Remembering Geetha Ravishankar (May 19, 1951 – October 31, 2026)

Founding Director, New Concept Information Systems

Geetha Ravishankar, one of the founding directors of New Concept, played a pivotal role in shaping the organisation over more than three decades. Her sudden passing has left a profound void among her colleagues, friends and the many people whose lives she touched.

Trained in architecture at the University of Madras and urban planning at Columbia University, Geetha brought together creative imagination, intellectual rigour and a deep understanding of the social development sector. She was instrumental in establishing New Concept's creative design and production capabilities and in setting the high standards that came to define its work. She believed strongly that content and design were inseparable — that effective communication required both substance and imagination.

Geetha was an extraordinary human being. Warm, confident and outspoken, she had a magnetic personality that energised every gathering. She was generous in her appreciation, forthright in her criticism and never hesitant to challenge conventional thinking.

Her intellectual curiosity was boundless. A voracious reader and lifelong learner, she was interested in the world around her and delighted in sharing her knowledge. She particularly enjoyed engaging with younger colleagues, encouraging their ideas and recognising talent irrespective of age or position.

We remember Geetha not only for the institutions she helped build, but for her humanity, creativity, warmth and the inspiration she gave to generations of colleagues. Her ideas, values and spirit will remain an enduring part of New Concept.

We have received dozens of heartfelt messages from colleagues and friends, reflecting the many lives she touched. We are sharing here some tributes from former employees of New Concept, whose words reflect their cherished memories and enduring connection with her.

Vijayalakshmi Balakrishnan

New Concept was in the early 1990s a just established company, working out of the basement of Pehelwan Bhawan.

I was a *sifarishi* candidate. Someone who knew Malli (Vimala) recommended me, and I showed up for an interview, clutching a CV in a manila folder, and my mom. I was too young, too dumb to understand what kind of look that would give. I have never, ever been allowed to forget that first meeting.

They gave me work, my first assignment in what we now call the non-profit sector. And I botched it. Malli was kind but firm; Geetha was firm and firm. There was no sugarcoating. Head down, I redid it. And then I redid it again. And again. Until, finally, it passed. Somewhere along the way, through those endless revisions and that relentless rigor, we began to respect each other.

Malli remained a warm, guiding senior colleague. But with Geetha, the relationship became something more. It became a profound, demanding mentorship. There was the one time she asked me to pick up some essential. I overpaid a little bit, and she pointed it out.

In that small moment, she was teaching me to understand the fiscal bottom line. My socialist instincts rebelled. Why do a few rupees matter? I thought. But as the years went by, and I began to take on independent projects, I slowly learned exactly why she underlined every single line item. She wasn't just counting pennies; she was protecting the integrity of our resources. She taught me that in our line of work, fiscal discipline is not the opposite of social justice; it is the foundation of it.

In the years since, New Concept has been my fellow traveller, walking the path the founders established. Because of them, an institution has been built that has chosen, deliberately and proudly, not to remain value-neutral.

Geetha's firmness was her way of caring. Her attention to the smallest details was her way of honouring the mission. I am a better professional, and a better person, because she did not let me get away with being "too young and too dumb."

Thank you, Geetha, for the manila folder memory. Thank you for the firmness. And thank you for the lessons that continue to guide my work every single day.

Vijayalakshmi Narayanan

I worked in New Concept many years ago. I learnt so many things from Geetha. Her boldness, kindness and helping nature will always stay with me.

When I look back on my life, I think of three important people - Vimala, Geetha and Raghavan.

May God give strength to her family, friends and colleagues. Thank you for inviting me to be a part of this memorial meeting.

Rina Tagore

Geetha, in some strange and odd way, you made sure that I am here in India, in Delhi, at this time. This was an unplanned visit for me, and yet here I am. That is so you: to make things happen, to get to results, to deliver as promised.

It was November 1993, 33 years ago, in Malviya Nagar, when I sat before the trio of Malli, Geetha and Raghavan for my interview. And it was you, Geetha, who asked the most questions, in your breezy, sharp style. You never minced words. It may have felt uncaring sometimes, but you were deeply caring. You would always come back, check in and explain. Behind all the words, your purpose was always clear.

