

# PINK CONNEXION

UBF

Volume 7 Issue 4 May-July '21



## Kameshwari Jandhyala:

Not afraid  
of mastectomy



## Robin Hood Army

Making the rich  
feed the poor

## Hampi

A spectacular  
symbol of  
India's legacy

# BEHIND The Scenes

We are living in a time when there are more deaths than even the two World Wars. Life seems more fragile now than at any other time in our living memory.

Just when we thought we had things in our control, the world around us—our lives, ambitions, career plans and our children's lives—has collapsed. It has been a year since our life has steadily spun out of control.

I, for one, believe in the law of Karma—as we sow, we reap. We truly believed that we were at the apex of creation, as we pillaged and ravished the earth for our gain. Without a care, we polluted rivers and the air, encroached forest land and mined tribal areas. We let several species go extinct, not realising we need even the humble bee for the eco-system's health. We put up shopping malls and high-rise buildings that did nothing for either the skyline or environment, even as we chopped 100-year-old trees and encroached on waterbodies.

In our egoistic belief that this world exists for us, we have taken advantage of this earth where a lion and a lamb, a dog or a calf, a flower and leaf have as much right to exist as we do. Maybe, we need to relinquish ideas of our own grandeur in the natural order and realise the pandemic may be of our own doing.

I hope human beings will nurture kindness and humility in the future. Let's take a leaf out of a doctor's life which is filled with care and concern for humanity.

*Ratna Rao Shekar*



## Contents

- 3 **CANCER CONQUEROR**  
Circled by a close-knit family, the resilient Kameshwari Jandhyala, tells her story of how she overcame cancer and dealt with a mastectomy
- 7 **MAKING A DIFFERENCE**  
The Robin Hood Army project is based on a simple principle—why not source surplus food from restaurants and feed the homeless?
- 10 **HERITAGE**  
We visit centuries-old Hampi and is awe-struck by the splendid architectural legacy of the Vijayanagara Empire of yore
- 13 **MY VIEW**  
Dr P Raghu Ram expertly guides us on mask etiquette and how important it is to wear a snugly fitted mask during the pandemic
- 15 **UBF DIARY**  
A quarterly round-up of the activities in the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation

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# Breaking taboos

## around cancer

Dynamic and outspoken Kameshwari Jandhyala is one of a kind. Leading a hectic and fulfilled life as a research consultant, she had to pause and deal with breast cancer eight years ago. But, she took tough decisions encircled by a loving family. **Kavitha Shanmugam** has a chat with this down-to-earth, resilient cancer survivor to discuss how she had tackled this challenging period in her life and share some insights on coping with this disease

Photos: **M Sridhar Rao**

**C**ancer came early into her life. At the age of 19, when Kameshwari Jandhyala had just completed her graduation she had her first brush with cancer. Her mother had multiple myeloma and as one of the older sisters in a large family with younger siblings to care for, she had spent many nights by her ailing mother's bedside at the Adyar Cancer Institute in Chennai. Her father had died a couple of years earlier.

At that time, nearly five decades ago, watching cancer patients and their families bravely putting up a fight cured her of any fear of cancer.

"I saw patients young and old courageously fight cancer despite knowing they were not going to make it. It left an impression on me back then itself. It's also where I learnt resilience," confesses Kameshwari, a Hyderabad-based research expert and a former consultant with the central Ministry of Education. This dynamic former professor of history, as a researcher has led multi-state studies, pioneered grassroot level women's leadership initiatives, initiatives, and has done evaluation and impact assessments on women's empowerment. Besides, she has a couple of publications to her credit as well.

Eight years ago, Kameshwari had to contend with cancer again when her niece died of glioblastoma (brain cancer). Though she was not the primary caregiver, she had visited her sister for a few weeks to support her during her three-year ordeal. "This kind of family support is crucial for the caregivers of cancer patients," points out Kameshwari, who belongs to a large family.

In 2013, when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, her first reaction was that the family has a "cancer gene floating around and it found me". After some "initial tears", she decided to tackle the cancer. She drew comfort from the knowledge that it had been caught at a very early stage. "I was thankful for small mercies. I recalled the fortitude with which my mother had faced a far deadlier cancer. I knew breast cancer treatment was more advanced, so I needed to act swiftly and not lose any time in treating the cancer," she says.

A breast screening in the course of a routine bi-annual check-up had showed up a shadow in her breast. She was advised to see Dr Jwala Srikala, a skilled radiologist at the KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases. Dr Srikala repeated the mammography and ultrasound test and asked her to return after three months for a repeat follow up imaging.

Kameshwari recounts, "This was a breather. Somewhere, I had a nagging

feeling that I would ultimately be diagnosed with malignancy." She used the three months to co-organise a huge evaluative study being conducted in Rajasthan by ERU, the consultancy firm she had set up with two others.

