) to more than 800 disadvantaged village women in Bengal, who are working for SHE Foundation. *Kantha* has spread so deeply into the interiors of the state that now there are several thousand artisans engaged in this craft, and working for other organisations.

The workers sew in the confines of their houses, when they can manage to snatch a few minutes for themselves, in the midst of tending to young children, cooking and cleaning. Often, four or five women sit together in a backyard, palm fronds swaying in the breeze beside them. Their chatter is idle, but their fingers are nimble and quick.

Deities such as Lakshmi, Saraswati, Durga, Kali and Ganesh as well as *jobas* (hibiscus), which are found in abundance in Bengal, feature regularly on the textiles produced by the artisans. Scenes from the *Ramayana* and geometric patterns also find a place in the *kantha* repertoire. To commemorate Rabindranath Tagore's 150th birth anniversary in 2011, Shamlu worked with SHE team leaders to translate some Tagore classics such as *Chandalika* and *Kabuliwallah* into *kantha* panels.





Deities and jobas (hibiscus), which are found in abundance in Bengal feature regularly on the textiles

Shamlu believes in corporate social responsibility and all the profits generated by the sale of *kantha* sarees, scarves, dupattas, jackets, kurtas and sherwanis are ploughed back into the organisation. SHE's line of products also include bedspreads, cushion covers, curtain lengths, table linen covered with beautiful pictures depicting village scenes. The foundation has provided money for health and eye camps for the artisans, blankets, sarees and clothes for the children of the embroiderers. They have been offered pressure cookers, gas stoves, and cupboards in which they can store their textiles.

Members of SHE Foundation also get loans to either extend or repair their homes, medical support for surgeries, vitamins, medicines, crutches, glasses and water purifiers. Hand pumps have been installed in some of the artisans' villages.

8 The works of SHE Foundation have been exhibited in Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai, Shantiniketan, Dhaka, Paris, Karachi, London and Washington DC among other cities. Former US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton picked up a Tagore in *kantha* piece from Shamlu's stall at an art and crafts exhibition, initiated by the US Consulate in Kolkata in 2012 as a gift for West Bengal's Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee.

Shamlu has also been instrumental in constructing a home for 100 girls, the daughters of leprosy patients. This was done under the aegis of Calcutta Foundation, an NGO formed in

1995 for underprivileged musicians from Oxford Mission. Shamlu has been a patron of Calcutta Foundation since 1995. She made cricketer Steve Waugh a patron of Calcutta Foundation and, with his help, the Nivedita Bhavan for girls started functioning from 2000.

She has also authored around 20 mathematics textbooks for four to 14-year-olds. Her books have kept her connected to her past, as a teacher of mathematics and have also been a sort of tribute to her father, who was a mathematician and statistician.

Shamlu is a fighter and she has managed to cast aside her personal tragedies and soldier on. Family and friends, as well as her associates from the world of *kantha*, helped her tide over the twin losses of her husband and son in the late 1990s.

Malika, though no longer actively involved with SHE, has been her bedrock through her tough journey through life. A busy mum of two daughters studying in America, Malika runs the Kangaroo Kids nursery school and stays a short distance away from her mother in New Alipore.

Though age is catching up with Shamlu, she's not ready to hang up her shoes just yet. She is content being *boroma* and *didi* (aunt and sister) to the hundreds of women she has empowered by reviving the humble *kantha*. ■

Be Breast Aware

Early detection saves lives!

With over 150,000 new cases being reported in a year, breast cancer has overtaken cervical cancer to become the most common cancer affecting women in India. Due to lack of awareness and absence of an organised population based breast cancer screening, more than 70 per cent of women present in advanced stages. The aim of this write up is to empower the readership about the basics of being 'Breast Aware', says **Dr P Raghu Ram** in his column



Can breast cancer be prevented?

No. There are only two ways to fight breast cancer.

1. Women and indeed, men of all ages, must be 'Breast Aware' and should report any new changes in the breast, to the specialist without delay.
2. Women over the age of 40 years must have a 'Screening Mammogram' at least once in two years (ideally every year). Early detection ensures excellent prognosis and longterm survival.

