

PINK CONNECTION

UBF

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**'I hope Cancer
is only a Zodaic
sign one day'**

Sunaina Roshan

Sreela Bose

Healing Children
with Stories

**The Calligraphers
of Hyderabad**



BEHIND The Scenes

Many a time, we judge the rich and the famous harshly. We think it's our right to criticise them. Just because someone is an actor or a model, we feel their lives are up for grabs and we are free to run them down. Actors like Katrina Kaif or Priyanka Chopra are not public properties that we can gossip about them and their relationships.

In a similar vein, it does not mean that if someone is leading a glamorous life, they don't have their struggles or hardships. The part that will probably never make it to their Instagram! Just shooting a photograph for my edit page, which takes less than 30 minutes, tires me out with all the effort involved in applying make-up and smiling hard! Imagine the effort these actors put in to dress up and shoot in Iceland's cold weather or in the Saudi heat? And, to stoically put up a public face that cannot crack in the most difficult moments. They cannot afford to slip up for a moment, what with the unrelenting glare of the social media on them.

All this came to life, when I read Minal's story on Sunaina Roshan, sister to famous actor Hrithik Roshan. You would think that since she belongs to a privileged family in Bollywood, she would have no complaints. But, this lady has had her share of struggles: divorces, cancer, serious illnesses and trysts with depression. Naturally, all this has affected her self-esteem. What is heartening to read is the family support she had, including from her brother, the actor we all swoon over, Hrithik. Apparently, his sister is so dear to him that he would spend hours praying and combing the Internet to find more about her cancer and to get the best doctor to treat her.

People in public life are human too with feet of clay. They have their crosses to bear just like you and I. We need to be kinder to them and look beyond the glitz. This is a lesson I have learnt through our cover story this time.

Ratna Rao Shekar



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“It’s important to stay clear
of the fear vibration”

Sunaina Roshan

3

Cancer can strike anyone. It can happen to a person born with a silver spoon in their mouth or to someone, who has no family history of the disease. That is exactly what happened with Sunaina Roshan, the daughter of Bollywood director producer Rakesh Roshan and his wife Pinky, and the sister of the popular actor Hrithik Roshan. Sunaina has bravely fought and survived not just cervical cancer but a bout of tuberculosis meningitis and a life-threatening kidney infection. This spunky woman shares her courageous journey full of challenges with **Minal Khona**

Far away from the glare of the public eye, behind the gloss and glitz of living a celebrity's existence, the real stories start to play out. There is pain, untold struggles, pyrrhic victories and quashed dreams, tears and prayers. Sunaina Roshan, who was born into a blue-blooded Bollywood family, exemplifies the hardships that can overwhelm people whose lives appear privileged.

Sunaina is the grand-daughter of a well-known music composer, Roshan Lal Nagrath from her father's side and her mother Pinky, is filmmaker J Om Prakash's daughter. Her successful producer father Rakesh Roshan and her actor brother Hrithik need no introduction.

When Sunaina was in her early thirties, she was diagnosed with tuberculosis meningitis (TBM), a serious form of TB, and was critically ill for a while. It all started with her battle with her weight. A self-proclaimed foodie, she has had weight related issues for most of her life. Narrating her life-story, she says, "When I was 32, I was working out to lose weight and I went from 80 kgs to 58 kgs." At the same time, she was bedridden due to sciatica pain.

Afraid she would gain weight, she ate only watermelon and Marie biscuits. When she recovered, she developed severe headaches within a week that worsened with time and caused a piercing pain in her eyes, head and neck. Her condition worsened and she became delirious and was rushed to Breach Candy Hospital. After a CT scan, she was first diagnosed with tuberculosis in her lungs. The doctors wanted to investigate more.

Sunaina had to go through a painful lumbar puncture, also known as a spinal tap (in which cerebrospinal fluid is collected for diagnostic testing), and the reports confirmed that she had TBM. She narrates, "I was delirious for the first two-three days and had no clue what was going on. The doctor felt my chances of survival were bleak. Even if I did survive, I could get paralysed or drift into a coma. The next 72 hours were critical.



Sunaina (extreme right) with her parents and Suzanne Khan, Hrithik's ex-wife at an awards function in 2010

My parents and my brother sat there beside me, praying and waiting for a miracle to happen."

She did survive but she was extremely weak, and just her parents and brother could meet her for the next 10 days. Her daughter Suranika (from her first marriage to Ashish Soni) was also not allowed to see her.

