

# PINK CONNECTION

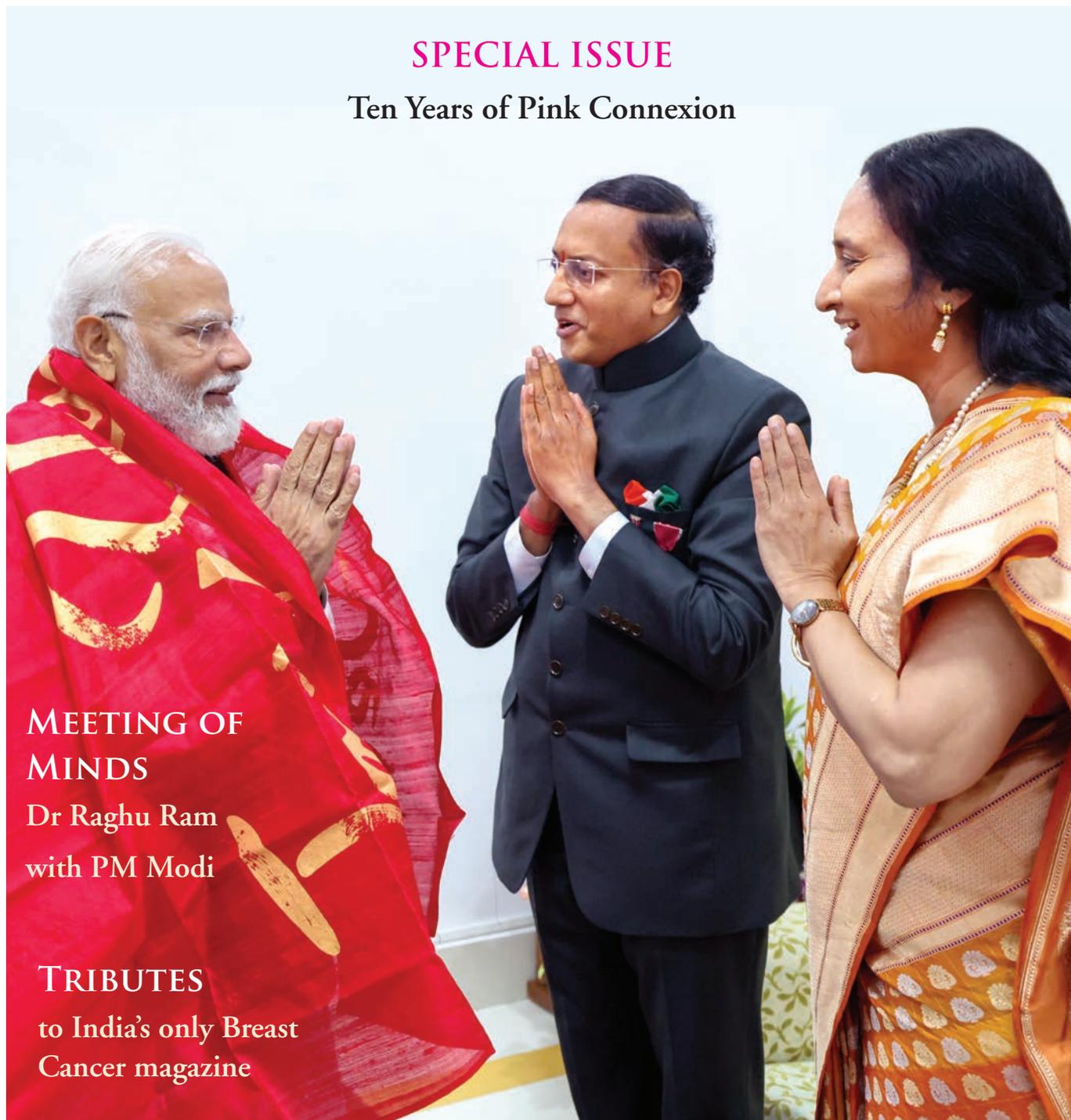
UBF



Issue 38: Aug - Oct '24

## SPECIAL ISSUE

Ten Years of Pink Connexion



MEETING OF  
MINDS

Dr Raghu Ram  
with PM Modi

TRIBUTES

to India's only Breast  
Cancer magazine

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### EDITOR

Ratna Rao Shekar

### CONTRIBUTORS

Minal Khona

Mallik Thatipalli

Nivedita Choudhuri

### DESIGN

Malvika Mehra

### COPY EDITOR

Kavitha Shanmugam

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### KIMS-USHALAKSHMI

Centre for Breast Diseases  
KIMS Hospitals, Minister Road  
Secunderabad - 500 003



+91-91009 13217



ubfhyderabad@gmail.com



www.breastcancerindia.org

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<https://www.youtube.com/c/UshalakshmiBreastCancerFoundation>



## Behind the Scenes

Among the many newsletters and magazines that I have launched, *Pink Connexion* is one that comes out every quarter, regularly no matter what, and this has gone on for the last 10 years. A large part is due to Dr Raghu Ram's belief that a newsletter such as this would give him a forum to showcase his work, and raise awareness about breast cancer, and reach an audience not just in Hyderabad where he works, but across the country! In fact, as our readers will see, it has even reached the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who appreciated the newsletter and the doctor's efforts. We do take it as a pat on our back for our efforts.

In the 10 years of its publication, we have featured so many cancer conquerors, and whether they are celebrities or simple middle-class women, each one has been a story of grit. And each time we are overcome by the individual's will to fight and conquer the disease, and in almost all the cases, they have spoken about the support of a strong family and physician. In featuring their stories, we hope more women will be aware of health check-ups and find the courage to fight health problems, whatever they may be.

