

PINK CONNECTION

UBF

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**'No matter what
people say, when it
happens to you, it
does shake you up'**

Poonam Ann Varma

**The Opera
House Gets
a Symphonic
Resurrection!**

**Loo Café - Changing
the Face of Public
Sanitation**



BEHIND The Scenes

A major topic of discussion socially today is about how to lose weight and look good. Like a constant hum, everyone is discussing diets and how to lose weight, as if there was no other subject in the world. Women, more than men are constantly worrying about putting on weight and how they need to curb their cravings for carbs and sugars.

Every woman I know wants to go on a crash diet to look like a model or a movie star. While I have nothing against losing weight and being fit, I do not think that we need to emulate fashion models. One fails to realise that models by the nature of their job need to look good. There might be international outrage once in a while about models being anorexic and pencil-slim with their starvation diets. Despite all that, affluent women long to look like a model.

In my view, as we get older, the focus should shift from merely looking good to being fit and healthy. From being obsessed with being size zero to being mentally and physically agile. We must ensure that we do not starve ourselves or go in for life-threatening surgeries. Instead, we should eat well, yet not over burden the stomach with junk food and useless carbs. And, keep a close watch on our physical health by going for regular check-ups. As Poonam, our cancer survivor says, she missed just one check-up to only discover that there were lumps in her breast, of which, one was even malignant.

Let us be grateful for a body that still keeps you mobile, and a mind that keeps you alert, rather than worry about how many kilos you have put on and what you need to do to look like a 25-year-old. Let's face it: we are never going to be how we looked at that age!

Ratna Rao Shekar



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“I wasn’t going to let something as small as cancer get me down”

3

Two years ago Poonam Ann Varma was diagnosed with stage 2 breast cancer at the age of 42. She won her battle with the disease and is cancer free today. But, what makes her story different is the way she handled her cancer—with a strong positive attitude. She is proof of the fact that positive thoughts and a happy mind can overcome every kind of hurdle, no matter how insurmountable. **Minal Khona** meets the gritty survivor.

Photographs: **Lakshmi Prabhala**

Having lost her mother to ovarian cancer 13 years ago, and with both her grandmothers also having had cancer, Poonam Ann Varma used to judiciously get her mammograms and other cancer checks done. At 42, she found a lump in her right breast.

“My mother-in-law had been diagnosed with breast cancer in April 2017 and was undergoing treatment at that time. For some reason, it was 18 months since my last check-up. One afternoon, I was lying on the bed and did a self-check and I felt a lump. I didn’t tell anyone but I went for a test,” recounts the 44-year-old Poonam.

Mammography, ultra-sound scan and core needle biopsy of the lump confirmed breast cancer. Surgery, a wide local excision (lumpectomy) was performed a few days later. The cancer had spread to the lymph nodes which had also been removed during surgery. “I was shocked. It was a huge jolt. I sort of eased my way into accepting that it was cancer after breaking down for 15 minutes,” she remembers.

Poonam’s daughter Akanksha was 14 at that time. She told her husband Vikram about the tests the first day. When it was confirmed she would need surgery for breast cancer, she revealed the fact to her daughter. As a family, they were all extremely distraught, but Poonam reveals that her husband and daughter rose to the occasion beautifully and were her biggest support systems; as was her five-year-old Labrador, Neytiri.

“It was a big jolt to us and if it was not for them, I would have crumbled. But, I was determined to fight because I had my daughter and husband to think of. I have always been a positive person, so my approach was to tackle it head on,” Poonam reveals.

In fact, she recalls the day of the surgery which had a picnic atmosphere in the end! “My daughter wanted to come to the hospital but I asked her to go to school as usual. Once I was out of surgery, there were



Full of smiles and good cheer: Poonam with her daughter Akanksha

15 people in the room. We had a blast, as we had packed sandwiches, *chiivda* and cold drinks. I wanted to celebrate, it was over and done with, and I felt, let’s move on.

