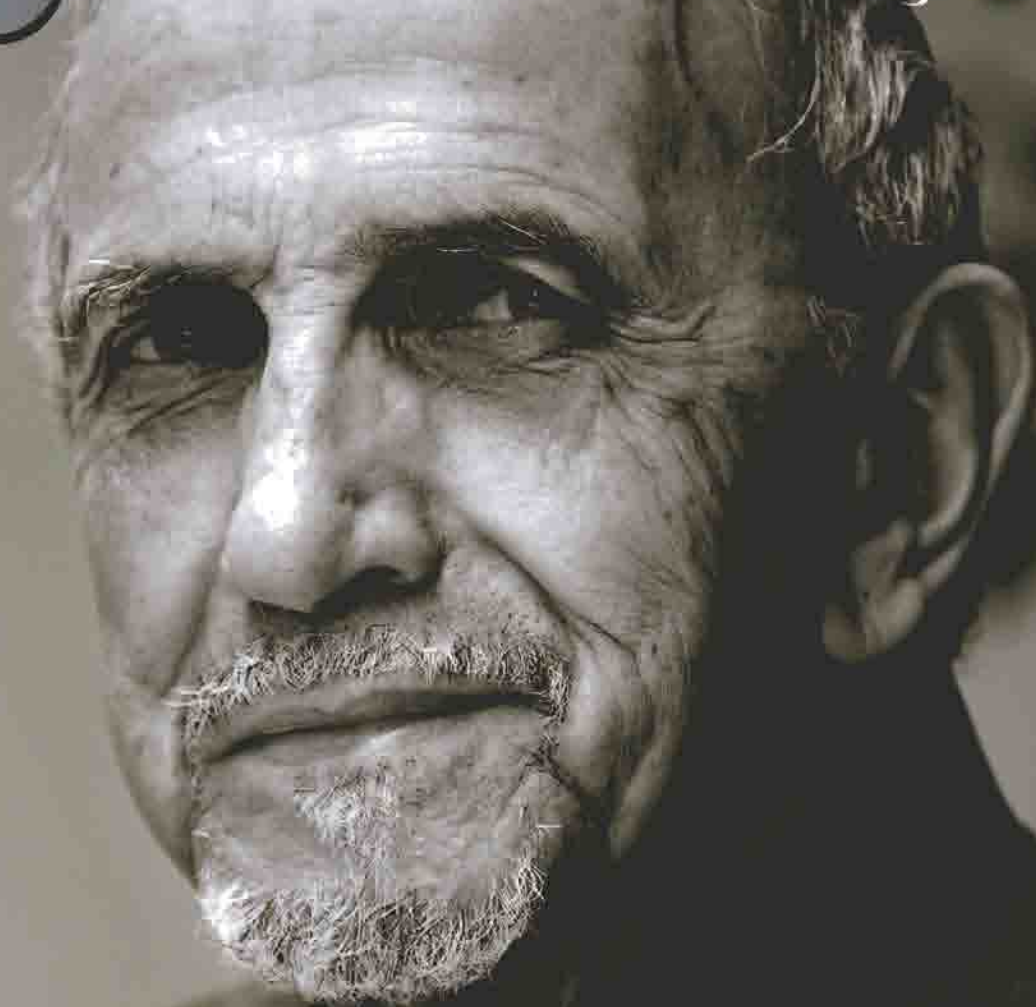


MAY 2007 Rs 30

harmony

celebrate age



Stage Presence

Ebrahim Alkazi

Cooling summer recipes

Explore the Nilgiris

Subscriber Copy Not For Resale

The magazine for silver citizens



Seniors at Ashiana, Bhiwadi

The Migration To Utsav Has Begun!

Two years back, we gave our Seniors a new vision - **Ashiana Utsav** at Bhiwadi, India's First Retirement Resort. Built to cater to the needs and aspirations of our silver citizens.

Today, the vision becomes a reality, as Ashiana Utsav Citizens start moving in, they begin a new life of self-respect, dignity and companionship. Welcome aboard!



ART OF ADAPTATION

I HAD ART ON MY MIND last month.

The visual image has its own language, making words superfluous, bringing semantic clichés to their knees. And the belief that this language should be spoken by everybody is the driving force behind Harmony Art, India's largest exhibition of contemporary art.

In this year's show, our 12th, held in Mumbai from 30 March to 8 April, our 'Artist in Focus' was Sakti Burman. The artist, who completed his studies in the Government School of Art, Calcutta, made Paris his base in the mid-1950s and went on to enchant the French with the rhythm of his lines, and quality of his pictorial metaphors and symbolism.

This past year, Burman has experienced a homecoming of sorts—he has set up a second home in New Delhi with wife and fellow artist Maite Delteil and re-established his presence in the Indian art world. No mean feat at 71.

Indeed, Burman is living what we repeatedly tell readers of *Harmony*: celebrate age, reinvent yourself, and don't fight shy of change and new beginnings.

There is no expiry date on creativity. This fact is now being recognised in India—media increasingly talks about 'elderly achievers' and 'grey skills' that society can tap into, and the needs and concerns of silvers.

It's not just media. For me, the most heartening aspect is that, now even individuals with little institutional backing are trying to make a change for the better.

For instance, I recently read with great pride about Shivani Mehta, a young student at M S University, Vadodara, who is doing her research on 'creating occupational opportunities for senior citizens'. Her work has prompted her to start a website exclusively for silvers.

She is now in the process of collecting data on senior citizens in Vadodara. "Senior citizens looking for part-time jobs will be



RITE NANDA

able to trace employment opportunities on the website," she says. "Also, they will be able to make new friends among their own peer group. It will be a boon for those who stay away from their children."

Cynics may call her work a drop in the ocean. I disagree. One act by one person who cares is enough to trigger social change. According to social entrepreneur Bill Drayton, "Change starts when someone sees the next step."

Mehta didn't just see it—she took it. *Harmony* congratulates her.

Tina Ambani

Tina Ambani

A Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust Initiative

Harmony—Celebrate Age—May 2007 Volume 3 Issue 12

Publisher **Anthony Jesudasan** Editor **Tina Ambani** Deputy Editor **Meeta Bhatti** Assistant Editors **Trina Mukherjee, Arati Rajan Menon**

Special Correspondent **Teena Baruah** Consultant Editor **Sudeep Chakravarti**

Design Head **Ritu Nanda** Visual Coordinator **Anuradha Joshi** Production Manager **Rajeev Nambiar** Graphic Designer **Mamta Jadhav**

Design & Imaging **Haresh Patel, Anand Sutar** and **Rohidas Adavkar** Editorial Coordinators **Glenn Fernandes, Anita Rosario**

General Manager, Business Development **Shrenik Mehta** Deputy Manager **Anuya Chauhan** Assistant Manager **Nikhil Wadhvani**

Editorial & Marketing Offices: 4th Floor, Maker Chambers IV, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400021. Tel: 91-22-22785423 (Editorial), 22785472 (Marketing).

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LOOK FOR



FREE OFFER

Cover photograph
by **IDRIS AHMED**

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To boost immunity, speed up your metabolism and improve your skin, indulge in the delicious new ice cream.

A health trend has taken the world by storm. Probiotic products have become a part of every healthy lifestyle. And that's no surprise because they promote wellness while they combine great taste and health benefits.

Why live the probiotic life. To maintain good health, all of us have vast numbers of beneficial bacteria that live in harmony with us. When administered in adequate amounts, these bacteria keep you healthy. But with age, unhealthy eating habits and stressful lifestyles the number of good bacteria reduces. (Reason enough to start kids on probiotic foods to build their immunity.)

How to eat ice cream and not feel guilty. The Amul ProLife Probiotic Wellness Ice Cream restores the balance in our body with the beneficial bacterial culture. These bacteria

increase the absorption of minerals and vitamins to improve digestion. They also promote the production of antimicrobial substances that deter bad bacteria, thereby boosting our immunity.

How to continue to indulge and stay well. Producing vitamin B, supporting healthy liver function, preventing intestinal infections and food allergies, cholesterol management and protection against harmful bacteria are just a few of the many benefits of this wonderful delight.

So next time you want to boost your immunity, to fight against indigestion and enjoy improved mental agility, simply pick your favourite flavour.



Amul
ProLife
Probiotic Wellness
Ice Cream



Vanilla with Chocolate Sauce. Strawberry with Strawberry Sauce.
Shahi Anjir. Fresh Litchi. Chocolate.

Available in convenient 125 ml cups. Also available in Sugar Free.
Sms START PROLIFE to 676787 to get free updates on a healthy lifestyle.

**INTRODUCTORY
OFFER**

- 25% FREE WITH 1 LT. TAKE AWAY PARTY PACK
- BUY ONE GET ONE FREE WITH 500 ML TUBS

column one

Harmony celebrates the art of living through features on people who are adept at it. This month, our model silvers, among others, include theatre legend Ebrahim Alkazi, on the cover this month ("Stage Presence"), and dancer Amala Shankar ("Ballet of Life").

For decades, theatre and the visual arts have been Alkazi's driving force. Even after handing over his legacy to son Faisal and daughter Amal Allana, at 82, Alkazi's passion powers his life.

Amala Shankar is equally driven. Carrying on the rich legacy of her husband, dancer Uday Shankar, the 88 year-old continues to channel her energy and serve art and the people who celebrate it.

We also help you live well through problem-solving devices. *Harmony* offers a regular fix of legal and medical advice, exclusive itineraries for a destination every month (the Nilgiris, this time), and yoga.

There's financial help, too. As part of our promise to help you max your money, we tell you about the latest product on the market, the Gold Exchange Traded Fund ("The Gold Option") in our 'Money and More' section'. Relatively new in India, it is a 'dematerialised' way to invest in gold and helps minimise some of the risks associated with investment in gold.

It's summer. To beat the heat, we have special coolers from Dr Pushesh Pant ("Just Chill") and advice on how to stay hydrated ("Get Your H2O"). Read on for more.

—Meeta Bhatti



As you are aware, the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) is meant to provide medical facilities to Central Government employees, pensioners and their

families. Unfortunately these facilities are only provided to people residing in 'CGHS' areas—in every state, this includes the state capital and perhaps one or two more cities. For instance, only Bhopal and Jabalpur are CGHS areas in Madhya Pradesh; Mumbai, Nagpur and Pune in Maharashtra; and only Dehradun in Uttaranchal. In fact, Raipur, the capital of Chhattisgarh, is yet to be declared a CGHS city. Retired people who are members of CGHS but don't live in CGHS areas are not covered under the scheme—although they are provided referral facilities, there are many 'ifs' and 'buts' attached. This is a deplorable situation.

In July 2003, the Health Ministry announced its decision to open a CGHS dispensary in Indore in Madhya Pradesh. Nothing happened for two years. In December 2005, when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Indore, he reiterated the government's commitment to open the dispensary, which would cover about 75,000 serving and retired persons and their families living in Indore, Ujjain, Dhar, Dewas and nearby areas. Once again, nothing has happened after the announcement.

Indeed, it is good news that Health Minister Ambumani Ramadoss managed to open a CGHS dispensary in 2006 in Avadi, Chennai, which is his parliamentary constituency. Unfortunately, we don't have a health minister from Madhya Pradesh, or the CGHS dispensary in Indore would certainly have been established by now! We request *Harmony* to take up our case with the Health Ministry.

S BHATTACHARYA AND FRIENDS

Indore

The letter of the month wins Orthaheel footwear, from Orthofit, a Mumbai-based sports medicine and rehab clinic

I want to convey my heartiest thanks to the UPA Government in general and Finance Minister P Chidambaram in particular for the concern they have shown senior citizens. However, I would like to draw their attention to the monetary loss being suffered by those of us who have invested in specially designed schemes, such as the Senior Citizens'

Savings Scheme (that offers 9 per cent a year) and LIC Varishtha Bima Pension Scheme. All banks now offer an interest rate of 9.75 per cent per annum to seniors. Thus, I request the government to revise the interest rate of these special schemes to '9 per cent or the prevailing rate of interest, whichever is higher' with immediate effect.



I also hope Harmony takes up the matter with the concerned authorities.

BALKRISHNA SURAJIWALA
Ahmedabad

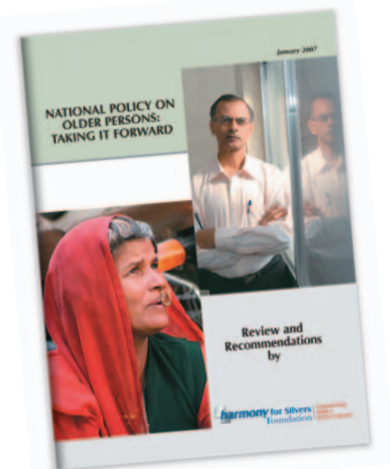
I am proud to be a regular reader of *Harmony* and wish Harmony for Silvers Foundation great success in its services for elders. In time, I hope you are able to provide free food, shelter and medicine to penniless elderly across India. Indeed, for the poor, 'old age' begins early, in their 50s, compared to wealthy and educated people who become old only in their 70s. You could begin by establishing an old age home for the poor in Mumbai and then expand to other cities.

A N SHENBAGA MURTHI
Sivakasi

I read the January 2007 issue of *Harmony* quite intensively and wish to congratulate you for the editorial contents and page layout of the magazine. I often wonder why more care is given to the young than silvers in our country. The Indian government is at fault for not paying more attention to geriatrics and gerontology, as governments do in the West.

JIMMY FERNANDES
Via email

We heartily welcome your policy review and recommendations on the National Policy on Older Persons ("Amplifying Our Voice", March 2007). The All India Non-Pensioned Cum Senior Citizens'



Retirees' Association has been diligently pursuing the government to implement the NPOP soon. We have even written to the apex judiciary on this account. We express our solidarity with Harmony for Silvers Foundation in its efforts to take the matter further.

ERNEST ABRAHAM,
CONVENER & GENERAL
SECRETARY, ALL INDIA
NON-PENSIONED CUM
SENIOR CITIZENS'
RETIRES' ASSOCIATION

Bengaluru

CONTRIBUTORS



Namita Gokhale, 51, is a novelist and columnist. Her first novel, the satirical *Paro: Dreams of Passion*, was published in 1984. Other novels include *A Himalayan Love Story*, *God, Graves and Grandmother*, recently adapted into a musical play, and *The Books of Shadows*. Her most recent novel, *Shakuntala, The Play of Memory* (2005) first appeared in a Hindi translation. Gokhale's non-fiction includes *The Book of Shiva* (2001) and *Mountain Echoes* (1998), a book of oral biography. She has retold the *Mahabharata* for young readers—Puffin will publish the book in 2007. Gokhale is also a director with Yatra Books, which co-publishes with Penguin India in Hindi, Marathi and Urdu. According to her, friends and family constantly tell her and her mother Neeraja Pant, 71, to 'act their age'!

AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY

We are looking for contributions from our readers. Write to us if...

- You had an experience related to money or finance
- You faced a serious health problem and conquered it
- You know of someone who has done something exceptional after the age of 55
- You have an hobby or an interesting travel experience to share
- You have a funny or insightful anecdote about your grandchildren

...and we'll print it in the column 'Your Space'



Mail us at 4th Floor, Maker Chambers IV, Nariman Point, Mumbai-400021. Or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

ANALYSE THIS



TOO TRUSTING

Guess this is why silvers are such a soft target for scam artists. According to a new study by Pew Research Centre, an American think tank, **seniors are more trusting than younger people in the US.** Titled *Americans and Social Trust*, the survey calls this a 'lifecycle effect' — "as people pile up more experiences, they become more trusting. Or it could be a generational effect; today's older adults may have come of age when social mores provided a more fertile seed bed for social trust". Also, people with higher incomes are more trusting than those with lower incomes; the married are more trusting than the unmarried; and people who live in rural areas are more trusting than those who live in cities.



'SHE' SAYS

Women over 50 are fit and fabulous—but still feel invisible. In a survey of British women released by cosmetics company Dove to coincide with its new advertising campaign featuring (naked) women over 50 for its 'ProAge' product range, 75 per cent of the 1,200 women interviewed thought the **ageing process is "hidden" by the beauty industry** although 90 per cent of them found they were 'too young to be considered old'. "Our findings point to a group of women who are vibrant and engaged but their absence from the increasingly important media creates a sense of 'invisibility' among women over 50," writes Professor Susie Orbach in the *Beauty Comes of Age* report. "Despite the fact that women of this age group are often active in society and have developed a personal confidence that was perhaps not afforded to previous generations, this has not been reflected in the media world around them." Other statistics from the study: 98 per cent of women over 50 still wear makeup; 96 per cent still enjoy a pair of killer heels; and 87 per cent believe they can still flaunt their cleavage.

Dove first attacked the ageism rampant in the beauty industry (calling it "beauty that limits") in late 2004 in its campaign for 'Real Beauty', which featured ethnically diverse women with silver hair, wrinkles and variable weight—*Harmony* wrote about it in December 2004 ("Beauty Bites").

NEWSWORTHY

LIONS' PRIDE

Volunteer service organisation Lions Club International has launched a **home for silvers at Koovathur village near Kalpakkam**, 80 km south of Chennai. Spread across 1.5 acre, 'Senior Citizens' Paradise' will house 120 people. While 80 needy seniors will be accommodated free of cost at the facility, 40 independent rooms will be available on payment of about Rs 5,000 per month. Besides separate dormitories for male and female residents, there is also a medical centre for residents of the home, and silvers living in nearby areas. People over 55 are eligible for admission. For details, contact (0) 9840086386.