I take this opportunity to applaud Dr Raghu Ram's efforts towards creating awareness for cancer, leaving no stone unturned, whether he is addressing international conferences or impressing governments. And our patron Dr Ushalakshmi *garu*, who has stood by this newsletter like a guiding angel.

It would not be inappropriate to thank my team here: Malvika Mehra for setting the template for the newsletter 10 years ago and doing it issue after issue; Minal Nirmal Khona, for doing many interviews with cancer survivors; Nivedita Chaudhuri, who writes from London but will get to know about good work being done in some remote corner of India. Of course, Kavitha Shanmugam who tweaks every word that goes into this newsletter.

I do hope the newsletter and the vision with which we started it, continue for a few decades more!

*Ratna Rao Shekar*



**Ratna Rao Shekar**  
Editor



**Kavitha Shanmugam**  
Copy Editor



**Malvika Mehra**  
Designer



**Minal Khona**  
Senior Feature Writer



**Nivedita Choudhuri**  
Senior Feature Writer



**Mallik Thatipalli**  
Feature Writer



The Prime Minister autographs the editorial page of the very first quarterly issue of Pink Connexion

 **Narendra Modi** ✓  
@narendramodi

In Hyderabad, I met Dr. Raghu Ram Pillarisetti Ji and Dr. S. Vyjayanthi Ji. Dr. Raghu Ram is a Padma awardee and has done pioneering work in curing breast cancer. We discussed aspects relating to healthcare infrastructure in India. He also appreciated our Government's efforts in this regard.

@RRPillarsetti



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📅 Joined January 2009

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ANNIVERSARY

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Raina Rao Shekar



# Dr Raghu Ram meets the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi

PM Modi later tweets about the meeting paying rich tributes to Dr Raghu Ram and his contribution towards improving breast cancer care in the country

It was a momentous event. Dr P Raghu Ram, and his wife, Dr Vyjayanthi got the opportunity to meet Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on May 7, 2024 at Raj Bhavan in Hyderabad. Dr Raghu Ram felicitated the Prime Minister with a specially made 'vastram' that the Linga Bhairavi temple in Coimbatore had gifted him.

During the felicitation, Dr Raghu Ram told PM Narendra Modi, "The principal source of your strength and power emanates from your late Amma's blessings. It is my prayer and wish that the 'vastram' gifted to me from Maa Bhairavi Temple gives you even more energy through the divine Devi Shakthi, in your selfless service to the nation."

Prime Minister Modi was touched by these remarks and commented, "You're a doctor and you are spiritual too."

Dr Raghu Ram explained to the Prime Minister about his views on the strength of spirituality and meditation and that he spends two hours in the prayer room every day. The Prime Minister was pleasantly surprised to hear this and admired the spiritual aspects of Dr Raghu Ram's life.

Dr Raghu Ram complimented the Prime Minister for having taken the landmark decision to extend the Ayushman Bharat facilities to senior citizens, which promises to be a 'game changer' in terms of providing the much-needed financial assistance to the growing elderly population in the country.

As breast cancer is the commonest cancer affecting women in India, the Prime Minister and Dr Raghu Ram, who is also a Padma Shri and a Dr BC Roy awardee, discussed ways in which breast cancer care and cancer care in general can be improved in the country.

At the meeting, they talked about how the population-based breast cancer screening programme that is being implemented under the auspices of the National Health Mission (NHM) can be made more robust; how cancer registries can be put to best use, particularly in rural areas and the urgent need for cancer to be classified as a 'Notifiable Disease'.



Prime Minister autographs the Editorial page of the very first quarterly issue of 'Pink Connexion'

The Prime Minister also autographed the editorial page of the very first quarterly issue of *Pink Connexion*, a publication on breast cancer, which was started ten years ago, in 2014. An innovative initiative by the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation and KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases, *Pink Connexion* is celebrating 10 positively eventful years (2014–2024) and is South Asia's first and one-of-its-kind breast health magazine.

After the meeting, notably, the Prime Minister tweeted about his meeting with Dr Raghu Ram, acknowledging the doctor for his "pioneering work in breast cancer". Further, the Prime Minister also paid rich tributes to Dr Raghu Ram for his stellar role towards improving breast cancer care in the country.

This tweet went viral and generated more than 1.1 million views, 31,000 likes and 4,200 reposts. What's more, the Prime Minister has started to follow Dr Raghu Ram on X (formerly Twitter), the social media platform.

# Accolades pour in for ‘Pink Connexion’...



I am delighted that *Pink Connexion* has completed 10 positively eventful years! As soon as the magazine gets printed, Dr Raghu makes it a point every three months to present me with the first copy. When he undertakes to do anything, he does it with 100 per cent commitment and dedication. Shortly before relocating to India, Raghu met me to present his dream of improving breast healthcare in India. I must be honest here—I did not take him seriously. However, I was impressed with his bold time-bound vision. So, I gave him an opportunity to unfold his dreams. Today, I am very proud of the fact that he has been working diligently with laser-sharp focus and rock solid determination over the past 17 years and delivered much more than he promised me when he first met me in July 2007.

He not only established South Asia’s very first comprehensive breast centre at KIMS Hospitals, he also founded a not-for-profit foundation that has been championing a number of unique initiatives towards empowering people and creating the much-needed awareness about the importance of early detection of breast cancer. To do this in a country where the disease is considered to be a “closet issue” is a tremendous achievement. To honour Raghu’s dedication and love for his mother and motherland, KIMS Hospitals has proudly associated his mother’s name—Dr Ushalakshmi to the Breast Centre at KIMS and hence the name—KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases.