No matter what people say, when it happens to you, it does shake you up. It shook my faith too and I did wonder how such a positive person like me, who has never harmed anyone, could get cancer

I believe in the power of words and that what has to happen will happen. I was not going to let something as small as cancer get me down,” she says bravely. Still, even the bravest among

us need some peppering up. And, some knocks can hit hard. In Poonam’s case, it was the chemotherapy that followed which was the deal breaker, not so much the tumour itself. Poonam’s pre-cancer pictures, hung up on the walls of her tastefully done up home, are of a beautiful woman with long, straight hair. She still looks beautiful, her large, expressive hazel eyes twinkling with an inner light. Her hair, which has grown back but still short is now slightly curly.

She recalls, “I had poker straight waist length hair. Though I was warned that they would start falling by the 15th day. But once I started chemotherapy and my hair started falling in lumps that was the toughest part.”

Chemotherapy for Poonam was a roller-coaster ride. She would be in bed for the first week but she would be up and about doing her chores in the second and third week after every session. “Twelve days after my surgery, I was baking a three-tiered

nine kilo wedding cake and I even hosted a party for fifty-five people at home,” she claims. She used to wear scarves in different styles when she went out initially. When Poonam held a birthday party at home, the theme was “special head dress”. Her friends came to her party wearing hats and other head gear! On her part, her daughter had painted gold tattoos on her head for the occasion.

Talking about her experience, Poonam says, “I was extremely touched by the number of people who helped out and reached out to support me. An aunt in-law came over and helped with the cooking and looking after my daughter. Friends from here and even overseas reached out.

I was determined to fight because I had my daughter and husband to think of. I have always been a positive person, so my approach was to tackle it head on...

Some would come over, and bring me food. People from the building, also friends, would bring lunch or dinner because I was not allowed to eat anything from the stores or refrigerated. Everything had to be freshly cooked. I used to eat every two hours and I had to increase my intake of protein rich foods like chicken to keep my energy levels high. My husband’s office is close by so he would come home and have lunch with me. My daughter would cook entire meals from scratch and made a chart with my list of medicines on it, and she would ensure I took them at the right time. My dog was so upset she would follow me like a shadow. She sleeps between me and my husband and during the chemo and radiation therapy days, she was forced to sleep in my daughter’s room. She used to sit on my clothes when I would get ready to go to the hospital.”

What did add to Poonam’s woes was that often people would come up with all kinds of suggestions. They would ask her to try naturopathy instead of chemotherapy. Or, they would narrate the stories of someone they knew who was battling cancer or had died of cancer. Poonam found it hard to block them out.

“I think when someone is recovering from cancer the last thing they need to hear is negative stories about those who didn’t survive. Plus, suggestions and opinions on treatments can be a strain. People should refrain from such talk,” she cautions.

Radiation therapy followed after chemotherapy and Poonam sat through five cycles a week, for six weeks. And, in November last year, Poonam’s ovaries, fallopian tubes and uterus (bilateral salpingo

oophorectomy and hysterectomy) were removed. This was done to minimise the risk of recurrence as she is a high risk patient.

Today, she is cancer-free but Poonam is making sure she eats right. “Processed food has been banned from my house, I eat only fresh food and because cancer can be hereditary and is caused by a gene, I am doing all I can to make sure my daughter is protected. No matter what people say, when it happens to you, it does shake you up. It shook my faith too and I did wonder how such a positive person like me, who has never harmed anyone, could get cancer. But one can’t predict these things and the best way forward is to deal with it and move on,” she says wisely.

With her *joie de vivre* intact, it is life as usual for Poonam. ■



Poonam is in a happy space today baking cakes!



Abhishek Nath: Changing the face of urban sanitation

One wonders if Swachh Bharat will ever become a reality as citizens lack access to basic necessities like public sanitation. Open defecation is still a common sight. There is a glimmer of hope however in the new model of public toilets being set up in Hyderabad by Abhishek Nath, an entrepreneur, who was a former hotelier. In 2018, Nath changed the face of public sanitation by providing clean public bathrooms along with a café and an ATM.

Mallik Thatipalli visits these revolutionary bio-toilets, which might go a long way to transform the poor image of India's public washrooms

Abhishek Nath used to love going for long drives. He would however never stop to use any public washrooms in India. "We have this notion that they are so dirty and badly maintained. I wanted to change that. Being very particular about personal hygiene myself, I wanted to build something I wouldn't mind using," he says. That is how the concept of Loo Café was born in Hyderabad, the city of entrepreneurs.