"I had to brace myself mentally as well. I had long conversations with my husband Hari which helped," she

**What I liked about Dr Raghu Ram is that he did not talk down to me. Most importantly, he believes the patient too has a key role in the decisions to be taken. He rightfully conveyed that it should not be left only to the family or the doctor**

reminisces. Three months later, after a biopsy, she was diagnosed with a low grade invasive ductal carcinoma – an early stage breast cancer. It was an

impalpable cancer picked up at early stage through screening.

After the diagnosis, a doctor had to be decided for her treatment. Three doctors were recommended to her but after meeting Dr P Raghu Ram, she knew within minutes she had made the right decision. Not just that his practice involves exclusively treating patients presenting with breast disease, but she was impressed by his entire demeanour, his matter-of-fact and positive approach. And, hearing that breast cancer is curable from him made it that much more reassuring, says Kameshwari.

Dr Raghu Ram is an easy conversationalist, she says, which incidentally, is a trait she shares with him. "What I liked about Dr Raghu Ram is that he did not talk down to me. Most importantly, he believes the patient too has a key role in the decisions to be taken. He rightfully conveyed that it should not be left only to the family or the doctor."

Dr Raghu Ram even took the trouble of drawing pictures and patiently



*Kameshwari with her husband Hari, who stood by her like a rock during her ordeal*

explained the pros and cons of the various options for treatment. He had explained to her that since the cancer is impalpable, a fine wire could be inserted pre-operatively at the lesion site in the breast and a wire guided wide local excision (lumpectomy) could be performed along with a sentinel node biopsy (removing a few lymph nodes in the armpit). Moreover, oncoplastic techniques (plastic surgical techniques) further could ensure no defect in the breast. This option had to be followed up with radiotherapy to the breast, he had told her.

The other option was a mastectomy (removal of breast) and sentinel node biopsy. In this option, radiotherapy to the breast was not required.

It was Kameshwari's decision to have a mastectomy, as opposed to a lumpectomy. "My family tried convincing me and Dr Raghu Ram also reiterated that I was eminently suitable for breast conservation and that there would be absolutely no difference to my prognosis if I were to opt for breast conservation. But, I was not keen on having radiotherapy and hence opted for mastectomy," she says.

Further she adds, "I was offered breast reconstruction, if I was to choose the mastectomy option but I was not keen." Her family however was concerned about the emotional issues she may have over the loss of a breast. She had extensive discussions with her husband and daughter but Kameshwari stood her ground.

She reasons, "My womanhood, femininity and who I am as a person are not defined by my breasts. I am more than that. Anyway, I had already battled all these issues at a very young age in the early years of my marriage, when I had to undergo a hysterectomy."

Continues Kameshwari, "I was 61 years old at that time. The aesthetics of not having a breast did not matter to me. I was beyond all that. I was not traumatised about the mastectomy, it did feel strange when I first wore a sari but I got used to it." Luckily, she did not have to undergo chemotherapy

because the cancer was caught at an early stage.

Kameshwari had her surgery a week after meeting Dr Raghu Ram, which also gave her daughter Megha time to fly down from Canada. Her nieces and nephews, who are extremely close to her also rallied around her. They took turns at the hospital to relieve her husband and Megha of stress. Her surgery went off smoothly and she recovered quickly under the expert care of Dr Raghu Ram and his team.

"My greatest strength at this time was my family, my husband, daughter, and siblings. I derived a lot of comfort and strength having my daughter come down from Canada," remembers Kameshwari.

Did her life change in anyway? "Not really," says the lady, who comes across as plucky and practical. "Looking back, I realise 2013 was an eventful year in many ways. Hari had just retired and we were excited about the possibilities of travelling and just being together. My colleagues and I were embarking on an interesting research study in Jaipur. Alongside,

**My womanhood, femininity and who I am as a person is not defined by my breasts. I am more than that. Anyway, I had already battled these issues at a very young age in the early years of my marriage when I had to undergo a hysterectomy**

I had to grapple with the loss of two close family members, my brother-in-law and a dear niece," she recounts.

It was a tumultuous period in her life. In the midst of all this, she learnt she had early stage breast cancer. She reminisces, "Briefly, my life was on pause, I wondered if this was a signal to slow down, to reset the pace of



*Kameshwari's daughter Megha, who flew down from Canada to be with her*

my professional life and spend more time with my family. But, very soon, I realised pause was not the best for me. Hari fully supported this and helped me recall I've always dealt with loss, pressure and emotional turmoil by getting back to my work, picking myself up and moving ahead."

So, Kameshwari went back to her consulting and research three months after her surgery. "This helped me to get back a sense of normalcy. I did not want to dwell too much on the surgery or cancer," she points out.