Her family was most supportive. "My dad would visit me every morning and evening, no matter how busy he was. Mom told me later that the day I was critical, Duggu (Hrithik) sat in the *mandir* through the night praying for my recovery. He rescheduled his shoot till the doctor gave a heads-up on my health," she remembers.

What followed was a year of restrictions, six months of which was spent entirely indoors. And, she had to undergo lumbar punctures every two months. Sunaina believes she contracted this disease because of her extreme dieting. She says, "I decided no more starving for vanity. I learnt

later there were eight other TBM cases on the same hospital floor as mine, and the girls had gone through weight loss diets as well, at the cost of endangering their lives. It is sad; this race to be size zero."

Subsequently, she had bariatric surgery three years ago, but as a "big foodie" she still has her ups and downs with weight. Her battle with depression is an ongoing one too.

Her depression started after her recovery, she says. "I had lost the confidence to venture out of the house on my own. I needed a nurse or a chaperone. The end of an intense relationship left me completely heartbroken and depressed. After my second divorce (from businessman Mohan Nagar), I had become so dependent on my mom that every time she travelled, I would feel low."

"My brother's brain surgery drove me into depression again. My symptoms ranged from a depressed mood to excessive eating, lack of sleep, and a disinterest in almost everything in life.

Looking back, Sunaina cannot recall the nitty-gritties of her long ordeal. All she can remember now is her family's unstinted support. They stood by me every step of the way—my parents, Duggu, Suzanne and my daughter

I would get hot flushes and sweat even in an air-conditioned room. My hands would shake and I would start crying for no reason," she reveals.

To fight her depression, Sunaina went for counselling sessions. She also pushed herself to go on the sets of her brother's film, *Kites*, to keep her occupied. This helped her regain her confidence. "There are still occasions when I get bouts of anxiety. I see my psychiatrist once a month and discuss the issues that make me anxious, so that the advice and medications can keep them in check. I carry SOS anti-anxiety mouth dissolving tablets in a handbag and resort to medications at times," she adds candidly.

It was bad enough battling these demons—in 2007, Sunaina was diagnosed with cervical cancer. No one in her family, on her paternal or maternal side, had any form of cancer. "I was about 35 and I never had a problem with my periods. That year, I had heavy bleeding and clotting. Intuitively, I knew something was wrong," she recalls. Her mother took

her to their gynaecologist Dr Kiran Coelho, who made her undergo several tests—a biopsy, a PET scan and a pap smear. She was not told about her condition for some time but she could sense something was amiss because her father looked disturbed. A week later, her entire family accompanied her when she had her sonography.

"They knew that I had cervical cancer and they were wondering how to break the news to me. I asked Dr Coelho upfront when she was examining me whether I had cancer. She said I did. When I went up to my room where my family was waiting, I told them I knew I had cancer," she recalls.

Looking back, Sunaina cannot recall the nitty-gritties of her long ordeal. All she can remember now is her family's unstinted support. She remembers, "They stood by me every step of the way—my parents, Duggu, Suzanne (Hrithik's ex-wife) and my daughter."

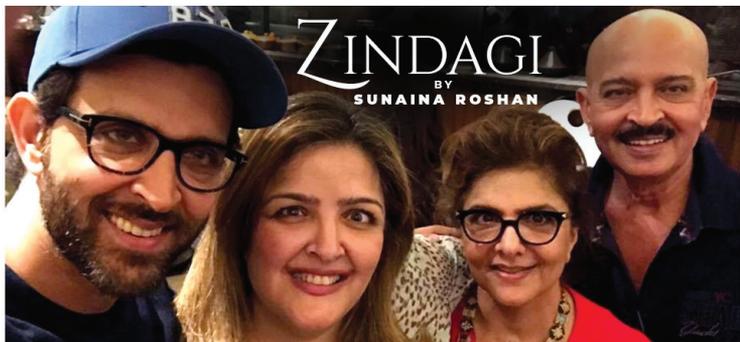
"My brother Duggu spent all night online reading up everything he could on cervical cancer, the treatment protocol etc. He visited all the best doctors in his quest to find the right one in India since I was against the idea of being treated abroad. He had all the questions ready with him when he'd meet them and finally, he selected one after he had answered all his queries to his satisfaction."

She had her first chemotherapy session in October 2007. Sunaina admits the ordeal left her shaken. She says, "I used to cry when I was alone. The one thing that really upset me was the prospect of losing my hair. Each time the doctor would visit the ICU, I would ask him whether I would go bald. I must have asked him the same question a dozen times. My brother did research to find out if there was a way to avoid losing hair. But that was not to be."