Home sweet home: According to a survey by British health management service Consultus Care & Nursing Agency, 88 per cent of silvers in the UK prefer to be nursed in their own homes than a nursing home.

SINGAPORE CARES

Countries in Asia are now cottoning on to the need to build an elder-friendly environment. In March, the **Singapore government set up a Ministerial Committee on Ageing** to pursue four thrusts: employability and financial security, holistic and affordable healthcare and eldercare, ageing in place, and active ageing. The top priority of the committee, according to chairman Lim Boon Heng, is getting more older Singaporeans employed. In the long run, the government plans to raise the retirement age from 62 to 65, or even beyond. "We would like to see retirement become a thing of the past," Lim tells Associated

Press. Further, the government will soon establish the Council for Third Age in June to support programmes to keep silvers healthy and active, and a Silver Industry Committee to look into growing sectors such as healthcare and wellness, travel and leisure. Today, in the city-state with a population of more than 4 million, one in 12 Singaporeans are 65 or older. By 2030, this proportion will jump to one in five.



HOME WORK ANYONE?

With demand for silver workers high in Japan (see "Sixty Plus", Orbit, February 2007), the private sector is pulling out the stops to enable people to work longer into their lives. Electronics major Matsushita Electric Industrial Co has announced a **'telework' programme** for nearly half its employees in Japan "to cope with an ageing society". Some 30,000 of its 76,000 employees, excluding factory workers, safety inspectors, secretaries and some others, became eligible to work from home starting 1 April, with the company lending them computers to work through high-speed Internet lines. "The program will allow older employees to have more convenient working hours," a spokesperson of the company tells Reuters. "It will also give younger employees flexibility to take care of their elder parents."

Scotland's silver plans: The Scottish government will spend £ 750,000 (about Rs 63.8 million) on a campaign to combat ageism and promote more positive images of older people.

OFFBEAT



AFTERNOON DELIGHT

In the city of Cologne in Germany, they take discounts for silvers very seriously. So much so that Pascha, a brothel, has introduced a **special 50 per cent senior discount for sex** in the afternoon! "Clients just need to show us some proof of age," the brothel's managing director Armin Lobscheid tells Reuters. "A normal session costs 50 Euro [about Rs 2,900]; older guests pay only half that amount." Meanwhile, Galways, a British 'escort service' franchise, has declined to follow suit. When informed about the Pascha's decision, a spokesperson for Galways told tabloid newspaper *The Sun*, "Well, that's Germany isn't it? In England, the elderly have to plump up the same amount of cash as anyone else."

INNOVATION

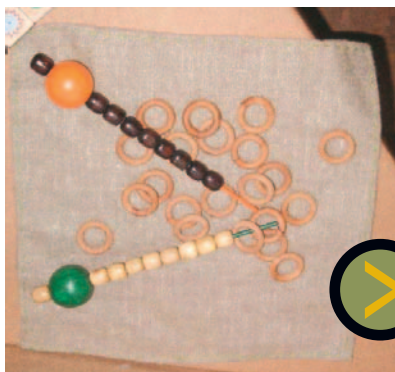
EMBRACING THE WEB

While visually impaired silvers can get online with 'screen readers' and 'self-talking browsers', the complete Web experience has been beyond their reach—until now. Technology giant IBM will launch a **multimedia browser to make audio and video content accessible to the visually impaired**. Dr Chieko Asakawa, a blind IBM employee in Tokyo, created the 'Accessibility Browser', or A-Browser. The user can control content with predefined shortcut keys, rather than looking for buttons using a mouse. The browser also allows video to be slowed down and speeded up, and can accommodate an

additional audio track to make programmes more comprehensible. For now, IBM is concentrating on content compatible with Real Player and Windows Media Player, the most popular multimedia applications globally. According to BBC News, the software will be available worldwide by the end of the year, and it will be free.



PLAY FOR KEEPS



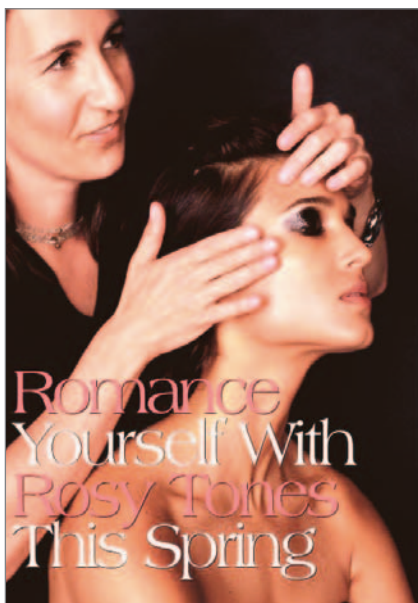
Silvers in Europe are now playing with Indian toys. Designed **to fight memory loss and improve coordination**, toys designed by faculty at **National Institute of Design (NID)**, Ahmedabad, have been selected by a rehabilitation centre in Bethel, Germany, for its activities for the elderly. "The non-toxic, wooden toys, named 'Ring Play' and 'Magic Memocubes', are

useful during hand exercises in physiotherapy," says Gayatri Menon, coordinator for toy design and development at NID. They also involve group play. While Magic Memocubes (cubes with colours and patterns) require you to look at the chosen pattern and rearrange the cubes, thus improving memory, Ring Play involves passing rings from one person to another using a wooden play stick without losing any rings, which improves hand-eye coordination. Menon now plans to offer the design to NGOs running homes and centres for the elderly in India. The best part: the toys are easy to produce and replicate.

MEDIA WATCH

MAKEUP MAGIC

To wipe away the years, turn to makeup, not surgery. That's the mantra of Bobbi Brown, makeup artist and CEO of US-based Bobbi Brown Cosmetics, whose acclaimed products are sold in over 20 countries worldwide. In her new book, *Bobbi Brown's Living Beauty* (Springboard Press; \$ 19.99; about Rs 850), Brown, who turns 50 this year, shares her cosmetic secrets "to help women in their 40s, 50s, 60s and beyond to look and feel better".



"I want to get rid of the stigma that surrounds ageing," she writes. "Getting older should not mean a panic-stricken drive to the nearest cosmetic surgeon for a Botox injection or tummy tuck. Instead, it should be seen as a process through

which a woman can gain more vitality, strength, wisdom and a new sense of beauty. And makeup magic can do that, naturally." The book hit stores in the US and UK in March 2007—no word yet on an Indian release.

TECH TALK WITH PUROHITS



The incandescent light bulb is on its way to darkness. Australia is banning it to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. The International Energy Agency estimates that switching to fluorescent lighting will cut worldwide electricity demand by 18 per cent.

LOVE THAT

LABOUR OF LOVE

Can you get more romantic than a **70 year-old man hand-carving more than 6,000 stairs up a mountain for his 80 year-old wife**? The tale of Liu Guojiang and Xu Chaoqing—voted No. 1 in *Chinese Women's Weekly* list of Top 10 True Love Stories—began half a century ago. When 20 year-old Liu fell in love with Xu, a widowed mother, relatives disapproved. The pair eloped to live in a cave atop a mountain in Jiangjin county in southwest China's Chongqing municipality. "My parents have lived in seclusion for the past 50 years because of their love for each other," their son Liu Mingsheng told news agency Xinhua. "They have no electricity and my father



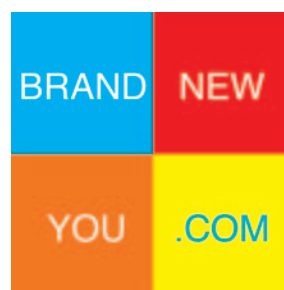
made kerosene lamps for light and carved steps up the mountain to make walking easier for my mother." After reading their story, the local government has promised to supply electricity to the cave.

WILD SILVER



PROJECT ELEPHANT

There are over 4,000 elephants living in India's zoos, temples and circuses, and not enough mahouts (elephant trainers) to take care of them. Also, **old and ailing elephants** have no place to go. "The health of captive elephants is deteriorating and their death rate is far higher than those in elephant reserves," A N Prasad, director, Project Elephant, Ministry of Environment and Forests, tells *Hindustan Times*. To correct the imbalance, the ministry is building a training centre for mahouts near the Haryana-Uttar Pradesh border that will also be a rehabilitation zone for elephants. "It will be an old age home for elephants," adds Prasad. The project is expected to cost Rs 5 million.



On the stands: *Brand New You*, a new magazine targeting the anti-ageing market, is being launched on 1 May in the UK. It will focus on five key areas—Face, Smile, Body, Style and Well-Being—with readers being guided through the latest developments in cosmetic improvement. The magazine, priced at £ 3.25 (about Rs 275), also has a website, brandnewyoumagazine.com

TRENDS

ATTITUDES TOWARDS AGEING

To learn more about attitudes related to ageing in the US and Asia-Oceania, AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) commissioned a survey of 400 opinion leaders—from government, NGOs, private sector, media, and academia—in Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, and the US. The results of the survey, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International, were released at Reinventing Retirement Asia, an international conference organised by AARP in Tokyo in March 2007, which *Harmony* attended. Here are some key findings:

1. Population ageing presents challenges and opportunities:

On the positive side, population ageing will mean increased access to the knowledge of older people, creation of new markets for products and services, and the potential availability of older people to contribute to the

workforce. On the negative side, the increased cost of providing retirement income and healthcare to a growing population of older people is a concern.

2. Some countries more prepared than others:

While a majority of opinion leaders in Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore believe their country is at least somewhat prepared to deal with population ageing, majorities in the other five countries (China, India, Japan, South Korea and the US) say their country is not adequately prepared.

3. Older workers wise, respected, productive:

A solid majority of opinion leaders perceive older workers as wise, respected, and productive. But they are divided on whether older workers can be described as flexible, and majorities do not see older workers as open to new technology or as fast at acquiring new skills. Australia, New Zealand and the US stand out



with the most positive attitudes toward older workers.

4. Employers not prepared for older workers: According to many opinion leaders,

H RECOMMENDS

ACTION PLAN FOR MAY

Never forget. While we wouldn't recommend living in the past, a healthy dose of nostalgia is a good thing. Form a 'reminiscence group' to talk about the good old days. Gerontologists liken reminiscing to callisthenics for the brain as the right triggers—a smell, perhaps a song—can even unlock vivid memories in some Alzheimer's disease and dementia patients. Such a group has been meeting once a week for the past three years at the McLean Health Centre in Simsbury, Connecticut in the US. "One day I remembered I could once do the salsa," 89 year-old Baldomero Gomez, a regular at the group, told Associated Press. "So I got up and did it, without missing a single step."





employers are not well prepared for a future workforce comprising more older workers. They recommend additional training and education, policies that prohibit discrimination

based on age at the workplace, reduced work hours, and the option to continue employment in a different position with fewer responsibilities to accommodate older workers.

5. Mid-60s appropriate time to retire: According to the average opinion leader, the appropriate retirement age is 65 for male workers and 63 for female workers. The average appropriate retirement age proposed by opinion leaders ranges from 68 in the US for both men and women to China's 63 for men and 59 for women.

6. Mandatory retirement opposed: A majority of opinion leaders oppose the idea of mandatory retirement age. Opposition is particularly strong in Australia, New Zealand and the US. But at the same time, a majority of opinion leaders in India, along with half of Chinese opinion leaders and sizeable minorities in Japan and South Korea, support the idea.

7. Pensions inadequate: Roughly half the opinion leaders state that the average older person's pension is insufficient to live comfortably. Moreover, a majority report that an adequate retirement income is not available to people of all backgrounds.

8. Different views on living: While enthusiasm for independent living for elderly is nearly universal in Australia and the US and supported by majorities in Japan, New Zealand and Singapore, majorities in China, India, and South Korea prefer living with extended families or in assisted care facilities.

9. Healthcare systems poor: Majorities in China, India, South Korea, and the US say access to quality healthcare is currently not available to all older people.

10. Older people contributing members of society: Almost all opinion leaders believe their government should enlist them to help with community projects.



Technology transfer. Do you paint, sculpt, sing, dance, or even cook exceptionally well? Whatever your special skill, pass it on to a child and keep a legacy alive. In Scotland, retired workers are passing on their expertise to Scottish pupils as part of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP), a government-sponsored scheme aimed at utilising the skills of the elderly, helping them stay active and, most significant, bridging the gap between generations. Over 1,300 people have already volunteered for RSVP and are teaching students poetry, cooking, country dancing and woodwork in primary schools across the country.

Welcome to the section where you can share your thoughts and experiences on anything under the sun. Write in with full contact details, and make this space your own!

MODEL OF CREATIVITY



Hirdwani with his creations

I created my first model in 1967. It was a replica of a Eucharistic Congress podium (from where mass is conducted) with six levels. I created it from the waste material my brother would get from his vacuum-forming unit. It made me realise the power of imagination and creativity. I could reuse material that is usually thrown away to create a model that has meaning and would be an asset worth retaining.

Today, I am 71. In the past 20 years, I have created over 50 models that depict different themes. Each took me at least four to five months to make. They

“Waste used with imagination can create something unique”

waste, is an ‘International Year of the Child’ model, with symbols that reflect a child’s need for love, shelter, food, safety and education. I have also made a model in the memory of those who lost their lives in the Kanishka plane explosion. Apart from that, I have built a theatre that replicates how we can view a movie at room temperature by raising the rooftop diagonally, allowing air and light in the hall. This

are all as big as the monitor of a computer and three-dimensional. One of them, made of plastic

was done earlier when power supply was a huge concern. It’s something worth considering now that we are facing a power crisis again.

One of the best in my collection is my creation of a mosque for Bohra Muslims with plastic waste. The two minarets are made out of ball pens and the dome is made of Odomos boxes. I have pasted stickers on them to create a design. The parapet is made of radium beads, which shine in the dark. I have been able to make some light fittings inside the dome, minarets and the prayer hall. The mosque looks beautiful when illuminated. The models are intricately designed from outside and inside. There is furniture too—like bookshelves in the mosque, seats and a screen in the theatre, a pool table, dining table and chairs in a model of a community centre, and a play area in the International Year of the Child model. I have taken great care while building these models, especially the religious places.

After my brother passed away in 1984, my supply of waste material was limited. However, I continued to create models until 1987. I have kept a part of my collection at my home in Ambarnath, on the outskirts of Mumbai, where they can be maintained. I still have 20 models with me in my house. Indeed, maintenance is my greatest concern. I am not married and have no heir to treasure them. I have been looking for an institution or organisation that would take all my models and maintain them for people to see. I don’t want to sell them to anybody as I have an emotional attachment with these models. They are my creation—products of finesse, creativity, time, patience, imagination and hard work. If all these models are displayed on one forum, they reflect different messages. Together, they put across my idea: waste material together with art and imagination can result in a unique artefact.

—Mohan Hirdwani, Mumbai

Anyone interested in helping him maintain his model collection can call Hirdwani at 022-22832968 or email him at mhirdwani@yahoo.co.in

THE SOUND OF MUSIC



Puri in performance

As the daughter of former Indian Army chief General (Retd) S M Shrinagesh and later the wife of Burma Shell executive Tribhuvan Puri, I had always led a glamorous life. However, in 1968, following the call of my heart, I reinvented myself. From attending parties, and playing golf and bridge, I stepped into the

world of Hindustani classical music. I was privileged to be the first *shagird* (pupil) of Patiala *gharana's* Ustad Munnawar Ali Khan, son of legendary Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali. Initially, he refused to take me under his wing as I was already 33 and the mother of four children—he couldn't expect me to be loyal to my music. But when he heard me singing he was convinced. I stopped going to parties, left golf and bridge and did my *riyaz* (practice) four to five hours a day. One day, Ustadji even warned me not to overdo my *riyaz* as it could affect my vocal chords because I was initiated into music very late in life.

A decade of learning and *riyaz* later, my guru encouraged me to audition for All India Radio which was selecting its new panel of artists. I was selected and have regularly performed for radio since then. Initially, I considered music intensely personal. But as my radio shows became popular, I began to receive invitations to *sangeet sammelan* (music festivals) all over the country. Singing at prestigious venues, such as New Delhi's India Habitat Centre and India International Centre, emboldened me and infused me with new energy.

One of the brightest moments in my musical career was a personal invitation from acclaimed Sufi poet

Faiz Ahmed Faiz. He was visiting Chandigarh, my home town, to inaugurate a *ghazal* concert where I sung an impromptu *ghazal*. The next day I was invited to the governor's residence to meet the maestro. He suggested we collaborate and create a recording of his poems and my music. Next, he faxed me 60 sheets of poems from Russia, where he lived then, and asked me to choose the ones I liked. Two years later, in 1991, I was ready with my cassette and HMV was willing to release it, but Faiz *saab* passed away. The album got little publicity, but I refused to let it sink into anonymity. I tried to sell copies among friends and well-wishers.

After this, I studied the complete 700 *shloka* of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, translated into Hindi by author Dina Nath Bhargava. I gave music to them and recorded a CD in a local studio, bearing all the expenses. Recently, my daughter Nandita Puri, a Kathak dancer, and I opened the annual Patiala Heritage Festival with our *jugalbandi*. It was a memorable moment in my life.