A skilful and a caring surgeon, Raghu has excelled in his chosen profession. His degrees run into five lines and what he has achieved at a very young age, some may take a lifetime to achieve. On this happy occasion, nothing gives me more happiness than to wish him and *Pink Connexion* all the very best.

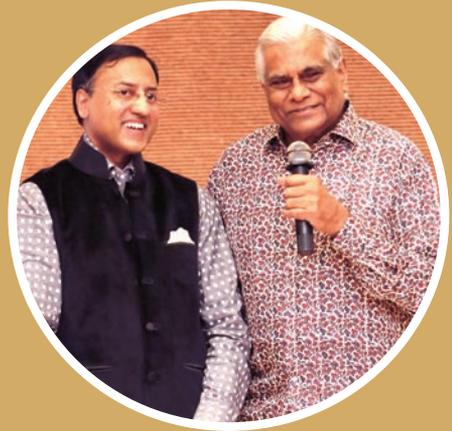
**Dr B Bhaskar Rao**

Chairman and managing director, KIMS Hospitals

I have closely watched Dr Raghu Ram's contribution to healthcare in the country with great admiration. He has displayed great vision and works with passion and a missionary zeal. With his extraordinary counselling and outstanding surgical skills, he has been able to provide first-class care for thousands of women. His consistent and focused actions over the past 17 years to spread the message of "early detection" of breast cancer all across the country, through a number of innovative initiatives, are commendable. One such unique initiative is *Pink Connexion*, which has completed 10 glorious years, empowering and enriching the readership. Wishing my dear friend Raghu with continued success and more power to his arms!

**K Padmanabhaiah IAS (Retd)**

Padma Bhushan awardee  
Chairman, Court of Governors, Administrative Staff College of India



It is a matter of great pride and joy that *Pink Connexion* is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation took birth when Raghu's mother was diagnosed with breast cancer.

I am proud to have been associated with this charity right from its inception and nothing gives me more happiness than to see its impact over the past 17 years, which has disrupted breast cancer advocacy in the country. I commend my dear friend Raghu for transforming his thoughts into meaningful actions.

**Jayesh Ranjan IAS**

Special Chief Secretary, Govt. of Telangana  
Chief Advisor, Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation



Like many other women, I was also not aware that after 40, it is important to have an annual screening mammogram. Dr Raghu Ram brought about this awareness and understanding. I have seen first-hand his exceptional body of work and I have extended my support to his various innovative initiatives championed by him over the past 15 years.

I deeply appreciate the phenomenal impact that he has made for breast cancer advocacy in the country. I congratulate him on behalf of all the women for the wonderful service that he has been rendering in addition to being a skilled, humane and a grounded surgeon practising the art and science of breast surgery ethically with passion, empathy and compassion. Wishing *Pink Connexion* a glorious 10th anniversary and looking forward to many more issues in the years to come.

**Amala Akkineni**

Actor and activist



I extend my heartfelt congratulations on *Pink Connexion's* 10th anniversary issue. This publication, which fosters hope in cancer conquerors with its valuable information, is shaping the landscape of breast health in South Asia. Kudos to Dr P Raghu Ram for his visionary leadership and relentless dedication. The strength and courage of breast cancer conquerors inspire us all. Let us continue to champion awareness, early detection, and treatment, and drive positive change in public health and women's lives.

**Suchitra Ella**

Padma Bhushan awardee

Co-founder and MD, Bharat Biotech International Ltd



Dr Raghu Ram has shown an unwavering commitment to the cause of breast cancer awareness and treatment. Through his leadership at KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases and UBF, he has tirelessly advocated for the importance of early detection and treatment, significantly raising awareness about breast cancer screening. *Pink Connexion*, a quarterly magazine, regularly features inspiring stories of individuals who have bravely fought cancer.

Dr Raghu Ram's dedication has not only educated countless people but also inspired many with his passion and perseverance. Over the past decade, he has achieved remarkable success in his mission to promote early detection and reduce the incidence of breast cancer in our country.

I wish him continued success in his relentless pursuit of this noble cause.

**Dr Evita Fernandez**

Chairperson, Fernandez Foundation, Hyderabad



Early detection saves lives, and Dr Raghu Ram has brought about this much-needed awareness in our country, which was missing earlier. A multi-faceted personality, he is also one of the best surgeons in the country and despite his many achievements, he is very down-to-earth, and treats his patients with exemplary empathy and extraordinary care. The *Pink Connexion* is one of Raghu Ram's "out-of-the-box" initiatives to spread the message of hope, courage and survival against breast cancer, and also to empower people about various breast health issues in an easy-to-understand format. Every issue is a delight to read and I wish to congratulate him and Ratna Rao Shekar, Editor of *Pink Connexion* on their 10th anniversary for their meticulous attention to detail and high-quality articles not only about breast cancer but also about various aspects that interests the readership from all walks of life.

**Asmita Marwah**

Proprietor, designer-in-chief  
Asmita Marwa Design



Congratulations to *Pink Connexion* on 10 impactful years! Over the years, I've witnessed how Dr Raghu Ram's progress has been swift and remarkable. Driven by a strong sense of purpose and dedication, he has taken KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases to another level with state-of-the-art equipment and minimal radiation technology.

Each segment of *Pink Connexion* is created with such care and empathy that it makes a real difference. As someone who values health deeply, I believe that spreading preventive information is crucial, and his work excels in this area. The empowering stories and insights on breast health are most relevant for the times that we live in today. Knowledge is powerful; with it, we can prevent so much.

The survivor stories are especially moving, they touch hearts and uplift those in treatment, reminding us of the preciousness of life. These stories can truly move mountains. I wouldn't think twice to lend my support in whichever way possible for this great initiative. Happy 10th anniversary!