Sunaina started losing her hair in clumps after her first chemo. She recalls, "I decided to go bald and ordered three or four different styles of wigs. It was the most dreadful day



Sunaina with her supportive parents Rakesh and Pinky Roshan



Sunaina reflects about life and the choices she has made in her life in her blog Zindagi

of my life and it took me 45 minutes before I actually looked at myself in the mirror. I wore the wig and tried to put up a brave front but actually it was a real torture that lasted for about eight to ten months."

The inside of the wig made of nylon would itch and sweat. The sweat would trickle down her face and neck as if she had stepped out of the shower. After seeing her bald, her dad would try to make her feel better by joking about how the shape of her head was better than his.

Sunaina adds, "The one person, who was most affected seeing me bald was my brother; he tried his best to control his tears in front of me. He had kept hoping I would not have to lose my hair. We share a strong bond and there are things I tell him, which I can't tell my parents. He keeps asking mum, 'Is didi okay?'"

Sunaina's daughter, who lives with her father, has been a support system too, though she was only 11 then.

Her father Rakesh Roshan would accompany Sunaina for the chemo sessions. "I had to undergo six sessions of chemo every three weeks and my father would come along to give me emotional support. He would be there till the chemo started and once the IV was inserted, he would leave. My mom, who stayed with me all the time, told me later that he would cry every night with the fear of losing his daughter. Now, even

if I have a slight fever, he panics," she recounts.

Her mother Pinky was always by her side during her hospitalisation. Sunaina says of her mother's devoted care, "She would never leave my side, not even to go home, in case I needed anything when she was away.

Through my blog, I want to reach out to people, who may need a speck of faith to find strength to move out of the darkness and to realise that the universe always has our back and God never lets us down

She'd sleep on the hospital sofa without complaining. At home, she looked after all my needs, and ensured my medicines were given on time and my food was made according to the doctor's instructions. We would always crack jokes. I have fallen ill so many times but each time she has given me the strength. My mom is my mentor, my strength. As a mother, I now understand that she would have probably died a thousand deaths at the fear of losing her child. She is the balancing factor in a house full of headstrong people."

Sunaina perhaps lives up to her name in more ways than one. Not only does she have pretty eyes, her vision of life is a beautiful one indeed. For she says, "I never treated cancer as a dreaded illness. I accepted the fact that I had it and I was strong enough to fight it. From a spiritual perspective, it's important to stay clear of the fear vibration. Love plays a big role but so do meditation and prayers and the support of friends."

"It is important that only positive energy and thoughts flow through your body to help it heal. It took almost three years of treatment before the doctor could confidently say that I was cancer free. Since my recovery, I've always prayed that one day soon, cancer will be just a zodiac sign."

Sunaina had to go through another test by fire. She contracted a near fatal kidney infection (Emphysematous Pyelonephritis) in January this year. She needed hospitalisation immediately but her consulting physician decided to treat her at home and converted her bedroom into an ICU with a round-the-clock nurse on duty. Confined to the bed for almost a month, Sunaina developed a bad neck spasm which made it difficult to read, watch TV, etc.

Bored of social media, she got thinking about her life and the choices she had made and decided to write about her ruminations in her blog, *Zindagi* (life). She explains, "Through my blog, I want to reach out to people, who may need a speck of faith to find strength to move out of the darkness and to realise that the universe always has our back and God never lets us down. There is positivity in even our weakest moments, and everything happens for a reason. And, it happens for our highest good."

And, that is how Sunaina seems to have weathered her health problems — with faith in the higher power and a strong will not to give up. "I fought hard and I won, and I don't know how my story will end but nowhere in my text will it read, 'I gave up'," she writes in her blog. ■



The Compassionate Storyteller

Sreela Bose

Cancer in any form is difficult to handle, more so when it affects children. Many of them have to undergo painful treatments, away from their homes and parents and live on hope. Sreela Bose works with the children at the St Jude India ChildCare Centres at Premashraya, a residential facility for impoverished cancer patients and their relatives, near the Tata Medical Centre hospital in Kolkata, telling stories to them.

The children not just enjoy the stories but project their wishes of wanting to be with their families during the narration, says Bose in a conversation with **Nivedita Choudhuri**

Six-year-old Swapan* stares intently at the placard placed before him. He needs to study the picture carefully, and develop a storyline around it, to narrate to his friends. He pauses for a minute before rattling off. "Ma'am, the little girl in the picture is travelling by train with her parents. They will go home and she will have a good night's sleep," he suggests. Eight-year-old Atul* and seven-year-old Ashish*, who are seated on either side of Swapan, pipe up. "Yes, ma'am. I am going home as well. I will travel by train tomorrow," declares Atul. "I am going home next week. I am so excited," Ashish chips in as well.