Looking back, I feel music has changed me completely. It has made me more Indian, so much so that I now refuse to go on foreign holidays. Instead, I would gladly spend days

“All truths begin and culminate in the sciences of music”

exploring our priceless cultural heritage. The world of Indian classical music is challenging, inspiring and exciting. The simple ceremony where my guru tied a *mauli* on my wrist, while uttering a prayer seeking God's blessings to help me in my endeavour, left a profound impression on my mind. Later, not only his lessons in music, but the values practiced by him, like simple living, kindness, and unconditional dedication to art, influenced my life. During my training with Ustadji I realised that all truths begin and culminate in the sciences of music.

Today, I am 71 and my next project is an album on meditation music where I will use *bhajan* sung by *Arya Samajis*. As far as I know no one has ever sung and recorded these *bhajan* for public consumption.

—Primila Puri, Chandigarh

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Ballet of life



Ruma Dasgupta relives the spirit of **Uday Shankar** through his wife **Amala**, daughter **Mamata** and daughter-in-law **Tanushree**

If he performs in Geneva don't miss going there," wrote Irish writer James Joyce to his daughter Lucia from Paris in June 1934. "He moves on the stage floor like some divine being...believe me, there are still some beautiful things in this poor old world." Joyce was alluding to the legendary Uday Shankar. The late dancer embraced different dance forms, classical and folk; learnt to paint at the Royal College of Art, London; partnered famous Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova for two Indian ballets staged in Britain and USA in the late 1920s; and created a signature style of performance. One of the few iconoclastic dancers from India to make waves abroad, Shankar passed away in 1977.

His legacy lives on in three women, who dance with the grace of their bodies and the richness of their minds—wife Amala, daughter Mamata, and daughter-in-law Tanushree, three

Amala calls her marriage to **Uday Shankar** "a spiritual experience and creative partnership"



SHILBHADRA DATTA



(Above) Mamata with her students at Udayan; Tanushree with her troupe at the Ananda Shankar Centre for Performing Arts

tributaries flowing from a river of creativity.

Born in a mud house in Bangladesh, Amala Shankar met Uday Shankar when she was a little over 11. Almost 19 years younger than her husband, she remembers the electrifying sensation she felt when he held her hand for the first time. She says she did not wash her hands for the next 24 hours just to let the fragrance of his French cologne that had rubbed off to her linger. In the

years that followed, they danced their way through life enthralling audiences across the world.

Amala Shankar has performed almost 200 shows every year for 75 years.

Today, at the age of 88, she lives in an apartment in south Kolkata surrounded by her paintings (created by scratching off layers of paint with her nails) and memorabilia of the past seven decades. In 1938, Amala helped Shankar set up the Uday Shankar

India Culture Centre in Almora in the Himalaya. The institute was patronised by Rabindranath Tagore and Romain Rolland among other famous artists and intellectuals of the time. Unfortunately, in those days Almora was a little out of the way for those interested in learning creative dance and within a few years it had to be closed down. Many who have been there recall the staging of *Ramayana* using two different hilltops as locations for Ayodhya and Lanka, and thousands of oil lamps to illuminate the show. Local holy men and villagers used to wait alongside roads and pray in silence as the couple, dressed as Rama and Sita, passed by. Shankar introduced to India in the early 20th century what is often termed as site-specific theatre today in the West.

“Our marriage was divine,” says Amala. “It was a spiritual experience and creative partnership.” If Amala is on the stage today, it is essentially for spiritual fulfilment. In 2006, she mesmerised a large audience in Indore after a self-imposed exile for years. She still actively teaches youngsters to use their bodies to express an emotion or a thought in free style—a lot of it reminiscent of the late maestro. “If you take a still photograph of the movements he devised, you will find how strongly each one resembles traditional Indian sculpture,” she says. The Uday Shankar India Culture Centre today is sadly cramped in two classrooms of a local college building.

Their daughter Mamata, now 52, was never forced to dance as a child. But the sheer vibrancy of her parent’s world beckoned her



Uday and Amala Shankar in the film *Kalpana*; and on stage: “Each movement he devised resembled sculpture,” says Amala

to the stage. “There were scores of people designing backdrops, costumes, composing music, rehearsing for shows,” she remembers. “Baba made me feel, even as a child, like I was one of them. He would call me aside and we would share our views on all that was taking shape.”

Mamata started taking lessons at the Uday Shankar India Culture Centre at the age of 10. She learnt Bharatanatyam before venturing into creative dancing, in keeping with Shankar’s philosophy of staying rooted in Indian culture yet branching out towards newer horizons. As she acknowledges, her mother was her *nritya* guru while her father was her inspiration. He helped her develop her skills as an actor, which helped her later in her career in films (she debuted in Mrinal Sen’s film *Mrigaya* in 1976) and television serials.

While Mamata was evolving as a dancer, her only brother Ananda was undertaking his own musical odyssey. A talented musician far

ahead of his time, Ananda was known for fusing Eastern and Western styles and choreographing ballets based on his music. The journey was cut short as Ananda suddenly passed away in 1999 from heart failure. Today, his wife Tanushree Shankar, 51, carries on his legacy. Daughter of a doctor in the Army, Tanushree took up dancing as an extra-

Mamata’s mother was her guru and father, her inspiration

curricular activity in school. After she became a part of the Shankar family, she developed a passion for creative dancing.

A student of Amala Shankar, Tanushree worked in Ananda’s experimental shows that used multimedia as a presentation tool (an audiovisual backdrop for performers) back in the 1970s. “Both Mamata and I have diversified from the Uday

Shankar *gharana*,” explains Tanushree. “Though our basic foundation is the same, our presentations are different. I am more dependent on body language than on emotions or *abhinaya* (dramatic action).”

Thirteen years younger than her husband, the end of her 25-year marriage shattered Tanushree. Dance helped her put the pieces back together as she had to take up the reins of the organisation run by Ananda for nearly 25 years. “Whatever I do today has been picked up unconsciously from Ananda,” she says. “As a dancer, my mother-in-law Amala Shankar is my guru.” Today, the Ananda Shankar Centre for Performing Arts continues to conduct national and international workshops, and pursue its mission of overall aesthetic development in an artist.

Mamata had a relatively smoother run. She performed for the first time in 1974 in the Ramakrishna Mission auditorium in Gol Park in south Kolkata—



The Mamata Shankar Ballet Troupe: "Every movement must have an inherent logic," she believes

she was the first, and last, female dancer to have been allowed to perform on that stage. In the years that followed, she broke out of the pure classical mode and created her own style inspired by her father's innovative spirit under her mother's guidance. "Don't replicate what I have created," was Uday Shankar's advice to his daughter before he died in 1977 when Mamata was only 22.

The bounds of classical grammar can be stifling, admits Mamata, but art cannot be created in anarchy. "Every movement must have an inherent logic," she says with conviction. "That is what I have been taught by my mother and I subscribe to it." The Mamata Shankar Ballet Troupe started performing in India and abroad as early as 1978 and her training academy, called Udayan, was established in 1986. Here, she teaches youngsters to critique social issues with the rhythm and movement of their bodies. Married to Chandroday Ghosh, also a dancer, Mamata has two

sons of her own and is mother to the 5,000-odd students who emulate her philosophy of life and reflect her energy. She also works in Bengali television serials (*Janmabhumi*) and is ready to play roles of substance in films; examples are Rituparna Ghosh's *Utsav* (2000) and Anjan Dutta's unreleased *Bong Connection*.

Uday Shankar's use of fusion has inspired Tanushree

If Mamata is busy with her screen career and teaching the nuances of dance and humanity to her students, Tanushree is inviting choreographers from the West to do residencies in India. "I use a lot of western techniques in my choreography," she says. "I give scholarships to my students too, so they get direct exposure to international trends." She has also acted in *Hemanter Pakhi* which received the National Award for the Best Regional Film

for 2004, and more recently in Mira Nair's *The Namesake*. Her recent dance productions include *Uddharan* (upliftment of the soul), based on the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and *Chirantan* (the eternal), which used Tagore's own translation of his poems in English, recited by Amitabh Bachchan.

Uday Shankar still has a tangible presence in all their lives. For those who question the aspects of fusion in her choreography, Tanushree replies, "Baba (Uday Shankar) did *Shankarscope*, with elements from rock concerts and fashion shows in the 1970s. He would have fused the best from all influences in his inimitable style if we had him with us." Mamata says her artistic legacy pushes her to be a better person. "I always have my parents to look up to when I teach my students to be in harmony with others." And Amala nurtures the dream of reviving the Uday Shankar India Culture Centre in Kolkata. "The more we delve into his works," she says, "the more I discover him." ■

Stage presence

Thirty years after retiring from the National School of Drama, 82 year-old **Ebrahim Alkazi** remains active in the artistic sphere. **Jai Arjun Singh** in conversation with the veteran of Indian theatre

So what is it you'd like to know about my dreary life?" asks Ebrahim Alkazi, twinkle firmly in eye. This is high irony, and he probably knows it; you'd be hard pressed to find a life more dynamic than the one lived by this veteran of Indian theatre. From the 1950s through to the 1970s, initially in Bombay and later in Delhi, Alkazi was a flag-bearer of the theatrical tradition, a director who brought new realism and purpose to Indian drama, a teacher who nurtured some of the great talents of the era. And though he retired from the National School of Drama (NSD) 30 years ago, he has remained active in the artistic sphere—collecting and documenting old photographs and paintings, conceptualising and curating exhibitions.

Currently, it is an exhibition of old photographs of Lucknow, from the time of the 1857 Mutiny. The exhibition has moved from Delhi to Mumbai and will go to Lucknow in September. "We try to reach as wide a public as possible," he says, going into his office and emerging with an elegantly produced book, *Lucknow, City of Illusions*, edited by Dr Rosie Llewellyn-Jones. Flipping the pages, he explains each photograph, the camera angles—and in the process, giving you an idea of the unerring visual sense that made him such an influential theatre director. "I developed a visual approach to the theatre," he often says, "as opposed to just a literary approach. I was very concerned with how the stage would look, and with the overall design."

Though he walks with a barely noticeable stoop, there's little else to suggest that Alkazi is 82. Dressed in a sharp suit, he still comes to his office, the Art Heritage Gallery in the Triveni Kala Sangam basement, at 11 am every day after spending an hour at the Alkazi Foundation in Delhi's Greater Kailash. His steady, clipped voice could easily belong to a man 25 years younger and he rarely pauses for breath. There's a natural storytelling talent on view when he talks about his life; he has an impressive memory for specifics and his descriptions are vivid. As theatre director Bansi Kaul, one of his students in the 1970s, says, "When Alkazi described a performance, we could imagine it unfolding. He was a charismatic teacher."

Given his sense of discipline and structure, it isn't surprising that Alkazi prefers to tell his story chronologically, rather than have a free-flowing chat. He was born to Arab parents in Pune and schooled at St Vincent, a Jesuit school, and those early years played a major part in his development. "The Jesuits had a comprehensive view of education," he explains. "They picked up our talents and encouraged us to hone them. The principal, Father Rifkin, was in charge of the library and he knew exactly what every student was reading."

At home, his father, a Bombay-based businessman, was a liberal and young Ebrahim had exposure to books and magazines from around the world. He fondly recalls reading the Cairo-based magazine *Rouz-al-Yusuf*, to which the great writer Naguib Mahfouz (later a Nobel Laureate) would contribute. "I hardly had a

holiday in my early life," he says, "never an idle moment. After school a tutor from Saudi Arabia taught us Arabic." He speaks with some pride of the communal living that he was accustomed to as a youngster. "In our community there was no master-servant relationship," he says. "Everyone ate together and the help were given a share in the family businesses. I have treasured these values of equality all my life."

It was at St Xavier's College in Bombay in the 1940s that Alkazi took his first strides in theatre. According to him, Sultan Padamsee, his friend and later brother-in-law, was a director on the scale of Orson Welles. "He started the Theatre Group, but died tragically young and a great deal of responsibility fell on my shoulders." Alkazi flung

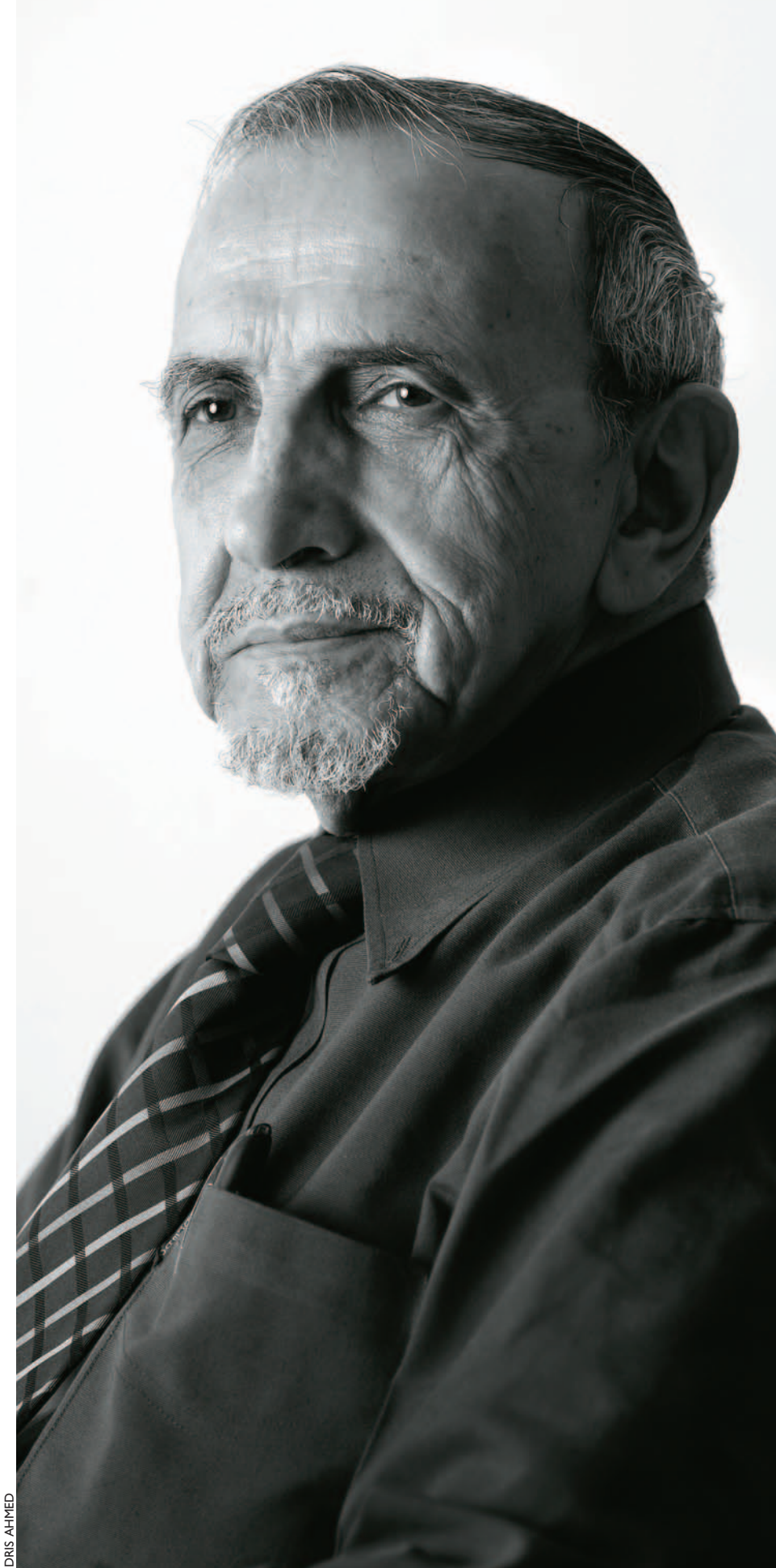


**"I developed
a visual rather
than a literary
approach to theatre"**

himself into acting and directing, and subsequently spent three years at the Royal Academy of Theatre in England, which gave him plenty of exposure to the possibilities of theatre. "But I wanted to come back and work in India." He did, and founded the Theatre Unit in Bombay.

"I wasn't interested in plays that had been successful on Broadway or the West End," he says. "Instead I wanted to encourage Indian playwrights and deal with

Alkazi: living theatre



IDRIS AHMED



A scene from Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*, enacted at Delhi's Purana Quila

subjects that were relevant to the Indian scenario. In fact, Alyque Padamsee and I fell out over this issue." Alkazi has always been very focused and clear about what he wanted. Kirti Jain, another of his students and a former director of the NSD herself, concurs that he was a director who "needed to make the decisions", to be in charge of all aspects of the production.

Bombay was a vibrant place in the 1950s. Alkazi speaks of spending time with M F Husain, Tyeb Mehta and Usha Amin; Mulk Raj Anand who founded *Marg*, a magazine for the arts; and Raja Rao, who wanted to set

up a Parisian café in Bombay. He recalls working at the terrace theatre of the Bhulabhai Desai Institute, and later renting a fifth-floor flat for Rs 150 a month near Breach Candy Hospital and setting up a theatre: "The audience would enthusiastically walk up six flights of stairs to see a play!" Simultaneously he became interested in collecting art—at one point he even managed to get together 47 original ceramic works by Picasso.

A turning point occurred in the early 1960s when the chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi asked him to come to Delhi to help set up a national drama school.