The only change that happened was that Kameshwari, who is never one to mince her words, became highly vocal with her family and friends on the importance of regular health check-ups and breast screening. "I also realised the need to talk freely of one's own experience," says Kameshwari,



*Kameshwari has become eloquent and vocal about the importance of regular breast screenings with the women she interacts with in her work as a research consultant*

who gets riled up about the secrecy surrounding cancer.

“There is an unspoken taboo about cancer, especially breast cancer, I felt. I called up my siblings, my friends and sister-in-laws and told them about my prognosis. I guess that was me, I wanted to talk about it maybe because it helped me. But then, I realised after I shared that I had cancer with them they told me of cases in their family that I had not known about earlier,” she points out.

In fact, this cancer conqueror says that patients should never hesitate to share their fears and concerns. “Talking helps in overcoming anxieties; reach

**Kameshwari put him in touch with the project-in-charge at the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) and Dr Raghu Ram actively set the wheels in motion. This led to a large-scale population-based breast cancer screening programme, in which healthcare workers trained under the auspices of UBF conducted Clinical Breast Examination (CBE) to detect cancer in early stages amongst women aged between 35 – 65 years. So, between 2012-2016, over 200,000 women spread across 4,000 villages in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh were screened for early signs of breast cancer and those diagnosed with breast cancer were treated free of cost through the government funded Arogyasree scheme.**

out to a friend or family member,” she suggests. But, she advises against tapping the Internet for information because it can damage one’s psyche and emotional wellbeing.

Kameshwari did not change her diet in any significant way either. Many of her friends working with her on women’s health issues gave her plenty of suggestions. She had just reduced her dairy and sugar intake which she had found difficult. “I have not given them up completely but I take them in moderation. As a vegetarian, I had to ensure to include sufficient protein in my diet and started to have an egg fairly frequently. That is again something that was not so easy to adapt to,” she reveals.

In her interaction with Dr Raghu Ram, she had discussed the work she had done with rural women as a consultant with the education ministry. So, one thing led to another and they discussed the possibility of the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation (UBF) raising awareness about the importance of early detection of breast cancer and conducting a screening programme for under-privileged women in rural areas, utilising the services of government healthcare workers.

Kameshwari has become eloquent and vocal about the importance of regular breast screenings with the women she interacts with in her work as a research consultant.

“The battle is more than half won, when women are mindful and make a conscious effort to look after their health,” she says. Kameshwari knows what she is talking about in more ways than one. ■

### **Kameshwari’s three coping mechanisms to fight cancer**

- Strong family support. This is crucial as it helps to know that no matter what, you have your close ones to hold your hand and just be there
- Mental fortitude and the self-belief that one can overcome. This is the most difficult but do not be ashamed of being fearful or worried. You need to believe that you can battle, overcome and move ahead in life. You need to strongly cling on to this belief because the mind can and does influence how we cope. You can be your own healer
- Do not give up on one’s passions and work is equally crucial. Getting back to normalcy as fast as possible is the best step forward. I have found it is important not to wallow in self-pity and feel that one’s world has crashed. Household routines and chores, immersing oneself in whatever work one does, and being quite open helps immeasurably

# The Modern Day

## Robin Hoods



Inspired by a Re-Food programme in Portugal, the **Robin Hood Army** project was launched in New Delhi by Neel Ghosh, Aarushi Batra and Anand Sinha to feed the homeless with food waste we generate. This volunteer-based organisation that works to source surplus food from restaurants and weddings and feed the less fortunate has rapidly grown across India, and has been playing a critical role during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Nivedita Choudhuri** talks to the founders about their philosophy and how they reach out to the needy

**R**obin Hood, the legendary outlaw of English folklore, would rob the rich and give to the poor. That was many centuries ago when King John ruled over England. Plucking a feather out of the hats of Robin Hood and his band of Merry Men, 21st century 'Robins' – volunteers this time, not outlaws – scour our cities day and night. But, it's not silver pennies and gold coins they are after but they are searching for surplus food which they can take from the rich to feed the poor.

The statistics are alarming. Hunger reportedly kills more people each year than AIDS, terrorism and malaria. There are around 850 million people in the world who don't have enough food to feed themselves, according to Robin Hood Army (RHA). Clearly, something had to be done to find a solution to this colossal problem.

Inspired by the Re-Food programme in Portugal, a country where RHA co-founder Neel Ghose had lived for some time, the organisation started operating first in New Delhi in August 2014. Enamoured by how simple and doable the idea was, he decided to replicate it in India. Its purpose was simple: source leftover food that was still edible from restaurants and

communities and distribute it to the homeless, hungry and poor on the streets of Delhi.

Ghose and his co-founder, Anand Sinha, (they were three of them, including Aarushi Batra, who set up RHA) identified around 150 people who would otherwise go to bed hungry and the first food-distribution drive was carried out by five volunteers.

Today, the RHA has spread to 10 countries, including Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bahrain, Philippines and Malaysia. "In a little over six years, we have managed to make our presence felt in 217 cities and served around 65 million meals," says Sanchit Jain, a computer engineer, who has his own tech start-up and is a full-time 'Robin'.