Ma'am, or Sreela Bose, is quiet. She knows that they are not going home tomorrow. The residents of St Jude India ChildCare Centres at Premashraya, a 10-storeyed free resi-

dential facility for impoverished cancer patients and their family, near Tata Medical Centre hospital in Kolkata, are undergoing gruelling medical treatment and are unlikely to go home in the near future.

Tata Medical Centre has partnered with St Jude India ChildCare Centres, who run residential units in two floors for the cancer-stricken children treated at the Tata Medical Centre. These units are currently home to Swapan and his friends.

Bose is aware that these children are experiencing traumatic times and painful feelings that they find difficult to process. Stories provide a narrative that builds empathy and connection to people and their journeys. So, Bose is a firm believer in the fact that a therapeutic story read to a child will help them to deal with their difficult experiences

and emotions. And, that's why she has taken on the role of the storyteller.

Bose (73) did her schooling in Mumbai before moving to Kolkata to complete her graduation in English from Lady Brabourne College. She trained as a teacher of the hearing handicapped in New Delhi and joined Balwant Rai Mehta Vidya Bhavan integrated school in 1972. A decade later, Bose joined the National Institute for the Hearing Handicapped in Mumbai, where she spent another 10 years or so. In the 1990s, she spent three years in Uganda with the UNDP.

After her stint in Uganda, Bose returned to Kolkata and started freelancing as a tutor in various institutes such as The Oral School for Deaf Children and Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy. She joined different NGOs as a storyteller but she finds the sessions at St Jude India ChildCare Centres, both in Rajarhat near the Tata Medical Centre and at Thakurpukur, near Saroj Gupta Cancer Centre and Research Institute, the most fulfilling.

One story that Bose never tires of telling is that of Shyama Kaviratne, co-founder of St Jude India ChildCare Centres. Many moons ago, when Shyama was a young girl and living in an upmarket locality in Mumbai, she chanced upon a poor girl standing at the gate of her elegant home and looking inside wistfully. She invited the child inside and encouraged her to play with her toys. The child started to come regularly to Shyama's house and, soon after, her family decided to open a school for slum children. The seeds of philanthropy were sown in Shyama's mind in her childhood.

In 2005, Shyama and her husband Nihal returned to Mumbai after staying abroad for 40 years. One day, they noticed young children living on the pavements with their families while undergoing treatment for cancer at Tata Memorial Centre. These families were too poor to afford interim accommodation while their children underwent chemotherapy. The Kaviratnes decided to set up a residential centre for these families near the hospital. In the last 12 years, more than 30 such centres have sprung up across India benefitting thousands of poor families.

Bose visits the St Judes centre at Rajarhat every Tuesday. The children eagerly wait for her arrival. She selects her stories carefully and each one has a hidden message at the end. Emphasis is on fearlessness, courage and resilience—qualities the children will need during their fight with cancer. A favourite with the children is Nandana Dev Sen's *Mambi* and the *Forest Fire*. The story of a shy little monkey, who wishes to be like her older jungle pals, is a crowd-pleaser.

The children hold their breath when danger befalls the forest and Mambi overcomes her fears to save her friends. This soul-stirring tale about discovering one's latent strengths strikes the right chord with the young ones.

Granny's Sari by Asha Nehemiah, a tale of a grandmother's sari that has been blown away by the wind, is close to Aarav's heart. As granny and her granddaughter go hunting for the sari, they meet people who have found the sari only to lose it again. The story teaches kids the importance of giving and sharing. For Aarav (8 years old) though, the story holds appeal on another front. He tells Bose the grandmother on the cover reminds him of his own granny, who he hasn't seen in months.

Some children are master storytellers and can cleverly weave an absorbing tale. Bose narrates an incident that happened a few years ago. A friend of hers had been narrating the story of Goddess Durga to her grandsons, but with a twist. "Durga Puja celebrations had ended and the goddess had packed her bags and was preparing to leave for Mount Kailash with her children in a taxi. As the children were getting into a taxi, they heard a baby wail. The baby told Ma Durga that she had killed his father and wondered who would bring him up now. It was Mahishasura's son. At that point, my friend stopped the narration halfway because she had some work to attend to," recalls Bose.

"I repeated the unfinished story to the children at Rajarhat. The children were asked if they wanted to finish the story.