**Shilpa Reddy**

Entrepreneur, fashion designer



Big warm hugs and congratulations on the 10th anniversary of *Pink Connexion*, which is brought out by Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation and KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases. Breast Cancer advocacy is very close to Dr Raghu Ram's heart. That's why he left lucrative career offers in the UK to take care of his mother, who was diagnosed with breast cancer, and to

serve his motherland. His mother is his biggest inspiration. And therefore, whatever he takes up, he does is from his heart. That is why the outcomes are phenomenal. The impact that the Foundation has created across the country and beyond, over the past 17 years, speaks much about his deep commitment to his mission and his focused hard work. I wish him all the very best.

**Rekha Lahoti**

Director, Kalakriti Art Gallery



I am extremely fortunate to have Dr Raghu Ram *garu* guiding me on breast health issues, a topic often shrouded in fear and silence. His compassionate approach made my mammogram a painless experience, dispelling myths about the procedure. When a cyst required testing, his counselling, expertise and skilled care eased my stress during the process. Dr Raghu's awareness efforts are helping people across the country, ensuring early detection and promoting better health outcomes. His dedication and consistent efforts over the past 17 years to disrupt the "taboo" surrounding breast cancer is commendable. This has made discussing and addressing breast health issues significantly more comfortable and reassuring.

*Pink Connexion* is a brilliant and unique initiative. I always look forward to reading every quarterly issue. Happy 10th anniversary and my very best wishes to the entire team for their relentless efforts.

**Lakshmi Manchu**

Actor and producer



Ten dedicated years of serving his people in his own land, which needed his services so much! To give up a flourishing medical career abroad to work for his nation is something that few will do. Dr Raghu Ram's commitment towards his patients can be seen in the way he treats his patients and friends; how he makes them so comfortable and confident about his course of treatment. His single-minded efforts have ensured that the stigma, embarrassment and reservations associated with discussing breast cancer or any breast health issue is removed. He has shown that any part of the human body should be respected like our limbs, face or fingers since the entire entity is a divine creation of God! Congratulations to Dr Sahab and his team!

The *Pink Connexion* has been providing interesting information about the various aspects of breast health and many other aspects of life. It is carefully penned by Ratna Rao Shekar, making it an interesting and informative read! Dr Sahab's family has been so supportive continuously. Kudos to all of them!

**Vinita Pittie**

Creative Designer



As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of *Pink Connexion*, we honour Dr Raghu Ram Pillarisetti, a true visionary and compassionate leader.

Appointed as a Board of Advisor at Global Leadership Outreach and Well-being (GLOW), Dr Raghu Ram has guided our team with his humble and tireless dedication to breast cancer awareness. His leadership in launching an international breast cancer awareness campaign has educated and empowered women worldwide. His expertise, compassion, and unwavering commitment to saving lives have inspired us all.

We are profoundly grateful for his contributions and proud to have him as a cornerstone of our mission. Here's to many more years of impactful work and inspiration. Best wishes!

**Sumana Rao**

CEO, GLOW and  
Harvard Alumna



Dr Raghu Ram is a beacon of hope for breast cancer patients in Hyderabad and beyond. I've known him for many years and witnessed his tireless efforts to raise awareness and provide exceptional care. His passion for the cause is deeply personal, driven

by his love for his homeland. Leaving a lucrative practice in England, he returned to Hyderabad to make a difference. Through his awareness campaigns and surgical expertise, he has saved countless lives. I've seen his compassion and dedication first-hand. He is a true champion in the fight against breast cancer, and I am privileged to be a close friend.

*Pink Connexion* has made a huge impact in the hearts and minds of people across the country. The innovative format, the inspiring "conqueror" stories, the feature on "woman of substance", besides a breast cancer awareness feature by Dr Raghu Ram, makes this a unique publication that touches so many lives. My heartiest congratulations to the editorial team and best wishes on completing 10 impactful years!

**Deepika Reddy**

Eminent Kuchipudi exponent, founder director, Deepanjali



It is with great pleasure that I congratulate *Pink Connexion* for successfully completing a decade, for creating awareness and providing the much-needed support to breast cancer 'conquerors'. Their inspiring stories alongside features that highlight women and men who made a difference to the society and the other interesting aspects regarding our heritage, are inspiring, informative and invigorating. I commend Dr Raghu Ram and Ratna Rao Shekar for their sterling efforts which has ensured the huge success of the magazine.

The awareness that Dr Raghu Ram has created in the Telugu States over the years has transformed breast cancer from a taboo issue to a commonly discussed one, thus encouraging women over the age of 40 to get an annual screening mammogram. The yeoman service that he is rendering to breast cancer patients is commendable. I wish him and everyone at *Pink Connexion* even more success in the years to come.

**Dr Balamba Puranam**

Senior consultant gynaecologist

Former HOD, department of obstetrics and gynaecology,  
Osmania Medical College, Hyderabad

Dr Raghu Ram and I have been good friends for more than 10 years and with utmost confidence I can share that he is a stalwart in the field of breast cancer. Being a senior obstetrician and gynaecologist, I have received constant feedback from patients describing Dr Raghu Ram's interaction with them during the most anxious times of their lives as being "empathetic, skilful and providing loving care".

*Pink Connexion* is the brainchild of Dr Raghu Ram and Ratna Rao and with their meticulous attention to detail, the publication has achieved a place in all our hearts. The publication stands tall in creating awareness and spreading the voice of warriors. Staying up-to-date in the digital world has marked a great milestone for the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation with the release of the world's first mobile app "ABCs of Breast Health" in 12 languages launched by actor Amitabh Bachchan in 2017. It is with great respect that I wish Dr Raghu Ram and the entire team at *Pink Connexion* all the very best for the future.