"I'd always wanted to do plays by Hindi writers, and this was my chance." However, in 1962 Delhi was an unsettling place—to Alkazi, it felt like a village compared to Bombay. "It was a peculiar, retarded, feudal world," he exclaims, talking in particular about the southern parts of the city. "Kailash Colony, where we set up our base in a shabby building owned by tent-wallah, was so far out that no taxi would go there." Chuckling, he recounts one of his earliest experiences in the city: seeing two men hoisting a dead donkey on a scooter by the side of the road. "This was my introduction to Delhi. It was surreal, like something out of a Luis Bunuel film!"

**"I wanted
to deal
with subjects
relevant to India"**



The flip side was that he realised Delhi's ancient monuments would be fantastic sites for theatre. "There was a space behind the tent-wallah's house, we picked up stones and built a makeshift stage there, lined with cow dung and with a thatched roof. We played to full houses." Later they would move to a more sophisticated venue—the Rabindra Bhavan building near Mandi Chowk—but those early days were heady. Alkazi began reading a lot of Hindi literature and plays. He was especially taken by Mohan Rakesh's *Ashad ka Ek Din*, based on the life of Kalidas, and *Andha Yug*, a drama set in the aftermath of the Mahabharata War. "I was told these were radio

scripts, not real plays, but I was convinced they would work with the right direction." He would have reason to feel vindicated later on when both plays were prescribed for a BA course.

The breakthrough came one evening at the Ferozshah Kotla stadium, where he got permission to stage *Andha Yug*. "Pandit Nehru came to watch it, and diplomats and huge crowds followed him." It was a successful performance, though one that ended with the prime minister gravely warning Alkazi to watch out for snakes when he staged his productions near monuments!

What would he say was his greatest strength as a director? "My intellectual humility," he replies, referring to his constant desire to add to his knowledge. Alkazi's son Faisal, himself a theatre director and educationist, adds that his father has always strived for perfection. "There has been a professional stamp to



Courtesy: NSD

Late actors Manohar Singh (left) and Virendra Razdan in *Othello*

everything he has done," says Faisal. "And he always taught us to work without cutting corners."

Alkazi's liberal background and interest in a number of different forms also helped. While the NSD under his supervision primarily represented Indian theatre, it was also open to traditions from other countries—for instance, he once got a Japanese director to stage a

production in the classical Noh tradition. "We designed the stage in the style of the Noh," he says, showing us an old photograph. "The form is not very different from Kathakali, and we were able to explore that connection."

One reminiscence quickly follows another as Alkazi discusses his productions—including translations of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Shakespeare's *Othello*—and his bouts with critics; once, after a reviewer likened an actress's performance to a "cackling hen", Alkazi wrote a letter to then editor of *The Times of India* Sham Lal, saying the critic's writing was "like the cackling of a hen no cock would look at twice". The letter was published in its entirety.

Not that he doesn't criticise his actors. "Actors tend to get conceited very soon," he says. "It's important to know how to keep them balanced." There were some performers, he says, who were brilliant but too low-key for the theatre—like Pankaj Kapur. "His talent really came out on the big screen." It's common to find theatre persons who are resentful or dismissive of cinema, but Alk-



Courtesy: NSD

A scene from *Andha Yug*



Alkazi (far right) directs the cast of Girish Karnad's *Rakt Kalyan*

azi is pragmatic. "I think movies are important and have always encouraged film appreciation."

A mildly cantankerous side emerges when we discuss corporate sponsorship for theatre. "It's a beautiful, velvet glove," he says. "They pick up popular actors and thematic plays and often do a good job within a certain sphere. But would it be possible to get sponsorship for a hard-hitting play that's critical of the media, for instance?" As for the hefty sums of money doing the rounds on the art scene (a subject close to his heart), he says, "There's a whole lot of colossal rubbish being produced and sold in the name of art. And when it comes to good work that sells well, most of the money doesn't even go to the artist."

We've been talking for a while and he asks if we'd like to have coffee. "I take lots of sugar," he says jovially, hardly the thing you expect to hear from someone his age. This is my cue to ask him how he stays so fit. "I eat very little," he says. "Besides, when you have a strong passion for your work, the energy comes naturally. I consider myself fortunate to have spent my life doing things I enjoy."

Importantly, he wears his erudition lightly. "He was extremely well-read, a walking library," says director Vijay Kashyap, who worked with him on productions like *Tughlaq* and *Razia Sultan*, "and yet he never used high-flowing words. He explained everything in very simple language." But as Alkazi himself is fond of saying, "The thing to know is that you don't

"There's a lot of rubbish being produced in the name of art"



know enough." He follows this philosophy tirelessly; much of his time is still spent reading, researching, learning new things about his areas of interest.

After retiring from the NSD in 1977, much of his work has been in art—as collector, gallerist and curator. Having lived in Kuwait, London and New York at various times in the past couple of decades, he has built up a sizeable collection of 19th century photographs. His wife Roshen Alkazi has run the Art Heritage Gallery

for over 40 years, but hasn't been well lately. Ask him more and Alkazi shows reticence. "She would inspect every painting," he says, deflecting the subject, "and I felt it was necessary for me to be involved too." He is also measured when talking about his children: Faisal has done a lot of work with handicapped youngsters, he says, and daughter Amal Allana is chairperson of NSD. "She is a director of great originality," Alkazi says. Was he a hard act for his children to follow? "In any artistic field, it tends to be difficult for the second generation," concedes Faisal. "But it wasn't bad because I became a director after he retired, so there weren't too many comparisons."

The meeting with Alkazi ends on a nostalgic note as he shows us a collection of photographs from his theatre ventures. There are shots of elegant set designs into which he invested so much effort. Rehearsals with actors, including a young Om Puri wearing a Japanese mask. A long shot of the Purana Qila, where Alkazi discovered that Nehru was right: there were indeed snakes around! When he first went to the site, he recalls being told that he couldn't use the ground because it was sacred. "It's already being used as a public lavatory!" he retorted. "I'm only cleaning it up."

I sense he wouldn't run out of anecdotes to relate, even if we spent several more hours talking. But he's the picture of courtesy, inviting us to visit him at home and hear more stories. "Do you want me to powder my nose?" he asks while posing for the photographer, a theatre professional to the last. ■

The first day at school.

The first time you rode the bicycle.

The first crush you had at thirteen.

The first drama you got a part in.

The first day at college.

The first date you went on.

The first kiss.

The first time you proposed.

The first job interview.

The first board meeting you addressed.

The first day after retirement.

Butterflies never retire.

The first click of the mouse. www.harmonyindia.org

Just chill

Dr Pushpesh Pant turns down the thermostat with cool summer soothers

Sanskrit poet Kalidas' *Ritusamahara* celebrates the seasons with 'painted' images in words that provide ancient prescriptions on how to keep our cool during the summer months. Application of sandal paste on their bosoms by

comely maidens and sleeping under moonlight are some options the

lyrical poet suggests. Though he had little to add by way of useful dietary injunctions, we can always rely on Ayurvedic wisdom for that. The age-old Indian school of healthcare advises us to partake food and drink that contain natural cooling properties. Easy-to-digest *dahi* or yoghurt is a time-tested dairy product that helps us beat the heat. Imbibe it as *raita* (vegetables with yoghurt), *lassi* and *chaas* (variations of buttermilk), or as a base of gravy. There are interesting desserts concocted with yoghurt too. Also in demand in summer are

sherbets and salads. For instance, *bael ka sharbat* and *santare ka vilayati meetha* soothe the summer belly. And considering that few Indian recipes allow cold dishes to play a solo, stellar role, we are proud to present Hindustani chicken salad, a light, cool, satisfying and worthy main course.

BAEL KA SHARBAT

INGREDIENTS

- Bael fruits: 2; large
- Sugar-free sweetener: 2 sachets (equal to 2 tsp sugar) if required

METHOD

Cut open the bael fruit and remove the flesh. Discard seeds and pith. Mash well, then pass through fine sieve. Add sweetener if required. Dilute one part of this fruit pulp concentrate with 3-4 parts of water. Add a little crushed ice and enjoy!

HINDUSTANI CHICKEN SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- Chicken (boneless): 500 gm; tandoori, grilled or boiled
- Mustard oil (use refined oil for milder taste): 1 tbsp
- Ground cumin: 1 tsp; freshly roasted
- Lemon juice: 1 tbsp
- Small lettuce/cabbage: 1/2 head; shredded by hand
- Sprouted *moong*: 50 gm

DRESSING

- Curd thick/hung, obtained from skimmed milk: 200 ml
- Lemon juice: 4 tbsp
- A pinch of mixed herbs
- A pinch of rock salt
- Fresh *anardana* (pomegranate seeds): 2 tbsp

METHOD

Shred the chicken and mix it in a large bowl with other ingredients. Blend with hand and keep in the fridge for about four hours. Prepare the dressing by mixing all the ingredients. Add 2 tbsp water to thin and whisk. Take out the chicken from the fridge just before serving and place on a bed of lettuce leaves. Pour the dressing over it and garnish with bite-size pieces of bell peppers or olives.





SANTARE KA VILAYATI MEETHA

INGREDIENTS

- Oranges: 10; peeled, segmented and deseeded
- Orange juice (without added sugar): 500 ml
- Gelatine: 5 tsp
- Mint leaves: 40-50; washed and dried
- A sprig of mint to garnish

METHOD

Soak two tablespoons of gelatine in naturally sweet orange juice till spongy. Then add remaining orange juice and bring to boil. Remove the scum that rises to the surface, cool. Pour jelly in moistened moulds and chill to set. When the jelly is almost set, add a layer of mint leaves on the surface along with orange segments. Pour more jelly on top (enough to cover) and replace in the fridge to chill. Use a sharp knife to cleanly remove the jelly from mould and garnish with orange segments and sprig of mint.



DAHI KI THANDI MITHAAS

INGREDIENTS

- Curd obtained from skimmed milk: 500 ml
- Your choice of ripe fruit (apricots, peaches, plums, raspberries): 250 gm; peeled and deseeded
- Sugar-free sweetener: 2 tsp
- Honey (optional): 1 tsp

METHOD

Place all ingredients in a mixer and blend well. Cover and refrigerate till set. Beat with a hand mixer or fork till fluffy. Replace in the fridge to chill and set. Garnish with segments of the fruit used and serve.



Dr Pushpesh Pant, our culinary expert, is a documentary producer, author and die-hard foodie

The truth about aspirin

Blindly popping an aspirin a day to stave off a heart attack may not be a great idea.

Teena Baruah reports on the debate over the 'wonder drug'

According to recent guidelines by the American Food and Drug Administration, aspirin can trigger an attack in asthmatics. And yet on 29 January, *The Washington Post* posted a report on its website recommending a low dose of aspirin to lower risk of adult asthma. The article, based on a study published in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*, sounds convincing until you reach the last line. "Our study cannot be taken as evidence for recommending aspirin to patients facing a risk of asthma," the author of the study Tobias Kurth is quoted. "More studies are needed..."

Confused? This is just one more turn in the aspirin saga—today countless debates and controversies rage over aspirin, an over-the-counter drug that takes away your headache and is supposed to take care of your heart too.

For more than 100 years, aspirin has enjoyed the reputation of a 'wonder drug'—it has been used to fight fever, scratchy throat and the common cold. After all, it was first invented as an analgesic. In the 1970s, studies showed that it relieved symptoms of cold but resulted in nasal secretions that contained the cold virus, thus spreading it further. As part of its analgesic uses, doctors have also prescribed a generous 350 mg

dosage for years to those suffering from osteoarthritis. This was until they realised that such patients developed a tendency to bleed internally. In

to osteoarthritis patients, doctors increasingly began to recommend an 'aspirin-a-day'



case of an external injury, people suffering from osteoarthritis and on aspirin are also prone to more than normal external bleeding.

This pointed to the drug's anti-clotting properties. Since then, aspirin has been used as first aid for those who have suffered a

routine to those people who were at risk of a heart attack—diabetics, and people suffering from high cholesterol and obesity—and those with a history of heart disease. According to Dr Upendra Kaul, director of cardiology, Fortis Group of Hospitals, Delhi, 10-15 per cent of India's silver population is on aspirin.

"Aspirin is a medicine, not a vaccine"

—Dr C M Gulati

heart attack. Further research indicated that these anti-clotting properties were, in fact, related to the drug's blood-thinning properties that were causing osteoarthritis patients to haemorrhage and bleed more on injury.

So, while it became medically prohibitive to prescribe aspirin

The story doesn't end here. Every other day, a new study finds new uses—or side effects—of the drug. A report in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* in January reviews six studies involving more than 95,000 people. The result: a new guideline recommending a daily low-dose aspirin therapy

for women aged 65 years and above, regardless of heart disease risk status, to cut incidence of heart attack. Previous studies associated aspirin with prevention of cardiovascular events in men but women were ignored owing to lack of data. But the report also sent a red-letter warning to people with high blood pressure: aspirin increases risk of stroke in 69 per cent of male users.

Despite such a contraindication, why is aspirin still so popular? According to cardiologist Deepak Natarajan of Apollo Hospital, Delhi, "Heart attack is the No. 1 killer disease in India with 50 lakh casualties every year and this pill cuts down the risk. So we love it." And it's inexpensive and can be bought over the counter.

Aspirin is sold in India under the brand names, Dispirin, Anacin, Bayer Aspirina and Alka-Seltzer.

But not all doctors are generous about prescribing aspirin. Dr Chandra Mohan Gulhati, editor of medical journal *Monthly Index of Medical Specialities*, disputes the 'aspirin-a-day' theory. "It is a medicine and not a vaccine," he argues. "You don't give it to normal people." As an expert responding to queries on drugs on website *Doctor NDTV*, he routinely warns people of aspirin's lesser-known darker side. "Anti-aspirin news never appears in media," he says. "For instance, no one talks about it being banned abroad for patients below 16 years as it can cause Reye's syndrome [a deadly disease that affects the liver or

brain] or multi-organ failure. Also, it's illegal to prescribe it to pregnant women. It increases risk of stroke in women and can be fatal for patients with high blood pressure. Yet most doctors see it as a harmless drug." (For more information, contact Dr Gulhati on info@mims-india.com)

So, despite the recent news reports based on the new guideline from the American Heart Association, primary prevention of heart attack with aspirin is fraught with dangerous consequences. As Dr R K Prasad, senior resident doctor (medicine), All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, insists, "You need a competent doctor to assess your risk of heart attack or stroke before popping the 'A' pill." ■

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ONE
Personal Classifieds



I am a 67 year-old living in Thiruvananthapuram. I have a bungalow close to the airport. It has four bedrooms, Seniors looking for accommodation during holidays can get in touch with me.

Contact K John at 0471-2474371;
Email: bombaykurian@yahoo.co.in

I am a 58 year-old college lecturer in search of old issues of *Screen*, *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and *Gentleman*. Anybody willing to sell them can get in touch with me.

Contact Professor M R Sethi at 01681-256230;
Email: profmrsethi@gmail.com

I have collected lots of information on meditation, yoga, and alternate therapies including herbal juices for curing and controlling old-age health problems like hypertension, cardiac problems and diabetes. I can share this

information with silvers by post. If interested, write to me with contact details.

Contact K V Bansal at 011-26851680;
Email: karamvirbansal@yahoo.co.in

I provide finance and real-estate services along with advice on tax matters. I can also organise or arrange catering services, train and bus tickets.

Contact S Balasubramanian at 09283799889;
Email: balu@humlog.com

I am 67 years young and interested in exchanging photographs of religious places and pilgrimages across the country with like-minded persons. Do get in touch if interested along with samples.

Contact 09433007066;
Email: markage.india@sify.com

Blossoming courage



It's like something out of a painting by Claude Monet: 77 year-old Manjeet Chawla sitting in her garden amid a riot of pansies, roses and chrysanthemums. Her house and garden in Delhi's plush Panchsheel Park area are as vibrant as the painter's canvas—cream twigs of ruskus in her drawing room, baskets of multi-hued dehydrated roses placed on table tops and bougainvillea tendrils hanging from ceilings. Surrounded by so much flower power, it's hard to believe she underwent two severe spells of depression in the past two decades.

She rebuilt her life by pursuing an unusual passion, painting with dried flowers. She preserves the delicate blossoms by pressing and dehydrating them. "The flowers from my first exhibition in 1986 are still as pristine as ever," she says. The show, organised by the Rose Society of India, was a watershed for Chawla, a triumph over a very personal struggle.

Four years before that, she had lost her husband Joginder Singh Chawla to a three-year battle with a brain tumour. "When he was ill, I nursed and fed my husband and listened to *kirtan*. I desperately hoped he would bounce back." When he passed away in 1982, Chawla suddenly realised she was on her own. She had never even checked her own bank balance before. Suddenly she found herself planning investments, splitting the family business among her three sons, and weighing the career options of her youngest son. All this left her exhausted and overwhelmed. Soon after the mourning, Chawla had a nervous breakdown.

SANJAY ARORA

Flower painting and motivational music have helped
Manjeet Chawla battle depression, says **Teena Baruah**



Chawla with her creations

"I could smell death outside my window," she says. She stopped socialising, interacting with her family. "I stopped dyeing my hair, lost weight and found myself looking at a stranger in the mirror." She felt guilty being a burden on her children and entertained thoughts of suicide. She was on anti-depressants and sleeping pills but they did not help. After two months, Chawla took charge of herself. She visited her doctor and started scribbling down her anxieties. She also wrote poems on happy moments, like her son's wedding and the birth of her grandchildren.

