

harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

APRIL 2013 ₹ 30

AT LARGE

Eunice de Souza
views the changing
panorama from
her window

PROACTIVE

V Balakrishnan
leaves a green
footprint

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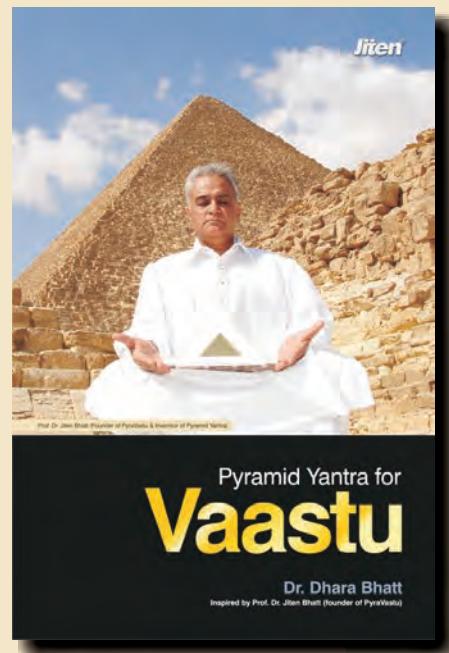
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SIMPLY STEVEN

Sometimes a dream-weaver can be just as fascinating as the tales he creates on celluloid. So it is with Steven Spielberg. Three-time Oscar winner and collectively the top-grossing director of all time, with an oeuvre encompassing commercial blockbusters like *Jaws*, *E.T.*, the *Indiana Jones* franchise and *Jurassic Park* as well as critically acclaimed gems like *Saving Private Ryan*, *Schindler's List* and, most recently, *Lincoln*, he is the filmmaker with the Midas touch. Even more remarkable than this body of work is how unassuming the man is.

My husband Anil and I were fortunate enough to spend a considerable amount of time with Steven in the past weeks. In Los Angeles, he introduced us to his team and the cast of *Lincoln* during Oscar week. And, in turn, we played host to him and Stacey Snider, his partner at DreamWorks Studios, on their visit to Mumbai. A highlight was his conversation with Amitabh Bachchan organised by Reliance Entertainment (see 'Legends'), where he held the select gathering of filmmakers in thrall. His wit and charm were on equal display at a dinner at our home, where he mingled with Mumbai's movers and shakers with consummate ease.

Every interaction with Steven convinced me further that greatness is a mantle that can be worn simply—it does

Suresh Natarajan



not require grand flourishes, pomp and ceremony. Here's a living legend who carries no baggage of ego, has no trappings of celebrity, and makes no demands on those around him. He is incredibly comfortable in his own skin, his mind curious and agile, his interest in people from every walk of life keen, his passion for his craft as palpable as his love for his family.

Indeed, this passion continues to drive Steven relentlessly and fuel his creative fire. At 66, he remains energised, looking to each new project with an almost childlike enthusiasm and seizing every challenge with relish. It comes from a conviction deep inside, a kernel of belief that insists that despite every honour, every accolade, every landmark achieved, the best, his best, is yet to come. That's something we must all learn from Steven Spielberg.

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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Publisher Dharmendra Bhandari Editor Tina Ambani Deputy Editor Arati Rajan Menon Assistant Editor Srilekha Pillai

Copy Editor Sai Prabha Kamath Correspondent (Mumbai) Radhika Raje Consultant Editors Malvika Singh, Meeta Bhatti Design Consultant Jit Ray

Head - Imaging Anuradha Joshi Studio Manager Haresh Patel Graphic Designer Dattaguru Redekar

Production Manager Rohidas Adavkar Website Coordinator Ajit Nair

Assistant Vice-President, Business Development Shrenik Mehta Assistant Manager, Business Development Kumar Kislay Marketing Coordinator Johnsi Nadar

Editorial & Marketing Offices: Reliance Centre, 1st floor, 19, Walchand Hirachand Marg, Ballard Estate, Mumbai-400001. Tel: 91-22-30327108 (Editorial), 30327102 (Marketing). Email: contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

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Cover photograph by Sanjay Kurl

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REVERSE GEAR
With his antique car collection, Inder Krishnama gets sentimental about a bygone era

FOR SUBSCRIPTION ASSISTANCE CONTACT: Harmonycare, Living Media India Ltd, A-61, Sector 57, Noida (Uttar Pradesh) - 201301.

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column one

As cover features go, this is a very special one for Team Harmony. Ever since he featured on our first 'Hotlist' of achievers in January 2005, we've wanted Sardar Fauja Singh on our cover. And the passage of time notwithstanding, the Marathon Man's story remains as compelling as ever. In "Feet Accompli", we traverse every milestone, crest and peak along his incredible dream run. This centenarian may be fleet of foot but his heart, mind and soul remain grounded, sustained by his boundless faith in a greater power.

While this epic tale has played itself out on the world's stage, countless other silvers have overcome their personal demons silently—but with equal conviction. Like Pushpa Deshmukh from Mumbai. In 'The Great Granny Diaries', she speaks movingly to Pratibha Jain about her youth replete with gender-based restrictions and obstacles and how she overcame them to discover her own potential.

Her willpower finds an echo in Chennai-based V Balakrishnan, who too believes we must be the change we wish to see. With an ingeniously simple process to compost kitchen waste into organic manure, this 'Proactive' silver aims to make his neighbourhood more sustainable and create a ripple effect.

Elsewhere, experience "A White Embrace" in the wonderland that is Kashmir; explore the changing landscape of Delhi in "Rural Murals"; heed Eunice de Souza's plea in 'At Large' to embrace—and respect—nature; and thrill to the sensuous verse of poet Jayadeva as he heralds the season of new beginnings. You can count on us to put the spring in your step!

—Arati Rajan Menon

1966: A Love Story" in the February 2013 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* was captivating. It was a fairy-tale romance for Dilip Kumar—the 'King of Tragedy'—and Bollywood diva Saira Banu. The interview with Saira Banu threw light on the little-known aspects of her life with Yousuf *sahab*. In fact, the former actor has confessed that she was in awe of Dilip Kumar from the age of 12. While Bollywood flicks bubble with the shimmering emotion of eternal romance, very few real-life celebrity couples can be remembered for lifelong devotion towards each other. Dilip Kumar and Saira Banu are an evergreen couple; theirs is a love story that triumphed an age difference of 22 years and is still going strong. Who says love stories don't have a happy ending?

Rajesh V Gaur
Andheri (West), Mumbai

I am an avid reader of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. Every issue brings new hope and joy to seniors like me. In the February 2013 issue, Editor Tina Ambani writes in 'Connect': "Life can be viewed through a lens of despair or a prism of hope; the choice is always yours." This is truly inspiring. Here, I would like to share a lovely travel experience. Six months ago, I was travelling by train from Secunderabad. I noticed that my fellow passengers were from

varied backgrounds and cultures. As the journey proceeded and the evening rolled into night, the passengers got busy with their dinner preparations; seating adjustments were made to make room for families. The different aromas made me observe the delicacies laid by them; each community had its own variety of dishes and their own style of eating. Our compartment was filled with conversations and laughter and families mingled with one another, sharing their food. I felt oneness and closeness with my countrymen. India is indeed a land of unity in diversity. We should be proud of our rich heritage and culture. We also have masterminds in science and technology. I really hope our future generation takes India forward.

Khadija Gandhi
Via email

ERRATUM

In the feature "Two-gether" in the February 2013 issue, we inadvertently stated that H L Wadhwa of New Delhi lost his voice after a partial stroke. Wadhwa is only unable to sing and hasn't lost his voice entirely, as was reported. The error is regretted.

—Editors

CONTRIBUTOR



Eunice de Souza taught English literature at St Xavier's College, Mumbai, for over 30 years before retiring as head of department. A poet and novelist, she is an editor of anthologies of 19th and early 20th century writing in English in India, among others. She also writes for children and is involved in theatre. Among her notable books of poetry

is *Women in Dutch Painting* (1988). She writes in leading newspapers on Indian culture and English literature.

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Two > one

Two is definitely better than one—researchers from I-Shou University and Kaohsiung Medical University in Taiwan have established that **matrimony is good for longevity**. Their study of over 300 silvers aged between 65 and 74 revealed that unmarried, widowed or single older adults had shorter telomeres than couples. Telomeres protect the body's chromosomes and DNA; short telomeres have been linked to the incidence of cancer and heart disease. After analysing blood samples along with details of the marital status, wealth, lifestyle and physical and mental health of the respondents, they concluded in journal *Age and Ageing*, “The state of being married was the only significant predictor of telomere length. Unmarried older adults may be experiencing accelerated cellular ageing.”



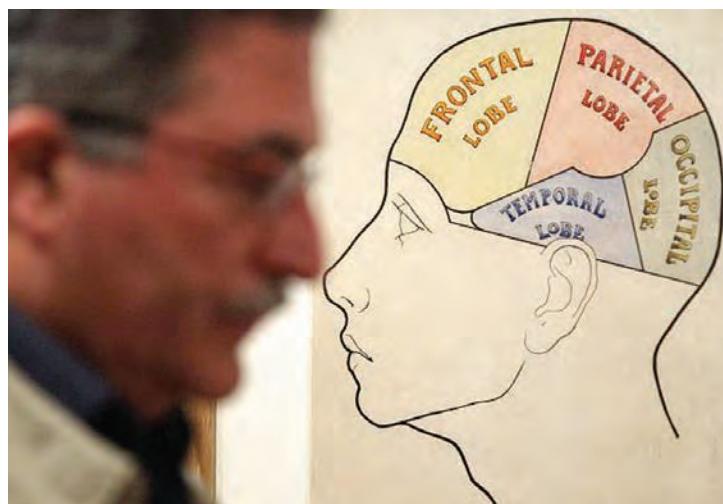


Terms of prejudice?

Could 'active ageing', a favourite term with us at *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, actually be a no-no? According to Hannah O'Rourke, a PhD scholar at the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta in Canada, **terms such as 'normal', 'healthy' or 'successful' ageing can have a negative impact on how society views silvers with chronic diseases.** "Normal ageing is not something we can easily define," she argues in the March issue of journal *Nursing Inquiry*. "There are many older adults with chronic disease who report they still enjoy life, even if they are confined to a wheelchair or their homes. The implication is that if you have a chronic illness, you've somehow failed in this goal of ageing. We need to find ways to support older adults with chronic disease to live well according to their own definitions of health and normality." She has got a point.

Forget me not

For people who tend to forget, scientists have discovered a new way to remember. A study team from Baycrest Health Sciences' Rotman Research Institute (RRI) in Toronto and the University of Toronto's Psychology Department have successfully used a **'distraction learning strategy' to help silvers overcome age-related forgetting.** In essence, distraction learning revolves around the fact that silvers have been proven to process information (irrelevant and relevant) in the environment around them with ease, and without a conscious effort; this can be used to aid memory performance. "Older brains may be doing something very adaptive with distraction to compensate for weakening memory," writes lead investigator Renee Biss in journal *Psychological Science*. "Poor regulation of attention by older adults may actually have some benefits for memory. In our study, we found that distraction can be used to foster memory-boosting rehearsal for older adults. In fact, we were able to eliminate



age-related forgetfulness across three consecutive memory experiments and help older adults perform like younger adults. The findings have intriguing implications for designing learning strategies for the mature."



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Pension prospects

Dithering and delay seem to be the twin mantras of the establishment when it comes to silver concerns. Last month, the national media reported that a **Union Government panel set up to review the government pension scheme has recommended delaying the proposed monthly old-age pension scheme till the end of 2017**—which coincides with the expiry of the 12th Five-Year Plan. The scheme aims to bring an estimated 42.6 million poor silvers under its ambit by linking pension benefits to minimum wages and delinking them from outdated ‘poverty lines’. The panel also suggested the adoption of a staggered approach to increase the pension amount from the current ₹ 200 to ₹ 500 by 2017. The panel’s suggestions are not likely to go down well with the Pension Parishad, a civil society federation of over 100 groups currently negotiating with the Union Rural Development Ministry to act promptly on the scheme. We now wait to see how the Government responds to the panel’s recommendations.



Set the record straight



DON'T LOSE OUT because of a clerical error. According to a circular issued by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, to ensure timely enhancement of their social security benefit, **family pensioners can rectify their birth records in case of any anomaly**. The process is as follows: the beneficiary of the family pension (spouse or parents) will submit a request to the head of the department where the deceased government servant served, along with age proofs (PAN card, matriculation certificate, voter's card, Aadhaar number) and an affidavit. The official can then authorise the change in date of birth in the Pension Payment Order.



HELP IN GURGAON:
THE GURGAON POLICE HAS OPENED A MOBILE HELPLINE FOR SILVERS TO CATER TO SAFETY AND SECURITY CONCERN, REDRESS GRIEVANCES, AND OFFER HELP IN A MEDICAL EMERGENCY. CALL 9416092569 (FROM 9 AM TO 6 PM EVERYDAY) AND 2221559 (24x7).

Her house

WITH A TONGUE-IN-CHEEK name—*Babayaga* means ‘witch’ in Slavic mythology—that signifies its intent to empower, not typify, its residents, **The Babayagas’ House is a self-managed housing project for silver women recently inaugurated in Paris.**

Located in Montreuil, on the east side of the city, the project, designed as a ‘feminist’ alternative for women who wanted to live communally but retain their independence, has been almost 15 years in the making. “To live long is a good thing but to age well is better,” 85 year-old Thérèse Clerc, the brain behind the project, tells news agency AFP. “Growing old is not an illness. We want to change the way people see old age and that means learning to live differently.” The five-storey building houses 25 self-contained flats; 21 are



adapted for silvers while four are reserved for students. Residents pay Euro 420 (about ₹ 30,000) a month for rent. The ground floor is reserved for activities and a soon-to-be opened study centre that Clerc hopes will evolve into “a university of sorts”. The building’s location, a stone’s throw from the metro, restaurants, stores and the cinema, is another lure for silvers who want to remain active and social. While the road to building the project was hard—Clerc calls it “a forceps delivery” owing to the difficulty in getting funding—The Babayagas’ House is now being hailed as a model for future projects.

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Not a lonely planet

No silver gets left behind. That could well be the tagline of **New York’s Senior Planet Exploration Centre, which aims to bring elders up to speed on the digital revolution.** It offers free classes on every tech subject imaginable, from accessing the Internet to using an iPad, video-calling on Skype and gaming on Wii. In fact, as *The New York Times* reports, the non-profit centre houses 22 computers; three Skype stations; a gaming area with a supersize Wii screen; a variety of mobile devices, including iPads, Kindle and Nook e-readers and every smartphone on the market; a 110-inch projector screen and a lounge, all with free wireless connectivity. “Many senior centres have computers but we are the first to focus on other technology and social media, bridging to a new level of need,” says Tom Kamber, executive director of Older Adults Technology Services (OATS), which runs the profit centre. “It’s time to stop doing Bingo and programmes that make older people feel dependent. They want to improve their lives and contribute. Learning these tools helps them do that and stay independent longer.”



Retirement realities

It's time once again for **HSBC's annual report *The Future of Retirement***. The latest global report, *A New Reality*, is the eighth in the series and is based on a survey of more than 15,000 people in 15 countries, including India. "The ageing of the baby boomer generation, declining fertility rates and increasing lifespan are combining to create new and complex demographic pressures around the globe," writes Sir John Bond,

Here are some global highlights:

- 80 per cent of respondents want to scrap mandatory retirement and 75 per cent want to keep working in their maturity.
- Less than a quarter (21 per cent) of respondents of all ages said that never working for pay again would be part of their ideal retirement.
- Indians view later life as a time to live with and be cared for by their families.
- Canadians view their later years as a time of reinvention, ambition, and close relationships with friends and family.
- Americans view their later years as a time for opportunity, new careers, and spiritual fulfilment, but are less focused on family or health than other countries.
- Brazilians view later life as a time for slowing down, relaxing, and spending time with their families, relatives, and friends, and they

expect significant support from their children.

- The French view these years as a time of dreams and aspirations, but also as a time of worry, and they are concerned about being a burden to their families.
- The British view 'later life' as a time of self-sufficiency, independence, and personal responsibility, counting on neither government nor family to care for them.
- Mexicans see it as a time for continued work and hard-earned financial stability.
- In China, younger generations view retirement as an opportunity for a new life but continued careers, while older generations want to stop working and relax.
- Respondents from Hong Kong view it as a time for rest, relaxation, and the enjoyment of accumulated wealth, which is seen as the cornerstone of well-being.

group chairman of HSBC Holdings, in the report. "The resulting changes will in many cases be very positive but also create real challenges, not least with regard to the funding of retirement. It is critical that governments, regulators, corporations and financial institutions understand these emerging trends in behaviour and attitude if we are to successfully tackle the pressing issues before us."

- The Japanese look forward to their later years as a time of good health, family considerations, and continued fulfilment from work.

Getting into India specifics, here's what the report had to say:

- People approaching retirement age are heavily reliant on cash savings, with 55-64 year-olds expecting 30 per cent of their retirement income to come from this source—this compares to a global average of 21 per cent.
- 67 per cent of respondents said that their financial preparations for a comfortable retirement were adequate, while 27 per cent described the arrangements as 'more than adequate'.
- On average, Indian respondents believe in planning for retirement as early as possible.

To read the entire report, go to www.hsbc.com/retirement

The British bedroom

Sex and silence may not seem complementary words but the British would beg to differ. While a recent survey of over 2,000 adults in the UK by non-profit Age UK confirms that a **majority of silvers in the UK are enjoying a successful sex life**, many feel that they cannot speak to their partner about sex. Here are some highlights, as London newspaper *Daily Mail* reports:

- 62 per cent of people over the age of 65 are currently enjoying a fulfilling sex life.
- 24 per cent assert that their age had not changed their sexual lifestyle.
- 28 per cent feel they cannot talk to their partner about sex.
- 69 per cent have never sought sexual health advice.



- 8 per cent are keen to start a new sexual relationship.
- 12 per cent say they would like to sexually experiment with their partner.

"Our survey shows that having a healthy sex life is important to us regardless of our age," says Lucy Harmer of Age UK. "However, we also found that many older people may find it hard to speak up about sex, whether it is to their partner, friends or healthcare professionals. We are keen to increase awareness of the importance of seeking out information and advice on sex—whatever your age. This will help people in later life to keep sexually active and healthy for as long as desired."

SURFING FOR COMPANY: ONLINE DATING IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY POPULAR AMONG SILVERS IN THE US. THE THREE BIGGEST ONLINE DATING SITES FOR ELDER AMERICANS—[SENIORPEOPLEMEEET.COM](#), [SENIORSMEET.COM](#) AND [OURTIME.COM](#)—HAVE A COMBINED USER TALLY OF OVER 4 MILLION.

Body of concern

Sad, but true—body image remains a perennial worry for women, according to a survey of over 900 women between the ages of 18 and 87 in the UK, US and Australia by Trinity University in the UK. As London newspaper *The Telegraph* reports, among all age groups, 81 per cent of women reported occasional 'fat talk' (concerns about weight) with 33 per cent frequently indulging in it, while 66 per cent reported 'old talk' (concerns about age), with 15 per cent frequently indulging in it. Interestingly, though, while fat talk tapered with age, especially after the age of 60, old talk became more common. "It's not



yet clear whether the changes come with age or are the result of the women in the study being of different generations," writes study leader Carolyn Black Becker in the *Journal of Eating Disorders*. "But what is clear is that negative self-talk isn't good for wom-

en. Both fat talk and old talk are linked with greater body dissatisfaction and eating disorders such as restricting food or binge-eating. Our findings suggest that the effects of cultural glorification of youth should be studied alongside the ideal of thinness."

CANE-DO

It's the ubiquitous symbol of advancing years in societies all over the world. But thanks to Japanese company Fujitsu, the cane just got a high-tech next-gen makeover. The New Generation Cane helps silvers and caregivers alike with its array of smart features. Armed with technologies like GPS, 3G, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, it tracks the user's location, heart rate and temperature and relays it to their caregiver. It's a fantastic navigator—it helps plan the user's route in advance, displays each step on the handle's vivid LED display, and alerts the user in case of a wrong turn taken. Most important, it sends text and email alerts if it thinks the user has fallen down and automatically contacts emergency services if it detects an irregular heartbeat. Fujitsu showed off the cane at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona recently; news on the rollout and price is expected later this year.

Ironman?

IT LOOKS like something out of a comic but **NASA's latest invention** promises some very serious benefits. Designed to augment the bodies of astronauts on deep space missions, the 23-kg X1 robotic exoskeleton, worn over the body, **can be used to assist movement in leg joints and even help the disabled to walk again**. "Robotics is playing a key role aboard the International Space Station and will continue to be critical as we move toward human exploration of deep space," Michael Gazarik, director of NASA's Space Technology Programme, tells news agency Reuters. "What's extraordinary are the unexpected possibilities space tech



spinoffs may have right here on Earth. It's exciting to see a NASA-developed technology that might one day help people with serious ambulatory needs begin to walk again, or even walk for the first time."