The Loo Cafés are set up in a snug area of 170 sq ft and consist of three bio-washrooms (for men, women and disabled), a small café (with snacks and beverages priced below Rs 30) and an ATM. Currently, there are 15 such cafés operational in the city and there are plans to include 30 more this year, including a Pink Loo café, exclusively for women in Hitech city.

Nath, who runs a facility management company, Ixora Corporate Services Ltd since 2016, has nearly two decades of experience in this field. Hailing from a family of doctors, his grandfather was Nizam of Hyderabad's personal doctor and his father is a surgeon, Nath however did not end up working with a scalpel. Instead, he dropped out of his dental surgery course to pursue a degree in hotel management. He worked with the Taj Group, initially and later on, with Johnson Controls as the director of operations for south west Asia.

"I've been in this field for 15 years. Cleaning and technical services have been my domain and I've been an hotelier too. The bathrooms were always the problem area when you manage a hotel or a mall," reveals the 40-year-old Nath. In 2018, he decided to change the face of urban sanitation with his unique model.

His Loo Cafés are free to use, well maintained and score highly on hygiene. There is a dedicated ramp to provide easy access to the disabled. The women's washroom comes with a sanitary napkin vending machine and a disposal bin. Equipped with free wi-fi, air coolers and solar panels, it could easily pass off as another chic café in the swanky Jubilee Hills in Hyderabad.

Visitors are personally assisted to the washroom by an assistant and an access card is provided free of cost to regular users.

Nath confesses that his idea was to first create luxury public washrooms. He changed his mind however and added the café concept to make the washroom units financially self-sustainable. He points out, "We brainstormed a lot trying to figure out what will work. We built a couple of units and completely discarded them. We visited public toilets in the city and most were terrible, so we built a small self-sustainable unit with a focus on maintenance."

Further, Nath adds, "There are many people who build washrooms as a part of their CSR activity. Eventually, maintenance becomes the issue. Some look at it from a commercial angle, where advertising revenues take precedence and washrooms are not the focal point. Finally, we created a model in which the revenue from the café and the ATM rent will go to sustain the maintenance of the loos."

The washrooms are indeed clean, easy to use and secure, which enables a cross-section of people (from IT employees to the disabled and GHMC workers) to use them. "Two key concerns in public washroom hygiene are temperature control and dry floors," Nath shares. At Loo Café, an optimum temperature control and dry flooring are maintained at all time. In fact, Nath will bring in a specially designed perforated floor, which will ensure a perennial dry floor, while setting up his next set of bathrooms.



The Loo Café: The sparkling new face of India's public washrooms



A Loo Café comes with an ATM and a café. And for the first time in India, stink sensors are used to monitor air quality

The investments required to set up each unit are high because of the expensive technology used to build the prefabricated structure. Setting up each Loo Café, which is assembled in his factory at Balanagar costs Rs 15-18 lakhs. Besides dipping into his own personal savings, Nath has raised money from his family and friends.

Nath credits GHMC (Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation) for 'aggressively following up' with permissions and leases. Harichandana Dasari, Zonal and Additional Commissioner, GHMC, one of the brains behind the project is positive about this toilet model. "I have seen a lot of models and barring Sulabh (which has a committed workforce) not many have been successful. Revenue and committed workforce have always been a challenge but Loo Cafés seem to have cracked the code on both the fronts. The whole concept is built on one premise—to ensure that the premises are so clean that people want to eat at the café next to a public toilet," says Dasari.

If the model is viable, it could spur the interest of other investors, she feels. "A café brings in revenue and an ATM brings in both rent and a security guard making it sustainable," she reiterates. Nath is also exploring other options to generate revenue to support the loos, such as hair-cutting salons, diagnostic centres and pharmacies.

There are other firsts at Loo Café. For the first time in India, stink sensors are used to monitor air quality inside the loos and these measurements are monitored by the GHMC and Ixora's offices through a smart network. This will allow them to quickly address the problem. Harichandana is enthused about reactions from the pilot project and is keen to popularise

this lucrative world-class toilet model all over India. "In the first month itself, we had 8,000-9,000 visitors using these cafés. Indore has also tried to implement this idea but on a smaller scale," she reveals.