**Dr M Lakshmi Rathna**

Senior obstetrician and gynaecologist,  
HOD, obstetrics and gynaecology, Ankura Hospitals, Hyderabad





Dr Raghu Ram has been a true pioneer in breast cancer awareness, leading the charge with unwavering dedication. His proactive approach, from organising educational walks to tirelessly spreading crucial information, has profoundly impacted our community. The Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation and KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases at KIMS Hospital have been invaluable partners in this mission, providing exceptional care and support alongside Dr Raghu Ram's efforts. His passion and commitment shine through in every initiative he undertakes, inspiring many to take proactive steps towards prevention and treatment.

I am deeply appreciative of his tireless work and the remarkable difference he has made in raising awareness and fostering hope. I wish him the very best for taking it further and farther and keen to extend help in whatever way we can. Also, heartiest congratulations to the Team at *Pink Connexion* on a hugely successful 10 years, creating awareness about the importance of early detection of the most common cancer affecting women, and inspiring people through your stories.

### **Shruti Girish Mallpani**

Director, MPM Venture Pvt Ltd



I have cancer on both sides of my family. My mum's mother passed away in her early fifties. My mother's sister too succumbed to cancer and another sister is currently battling it. My father's sister got it in her early 50s but survived due to early treatment. Given the situation on both sides of my family, I am very conscious of being another victim. I have been consulting Dr Raghu Ram for a number of years now and I do my annual breast cancer check with him and his team at the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation.

The mammogram is mostly painless and the ultrasound is always carefully done. And after the results is the patient counselling with Dr Raghu, which leaves me reassured and mentally at peace for another year. He always takes the time to explain my reports and to advise me on the right path. Based on his advice, I have also done the BRCA gene test. I will never forget the relief my family and I felt when he texted me from his trip in NY, as soon as he got my results. I ensure my family goes to Dr Raghu. I have sent a number of my friends to him. My husband and I deeply respect his integrity and commitment to his work. We are also always impressed and humbled by the non-profit work he does as part of his work with breast cancer. I have been blessed not to be touched by the disease yet and hope never to be. But I do know that if I ever am, there will be nothing to worry about, as there is no one we trust more than Dr Raghu Ram on this. We know we are with the very best. *Pink Connexion* does a lot in spreading hope and courage in addition to creating awareness. Happy 10th anniversary. More power to these untiring efforts.

### **Sabina Xavier**

MD and chief operating officer, Y AXIS Overseas Careers  
 Founder, Heal-a-Child Foundation, Chapter Chair,  
 YPO Hyderabad

As a media professional, I know how challenging it is to sustain a magazine, over such a long time, while retaining the ethos, spirit and enthusiasm with which it was started. *Pink Connexion* has been informative, engaging and continues to tell inspiring stories that stay with you, giving hope to countless others. Full credit to the editorial team led by Ratna Rao Shekar, whose record and experience of superlative leadership in conception, design and presentation, shines forth in every single issue.

The magazine's consistent excellence doesn't surprise me because its driving force is Dr Raghu Ram, who brings the same passion and commitment to the publication as he does to his work. In the words of Roland Barthes, Dr Raghu Ram has made his work his "essential gesture as a social being". Congratulations on the 10th anniversary!



**Uma Sudhir**

Executive Editor, South India, NDTV



It is an honour to contribute to the 10th anniversary edition of *Pink Connexion*. Over the past 17 years, the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation and the KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases have made tremendous strides in promoting breast health and cancer awareness. Dr Raghu Ram's relentless dedication to this cause is truly inspiring. His passion for raising awareness about breast cancer is evident in everything he does – whether it's through enlightening talks, engaging workshops, or even casual conversations.

The Foundation and the Centre have not only provided invaluable support to countless individuals but also significantly advanced public knowledge about breast health. As we celebrate this milestone, I am filled with admiration for the unwavering commitment shown by Dr Raghu Ram and his team. Here's to many more years of spreading awareness, saving lives, and making a difference.

**Niharika Keerthi Khushlani**

Senior deputy editor, *You & I* magazine

Ever since Dr Raghu Ram established the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation in 2007 on his return from London, he has tirelessly campaigned for not just awareness about breast cancer/diseases but also its timely detection and effective treatment in Hyderabad.

He set up KIMS-Ushalakshmi Centre for Breast Diseases, which stands tall today as South Asia's first comprehensive breast health centre. *Pink Connexion*, a quarterly magazine relating to breast health, followed in 2014. It features engaging first-person stories of cancer survivors who were treated at the centre and told with an optimistic sensibility. The magazine is now celebrating its 10th milestone this year. Warmest wishes to Dr Raghu Ram and Team UBF for reaching many new milestones in breast disease care.



**Swati Sucharita**

Journalist and writer



# Dr Raghu Ram's journey: Disrupting breast cancer care in India

On the occasion of Pink's 10th anniversary, Dr Raghu Ram, founding director, KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases in Hyderabad, marks another key milestone in his career. The doctor is celebrating 17 eventful years of being at the forefront of breast cancer care in India.

The story of his journey from 2007, when he turned his back on a lucrative career in the UK to return to India to bring about revolutionary changes in how people view breast cancer, and his innovative initiatives towards testing and care of this commonest cancer among women, is a compelling one.

Here, Dr Raghu Ram writes about some significant moments in his career

In 2002, my mother, Dr Kotha Ushalakshmi, a renowned obstetrician and gynaecologist from Hyderabad, was diagnosed with breast cancer. This unexpected diagnosis connected to a person so very close to me, coupled with the huge disparity in breast cancer care across Bharat, became the major defining turning point in my life.