Power SUIT

The power suit just got a whole new meaning. **The Hybrid Assistive Limb (HAL)**, a power-assisted pair of legs that can help silvers and the disabled get around, received its global safety certificate, the first nursing care robotic product to achieve this landmark. Developed



by Japanese company Cyberdene, the battery-powered, metal and plastic HAL detects muscle impulses to anticipate and support the user's body movements. Over 330 units of HAL are already in use at hospitals and other nursing facilities in Japan since 2010; the certification has now paved the way for an international rollout. Cyberdene's next goal: the global mark of approval for its power-assisted pair of arms.



"ZERO MAY MEAN ZILCH. But put it after another number and the value increases tenfold. Place zero before a number and it takes away nothing from it." These are just some of the gems that formed the core of a recent one-act performance by Chandrashekhar Tembe at the Harmony Interactive Centre in Girguam, Mumbai.

Exhorting his audience to be egoless and give like 'zero', Tembe, who regularly conducts talk shows on radio, said, "Zero teaches us one of the biggest lessons of life. Don't deprecate or undermine any one; at the same time, enrich the lives of others." Tembe's philosophical take on numbers was not limited to zero alone. He also had interesting observations on the omission of the number 13 from certain buildings, hotels and hospitals, especially in the West, because of the superstition surrounding it. Asking the audience not to fall prey to such irrational beliefs, he said, "Every number radiates positivity. Even number 13."

Tembe's act was not limited to numbers alone. Drawing from mythology, he emphasised the need for diplomacy in our daily interactions. "Once Lord Vishnu was asked by Lakshmi and Shanidev whom among them he held in high esteem? Vishnu said both were equally important. But when they insisted on an answer, he gave them a task: to walk to a certain point and come back. When they came



back, he said, I liked you both while going and I liked you both while returning. None of you is inferior or superior to the other. You have a well-defined role to play in the scheme of things and are equally important to me." With his witty remarks and interesting anecdotes, Tembe kept his audience enthralled.

Meanwhile, members from the interactive centre also visited Chowpatty for a short get-together on the beach. Sharing jokes and camaraderie, they settled down to a round of *shayari* by Naukaben Kothari.



Sheep STORY

You could call it a fertility paradox. While in most species, child-bearing capability declines with age, the prospect of bearing twins actually increases. To examine this phenomenon further, **scientists from the Universities of Sheffield and Edinburgh studied an isolated breed of sheep to see how age affected their reproductive success.** Their study of the distinctive Soay breed, located on the remote islands of St Kilda in Scotland, confirmed this hypothesis: while the reproductive success of an ewe declined with age (from about the age of six) along with the chances of her lambs' survival, her chances of having twins kept going. "Whether a sheep is five years old or 10, it still has the same chance of producing twins," writes study

leader Adam Hayward in journal *Functional Ecology*. "In humans too, the probability of having twins actually increases with age. We now suspect that women start releasing two eggs per cycle instead of one as their body ages." As Soay sheep are confined to their remote islands, scientists have been able to build a detailed database on them over the past 25 years, collecting data on each individual sheep from birth and offering unique insight into an entire population. "Soay sheep provide an excellent population for studying ageing as you can see how the data change for each sheep as it grows," adds Hayward. "We are now looking at how immune function and cells in Soay sheep are affected by age."

SHE SAYS: A NEW POLL OF 1,000 WOMEN AND 1,000 MEN BY FOREVER YOUTH LIBERATOR, A COSMETIC BRAND OF FRENCH FASHION BRAND YSL, FINDS THAT TWO-THIRDS OF WOMEN BELIEVE THEY LOOK BETTER OVER TIME THAN THEIR PARTNERS. INCREDIBLY, THE MEN TEND TO AGREE—OVER 50 PER CENT SAY THEIR FEMALE PARTNERS ARE AGEING BETTER THAN THEM.

Game on! The next time your grandson whips out his video game, join him. Researchers from North Carolina State University in the US have found a link between silver gamers and better emotional functioning. They studied 140 silvers over the age of 63 and found that regular gamers reported higher levels of well-being, positive mood, better self-reported health and a higher happiness quotient than non-gamers.



FACTS

- » 8.75 billion pounds of textiles are produced every year. That's nearly 35 pounds per person. Of that number, 1 million tonne is discarded each year, the majority coming from consumer households. Most textiles do not decompose in landfills, creating a grave environmental impact.
- » Cotton, found in most clothing, is the most pesticide-dependent crop in the world. It takes one-third of a pound of pesticides to make one T-shirt.

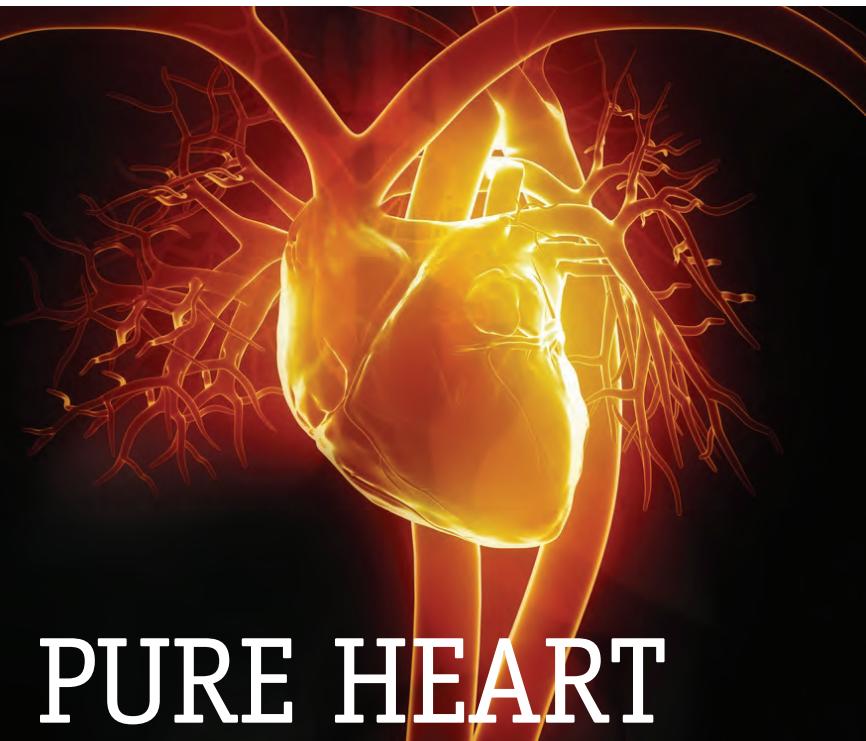
Then: Pillow cases Now: Floor cushions

Summer is here and how! Floor cushions are a perfect way to relax this season; here's a simple way to make them. Collect old pillow cases that you don't use any more. Pick colours that suit your mood; use fabric paints to make them snazzier if you like a more flamboyant look. Sew them together at the seams keeping the openings of the case clear—this will allow you to fill them up with pillows or just loose cotton. Add snap buttons at the openings to keep pillows/cotton in place.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. KEEP THE LENGTH SMALL TO MAKE A COSY SEAT FOR YOUR DOG.
2. AFTER STITCHING THE SEAMS IN A LINE, STITCH THE END TO MAKE A YOGA MAT COVER.

IT'S BEING HAILED AS OUTSTANDING RESEARCH—COMPUTER SCIENTIST SANGHAMITRA BANDOPADHYAY FROM THE INDIAN STATISTICAL INSTITUTE, KOLKATA, AND HER STUDENT MALAY BHATTACHARYYA, HAVE DISCOVERED A COMPUTATIONAL TECHNIQUE TO SPOT CHANGES IN GENETIC MATERIAL THAT SEEM LINKED TO THE EARLY STAGES OF ALZHEIMER'S. THE TWO HAVE UNCOVERED A PATTERN THAT HELPS REVEAL THE PREVIOUS CHANGES IN THE BRAIN OF PATIENTS SUFFERING FROM ALZHEIMER'S.



PURE HEART

According to a recent American survey, the environment's depleting ozone levels and increasing air pollution will play a bigger role in the occurrence of sudden heart attacks. Based in Rice University in Houston, Texas, the study analysed about eight years of data of monitors managing air quality and the amount of concurrent OHCA (out-of-hospital cardiac arrests) logged at Houston Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Statisticians from Houston University discovered strong links between OHCA and recorded ozone levels. They also revealed that a daily average rise in fine particle matter (in

the air) by 6 micrograms per day increased the risk of OHCA by 4.6 per cent with varying impact, depending on already existing heart conditions. In cases where EMS conducted chest compressions, over 90 per cent of patients died; this mostly occurred during the hot summer months. To confirm their conclusion, researchers also observed the effects of harmful gases such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide; they concluded that none of these had any impact on OHCA. Considering the increasing level of air pollution in India, this revelation assumes even greater significance.

AFTER EXAMINING DATA FROM OVER 10,000 PEOPLE IN THE US FROM 1993 TO 2011, IT HAS BEEN PREDICTED THAT 13.8 MILLION AMERICANS WILL BE LIVING WITH SOME FORM OF DEMENTIA, 7 MILLION OF WHOM WILL BE ABOVE 85. IN THIS PERIOD, PARTICIPANTS WERE ANALYSED EVERY THREE YEARS BASED ON RACE, AGE AND EDUCATION TO CALCULATE THE NUMBER THAT WILL BE LIVING WITH ALZHEIMER'S BY 2050.





Colourful diet

Researchers at Johns Hopkins Medical Centre in Baltimore, Maryland, in the US, have discovered that silvers who consume the right amount of carotenoids—found in colourful fruits and vegetables such as peppers, mango and kiwi—are more likely to remain stronger than those who do not. The study was published in *Journal of Nutrition, Health and Ageing*. For the study, researchers used blood samples to measure the

different levels of carotenoids in almost 700 people aged 65 and above. They subsequently tested their physical walking performance, proving that higher dietary intake of fruits and vegetables rich in carotenoids is directly associated with a protective effect against physical degeneration. The study could help predict future disability and prepare silvers for an independent, qualitative life in later years.



THE ROTARY BANGALORE CANTONMENT AND SOUTH WEST IN BENGALURU ORGANISED A TWO-DAY WELFARE EVENT FOR SILVERS IN FEBRUARY 2013. THIS UNIQUE PROGRAMME ALLOWED ELDERS TO BENEFIT FROM A FREE HEALTH CHECK-UP CAMP AND RELATED COUNSELLING SESSIONS.

BIRTHDAYS

● Former international cricketer and Padmashri **Ajit Wadekar** turned 72 on 1 April.

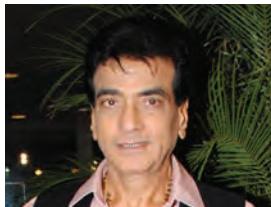


● Multilingual singer and pioneer of Indian fusion music **Hariharan** (right) turned 57 on 3 April.



- Physician, politician and MLA **K Krishnasamy** turned 59 on 3 April.
- Award-winning Bengali and Hindi actor **Suchitra Sen** turned 82 on 6 April.
- Cricketer-turned-cricket administrator **Dilip Vengsarkar** (left) turned 57 on 6 April.

● Legendary actor **Jeetendra** (right), born Ravi Kapoor, turned 70 on 7 April.



● Acclaimed actor and politician **Jaya Bachchan** turns 64 on 9 April.



- Classical singer, Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan **Kishori Amonkar** turns 83 on 10 April.
- English author and former politician **Jeffrey Howard Archer** (left) turns 72 on 15 April.

● Veteran playback singer **Janaki S** turns 74 on 23 April.



● Actor **Moushumi Chatterjee** (right) turns 59 on 26 April.



- Veteran dancer-actor **Zohra Saigal** turns 101 on 27 April.

- Virtuoso conductor of Indian-Parsi origin **Zubin Mehta** (left) turns 77 on 29 April.

IN PASSING

● Pioneering Indian printmaker and photographer **Jagmohan Chopra** (left), 78, breathed his last on 3 March 2013 in New Delhi.



● Veteran journalist **S K Varma** passed away at the age of 90 in New Delhi following a cardiac arrest on 3 March.



● President of Venezuela **Hugo Chávez**, 58, died in Caracas on 5 March after a long battle with cancer.

● Southern Indian actor and dancer **Rajasulochana** (right), 77, succumbed to renal failure on 5 March.



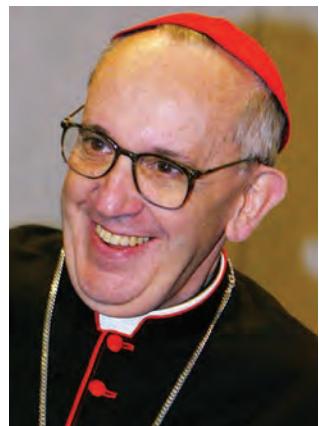
● Carnatic music legend and eminent physician **Dr Sripada Pinakapani** (left), 99, passed away on 11 March in Hyderabad after a prolonged illness.

● Kathakali maestro **Ramankutty Nair** died at the age of 88 on 11 March.

● Celebrated painter **Ganesh Pyne**, 76, breathed his last on 12 March owing to a cardiac arrest.

MILESTONES

● Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina, 76, was elected the leader of the Roman Catholic Church on 13 March. A surprise choice, the new pope took the name Francis I, becoming the first non-European pontiff in nearly 1,300 years. Pope Francis, 76, appeared on the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica just over an hour after white smoke rose from a chimney on the roof of the Sistine Chapel to signal that 115 cardinal electors had chosen him to lead the world's 1.2 billion Roman Catholics.



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WORDS ARE ALL I HAVE

My passion for writing has made my life rich. Not only has it given me a reservoir of memories to look back on; it has given me something to look forward to when I wake up every single day. I literally live to write and have authored 93 books—and am still counting.

I began to love the written word when I was growing up in Junagadh, then a Nawabi state. The Nawab had opened a public library that boasted 50,000 books, and at the age of 11, I used to visit it every day. At that tender age, I began to explore words, experiment with them, amuse myself with them and observe the world around every word I came across. I used to imagine stories in my notebooks, which, of course, were filled with words.

My writing found real expression in high school, where we had an in-house magazine, and I penned poems, stories and essays for it. I will never forget the sheer joy I felt when I saw my first byline at the age of 15 for a story in *Jai Hind* newspaper published from Rajkot in Gujarat. From there on till I graduated, I wrote for many newspapers and magazines, and knew that this was my mission. My family wasn't happy with my career choice but what else could I do? I was addicted to writing!

After I graduated, I left home and came to Ahmedabad and was appointed assistant editor of the magazine, *Sadhana Weekly*, at the age of 22. I covered the Emergency and was even imprisoned for writing against censorship. At the time, I was conferred an award by the Government of Gujarat for my first book, *Haheli Nu Aakash*. I rejected the award, saying, "If you're applauding my writing, why am I in jail today?" Writing has taken me to many places. I did some spot reporting during the Indo-Pakistan war, covered Operation Blue Star, the agitation in Assam and a whole lot more. Those were times of political struggle and there was so much to write about. As difficult as it sometimes was, not once did I flinch or waver. One of my most precious memories is walking barefoot in the hot desert, my feet bleeding, on the way to Pakistan, to cover the Indo-Pak war.

As you may have guessed by now, I write on a variety of subjects, from political analysis, to history, biographies, essays, novels, political novels and poems. I also do some translation work. *Aandhiyon Main Jalte Diye: Atlaji* –



Pandya: A way with words

Kavi Ane Kavita is my all-time favourite. I am still actively writing and contribute columns to leading Gujarati daily newspapers and magazines. I am also working on revealing the unknown history of Gujarat, and, along with my wife Aarti, I have set up the Gujarat History Research Centre. My quest for journalism, history and research is insatiable and even a fractured leg right now is not preventing me from pursuing my passion for the written word.

—Vishnu Pandya, Ahmedabad

A NEW FAITH

After working for 38 years in the insurance sector, I retired in 2007 and settled in Noida. I took a break, spent some time with my sons—one in Gurgaon and the other in the US—and then took up a position with Amity Univer-

sity to teach the MBA course. I was happy, fulfilled and looked forward to every day.

The night of 10 April 2011 was a turning point in my life. It was the beginning of eight hospitalisations in as few as 18 months. During this time, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer accompanied by serious urinary problems. I was also diagnosed with deep vein thrombosis, apart from already being a patient of diabetes and hypertension. I suffered very high fever on many occasions and had to be bathed in ice to bring down my temperature. Recurring urinary infections left me with septicaemia, a condition where the blood is infected.

I naturally developed disgust for hospitals, their sterile smell and all-pervasive gloom. There was a time I requested my doctors to allow me to receive treatment at home but I had no idea how difficult that would be. It meant sourcing drugs from pharmacies in time for my injections, which were to be administered at specific times. Radiotherapy left me weak but I still drove 20 km daily, after a full working day, in peak hour traffic to receive my treatment. My daily routine started at 4.30 am.

In early 2012, I decided to visit my son in the US to meet my new grandson. A day before departure, I developed a urinary problem once again but I made the trip to the US anyway. It was probably my deep desire to meet my grandson and the joy of meeting my son that gave me the strength to stay largely healthy during that month.

My latest hospitalisation was in November 2012 and the procedure was only partially successful. I live with the possibility that any of my previous medical problems, including cancer, will resurface any time. But, unlike 18 months ago, I have a new source of strength—I have learnt to count my blessings and have a deep faith that sustains me.

I am lucky to have the specialists I have attending on me. I am also eternally grateful to my family, especially my wife, who has suffered silently alongside me. I am lucky never to have experienced unbearable pain, despite the serious nature of my illness. Most of all, I have learnt that God has his own way of dealing with human beings. On one hand,



Anshuman Akash Jha

Jain: Mind over body

he gave me an ordeal but he also kept giving me positive signals to keep me going. I believe God gives us challenges but solutions too.

I was determined to not let my body control me; rather vice versa. After every hospitalisation, I have been able to return to work the very next day while attending to routine chores without feeling weak. It has worked so wonderfully well that I started believing that it is faith and our attitude that make us weak or strong, not the body. In fact, no one at work even knows what I have gone through as I am always cheerful.

Here are a couple more lessons I have learnt: Pain and suffering are part of life and they are best accepted with patience. Also, the world is full of angels. And, yes, I still look forward to every day with as much vigour as I did before the night of 10 April, 2011.

—Inderjit Jain, Noida



Sivaram V

Brush and soul

THOMAS MALAYIL, 83, ALLEPPEY

I am 83 and celebrating my *Sahasra Poorna Chandradayam* (the celebration of the 1,000th full moon in a person's lifetime). It's God's grace to be blessed thus. I retired as chief manager of State Bank of Travancore in 1991. After retirement, I enjoyed a stint with Unit Trust of India. However, since 2006, art has been my sole focus. I paint, photograph and write poetry. I am also the founder of the Alleppey Senior Citizens' Forum, which brings together senior members in our society.

My entire family is artistically inclined—we have graphic designers, movie directors and painters. Probably an inborn aptitude pulled me into art. I love being able to express myself through my paintings and poetry. I used to contribute people photographs to leading newspapers. The suffering of the underprivileged makes me sad and I try to alleviate their pain by bringing a smile to their faces when I take their photographs.

In my paintings, I like to explore the theme of nature. I am awed by the creativity of God and lean towards spirituality. I fill my time with my paintings and prayers. Art, along with my spiritual outlook to life, brings me great joy and peace. I share my endeavours with others through an art gallery I have set up at home. My paintings are usually picked up by tourists who come to visit Alleppey; word-of-mouth publicity brings many to my gallery. However, I don't do custom paintings. I just paint from the heart and people buy what they like.

I also try and keep busy by contributing in my little way to society. Through the Senior Citizens' Forum, which I founded in 2000, I interact with many retired people in Alleppey. Some retired members of the forum now manage its administration but I participate in the monthly meetings and get a chance to meet like-minded people.

—As told to Nisha Salim

MUSICAL FUTURE

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

I have been in advertising my entire working life. I started when advertising was not every industry's need; today, it's one of the most popular professions. Throughout my career, I have been interested in music and musical instruments. I have learnt how to play the piano, guitar and violin. Now that I am going to retire, I would like to dedicate my life to music. What are my options?

Your choice of change is very interesting; I have done the same. You have several options. The trick is to choose the right one. I don't know how much you have learnt vis-à-vis the instruments, but you will need to acquire a professional degree to make a career out of it. After getting a degree, you have a variety of options to select from. You can be a music teacher, wherein you can select between teaching at schools and conducting workshops at offices. Music teachers at schools are also responsible for designing annual functions, musical productions and coaching the school band. If you wish to conduct a professional workshop, you can approach corporate groups or speak to your own office. You can also start a music coaching class of your own. That would require heavy investment to rent a place, if you don't wish to use your own house. You can also opt to play in a band or simply start a band of your own. There are many luxury hotels that host live gigs that could be quite an experience. The choice is yours.

—Vincent Rodrigues is an independent musician in Goa



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

Target those thighs: The rewards are not just aesthetic but postural too

In yoga, unlike with other fitness forms, you engage different muscle groups of the legs—including the thighs—subtly. It is important to work out the muscle groups in the thighs, called adductors, not just to get photogenic legs but to develop postural balance and stability of the body. These are also important for movement in the hips, which support the torso.