The RHA is a zero-funds volunteer body. It has no revenue, office space or employees. The 'Robins' or volunteers, who are largely students and professionals, help by giving their time for this worthy cause. They are motivated by just one goal: to contribute and do something for society.

Says Batra, "The RHA is a massive team effort involving around 50,000 volunteers who have signed up on our roster and they each put in at least two hours every week to feed the destitute. The modus operandi is simple. The 'Robins' use Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp to attract more volunteers. The food is also sourced from parties, weddings and restaurants using social media. People can also fill in a form on the RHA website (robinhoodarmy.com) to join as a volunteer or to share food."

Batra, who did her schooling at Convent of Jesus and Mary and then graduated in economics at Jesus & Mary College, New Delhi, met Ghose while both were students of London

School of Economics and Political Science. She shifted to New York after her marriage in 2019, but RHA continues to be an invaluable part of her life.

Batra says that whenever a drive is planned in a new city, a WhatsApp group is set up connecting all volunteers in that city. New volunteers are continually added to the group.

She goes on to explain how Sundays are usually kept aside for drives, but ad-hoc drives also take place. "A decentralised approach is adopted and the founders are usually not involved in the nitty-gritty and planning that goes into organising drives in the various cities. There are city heads for that," she says.

Batra recalls an instance when 1,000 people were served food left over from only one wedding in Surat. The kind of food wastage at lavish Indian weddings is heart-rending, she says, especially when millions of children in the country sleep hungry every night.

"The 'Robins' also learn and are motivated by what they see. Ours is not just a food delivery service. We spend time with the under-

privileged and needy in hospitals, orphanages and old-age homes and learn so much from them. I have found some of the most positive and jovial people living on streets and under flyovers," observes Batra.

Of course, last year changed everything. Life came to a grinding halt following the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown. Poverty and hunger were pressing issues that existed from before, but the migrant exodus and job losses that followed made life miserable and unbearable for a lot of people in India.

In an effort to mitigate the suffering of people impacted by the pandemic, RHA launched its 'Mission 30 Million', which has turned out to be one of the largest food relief efforts in

**The RHA is a zero-funds volunteer body. It has no revenue, office space or employees. The 'Robins' or volunteers, who are largely students and professionals, help by giving their time for this worthy cause**



There are around 850 million people who don't have food to feed themselves



*Making a simple idea work: Neel Ghose and Aarushi Batra*

the world. The initiative was rolled out in July-August 2020 and the organisation has almost met its target. Around 23 million people have been given food across eight countries, and what is remarkable is that it was done with no help from the governments or corporate bodies.

“The pandemic posed multiple challenges. For starters, we had to practise social distancing. We started off by serving food, water and providing footwear to migrant labourers,” she recalls.

Ordinary citizens started to contribute by providing home-cooked food and though restaurants were closed, the owners would ensure their kitchens were operating by cooking food for the homeless. Even Bollywood actors Sonu Sood and Bhumi Pednekar, as well as chef Vikas Khanna tied up with RHA to provide footwear, rations and other items to the underprivileged, she reveals.

RHA has also rallied around and participated in flood-relief efforts in Orissa, Bihar, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh during the pandemic. “In some instances, ‘Robins’ have travelled in boats for more than two hours to reach inaccessible flood-hit areas,” she points out.



*The Robin Hood Academy is another enterprise initiated by the Robin Hood Army to encourage the spirit of learning*

**The kind of food wastage at lavish Indian weddings is heart-rending, she says, especially when millions of children in the country sleep hungry every night**

“We’ve also received desperate calls from expats living in the UK and USA who were worried for their elderly parents in the midst of the pandemic. They asked us if we could drop off rations and groceries to their parents, who were unable to step outside and shop. So, we began to drop off groceries at the doorsteps of those who were completely stuck at home,” elaborates Batra.

RHA has another initiative too called Senior Patrol, where they help senior citizens get vaccinated. She explains, “We help elderly people, especially those who live alone to register online on the Co-Win portal. ‘Robins’ pick up and take them to the vaccination centres and then drop them home. The senior citizens are often helpless and so they feel really grateful when we offer our help. We often get to hear this line—*Jahan apno ne saath chhod diya, aapne hamara haath pakra* (where our own people abandoned us, you have held our hand).”

Spread across more than 105 cities and empowering more than 7,000 students with basic primary education, the Robin Hood Academy is another enterprise initiated by RHA. Here, ‘Robins’ conduct regular classes with the help of a standardised curriculum to introduce and encourage the spirit of learning. The aim of the Academy is to provide street kids the tools and knowledge to go to school.

Uma Chilak joined RHA as a volunteer and was the city head of the Hyderabad unit from 2015-2020. The interior designer has plenty to share about the stellar role played by RHA during the pandemic.