"The only way to cure depression is to be busy and active"

Walking about in her garden for hours, Chawla discovered the therapeutic power of flowers. She started drying flowers by pressing them between absorbent tissue paper and tucking them under her mattress for a week. She learnt ways to preserve them—avoiding water and humidity, hanging them upside down (in case of bougainvillea),

using glycerine and burying flowers in a mixture of disinfected sand and borax powder. Soon she began to use them to make artwork like paintings, candles and cards. As her reputation grew through word of mouth, Chawla began to receive invitations to give demonstrations. In 1992, her name was listed in the *Limca Book of Records* for an 'unusual hobby'.

However, in 2005, Chawla suffered her second attack of depression. After undergoing angioplasty in St Louis Hospital, Washington University—her youngest son lives in the US—she was on her way back to India. Because of carrying heavy baggage at the airport, the stent inside her heart was damaged.

"It was August and I couldn't even dry flowers because of the humidity," she remembers. Sensing her despair, her four-year-old grandson Harjeet ran to his room and fetched his watercolour box. "He took my finger and pressed it on a paint block and taught me how to do finger painting." For the next few days, she immersed herself in

finger-painting. She also joined a Buddhist society where the disciples chanted *Nam-myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo* ('I am the cause and effect of everything') to create a positive aura.

Another positive trigger for her mind is devotional music. Last year, she confesses, she was again feeling restless when she heard

FEELING BLUE?

Symptoms to spot

- An 'empty' feeling, sadness, anxiety, tiredness
- Loss of interest in daily activities
- Sleep problems
- Problems with eating and weight (gain or loss)
- Crying a lot, feeling guilty, helpless, worthless
- Persistent aches and pains
- Trouble focusing, remembering, or making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide

How to get over it

- Speak to friends and relatives to try and 'snap out' of it
- Speak to your physician about anti-depressant medication
- Go in for counselling without feeling embarrassed or guilty

two lines of a *kirtan* wafting from a grocery store: *Kahe man tu dolta, tud rakhega sajjan har* (God will take care of you, why are you getting restless?) She went over to the shop and bought the cassette. Since then, she has collected about 500 devotional albums that motivate her.

Today, Chawla can look back at her troubled past with serenity. She lives with her daughter and two elder sons and says, "The only way to cure depression is to be busy." Her days revolve around attending to her grandchildren (five of her eight grandchildren live with her), listening to music and, of course, working with flowers at night. On the anvil is a book on flower painting that details all her innovative drying techniques. "Every flower has a meaning and a use," she says. She used their colour to conquer the blues. ■

Get your H₂O

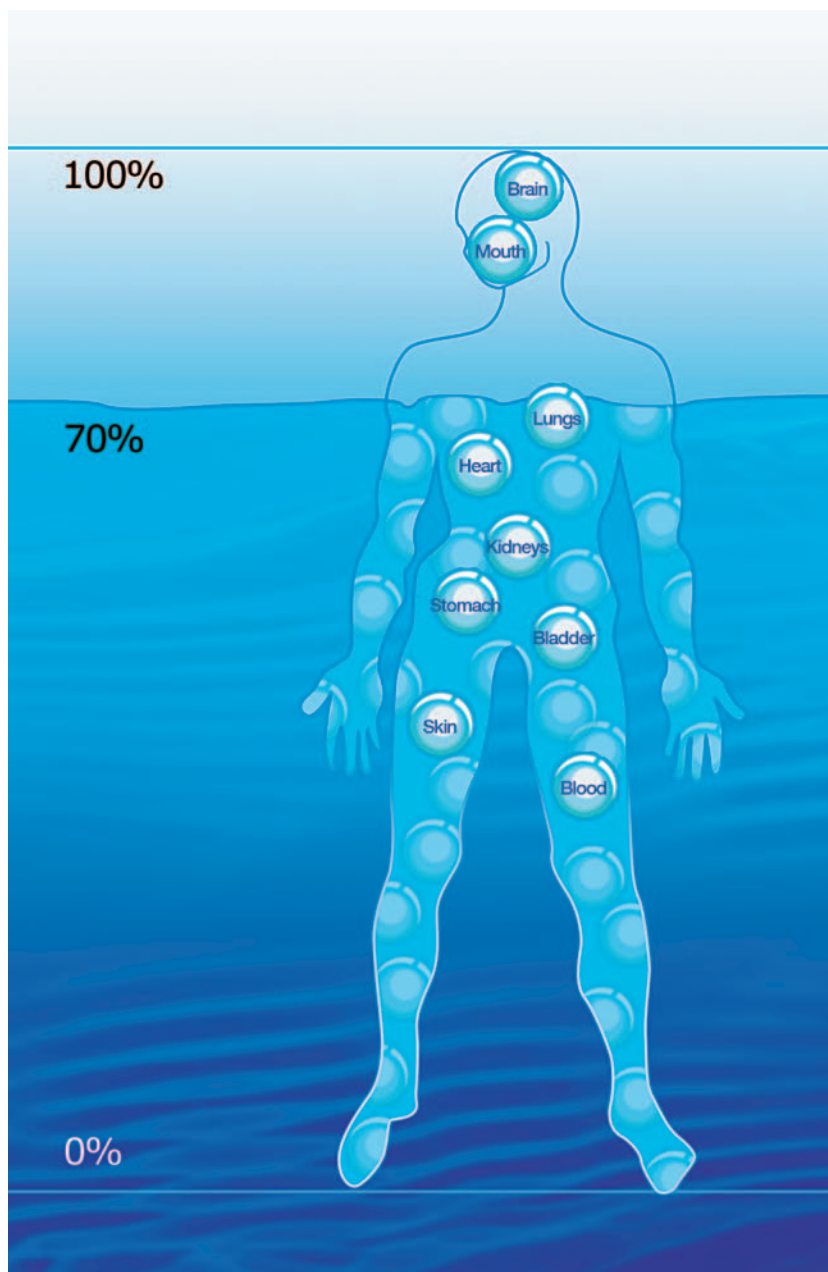
Steer clear of dehydration this summer, says **Firuzan Mistry**

Hot and bothered this summer? When the mercury starts rising, don't forget to drink enough water. A fluid imbalance caused by insufficient fluid intake, excessive fluid loss or both, dehydration occurs in people of all ages—but happens more quickly in silvers.

While mild dehydration can cause weakness, dizziness and fatigue, severe dehydration is a medical emergency, which can result in seizures, brain damage and even death. On the other hand, hydration (adequate fluid consumption) maintains fluid and electrolyte balance in the body; for silvers, it results in lower rates of constipation and reduced risk of urinary stones.

SILVERS AND DEHYDRATION

Silvers have 60 per cent water content in their bodies as opposed to 70 per cent for younger adults. As they lose their lean body mass (muscle mass), water levels in their bodies decrease, making them more prone to dehydration. The elderly also have a lowered 'thirst response', which basically means they tend to feel less thirsty than younger adults. "Inadequate awareness of this problem puts seniors acutely at risk because they can lose important amounts of body water without ever becoming thirsty," says Dr Amitava Chakravarty, MD (general medicine),



The concentration of water in the body

consultant, Advanced Medicare & Research Institute Ltd (AMRI), and Woodlands Nursing Home, Kolkata. "Also, they are more

vulnerable to shifts in water balance as the shift of fluid and electrolytes out of their body cells is faster."

Illustration: MAMTA JADHAV

As we age, our kidneys do not concentrate urine as well as they used to, allowing glucose and sodium to escape along with the necessary fluids to stay healthy, causing increased chances of dehydration. Further, silvers who suffer from congestive heart failure, high blood pressure or diabetes may be taking a diuretic. Diuretics affect the body's fluid balance by eliminating excess fluids. In such a case, failure to maintain proper fluid levels may lead to dehydration.

The same holds true for laxatives, used by many silvers for constipation. Laxative use also causes a loss of needed fluids, which may lead to dehydration if fluid balance is not restored. Here's another thing: silvers often resist drinking fluids before

outings for fear of incontinence, thus making themselves more prone to dehydration, especially in summer months.

Other causes of dehydration are diarrhoea (which leads to rapid dehydration), excessive sweating, and blood loss. It is also vital to

Silvers can lose important amounts of body water without even feeling thirsty

maintain adequate hydration in silvers who have undergone surgery to prevent drowsiness and prolonged bed rest.

However, 'over hydration' should also be guarded against, especially in silvers suffering from congestive heart diseases, heart failure, renal failure and

other conditions where fluid overload can prove dangerous.

PRECAUTION AND PREVENTION

Being aware of your body's needs can keep dehydration at bay. Remember: warm environments or slight increases

in body temperature create a need for up to 10 per cent more fluids in the body.

"When you're past 60, you can't depend on the usual signals to tell you that you're thirsty," says Dr Mihir Dalal, manager, Medical Services, Saifee Hospital,

HYDRATING



BEAT THE HEAT

- Remember all fluids are not hydrating—some may actually dehydrate you.
- Hydrating liquids include plain water (the best), milk, lime juice and fruit juices, while coffee, tea, alcohol, colas and all caffeinated beverages dehydrate you.
- Don't wait till you feel thirsty—keep drinking a glass of water every other hour throughout the day.
- Drink water before, during and after an exercise session.
- Always carry water with you when you're out of the house and remember to keep drinking through the day.
- Eat more vegetables and citrus fruits in summer months.
- Keep oral rehydration solution (ORS) packets at home.
- If you suffer from heart trouble or renal failure, drink small amounts of water regularly through the day rather than drinking large quantities at one go as fluid overload can prove dangerous.

DEHYDRATING





tions where lengthy fasts are required before certain medical procedures, or during long waits in hospitals where little attention is paid to fluid and food intake.

Most important, as dehydration often creeps up on you, watching out for the symptoms can help you prevent things from getting worse. These include dryness of the mouth; loss of skin elasticity (on pinching the skin on the arm, wrinkles stay longer than normal); confusion; and drowsiness (especially for those who have fever or have undergone surgery). In advanced cases of dehydration, tachycardia (fast pulse rate) and dizziness occur.

CARE AND TREATMENT

The first line of treatment for someone suffering from dehydration is administration of oral rehydration solution (ORS). Marketed by both government and private companies, it is easily available and comes in a range of flavours. While government clinics refer to it as ORS, private companies manufacture it under the name 'Electral' or 'Electrobion'. A packet costs Rs 3.50. A glass of water with fresh lime and sugar and salt produces the same results.

However, in severe cases or in cases of excessive vomiting, patients may need to be hospitalised and given intravenous fluids. Here, though, there is need to exercise prudence on the part of doctors. As mentioned earlier, over-enthusiastic replacement of fluids in silvers can precipitate acute heart failure so it's best not to hit the (water) bottle too hard. ■

Mumbai. "Increase your awareness and drink frequently. You have to schedule your drinking to stay hydrated, which often means drinking before you feel thirsty."

The universal recommendation of doctors is to drink one-and-a-half litres of fluid a day. To make it simple, drink one glass at least every other hour during the day. Plain water is the best because it doesn't contain sugar, caffeine, or chemical flavouring. Unsweetened fruit juice and milk are also good. In summer, if you're

planning to be outdoors for long periods of time, Dr Chakravarty recommends drinking 50 per cent more than you think you need. And if you exercise, make sure that you drink plenty of water before, during, and afterwards, especially if you are breaking a sweat.

"Be a water carrier," says Dr Dalal. "Carry water in small, easy-to-carry bottles as a constant reminder to drink throughout the day. And eat more vegetables and citrus fruits." Also, ensure you remain hydrated in situa-



ENT check-up

Dr Santanu Banerjee on ear, nose and throat-related problems

Q I am 65 years old and hear a buzzing sound in my left ear. It happens in the mornings.

A For a proper diagnosis, a doctor would need to know how long you have been hearing this sound and about your health background. Old age or other major ailments you might have could be possible reasons. At times, such a sound can occur because of otitis (infection of mid ear) and mastoiditis (infection of the mastoid bone behind the ear). Although there is no obvious reason for such ailments most of the time, inner ear diseases like Meniere disease, blockage of the Eustachian tube or even a brain tumour could be the underlying cause. Therefore, you need to visit a specialist for a thorough check-up to rule out anything serious. However, in most cases, there are no remedies for such persistent sounds.

Q I am 59 and was a smoker for 30 years. I recently quit but my throat feels sore very often. I don't have any problems swallowing or drinking but I tend to get coughs and cold easily. Should I go for an oral cancer check-up?

A You should definitely go to the doctor immediately for a check-up. However, it may reassure you to know that such symptoms are often not because of cancer but offshoots of other diseases like pyorrhea, hyperacidity and chronic lung infection.

Q I am 56 years old. My right ear is giving me a lot of trouble. I regularly clean it with ear buds and coconut oil but still get an irritating scratchy sensation. Why?

A The root of the problem is probably not in the ears but somewhere else, such as the sinus, gums, or pharynx. Such feelings that arise from outside the ear are called autologia. So just cleaning your ear might not be enough; in fact, it may actually be unnecessary. You need to visit an ENT doctor to get to the underlying cause.

Q My wife is 55 years old and suffers from nasal blockage. This happens especially while she's asleep and she often wakes up at night owing to breathlessness. Nose drops only offer temporary relief. Is there a remedy?

A Drops are for short-term use. If used for long, they can cause nasal obstruction that may lead to drug-induced inflammation. Consult an ENT specialist and get her nose checked for other diseases. Your wife could be suffering from a deviated nasal septum (the bony partition that separates the nasal cavities), sinusitis (a type of inflammation), a polyp (a projected mass or growth protruding from a mucous membrane) or allergy (hypersensitivity to any external stimuli). Once the problem is detected, it will be easy to treat her ailment. ■

Dr Santanu Banerjee is consultant ENT specialist, Woodlands Nursing Home, Kolkata

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Fibre of a yogi

Shameem Akthar on how yoga helps develop stamina

Most of us do not appreciate the need for stamina, believing we can power our day with will power.

But stamina is the fuel of our lives—without it we would come to a halt.

A host of yogic poses are being promoted in the West as 'warrior yoga'. These are built around the ancient warrior series (*virabhadrasana*). These challenging poses promote bone density, tone the body and correct our posture by rectifying age or job-related spinal curves. Most important, they give us immense stamina. These include the entire *virabhadra* series—upward-facing dog pose (*urdhva mukha svanasana*), half-crescent pose (*anjaneyasana*), camel pose (*ushtrasana*), east stretch pose (*purvottasana*), wheel pose (*chakrasana*), one-leg raise downward-facing dog pose (*eka pada adhomukha svanasana*), all yogic squats from the full squat (*druta utkatasana*) and its variations like the pose of Kali (*kaliasana*) and dancing Shiva (*natraj asana*) series.

Other simpler poses that turn into challenging stamina-builders when duration is extended

include the boat pose (*navkasana*), the cow-face pose (*gomukh asana*), mountain pose (*parvatasana*), all yogic push-ups and variations of the balance pose (*santolanasana*). More effective than seemingly exotic contortions, they are not hard to learn. Unlike other advanced poses, they involve simple movements. However, they only become tough when you learn to hold them for long. Instead of making you feel inadequate, these poses empower you by allowing you to choose your own learning curve. So, start off with soft lessons but progressively up the ante by increasing duration. You can choose your own pace, taking as long as a year or more to increase duration for a pose from 15 seconds to one minute or more.

These poses are strung as sequences. Gradually attune your body to the challenge. Then do these poses in a sequence. This is the tougher part, but exciting as it introduces a dialogue between body and mind. The new-age 'Tired All the Time' syndrome is infecting even teenagers today—mainly owing to reduced physical activity, propensity towards chair-bound jobs and technology that has made it easier for us to do daily chores by remote control. It is time to relearn yogic stamina-builders to pack more punch into our life. ■

Yogic moves

Warrior pose (*virabhadrasana*)

Jump lightly to land with feet a metre apart. Spread arms at shoulder level. Fan out feet, so the left foot is lightly spread, while the right fully points towards the right side, parallel to the right arm. Inhale, clasp hands overhead like a *namaste*, or hold aloft. Exhale while turning right, twisting at the torso.

Inhale. While exhaling, lower yourself lightly so knees are bent. Initially, do not lower yourself too much.

Over time, go down as low as you comfortably can.



Illustration: MAMTA JADHAV

Keep your gaze on a spot in front of you to exercise your mind too. In this final pose, breathe normally, staying for five seconds on the first day. Over time, you can increase the duration according to your stamina. Return to starting position while inhaling. Repeat the entire sequence for the left side. Avoid this pose if you suffer from lower backache or knee pain.

Benefits: Powers stamina, improves natural grace, aids mental focus, tones spine. The twist works out the liver and helps in detoxification and weight loss.