You actually experience these sets of muscles only when you try advanced arm balancers like the one-legged shoulder-pressing pose (*eka pada bhujapidasana*) or different versions of the boat pose (*naukasana*). Initially, there will be a lot of resistance to the challenge in these poses, even for an advanced practitioner, simply because these muscles are strong, silent workers. To initiate awareness of them through these poses is indeed very exciting.

Other poses that can challenge the thighs are simple leg raises, like the lying bit toe holding pose (*supta hasta padangushtasana*) and the standing big toe pose (*utthita hasta padangusthasana*).

(*padangushtasana* series) and standing balancers like the one-legged prayer pose (*ekapada pranamasana*). Again, these poses must be held for a minute or more to really impact these muscles. Initially, you need to start with several dynamic movements. Then work up stamina slowly by repetitions extending from 15 seconds to half a minute at a stretch. Finally, you can attempt the longer hold in a pose, for one minute. Even with regular practice these poses can be tough when held for this long—this shows how much attention these muscles require!

Further, some poses that involve intense balance, such as the warrior pose and all its variations (*virabhadrasana*) and the standing big toe pose (*utthita hasta padangusthasana*), all powerfully involve the thigh muscles. Taking into account the learning graph these poses require, as well as stamina building, you should progress slowly into practice till you are comfortable and the sense of effort is done with. Then, increase duration to half a minute or more.

YOGIC MOVES

Half lotus boat pose (*ardha padma naukasana*)

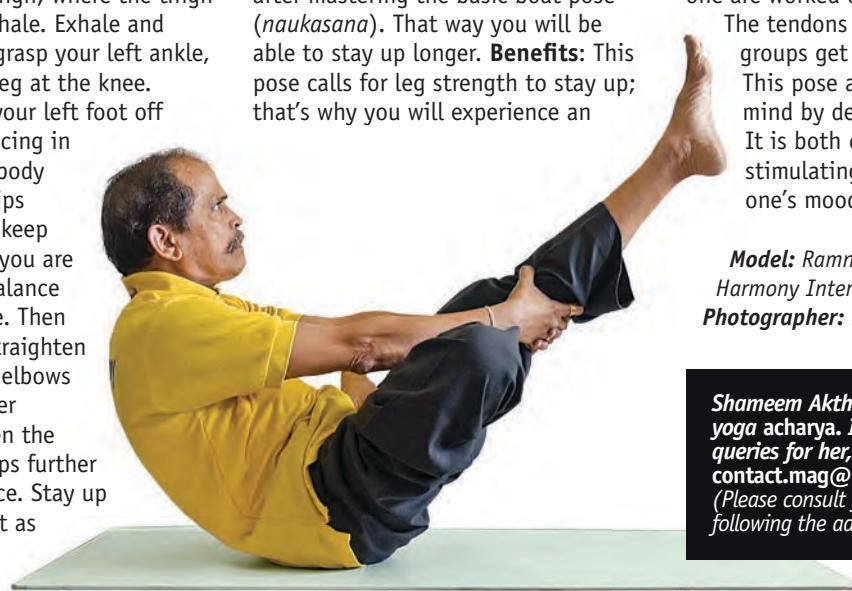
Sit up straight with both legs out in front. Bend your right leg at the knee. Place the back of your right foot on top of your left thigh, where the thigh meets the hip. Inhale. Exhale and reach forward to grasp your left ankle, bending the left leg at the knee. Inhale and raise your left foot off the ground, balancing in the pose so your body is borne on the hips entirely. You may keep your leg bent till you are assured of your balance in this tricky pose. Then slowly begin to straighten the leg. Flare the elbows out, so the counter resistance between the arms and legs helps further power your balance. Stay up with your left foot as high as possible,

breathing normally, for as long as comfortable. Release. Repeat for the other leg. **Note:** Attempt this only after mastering the basic boat pose (*naukasana*). That way you will be able to stay up longer. **Benefits:** This pose calls for leg strength to stay up; that's why you will experience an

initial imbalance. The back must also support this pose as well as the hips. Both the bent leg and straightened one are worked out in different ways.

The tendons and all major muscle groups get a powerful workout. This pose also works on the mind by developing focus. It is both calming as well as stimulating, thus upping one's mood.

Model: Ramnath Chiplunkar,
Harmony Interactive Centre
Photographer: Haresh Patel



Shameem Akthar is a Mumbai-based yoga acharya. If you have any queries for her, mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonymag.org. (Please consult your physician before following the advice given here)



EATING RIGHT BY ANJALI MUKERJEE

Quick bite: Snacks keep you going but can't replace meals

I am happy to be 65 and busy through the day with activities and meetings. I tend to skip meals, which sometimes makes me dizzy and weak. Can you recommend some in-between snacks that won't take much time to put together and are filling as well?

You are aware of the reason you are feeling dizzy and weak: skipping meals is unhealthy. When you skip meals, the body goes into fasting mode. During fasting, three macronutrients—carbohydrates, proteins and fats—are broken down in separate processes. Once the body's blood glucose stores are used up, the energy needed is met by liver glycogen and muscle glycogen. For further needs, the liver converts fats into ketone bodies (a process called ketosis). The above process can affect energy levels and lead to weakness, dizziness and nausea.

If skipping meals is a daily routine, the body's metabolism slows down. Metabolism is the rate at which we burn calories. When we have long gaps between meals, fewer calories are burnt and the body is forced to store the excess fat. Skipping meals could prove to be a greater problem if you suffer from chronic ailments like diabetes and low immunity. Also, skipping meals can lead to low, imbalanced blood sugar. And when you skip a meal, you become very hungry and tend to overeat at the next meal. Further, long gaps between meals lead to flatulence, gas and acidity.

Ideally, there should be a gap of two to three hours between meals. You can start your day with a good breakfast



like eggs and toast or a paneer sandwich or *poha*, followed by a mid-morning snack. For lunch, have *khichdi* with vegetables or chapattis with vegetables or *dal*. Your evening snack could be a handful of nuts like almonds, peanuts, walnuts, roasted *channa*; and dinner could be wheat or *jowar* chapattis with *dal*, yoghurt and vegetables. This diet will help maintain your blood sugar levels and prevent you from feeling giddy and weak.

For snacking between meals, try to make healthy food choices; please remember, though, that snacks can't replace meals. Here are some options for in-between snacking:

- **Fresh fruits:** One serving of any fruit like apple, pear, orange, pomegranate, papaya or watermelon is a good snack option as it is nutritious and easily available.
- **A handful of nuts:** Include a mix of almonds, raisins and walnuts.





READERS
ASK

I recently heard that eggs are harmful for people with cardiovascular conditions. But I love eggs! Can I at least have one everyday?

In healthy people, eggs do not increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, but for people with cardiovascular diseases, it is better to keep a check on your cholesterol intake through food. To prevent cardiovascular diseases, you need to make certain modifications in your diet like reducing the intake of dietary cholesterol to less than 300 mg/day. An egg has about 200 mg of cholesterol. At the same time, eggs also contain nutrients like Vitamin B12, Vitamin D, riboflavin and folate; and these nutrients, in fact, help lower the risk of heart disease. Cholesterol in an egg is mainly concentrated in the yolk so you can include egg whites in your diet. Eat egg white omelettes using two to three egg whites; scrambled egg whites also taste good. Make sure you eat a whole egg not more than twice a week. Also eliminate other sources of cholesterol from your diet on that day. On the day you have the whole egg, avoid high-fat dairy products and meat.

How important are proteins in a diet for Type 2 diabetes?

Proteins are the main components of muscle and other tissues. The body uses proteins to build and repair these tissues. In diabetes as well, proteins supply amino acids for tissue repair. When carbohydrates are consumed, they raise blood sugar during absorption; whereas, proteins, on consumption, cut the rise in blood sugar. Proteins provide satiety and are, therefore, helpful in regulation of energy intake and weight loss at the same time. One of the causes of Type 2 diabetes is obesity and, therefore, any mechanism that reduces body fat decreases insulin resistance and improves blood glucose control. Studies have shown that a high protein diet decreases abdominal and total fat mass in people with Type 2 diabetes. Consumption of low glycaemic index complex carbohydrates, along with adequate amount of proteins, helps manage blood glucose levels in diabetics. The protein requirement for an individual is 1 g/kg body weight. You can choose from low-fat protein sources like lean meat (chicken, fish), egg whites, milk and milk products, lentils, and soy products.

For snacking between meals, try to make healthy food choices. Drink a lot of fluids everyday and keep yourself hydrated. This will prevent you from feeling weak and giddy

- **Boiled eggs:** Egg is a high biological value protein; the yolk is rich in nutrients.
- **Whole-wheat sandwich**
- **Yoghurt:** A cup of plain yoghurt (preferably a brand with a low amount of sugar).

Apart from snacking, drink a lot of fluids everyday and keep yourself hydrated. You can drink any fruit juice, coconut water, buttermilk, vegetable juice or lime water. This will prevent you from feeling weak and giddy. Here's an example of a day's food plan without long gaps between meals:

- **Breakfast:** Cereals plus skim milk.
- **Mid-morning snack:** A fruit.
- **Lunch:** 2 wheat chapattis, vegetable, salad, yoghurt/dal.
- **Mid-afternoon:** A handful of nuts.
- **Evening:** A couple of khakra/whole-wheat biscuits.
- **Dinner:** Brown rice or wheat roti, vegetable, salad, yoghurt/dal.

Dr Anjali Mukerjee is a nutritionist and founder of Health Total, which has 15 centres in Mumbai to treat obesity and other health-related disorders.

Visit www.health-total.com

If you have a question for Dr Mukerjee, write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



SILVER LINING BY V S NATARAJAN

Root cause: Is a thyroid condition responsible for your health woes?

“I’m feeling unusually tired; what could be the problem?”

“I am putting on weight; can a clinical test diagnose it?”

“Why are my eyes looking big and starry all of a sudden?”

“I get tremors and also palpitations; could I be suffering from a thyroid disorder?”

In fact, a ‘thyroid condition’ seems to be an instant assumptive cause for many complaints faced by silvers. Thus, it is one area where they need clear knowledge so they can deduce if it is indeed responsible for their health woes.

For the normal functioning of this ‘temple’ called the human body—apart from major organs like heart, brain and kidney—there are certain regulatory factors that maintain the tempo of the temple. These are the hormones. One such vital hormone is the ‘thyroid’. The thyroid gland, located in the frontal portion of the neck, is normally invisible. When dysfunctional, it may enlarge and present itself as goitre (a swelling in front of the neck).

The thyroid gland secretes thyroxine, which acts as a fuel for the normal functioning of the human cell. When hormonal secretion is lower, the condition is called myxedema (hypothyroidism); when the secretion is more than normal, thyrotoxicosis (hyperthyroidism) sets in. Not just hypothyroidism, the incidence of any disorder of the thyroid gland is two to three times higher in women.

Causes of hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism has an autoimmune origin. While immunity is the defensive force of the body fighting against a foreigner, autoimmunity means fighting against the self and causing self-destruction. Some causes include previ-

ous irradiation, surgical removal of the gland or drugs like lithium that are prescribed for psychiatric disorders.

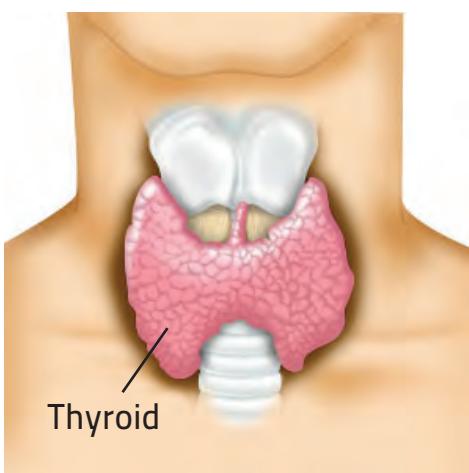
Symptoms

The onset is usually insidious—over months, years or decades. Its variable presentation is deceptive and is often masked by other illnesses. In older people, the symptoms and signs are more often mild and non-specific. Hypothermia, cold intolerance, dry skin, thinning hair, weight gain, constipation, general malaise, falls, immobility, weakness, myalgia (muscle pain), arthralgia (joint pain), hearing problems, thick speech, depression, dementia and anaemia are some of these features that can present themselves; at other times, none of the features can be there.

Most of the above symptoms may be linked to the general process of ageing. So diagnosis may be delayed. High index of suspicion is the only key to make a correct diagnosis. Hypothyroidism is a tricky and stressful disorder that makes the patient consult a psychiatrist for depression, a gynaecologist for menstrual irregularities, general practitioner for weight gain, a geriatrician for slowness of movements, gastroenterologist for constipation, or an ENT specialist for hearing. At last, the patient lands up with the endocrinologist, with the laboratory value pointing towards hypothyroidism.

Investigations

Thyroid function tests like T3, T4 and TSH are very important in this case. High TSH and low T4 usually confirm the diagnosis of hypothyroidism. Sometimes, an ultra-sonogram of the thyroid gland is advised to detect thyroid masses, and blood tests to detect anti-thyroid anti-bodies. Sometimes, biopsy of the thyroid gland may be necessary to find out the cause for hypothyroidism.





Treatment

Though the condition is curable, the treatment is for life. The dose of the thyroid tablet should often be adjusted according to the clinical condition of the patient and the thyroid function test. Thyroxin should be taken continuously. Do not alter the dosage without your doctor's advice. If thyroxin is taken properly and regularly, the symptoms will disappear.

As most silvers have associated cardiac problems, it is important to start them on a very low dose and gradually increase it, because a sudden high dose may put a strain on the heart. Thyroid tablets should always be taken at the same time of the day; in the morning on an empty stomach. If you missed a day's dose, do not try to compensate for it by doubling the dose the next day or by taking it at some other time of the same day. As hypothyroidism is common in the elderly, every senior citizen should undergo a routine thyroid function test or at least the TSH test once a year to detect silent hypothyroidism.

Hyperthyroidism

Sub-clinical hyperthyroidism is more common in older people (prevalence of 3 per cent), but the severity of the disease is less common.

Symptoms

This occurs owing to hyperactivity of the thyroid gland and excessive secretion of thyroxine. The cause is usu-

ally secondary to the gland's increased activity or a tumour growing in the gland. If present, the tumour may be large and obvious but sometimes it may be small and difficult to detect.

The characteristic features—heat intolerance, bulging of the eye balls, excessive sweating, loss of weight, tremor of the hands—may be lacking in older people. The only symptom that may help indicate towards it is a bright and 'staring expression' and a wasted appearance. The pulse rate will be on the higher side and it may be irregular as well.

Investigations

In most cases, TSH is undetectable and both T4 and T3 are high. Anti-thyroid antibodies and thyroid radioisotope scanning tests offer a clue regarding the cause of hyperthyroidism.

Treatment

- **Medical:** Symptoms owing to thyroid hyperactivity can be brought under control by medicines like beta-blockers and anti-thyroid drugs, but the swollen gland, if present, will show no regression.
- **Surgical:** Surgical removal of the lump will provide symptomatic relief as well as cosmetic relief. As most silvers have many contraindications for surgery, such as asthma, cardiac and renal problems, it is wiser to control hyperthyroidism with drugs.
- **Radiotherapy:** In the elderly, where surgery is not possible and continuous medication is a problem, radiotherapy is appropriate. A single dose may be effective in controlling the symptoms lifelong.

Thyroid problems are a double-edged sword, where either normal age-related changes are wrongly diagnosed as hypothyroidism or the actual symptoms of hypothyroidism are neglected as a normal physiologic variant. It depends much on the clinician's expertise and experience to pick out a thyroid disorder in the first visit.

Regular screening through TSH profile can help diagnose the actual problem earlier than later. So if you have not checked your thyroid profile for the past six months, consult your doctor and have a TSH study done today. The better you learn about your body, the better you can care for it.

Padmashri Dr V S Natarajan, a specialist in the field of geriatric medicine, runs Memory Clinic, a service for silvers in Chennai. If you have a question for him, write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN SMT PUSHPA DESHMUKH, MUMBAI

An engaging series about the wisdom of love, nurturing and culinary bonding across generations

What makes Smt Pushpa Deshmukh, 75, remarkable is a clear awareness of her own potential and the courage to speak about life honestly. Without resorting to emotional excess or self-pity, she speaks in her Maharashtrian-Hindi dialect about the things that have gone wrong and family values collapsing in today's world.

Smt Deshmukh belongs to Chandraseniya Kayastha Prabhu, a small Maharashtrian community located

mostly in Mumbai. Her husband Kashinath Deshmukh, who worked at Jenson & Nicolson, passed away in 1976. Even though her community is quite liberal and broad-minded, she grew up in a family that did not believe in educating the girl child. Later, her husband taught her English and encouraged her to pursue her interests. She has three children, three grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter who is eight months old.

She had a strong vision of life from a very young age, yet her life was full of obstacles. While she was studying in the 7th standard, her parents decided to discontinue her studies. The memory is still fresh and her words move me in a manner that cannot be captured in words.

Is it true that your principal came home when your parents refused to send you to school?

Yes, I stood first in the 7th standard, but my parents did not want me to study further. My teachers were upset because they felt I was bright. The principal actually came home to talk to my father. The school offered scholarship for me to study up to 11th. I guess they tried their best but my father was not swayed. I was a girl child; there was no point of my education in his eyes.

Were you upset over this?

Yes, I was very sad. I still feel that way.

Apart from studies, what were you interested in?

I was interested in everything. I used to act in school plays all the time. I remember when I was 12; I acted in a play at school. A drama director saw me and took me for an audition to his studio. He wanted me to act in one of his plays.

Were you granted permission?

Of course not! On the contrary, I still remember the slap on my face. My brother got really angry when he heard that I had gone somewhere for an audition. My uncle gave me a



Haresh Patel

warning and told me to behave like other girls.

Did you try convincing them?

I tried really hard. Even at that age, I dreamt of becoming a teacher. I remember pleading with my mother. I told her that they would not incur any expense if I continued my studies because of the scholarship.

What did she say?

She always had only one response: 'Ask your father.' That was the end of it.

Do you think you would have made a good teacher?

I am sure I would have. I find a lot of happiness in teaching my maid's children. I also helped my grandson with his studies while his parents were pursuing their higher studies.

Do you think of life as unfair?

Yes I do. But I am not alone, there are many like me. In fact, when I see the story of Ramabai Ranade, particularly the television serial *Unch Mazza Jhoka* on Zee TV Marathi, I relate strongly to her life. But the point is not to get bitter and still find happiness in things around you.

What brings such wisdom?

I have always enjoyed whatever I have done. Even though I could not finish school, I used to read my friend's books. I always enjoyed listening to music; my friends call me a walking encyclopedia of old songs. After marriage, I lived in a large joint family. I loved cooking and taking care of my family. In fact, cooking remains a passion even now. I also enjoy knitting and have always made sweaters and shawls for my family.

A tip for happiness?

Find joy in whatever you do. Treat your husband's family like your own



Pratibha Jain

"Find joy in whatever you do. Give space so that there is enough room for everyone"

parents and siblings. Treat your daughter in-law like a daughter. Don't expect anyone to change for you, rather give them space so that there is enough room for everyone.

A memory you cherish?

At the age of 42, I joined a textile designing course. I enjoyed it very much. My husband took good care of me and nurtured me.

Have family values changed now?

When we were growing up, relationships were given more importance

than wealth. Nowadays, children go abroad to pursue their studies and career. They send money back home but that is not what parents need the most. I am very lucky because my son and daughter-in-law really take good care of me.

FROM PUSHPA DESHMUKH'S KITCHEN

Wadi-Che-Sambar

Steamed dumplings in spicy coconut gravy

Ingredients

For the *wadi*

- Besan (Bengal gram flour): 1 cup
- Chilli powder: $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp

- Turmeric powder: a pinch
- Coriander-cumin powder: 1 heaped tsp
- Salt to taste

For the gravy

- Onion: 1 medium; chopped
- Coconut: 1½ cups; grated
- Ginger: 1 inch piece
- Garlic: 2-3 cloves
- Coriander leaves: 4-5 sprigs
- Curry leaves: a few
- Mustard seeds: ½ tsp
- Cumin seeds: ½ tsp
- Asafoetida powder: a pinch
- Chilli powder: ½ tsp
- Turmeric powder: a pinch
- Coriander-cumin powder: 1 heaped tsp
- *Goda masala or garam masala:*
1 tsp
- Kokum: 2 pieces
- Jaggery: 1 tsp (optional)
- Salt to taste
- Oil: 2 tbsp

Method

To make the *wadi*, mix all the ingredients with ¾ cup water. Steam this mixture for 15-20 minutes by pouring into a plate or *dhokla* moulds greased with a little oil. The height of the poured batter should be less than ½ inch. Insert the edge of a knife into the steamed mixture to check if it's ready. If the mixture does not stick to the knife, it is done. Otherwise, allow to cook for a few more minutes. Cool and cut into 1-inch squares. Set aside.

For the gravy, you first need to prepare a fried paste known as *talela vaatan*, popular in Maharashtrian cuisine. Sauté half the chopped onions in 1 tsp hot oil until they turn translucent. Add coconut and continue to sauté until light golden. Grind with a little water into a thick paste. Set aside. Grind the ginger, garlic and coriander leaves with very little water into a paste. Heat 1 tbsp oil in a wok and add mustard. As it starts spluttering, add cumin, asafoetida and curry leaves.