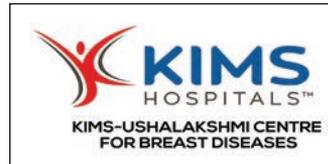
Despite rewarding career opportunities in the UK, my wife, Dr Vyjayanthi, and I relocated to Bharat in 2007 to take care of my mother and serve my country. By grace of the divine force, over the past 17 years, I have been working with missionary zeal alongside like-minded colleagues, friends and the government in an earnest endeavour to improve breast healthcare in my country, through a number of innovative initiatives.

### Transforming Dreams into Reality (2007 – 2024) The KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases

One of the first initiatives we flagged off was South Asia's

first free-standing, purpose-built and comprehensive Breast Health Centre in Hyderabad in 2007.

The KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases ([www.breastcancerindia.org](http://www.breastcancerindia.org)) was established under the auspices of KIMS Hospital, which is one of the largest private

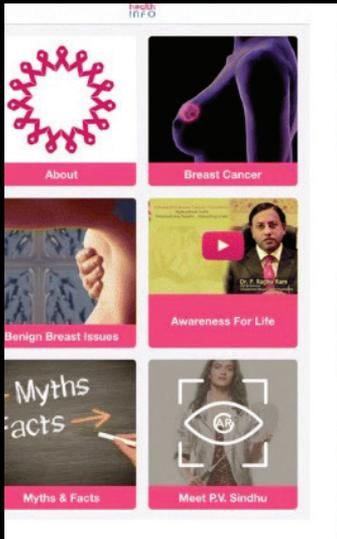


hospital groups in south India. The breast centre has incorporated best aspects of the Royal Marsden, Cardiff and Nottingham Breast Centres in the UK and Van

Nuy's Breast Centre in the USA.

Women with both benign breast disease and breast cancer are managed under one roof by specialists with a declared interest in managing breast disease. Over the years, KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases has made significant and meaningful difference to many lives, in





addition to bringing about a revolutionary change in the way 'Breast Health Centre' is understood in the Indian subcontinent.

### Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation

Breast cancer is the commonest cancer affecting women in this country. Due to lack of awareness, absence of a robust nationwide population-based breast cancer screening programme and inequitable cancer care, the vast majority present in advanced stages with poor survival.



In many parts of the country, it is still a 'closet' issue that is not talked about. With a vision to make breast cancer an openly discussed issue, and empower women about the importance of early detection of breast cancer in addition to spreading the message of hope, survival and courage to those who have fought breast cancer, I founded Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation, as a 'not-

for-profit' charity in 2007 ([www.ubf.org.in](http://www.ubf.org.in)).

To honour my mother's struggle and applaud her strength in the fight against breast cancer, both the Breast Centre and the Foundation bears her name. The landmark breast cancer advocacy initiatives such as the Pink Ribbon Campaign, implemented by the 'not-for-profit' breast cancer charity, has quite simply transformed breast cancer from a 'taboo' issue to a much commonly discussed one. This has paved the path for "early detection" of this disease and saved scores of lives in the region.

Inspired by the innovative Pink Ribbon Campaign undertaken by the Foundation, it is very gratifying to see that many NGOs and hospitals have embarked upon conducting similar programmes not only for breast cancer awareness, but for other illnesses as well, which also desperately need urgent attention.

This speaks volumes of the "Pink Ribbon Campaign" that has enthused individuals, organisations and institutions in Bharat to take up and spearhead impactful awareness activities.

### Screening initiative

Under the auspices of the Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation in partnership with the governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, I have overseen the implementation of a large-scale Clinical Breast Examination (CBE) based breast cancer screening programme in rural Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, which have very limited access to mammography services.

Between 2012–2016, 200,000 under-privileged women between the ages of 35 years and 65 years, spread across 4,000 villages in the region, have been screened for early signs of breast cancer by way of CBE, performed by 3,750

trained healthcare workers, employed with the governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Breast cancers detected through this initiative have been treated free of charge through the state government-funded Aarogyasri scheme.

This milestone project made national impact in 2016 and a high-powered Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Group (TAG) set up by the government of India's Union ministry of health, of which I was a member, approved the proposal to implement CBE-based breast cancer screening programme all over Bharat.

This initiative is currently being rolled out nationwide under the auspices of government of India's National Health Mission.



### Breast Surgical Society

Inspired by the American Society of Breast Surgeons and Association of Breast Surgery in the UK, I played a pivotal role in the genesis of The Association of Breast Surgeons of India (ABSI), South Asia's first and the only

surgical organisation that represents surgeons practising the art and science of breast surgery.

Established in 2011, over the past 13 years, ABSI is the "Voice for Breast Surgery in Bharat" and the Association has been working relentlessly towards standardising breast healthcare in the country.

### Dr Raghu Ram Pillarisetti OBE

*MS, FRCS (Eng), FRCS (Edin), FRCS (Glasg), FRCS (Irel), FACS (USA), Hon. FRCS (Eng), Hon. FRCS (Thailand), Hon. FCSSL (Sri Lanka), Hon. FCCS (China) Hon. Fellow (The Association of Surgeons of Great Britain & Ireland) Hon. Fellow (American Surgical Association)*

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## A glimpse into the eventful life of Dr Kotha Ushalakshmi, who is the guiding light behind a Foundation dedicated to breast cancer



Dr Kotha Ushalakshmi turned 91 on July 21, 2024. She has successfully completed 91 positively eventful years with utmost commitment to her family, extraordinary dedication to her profession and has served as a major inspiration to a one-of-its-kind breast cancer advocacy campaign in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh spearheaded by a Foundation, which bears her name.