“We found that people from all walks of life had been affected by the pandemic. It is not just migrant labourers. Many people’s salaries and earnings have suddenly stopped. Beauty parlour employees, hotel cleaners, gym

instructors, staff working in shops selling non-essential items and theatre workers had all been suddenly left high and dry,” shares Chilak.

They had distributed 50,000 grocery kits in two months to families in the entertainment business and to drivers of Ola and Uber cabs, and more such workers in need at the height of the pandemic. A grocery kit comprises 10 kilos of rice, two kilos of dal, one kilo of sugar, 500 gm of tamarind, oil, onions and potatoes.

They tapped the growing tribe of home bakers during the pandemic as well. “We delivered 30,000 cakes to schools and orphanages and blankets to those sleeping out,” adds Chilak.

RHA has come a long way from serving up cooked meals in 2014 to delivering raw rations during the pandemic. But, what is heartening and warms the cockles of one’s hearts, is the spontaneous spirit of generosity that seems to drive donors and the Robins alike. We need more people like them in the world so that no one ever has to go hungry. ■

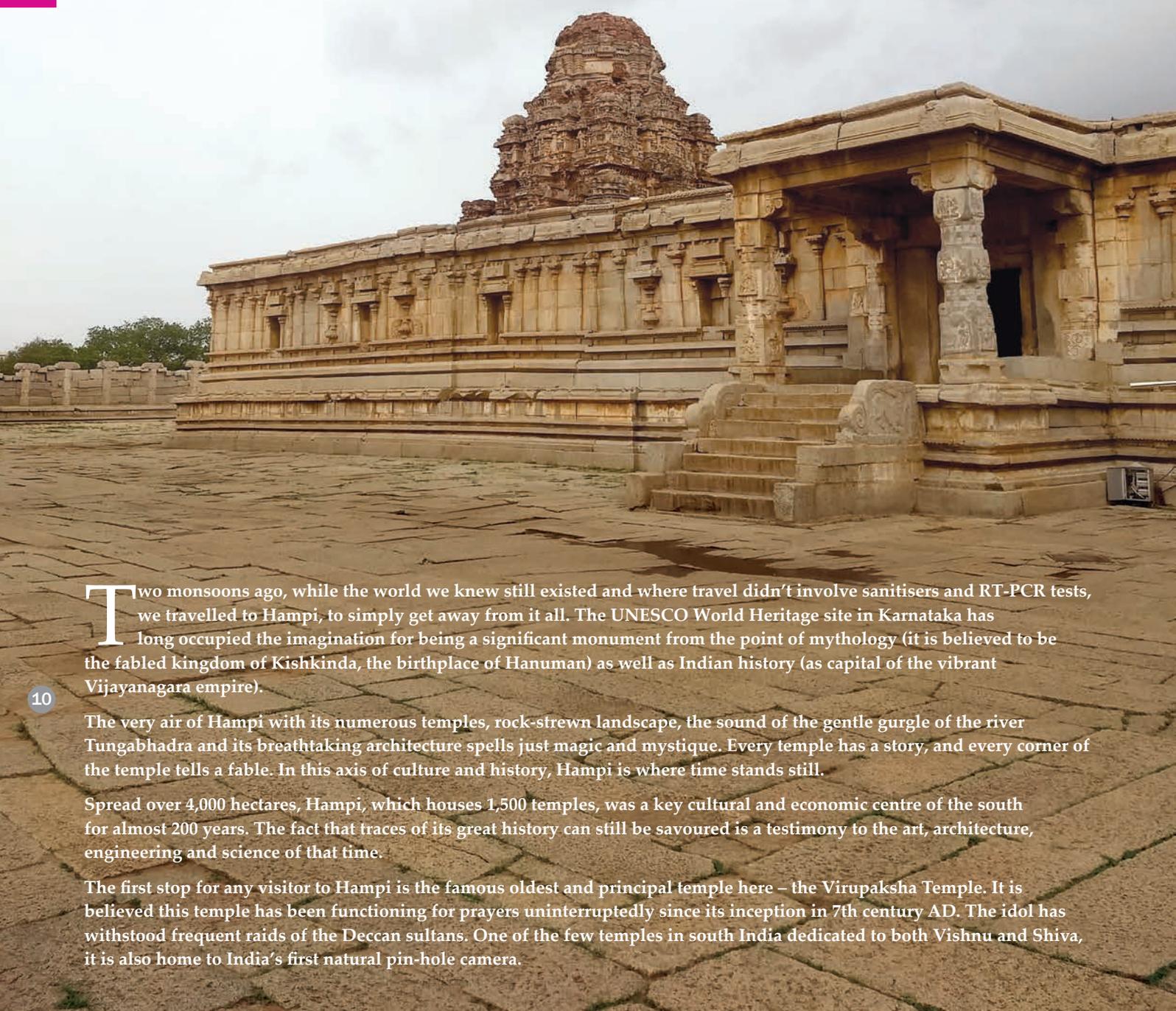
# Hampi:

## Where Time Stands Still

Hampi, the seat of the mighty Vijayanagara empire of yore, is one of the symbols of India's rich legacy. It has attracted travellers for centuries now.