Add the remaining chopped onions and sauté until they turn translucent. Add the ginger-garlic-coriander paste and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Add the fried paste of onions and coconut and sauté for 2-3 minutes. Then add the remaining spices and two cups of water. Bring to a boil.

Just before serving, add the *wadi* and bring to a boil—re-boiling the *wadi* tends to dissolve them in the gravy. Serve hot. Garnish with coriander leaves. You could add tamarind paste instead of kokum.

Pratibha Jain, an author and translator from Chennai, is the co-author of two award-winning books *Cooking at Home with Pedatha and Sukham Ayu*. Her area of specialisation is documenting Indian traditions through research, translation and writing

After celebrating your 25th anniversary, celebrate your first.

The first time your eyes met.
The first time you mustered up the courage.
The first time you bared your heart.
The first time you heard "Yes".
The first date.
The first time you held hands.
The first fight.
The first time you made up.
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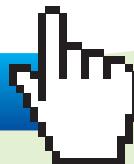
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Waste not

A former railwayman has found the path to saving the planet in his backyard. Now, Chennai's V Balakrishnan tells Jayanthi Somasundaram that the next step is getting entire neighbourhoods involved

This green crusader in Chennai believes the answer to global warming lies in your own backyard. Before you laugh off the suggestion as ludicrous, give V Balakrishnan a chance to explain. After all, he's kicked off a movement of sorts in his neighbourhood and beyond, with a simple contraption to compost kitchen waste into organic manure—all this in his own backyard.

Proof of his success lies in the coconuts he regularly harvests, every tree thriving on organic manure composted by this 78 year-old former railwayman. The wide, tree-lined road outside his gate at Kalakshetra Colony and neatly mowed cow grass lining the pavement are also testament to his belief that the road to saving the earth starts at home.

"You cannot expect the government to do everything; we must sort waste at home and send out less. This is the only way we can reduce and completely avoid landfills," says the retired mechanical engineer. His motto is simple: "If you send out less, the community, city, country and the world will be a better place to live in."

To 'send out less', Balakrishnan has designed a simple contraption that uses gravity to aerobically compost kitchen waste into organic manure. "I use this organic manure for the coconut trees around my house, and the coconuts are so big and tasty," he beams.

It looks like a concrete drum and comprises three rings or separate levels, one above the other. Kitchen waste mixed with dry leaves or shredded newspaper is dropped into the topmost ring and falls on a nylon mesh at the second level. Here, bacteria, catalysed by cotton-seed oil, break down the waste into powdery compost. The compost then collects in the bottom ring and can be drawn out through a small shutter. Running down the length of the drum is a pipe that emerges at the top with two elbows. The pipe aerates the mixture inside the drum.

"In 2008, officers of the Municipal Corporation met residents of Kalakshetra to turn the colony into a model community," recalls Balakrishnan. "They showed me an earthen pot-like system to convert household waste into organic

manure. I realised that you would have to keep lifting the pot to put waste inside them and to get the manure out. It was a laborious process. So I designed a different model. Several modifications later, I arrived at this final model."

The composting contraption's simplicity is its USP and Balakrishnan has received several requests to set it up in other backyards. But he prefers to work only in an advisory capacity. "It is so simple that all you need is a plumber to put it together," he points out. "Including labour, it should cost only ₹ 1,200."

But saving the planet takes a green heart that goes beyond converting kitchen waste into compost. "Can you see that beautiful park down the road?" he asks us. "Land sharks wanted to build an apartment block over there. We [members of Kalakshetra] took them to court and created that area. Look at the children playing there! We call it 'Mini Vrindavan'."

"We must sort waste at home and send out less. This is the only way we can reduce and completely avoid landfills"

savouring the time he spends watering the grass outside his house every day. His enthusiasm was infectious and, soon, his neighbours started doing the same!

If halting climate change begins in your backyard, the next step is going beyond it to inspire and encourage others. "To succeed, it has to be a collective effort," says the septuagenarian. "I visit schools and corporate bodies to talk about the issue. We can make a real difference only if the younger generation embraces change."

Balakrishnan has also written to the chief ministers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, urging them to incorporate the process of composting kitchen waste into the civic system, just as it was mandated that all new constructions create rainwater harvesting systems. "It does not have to be my method, but any method," he iterates. "You should simply not send it to the landfills."



Balakrishnan draws out compost from the bottom ring of a concrete drum

It's tough to mount any crusade alone and Balakrishnan is only too happy to introduce us to the other half of this success story. "My driving force is my wife Sunganthi. She helps me organise the system in such a way that we do not throw out anything but plastic." Sunganthi, also a retired state government employee, offers a broad smile, adding, "The lady of the house should be aware of the importance of recycling. Only then can it work."

With over 200 houses in Kalakshetra, Balakrishnan admits that only 10 or 15 actually recycle waste at home. But there are many outside his neighbourhood that are following in his footsteps. "I have spoken to over 4,000 people in the past few years. Every Sunday, between 4 pm and 6 pm, I consult with people at home. I invite them over to see how my system works and I am ready to help them. A man from Germany recently wrote to me, asking for information. I have also had visitors from restaurants and schools who want to understand my model so they can set it up too."

Kalakshetra Colony largely comprises independent homes, so a composting system is easy to set up and operate. What about people who live in apartments? "The issue of global

warming is completely based on landfills. When waste is burnt at these sites, methane gas is produced. This gas produces heat, which is absorbed by the ozone layer," he explains. "Every home, small or big, can do something. It can even be set up in your balcony."

Raised in Kerala, Balakrishnan says recycling was a natural process back then. Now, it has to be a deliberate effort. "But it doesn't take much," points out Sunganthi. "Start with little things, like carrying a cloth bag when shopping to avoid using plastic." Her husband chips in, "Then tell your neighbours and they might follow your example." The couple reminisces about living in railway quarters in the 1970s. "I didn't see many dustbins in the area back then," remembers Sunganthi. "Everyone was doing some form of recycling at home. We were very organised."

Encouraged by the success of his efforts, Balakrishnan remarks, "Future generations will benefit if we start recycling at home. The manpower, pollution from trucks that carry waste, diesel costs and jam-packed landfills should be on our mind every single day. If every household can do this, we can save the world." *

HEADSTRONG

Over 500 RTI petitions later, Ramashankar Gupta refuses to give in to pressure tactics, writes Manas Shrivastava

A farmer, patriot and disciple of socialism, he carried the flame of change through the years and joined politics because he thought it was a potent way to serve society and country. After completing his higher secondary in 1970, Ramashankar Gupta gave up education and joined the Praja Socialist Party in his hometown in the Manendragarh district of Chhattisgarh. Seven years later, he became a member of the Janta Party, moving to the Janta Dal in 1990; for him, V P Singh was a crusader. When Singh's government collapsed, it shattered Gupta's myth about politics as an instrument of change.

Gupta's flaccid dreams found a foothold in the Right to Information Act (2005). He began filing RTI petitions against the district administration and revenue department. The revelations shook his soul. He was shocked to know the kind of corruption that existed in local governance. A big scam that came to light was about the bulk purchase of pesticides. "Though I had dug up local records, it was a national practice," recollects Gupta. "The government was buying pesticides in bulk, some of them even banned, and dumping them in open spaces and drains just to earn huge commissions from pesticide companies."

Based on the information he received through his RTI petitions, Gupta started filing complaints against allegedly corrupt officials. One of his biggest victories came in 2007 when, based on his complaint to the State Information Commission, Chhattisgarh, the government withdrew its ordinance with reference to ₹ 100 as information charge per page for an RTI application. Similarly, the state

government caved in when, in 2011, it withdrew all the check-posts set up by municipal corporations in the state for collecting environment fee from vehicle owners—the case is still going on and only one person has been arrested thus far.



Manas Shrivastava

"If everyone stops working for society out of fear, how will we bring about change?"

Even with RTI, tackling corruption has not been as easy as Gupta had thought. Of the 500 RTI petitions he has filed against the local government, revenue department and health services, only about seven cases have had a logical conclusion. "Though most of my complaint files are still open, no effective action has been taken," he rues. He alleges that the

government tried to put a spoke in the wheel; officials were adamant that they would not reply to questions but only share information that was on record, and applications in more than 150 words were not accepted. At the same time, he acknowledges that he, to a certain extent, has been able to alter the mindset of officials.

In 2008, Gupta met Anna Hazare and other RTI activists in Raipur where a common realisation dawned: they could access information but who would book the offenders? That's when the need for Jan Lokpal was felt. "It's really a sad scenario but I am waiting for that change when action will be taken against complaints; unfortunately, that has not happened so far," says Gupta, who, in this process of social change, has earned more brickbats than bouquets. While he was busy digging up skeletons in government offices, officials were fabricating fake cases of property fraud against him.

At 61, Gupta is battling eight such cases slapped against him by the district revenue department. While those who stand against RTI are resorting to unfair means to clip his wings, Gupta claims he has not undertaken any financially gainful activity in the past four years. With all his three children settled, he doesn't feel the need to earn anymore. He is content with the ₹ 8,000 he gets in the form of rent from one of his properties.

A man of profound will, he remains steadfast, believing that the more they "try to restrict" him, the more firm he will be about his mission. After all, as he says: "If everyone stops working for society out of fear, how will we bring about change?" *

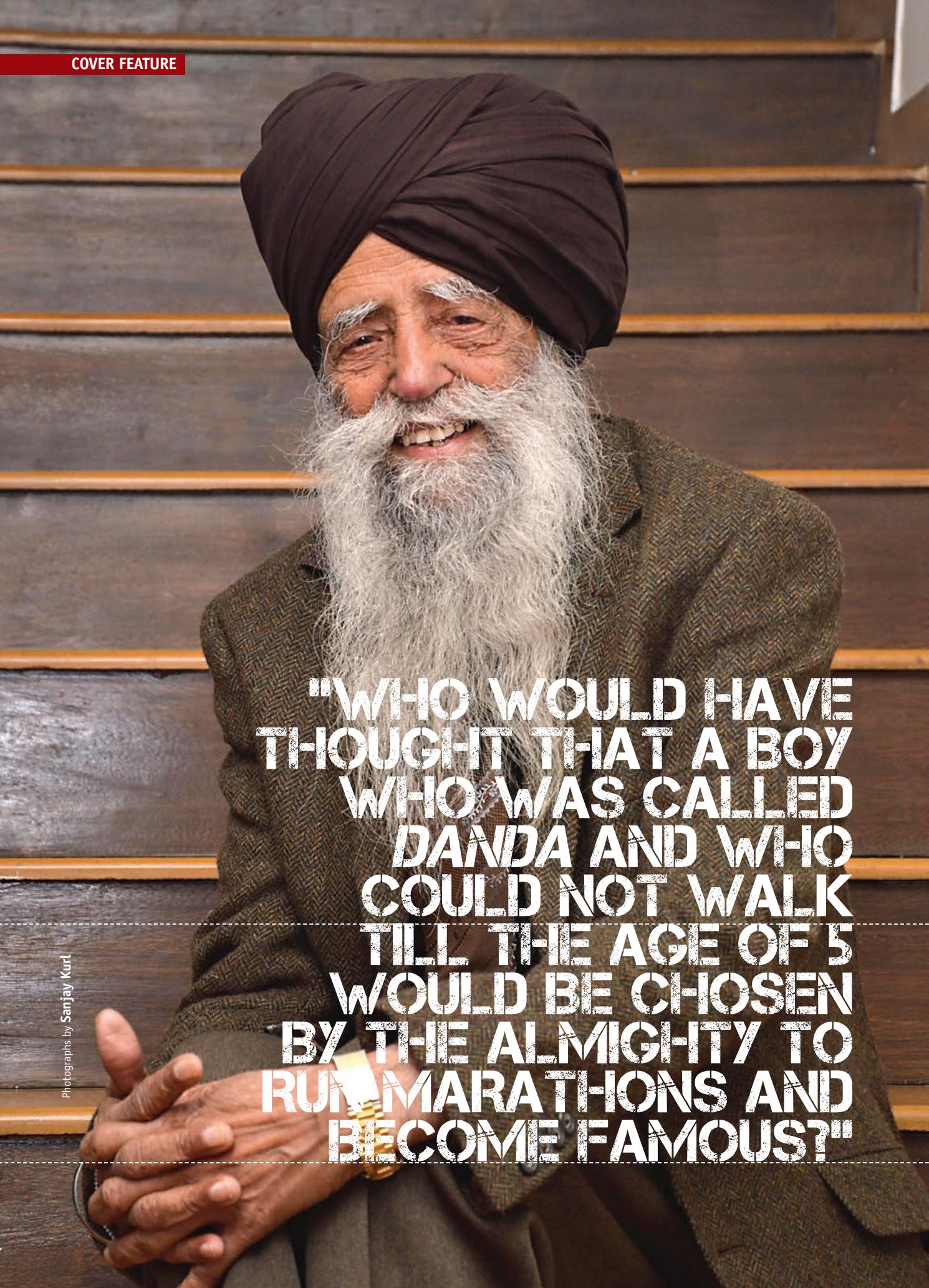
ACCOMPLISHED

AS SARDAR FAUJA SINGH, THE WORLD'S OLDEST MARATHONER, HANGS UP HIS TRAINERS, SUPARNA-SARASWATI PURI FINDS A HUMBLE CENTENARIAN WHOSE LONG ROAD TO FAME WAS MEANT TO FULFIL A SPIRITUAL PURPOSE—TO DO AS THE ALMIGHTY HAD WILLED



If or a handful of men, destiny is scripted at leisure by the Almighty. Sardar Fauja Singh is one of those chosen few. How else can you explain this centenarian's journey from being a skinny child with spindly legs dubbed *danda* (stick) to being the oldest marathon runner known to the world?

Those spindly legs have carried the 'Turbaned Tornado' to marathons across the globe; to Buckingham Palace where he has been felicitated by the Queen; to carry the flame in London for the Athens Olympics in 2004 and the London Olympics in 2012; to shine as a poster boy for sports-wear company Adidas, which has named a range of trainers after him; and to become a role model for silvers across the world.



"WHO WOULD HAVE
THOUGHT THAT A BOY
WHO WAS CALLED
DANDA AND WHO
COULD NOT WALK
TILL THE AGE OF 5
WOULD BE CHOSEN
BY THE ALMIGHTY TO
RUN MARATHONS AND
BECOME FAMOUS?"

Behind Singh's historic sprint lies a tragic story. A father of three daughters and three sons, he shared a special relationship with his fifth-born Kuldip, as they lived and ploughed the fields together in his village near Jalandhar. When Kuldip died in a freak accident in 1994, Singh couldn't quite come to terms with his loss, especially as his wife had died a couple of years earlier. So he relocated to Ilford in East London in 1995, to live with his other son.

The grief and loneliness made his soul ache and prompted him to start running, an activity he loved back home. He felt it would get his mind off the tragedy and give him a sense of purpose. So when he stepped on to the track for the first time, for the London Flora Marathon in 2000, the world was agog. At 5 feet 8 inch, weighing 52 kg and aged 89, the turbaned Sikh with a flowing white beard was an unlikely candidate to make it even halfway to the finish line. Or so everyone thought.

Fauja Singh's feat is now recorded in history and his journey since includes the title of the world's oldest marathoner. He has knocked down many world records for marathon runners in his age group and has bettered even his own timings. But neither glory nor money has made an iota of difference to this simple farmer, an identity he cherishes to date. This centenarian, whose strength and stamina have defied comprehension, attributes his achievements to an abiding faith in God, a life that has no space for negative thoughts or greed, and a vegetarian diet that keeps him in great shape.

Harmony-Celebrate Age waited six months to speak to Singh, who quit competitive running after taking part in the 10-km run at the Hong Kong Marathon on 24 February 2013, five weeks before his 103rd birthday. It was indeed the end of an era. But for Singh, there is no finish line and he will continue to run for sheer pleasure.

Immaculately dressed in brown, Singh walks into the living room of his biographer's residence in Chandigarh with an upright gait. Bearing an air of unmistakable pride peppered with a rustic charm, he greets us in an unwavering voice accompanied by a youthful smile. His wrinkled face and honest eyes reflect the spiritual wisdom that had guided him from hardship to fame. In his biography titled *Turbaned Tornado* (2011), authored by Khushwant Singh, Fauja Singh says of his matchstick-like legs as a child: "Perhaps it was the Almighty's way of preserving my legs for later years." Excerpts from an exclusive interview:

WHAT DRIVES YOU TO RUN EVEN TODAY?

There are all kinds of addictions; some good, some bad. My addiction to run is good, especially for my health. I have more or less stopped serious, long-distance running. But if I do not walk for four to five hours daily, anything from five to 10 miles, there is no *swaad* [taste] in living! I do not walk

as a compulsion. I walk because I love to, because it keeps me happy. Compared to the average aged person—and there aren't many of my vintage—I am content simply because I walk. I am also blessed to have a remarkable trainer, my coach Harmander Singh, who ensures that I remain in good health. My physician is pleasantly surprised to see stable vitals every time I have a routine check-up.

RUNNERS HAVE A FANCY FOR SHOES. DO YOU TOO?

Over the years, I have used numerous pairs of shoes made by the best shoe companies. These days, footwear technology is very advanced. I had an Adidas pair, a very light pair of shoes that had a good spring to them. They also had a unique device that, when connected to a mobile phone, could monitor your run. I liked them very much. German shoes last a long time and help you maintain an upright posture while running instead of encouraging a hunch. My first pair was a German make.

When I was in Toronto, I noticed a pair of shoes in a shop window. They were a beautiful yellow, a favourite of mine as I often wear a yellow turban when I run. The shoes cost \$ 150 and came with a booklet. Although I cannot read, I knew the shoes had special features. I was tempted to buy them but decided not to as I did not really need them, so I moved on. Suddenly, a lady rushed out and invited me into the shop to try the pair. I realised the shoes were indeed unique and meant exclusively for running long distances. They were light and the booklet promised a flying-like experience. I ended up buying them and ran in them while wearing a yellow turban!

WHAT GOES THROUGH YOUR MIND WHEN YOU RUN?

When I began running, there would be a *mela* around me for the first 15 miles... people dancing and a lot of fanfare. But after 20 miles, I would get tired and look down, as coached by Harmandar, and take His [God's] name for the rest of the way. When I began running marathons and was stronger at 89, I would get breathless but my legs would not feel a thing. Now, my legs grow weak but I do not feel breathless!

WHAT ARE YOUR MOST UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES?

[Visibly sombre] I desperately try to overcome the memory of the death of my fifth son Kuldip in an accident, every day of my life, but it just does not go away. He was young and loved the rural way of life unlike my other children who went overseas, seeking a better life. His attachment to agriculture was similar to mine.

He had specially constructed a spacious bungalow, the only one in the village at the time. He planned a comfortable and secure future for his family and me, so that we could be together like a *pind da tabbar* [typical village family]. It was all destroyed in a flash with his going. It has been almost three decades since I saw my fields. Whenever I visit

"I DO NOT CONSIDER MYSELF OLD AND STILL ENJOY BUYING A SUIT WORTH £ 150 DESPITE MY FAMILY'S OBJECTIONS. THEY FEEL I DO NOT NEED TO FLASH SUCH EXPENSIVE ATTIRE AT MY AGE. BUT I ENJOY BUYING GOOD THINGS FOR MYSELF"

the village, I cringe when I pass by the house he built. To date, I cannot bring myself to even look at a picture of him.

How do I cope with this? Well, I live each day following a strict routine that I have chalked out for myself over the years. I wake up at 6 am, drink a cup of tea, followed by a bath after ironing my clothes. You see, I live by my own diktat, which is *ohi sunno jo samajh aa javey, te ohi khao jo hajum ho javey* (Listen only to what you understand and relate to and eat only what can be digested). I tune into Punjab Radio every morning to listen to the chaste, rustic Punjabi I am used to. I eat breakfast, take a catnap and then go out for the day. I first drop in at the local *gurdwara* to meet fellow Sikhs and catch up with the *gupshup* on Punjab. Then, for at least five to six hours, I walk while buying small purchases for myself and to ensure that I am exhausted by the evening. It is crucial that I retire without entertaining a single negative thought, which might spring to an idle mind. This regimen has kept me going all these years.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE YOUTH IN INDIA?