Lalita* offered to give the story an ending. She said Ma Durga went to the baby and said, 'Don't cry. This was predestined. Your father didn't do any good and so I had to kill him. But, I grant you a boon. You will be strong and you will fight against evil. Your name will be Vir'."

"Lalita was too tired to write the story since she had just finished chemotherapy. So, a St Judes' member wrote it down. I was amazed to see so

much imagination in a young child living in such adverse circumstances. Unfortunately, she lost her battle against cancer and passed away a couple of years later," adds Bose on a sad note.

The children are sanguine and full of good cheer however despite their plight. Bose recounts an episode involving a young boy named Arpit* and his reaction to the story, *The Fir Tree*, written by Hans Christian Anderson. The story is about a fir tree and its preoccupation with growing up. On Christmas Eve, it is cut and carried into a house. However, the day after Christmas, it is dumped in an attic. In spring, the tree—by now withered and discoloured—is cut into pieces and burned.

"I had taped the last few pages because I did not want the unhappy ending to upset the boy. I told him I did not like the way the story ended. But, Arpit was made of sterner stuff. He said, 'There is no need for sorrow. After being burnt, the tree will be born again. There will be another party for Christmas and the children will dance again'. 'What do they say about 'out of the mouth of babes'?' This is it. ■

*Names have been changed to protect identities.

Bose is aware that these children are experiencing traumatic times and painful feelings that they find difficult to process. Stories provide a narrative that builds empathy and connection to people and their journeys



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي بَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ
 ثُمَّ عَلَّمَهُ الْقُرْآنَ الْعَرَبِيَّ لَعَلَّهُ يَشْكُرُ
 وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقُرْآنِ
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 وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقُرْآنِ



The elegance of a handwritten line

Computers have not just destroyed handwriting. The ancient art of calligraphy, which flourished during the times of Qutb Shahi and the Asaf Jahis, is disappearing. The calligrapher, who wrote the Quran, enjoyed an enviable position and his status was next only to the Imam. **Lakshmi Prabhala**, who went around the Old City of Hyderabad, discovered a lane called Chatta Bazaar, a hub for printing cards, where a few calligraphers are still hard at work writing on wedding invitations and creating beautiful, elegant calligraphy

Photographs by **Lakshmi Prabhala**





At Chatta Bazaar, Mohammed Abdul Khaleel Abid is engrossed in his calligraphy

For over four centuries, calligraphy has been an integral part of Hyderabad's rich heritage. Chatta Bazaar in Old City, also called Hyderabad's printing district, was once a hub for calligraphers, who were known to use the *qalam* (reed pen) with flair and dexterity. When they put a pen to paper, calligraphers can effortlessly alternate between straight and curved, thick and thin, long and short lines, and bring to the fore, the spirit of a verse. There is incomparable beauty here. Since 1990, with the advent of computers and Urdu fonts, their numbers have dropped rapidly, and just a few fingersmiths continue to practise this elegant art-form in these bylanes.

Almost halfway into Chatta Bazaar, tucked inside a *kaman* (arch), an elderly man is seated inside a kiosk under a signboard that reads "Welcome Printers". Unmindful of the bustle around him, Mohammed Abdul Khaleel Abid applies strokes with his *qalam* to create an artistic interpretation of a Quranic verse. He has been in Chatta Bazaar for more than 40 years, assisting the printing shops with his calligraphic designs.

"I was working with the Hyderabad based Urdu newspaper, *The Siasat Daily* for about 12 years, until 1992," he recounts. He had taken care of the daily's last page, their advertisements, and titles and at times the middle page. As Urdu was handwritten at the time, printers worked closely with calligraphers. "Around 15-20 people used to write together and we shared the work between us. *Computeraan aaye tab*

hath gaye (When the computers came, the hand was gone)," Khaleel recalls.

Khaleel, who learnt his craft from his father, says reverently, "I was inspired and encouraged by my *ustad*, my father Mohammed Abdul Rasheed, who was an expert calligrapher himself and worked for *Siasat* for about 15 years." His sons are both employed as engineers, and are not inclined to take up calligraphy as a career. "It is indeed God's will that in my family the art dies with me," he says reflectively.