**Mallik Thatipalli** visits the UNESCO World Heritage site and comes away mesmerised by the magnificent mandapas, temples, forts, and pillared halls

Photos: Mallik Thatipalli



**T**wo monsoons ago, while the world we knew still existed and where travel didn't involve sanitisers and RT-PCR tests, we travelled to Hampi, to simply get away from it all. The UNESCO World Heritage site in Karnataka has long occupied the imagination for being a significant monument from the point of mythology (it is believed to be the fabled kingdom of Kishkinda, the birthplace of Hanuman) as well as Indian history (as capital of the vibrant Vijayanagara empire).

10

The very air of Hampi with its numerous temples, rock-strewn landscape, the sound of the gentle gurgle of the river Tungabhadra and its breathtaking architecture spells just magic and mystique. Every temple has a story, and every corner of the temple tells a fable. In this axis of culture and history, Hampi is where time stands still.

Spread over 4,000 hectares, Hampi, which houses 1,500 temples, was a key cultural and economic centre of the south for almost 200 years. The fact that traces of its great history can still be savoured is a testimony to the art, architecture, engineering and science of that time.

The first stop for any visitor to Hampi is the famous oldest and principal temple here – the Virupaksha Temple. It is believed this temple has been functioning for prayers uninterrupted since its inception in 7th century AD. The idol has withstood frequent raids of the Deccan sultans. One of the few temples in south India dedicated to both Vishnu and Shiva, it is also home to India's first natural pin-hole camera.

In this temple, a giant tower or Gopura opens into the first courtyard of the compound. This pastel coloured, nine-storied tower is the most prominent landmark in Hampi and is visible from afar. The temple is a grand structure sprawling over a large area with many smaller shrines, pillared halls and gateways.

Nothing in this city of architectural wonder is as beautiful as the Vijaya Vittala Temple, the unheralded queen of Hampi's temple complexes. You have to walk along what was once the original and fabled Hampi bazaars, where diamonds and rubies were sold by kilos, to reach this temple dedicated to Vishnu.

Built in the 15th century Dravidian style, the temple is spread across a large complex filled with halls, pavilions and gateways. The most extraordinary feature of this temple is the stone chariot, which is one of the three famous stone chariots in India, the other two being in Konark and Mahabalipuram. It originally enshrined Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu.

The chariot, built on a rectangular platform, has been carved out of giant granite blocks. The chariot's base features mythical battle scenes and a series of concentric floral motifs adorn the wheels of the chariot. The story goes that in the 16th century, King

Krishnadevaraya of the Vijayanagara Empire was so fascinated with the Konark Sun temple chariot while fighting a battle in Odissa, he decided to build one here. An interesting folklore is linked to the Hampi chariot as villagers believe the world would come to a halt when the chariot moves from its place.

Another highlight here is the musical pillars hall (with 56 pillars), which emit a musical note when tapped. While this portion is cordoned off to the curious visitor, it is a treat to see these Saregama pillars.

The most extraordinary feature of this temple is the stone chariot, which is one of the three famous stone chariots in India, the other two being in Konark and Mahabalipuram.

The other architectural marvel at Hampi is the symmetrical stepped tank. This stepped tank was used for religious ceremonies and was considered sacred. The tank displays the spirit of architectural innovation in the Vijayanagara Empire.

Visitors can next soak in the sight of the Hazara Rama Temple, built in the early part of the 15th century

by Devaraya II. The temple once served as the private temple of the royal household. The "Hazara Rama" literally means "a thousand Ramas" and the Ramayana story is carved out on stone in the temple. Presently, it is not a functioning temple and is visited for its architectural beauty.

The less explored ruins of Anegundi or the "monkey kingdom", which is part of the UNESCO site is spell-binding as well. Hanuman, the monkey god who plays a big role in the Ramayana, was believed to have been born here.

Other places of interest at Hampi are the Queen's Bath, Mahanavami Dibba, Zenana enclosure, Courtesan's Street, Sugreeva's cave and Bhima's Gateway. If you climb up to Hemakuta Hill, you will discover two large Ganesha statues and a huge 6.7 m Vishnu carved out of a single boulder with a lion's head and the body of a human lying under a seven-hooded serpent.

A trip to Hampi is incomplete if you do not climb the 600 odd steps to the Hanuman Temple at sunset and watch the sun go down over the surreal scenery. It is guaranteed to imbue even an atheist with a spiritual feeling.