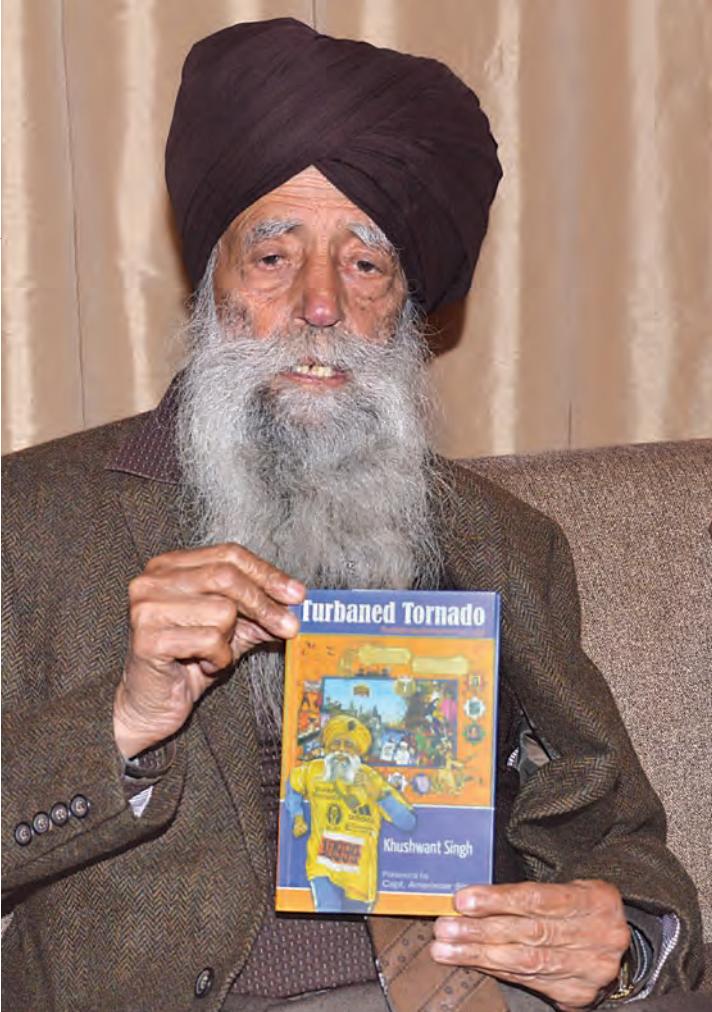
I feel the average youngster in India *vigadd gaya hai* [is thoroughly spoilt]! However, if the Indian government wants, it can productively channel the energy of the youth.

There was a time when I avoided visiting my house in Punjab as I felt strongly about unfortunate incidents like outraging the modesty of womenfolk. Drug menace has corroded the state and its youth to a grave extent. Then again, it is up to the *sarkar* [government] to persuade or dissuade the young. In the Punjab of my youth, we believed in taking care of three things: women, money and food. As long as they were cared for, their value remained intact.

WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

In addition to the passion for running, God has guided me to do a lot of charity work, which I enjoy immensely. I enjoy the *sukh* [happiness] of *sach* [truth]. My mind has no place for greed of any sort. Had I felt any greed, of material acquisition, monetary gain or otherwise, particularly after the success and fame my running has got me, *main taan dubb jaunda* [I would have sunk]! Greed makes a man succumb to destruction.

The money raised by the marathons I run always goes to charitable causes. I have no idea how much I have donated in the past 10 years. [*According to his coach and family, Singh has contributed over £ 120,000 to charities like the Cancer Research, Age Concern and British Heart Foundation since he started his marathon career*].



In Mohali this January, I ran in a mini-marathon for social awareness. There, I registered my concerns about women's security and their rights. I am happy to offer my services for a good cause. Coming back to my sports shoes, I have quite a collection and have given away several pairs along with some of my turbans.

WHAT IS THE STORY AROUND YOUR NAME?

I was raised in a clan of old aunts, who would affectionately call me *Fauju*. I once asked my old *tayee* [father's older brother's wife] how I got my name. She said my family had once visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar on a full moon night. While doing the *parikrama* [encircling the shrine], they overheard a woman shout, 'Ve Fauja Singhya'. They liked the sound of it so much that it was decided that if a son was born, he would be named Fauja Singh!

A LOT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT YOUR DATE OF BIRTH. DOES IT MATTER TO YOU? WHAT DO YOU FEEL ABOUT IT?

I have nothing to say because it is not important to me. [Singh's British passport lists his date of birth as 1 April 1911.] In my day, babies were delivered by a midwife and births were not recorded. I do not consider myself old and still enjoy buying a suit worth £ 150 despite my family's objections. They feel I do not need to flash such expen-

sive attire at my age. But I enjoy buying good things for myself.

Lately, I have begun to experience weakness in my legs. The veins get pulled, causing pain and discomfort, although my coach ensures I drink enough saline water while training and running. But when my legs feel weak, I ask myself what I could have possibly neglected the night before. You see, I would rather go without eating a morsel at night just to wake up feeling bright and energised.

YOU HAVE WITNESSED MANY HISTORIC EVENTS LIKE THE PARTITION, EMERGENCY AND OPERATION BLUE STAR. CAN YOU SHARE YOUR REFLECTIONS ON THESE?

I vividly remember Bhagat Singh's *shahaadat* [martyrdom]. I was 35 years old during Partition, a father of two grown-up daughters. I witnessed such sin during the *batwara* [Partition] on the Pathankot Road when the *kafiley* [caravans] passed. The ground was paved with black flies that covered dead bodies thrown in trenches. It was carnage and there were refugees on either side. It was the most horrific sight you can imagine. When destruction and suffering are unleashed, no man can prevent it as *Maharaj Ji* [the Almighty] will make it happen, regardless. Who would have thought that a boy who was called *danda* and who could not walk till the age of five would be chosen by the Almighty to run marathons and become famous?

TELL US ABOUT YOUR WIFE.

[Smiles] I was married to Gian Kaur in Hoshiarpur's village Kalkat. I was perhaps 20 years old then. No one comes into the world with a companion and no one leaves the world together. She was generally healthy when she died after a blood vessel in her brain burst. I miss her. One day, in London, while coming out of a *gurdwara*, a group of women circled me and asked about my wife, saying, 'Babaji, where is our *mataji*?' I told them it has been over 20 years [she died in 1992] since she left me to be with God. Had she been around, do you think I would have been allowed to run all over the world?

YOU RAN WITH FOUR GENERATIONS OF YOUR FAMILY IN TORONTO LAST OCTOBER. HOW WAS THE EXPERIENCE?

[Beaming with pride] It was a happy experience although I was concerned about the youngest members who were under 10, a great-grandson and great-granddaughter. I kept asking the older lot to be careful of these two but they kept pace with me!

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE FOODS?

England is the worst country in the world when it comes to weather. It is cold and damp, which is why, all year round

I take flaxseed *pinni* [a sweetmeat] along with my cup of tea every morning. I carry this without fail even when travelling. [Interestingly, after a news report in Canada that the secret to Singh's health was *Alsi Pinni*, many Indian stores started storing them and advertised them as food for longevity!] I only have fresh home-made yoghurt followed by two glasses of lukewarm water, and then I begin my day's walk. I have never eaten fried stuff like *pakora* or *parantha*. Every time I make a trip back home, I return to London with a kilogram of powdered ginger that I use twice a week to make curry. I avoid any food that creates gas. I like sweets but not chocolates and candy. I must have my nightcap of warm milk before I sleep. It is very crucial that I wake up every day with my legs feeling as light as feathers. Hence, I religiously follow this routine.

DO YOU ENJOY MOVIES AND MUSIC?

Yes, I enjoy watching Punjabi films. I also like listening to music, from oldies like Surinder Kaur's songs, to the recent ones by Gurdas Mann. My favourite is *Dil hona chahida jawan, umaraan nu ki karnaa* [Your heart needs to be young, what is there in age?].

WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE WORLD?

Compared to India and Pakistan with their age-old animosity and levels of corruption, the rest of the world is better. Having said that; let me tell you a little story. A village woman was once told to give five *laddoo* to the most beautiful child in the village. She gave them all to her own child! [Laughs loudly] "*Burreh layi sab ton wadiya jagah oyeyo hai jithey odda tabbar hove, gabroo nu. O sona lagda jithey kam hai.*" (For an old man, his favourite place is where his family is. Likewise, for a young man, the best place is where his work is.)

I have travelled the world and, to me, every country is beautiful, each one endowed with unique features. Singapore is amazingly clean; Germany is beautiful; while England, which is home to me, is a melting pot of cultural and global identities. Birmingham and Southall are virtually mini-Indias. Moreover, wherever I go across the world, people welcome me with open arms.

AS THE BRAND AMBASSADOR OF ADIDAS, YOU HAVE SHARED SPACE WITH ICONS LIKE DAVID BECKHAM AND MOHAMMED ALI. WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

On such occasions, I look to God and ask Him what all he is engaging me with! I do not get arrogant that I am amid world-famous achievers. I am a simple, illiterate village man who loves meeting people from different walks of life. I greet everybody with equal enthusiasm and respect. When I was running outside England once, there was a very famous English player who was keen to meet me while everyone else was going crazy wanting to meet him! [Bursts into peals of laughter] The Queen of England

FAST FACTS

- Shot to fame in 2000, when he completed the London Marathon—a gruelling 26.2 miles in 6 hrs, 54 min. Knocked 58 min off the world best in the 90-plus age bracket.
- Personal best is at the Toronto Waterfront Marathon in 2003 (5 hrs, 40 min).
- Holds the UK record for the 200 m, 400 m, 800 m, 1 mile and 3,000 m for his age group. Each record is 94 min and less.
- Major marathons: London (6), Canada (2), New York (1).
- Poster boy for Adidas, which has named a range of trainers after him.
- Secret to his strength: Ginger curry for dinner.
- Secret to his longevity: *Alsi Pinni* (Punjabi sweetmeat).

has, more than once, shaken hands with me while photographers have gone nuts. Strangely, none of this goes to my head.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT DRUG-ENHANCERS USED COMMONLY BY SPORTSMEN? FOR INSTANCE, THE CASE OF LANCE ARMSTRONG?

There is no need to consume performance-enhancing drugs. Some people have, in the past, accused me of consuming such stuff, of taking money to run marathons. They were silenced after investigations and certifications from relevant authorities proved otherwise. These substances provide a momentary energy boost but they weaken the body rapidly. Earlier, when I was accused of such things, I would get angry but now I simply fold my hands and submit that I am a simple, illiterate village man who knows nothing else but running.

YOUR OPINION ON THE SPORTS SCENARIO IN INDIA?

The saddest part is the performance-enhancing drugs sportsmen take. We do have world-class sportsmen who win the Olympics and other laurels. Anything is achievable if the Indian government chooses to do its bit for sports and its enhancement.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED?

A lot has been said about me as well as my achievements. On the Internet, you have quotes and proverbs coined on me and my accomplishments. I do not wish to dictate how I would like to be remembered. I know for a fact that everyone will remember me for all that I have done long after I am gone, just as I know that those who speak ill of me are also responsible for extending my age! If everyone thought only well of me, I would have sunk long ago! ☀



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CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

An auteur filmmaker and an iconic actor - together they capture the aesthetics and grammar of motion pictures. Steven Spielberg and Amitabh Bachchan get in front of the camera to converse in the language of filmmaking, reports **Srirekha Pillai**

TAJ LAND'S END, MUMBAI
- EVENING

Resplendent in white, Amitabh Bachchan strides in with a protective arm around the unassuming Steven Spielberg, who sports the classic black-and-white combo.

The magic of moviemaking unspools as the two legends go into flashback mode. And just like a wholesome movie with the right mixture of emotions, action, adventure, drama and a few laughs, the interaction organised by Reliance Entertainment gives you all of it.

STEVEN SPIELBERG
(*His witty repartee has the audience in splits*)

When comparisons are drawn between *E.T.* and George Lucas's *Star Wars*: "While George travels to outer space, many million light years away, to meet aliens; I want aliens to come down to earth and run around in my backyard."

Referring to the make-believe world of movies: "When I saw spectators throwing up their popcorn in fear during the screening of *Jaws*, I couldn't believe my luck that they actually believed in the white turd!"



On the experience of making the movie described as a watershed moment in the history of filmmaking: "Jaws had scared me off filmmaking. We had spent nearly nine months shooting the 20-ft machine (the giant white shark) underwater in adverse conditions, during which many of my cast and crew and I suffered from seasickness. I never thought I would make a movie again in my life."

The *Jaws* scare: "The menacing shark had become such a cultural phenomenon that people were afraid to step into the seas. No sooner would people enter the pools in their backyard than their friends would go dah-dum-dah-dum, replicating the soundtrack of *Jaws*."

AMITABH BACHCHAN

You are a self-professed fan of Bond movies. Did you do the *Indiana Jones* series as an homage to Bond films?

STEVEN SPIELBERG

Well, it was George Lucas who was inspired by the series we saw as kids to do *Indiana Jones*. I approached Albert 'Cubby' Broccoli, the producer of the Bond films, twice. But he felt I was not experienced enough to make a film for him. When I approached him after *Jaws*, he told me tongue-in-cheek that he may consider me if ever there would be a Bond film on water.

(*Laughter all around*)

AMITABH BACHCHAN

Much has been written about your relationship with your fellow filmmakers, Francis Coppola, George Lucas, Martin Scorsese and others. Was there any kind of envy?

STEVEN SPIELBERG

Together, we are a little bit of a mafia. Though we love each other, we are overtly critical about each other's works. My movies are better for the input given by them. To peals of laughter, "Though I don't get a movie from Coppola any longer, I do get a bottle of wine every evening."

AMITABH BACHCHAN

You've said you want to be remembered by *Schindler's List* and *E.T.* Why is it so; you've done so many splendid films?

STEVEN SPIELBERG

Wherever I go, people talk about these two movies. The *E.T.* demographic grew up and watched *Schindler's List*. *E.T.* also brought out the parent in me. By the time we finished shooting, I had become so attached to Henry Thomas, Drew Barrymore and Robert MacNaughton, that I wanted to take

them home. *E.T.* also helped me cope with the most dramatic event in my life, my parents' divorce when I was just 17. During that phase, I had created an imaginary friend. To me, *E.T.* was a friend who could be the brother I never had and a father that I didn't feel I had anymore. After all, I don't visit shrinks. Movies are my psychiatry.

AMITABH BACHCHAN

Your first films were shot at home with an 8 mm camera.

STEVEN SPIELBERG

As a child I used to hang out with my dad's camera. Using the Lionel train set my dad had got, I made my first film, setting up cameras at all possible angles and capturing a train crash. I held home screenings of the film, charging my friends 25 cents, while my sister sold popcorn.

AMITABH BACHCHAN

When you shoot a film, does it turn out exactly the way you have envisioned?

STEVEN SPIELBERG

Most of my movies are fixed on the editor's table. After the first screening, I mostly exit the dark room, shaking my head and in tears, wondering how can I make this atrocity? Thank God for editors. I call them my third eye.

AMITABH BACHCHAN

(*With a smile*)

In your earlier years—and sometimes even now—your films are driven by characters such as a fish, aliens or robots. Lots of actors feel threatened by that!

(*Audience roars with laughter*)

STEVEN SPIELBERG

(*Smiles*)

Actors are equally important to me. As I have moved beyond middle age, I am turning more towards actors to save my career. So that's why I work more with the likes of Daniel Day Lewis and Leonardo DiCaprio. I would not have made *Lincoln* but for Daniel Day Lewis. Though I failed to convince him twice, Leo, who came home for dinner one night, put us together. Three days later, Lewis was on.

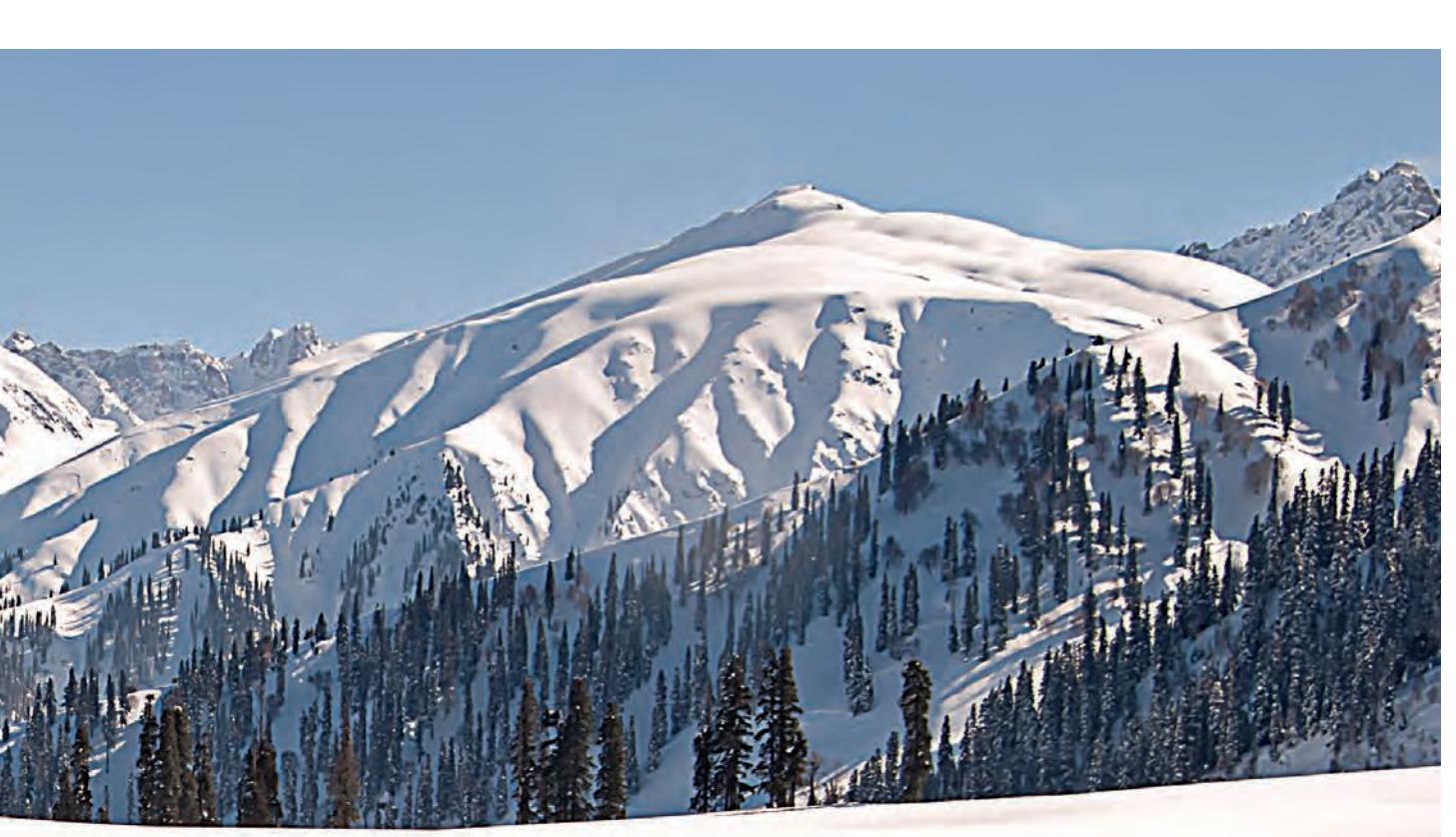
CURTAINS COME DOWN

Spielberg and Bachchan mingle with the select audience comprising moviemakers.

LIGHTS FADE OUT

DESTINATION





A WHITE EMBRACE

WITH ITS SNOW-CUDDLED MOUNTAINS, HALF-FROZEN LAKES, TULIP GARDENS AND PINE FORESTS, KASHMIR SPINS AN ETHEREAL MAGIC

◆ ◆ ◆ **Gustasp and Jeroo Irani**



For many decades Kashmir had infiltrated our dreams like the memory of a lost, unrequited love, inaccessible and out of reach. Not surprising, as the Paradise on Earth—troubled yet irresistible—holds a soft spot in the collective unconscious of most Indians. With a shroud of tenuous peace enveloping it of late, the Valley is now gradually warming up to tourists.

As we step off our plane, an avalanche of Bollywood memories swamp us: Shammi Kapoor rolling down snowy slopes yelling “Yahoo” in *Junglee*; the Kapoor scion serenading a coy Sharmila Tagore in a *shikara* in *Kashmir Ki Kali* and Amitabh Bachchan and Rekha’s evergreen *Dekha ek khwab* amid blushing tulip fields in *Silsila*. Indeed, many blockbusters have packaged this Eden with dollops of syrupy romance.

As we drive down from the airport, we get glimpses of Kashmir’s ageless beauty. Srinagar is not a battle-scarred town as we had expected but exudes the beauty of a woman who has not aged despite two decades of strife. With its sloping red and green-roofed homes, new low-slung malls, a handful of fast food restaurants and the timeless backdrop of lakes and mountains, the town has an aura of sleepy prosperity. The lakeshore boulevard washed in the golden light of a wintry sun reminds us that unfortunately Kashmir’s heart-stopping beauty, like the legendary Helen of Troy’s stunning good looks, has brought great misfor-

tune to the region—two countries locked in an eternal tussle to possess her completely.

We are in the Valley even as the icy fingers of winter have clamped it in a white embrace. On one side of Vivanta by Taj, where we are staying, rises the seismic knot of the Zabarwan mountains and below our garden patio flares Dal Lake, its still waters skimmed by canopied *shikara*, flocks of wild ducks, floating gardens and the inimitable houseboats with their proud carved prows and *bukhari*-warmed interiors.

In the evening, we set off on a *shikara* cruise on a lake awash in a shade of molten gold, akin to the colour of the local *kahwa* tea, brewed with strands of saffron, cinnamon and garnished with almond slivers. As we glide in silence, awed by the abundance of calm all around us, narrow country boats slip in on either side, bearing sweet-tongued vendors trying to sell saffron, spices, walnuts, almonds, silver jewellery, shawls, bedspreads and even freshly brewed *kahwa*.