There were others, for sure, but you three were the front face of strategy and operations. There were difficult Exec meetings we could sense from outside the closed doors. Geetha would storm out, Raghavan would always keep his calm composure, and Malli would get on with doing things. But we'd know! And it would be you, Geetha, who from time to time told us that the strength of collective leadership is being able to debate and challenge each other, and move forward without grudges.

You were "the scary one," asking tough questions, demanding answers and results, on time, and never willing to compromise on quality. And behind that tough intellect, you gave immense love and care. You somehow just knew, popping up at any time, from anywhere.

You had an astute ability to know people, their strengths and qualities, to work with their gaps, and even to forgive, through all your toughness.

And what a beautiful, warm welcome Indiver and I always had whenever we came to see you on our trips to India from New Zealand. Indiver, who is in New Zealand right now, asked me to share this: "My interactions with Geetha were scattered like tiny dots over the enormous canvas of three decades, yet each one was memorable: her big smile, her sharp wit and her intellect."

So Geetha, how could I not be here?

Nimesh Pilla

Goodbye, Geetha Ma'am

Everyone remembers their first boss. Mine was Geetha ma'am. (I'm still finding it tough to put "Late" in front of her name.) I learned on Saturday (31st Oct) that she's gone, and I've spent the last two days realising how much of the way I think started in the basement of New Concept Information Systems in Delhi, when I was a first-year college student who thought "design" meant "make it look cool."

Day one - I walked in as an intern and was told I'd soon meet the big boss lady. I was so nervous I didn't know what to say, how to sit, or what to do with my hands. Geetha ma'am read all of that in about four seconds. Instead of letting me sweat it out, she started talking to me about art and architecture, and within minutes it felt like meeting a friend, just one a couple of decades older.
That small kindness told me there was someone here to mentor me, guide me, and let me fail. It was my first lesson in leadership: when the person at the top leads with warmth, people follow with passion. Anyone who has walked into New Concept, will know that genuineness runs through every level of the place.

The poster: A few weeks in, I designed a poster for an event. I went all in: bold graphics, dramatic layout, the works. I thought it was beautiful.
The client rejected it.

I was mentally drafting a speech about how they "just didn't get it" when Geetha ma'am sat me down and quietly explained that the client was right. The poster was for rural India, for people who weren't highly literate, and to them my "beautiful" poster was intimidating. Even the paper for such audiences is chosen so it doesn't feel too glossy or too grand. The goal wasn't to impress them. It was to make them feel the poster was theirs.

What she taught me…Years later, I'd study this as design strategy, apply it at KPMG and IBM, and build workshops around it under fancy names like human-centred design. But I first understood it with no framework in sight, just Geetha ma'am, a rejected poster, and a nineteen-year-old learning that design isn't about the designer.

Every time I ask "who is this actually for?" before "how should it look?", that's her voice. She probably never knew how far that one conversation travelled. Most great teachers don't.

Signing off Ma'am, I have a feeling the other world is a little louder and a lot warmer since Saturday. I'm sure you're still inspiring people there with that infectious laugh, your love, and the kind of care that makes a nervous intern feel he belongs.

Thank you, ma'am. Rest well.

Nilay Raha

Though I never had the opportunity to work directly with Geetha Ma'am, I had heard a great deal about her entrepreneurial skills and leadership, first during my internship with NCIS in 2008 and subsequently during my tenure with the organisation after my MBA course.

The legacy of NCIS, built over more than three decades of delivering quality services, speaks volumes about her vision, dedication and entrepreneurial spirit. Building and sustaining such an institution for over three decades is certainly no small achievement.

I have always looked up to her in the same way I admire my own icon, Vimala Ma'am. I was also aware that Geetha Ma'am had made significant contributions to the Jaishankar Memorial, in addition to being a founder member of both Jaishankar and NCIS.

Her passing is undoubtedly a huge loss, not just to NCIS but to the wider professional community. We have lost an accomplished industry professional, a pioneer and an inspiring personality whose contributions will continue to be remembered.

I am deeply saddened by her demise. My heartfelt condolences to her family, colleagues and everyone associated with NCIS.

May her soul rest in eternal peace.

Paresh Kumar

Geetha ma'am made a difference to so many lives, including mine, through her work,. She shaped the way I look at society and my own role in it. I will always remain grateful for her guidance and inspiration. You will be deeply missed, Ma'am. 🙏

Sujata Raghavan

So much to absorb…such a fascinating person…we all really are fortunate that we walked some part of the path with her.