Is breast self-examination the same as breast awareness?

Breast self-examination (BSE) is a regular and repetitive monthly self-examination of the breast performed by a woman, at the same time each month, in a predetermined manner. The concept of BSE has not proven to be beneficial.

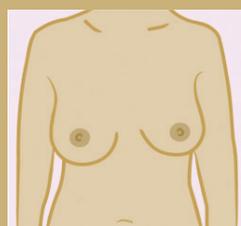
Breast Awareness is about becoming familiar with the breasts and the way they change throughout a woman's life. It is a concept that encourages women to know how their breasts look and feel normally, so that they gain confidence about noticing any change which might help detect breast cancer early. Breast Awareness, as a concept, is gaining increasing acceptance world over.

Changes that one should be aware of:

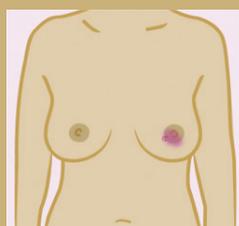
- Painless lump or thickening that feels different from the rest of the breast
- Change in size—it may be that one breast has become noticeably larger or noticeably lower
- Recent retraction of the nipple
- Rash on or around the nipple
- Blood stained spontaneous discharge from one or both nipples
- Puckering or dimpling of the skin overlying the breast
- A swelling under the armpit or around the collarbone (where the lymph nodes are)
- Constant pain in one part of the breast or armpit

The 5-Point Code of Breast Awareness

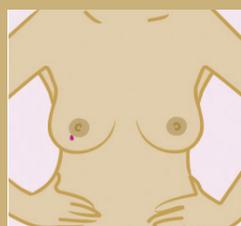
- Know what is normal for you
- Know what changes to look and feel for
- Look and feel
- Report any changes to your doctor without delay
- Have mammogram (X-ray of the breast) at least once in two years from the age of 40 (ideally every year)



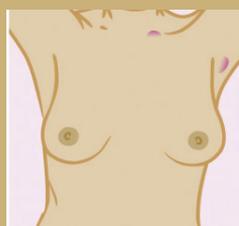
A change in size or shape



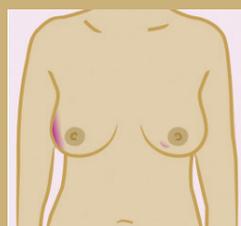
Redness or a rash on the skin and/or around the nipple



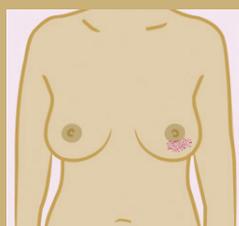
Discharge (liquid) from one or both of your nipples



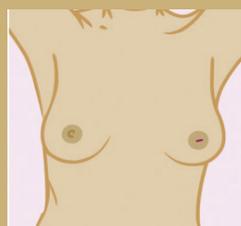
A swelling in your armpit or around your collarbone



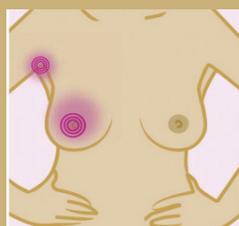
A lump or thickening that feels different from the rest of the breast tissue



A change in skin texture such as puckering or dimpling (like orange skin)