Urdu Calligraphy finds its roots in Islamic calligraphy when the words of the holy book of Quran were first written, and revered

Khaleel is surprised that only a few want to take up calligraphy these days. He points out, "I receive a lot of requests for exclusive cards with words written in calligraphy, and I am certain that is what people prefer. *Computer se jo likthe hai, khoobsoorati aur baareeki bilkul nahi aati-woh kitabat se hee aati hai!*" (The output

from the computer cannot compare to the beauty and subtle elegance that calligraphy can evoke)

In the middle of an arterial road at Punjagutta, stands the Idara-e-Adabiyat-e-Urdu, the oldest calligraphy training centre in India. Despite the cacophony from all the honking and speeding vehicles on the street, the boys and girls inside the centre are bent over their papers, engrossed in the pen strokes they have just learnt. A master calligrapher, Mohammed Abdul Gaffar explains the subtle nuances of the craft to them, "To master this fine art, you need to grasp the



Master calligrapher, Mohammed Abdul Gaffar explains the subtle nuances of the craft to his students

technique of holding a pen at a correct angle and with an optimal amount of pressure."

Abdul Gaffar is concerned about the lack of encouragement for calligraphy. Since most publications have moved to computerised printing, these handwriting techniques have a hard time finding a place in the academic curriculum. A Government Order was issued directing Urdu medium schools to teach calligraphy for classes I to X, but this order has not been implemented for many years, he says.

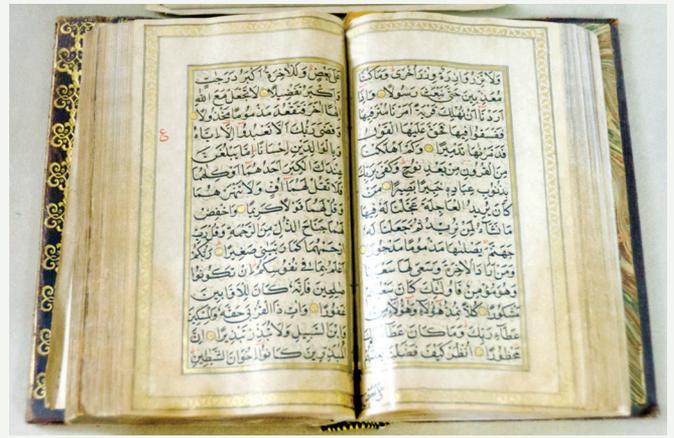
"In 2016, a syllabus was created and included in a 300-page combined hand-book for teachers of co-curricular activities viz., physical education, music, art, craft and calligraphy. But ironically, calligraphy has been left out," he laments.

After learning calligraphy at this institute, Abdul Gaffar is now their chief instructor and a visiting faculty at the Nizam's Educational Trust, Maulana Azad National Urdu University among others as well. He has also participated in several exhibitions and received awards for his calligraphic compositions.

Urdu calligraphy finds its roots in Islamic calligraphy, when the words of the holy book of Quran were first written, and revered. Abdul Gaffar explains, "To quote from the Quran, '*allama bil qalam*', which means (sacred) knowledge is passed on through a pen. The written word has taken intricate forms and patterns, so beautiful that they are also capable of adorning the facades and interiors of buildings portals, books, epitaphs, wall hangings etc." In the Islamic world, calligraphy had become a medium to decorate as well as convey the wisdom of Islam. Calligraphy also became a signature of Islamic art.

The art of writing the Holy Scriptures acquired a status that no other form of artistic expression was able to match and the calligrapher's position in society was one of dignity and honour. The fact that the calligrapher was second only to the priest reflected the religious merit that was attributed to writing at the time.

The Qutb Shahi sultans were great scholars and patrons of art and during their regime, large number of religious scholars, poets, calligraphers and architects migrated from Iran to Golconda



A Quran written in Naskh and bears Emperor Aurangzeb's seal

A reed or bamboo pen (called *qalam*) was used and the nib's size would depend on the thickness of the strokes required. Reeds were preferred over metallic tip pens as their flexibility facilitated greater range of motion and control while writing. The tips were made with a pen-knife and a slit was made in the middle to hold enough ink for one letter. A carved wooden pen was used for larger letters. Mostly black ink was used, which was placed in small, waterproof inkwells. Paper was a preferred medium but other surfaces like textiles, metal, ceramic, ivory, stone, glass and leather were popular as well.

Over centuries, many calligraphy styles were developed into scripts, each *khatt* (script) having its own distinctive shape and characteristic. These scripts were created for specific purposes; some were used to write the Quran, while others were used for official documents and larger scripts were used as adornments in architecture.

While calligraphy came to India in the 12th century through Muslim invasions, it was only during the Qutb Shahi rule that Hyderabad began its association with the art-form. At several museums across the city, handwritten copies of the Quran written in calligraphy style are on display. The ones gifted to the last Nizam are still on display at the Nizam Museum in Purani Haveli.