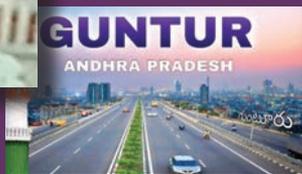
The eventful journey of this well-known gynaecologist in the Telugu states, is chronicled in a short film, *The Indomitable Dr Kotha Ushalakshmi@90*. Her tryst with breast cancer transformed her son, Dr Raghu Ram's life, who has committed himself for a lifetime to improve the delivery of breast healthcare in India.

Truly, the greatest legacy that anyone can leave behind is to positively impact the lives of others. Her glorious life well and truly epitomises this statement.

A glimpse into her journey thus far can be found on this YouTube link given below:

 <https://youtu.be/oW8QgSP7Zx0>

### Born 1933



### MBBS and MD, DGO



Andhra Medical  
College,  
Visakhapatnam





Defied parent's wishes and married her senior in Medical College



Served as Professor of Obstetrics & Gynaecology in undivided Andhra Pradesh for over a decade...

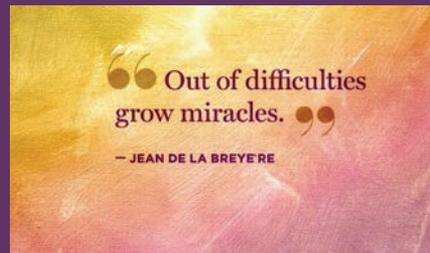
One of the most sought-after gynaecologists of her generation...

**2002 - Everyone has a Story**



Her 'big' story began when she was diagnosed with Breast Cancer

**She fought the disease with courage & determination**



**2007**



Son and daughter-in-law leave lucrative career opportunities in the UK to relocate to Bharat to take care of Amma



**2007 - 2024**



Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation, Hyderabad, India

Creating awareness  
Reaching out to the Community  
Supporting breast cancer 'Conquerors'

**Empowering Women...  
Impacting Lives...**



**KIMS Hospitals has honoured Dr Ushalakshmi**

South Asia's first purpose built comprehensive Breast Centre  
Bringing about a revolutionary change in the way 'Breast Health Centre' is understood in the Indian subcontinent

The Association of Breast Surgeons of India (ABSI), the 'voice' that represents surgeons practising breast surgery in India has instituted an annual **Dr Ushalakshmi Oration** to honour her extraordinary contribution to breast cancer advocacy

# What our Cancer Conquerors have to say about 'Pink Connexion' turning 10!



In July of 2019, I began my treatment for breast cancer at the KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases at KIMS Hospitals in Hyderabad. I was diagnosed with invasive ductal carcinoma and had to undergo surgery, which was done by Dr Raghu Ram. From the moment we met him, my family and I felt we were in safe hands. He gave his undivided attention, answered many questions, and put us at ease about my battle with breast cancer.

It has been five years since my surgery, and I am indebted to Dr Raghu Ram for his expertise and personal care. He continues to offer his support and advice and I am fortunate I can reach out to him at any time. I felt privileged to feature in *Pink Connexion* – many congratulations to the editorial team for bringing out the 10th anniversary issue!

**Noor Sandhu**

Hanoi, Vietnam



It has been my greatest fortune to be treated by Dr Raghu Ram. In my own tryst with breast cancer, I managed to emerge strong and successful because of the extraordinary quality of treatment, the untiring support through pre- and post-surgery management, and equally, personal, supportive, empathetic care and counselling provided by Dr Raghu Ram throughout the period of my treatment. I emerged a 'conqueror'.

It is immensely satisfying that in my journey Dr Raghu Ram inspired me to stay positive and remain undeterred whilst dealing with this unwelcome visitor. I was featured in the second issue of *Pink Connexion* ten years ago. I commend Dr Raghu Ram, Ratna Rao and the editorial team for staying focused in spreading the message of hope and creating the much-needed awareness about early detection for a decade and beyond. Happy 10th anniversary to everyone at *Pink Connexion*.

**Dr Ananda Shankar Jayant,**

Padma Shri awardee, classical dancer, choreographer, scholar and former bureaucrat



The first time I met Dr Raghu Ram, he was composed and cheerful. The first thing he told me when he saw me was: "My mom is also a cancer conqueror and you too should be one". That inspired me and gave me a lot of confidence to face any challenges. I even went for the Pink Ribbon Walk held by the doctor to create awareness on breast cancer just four days after my surgery.

Fourteen years have passed and I am cancer free. Now I counsel other people who have cancer, motivate them either in person or on phone. I have also counselled many Ashaa workers under the able guidance of Dr Raghu Ram. The doctor's dedication and determination have really boosted my morale. I also attend counselling sessions, organise awareness programmes in Hanmakonda too.

To be featured in *Pink Connexion* was an honour. Hope my story has inspired others and made a difference. Best wishes to *Pink Connexion* on completing 10 years!

#### **Never ever give up**

*Cancer I did not give you the right  
To invade my body and take a bite  
This is my body and with all my might  
I will prevail with one hell of a fight  
To the cancer inside, I will battle and kill  
For that is my body's God given will  
To my cancer these words I do send  
Your life is short and near the end  
I will combat and I will win  
With all the support of my kith and kin.*

**Prof BS Anuradha**

Warangal



I'm happy to have been able to share my story through a feature in *Pink Connexion* recently, which has probably helped many who are battling breast cancer. I am, therefore, truly happy that this publication is celebrating 10 years and my best wishes to the team.

I discovered a small lump in my left breast during the second phase of the pandemic in 2021 and was diagnosed with early breast cancer. I was blessed to approach Dr Raghu Ram who was so warm, kind and sympathetic. He treated me with dignity and respect. I thank him and his team from the core of my heart for being more than a doctor to me. He risked his life during the pandemic to give life to me. His motivational words gave me immense power to fight against this devil called cancer. And, importantly, he conserved my breast and reshaped the breast after lumpectomy through oncoplastic techniques.