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

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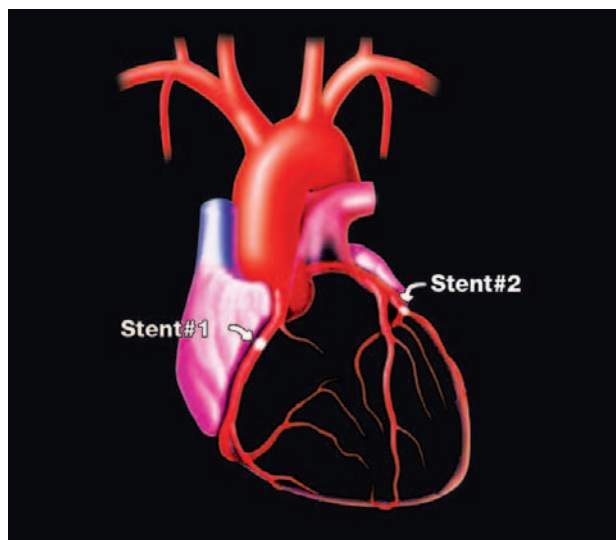


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DO WE NEED STENTS?



Thirty-five per cent of cardiac patients who undergo angioplasty can fare just as well with medicines. This conclusion is drawn by Dr William Boden of Buffalo General Hospital, New York, in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. Angioplasty, which involves using metal scaffolds (stents) to prop open clogged arteries, is already facing flak because research has found that drug-coated stents increase the risk of blood clots. Boden, however, shifts the argument to whether the procedure is needed at all. Going by his argument, in India, out of 67,000 stents implanted last year, over 22,000 patients would have done just as well with medicines. "Angioplasty gives only slight and temporary relief from chest pain," says Boden. "It shouldn't be done if the blockage is not in one of the main arteries."

BONE SHARE

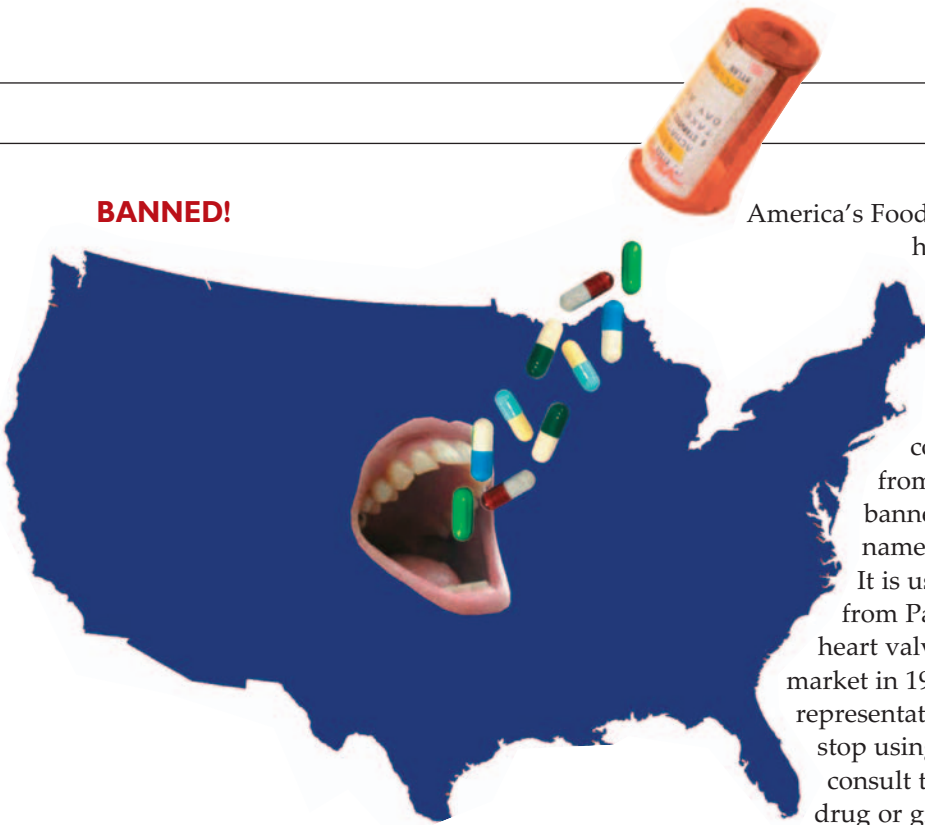


If the leg of a chair breaks, a carpenter would get some wood, trim it and nail it to the damaged leg. On 16 March, Dr Rajesh Malhotra, orthopaedic surgeon at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi, applied this logic to treat 45 year-old Gita Rani from Ambala. Malhotra used a bone from a cadaver to replace her hipbone, which was damaged in an accident. An earlier hip-replacement had left Rani with a shorter right leg. Malhotra secured eight inches of the donor's bone into Rani's bone using a metal rod. Called **revision hip arthroplasty**, the procedure costs from Rs 15,000 (for indigenous joints) to Rs 160,000 (for imported joints) and is available only at AIIMS for now. "Conventional hip replacements are costlier [about Rs 300,000], and have a shorter lifespan," explains Malhotra. "But they allow you to walk earlier." Rani is expected to walk again in three months.

HEM YOUR HEART

Stem cell therapy will soon become a cure-next-door. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Delhi, has identified **five centres in India to study the use of stem cells in regenerating dead cardiac muscles** after a heart attack. The centres are All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi, Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) in Pune, Army Hospital (Research and Referral), Delhi, PGI Chandigarh, and Sanjay Gandhi Institute in Lucknow. Director General of AFMS Vice Admiral V K Singh recently told the media that it has initiated stem cell therapy on two patients with acute myocardial infarction (heart attack). This involves injecting regenerative stem cells into the artery leading to damaged heart muscles, initiating the process of repair and re-growth of healthy cells. In fact, AFMS officials claim the hospital will soon become Asia's largest stem cell research centre.



BANNED!

America's Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has banned **Zelnorm**, a popular anti-constipation drug, after studies revealed it causes heart attacks and strokes. The decision won't go down well with its manufacturer, Swiss drug major Novartis—the company earns \$ 561 million annually from its sale. The second drug to be banned is **Pergolide**, marketed under the name Permax by Valeant Pharmaceuticals. It is used worldwide by people suffering from Parkinson's. FDA claims it causes heart valve damage. Pergolide came on the market in 1988. However, according to a representative of the FDA, patients should not stop using the drug abruptly—they should consult their doctor and switch to another drug or gradually reduce the amount of Pergolide used.

SWEET SOLUTION

Cutkal, a new artificial sweetener, is a combination of Aspartame and Acesulfame-K. Aspartame helps manage carbohydrate intake, allowing diabetics to indulge their sweet tooth without compromising blood sugar levels. However, as it is metabolised in the body, it provides four calories per gram. This is where the combination with Acesulfame-K scores. Acesulfame-K is 200 times sweeter than sugar. It enhances the taste of aspartame; helps avoid the bitter aftertaste; and as it is not metabolised in the body, doesn't add to calories. Owing to Acesulfame-K, the amount of Aspartame in Cutkal reduces by at least 30 per cent, making it calorie-free. The dispenser, with 20 pellets, costs Rs 58.

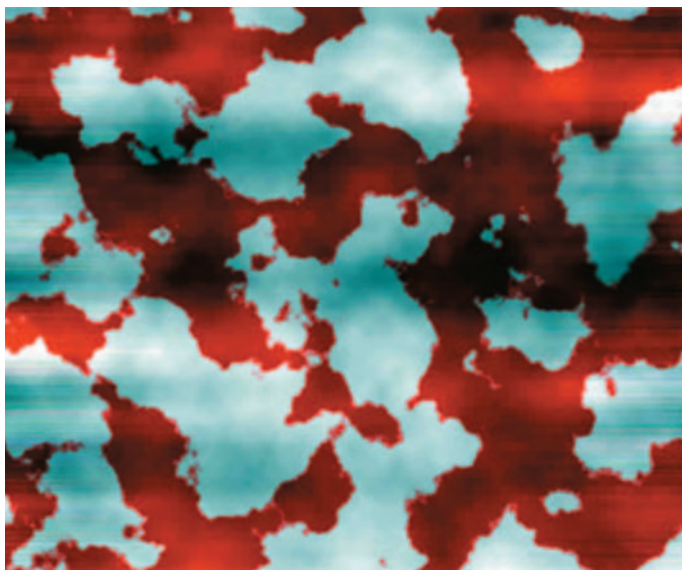
**FIRE-FIGHTING ASTHMA**

British researcher Professor Paul Corris of Newcastle University has developed a **drug-free solution for asthma**: heat therapy. Called **bronchial thermoplasty**, it uses tiny probes on wires (implanted in the lungs) that emit radio waves to burn away tissue blocking airways. Last year, his team tested the method on 112 patients, aged between 18 and 65 years, and found they had fewer asthma attacks, were free from symptoms and needed to use less medication for emergencies. The trial report is published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

HEALTH BYTES

BLOOD BROTHERS

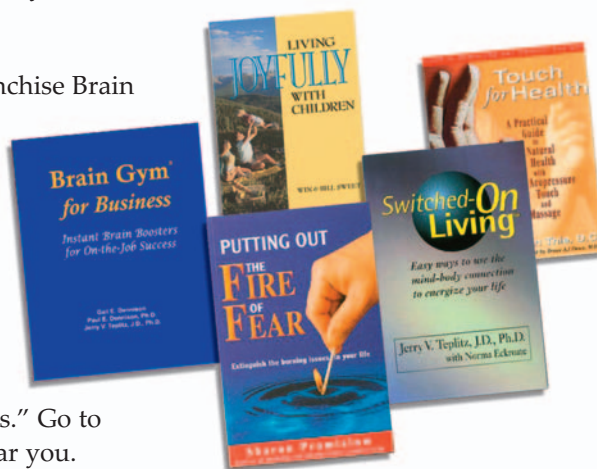
Imagine a world where everyone is a universal donor. Cellular biologist Henrik Clausen from University of Copenhagen hopes to make that reality. His team has developed a **technique that can convert A, B and AB blood types into type O**, the universal donor group, which can be given to anyone in need of transfusion. It will use bacterial enzymes to remove different antigens (sugar molecules) present in A, B and AB blood types and convert them into universal O blood type. The process will be "inexpensive and efficient", claims Clausen in a recent issue of *Nature Biotechnology* magazine. Currently undergoing trials, it is expected to be available in five years. "If proved effective for large-scale use, it would substantially reduce pressure on blood supply," comments Khushroo Pocha, founder of Chennai-based www.blooddonors.com. At present, India's annual blood requirement for transfusion is 7 million units.



We face a shortfall of 40 per cent especially in summer months when colleges, the main source of voluntary blood, are closed.

TUNE IN

Use your brain or lose it. That's the motto of international franchise Brain Gym, which uses **exercises and puzzles to improve memory and stave off dementia**. Launched recently in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru, Brain Gym has a special programme for silvers to help them combat emotional and physical problems. Each one-hour session costs Rs 250. According to Sujeet Arekar, instructor at the Mumbai branch, there isn't a one-size-fits-all programme for all seniors. "Sometimes, we spot the difference after two sessions after which the person can continue exercising at home and come in as required," he says. "But others may need several sessions." Go to www.braingym.org for all your queries and to find a branch near you.



TOP FIVE DISEASES AFFLICTING INDIA'S SILVERS

- Cataract: 63 million
- Hearing impairment: 46 million
- Heart disease: 27 million
- Hypertension: 7 million
- Diabetes: 3.7 million

Source: ICMR (2001). Estimated silver population (60-plus) was 80 million in 2001

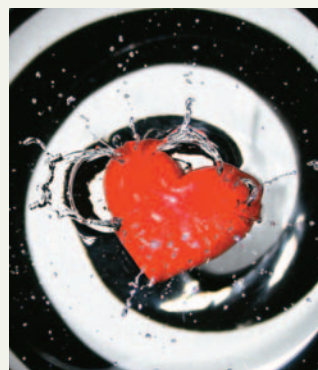




Illustration: MAMTA JADHAV

Tech trawl

In the first of a series on the best of the Internet, *Harmony* surfs tech websites

Whether you are tech-challenged, bewildered by the array of gadgets in the market and keen to bring yourself up to speed; or a tech freak who can't get enough news about your coveted objects of desire, these websites will tell you what's new, how it works and whether it's a good buy for you.

Cnet.com: Learn about every gadget and Internet tool here. News items, a 'tips and tricks' section that simplifies complicated gadgets, and a variety of free (and safe) software downloads. Its USP: product reviews that leave no stone unturned. For example, when the chaps at *cnet* reviewed the iPod Nano music player, they threw it around, stepped on it, and finally ran a vehicle over it before pronouncing it "durable enough". (The car got the iPod.)

Silver view: The bad news first—the type size of the website is fairly small and there's no magnifier. Otherwise, the site is easy to navigate and written in plainspeak that doesn't threaten non-techies.

Howstuffworks.com: Using tons of illustrations, the site explains how hundreds of subjects (including appliances and gizmos, and pretty much everything around us) work. Step-by-step explanations in simple language make it easier to understand the most complicated gadgets and concepts. From engines and smart phones to the Airbus 380 (seriously), you'll learn how it all works here, though they may be overreaching with the 'How Women Work' section.

Silver view: The home page is very crowded so you need to take your time to read it carefully. Though there's no magnifier, the type size is fairly large. Once you figure out where everything is, this is the perfect site to surf with your grandkids.

Wired.com: *Wired* is an iconic magazine established in 1993 that reports on technology's effect on culture, economy and politics; the site is its online avatar. Apart from news on gadgets and gizmos, software and multimedia, the site gives you the big picture on how the Net influences our lives. You can also read old issues of *Wired* magazine. The best part about the site, though, is the writing: smart and sassy, it makes even reading stuff like a week-long review of Google Apps (communication and collaboration tools from Google Inc) a delight. The headline for this one: 'Livin' la Vida Google'.

Silver view: The clean design of every page makes this site a breeze to read and navigate. What's more, there are also buttons to magnify (and decrease) text at the bottom of the home page.

Ndtvgadgets.com: Looking to score a new phone or camera? Don't forget to visit this Indian site, titled 'Gadget Guru'. From camcorders and mobiles to music players, laptops and even car speakers, you get a comprehensive listing of products and brands, reviews, features and price comparisons, and user feedback. There are also columns on appliances and devices, readers' polls and forums, a 'gadget gallery' with slideshows on the most popular products (see them from every angle), and a report on the most malignant viruses on the Net.

Silver view: As this is an Indian site, you don't have to worry about converting prices from dollars and wondering whether the gadget is available here. This is also an extremely interactive site where all your queries are answered promptly. On the flip side, the home page is cluttered, the text size is small and there's no magnifier.

—Arati Rajan Menon

The gold option

Smita Deodhar tells you about Gold Exchange Traded Fund, the latest financial product on the market

Primarily bought in the form of jewellery, Indians have always seen gold as a good investment. We are the world's largest buyers and hoarders of gold and account for 23 per cent of world gold jewellery demand. According to reports, Indians have amassed around 13,000 to 15,000 tonne of gold, 9 to 10 per cent of cumulative global mine production. Today, the gold market in India is estimated close to Rs 700 billion, of which Rs 200 billion is directed at investment.

To capitalise on this demand, Benchmark Asset Management Company (AMC) launched a new financial product, the Gold Exchange Traded Fund (Gold ETF), on 15 February. On 1 March, the Unit Trust of India (UTI) launched its own Gold ETF. While the Benchmark product

will be called Gold BeES, the UTI product will be called Gold Share. "Those who currently buy gold bars and coins for investment purposes will find this form of investing more safe and convenient," says Rajan Mehta, head of marketing, Benchmark AMC.

Kotak Mahindra Mutual Fund, Reliance Mutual Fund, Tata Mutual Fund and ICICI Prudential have submitted their applications to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to join the fray with their own Gold ETF. "Gold ETFs are the flavour of the season," says Kartik Jhaveri, certified financial planner, chartered wealth manager and director of Mumbai-based Transcend Consulting. "Asset management companies are always in a race for funds and no one wants to

miss out on the opportunities generated by a new product."

Relatively new in India—the first Gold ETF was launched in Australia in 2003—a Gold ETF is a dematerialised (not physical) way to invest in gold. This helps minimise some of the risks and costs associated with gold investment. And as it helps add stability to a financial portfolio, it's a viable option for silvers. "Senior citizens could invest a part of their money in Gold ETFs because it offers a different asset class, which is historically less volatile than equities and not correlated with stocks or interest rates," explains R Raja, senior vice president at UTI Asset Management Company, in support of the product. Zankhana Shah, certified financial planner with Mumbai-based Moneycare Financial





when the price of 10 gm of gold is Rs 9,850, you will be allotted 10 units (Rs 10,000 - 1.5 per cent entry load / 985).

The fund house will invest the money collected from investors in standard gold bullion, i.e. gold of .995 purity, which it will deposit with a custodian bank. (Bank of Nova Scotia is the custodian for both UTI and Benchmark Gold ETF, and this gold is the underlying asset for the ETF). The net asset value (NAV) of the units is linked to the price of gold in the London bullion market. When the price rises, the NAV will rise, and vice versa. Gold ETF will provide returns that correspond to returns from physical gold.

Jhaveri is more optimistic. He feels a Gold ETF has the potential to give a return which could be 1-2 per cent higher than physically holding gold blocks. "Returns can come from holding the gold (increase in price) and from the trading activity of the asset management company, provided it takes successful calls." But he also points out that price of gold may see fluctuations in the short term and there may be periods of falling NAV if this happens. In

Planning, spells it out more clearly, saying, "Gold ETF could be a good diversification tool, but not more than 10-15 per cent of a person's total assets should be invested in gold."