Along the lakeshore boulevard, lined with tall bare poplars and *chinar* (maple trees) poking defiant fingers at the sky, local men in calf-length *pheran* (a kind of long poncho worn over trousers) stroll in companionable silence. A few groups of pink-cheeked women amble along, arms linked, exuding the freshness of newly fallen snow. They gaze with unabashed curiosity at a bevy of young women tourists walking a little ahead of us and greet them. Srinagar nights

Kashmir offers experiences as diverse as a stroll in the historical Mughal Gardens and a breathtaking ride on the grand gondola





Snow banks line the roads like piles of whipped cream; bronzed skiers from the West, helmeted and clad in neon gear, schuss down the slopes, turning and curving like ballet dancers on steroids

may be very chilly but the welcome is definitely very warm. Back at the resort, we gaze at a post-sunset sky that gives way to a velvety night, a-glimmer with the twinkling lights of the houseboats moored at the rim of the lake and the lights of Srinagar strung in an arc around the town.

Early in the morning, we take in a glimpse of the horizon serrated by the snow-capped Zabarwan mountains with thick bands of mist around their thrusting bellies. Soon we are off to the Mughal Gardens, Nishat and the Chasma Shahi, tiered and landscaped in the Mughal style and framed by mountains and lakes. At the Chasma Shahi Garden, we drink deep of the mountain spring that is channelled through fountains and water bodies and is said to be the purest water in Kashmir. Terraced Pari Mahal, once a royal observatory, offers mesmerising views of Dal Lake while the Hazratbal shrine and the Jama Masjid are worthwhile stops too.

Srinagar, Gulmarg and Pahalgam have a white muffled quality about them that only winter can bestow. Early morning, we drive to Gulmarg via Tangmarg, 53 km from Srinagar. Most tourists stop at Tangmarg to switch to cars

with snow chains on their wheels to increase traction on the icy, slippery roads. Ramshackle shops in Tangmarg rent gumboots and winter wear for tourists unprepared for the inclement weather.

We drive past forests of pine that fill deep valleys and snow-whipped mountains that seem to block our view of the sky—well, almost. Snow banks line the roads like piles of whipped cream and icicles hang from green-roofed blond wood cottages that dot the bowl of Gulmarg, located 8,825 ft above sea level. Bronzed skiers from the West, helmeted and clad in neon gear, schuss down the slopes, turning and curving like ballet dancers on steroids.

After checking into the Khyber Himalayan Resort and Spa, where Alpine style meets Kashmiri decor, we rush outside to clamber onto the gondola, one of the highest and longest in Asia, which takes us up to Kongdoori mountain, swinging and swaying over dark green forests of pine and sheer mountain slopes powdered with soft snow. A short walk away from Kongdoori station is an open-air restaurant where we savour *kahwa*, while the sun's healing rays thaw us out a bit.

Pahalgam's hushed valleys like Betab and Aru are serene bowls of cream in winter where we romp in the snow, zip around on a sledge pulled by a muscled local and breathe in the sharp crystal-clear air by the lungful

Fortified, we embark on the second stage of our journey to the top of Affarwat mountain from where one can see the Line of Control and the frozen Alpather lake. We realise we have travelled a total aerial distance of 5 km! Domestic tourists, as well as those from Southeast Asia, play in the snow, jump around and pose for photographs. On the other hand, hardcore skiers from Europe get ready to take off for Tangmarg, a mountainous forested route spiked with a hint of danger. Skimming over snow drifts and pristine slopes unmarked by trails, they are ski gods totally in command of a seemingly hostile environment—ski runs that vary from 8,700 ft to 14,000 ft, some of the highest in the world.

We return to the Khyber in time for high tea at the Tea Lounge, not cucumber sandwiches and scones but bite-sized Kashmiri versions: quiche stuffed with a local vegetable, a phyllo pastry encased *seekh* kebab, *phirni* in a

tart and saffron cheese straws, among others. We revel in the rich interiors that are evocative of the spirit of the land—bulky copper samovars, papier-mâché screens, crewel stitch embroidered silk drapes and exquisite Kashmiri rugs, all alluring references to the multi-talented local industries.

From our mountain-view rooms, muscled peaks piled high with snow and tall defiant dark green pines fill our line of vision. The pines occasionally shudder, offloading snow with a sigh. We sip early morning tea on our balcony, shivering in the subzero temperatures but find the view so captivating that it is difficult to tear ourselves away.

Yes, Gulmarg is alluring but our first sight of Pahalgam or the Valley of Shepherds, a few days later, elicits a loud “wow”. Located in a valley by the Lidder river, Pahalgam has the secretive air of a snowbound village where Snow



(Clockwise from top left) Children following their flock in the Valley of Shepherds; Muskaan sports a welcoming smile as her grandfather looks on; a woman punting down a shopping avenue on Dal Lake



FACT FILE

WHEN TO VISIT

Kashmir is a year-round destination with each season showcasing a different facet of the Valley. In winter, snow-cuddled mountains and valleys and half-frozen lakes and rivers take centre stage while spring and summer blaze with colour. In autumn, the landscape is tinged with gold and shades of rust.

GETTING THERE

By air: Srinagar is the nearest airport and well connected with flights from Mumbai and Delhi.

By train: The nearest railhead is Jammu Tawi (305 km).

By road: One can also drive from Jammu to Srinagar.

WHERE TO STAY

While Vivanta by Taj at Dal View in Srinagar, (Tel: 0194-2461111) combines luxury with unsurpassable views, The Lalit Grand Palace (Tel: 0194-2501001/2) is a slice of history. There are a number of mid-budget and budget options as well, details of which are available on the website of the J&K Tourism board, www.jktourism.org.

In Gulmarg, The Khyber Himalayan Resort and Spa (Tel: 01954-254666) is the top of the heap, while there are others like the modest old-world Highlands Park (Tel: 01954-254430, 254491, 254407).

Hotel Himalaya House (Tel: 01936-243072) and Hotel Brown Palace (Tel: 01936-243255) are good options in Pahalgam.

White and the Seven Dwarfs may well have lived, enveloped in pine forests and surrounded by an amphitheatre of snow-capped peaks. Pahalgam's hushed valleys like Betab and Aru are serene bowls of cream in winter where we romp in the snow, zip around on a sledge pulled by a muscled local and breathe in the sharp crystal-clear air by the lungful. The sound of the rushing turquoise-blue Lidder, half-frozen in places, is like a continuous soundtrack, interspersed with the calls of jet-black ravens that perch on bare-branched trees.

Driving back to Srinagar, 96 km away, apple-cheeked children wave to us. One of them asks us to stop. We hand her a bunch of grapes that she accepts with a "Thank you." She adds with a smile, "My name is Muskaan. Where are you from?"

A short conversation later, suffused with the warmth of the people of the Valley, we drive back to Srinagar to spend our last night in Kashmir. Next morning, we wake up to a luminous dawn and the news of Afzal Guru's execution. With a curfew clamped in parts of Srinagar and the Valley, we are forced to stay back, giving us another opportunity to soak in the shifting moods and play of light on the ethereal Dal Lake and the majesty of the Zabarwan mountains from our garden sit-out.

During the return flight to Mumbai, the images of a land blessed with extraordinary beauty unreel in our memory. Despite its tumultuous history, we have had felt a sense of peace there, as soft as a ball of snow—but, hopefully, not as evanescent! ✽

What is 60?

The number of push-ups you have to do this week.

The number of movies you have to catch up on.

The number of bad jokes you cracked last month.

The number of times you told your grandson
to get away from the TV set and get a life.

The number of places you have to travel to.

What it's not, is your age.

At least not in your head.

Or in your heart.





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Photographs by Haresh Patel

Gujarat on a plate

HIRALAL KASHIDAS BHAJIAWALA'S *SURTI* DELICACIES ARE AS DISTINCTIVE AS SURAT'S CORE VALUES. **EKTA V** RELISHES THE SPREAD

As you approach C P Tank in South Mumbai's Bhuleshwar area, the aroma of freshly made *papdi* and *kachori* inexorably draws you to Hiralal Kashidas Bhajiwala. At this savoury destination, your olfactory senses demand that the delicious *Surti* fare (from Surat in Gujarat)—complete with *khaman dhokla*, *khandvi*, *pathara*, *bhajia* and *undhiyu*—not be resisted. For the past 80 years, this iconic eatery has been synonymous with authentic *Surti* delicacies and is undoubtedly the most popular snack shop in this Gujarati neighbourhood. Indeed, regular customers swear by the authenticity of the traditional flavours doled out here. "To me, this little shop is mini-Gujarat," affirms Balkrishna Joshi, a loyalist since the 1980s. "My visit to South Mumbai is incomplete without visiting it. I'm yet to come across another place that serves such a wide range of *Surti* fare in Mumbai."

LEGACY

From humble beginnings in the 1930s, this family business is now run by its third generation: brothers Bakul Shah and Gaurang Shah. The tiny eatery, replete with old-world charm, is named after their grandfather. "He was an expert cook, his trademark being *kandha bhajia*. We feel blessed to carry his legacy forward," says 62 year-old Bakul Shah, adding that he was 23 when he joined the business—it was the same day he wrote his engineering exam. His younger brother Gaurang was 20 and joined even before he graduated. "We are probably the most educated family in our community; our father was an electrical engineer who graduated from the US, but he too worked in this family business," they claim with pride.

Maintaining a legacy this old is fraught with challenges; while satisfying their demanding yet loyal clientele generation after generation is one of them, the changing demog-

raphy is another. "From being a traditional Gujarati neighbourhood, the area has now become a commercial centre," says Bakul Shah. Brother Gaurang couldn't agree more. "Yes, that has been our toughest challenge—not to let the business suffer because of changing times," he concedes. "However, while you lose some, you gain some as well. We now have corporate clients and professional caterers who buy from us. We do miss some familiar faces—they have either moved to the suburbs or left the country—but most of them have kept in touch."

At the core of this family venture are core values of honesty, dedication and a firm belief in *karma*. "Earlier, we had cooks who loved cooking as much as we love serving," elaborates Gaurang Shah. "We owe our popularity to dishes that were more about the maker's skill than the recipe. But with changing times, we have de-skilled the process and brought in machines."

Given the popularity of their brand name, why haven't they branched out? "We could have," they respond. "But we are more than satisfied with the appreciation we get from our customers; we don't feel the need to expand." This also en-

sures their recipes remain a closely guarded family secret. "Our aim is that every dish that we serve should be consistent every single day," says the younger Shah.

Little wonder then, that loyal customers line up every Sunday for up to 20 minutes for the distinctive taste the Shah brothers bring to their much-in-demand *undhiyu*, a *Surti* specialty made of green beans, raw banana and purple yam. So, what is the ideal *undhiyu*? "It is very easy. *Undhiyu* has only eight ingredients," they chide with obvious relish. "What a lot of people don't get is that a dish is only as good as its raw materials. All our vegetables and supplies come from Surat and are very fresh." Thankfully, their popularity hasn't been channelled into the price tag—the dish comes at a reasonable Rs 320 a kg!

Are profits suffering, then? "My margins are smaller, but I am content," says Bakul Shah. "And in all probability, we are the last generation in the business. My son lives in the US and is happy there. I'm not looking to make more money now. I just want to spend time with my grandchildren, teach them our values and travel a little."



MAYA MEMSAAB?

HER CHARM AND BEAUTY HAVE NOT WANED THROUGH THE MANY MOONS IN HER LIFE. ZEENAT AMAN, THE BOLLYWOOD DIVA OF THE 1970S, RETURNS AS A 'MEGALOMANIAC MAYA' WHO HELMS A BEAUTY PAGEANT IN ASHISH HAVSAR'S IN-THE-MAKING FILM. THE ROLE IS TAILOR-MADE FOR THE VETERAN, CLAIM INDUSTRY SOURCES.



Zooming into the past

ADITYA ARYA'S MUSEUM TRACES THE FASCINATING JOURNEY OF A CAMERA FROM THE STUDIO TO THE STREETS. AMBICA GULATI IS SPELLBOUND

Rare cameras from the past greet you at the Vintage Camera Museum in Gurgaon near New Delhi. Leading us through this archetypal journey is Aditya Arya, whose prized collection of photographs from the **PHOTOGRAPHY** Independence movement and priceless cameras that captured history when it was in the making form the core of this museum. The museum is a part of this 53 year-old photojournalist's India Photo Archive Foundation that aims to preserve and restore

photographic data from a whole era for posterity.

A first-of-its-kind museum in India, it is housed in the basement of Arya's home. A few steps down under the earth and visitors are transported into the 1800s, when the humble journey of the camera actually began. While each camera marks the technological evolution of the apparatus, complementing the collection are archival pictures of renowned photographer Kulwant Roy,

Arya's uncle. Roy had left several of his iconic images with Arya, who now possesses some of the original negatives of the Indian Constitution being signed and the early years of the Republic of India. Some of these eye-catchers are of original advertisements by Kodak in the 1830s.

While photography was invented in 1830, Arya's collection of cameras dates from the 1870s until 2004—from early wooden field cameras to the latest digital ones. Arya visited almost



A first-of-its-kind museum in the country transports visitors into the 1800s when the humble journey of the camera actually began

every big town in India and scoured almost every *kabari* bazaar in search of these rare gems. In October 2011, he decided to showcase his extensive collection comprising models from companies such as Mamiya, Thornton-Pickard, Fujifilm, Hasselblad and Leica.

Pointing to a large wooden field camera on a tripod, Arya explains that the earlier cameras were made of wood, later evolving into metal and, with the passage of time, shrinking to the size they are today. Visitors are spellbound looking at the antique collection: Camera Obscura, an early 19th century pin-hole camera from the US; a camera with a shutter made of thick cloth; another one with an interchangeable lens; a flashbulb camera used by American photographer Margaret Bourke-White, well-known for capturing Mahatma Gandhi with his *charkha*. The list continues. More

amazing are the wooden 3D viewers. A picture taken sometime in 1901 seen in a wooden 3D is quite an experience!

There's also the world's smallest camera, Minox, from the 1970s. "Analogue photography died in the 2000s," says Arya, standing before a collection of films made by Kodak and Fuji. "Most companies don't even make film cameras anymore. And then, there is the Rolls-Royce of cameras, Sinar, which cost ₹ 800,000 to ₹ 1 million in the 1990s. Complicated to use, but you get photographs of amazing quality."

As neatly arranged rows of cameras dot the well-lit room, it's certainly a treat to watch the equipment getting transformed over time from stationary objects in the studio to smile-detectors on the street. Indeed, a picture-perfect journey!



NATURE IN HER FEET

AS SPRING KNOCKS ON OUR DOORS, 53 YEAR-OLD KATHAK EXPONENT ADITI MANGALDAS'S SOLO PRODUCTION *FOOTPRINTS ON WATER* AT THE 11TH JIVAN PANI MEMORIAL FESTIVAL IN DELHI PROVED TO BE A NARRATIVE OF CHANGING SEASONS. SPRING BLOSSOMED WITH HER STEPS, THE STAGE RESOUNDED AS IF WITH THE DESCENT OF RAIN, THE SILENCE OF AUTUMN AND WINTER AND REJUVENATION THEREAFTER. *VASANT, GRISHMA, PATJHAD, SHEET...*THE SEASONS CHANGED WITH THE DANCER'S SWAY AND TWIRL—AS SIMPLE AS LIFE, AS EVOCATIVE AS ROMANCE FOR NATURE AND YET VIRTUOSO BEYOND BELIEF.

Artist in transit

Born in Aligarh and working out of a Manhattan loft for the past three decades, printmaker and sculptor Zarina Hashmi, popularly known as Zarina, crossed borders but couldn't erase home plans, permanently etched in her cerebral and emotional memories. Now 75, Zarina was recently the artist in focus at the Guggenheim Museum with *Zarina: Paper Like Skin*. Her deeply toned and textured prints are indeed like skin, with life and experiences eternally crawling in and out. Zarina's story of dislocation and loss, sweetly suffused with Urdu script, has won her accolades, buyers and fans in New York, Brussels, Dubai and New Delhi, where her work is being exhibited at Gallery Espace as part of the India Art Fair. For a surface as fragile as paper, the strength in Zarina's art is owing to her existence.

A palash tree in full bloom in Silli Forest, Ranchi, Jharkhand

Photo by Shilbhadrata Datta



POETRY



Nature's ballad

Come spring and nature wakes up to a joyous melody. Lovely and lush, it sprouts shimmering new leaves and the rarest of blooms. From time immemorial, the bright orange flame-like flowers of palash have been associated with the season of fertility and love. Jayadeva's 12th century poem, *Gitagovinda*, likens these blossoms to the red nails of love that tear at young hearts. Here's an excerpt of the epic, translated by Barbara Stoler Miller, which describes the sights and sounds of the season of new beginnings

When spring came, tender-limbed Radha wandered
Like a flowering creeper in the forest wilderness,
Seeking Krishna in his many haunts.
The god of love increased her ordeal,
Tormenting her with fevered thoughts,
And her friend sang to heighten the mood.

Soft sandal mountain winds caress quivering vines
of clove.
Forest huts hum with droning bees and
crying cuckoos.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend --
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

Lonely wives of travellers whine in love's
mad fantasies.
Bees swarm over flowers clustered to fill
mimosa branches.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend --
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

Tamala trees' fresh leaves absorb strong scents
of deer musk.
Flame-tree petals, shining nails of love, tear
at young hearts.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend --
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

Gleaming saffron flower pistils are golden
sceptres of Love.
Trumpet flowers like wanton bees are arrows
in Love's quiver.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend --
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

Tender buds bloom into laughter as creatures
abandon modesty.

Cactus spikes pierce the sky to wound
deserted lovers.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend --
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

Scents of twining creepers mingle with perfumes
of fresh garlands.
Intimate bonds with young things bewilder even
hermit hearts.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend --
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

Budding mango trees tremble from the embrace
of rising vines.
Brindaban forest is washed by meandering Jumna
river waters.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend --
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

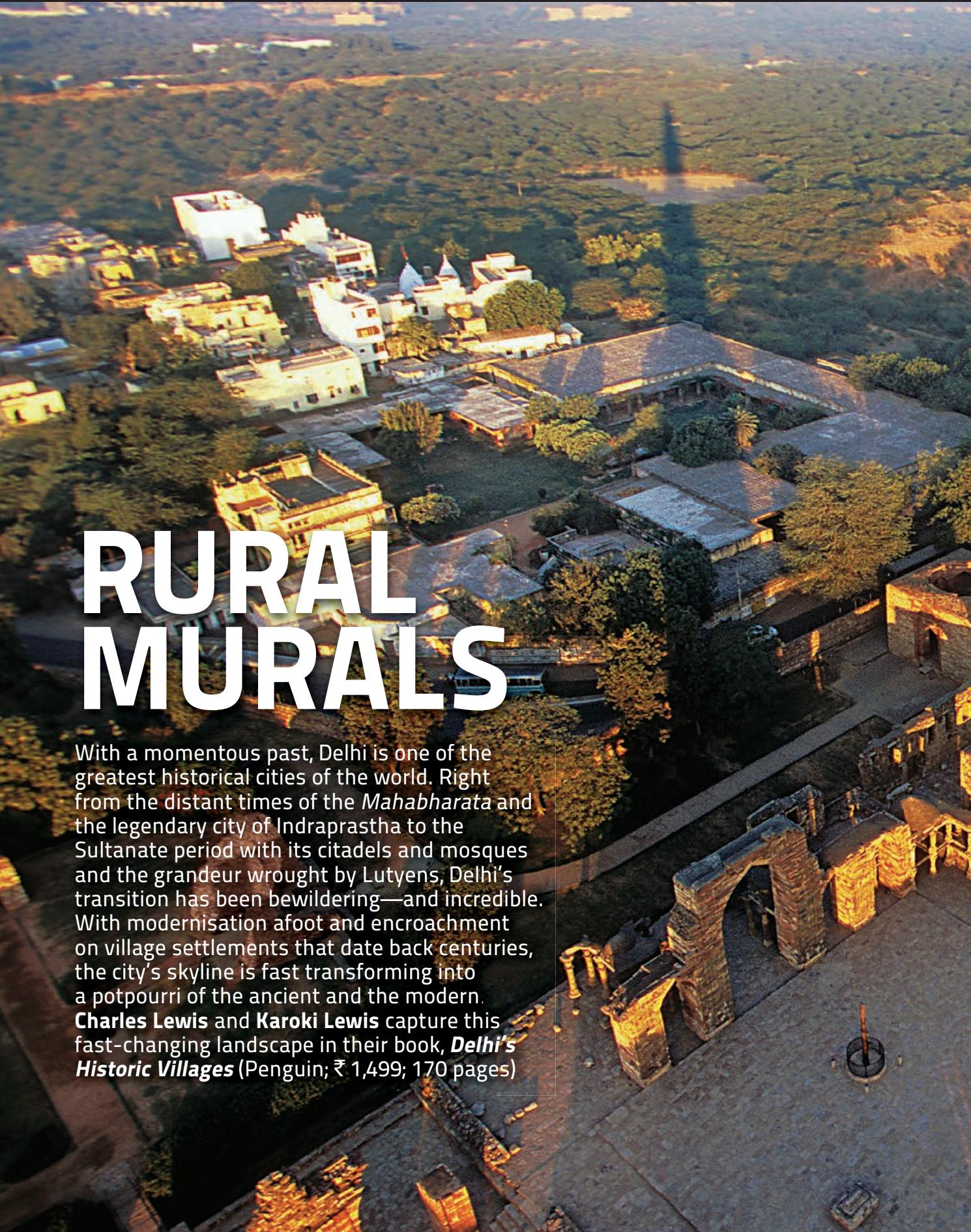
Jayadeva's song evokes the potent memory of
Hari's feet,
Coloring the forest in springtime mood
heightened by Love's presence.
When spring's mood is rich, Hari roams here
To dance with young women, friend --
A cruel time for deserted lovers.