**Susila Kila**

Kakinada



I am immensely grateful to Dr Raghu Ram, whose exceptional skill and dedication have made a profound difference in my battle against breast cancer. He performed my surgery with remarkable precision and care, ensuring the best possible outcome. His meticulous attention to detail was evident every step of the way, giving me confidence and peace of mind during a challenging time.

Beyond his surgical excellence, he is deeply committed to supporting breast cancer patients and his unwavering dedication to patients' well-being is truly inspiring. I am deeply thankful for the opportunity to feature in *Pink Connexion* and share my experience, which must have had a positive impact on the lives of many others battling breast cancer.

Wishing more power to *Pink Connexion* as the publication celebrates its 10th anniversary.

**Krishma Virk**, Ludhiana



*Pink Connexion*, which started as a quarterly publication in 2014, has made a lot of difference by spreading awareness about breast cancer in India, its various aspects and about benign breast cancer. Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation has done yeoman service in spreading the awareness of early detection and has transformed breast cancer from a 'taboo' issue to a more commonly discussed issue in the region. I give full credit to Dr Raghu Ram and the editorial team at *Pink Connexion*, who are doing a wonderful service by bringing out this publication. As a breast cancer conqueror myself, I was very happy to be featured in one of the issues.

My heartfelt gratitude to my surgeon, Dr Raghu Ram, who took exceptional care of me whilst fighting this battle and for being a source of enormous support. I wish him and the magazine all the very best.

**Dr Manimala Rao**, Hyderabad

**PINK  
CONNEXION**  
Volume 8 Issue 1 Aug - Oct 21  
 UF



It is indeed a joyous occasion to see *Pink Connexion* complete a decade! This quarterly is a gift—as we untie the pink ribbons through the encouraging and enlightening content. Congratulations to Dr Raghu Ram, the *Pink Connexion* editorial team and all its contributors for a decade of invaluable contributions and unwavering dedication.

I am reminded of this verse in the scripture, “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us”. Indeed, it is the love of the Almighty and the empathy and expertise of Dr Raghu Ram that I stand witness as a “Conqueror”, having gone through the difficult phase of cancer. The stories featured in the *Pink Connexion* gave me courage and resilience. Strength does not come from physical capacity; it comes from an indomitable will. The beautiful scars tell my story—a reminder that we can face and overcome the challenges and experience the renewed beauty that life has to offer.

**Caroline Sunitha**, Hyderabad

**PINK  
CONNEXION**  
Volume 8 Issue 1 Aug - Oct 21  
 UF



In the 11 years I have been cancer free, I have watched with great delight Dr Raghu Ram receive several well-deserved accolades. He is a great human being, sensitive, empathetic and caring, qualities that everyone seeks in their doctor.

For me, his efforts in going beyond treating patients have been equally significant. His unwavering commitment to building public awareness on breast cancer; promoting women’s breast health; creating time to provide robust counselling to his patients and his recent advocacy to revive the family doctor system to reach effective healthcare for all, speaks volumes of his deep social concerns and commitment. I am proud to have featured in one of the issues of *Pink Connexion*.

Great work and all the very best to Ratna Rao, the dynamic editor of this extremely impactful magazine. Looking forward to the 20th anniversary issue of *Pink Connexion*!

**Kameshwari Jandhyala**, Hyderabad



From the time I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2017, Dr Raghu Ram has not only been my surgeon, but has also been a great source of support to me and my family. His counselling skills are extraordinary and surgical skills are exceptional. He has done such a fabulous job that you can't tell I've had a lumpectomy done. This is because he reshaped the breast using oncoplastic techniques so well even after removing a sizable proportion of breast tissue.

There is now just a faint scar, which is barely visible. I have shared my own experience with cancer in the May 2019 issue of *Pink Connexion*. This is a quarterly magazine that has filled a huge void in breast cancer advocacy in the country. Also, the magazine makes a conscious effort to spread the message of hope and courage in the fight against cancer, which is, I believe, very important. Happy 10th anniversary and I wish this publication continues to touch many more lives.

I wish Dr Raghu Ram and his team all the very best.

**Radha Kantipudi, Hyderabad**



Dr Raghu Ram, a name I had never heard of before until that fateful day during the peak of COVID, when I found out that I had breast cancer. I took the first flight out from Delhi to Hyderabad after the lockdown to be treated by him. He was there to counsel and reassure me that we would get through this together. He made it relatively painless both physically and emotionally, and at times, it seemed as if nothing happened. This is due to his skilful and extremely capable team. I feel blessed that he has treated me. Wherever I am, I will be grateful that he was my guiding light at my darkest hour.

To feature in *Pink Connexion* was a blessing. To know that my story has helped instil courage in many others battling this disease is very gratifying. Whilst congratulating *Pink Connexion* on turning 10, I am sure that this innovative magazine will continue to touch many lives in the years to come.

**Shalini Nayar, New Delhi**



It was Dr Raghu Ram who paved the path for my cure when I got breast cancer. His surgical precision due to his oncological expertise makes him a fine oncoplastic surgeon. His counselling helped me to take informed decisions about my treatment options. My breast conservation surgery skilfully done by him cured me and restored the beauty of my physical body, thereby encouraging to live this second life with grace. He treats his patients with empathy, patience and care while imbining the courage to conquer cancer.

I was interviewed recently this year in the February 2024 issue of *Pink Connexion*. I feel fortunate that I could narrate my story to inspire others to undergo aesthetic breast conserving surgery. My very best wishes to *Pink* magazine for celebrating 10 years.

**Antara Pal, Bengaluru**