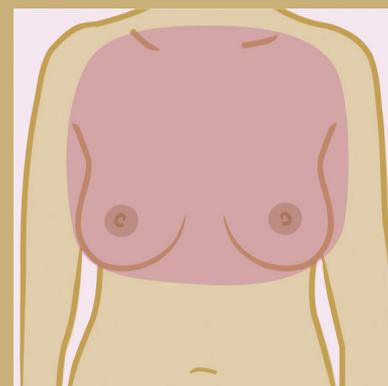


If your nipple becomes inverted (pulled in) or changes its position or shape

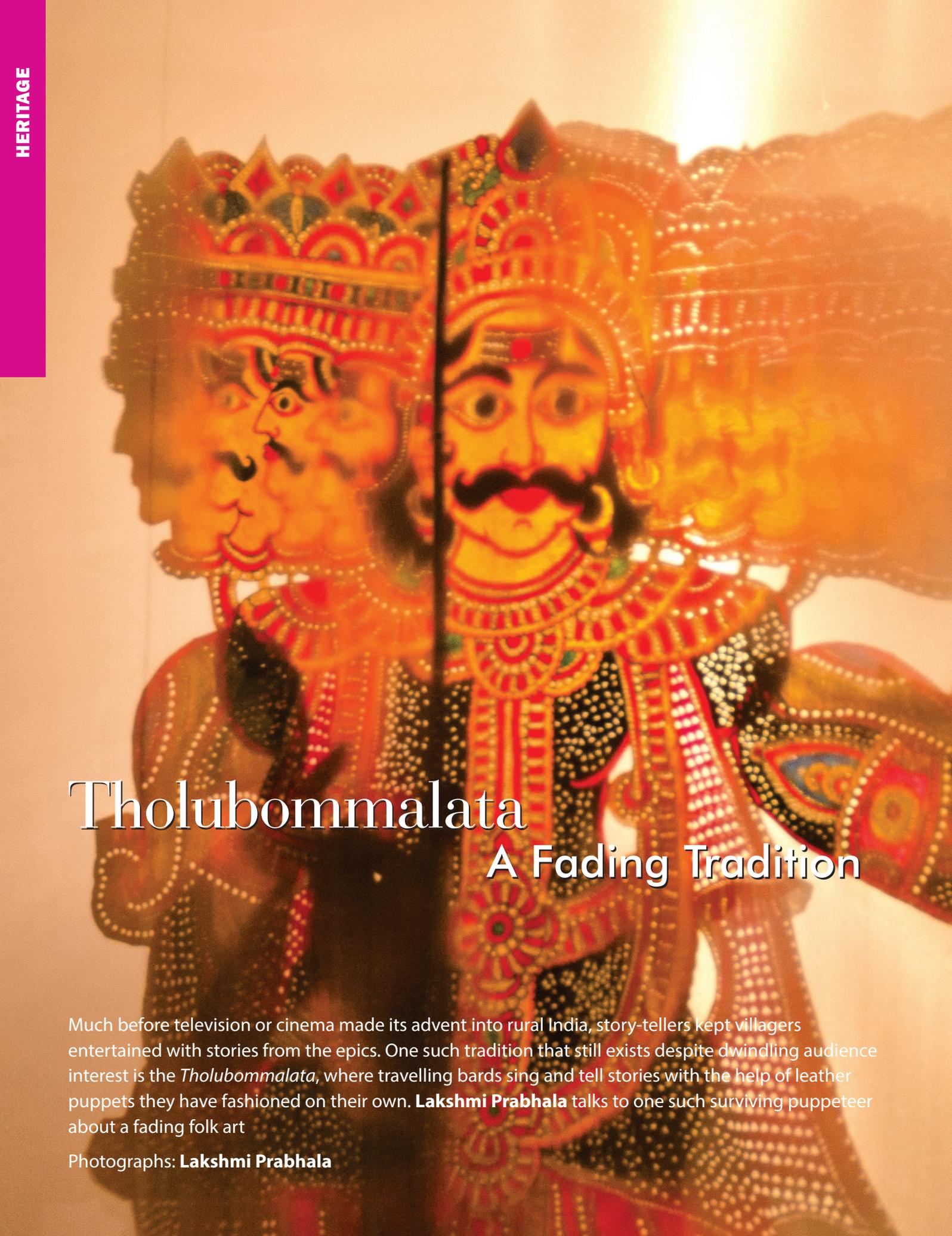


Constant pain in your breast or your armpit

Areas to check



Courtesy: Breast Cancer UK

The image shows two Tholubommala puppets, which are traditional Indian leather puppets. They are highly ornate, with intricate carvings and a rich color palette of red, yellow, and black. The puppets have large, expressive faces with prominent mustaches and are adorned with elaborate jewelry and headgear. They are positioned against a warm, golden background, which makes their colors stand out. The lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of the leather and the fine details of the carvings.