The best time to visit Hampi is between July to February. Most people do a hasty weekend but visitors should spend time to really get into the skin of this treasure trove. ■



# Mask Etiquette

## Covid Safety Measures

In this challenging period, it is important that each one of us is responsible to ensure our own safety, and equally, to be sensitive to the safety of others around us. **Dr P Raghu Ram** says one of the most effective ways of achieving this is by scrupulously following what is known as 'mask etiquette'



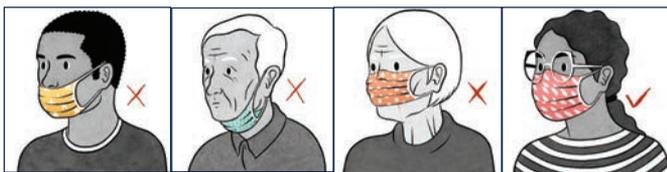
**A**t a time when the second wave of the pandemic is at its peak in India, it is distressing to see a number of irresponsible people (both educated and uneducated) either without masks or wearing them improperly. Equally, it is a common sight to see people bringing their mask down whilst speaking.

This must stop. The moment the mask is brought down to the level below the nose, the whole purpose of wearing the mask is defeated. Bringing the mask to the level of the neck exposes the inside of the mask to germs lurking at the neck level. And then, by bringing the mask from the level of the neck back to the face could make the individual prone to get infected with these germs.

Furthermore, by frequently touching the mask's outer area the individual is exposed to carry the virus on their hands and spread it in the community, if these potentially infected hands are not washed.

### Wearing the mask right

Before wearing a mask, it is vitally important to wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Then dry your hands with a clean paper towel/cloth and throw the paper towel away. Do not use an air dryer as it may disseminate the virus all around. Alternatively, use a hand sanitiser as a second best alternative.



How NOT to wear a Mask & How TO wear it correctly



Double mask Courtesy: Internet

Check the mask periodically for any defects such as a tear or missing tie or ear loop. Throw away any that are defective.

If you are wearing a surgical mask, make sure the exterior side of the mask is facing out, away from your face. The coloured side is usually the front and must face away from you. The white side should be on the inner aspect touching the face.

If using a mask with ear loop, hold the top of the mask with your fingertips, put on the loops around each ear. Place the mask on your face with the stiff, bendable edge at the top by your nose. If using mask with ties, place the mask on your face with the stiff, bendable edge at the top by your nose. Bring the upper ties over the crown of the head and tie the upper ties with a bow. The crown refers to the area at the upper back of the head. Then tie the lower ties behind your head with a bow.

### General principles to observe

The mask should snugly fit the face. Very important to ensure that there is no air leak near your eyes and from the mask's outer edges. If the mask is fitted correctly, you would be able to see the mask moving in and out with each breath.

Once the mask is in place, use your index finger and thumb to pinch the bendable top edge of the mask around the bridge of your nose. Make sure the mask is completely secure. Extremely important to make sure the mask covers the nose and mouth so that the bottom edge is under your chin.

Do not forget to wash your hands after wearing the mask.

### Mask removal is equally important

Wash your hands before removing the mask. Do not touch the outside of the mask with bare hands. Use tissue papers to stabilise the outside of the mask. Untie/remove ear loops and gently take the mask away from the face without sudden jerky movements. Do not touch inside of the mask (the part over nose and mouth). It may be

contaminated from your breathing, coughing or sneezing. Promptly, dispose the mask in the trash without fail. Wash your hands.

### Wearing a double mask

Most recent recommendation is to wear a double mask in crowded places. A disposable mask is worn underneath a cloth mask. The masks should snugly fit covering the nose, mouth and chin without any gaps.

It is vitally important not to use two surgical (disposable) masks as they are not designed to fit snugly and wearing two such masks does not protect you.

### Who should wear medical masks?

Frontline healthcare workers, people suspected/confirmed with COVID, caretakers looking after COVID suspect/confirmed patients, people in the community over the age of 60 and those with underlying co-morbid health conditions should wear medical masks.

Whilst people with no COVID symptoms at home and when going out to a public place can wear a fabric/disposable mask.



### Can masks be worn during exercise?

Although there are conflicting views, commonsense indicates that masks should not be worn while exercising. Airflow is significantly diminished in moderate to severe exercise, which is associated with faster breaths. And therefore, wearing a mask during exercise will act as a barrier to airflow, which can lower oxygen levels in the re-circulated air.

Also, more carbon-dioxide exhaled during exercise can potentially get trapped by the mask and when it is re-inhaled, it can further cause excessive breathing (hyperventilation) and reduced brain function, which can



manifest as confusion and loss of consciousness as well. It is a well-known fact that heart rate increases during exercise. But wearing a mask during exercise further increases heart rate, which can cause dehydration, light-headedness and dizziness and can even result in adverse cardiac effects.