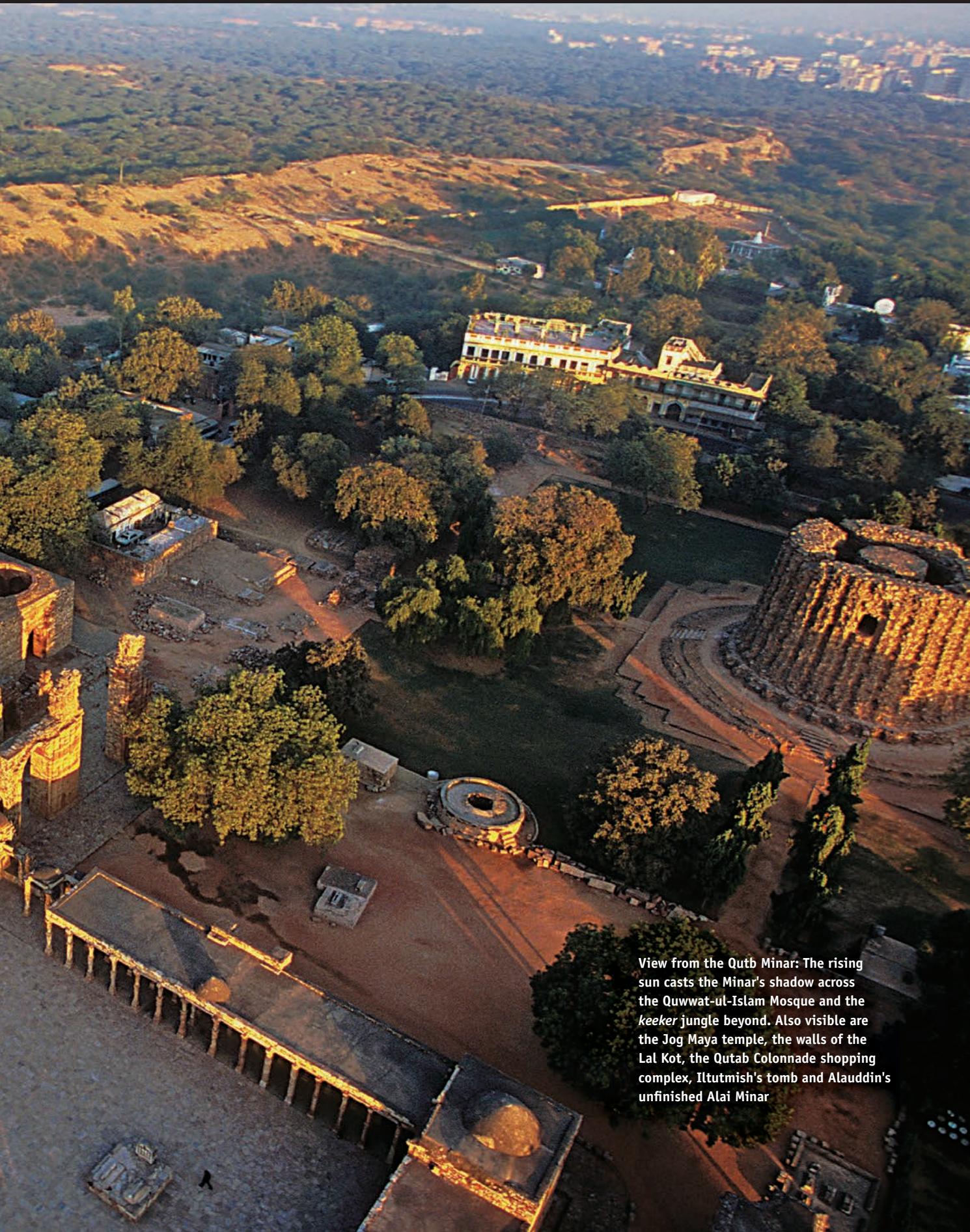
Wind perfumes the forest with fine pollen
Shaken loose from newly blossomed jasmine
As it blows Love's cactus-fragrant breath
To torture every heart it touches here.

Crying sounds of cuckoos, mating on mango shoots
Shaken as bees seek honey scents of opening buds,
Raise fever in the ears of lonely travellers --
Somehow they survive these days
By tasting the mood of lovers' union
In climaxing moments of meditation.

RURAL MURALS

With a momentous past, Delhi is one of the greatest historical cities of the world. Right from the distant times of the *Mahabharata* and the legendary city of Indraprastha to the Sultanate period with its citadels and mosques and the grandeur wrought by Lutyens, Delhi's transition has been bewildering—and incredible. With modernisation afoot and encroachment on village settlements that date back centuries, the city's skyline is fast transforming into a potpourri of the ancient and the modern. **Charles Lewis** and **Karoki Lewis** capture this fast-changing landscape in their book, *Delhi's Historic Villages* (Penguin; ₹ 1,499; 170 pages)



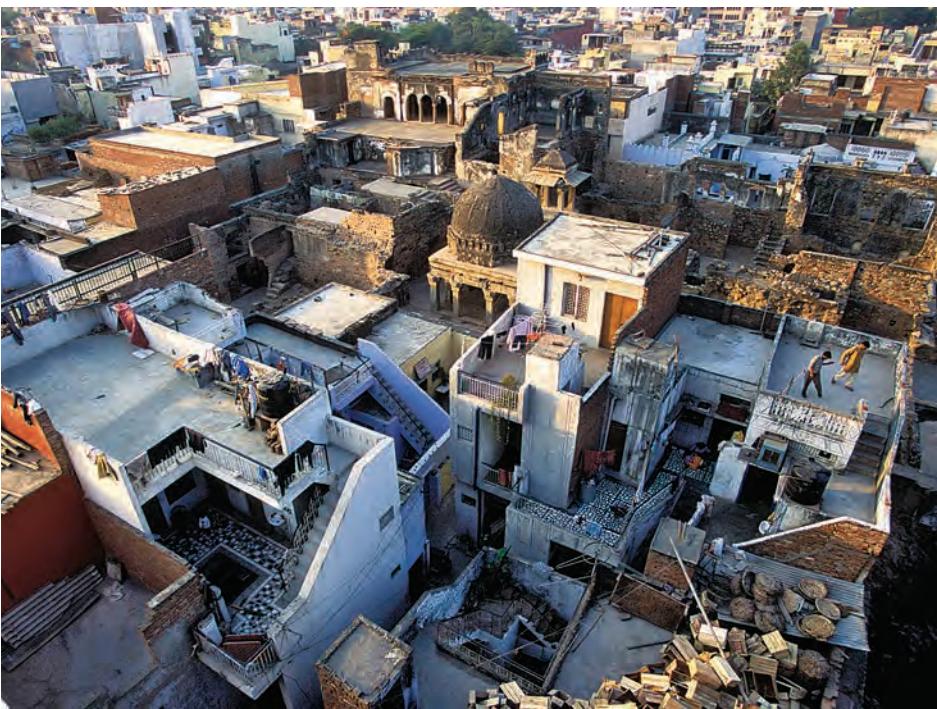


View from the Qutb Minar: The rising sun casts the Minar's shadow across the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque and the *keeker* jungle beyond. Also visible are the Jog Maya temple, the walls of the Lal Kot, the Qutab Colonnade shopping complex, Iltutmish's tomb and Alauddin's unfinished Alai Minar



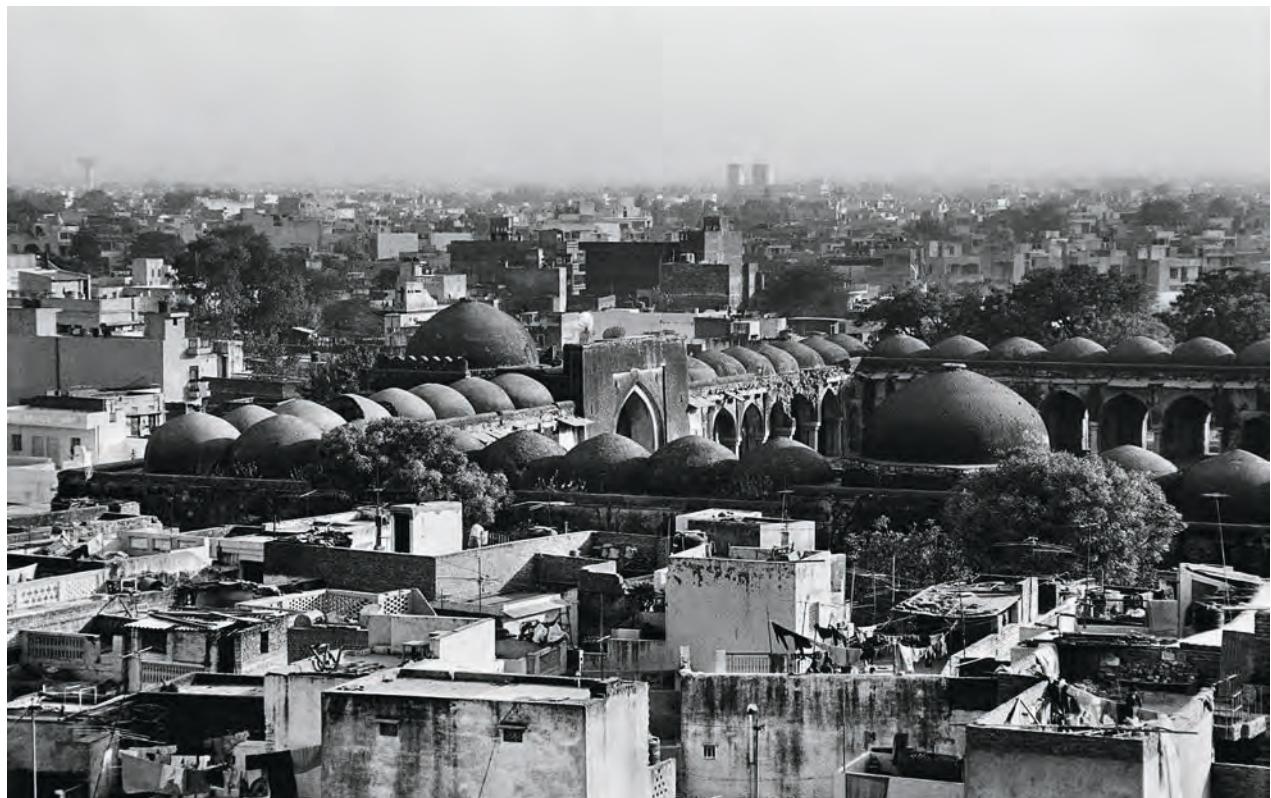
(Clockwise from top) A game of *chaupad* in Begumpur village square; an example of the kind of appalling encroachments and desecration evident everywhere in Mehrauli; the hustle and bustle at Hauz Khas





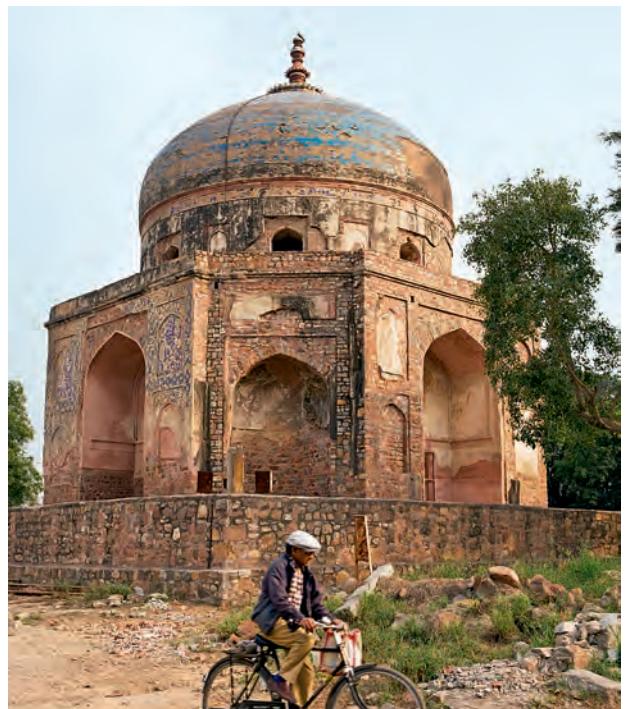
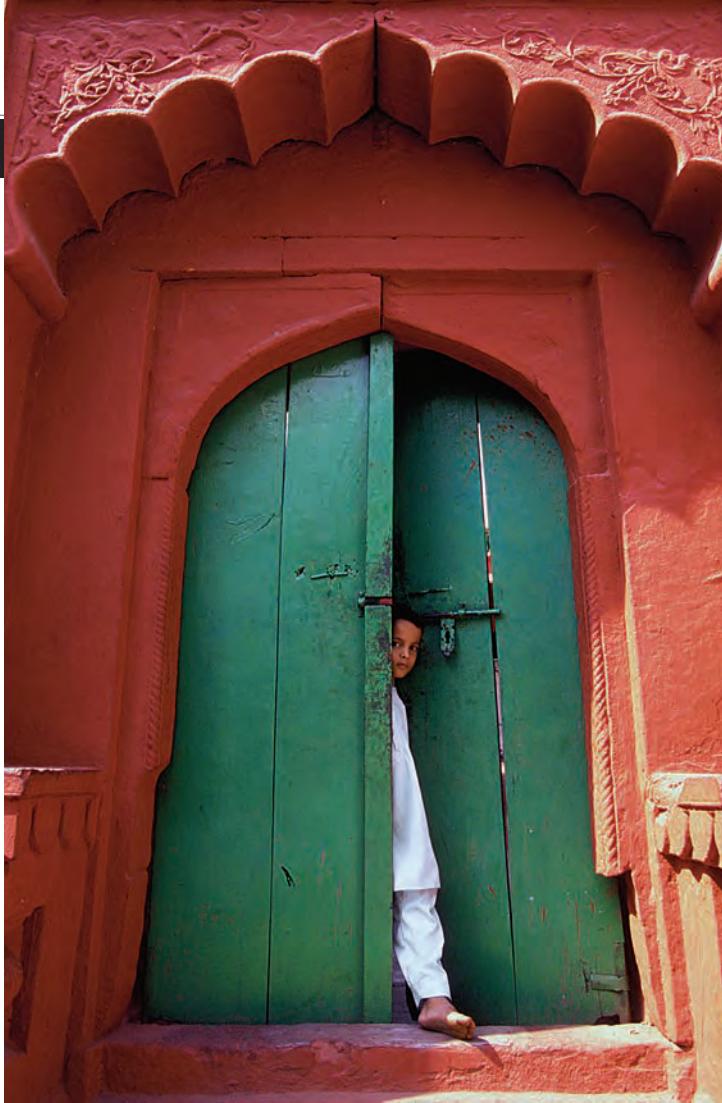
(Clockwise from top left) A stark example of the encroachments throttling the Zafar Mahal complex; a silver woman with a hookah in Shahpur Jat; BSF jawans excercise in the courtyard of the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque





(Clockwise from top) The Begumpur Mosque lost in the coils of urban expansion; a suppliant Jain priest as the first rays of the sun strike the Mahavira statue on the Mehrauli Bypass; the village cobbler at Masjid Moth awaits customers while a little girl collects water





(Clockwise from top left) A young student peers from the doorway of a *madrasa* in Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki's Dargah; Nila Gumbad near the Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station; stone carved pillars from Hindu temples in the cloisters of the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque



The crossover

One of the most influential books of the 19th century, *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880) by Lew Wallace is a tale of fortitude and redemption. We celebrate the season of faith with an excerpt from the book, which was adapted into a successful motion picture

The breathing of the Nazarene grew harder; his sighs became great gasps. Only three hours upon the cross, and he was dying!

The intelligence was carried from man to man, until everyone knew it; and then everything hushed; the breeze faltered and died; a stifling vapour loaded the air; heat was superadded to darkness; nor might any one unknowing the fact have thought that off the hill, out under the overhanging pall, there were three millions of people waiting awestruck what should happen next—they were so still!

The face then plainly seen by Ben-Hur, bruised and black with blood and dust as it was, lighted nevertheless with a sudden glow; the eyes opened wide, and fixed upon someone visible to him alone in the far heavens.

The light in the eyes went out; slowly the crowned head sank upon the labouring breast. Ben-Hur thought the struggle over; but the fainting soul recollected itself, so that he and those around him caught the other and last words, spoken in a low voice, as if to one listening close by:

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

A tremor shook the tortured body; there was a scream of fiercest anguish, and the mission and the earthly life were over at once. The heart, with all its love, was broken; for of that, O reader, the man died!

Ben-Hur went back to his friends, saying, simply, "It is over; he is dead."

The people had their wish; the Nazarene was dead; yet they stared at each other aghast. His blood was upon them! And while they stood staring at each other, the ground commenced to shake; each man took hold of his neighbour to support himself; in a twinkling the darkness disappeared, and the sun came out; and everybody, as with the same glance, beheld the crosses upon the hill all reeling drunken-like in the earthquake. They beheld all three of them; but the one in the centre was arbitrary; it alone would



be seen; and for that it seemed to extend itself upwards, and lift its burden, and swing it to and fro higher and higher in the blue of the sky. And every man among them who had jeered at the Nazarene; every one who had struck him; every one who had voted to crucify him; every one who had marched in the procession from the city; every one who had in his heart wished him dead, and they were as ten to one, felt that he was in some way individually singled out from the many, and that if he would live he must get away quickly as possible from that menace in the sky. They started to run; they ran with all their might; on horseback, and camels, and in chariots they ran, as well as on foot; but then, as if it were mad at them for what they had done, and had taken up the cause of the unoffending and friendless dead, the earthquake pursued them, and tossed them about, and flung them down, and terrified them yet more by the horrible noise of great rocks grinding and rending beneath them. If they called on the Lord, the outraged earth answered for him in fury, and dealt them all alike. It did not even know wherein the high-priest was better than his guilty brethren; overtaking him, it tripped him up also, and smirched the fringing of his robe, and filled the golden bells with sand, and his mouth with dust. He and his people were alike in the one thing at least—the blood of the Nazarene was

upon them all!

When the sunlight broke upon the crucifixion, the mother of the Nazarene, the disciple, and the faithful women of Galilee, the centurion and his soldiers, and Ben-Hur and his party, were all who remained upon the hill.

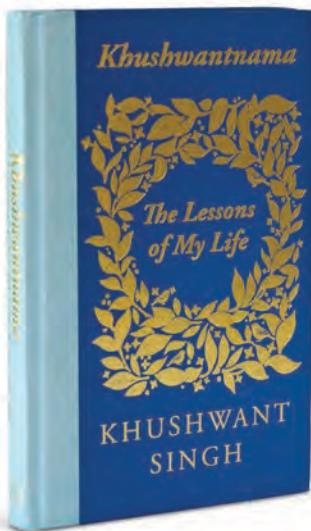
"Seat thyself here," said Ben-Hur to Esther, making a place for her at her father's feet. "Now cover thine eyes, and look not up; but put thy trust in God, and the spirit of yon just man so foully slain."

"Nay," said Simonides, reverently, "Let us henceforth speak of him as the Christ."

"Be it so," said Ben-Hur.

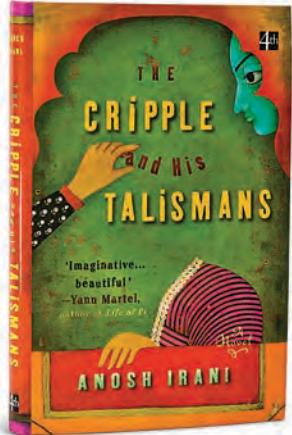
BETWEEN THE LINES

If there's anyone who has lived life to the fullest with truth, love and a little malice, it has to be **Khushwant Singh**. In **KHUSHWANTNAMA: THE LESSONS OF MY LIFE** (Penguin; ₹ 399; 188 pages), the indomitable Singh, who is now 98, reflects on a life heartily lived and the lessons learnt. Through free-flowing rambblings on subjects as diverse as

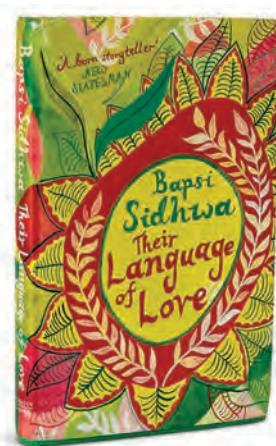


the pleasures of poetry, the joy of sex and the importance of laughter, besides other mundane things, he tells us how to lead a long, healthy and fulfilling life. His unpretentious writing, interspersed with Urdu couplets, makes for a heady read, similar to the single malt whiskey Singh professes to have a weakness for. With in-your-face confessions like, "Whatever their age, to me women were, and still are, objects of lust", Singh lays bare his soul without the fear of being judged—and therein lies the appeal. With an epitaph tagged at the end of the book, Singh lets it be known that this may be his swan song. Take a bow, Mr Singh—there will never be another quite like you.