Tholubommala

A Fading Tradition

Much before television or cinema made its advent into rural India, story-tellers kept villagers entertained with stories from the epics. One such tradition that still exists despite dwindling audience interest is the *Tholubommala*, where travelling bards sing and tell stories with the help of leather puppets they have fashioned on their own. **Lakshmi Prabhala** talks to one such surviving puppeteer about a fading folk art

Photographs: **Lakshmi Prabhala**



As shadows are critical for the Tholubommalata performance, a good source of light with optimum intensity is important

Across India, oral story-telling traditions have survived many centuries, creating a rich repository of culture and history. Various communities of wandering story-tellers, bards and folk performers have devised their own visual aids like toys, dolls, masks, scroll paintings and puppets to support their narration. Of the myriad folk art forms, leather puppetry or Tholubommalata (*tholu* —leather, *bommalu* —puppets and *aata* —performance, in Telugu) has managed to combine craftsmanship, performance and visually appealing techniques to become popular across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana during the twelfth century.

A leather puppeteer, V Chinna Anjaneyulu explains the origin of this folk art-form, “Initially, puppeteers used wooden puppets but carrying them around was cumbersome, especially while travelling. So, they started to create puppets from deer skins, by improvising on designs and technique over time,” he says. Performances using leather puppets

are based on stories from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* that would go on for several nights. Anjaneyulu says, “Valmiki may have written *Ramayana*, but it is folk artists like us who have brought these tales to the common man.”

“As the performance uses only shadows, we wait till it is completely dark—so that it has the desired effect,” explains Anjaneyulu, who belongs to a puppet troupe from Sattupalle,

**Valmiki may have written
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Khammam district. As leather puppets are manipulated behind a screen, and the entire story is narrated using only shadows, it is called shadow theatre. The notes from the harmonium float in the air to percussion sounds

from cymbals, as members sing an invocation to Lord Ganesh, to seek blessings for a successful show. The performance was based on *Mahiravana Charitra*, an episode of *Ramayana* about Ravana’s lesser known brother Mahiravana, a sorcerer and king of the underworld. When Mahiravana kidnaps Rama and Lakshmana, and attempts to kill them in a sacrifice, Hanuman saves them and kills Mahiravana.

The art of making the puppets, the music and drama have all been passed down from their parents and other family members. They have not had any formal training, he says.

The brightly-coloured puppets vary in height from four to six feet and usually have joints at shoulders, elbows and knees. Depending on the character and role essayed by the puppet, additional joints can be attached at the waist, neck and ankles. Traditionally, deer skin was used for puppets depicting gods like Rama and Krishna, but the practice discontinued and was replaced by goat skin.

Since leather puppets are a main source of livelihood, great care is taken to preserve them. They are stored in a box, away from sunlight and moisture. The puppeteers' family takes great pride in its puppet collection, and treats it like their treasure. When a puppet becomes unusable, due to age or any kind of damage, it is immersed in the nearest lake or river.

"It can take a month to make a puppet," Anjaneyulu estimates. Using older puppets as a model, various parts of the puppet figures are drawn and cut out on the skin. Each community/region follows its own well-defined style of drawing and its own colour-schemes for their puppets. As with most folk arts today, waterproof chemical colours have replaced natural dyes. Different characters have designated colours, for example, blue is reserved for gods, green for Hanuman, yellow for sages and so on. The drawing and colouring is done on both sides of a puppet, since they render better during a puppet show.

Finally, using a chisel many small perforations made on the leather puppet to depict jewellery. When seen on stage against light, surrounded by vivid colours, these perforations never fail to create a twinkling effect. All the different parts of the puppet are now joined together, using a bamboo stick to keep the figure straight, while arms, legs, arms and head remain moveable.