A report (titled *True Cost of Sanitation*, which was published jointly by the LIXIL Group Corporation, Water Aid and Oxford Economics) estimated that inadequate sanitation caused India considerable economic losses, equivalent to 5.2 per cent of India's GDP in 2015. In such a scenario, Loo Cafés can become a game-changer in urban centers where good sanitary practices are sorely lacking. With only 11 states in India declared as open defecation free, this model, thanks to its durability and viable investment model can be widely implemented.

"Two key concerns in public washroom hygiene are temperature control and dry floors," Nath shares. At Loo Café, an optimum temperature control and dry flooring are maintained at all times

Upbeat about his innovative model, Nath has big plans for the next set of cafés to be launched. "The next units will take hygiene levels to another level. We plan to open our first Loo Café for the visually impaired in November. We are also exploring options of removing door knobs covered with germs and instead opt for a nudge model, where one can tap the door with one's elbow/ shoulder to enter. Our loos will get smarter in a few months," he says.

Nath is receiving recognition for his work with public toilets. He was invited by the Indian government to elaborate on his idea during an event conducted to commemorate the World Toilet Day. He is just back from Leh, where he has started a Loo Café. Nath will not rest until his model catches on since he truly believes that these cafés are the future for a cleaner India! ■



A Grand Resurrection of India's only Opera House!

9

The Royal Opera House was a landmark in Bombay at one time. It had a great history when it was a film theatre with many famous actors attending premiers inside its ornate and grand interiors. However, by 1990, with the entry of multiplexes, the theater sunk into oblivion.

Anil Mulchandani speaks to the present owners, who are from the erstwhile princely state of Gondal in Gujarat, and the restoration architect, Abha Narain Lambah to write about the Opera House's encore

Photographs: **Dinesh Shukla**

When I was a child, my grandmother took us for a movie at the Royal Opera House, better known in Mumbai as just Opera House. I recall the grandeur of the interiors—the domed lobby, the chandeliers, the stalls, balconies and the “Dress Circle”. This was then one of the most popular cinema halls of Mumbai. By the 1990s, Opera House was no longer viable as a single screen theatre, with the growing demand for home videos, and the opening of malls and multiplexes, and the theatre was shut down.

In 2010, I heard that the present owners of the Royal Opera House, who belong to the erstwhile ruling family of the Gondal princely state in Gujarat, had started to restore this grandiose property to its former glory. Kumud Kumari, the erstwhile Maharani of Gondal, explains, “Since the Royal Opera House is a listed heritage building, it could not be redeveloped but only restored. It is an important legacy of our family, as my father-in-law, Maharaja Vikramsinhji of Gondal bought the Opera House in 1952. Therefore, my husband Jyotendrasinhji decided to restore the property to its former glory.”

India’s only existing opera house was conceptualised by an Anglo-American actor and theatre manager Maurice E. Bandmann (1872-1922), who had established a theatrical empire that extended from the Mediterranean to the Far East over three decades. He was a pioneer in theatrical management, which enabled him to move several troupes across his carefully planned circuit. An article in the *Bombay*

Gazette of 1914 talks about his plan for companies to do shows starting from England to Australia, and then Egypt and then running through India and East to Australia, giving to India “pucca music hall shows after the fashion of the Empire programmes at Home”.

In Kolkata, he owned two large theatres, the Empire and the Theatre Royal, in partnership with Arathoon Stephen, an Armenian hotelier and real estate developer. An advertisement from October 1914 shows that Bandmann had called the Empire Theatre as a ‘Palace of Varieties’, and was showing a mix of films and live acts at the Empire such as

a *House for refined Vaudeville*, targeting Indian audiences. The matinee at 6 pm was ‘specially organised for the Indian gentlemen’ and a ‘zenana’ offered segregated seating for ladies.

He endowed Mumbai with one of its greatest landmarks, the Royal Opera House in Bombay in 1911, financed by his partner, Jehangir Framji Karaka, who was a Parsi businessman and head of a coal trading company. With a cost of

approximately £33,000, the Royal Opera House was built in an Indo-Baroque style with an elaborate façade, complete with Italian balustrades, marble statues, crystal chandeliers and a gold ceiling. A long frontage was also created to let carriages drive up to the entrance.