The Qutb Shahi sultans were great scholars and patrons of art and during their regime, a large number of religious scholars, poets, calligraphers and architects migrated from Iran to Golconda. Many monuments built during the Qutb Shahi era showcase Islamic calligraphic inscriptions revealing the style prevalent during the time.

Calligraphy has established a profound and spiritual connection between art and language. When words are penned with greater feeling, they can convey a deeper expression, which computerized fonts can never hope to achieve. ■

UBF Diary

July 2018

Symposium in Surgical Training in the UK



In his capacity as the Convenor, International Affairs for the Association of Surgeons of India, Dr Raghu Ram organised a symposium on surgical training opportunities in the UK, in association with the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh—the oldest surgical college in the world. Prof Michael Lavelle-Jones, president; Prof Graham Layer, vice-president and Prof John Duncan, vice-president participated in the symposium along with Dr Santhosh John Abraham, director, Surgical Studies, ASI and Dr PV Ramana Murthy, National Executive Committee member of ASI from Vijayawada.

More than 350 surgical trainees from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Orissa and Chhattisgarh attended this symposium, which was held at Vijayawada in July, during the Regional Refresher Course organised by the Association of Surgeons of India.

August 2018

A Deserving Felicitation

Dr Raghu Ram, who was a recipient of the Dr BC Roy National award for the year 2016, which is the highest recognition awarded for a doctor practising in India, was felicitated in Hyderabad by Lions International.



September 2018

Breast Cancer: Not a Taboo Topic Anymore

Dr Raghu Ram delivered the prestigious 'Dr AK Chary Memorial Oration' in Hyderabad on September 15 at the Fourth Annual Conference of the Telangana State Chapter of the Association of Surgeons of India, held at Shadan Medical College. Dr AK Chary was a renowned surgeon from the Telugu States and a doyen in the field of surgery in Telangana.

In his oration, Dr Raghu Ram spoke on breast cancer advocacy and the transformational initiatives championed by the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation over the past decade. And he brought to the fore the point how breast cancer



has been converted from a taboo—a closet issue—to a commonly discussed subject. In the process, the Foundation has created awareness about early detection impacting and saving many lives. He also outlined the Foundation’s population-based breast cancer screening programme, the largest in south Asia, which had successfully reached out to 200,000 under-privileged women across 4,000 villages in Telangana and AP. The next speaker, Dr Vijay Kumar, Vice-Chancellor of Yenepoya University (Mangalore) in his talk complimented Dr Raghu Ram’s work.

Dr PV Chalapathi Rao Award 2018 to the Best Outgoing MBBS Student in Surgery

Dr Raghu Ram and his family set up a corpus fund two years ago and the interest generated is used to award the best outgoing student in surgery at Osmania College and Gandhi Medical College. The two colleges were chosen as Dr Chalapathi Rao served in both these institutions as professor of surgery for 16 years from 1967-1983.

Instead of a routine medal, the family felt the awardee should be presented with a useful gift. The awardee was presented with a laptop at a glittering, annual day function organised by Gandhi Medical College Alumni Association at Gandhi Medical College on September 24.



Doctor Talks



Dr Raghu Ram was invited as guest speaker to multiple surgical meetings held in many parts of India—Varanasi, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Thekkedy (Tamil Nadu), Lucknow, Nasik, Aurangabad, Nagpur and Kadappa (formerly Cuddapah).

October 2018

Hyderabadis Walk the Breast Cancer Talk

PV Sindhu and Bhavani, a 70-year-old visually challenged, breast cancer survivor flag off the tenth edition of the Pink Ribbon Walk. Thousands of people from all walks of life including breast cancer ‘conquerors’ and their families participated in the event

The slogan ‘Does your heart beat for early detection of breast cancer’ resonated with Hyderabadis as thousands participated in the tenth edition of the 2K PINK RIBBON WALK organised by Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation (UBF) & KIMS-Ushalakshmi Centre for Breast Diseases on Sunday, September 30, 2018 at KBR Park, Hyderabad. The event was flagged off by the chief guest, renowned badminton player—PV Sindhu, and Bhavani, a blind 70-year-old cancer survivor.

People from all walks of life, breast cancer ‘conquerors’ and their families, a huge contingent of blind students and students from Old City, army personnel, diplomats and well-known faces of the city participated, expressing solidarity with the Pink Ribbon Campaign.

The aim of the PINK RIBBON WALK 2018 is to create awareness about the importance of 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 fight against breast cancer.