The stage, for a leather puppet performance, can be set up in an open space using four poles and a white screen in the front. As shadows are critical for the performance, a good source of light with optimum intensity is important. "When there was no electricity, kerosene lamps were used, which would have been very pleasing, as the gentle glimmer of golden yellow light enhances the colours of the puppets. Today, we simply use light bulbs," explains Anjaneyulu.

Standing behind the white screen, the puppeteers infuse life into an inanimate puppet by lending a wide gamut of moods and expressions dictated by the story. With their skilful manipulations, they are able to make puppets sing, dance, fight, romance, mock, shout and cry. Holding the central bamboo stick, the performer moves a stick tied to the end of a puppet's limb. Usually, one person controls a puppet, and also sings and delivers dialogues for the puppet. When the movements get intricate, or when larger puppets are involved having more than 10 different movable body joints, other members of the troupe pitch in.

During the performance, the music accompanying the narration comes from the harmonium, *mridangam*, cymbals and wooden planks. To ease the mood intermittently, and give some performers a break, the stories are interspersed with comical interlude, topical jokes and current events, at times impromptu.

When the characters are involved in a fight, puppeteers stamp their feet on the wooden bars to simulate the sound effect of blows being exchanged.

According to Anjaneyulu, an estimated 100 *tholubommalata* troupes are spread across Andhra Pradesh with a few in Telangana. The major clusters for leather puppetry still continue at Nimmalakunta in Anantapur, Narasaraopet in Guntur and Madhavapatnam near Kakinada. Lack of patronage has caused many trained puppeteers to quit and take up more viable ones to eke out a living.





Standing behind the white screen, the puppeteers infuse life into an inanimate puppet.

The audiences today lack time and patience to sit for a couple of hours. And, given this scenario, the next generation refuses to take up puppetry

“We cannot blame them, as the audiences are dwindling. Earlier, when *tholubommallata* was the only source of entertainment, shows would last even for 5-6 nights and artists could survive through regular performances (except during rainy season). With increased penetration of TV and cinema in rural areas, patronage for folk-arts has reduced and families are forced to look for alternate occupations like agriculture, cattle-rearing or setting up small businesses. The audiences today lack time and patience to sit for a couple of hours. And, given this scenario, the next generation refuses to take up puppetry,” reveals Anjaneyulu.

To help the struggling community with additional income, the Handicrafts Board has set up centres at the clusters, to provide training

and conduct workshops, where folk artisans can use their skills to create and sell leather craft items like lampshades, leather panels, wall hangings, etc.

Shadow theatre occupies an important place in India’s rich heritage. The magical glow that envelops the characters together with mesmerising narratives, celebrate the legendary and historic heroes bringing the divine sagas of yore to life. Like many art-forms slowly fading into oblivion, it has changed with time, and its practitioners are compelled to innovate and seek relevance in the current social setting. These puppeteers, who are extremely passionate about this art form, continue stoically despite fading audiences. And hopefully, with some patronage and encouragement they will see brighter days in future. ■

UBF Diary

January 2018

Prof P V Chalapathi Rao Gold Medal Awarded to Best Medical Student

Dr Raghu Ram presented the Prof P V Chalapathi Rao Gold Medal to Pratyusha Godi - best outgoing post-graduate student—in general surgery from Osmania Medical College, at a function organised by Osmania Medical College Alumni Association.

A corpus fund has been set up in Prof Chalapathi Rao's name (Dr Raghu Ram's father). The interest generated is being used annually to award the best outgoing under-graduate student in surgery (MBBS final year), at Gandhi Medical College and the best outgoing post-graduate student (MS) in general surgery, at Osmania Medical College. These two colleges were chosen as Prof Rao served in both these premier institutions as Professor of Surgery for 16 years from 1967–1983.