The theatre was inaugurated by King George V, and additions continued until 1916. “The Opera House started screening films and by 1925, it became primarily a film theatre. Among

With Mumbai getting a UNESCO World Heritage Site tag for its Victorian and art deco architecture, the Royal Opera House is certainly one of the gems in the crown of this city



Statues flank the doorway of the Royal Opera House

leading musicians and actors who performed at the theatre were Bal Gandharva, Krishna Master, Bapu Pendharkar, Master Dinanath, Jyotsna Bhole, Londhe, Patwardhan Buwa, and Prithviraj Kapoor. In 1935, Ideal Pictures Ltd. acquired the theatre and completely renovated it in the following year. In 1952, it became the property of our family. The red carpet, Minton tile flooring and grand interiors welcomed the crème de la crème from the days of the British Raj to recent times,” recounts Kumud Kumari.

She continues, “After we closed it as a theatre, the Kathiawada princely family had a fashion show here around 1993 and since then the property has been largely disused. Over the years, parts of the property became dilapidated with corroded girders, trees growing out of walls, and the arches, verandas and roof sorely needed repairs and even reconstruction.”

The work of restoration and renovation was commissioned to the architect Abha Narain Lambah, whose firm has an excellent record of architectural conservation, building restoration and retrofit. They have worked on historic sites across India ranging from ancient Buddhist sites and medieval monuments to colonial buildings and even the modern heritage buildings of Chandigarh. “While the architect and associates were highly skilled, the restoration and renovation took over six years because approvals were needed at each stage from the Mumbai Heritage Conservation Committee and other authorities,” she reveals.

The team poured through historical photographs, old publications, the writings of Sharada Dwivedi and culled information from descriptions in books and articles to understand how the property looked back in its glory days. They also watched films that had been shot on location at the



The different viewing areas at the Royal Opera House today

Royal Opera House. “With all this research, Abha and her associates were able to restore it as close to the original as possible,” she remarks.

Today, the Royal Opera house once again is imbued with the grandeur and flair for which it was known. The front elevation is impressive with marble cherubs on the rooftop, a sculpted frieze on the roof, long pilasters and Corinthian columns. The foyer has chandeliers that once belonged to the renowned Sassoon family, one of the wealthiest families of their time. The entrance hall has a dome with eight segments representing poets, dramatists, novelists and the literati.



The marble cherubs on the rooftop after the restoration



The foyer has chandeliers that once belonged to the renowned Sassoon family

The seating design is such that it enables people to get a clear view of the stage and screen. “Together with the restoration and renovation, some modern facilities had to be added for today’s audience. This is now largely a venue for theatre, music and shows, but a few film openings have also happened here,” says Kumud Kumari.

With Mumbai getting a UNESCO World Heritage Site tag for its Victorian and art deco architecture, the Royal Opera House is certainly one of the gems in the crown of this city. The restoration and renovation is a case study for reviving many other historical structures in Indian cities. ■

UBF Diary

November 2018

Delivering a Prestigious Oration in Punjab



As the chief guest of the event, Dr P Raghu Ram inaugurated the 4th Annual Conference of the Punjab chapter of the Association of Surgeons of India (ASI) at the Sri Guru Ramdas Institute of Medical Sciences, in Amritsar on November 24, 2018. He also delivered the prestigious Professor Eggleston Memorial Oration instituted in the memory of the distinguished, legendary American surgeon, who spent three decades in India. Dr Eggleston transformed the delivery of surgical care in Ludhiana, leaving behind a lucrative career back home in the USA, to selflessly work for the poor in India. Dr Raghu Ram later planted a sapling in the university campus as well.



Dr Raghu Ram Creates 'Billionaire Moments' at INK 2018 in Hyderabad

This year's version of INK Talks focussed on creating 'billionaires of moments'. In an attempt to redefine success, the theme was around the many great, inspiring moments a person has created for themselves and others. Dr Raghu Ram was invited to speak in the regional language session introduced for the first time at INK. And, the doctor rose to the occasion speaking in his mother tongue—Telugu—about leaving behind a lucrative career in England to start a breast cancer foundation in his mother's name in India, and the landmark initiatives he has introduced to transform the delivery of breast healthcare in India.



In his speech, Dr Raghu Ram observed, "Sadly, in this day and age, children in schools have the option of choosing Hindi or any regional language as their 'third language' option, and are moving away from speaking and writing in their mother tongue. We must take great pride in celebrating our regional languages—we must actively encourage our children to speak in their mother tongue - otherwise we will lose our identity and relevance in the world."