Dr Ushalakshmi (Founder Chairman, Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation), Mr K Padmanabhaiah (Chairman, ASCI), Mr Faisal Uddin (Senior Vice-President, Synchrony, principal partner for Pink Ribbon Walk), Mr Andrew Fleming, British Deputy High Commissioner, Mr Ramesh Prasad (Chairman, LV Prasad group) and a host of other celebrities took part. PV Sindhu paid rich compliments to Dr Raghu Ram and the innovative initiatives championed by Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation to ensure early detection and save lives in the Telugu States.

In her speech, Bhavani highlighted effective counseling, excellent surgical skills, good post-operative care and support from family as factors, which helped her to conquer breast cancer. She had travelled all the way from Kakinada to tell her story and spread the positive message of hope and courage to people fighting breast cancer. Dr P Raghu Ram said, "To win the war on breast cancer, all women should get an annual screening mammogram done from the age of 40."



For the eight consecutive year, Hyderabad became the only city in the Asia-Pacific region, to have its monuments and historic buildings turn PINK this October, to create awareness about early detection of breast cancer

The Basics of Breast Screening

Early detection of breast cancer can save lives!

Dr P Raghu Ram gives a comprehensive lowdown on breast screening and why it is critical for women to undergo breast screening, in his quarterly column

With over 150,000 new cases being reported every year, breast cancer has overtaken cervical cancer to become the most common cancer affecting women in India. Due to lack of awareness and with the absence of an organised population-based breast cancer screening, more than 70 per cent of women present the disease in advanced stages. The aim of this write-up is to empower the readership about the basics of breast screening.

Here are a few typical questions women ask:

Doctor...I cannot feel a lump, why should I have a mammogram? And, what is a screening mammogram?

A screening mammogram (X-ray of the breast) is done to detect breast cancer in the impalpable stage, when neither the lady nor the doctor can feel a lump in the breast. Breast screening, by way of a mammogram, is an effective proven way of detecting breast cancer many years before it actually shows up. Early detection of breast cancer offers the best chance for a successful treatment. It is advisable and necessary to do a screening mammogram once every year from the age of 40.

Is breast cancer screening effective in all age groups?

While it is important for women of all ages to be 'breast aware', breast screening is effective only in women over the age of 40. Routine breast screening for women under 40 years, and without symptoms have not yet been proven to be effective.

Is it safe to have a mammogram? Does it cause radiation hazard?

It is indeed safe. Mammography involves a tiny dose of radiation—the risk to health from this is insignificant. The radiation dose delivered during mammography is similar to the one you receive during a dental X-ray.

Is mammography painful?

While mammography may cause momentary discomfort, it should not be painful, if it is done by a properly trained radiographer. With digital mammography, the discomfort is even less.

What is the difference between a conventional mammogram and a digital mammogram?

In full-field digital mammography, the image of the breast can be generated in about five seconds (compared to four to five minutes with a traditional mammogram). So, it is quicker, and digital mammography is more effective than standard mammography in showing up early subtle breast cancer changes. It is particularly useful in younger women with dense breasts. Other advantages are less discomfort and

negligible radiation exposure compared with conventional mammogram and greater accuracy as highlighted above.

Moreover, with the availability of telemedicine facilities, digital images can be sent anywhere across the world for a second opinion. As the machine is very expensive, full-field digital mammography is not widely available in India.

Is mammography 100 per cent accurate in detecting breast cancer?

Mammograms are the most efficient way of detecting breast cancer in the early stages. Like other screening tests, they are not perfect. The accuracy of mammography is around 85 per cent. The reasons are:

- Some cancers are very difficult to see on the mammogram
- The person reading the mammogram can miss the cancer

It is always advisable to get an ultrasound of both breasts done along with the mammogram assessment.

What is the role then for an MRI of the breast?

Breast MRI is not recommended for routine breast screening or in the evaluation of every patient with breast cancer. It is however, extremely useful under certain specific circumstances, namely:

- When you need to evaluate the condition of a woman with breast implants as the accuracy of mammography and ultrasound are limited by the presence of implants
- As part of the assessment for a woman with lobular breast cancer (a specific type of cancer) especially while planning breast conserving surgery
- There is an ambiguity in the mammogram and ultrasound findings of the breast of a patient who has had breast cancer surgery
- Evaluation of the breasts in someone with confirmed cancer in the lymph nodes in the armpit, when routine mammography and ultrasound have failed to demonstrate a primary cancer in the breast
- In young women with a very high risk of developing breast cancer, MRI may be considered as an option for breast screening ■





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

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