HOW IT WORKS

You can invest during the new fund offer (NFO) period or in the secondary market after the ETF is listed on the stock exchange. A minimum investment would be specified during the NFO—BeES specified Rs 10,000 and UTI asked for Rs 20,000. Secondary market purchases may be as small as one unit, with each unit representing about one gram of gold. "By investing through the secondary market, you can avoid the entry load and make the investment more cost-effective," points out Shah. "But you can't avoid the brokerage fee." Mehta concedes that investing in the

secondary market may be a cheaper option. "It will depend on the deal struck between the investor and the broker," he says. "In a good deal, the investor can make the purchase at 0.5 to 0.6 per cent brokerage fee."

If you buy through the NFO, the applicable entry load (1.5 per cent

Gold ETFs offer an asset class that is less volatile and not correlated with stocks

for BeES and 2.5 per cent for UTI ETF for an amount less than Rs 5 million) is deducted from the amount paid. The investor's Demat account is credited with units against the remaining amount in such a way that the value of each unit corresponds to one gram of gold. For instance, if you apply for Rs 10,000 in BeES

the long term, however, returns are expected to be positive.

As this fund is open-ended, you can sell your units at any point, either directly to the fund house or in the secondary market—this arrangement can differ from company to company. On selling the unit, you will receive cash pay-

GOLD ETF: AT A GLANCE

- Fund house announces the new fund offer, open for a specified period
- Investor fills application form for purchase of ETF, minimum investment amount specified by fund house
- After deducting entry load, investor's Demat account credited with Gold ETF units; one unit corresponds to the value of 1 gm of gold.
- Fund house uses amount collected from investors to buy pure gold of equivalent value
- Gold deposited with custodian bank
- After some weeks, fund listed on stock exchanges (in case of BeES and UTI, the National Stock Exchange)
- Authorised participants, appointed by fund house, give buy and sell rates on ongoing basis, making a market for the Gold ETF. NAV of unit depends on price of gold in London bullion market, and fluctuates accordingly
- Purchase and sale of Gold ETF in secondary market becomes possible, through broker
- Sale of units in secondary market (like shares are sold), or to the fund house (if it has provided this facility)
- Redemption proceeds, net of tax as applicable, credited to bank account.



ment equivalent to the NAV of the unit, less taxes as applicable. Trading and holding can be done only in dematerialised form.

Gold ETF is exempt from wealth tax, but being a non-equity mutual fund product, it's subject to a short-term capital gains tax (the difference between sale price and purchase price is added to your taxable income and the tax applicable to that income slab is charged) if the units are sold within one year of purchase, and long-term capital gains tax of 20 per cent if sold after one year.

THE ADVANTAGES

Gold is less volatile than equity, works as a good hedge against inflation in the long run, and is accessible to those lacking

understanding of sophisticated financial products. It helps balance the risk of financial instruments in a portfolio.

Apart from recurring costs (locker rental and insurance premium), holding gold in

Over 10 years, you could expect a return of 7-8 per cent a year on Gold ETFs

physical form has its downside. Unregulated players and rampant malpractice introduce an element of risk in buying gold. It is not uncommon to be sold gold of lower-than-stated purity—and there is no redress for the loss. While selling jewellery back to the jeweller,

gold has to be sold at a discount to spot price. "At present, investors buying coins from jewellers or banks are paying about 10-15 per cent premium," adds Rajesh Bhojani, president of marketing, UTI Mutual Fund.

Most of these issues are resolved when gold is held as ETF. The fund house ensures only the purest gold is purchased. Storage and safety are the responsibility of the custodian bank. The costs, for the customer, are restricted to the entry load or brokerage (depending on mode of investment),

annual management expenses and taxes on redemption.

Authorised participants on the stock exchange, appointed by the fund house, create liquidity by providing two-way quotes every day (rate at which the units are sold, and at which they can be purchased). You can sell units on any working day. (Settlement is usually done two days after intimation of the desire to sell.)

"I feel the product is suitable for all kinds of investors, from people who wish to invest small amounts regularly to build a sizeable investment in gold to wholesalers, speculators and high-net-worth individuals," says Shah. Raja of UTI expands the prospective client list to include corporate houses, banks, insurance companies and pension funds.

THE DRAWBACKS

Returns generated by gold have shown wide disparities, depending on the time of purchase and holding period. For instance, over the past year, gold prices have appreciated by 35 per cent. Price rise averaged 16 per cent over the past five years. The 1980s and the 1990s saw the prices of gold rise by just 7.78 per cent annually.

Financial experts say that over a period of 10 years, it would be realistic to expect a return of 7 to 8 per cent a year at best. "The rate of return on gold is marginally higher than the expected long-term inflation rate of 5-7 per cent and much lower than the returns generated in the equity market," cautions Shah. "This is not attractive for those looking for long-term growth."

As all investment is in dematerialised form, it is necessary to possess or open a Demat account. Gold is purchased by people across all income classes, many of whom may not have, or want to open, a Demat account. This requirement is likely to restrict the number of investors who go for Gold ETF.

However, Raja doesn't agree. "Small investors will not face any difficulty in investing in Gold ETFs," he argues. He cites the following figures to back his claim: 1,490 cities/towns in India have broking terminals of the National Stock Exchange. Commercial Banks and Securities Companies offer Demat services in many small cities and towns, which will ensure a wide reach. "On the contrary, we expect the

spread of Demat accounts because of demand of Gold ETFs," he adds.

The annual management expenses of 1 per cent, to be charged through downward revision of the NAV, will affect returns to some extent. But Mehta clarifies, "This is only the cap. We will be able to bring down this expense as the size of the fund increases."

Shah feels that more than the economic status of the investor, awareness will be the deciding factor in the success of the product. Mehta agrees. "It is a novel concept and will take time to catch on," he says. "When dematerialisation of shares was introduced, many were wary of the new system. Today, dematerialised equity has gained complete acceptance. Similarly, as the advantages inherent to gold ETFs become clear, we are sure to find good investor support."

His confidence doesn't seem misplaced. Going by current figures—Benchmark's ETF garnered Rs 1 billion and UTI garnered Rs 2 billion during their NFO period—people are willing to go for gold. ■



For name's sake

Legalpundits responds to queries from readers

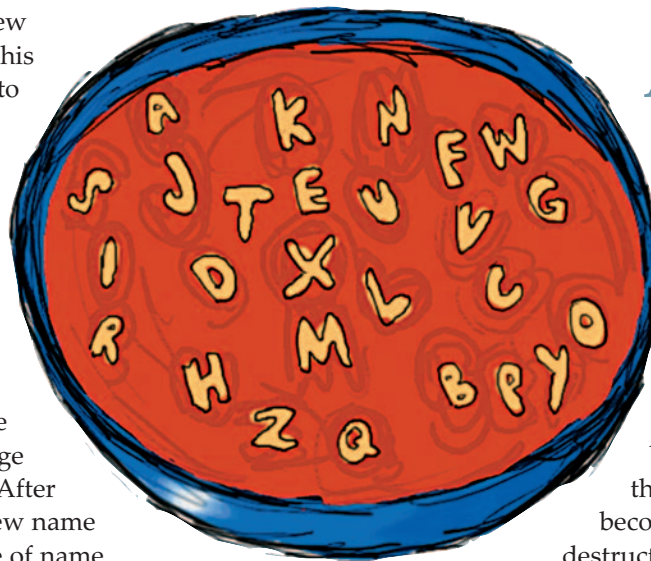
Q I am a 60 year-old man based in Chennai. I have been saddled with a wrongly spelt first name ever since it was registered in my birth certificate. Is there an age limit for changing names or surnames by affidavit?

A There is a procedure but no age limit. However, instead of saying that the name was a mistake or wrongly spelt, you should take steps to have the name changed. You need to swear an Affidavit as follows: "I (mention present name), aged _____, residing at _____, do hereby state that I have changed my name with effect from _____ and shall henceforth be known as (mention new name)." On the basis of this Affidavit, you will have to give notice in the State Government Gazette. You may have to produce proofs regarding your existing name, age, address and other contact details. After the publication in the Gazette, you have to give public notice of the change of name in newspapers. After this, you can use your new name and apply for the change of name in various official records.

Q My grandfather had created a family trust in 1964 and donated a part of his land to it. His son (my father) and four daughters were made trustees. My grandfather expired in 1978. There have been no activities pertaining to the trust from the date of creation till date. My father has paid property tax in the name of the trust till his death early this year. According to the registered trust deed, my father is supposed to inherit the trust

property if it stands dissolved. I would like to know the following details:

- Does the trust cease to exist, as there have been no activities so far?
- Can a family trust be dissolved even if a couple of living trustees object?
- I have learnt that all family trusts become extinct (dissolved) after a period of 25 years. Is it true?
- Can I contest to claim the land donated to the trust property?
- My grandfather (chief trustee) has failed to mention his successor (chief trustee) after his death. So what do we do next?



A As you have not sent us a copy of the trust deed, we have to assume it is a private trust. Under Section 77 of the Indian Trusts Act, 1882, a private trust ceases to exist when any of the following events take place: when its purpose is completely fulfilled, when its purpose becomes unlawful, or when the fulfillment of its purpose becomes impossible by destruction of the trust property or otherwise; or when the trust, being revocable, is expressly revoked. Your query mentions the consequences of the trust being dissolved—your father inheriting the trust property. Study carefully what the deed contains. The Act does not say that the trust stands dissolved merely because there has been no activity so far. Most private trust deeds contain a stipulation that the income from the trust property shall be given to one or more persons. To offer you further advice, we would need to see a copy of the trust deed. ■

For advice from Legalpundits International Services Pvt Ltd, mail us or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org or fax at (022)22852217. Harmony takes no responsibility for advice offered



We believe in keeping promises.

When Harmony was established in 2004, we gave you our word that, in addition to *Harmony* magazine, website harmonyindia.org, and the Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, Mumbai, we would eventually evolve to provide activities and services tailored for you, our constituency. For the past three years, we have actively promoted the Senior Citizens' Run at the Mumbai Marathon and Delhi Half Marathon.

Now, we deliver with our first exclusive service, offering vacations to exciting destinations.

Offering **a travel service** wasn't an off-the-cuff decision. According to global travel company Thomas Cook, the 'senior' travel segment in India grew by 15 per cent in 2005-06. Our own research cements this finding—silvers are travelling more, both in India and overseas, keen to experience life beyond their comfort zone and live out their dreams.

Harmony, always a believer in the power of dreams, wants to make them come true. Thus, our travel service, conceived after much groundwork, in collaboration with Yatra.com for domestic travel and Bombay Travels for overseas tours, both established companies. The result: a travel package

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For more details, call Bombay Travels at (022) 22028415 or email bomtrav@gmail.com

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Lose yourself in the soothing charm of Kovalam, Kumarakom, Thekkady, Munnar, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram. Deluxe package includes twin-share accommodation, all meals, houseboat stay, air-conditioned car for sightseeing, tolls. Excludes air and rail fare

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Rs 30,263 per person (for a group of 2)*

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The hills are alive



Forget done-to-death Ooty, says **Padmaja Kesnur**, and concentrate instead on Coonoor and Kotagiri, the better kept secrets of Nilgiris

A toy train chugs in, its whistle shattering the silence. Coonoor railway station is straight out of a storybook, quaint and quiet. When the over century-old Blue Mountain Rail pulls into this

station, nearly 6,235 ft above sea level, the scent of pines suffuses your senses and you enter a new world. The narrow gauge railway starts from Mettupalayam at the foothills of Nilgiris and ends at Ooty, five stations ahead of

Coonoor. Ooty, Coonoor, and Kotagiri form a triptych on the canvas of Nilgiris, the land of tea estates, Toda tribes, thrush and tahr. But Ooty has been done to death on the tourist circuit; the better kept secrets of Nilgiris are



NIKKI BEULENS

the other two relatively unspoilt destinations.

Undulating hills with the verdure—and fragrance—of tea plantations are a constant companion in Coonoor. Nilgiris teas are grown throughout the year, unlike teas from Darjeeling or Assam, and are renowned for their flavour and fragrance. Not many tea estates encourage visitors and of the ones that do, the



(Left) The enchanting Tiger Hill trail with panoramic views of blue hills; the Blue Mountain Rail pulls into Cantonment Station, Wellington

high-profile High Fields is always full of tourists. A quieter option is Homedale, which has established itself as a home for 'quality tea'. This small factory is friendly, and not formidable, unlike the bigger ones. Owner Prashant Menon personally acquaints visitors with the manufacturing process, from the withering of green tea leaves through the crush-tear-curl (CTC) process to its fermentation as black tea.

Having seen how it's made, you can taste Nilgiris' best at Tranquillitea, a tea lounge nestled in a bowl encircled by blue hills, in Upper Coonoor. This place is nothing like Mumbai's impersonal elitist cha bars or tea centres. Here, the 20-something 'ideator' Sandeep Subramani familiarises visitors

with different teas from upper cut silver tips to oolong and the healthy green variety. This is the singular such dive in the tea country of Nilgiris, like the wine tasting at California vineyards.

The lounge is housed in an 1894 heritage bungalow called Strathearn, Scottish for 'valley of the river'. The simple interiors serve a dual purpose of embellishment and outlet for local talent. The walls are adorned with paintings of tribals and topography and the furniture is made from tea bushes by local artists. Both paintings and furniture are for sale.

Close to Tranquillitea is Sim's Park, with its array of trees and flowering plants. Some of the main attractions here are the *rudraksha* (bead) tree, tree ferns,



(Clockwise from top) Tranquillitea, a tea lounge in Upper Coonoor; All Saints', Coonoor's oldest church; pockets of *shola*, Nilgiris indigenous tree species



ding Mumbai's Bombay Gymkhana and Radio Club and Delhi's National Sports Club, it provides accommodation in cottages for affiliated members, too.

here, the pace has to be unhurried. To get around, hire a taxi at the taxi stand in Bedford (Upper Coonoor); or, there are a number of taxi agencies to negotiate with.

Undulating hills with the verdure of tea plantations are a constant companion

Non-members needn't worry — when visiting Nilgiris, you'll be spoilt by choices for places to stay (*see box*). Some of the better ones are the Hotel Wallwood Garden of the Neemrana Group and the Taj Garden Retreat. The Wallwood, an old Scottish bungalow converted into a guest house, keeps a low profile and lets guests do their own thing. The Taj, on the other hand, goes out of its way to bring the Nilgiris experience closer home providing entertainment in the form of Badaga and Toda (local tribes) dances. If you happen to be at the Taj, simply stroll next door to Coonoor's oldest church, the All Saints' Church, and feel the serenity soothe your spirits.

A small hill town with an area of just 15.5 km, Coonoor packs a mean punch in the form of peaks, valleys, and waterfalls, and there is much to explore here. This trip is not about frenetically ticking off must-see hotspots; in fact,

A car is certainly a convenience but the best way is to foot it out as distances are not daunting.

Much of the Nilgiris was grasslands—on sheer cliffs—alternating with native *shola*, which the British phased out with eucalyptus, pine and acacia. Today, all you see everywhere is these artificial forests, almost naturalised now and, of course, the tea plantations. To keep a tryst with natural beauty, you can take one of the many trails that do not fall on a regular tourist's radar.

One such enchanting walk that winds through a tea estate starts at the Tiger Hill Cemetery in Upper Coonoor. The cemetery itself is worth a look. With not a soul around, the place is dead and yet, with plenty of birds flitting about, so alive, that it is surreal. The walk enthralls with panoramic vistas of blue hills in the distance and sightings of

the rose garden with 300 varieties, and pockets of natural *shola* (Nilgiris' indigenous species). With more than 1,000 species, you may find yourself hard pressed to see it all in one go. Take time to acquaint yourself with the mountain flora of quercus, cypress, fir, araucaria and pine.

Ten paces away from Sim's Park stands the revered Coonoor Club, a popular haunt with senior citizens for their daily fix of yoga or a game of bridge. Affiliated to nearly 50 clubs in India, inclu-

uncommon birds such as the Nilgiri verditer flycatcher and the Asian blackbird, and pipits and thrush endemic to Nilgiris. Though you may see tea-pickers at work on the plantation on your walk, you should be careful, for this is also bison country. Though bison are bovine creatures and pretty harmless, they can be dangerous if they perceive a threat. Panthers, too, are known to lurk here, though there have been no instances of man-animal conflict in this area. But, locals say there has been one instance recently of an elephant herd straying up the path.

A long drive through the winding roads gives you a fantastic view of mighty peaks and cascading waterfalls around Coonoor. Everywhere you'll be greeted by the sight of the jacaranda bursting with its lavender bounty and the narrow train track coursing through fields and hamlets. The regular tourist beat includes many 'picturesque' posts such as Lady Canning's Seat and Law's Falls (5-10 km from Coonoor), the latter described by guide books as 'undisturbed *shola*—a paradise

for naturalists'. But Law's Falls is a perfect example of a tourist-ravaged and littered picnic spot, consumed by an overpowering stench.

Off the beaten path lies Cantonment Station, Wellington, the next halt on the narrow gauge route, just 3-4 km from Coonoor on the way to Ooty. While the Defence Services Staff College and Madras Regimental Centre (MRC) are out of bounds for civilians, you can make the most of the protected environs of the Cantonment

houses a museum that brings alive the history of MRC and the four Mysore Wars through pictorial exhibits, old documents, tomes and lithographs.