In Honour of Dr Chalapathi Rao

Dr P Raghu Ram presented the Prof PV Chalapathi Rao Gold Medal, instituted in his father's name for 2018 to Syeda Asifa, who was adjudged as the best outgoing post-graduate student in general surgery from Osmania Medical College. This medal was given at a function organised by the Osmania Medical College Alumni Association on December 9.

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



Dr Raghu Ram Delivers the Col Pandalai Oration

The highest academic honour for an Indian surgeon

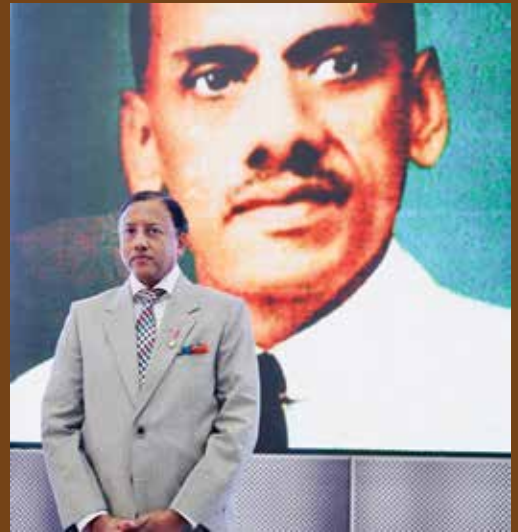
Dr P Raghu Ram, President elect of the Association of Surgeons of India (ASI) and director, KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases in Hyderabad, delivered the Col Pandalai Oration at the 78th Annual Congress of The Association of Surgeons of India (ASICON 2018) in Chennai on December 27. This is the highest academic honour that can be achieved by a surgeon practising in India. Dr Raghu Ram is the first surgeon from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in the 80-year-old history of the organisation, to have delivered the association's most prestigious oration.

Attended by close to 10, 000 surgeons from all over India and abroad, ASICON 2018 was held at the Chennai Trade Centre in Chennai from December 26–30, 2018. The Association of Surgeons of India (ASI) is Asia Pacific's largest and the world's second largest surgical association that represents the surgical fraternity across the length and breadth of India.

Dr Raghu Ram was felicitated by Shri Bhanwarilal Purohit, governor of Tamil Nadu and by Shree Edappadi Palaniswami, chief minister of Tamil Nadu for having delivered the Col Pandalai Oration during the inaugural ceremony at ASICON 2018 in Chennai.

A surgeon of eminence is hand-picked every year to deliver this prestigious oration based upon a lifetime of transformational initiatives implemented by the surgeon which have made a substantial impact to healthcare delivery.

Speaking on this occasion, Dr Raghu Ram said, "Delivering ASI's most prestigious oration has well and truly been a high point in my life. I thank lord almighty for giving me this distinct honour and unforgettable privilege."



The Oration Theme

Titled 'Transforming Breast Healthcare through Disruptive Innovation', Dr Raghu Ram's oration focussed upon highlighting four landmark initiatives that revolutionised breast healthcare in India:

- Conceiving, designing and establishing KIMS-Ushalakshmi Centre for Breast Diseases at KIMS hospitals, which is south Asia's first comprehensive breast healthcare centre in Hyderabad
- Founding Ushalakshmi Breast Cancer Foundation, a not-for-profit breast cancer charity that has transformed breast cancer from a 'taboo' issue to a commonly discussed issue over the past eleven years through a number of unique initiatives, thus creating awareness about the importance of early detection of breast cancer
- Implementing south Asia's largest population based breast cancer screening programme that has touched over 200,000 under-privileged women spread across 4,000 villages in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh
- Establishing the Association of Breast Surgeons of India, which is south Asia's first dedicated breast surgical society that represents general surgeons, surgical oncologists and plastic surgeons involved in the management of breast diseases, thus paving the path for standardising breast healthcare in India

Dr Raghu Ram

President ASI for 2020!