Dr Raghu Ram congratulating Dr Pratyusha Godi

Only Centre to Conduct RCS England's Final MRCS Examinations in Telugu States



L-R: Erinn Middleton (ISTP Officer, RCS Eng), Dr Dilip Gode (President, ASI) and Dr Shafi Ahmed (Lead, ISTP & Council Member, RCS Eng)

For the fourth consecutive year, Dr Raghu Ram was entrusted with convening the prestigious Intercollegiate Final MRCS examinations by The Royal College of Surgeons of England, which was held on January 21 and 22, 2018 in Hyderabad.

Equally, in his capacity as Convener (International Affairs), The Association of Surgeons of India (ASI), Dr Raghu Ram also hosted an orientation session titled 'ABC of International Surgical Training Programme' during the examination schedule. Surgical trainees from all over India intending to pursue part of their advanced surgical training in the UK attended this innovative programme, conducted by RCS England and ASI.

February 2018

Appreciation from Peers

Dr Raghu Ram was recently a guest speaker at the Annual Conferences of the Maharashtra Chapter, (January 2018, Mumbai) Karnataka Chapter (February 2018, Hassan) and the Madhya Pradesh Chapter (February 2018, Indore) of the Association of Surgeons of India.

Commenting on being invited as guest speaker at the various state Chapter Conferences, Dr Raghu Ram said: "There is no greater reward than appreciation from peers across the country. It has been a humbling experience."

Dr Raghu Ram made Chairman (International Affairs) for SAARC Surgical Care Society

Impressed with the landmark initiatives championed by Dr Raghu Ram in his capacity as Convener, International Affairs for The Association of Surgeons of India, he has been appointed Chairman (International Affairs) of SAARC Surgical Care Society by Dr Shiva Misra, President, SAARC Surgical Care Society. This is an organisation that represents the interests of surgeons and surgical trainees practising the art and science of surgery in eight south Asian countries— i.e. India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Maldives.



Guest Speaker at Birmingham University, United Kingdom

Dr Raghu Ram was a guest speaker on March 17, 2018 at a meeting organised in Birmingham University by the Indo-UK Breast Forum, which represents the breast surgeons of Indian origin working in the United Kingdom. He was also felicitated at this event.

Titled 'From United Kingdom to India—A Dream Accomplished', Dr Raghu Ram traced his journey over the past two decades, from the time he arrived in Glasgow during one of the coldest winters (-19° C), and trained in some of the world-renowned centres in the UK to how he transformed his dreams into reality, after relocating to India.



Dr Raghu Ram being felicitated by Dr Soni Soumian on behalf of Indo-UK Breast Forum

Dr Raghu Ram Bestowed with a Rare Honour at EBCC, Barcelona



L-R: Dr José Baselga, Physician in Chief & CMO at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre and Prof Robert Mansel, Chair of EBCC 2018 with Dr Raghu Ram

Dr P Raghu Ram achieved the rare honour of being the only surgeon from the Asia Pacific region to be invited to participate as guest speaker, at the 11th edition of the European Breast Cancer Congress (EBCC), Europe's largest and most prestigious breast cancer congress held in Barcelona from March 21–23, 2018.

Some 2,500 delegates from 90 Countries across the world—scientists, clinicians, patient representatives and health professionals of diverse profiles, who tackle key issues facing patients throughout the continuum of the breast cancer journey attended the event. They

had gathered in Barcelona to discuss debate, inform and educate themselves about the evolving landscape of cancer at this Congress. Titled 'Setting a benchmark for breast healthcare in India', Dr Raghu Ram empowered delegates about the innovative initiatives spearheaded by Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation and KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for breast diseases over the past decade (2007–2017).

Dr Raghu Ram delivers Dr Mrs M J Mehta Oration

Dr Raghu Ram delivered the Dr Mrs M J Mehta Oration—one of the most prestigious annual orations instituted by the Poona Surgical Society on March 30, 2018. Titled 'Breast Cancer Advocacy and Screening', in his oration, Dr Raghu Ram highlighted the impactful Pink Ribbon advocacy campaign, spearheaded by him over the past decade that has transformed breast cancer from a 'closet issue' to a much commonly discussed one. Equally, he also outlined South Asia's largest population based breast cancer screening programme, implemented by Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, over the past five years.



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

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