It's not every day that you come across a book that turns the idea of time and gravity upside down; cocking a snook at the norms of human behaviour and morality. Audacious and hilarious in equal measures, **THE CRIPPLE AND HIS TALISMANS** (Harper-Collins; ₹ 499; 231 pages) is an ode to Mumbai and the resilience of its people. The city, its people, its idiom and smells and sights sweep the reader away in this dark tale that is as much about loss as faith; as much about a world that is cruel as it is forgiving. **Anosh Irani**'s humour is compassionate and wicked at the same time in this tale of a nameless young man in search of his missing arm, with each person he meets along the way giving him a clue. Thus, we have a woman who sells rainbows, a coffin maker who builds tiny caskets, a giant who lives under water and *Baba Rakhu*, the master of the underworld. Characters jump off every page, catching the reader unaware. Mysterious eunuchs, lepers, criminal *baba*, chicken that indulge in black magic, limbs for sale...nothing can be ruled out in this bizarre, insane world. This dark, comic world teeming with the energy of Mumbai and its squalor and seediness does absolute justice to the bully of a narrator, who manages to redeem himself in the end, by seeking to embrace the divine. Both ribald and tender, this is the stuff of modern-day fables.



A prominent voice from Pakistan, **Bapsi Sidhwa** chronicles the lives and loves of those on either side of the Indo-Pak border in her first anthology of short stories, **THEIR LANGUAGE OF LOVE** (Penguin; ₹ 499; 253 pages). What makes this stellar collection of tales worth reading is the highly visual writing style and Sidhwa's pungent one-liners. Her narrators and protagonists, always the outsiders—Parsi, immigrants and expatriates—try to make sense of the world they inhabit and its alien customs. The common thread that strings these stories together is conflict: clashes between countries, communities, couples. Cross-border conflict, one of Sidhwa's favourite themes, is a recurring motif



in many of the stories, which are tinged with an element of nostalgia. While "A Gentlemanly War" gives you a glimpse into the pain of the 1965 war when families were torn apart, in "Breaking It Up", Zareen, the narrator of the earlier story, tries to sort out the tension that follows her true-blue Parsi daughter's decision to marry an American Jew. The most powerful tale of the lot is undoubtedly "Sehra-bai", where a 72 year-old, once-spirited lady is left facing the demons of her marital life, drawing little comfort and relief reminiscing about her innumerable former admirers. Sidhwa relies on memories—both personal and those culled from others—to bring to life her stories. In the process, she succeeds in elevating the mundane and humdrum to the extraordinary.



View from my window

Eunice de Souza urges us to shed our apathy to nature

This is not the best time of year for one of my favourite occupations: looking at the world through my kitchen window. During the summer, the sun comes blazing in, hot and blinding. It's difficult even to get on with one's chores, let alone gaze aimlessly at the landscape.

The landscape? Well, a couple of trees that have lost their leaves, a few that are full of shimmering new delicate green leaves. A small marshy bit below the window, created by neighbours who fling buckets of water out of their windows (what is a *mori* for?) from the ground floor and the top floors. I used to be furious, but requesting them to stop didn't help. Now, however, I find that the mess has attracted all kinds of water birds, and birds such as kingfishers that look for food in the muddy water.

Some of the kingfishers are the small, bright blue gems. But there's one medium-sized one that is a brilliant blue and rusty-brown. And there's an Indian Pond Heron who is the same colour as the mud he inspects but displays a wonderfully soft off-white plumage when he flies. Both birds seem to be able to sit still for ages, which can be quite frustrating for the viewer waiting for them to display themselves in a blaze of beauty.

There are also touching little domestic scenes. I wrote this small poem after viewing one such. It is called *Mother Crow*.

*Mother runs her beak
Against his feathers.
He submits, head bowed.
There! He's ready for the day.*

*Nest to my window, window to nest.
His mouth is a cavern.
Anything goes.*

And here's another one about everyone's favourite songster, the bulbul. Called *Bulbul*, it reads:

*We really must bring bulbuls back
Into poetry.
I can set my watch by this one's song.
There he is,
Above the tumult of crows
Chattering mynahs, loud-voiced
humans.
He is pure sound.*

It all sounds like Paradise, but even Paradise had a serpent. We don't have literal serpents but we do have human ones. The leafless trees revealed crows and pigeons hanging by their wings because they were caught in kite strings during the January kite festivities. I can't even begin to imagine their suffering as they hung there, starving to death.

Some years we have been lucky and seen such birds before they died. One year we had to summon the Fire Brigade at least a dozen times, and they always came immediately. If the birds were injured they took them to a vet to be healed. It's an exemplary service and has to my knowledge rescued fat pups stuck between narrow spaces between walls, cats on ledges, wounded dogs in drains. And they do their job in an unfussy way, and don't hang around for tips.

Kite Season

*The trees are festooned with kites
of many colours.*

*The trees are festooned with birds
hanging by a wing
an entangled leg
glass-coated string.*

Holi has just gone by, and again, in the name of festivity we damaged the land, and terrified birds and animals. Pits were dug up, fires were burnt, and water balloons went looking for victims. With those pits being left open, we have one more hurdle to cross as we try to negotiate marshy land, fire pits, loose paver blocks, all kinds of vehicles parked on the pavements, illegal extensions and the rest. But if a dog is fed on the road, all hell breaks loose!

We are creating a world that is the antithesis of the beauty I see from my kitchen window. We call ourselves spiritual but are cruel to animals and birds. We call the West materialistic but are destroying cities with monstrous towers that have no character, and destroying neighbourhoods which do. All in the name of 'development'.

Nature has its savagery too. One day I heard a great deal of consternation among the crows. I looked out to see what had happened. Suddenly a kite flew past the window, carrying a small, bloodied corpse in its beak. Distressing, though we know they do it to satisfy a basic need: food.

Soon our landscapes may be the kind I describe in a poem called *One Tree*.

*One tree makes a garden.
Two trees make a wood.
Three trees make a forest.
And we will have only ourselves
to blame.*

A leading literary figure, de Souza is a contemporary poet, novelist and critic. She lives in Mumbai

A photograph of an older man with a beard and a young girl sitting on a wooden dock. The man is leaning over the water, reaching out towards the girl with a joyful expression. The girl is looking at him with a smile. The background is dark water.

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celebrate age

Challenge = opportunity

Challenges make you aware of your inner purpose and help you evolve, says Deepak Chopra

No one will disagree that life brings challenges, but step back for a moment and ask the deeper question, which is *why*. Why is life so difficult? No matter what advantages you are born with—money, intelligence, an appealing personality, a sunny outlook, or good social connections—none of these provides a magic key to an easy existence. Somehow life manages to bring difficult problems, the causes of untold suffering and struggle. How you meet your challenges makes all the difference between the promise of success and the spectre of failure. Is there a reason for this, or is life simply a random series of events that keeps us off balance and barely able to cope?

Spirituality begins with a decisive answer to that question. It says that life isn't random. There is pattern and purpose inside every existence. The reason that challenges arise is simple: to make you more aware of your inner purpose. Every time a challenge comes your way, whether it is about relationships, work or personal transitions, there are three levels of awareness. Become aware of them, and you will take a huge step toward finding a better answer.

Level 1: Contracted awareness

This is the level of the problem, and therefore it immediately grabs your attention. Something has gone wrong. Expectations have turned sour. As resistance mounts, your situation still doesn't improve. If you examine the level of the problem, the following elements are generally present:

- Your desires are thwarted. Something you want is meeting with opposition. You feel as if every step forward is a battle.
- You keep doing more of what never worked in the first place.
- There is an underlying anxiety and fear of failure.
- You can tell if you are stuck at the level of contracted awareness by one simple test: the more you struggle to get free of a problem, the more you are trapped in it.

Level 2: Expanded awareness

This is the level where solutions begin to appear. Your vision extends beyond the conflict, giving you more clarity. For most people this level isn't immediately available, because their first reaction to a crisis is to contract. They become defensive, wary, and fearful. But if you allow yourself to expand, you will find that the following elements enter your awareness:



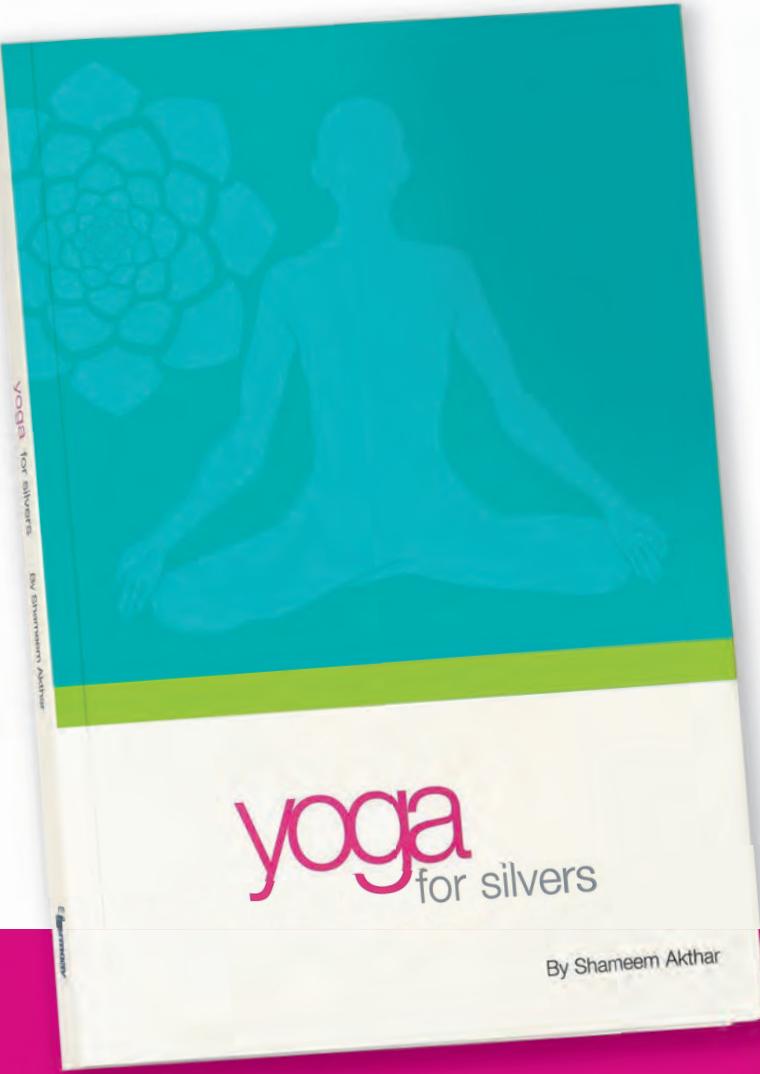
- The need to struggle begins to diminish.
- You start to let go.
- You approach decisions with confidence.
- You can tell that you have reached this level of awareness when you no longer feel stuck: a process has begun. With greater expansion, unseen forces come to your aid. You move forward according to what you desire from your life.

Level 3: Pure awareness

This is the level where no problems exist. Every challenge is a creative opportunity. You feel completely aligned with the forces of nature. Although it may seem that it takes long experience on the spiritual path to reach pure awareness, the truth is exactly the opposite. At every moment pure awareness is in contact with you, sending creative impulses. All that matters is how open you are to the answers being presented. When you are fully open, the following elements will be present:

- There is no struggle.
- The outer world reflects what is happening in your inner world.
- You view yourself and the world with compassion and understanding.
- To be completely established in pure awareness is enlightenment, a state of unity with everything in existence. Ultimately, every life is moving in that direction. Without attaining the final goal, you can tell that you are in contact with pure awareness if you feel truly yourself, in a state of peace and freedom.

Extract from *Self Power: Spiritual Solutions to Life's Greatest Challenges* (Random House India; ₹ 499; 224 pages). Chopra, a holistic health guru whose bestsellers have been widely translated, is the founder of the Chopra Centre for Wellbeing



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Open a TaB!

Today, diet sodas are ubiquitous, preening proudly from the spacious racks of supermarkets and crammed crannies of neighbourhood mom-and-pop stores. But decades ago, when millions were still gloating in the affluence of the post-war years and the resultant consumerism, calories were the last thing on their mind. With spreading waistlines, health-conscious consumers, especially women, woke up to the dreaded 'C' word, banishing calorie-rich treats and sugary drinks from their staple.

It was the ideal setting for the Coca-Cola Company to pop its first diet drink, TaB cola, in May 1963. The company went to town with the slogan, 'How can one calorie taste so good?' cleverly targeting consumers who wanted to keep tabs on their weight. Slowly and steadily, TaB increased its hold on the market, growing to be the market leader. In fact, TaB stayed on top till it was upstaged in 1982 by another diet drink from the Coca-Cola Company, Diet Coke. In its heyday, many variations of TaB, including TaB Clear and TaB X-Tra, besides the caffeine-free version, made it to the market.

Though the company was flooded with over 250,000 names for its first diet drink, it zeroed in on TaB, influenced by the possible play on words. Designer Sid Dickens came up with the idea of making the B in the name capital, to make the logo stand out. However, the diet soda trailblazer had its share of negative publicity when scientists speculated that its main sweetener, sodium saccharin, was a potential animal carcinogen. The study conducted on lab rats resulted in mandatory warning labels on the product till 2000, when the US Food and Drug Administration debunked the study, revoking the labels. TaB still has takers in Spain and Norway, besides the US and South Africa, resulting in the production of about 3 million cases a year.



THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: APRIL 1963

- On 4 April, Henry Miller's novel *Tropic of Cancer* went on sale legally for the first time in the United Kingdom, after being banned for nearly 30 years for being obscene.
- On 7 April, the first full Sunday edition of *The New York Times* at more than 700 pages and weighing seven-and-a-half pounds set the record for the size of a newspaper.
- On 9 April, Sir Winston Churchill, former prime minister of the UK, became the first person to be made an honorary citizen of the United States through an Act of the US Congress.
- On 20 April, France's Lascaux Caves were closed owing to the erosion of a few of its cave paintings due to carbonic acid produced by the exhaling of visitors.

Demitarian

n. A person who cuts his or her meat consumption in half.

Example. Mr Sutton, who is with the Natural Environment Research Council in Britain, said people in rich Western countries ate too much meat and could reduce their environmental footprint by cutting back. Mr Sutton is advocating that people become **demitarians**—cutting their meat consumption in half.

—Christopher F Schuetze, “Would you cut down on meat to help the environment?”, *The New York Times*, 22 February 2013

“ If you want to conquer fear, don't sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy.

—American writer
Dale Carnegie

Sick-lit

n. A literary genre that features individuals dealing with fatal or devastating diseases.

Example. Literary media have been abuzz about the **sick-lit** controversy: novels written for teenagers with themes of death, fatal disease and psychological disease such as anorexia.

—Russell Smith, “*Sick-lit: a symptom of publishing's decline?*”, *The Globe and Mail*, 13 February 2013

Safe shake

n. The touching of elbows used as a handshake replacement to avoid spreading germs.

Example. In the 2011 movie *Contagion*, a chef in Macao initiates a global pandemic by failing to wash before shaking hands with the character played by Gwyneth Paltrow. Nathan Wolfe, a virologist at Stanford, has said that the Japanese bow and a move called the **safe shake**, which involves touching elbows, are potentially less risky than the traditional handshake.

—David Owen, “*Hands across America (subscription required)*”, *The New Yorker*, 4 March 2013

Insta-mentary

n. A documentary produced in a very short time, particularly about a recent news event.

Example. Even as Hollywood movie studios scramble to put together feature films inspired by yesterday's takedown of Osama bin Laden, Discovery Channel is already working on an **insta-mentary** about the dramatic execution of the terrorist icon.

—Josef Adalian, “*Discovery Channel producing insta-mentary on Osama Bin Laden's death*”, *Vulture*, 5 February 2011

Goalodicy

n. The continued pursuit of a goal despite evidence that the goal cannot be achieved.

Example. If you suffer from **goalodicy** you find yourself so obsessed by the goal that you ignore the realities. You will think that the achievement of the goal will save you from all the difficult work, sacrifices and choices that you really need to make. This suspension of reality leads to reckless behaviour.

—Shaa Wasmund, “*Book extract: Goals must not block out reality*”, *The Sunday Times*, 23 October 2011

OPENTURE

n. The tendency to not seek a resolution or ending for an emotionally difficult experience.

Example. To use an old cliché of therapy-speak, we spend too much of our lives seeking ‘closure’.... What we need more of, instead, is what the psychologist Paul Pearsall called **openture**. Yes, it's an awkward neologism; but its very awkwardness is a reminder of the spirit that it expresses, which includes embracing imperfection, and easing up on the search for neat solutions.

—Oliver Burkeman, “*The hunt for happy*”, *The School of Life*, 1 March 2013,
quoted from *The Antidote*, Faber & Faber, 13 November 2012

**“ Our greatest weakness lies in giving up.
The most certain way to succeed is
always to try just one more time.**

—American inventor Thomas Alva Edison

Second screening

pp. using a mobile device to monitor and post social media comments about what you are watching on TV or at the movies. **Example.** She also pointed out that *The Killing's* being subtitled prevents viewers from **second screening**, swapping smart-alecky comments about the unfolding drama on Twitter and other social media as they're watching—and so maybe makes them concentrate on the show that little bit harder, and draw more rewards from it.

—Keith Miller, "Fair Isle sweaters optional at the Hay Winter Weekend",
The Telegraph, 1 December 2012

Pi-ku

n. A haiku on the theme of the mathematical constant pi.

Example. Students will spend the morning in 35-minute sessions that include math competitions, integrated math and art workshops featuring origami, **pi-ku** writing, and a pi(e) eating contest.

—Kari Tutwiler, "Pi and pie to fuel math competition at WSU Tri-Cities",

Washington State University News Centre, 11 March 2013

PROEM

n. A prose poem; a work written in prose but incorporating poetic imagery and rhythms.

Example. He read a variety of forms of poetry, including librettos, verse meant to be set to music; sestinas, poems structured with six stanzas of six lines and a final triplet; sonnets; villanelles, nineteen-line poems with two rhymes throughout; and, surprisingly, prose poems—what Fort called **proems**.

—Dan Kipp, "American poet Charles Fort invited to Kenyon for guest reading", The Kenyon Collegian, 3 February 2011

Road rave

BZZZ

Blend exhilaration with empowerment and you get The Bikerni. An all-women group established two years ago to give female motorcyclists in India a shared platform, the group aims to organise a local ride every month and national ride each year. Appropriately enough, the group conducts rallies to support the girl child and women's causes; for instance, it conducted awareness campaigns following the horrendous Delhi rape case. Age is no barrier here—avid members include Gujarat-based Pintuelli Gajar, 53, who loves cruising on her customised bike and Shabnam Akhtar and Marilyn Mendes, both in their 50s, zooming about on their Royal Enfields. Their tagline on Facebook says it all: 'Don't mess with us; you will only see dust far ahead in



front of you.' To feel the adrenaline rush, connect with the group on their Facebook page *The Bikerni: Association of Female Motorcyclists*, or call coordinator Urvashi on (0) 9423024181.

"I want to wean youngsters from substance abuse and channel their energy in the right direction"

Anthony Dias, 56, Mumbai, for canvassing against drug abuse



Gautam Ruparel

In suburban Mumbai, St Francis D'Assisi Ground in Borivali comes alive every evening with young boys in bright football jerseys dribbling, passing the ball and scoring goals amid much applause and cheer. It's not just their craft that catches your eye but their shirts, which have 'No Drugs' emblazoned on them. Christened Borivali Youngsters, these local heroes and their coach 56 year-old Anthony Dias tackle not just the opposing team on the playground but the greater menace of drug abuse. When Dias relocated to Mumbai in 2008 after a 23-year stint in Dubai, he was saddened to see the extent to which youngsters had fallen prey to drug abuse. While taking his grandson out to play, he noticed youngsters huddling in the nooks and corners of the playground and on the pavement, taking drugs. Borivali Youngsters, which plays football and hockey on the local circuit, was born out of his yearning

to channel the youth in the right direction. Today, he has over 40 boys training with him. Dias takes his students not just through the intricacies of the sport but counsels them against drug abuse by sharing online material on the ill-effects of addiction. His 'No Drugs' jerseys are so popular that youngsters approach him with requests for customised shirts. Dias, who still plays in the Mumbai Hockey League and Mumbai District Football Association League, recalls how an 18 year-old teammate walked up to him and touched his feet when he scored a goal in a hockey match recently. "He just couldn't believe that I was so agile at 56," says the sportsman, attributing his fitness to freehand exercises and a controlled diet. "I just pray that God continues to keep me in good shape so I can continue to make a difference in people's lives." Now, that's a worthy goal.

—Gautam Ruparel

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