The 80-year-old prestigious Association of Surgeons of India, the world's second largest surgical organisation and considered to be the 'voice of surgery' in India, has elected Dr P Raghu Ram as its President for the year 2020



Dr P Raghu Ram, director of KIMS-USHALAKSHMI Centre for Breast Diseases in Hyderabad has become one of the youngest surgeons in the country to be elected to the top post of President of The Association of Surgeons of India (ASI) for the year 2020. This election witnessed the highest ever polling and the highest ever landslide victory margin (of close to 2,000 votes) in the 80-year history of the association.

ASI is Asia Pacific's largest and the world's second largest surgical organisation that represents the surgical fraternity all across India. Established in 1938, ASI is widely considered to be the 'voice for surgery' in India. It was formed to realise the long-standing wish among Indian surgeons to get together for the purpose of sharing knowledge and enhancing their surgical skills. The association promotes the art/science of surgery and strives to take the latest techniques in the surgical field to the remotest corners of the country in an endeavour to improve the lives of people all over India.

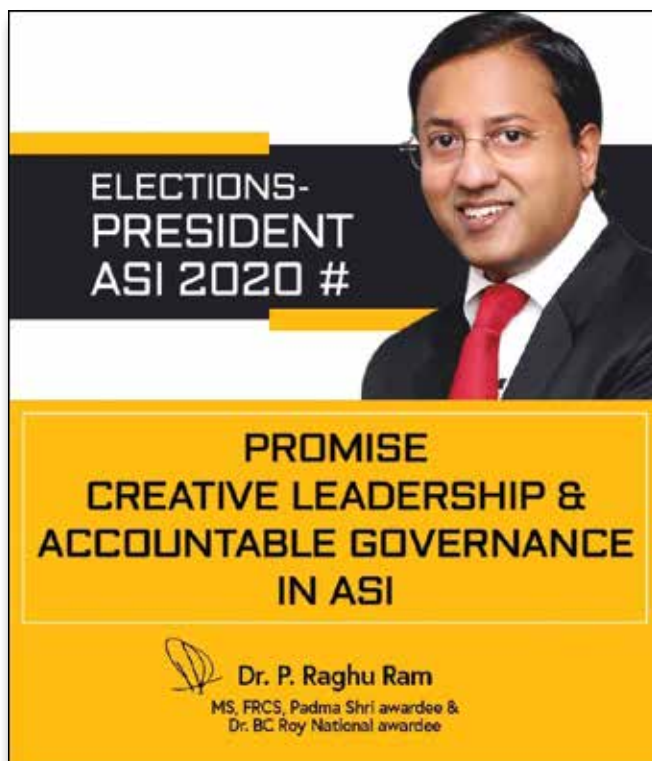
With a strong presence in the form of state chapters and union territories across India, ASI is the umbrella organisation to 12 specialty sections comprising of surgeons practising the art and science of breast surgery, onco surgery, gastrointestinal surgery, laparoscopic/minimal access surgery, endocrine surgery, paediatric surgery, plastic surgery, thoracic/cardio-vascular surgery, trauma/ critical care surgery and genito-urinary surgery in addition to sections representing rural surgeons and surgeons in the armed forces.

Vision

Talking about his election, Dr Raghu Ram said, "My heartfelt gratitude to the membership at large for giving me a thumping mandate. Rightly so, there are a lot of expectations. I intend to go beyond just cutting ribbons and being chief guest at surgical meetings across the country. ASI is much more than this. My core mission is to provide creative leadership and ensure accountable governance."

Dr Raghu Ram's 25 eventful years after qualifying as a surgeon

- First place, MS (General Surgery) examination, Kasturba Medical College, Mangalore (1995)
- Obtained FRCS from all the surgical Royal Colleges in the British Isles



- Youngest ever in the 514 year history of The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (oldest surgical college in the world) to be conferred International Gold Medal—highest honour bestowed upon select few distinguished surgeons practising outside the UK (2013)
- Conferred Fellowship, American College of Surgeons—FACS (2014)
- One of the youngest doctors in the Country to be conferred Padma Shri by Hon'ble President of India—one of the highest civilian awards of the land (2015)
- Youngest Surgeon from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to be conferred the Dr BC Roy National award by Hon'ble President of India—highest award that can be achieved by a doctor practising in India (2016)
- Vice President (President elect), The Association of Surgeons of India (2019)
- President, The Association of Surgeons of India (2020) ■



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

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