It is important to balance the benefits of wearing a mask versus adverse effects during exercise. It would be prudent not to exercise in public places for a few months, until the pandemic wanes. How responsibly we conduct ourselves collectively as a nation will largely determine the effect of the pandemic in the country.

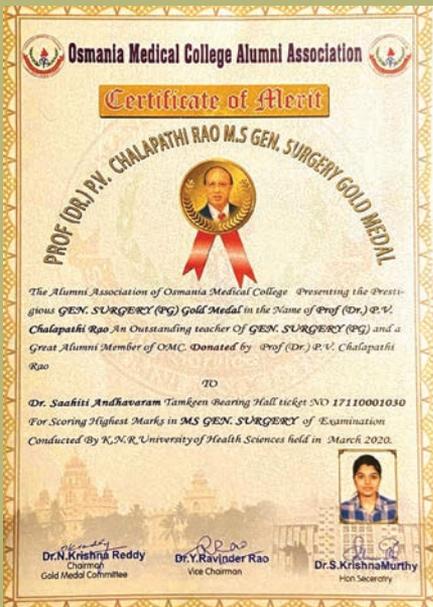
Wearing a mask properly alongside personal hygiene and social distancing are the three pillars, which we must not forget, both at home and outside. ■



# UBF Diary

March 2021

## The Legacy Lives On... The Dr PV Chalapathi Rao Gold Medal for 2020



Dr P Raghu Ram, founder, CEO and UBF director presented the 'Prof P V Chalapathi Rao Gold Medal' for the year 2020 to Dr Saahiti Andhavaram, the best outgoing post-graduate student in general surgery from Osmania Medical College at a function organised by the Osmania Medical College Alumni Association on March 24, 2021.

A corpus fund was created in the name of the late Prof Chalapathi Rao and 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 best outgoing post-graduate student (MS) in general surgery at Osmania Medical College.

These two colleges have been chosen as Prof Chalapathi Rao served in both these premier institutions as professor of surgery for 16 years from 1967 to 1983.

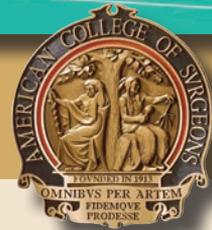
## The Queen's Honour Features in The American College of Surgeons Bulletin

Dr P Raghu Ram was recently appointed OBE – 'Officer of the Most Excellent Order of British Empire', which is the second highest-ranking Order of British Empire Award (excluding Knighthood/Damehood) by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II in the 2021 New Year's Honours' list.

In recognition of achieving this singular honour, he was featured in the March 2021 bulletin published by The American College of Surgeons, which is the world's largest surgical organisation that represents the surgical fraternity from America and across the world.

To read more about the feature published in the Bulletin, click on the link given below

<https://bulletin.facs.org/2021/03/members-in-the-news-19/>



## In Pursuit of that One Idea



Dr P Raghu Ram was interviewed by the editorial director at Rediff.com on March 11, 2021, after he had received the Queen's Honour.

Here's a highlight from the interview, in which Dr Raghu Ram says that receiving the Queen's Honour has well and 'truly added fire in my belly to make an even greater impact' to improve breast healthcare in the country. And, interestingly, he also shares a quote by Swami Vivekananda, which he says has now become a part and parcel of his life. "Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life... Think of it, dream of it and live on that idea... Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body be full of that idea, and, just leave every other idea alone".

Clearly, that one idea has been Dr Raghu Ram's mantra.

To know more about the interview, click on the link given below:

<https://www.rediff.com/news/interview/the-protector-of-women-from-breast-cancer/20210308.htm>

**rediff.com**



**Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation**  
Hyderabad, India

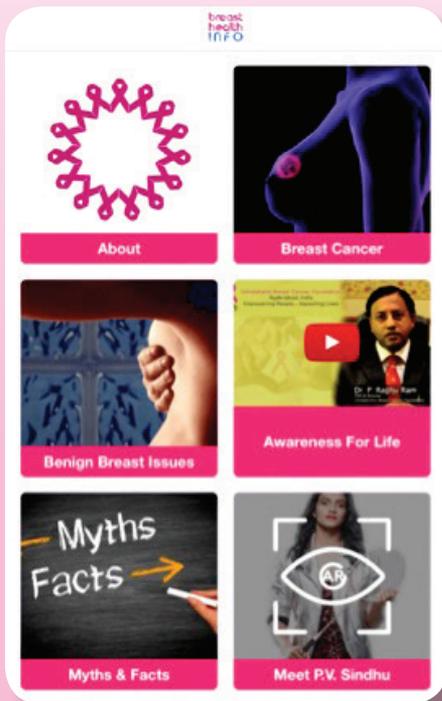
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**World's first mobile app on breast health in 12 languages**

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

## ‘ABCs OF BREAST HEALTH’



Launched by Mr Amitabh Bachchan (2017)

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

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### LINKS FOR FREE DOWNLOAD

**App store**

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

**Google play store**

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