On the road from Wellington to Kotagiri, if you are looking for a quiet retreat, divert to Raliah Dam, via Bandumi village. The site is beautiful and almost melancholic in its isolation. Meet the lone watchman at the dam, take in the beauty, and if you are lucky, you may witness, like I did, a giant Malabar squirrel come out and dance for you.

To keep a tryst with natural beauty, take one of the many trails through the hills

surroundings. The 130 year-old Wellington Gymkhana Club, another heritage club with nearly 40 affiliations, boasts an 18-hole golf course with breathtaking views. That the golf course was once a *Toda mund* (colony) adds to the charm. MRC was originally the Wellington Barracks, where British troops were garrisoned. This training establishment now

Kotagiri, 20 km from Coonoor, is in some ways even more remote to tourist sensibilities than Coonoor or Wellington, and exudes a rustic charm. A state transport bus will get you here or, better still, you can hire a cab, as you would be moving in and around Kotagiri too. Here, in Kannerimukku village, the first European house was built by then collector

From the rough to the smooth in Coonoor: a bison in the tea bushes; a guest room at Hotel Wallwood Garden





Law's Falls

FACT FILE

WHEN TO GO

March to June are the best months to visit

GETTING THERE

Coimbatore is the nearest road and rail-head and airport. From here, use hired or state transport.

Alternatively, from Mettupalayam (30 km from Coimbatore, at the foothills of Nilgiris), take the Blue Mountain Rail directly to Coonoor or Wellington. Another way to get in is by road from Bangalore or Mysore. The route from Bangalore crosses the Mudumalai-Bandipur forest, an added attraction.

WHERE TO STAY

Hotel Blue Hills International, Coonoor: Tariff from Rs 770 to Rs 1,200 plus taxes for double deluxe rooms. Tel: 0423-2230174; Mobile: (0)9443003175

Hotel Riga Residency: Tariff from Rs 1,500 (deluxe) to Rs 1,800 (suites), plus taxes (inclusive of complimentary breakfast). Tel: 0423-2234401, 2234405. Website: www.rigaresidency.com

Hotel Wallwood Garden

(Neemrana Group): Tariff from Rs 2,000 to Rs 2,250 inclusive of taxes, in peak season. Tel: 0423-2230584; Mobile: (0) 9443730584

Hotel Taj Garden Retreat:

Tariff ranges from Rs 5,500 to Rs 7,500 plus taxes, inclusive of all three meals. Tel: 0423-2230021, 2230042

Nilgiri Leisure Holidays:

Offers personalised holidays in exclusive guest houses, home stays and boutique hotels. Mobile: (0) 9443841572. Email: nilgirileisureholidays@gmail.com

TRAVEL TIPS

Even in summer, light woollens or jackets should be kept handy as the evenings tend to be nippy and cool

of Coimbatore, John Sullivan, in 1819. Credited with the discovery of 'Ootacamund' (Ooty's full name), he is remembered as the builder of modern Nilgiris. Sullivan's bungalow Stonehouse has now been converted into a gallery, where a collection of old photographs helps reconstruct an era gone by. However, the renovation is still on, so don't have any great expectations.

Save them instead for Kodanaad Viewpoint on the easternmost ridge of the Blue Mountains, 18 km from Kotagiri. The view of the valley interspersed with the paddy fields, the thread of River Moyar weaving its way across, the rows of hills and the plateaus resembling the topographical representation on a physical map are a cartographer's dream. The vast space induces introspection and makes us realise the import-

ance of preserving our planet. This sentiment is strengthened in the Longwood, perhaps the only preserved patch of the pure *shola* forest in civilised Nilgiris.

Kotagiri town is also home to Keystone Foundation, a decade-old NGO working with the indigenous people of the Nilgiris. Keystone is a window to the world of the native tribes—the Irulas, Kurumbas and Kotas—who are the original inhabitants of Nilgiris and true custodians of its rich natural heritage. Its volunteers have been working closely with these tribes to provide them with better livelihood options and improve the quality of their lives. Under the brand name 'Last Forest', Keystone sells products like honey, spices, beeswax candles and Kota pottery through its chain of 'Green' shops.

Indeed, no travel experience is complete without a shopping spree. Keystone's Green shop at Bedford Circle in Upper Coonoor will ensure you carry takeaways and gifts with local flavour for folks back home. For more fancy stuff such as Toda silver jewellery or antique furniture, check out Tulsi Mall, an indispensable one-stop shop for the elite of Coonoor and Wellington. Troop to quaint places like Beulah Farm, near Bandumi village between Coonoor and Kotagiri, and pick up some rhubarb preserves and fresh herbs, and Leebon Nursery, on the outskirts of Coonoor towards Ooty, for saplings of the indigenous balsams and fuchsias. Tea brands such as Nonsuch, Chamraj and Korakundah can be procured from any corner shop, but to take home exquisite unblended tea, there is no better place than Tranquiletea. 🍵



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Slave to the rhythm

Gul Bardhan shares her
61-year affair with dance
with **Runa Chakravorty**



YESTERDAY ONCE MORE

Seems like yesterday that my late husband Shanti Bardhan founded the Ranga Sri Little Ballet Troupe in Bhopal. In fact, it was 1952! We made music, composed ballets, worked on a new dance form using human puppets and travelled far and wide to learn urban, folk and tribal dances. It has been a long journey, fraught with difficulties, pain and loss. But the highs kept me going.

THE EARLY YEARS

I come from a Mumbai-based Gujarati family. I was the youngest daughter and had a brother and two sisters. While strong political ideologies fired the patriot in us (my father Hans Raj Shah worked for Congress), our mother would play the dilruba [a stringed instrument; cross between the sitar and sarangi] and encourage us to appreciate the arts. I took the plunge when I saw Shantida's [Shanti Bardhan] ballet, *Bhookha Hai Bengal*, based on the Bengal famine. Shantida was trained in Manipuri and Tipperah (a dance form from Tripura) and performed with the late Uday Shankar at his Culture Centre in Almora. The centre disbanded later and Shantida chose to redefine Shankar's choreography. His projection of modern-day maladies had an impact on me and I joined his group in 1945.

A M FARUQUI

THE APPRENTICE

Those were the student days—gruelling practice from 7 am to 10 pm, no Sundays or holidays. I first performed in 1946 in the ballet *India Immortal*, which spoke about the destruction of India's golden period with British rule. It was created by students and choreographed by Shantida. Pandit Ravi Shankar composed its music. We went on an all-India tour and Jawaharlal Nehru watched us perform.

LITTLE BALLET TROUPE

In 1947, Shantida, under the banner of Indian Renaissance Group, choreographed the ballet *Discovery of India* based on Nehru's book. Financial constraints impeded its progress and Shantida developed tuberculosis. But I

purchase costumes and musical instruments for *Ramayana*—that was a turning point and it turned out to be a huge success.

The troupe has around 20 members today and its repertoire comprises 36 full-length ballets, Manipuri, Mayurbhanj and Seraikela Chhau dances and short dance numbers. In 1964, it shifted from Mumbai to Gwalior and reconstituted itself as Ranga Sri Little Ballet Troupe, with provision to impart training too. In 1984, Ranga Sri Little Ballet Troupe shifted to Bhopal—the state government allotted us land to construct our own building.

GUARDIAN ANGELS

When Shantida passed away in 1954, rehearsals of the ballet

great loss. He had the rare ability to create a ballet on any subject, even a pebble or a leaf!

THE SHOW GOES ON

The Ranga Sri Little Ballet Troupe has staged shows all over the world. Awards from several countries (including the Sangeet Natak Academy Award and M P Shikhar Samman in 2001) have followed. But what motivates me is performing on stage even today and still being able to connect with my audience at the age of 78. It also feels good when I conduct workshops and talk to young wide-eyed students, and especially their parents who were my students, and teach them a thing or two about dance.

Age has little to do with what you want to do in life. I continue to dance and help my troupe with shows as best I can. I also love to read. Over the years I have collected books on diverse subjects. Currently, I am reading *Natyashastra*. I have also edited a book, *Rhythm Incarnate*, based on the work and life of Shantida. I have choreographed ballets like *Uttarpriyadarshi* and *Mahabharat* and intend to choreograph a ballet on volcanoes. Being the secretary of Ranga Sri means a lot of administrative work too.

These days, I only perform for *Ramayana* and *Panchatantra* but still practice for about five to six hours a day. By God's grace, I am on the right side of health and the only thing that bothers me is my hearing impairment. After dancing, flower arrangement takes up a great deal of my time. I believe it is up to every individual to decide what they want from life—I have decided what I want from mine. ■

“Age has little to do with what you want to do—I still dance and help my troupe”

convinced him to start work again. The Little Ballet Troupe was established the following year with support from like-minded people. We started working on a ballet based on *Ramayana* using human puppets.

There was so much to be done—costumes, masks, musical instruments—and we had to make the materials ourselves. In 1953, for the first time the Little Ballet performed in Mumbai. By then dance had become a common bond for Shantida and me and we married in 1953, just a year before he died. To ensure the success of the show, I arranged a sarod performance by Ustad Ali Akbar and three short dance performances. We collected about Rs 2,000, which helped us

Panchatantra were in progress. It was tough to carry on and I was disillusioned. Almost fortuitously, Pandit Nehru sent a message through his daughter Indira, saying he wanted to meet me. When I told him I was thinking of disbanding the group, he talked me out of it and assured me that money would not be an obstacle. The next day, I received a cheque and the work on *Panchatantra* continued. Nehru attended the performance when it was staged in Delhi and continued to be there to encourage us.

Prabhat Ganguly, an old associate of Shantida, joined the troupe in 1959 and infused a new vigour. He remained chief choreographer for more than 40 years. His passing away last June was a

All that glitters...

Vidya Gadgil has spread sweetness and sparkle with her sugar jewellery for over three decades. Khursheed Dinshaw finds out how

Call Vidya Gadgil's jewellery good enough to eat and you wouldn't be lying.

Instead of gold, silver, diamonds or pearls, she has been creating jewellery out of sugar for the past 36 years. Known as 'halva' jewellery, the technique involves making elaborate ornaments from intricately woven, tiny balls of sugar.

Making *halva* jewellery is a Maharashtrian tradition that is passed down from generation to generation," explains the 78 year-old. During Makar Sankranti each January (the occasion of the 'ascent' of the sun to the north, celebrated across the country, sometimes as a 'harvest' festival), new brides and grooms and infants are bedecked in ornaments made of sugar in a symbolic gesture to spread

warmth and love (see 'Sweet Tradition'). Sugar jewellery is also worn at special occasions like weddings and family get-togethers.

Gadgil learnt the art at home when she was young but her interest in it was reawakened in January 1970, when she saw sugar garlands at a *halvai* (sweetmeat) shop in Pune, where she lives. A casual conversation with the shopkeeper revealed

"Halva jewellery making is a tradition in Maharashtra"

that the demand for such jewellery was immense—in fact, he told her that if she could make some for him, he would welcome

the extra supply. With her children in college and plenty of time to kill, she took it up as a challenge. After brushing up her skills, she took on her first wholesale order (from the same sweet shop) for a hundred garlands. "I had taken a garland as a sample and I bought the sugar balls [called *til gul*] in the market," she adds. Soon, she began making her own sugar balls, a process that is easy to learn but time-consuming (see 'Do It Yourself').

What started out as an effort to carry on a tradition has become much more. Response to Gadgil's *halva* jewellery has been so good that she now employs 40 women—domestic help or those living in nearby slums—to help her. She trains them and provides them raw material. While seven women, who get a monthly



Gadgil offers over 60 jewellery designs with prices ranging from Rs 150 to Rs 830



HEMANT PATIL

Once looked down upon for going commercial with a family tradition, Gadgil is now seen as a 'sugar jewellery specialist'

salary of Rs 800 to Rs 1,000, work out of Gadgil's own house, the rest take the work home and are paid depending on the size and intricacy of the jewellery they make. Not all the women belong to lower income groups. Three women from well-off homes, who came to know about Gadgil through word of mouth, also help her make sugar jewellery, glad for a constructive way to use their time.

It hasn't all been smooth sailing though. "Before gas came on the scene, I would make the jewellery on a kerosene stove that was smoky," she recalls. "And we didn't have Fevikwik in those

days so I would use thick sugar syrup as glue." She also faced criticism from relatives and neighbours for going commercial with what was, essentially, a family tradition. "Although *halva*

"Anyone can do this with patience and creativity"

jewellery making was common in households when I began, it was unheard of as a business venture," she says. "People would look down upon me and assume that I was doing it to tide over

some sort of financial difficulty at home. Now, people see it as a creative pursuit and refer to me as a 'sugar jewellery specialist'!"

Gadgil, whose husband and son have both passed away, lives with daughter-in-law Shrirekha, who has helped her evolve with the times. Earlier, Gadgil copied from her own gold jewellery sets but with Shrirekha's assistance, contemporary designs have become part of her repertoire. Today, she offers over 60 jewellery designs; while basic sets comprise a necklace, bangles, *bindi* and earrings, more elaborate ones come with 16 accessories, including anklets, waistbands,

Sweet tradition

Every year on Makar Sankranti in January, Maharashtrians exchange *til gul* (sugar balls) with the words: *Til gul gheya ani god god bola*. (Eat this *til gul* and speak sweetly.) In earlier days, for people living in large, traditional families, this occasion was a way of telling family members to let go of their personal differences and live in

harmony with one another. Eating *til gul* is believed to reduce animosity and pettiness.

On Makar Sankranti, new brides and grooms and infants are also bedecked in sugar ornaments to signify warmth and love—in fact, in olden days new brides would wear black saris (to ward off the evil eye) and white sugar jewellery to

welcome home produce from the farm on this special day. Sugar jewellery is also worn for special family occasions like weddings, anniversaries and *puja*.

Earlier, all sugar jewellery was made at home and edible (see 'Do it Yourself') but professionally made jewellery available today (like Gadgil's) is not.



Festive ornaments for children

amulets, nose rings and a three-layered necklace (*shahi haar*). Other innovations include beads coated with sugar (the set can be used even after the sugar is removed) and a 'mobile phone and pen set' made of sugar for grooms. With prices ranging from Rs 150 to Rs 830, she makes about Rs 8,000 per month on an average—as the business is unpredictable, the amount varies.

Gadgil's dedication has won over all her critics, including her mother. "When I turned 50, my mother used to urge me to devote time to religious pursuits instead of the *halwa* business," she recalls with a chuckle. But her mother came around when she realised how much Gadgil's work was

Do it yourself

Materials

- A flat-bottomed copper pan
- Sugar and water
- Dry fruits like cashew nuts, almonds and dry coconut pieces

Method

Remember: making sugar jewellery is a time-consuming process. It takes up to four hours just to make the sugar balls so you must be patient. It can take four to five days to make a single ornament.

In the flat-bottomed pan, lightly roast the dry fruit/coconut on an extremely low flame and set aside. In



A special set for grooms

another dish, make sugar syrup. While it is hot, pour one-fourth teaspoon of it in the flat-bottomed pan and add the dry fruit/coconut. Roll the dry fruit/coconut in the syrup by hand and continue to do so, pouring one-fourth teaspoons at regular intervals, until it becomes coated with the syrup. With each successive coating, increase the quantity of sugar syrup poured on it. Once thorn-like projections appear on it, stop. This can now be eaten as it is or used to make accessories! Alternately, if you don't want to manually do this, you can buy sugar balls (called *til gul*) and string them together with thread to make simple necklaces. People who make sugar jewellery professionally (like Gadgil) also use Fevickwik to glue sugar balls together—of course, this jewellery is not to be eaten.

There's immense scope for creativity. For example, you can trace various designs on white paper (crowns for your grandchildren; rings and pendants for yourself). Then, cover these with coloured paper and decorate with sugar balls along the edges. To make your creations more ornate, you can also stick sequins, mirrors, stars, golden thread and coloured lace on them.

After care

Sugar jewellery should be wrapped in butter paper and stored in an airtight plastic bag. It should not be opened during the monsoon season as the sugar melts owing to the moisture and humidity in the air. With proper care, sugar jewellery lasts about one to one-and-a-half years.

helping others. "Once, when my mother was visiting, one of my workers came and told me that she had bought a year's supply of wheat for her family from the

money she had made under my guidance," Gadgil recounts. "My mother was touched to hear this, and told me she realised I was already doing God's work." ■

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Home truths

Home Products

By Amitava Kumar

Picador India; Rs 495; 328 pages

This deceptively simple novel conceals stories within a story teeming with people, places and incidents. They are familiar to writer Amitava Kumar and have touched

him somehow at some points of his creative journey. The story begins as a spot of investigative journalism by Binod, a young man from Patna working as a film reporter in Mumbai, to add fodder to his movie script in the making, and takes strange turns to become his own story. Binod turns up in Patna to find out more about a woman made pregnant and murdered by a local politician. He seeks the help of his aunt and cousin Rabinder, who

is cooling his heels in prison after pursuing many risky and risqué ventures. Soon, with some goading from Rabinder and his dying father Binod, he looks back at his own family and roots for a real plot. The wealth of information he digs up could have been sexed and spiced up to a perfectly workable script for a Bollywood film. But Binod realises "how stories begin in one place and end in another place" and real-life tales often cannot be tied up into a tidy little plot. Apart from writing essays and non-fiction (this is his first novel), Amitava Kumar is a professor of English in Vassar College, New York and a regular blogger. He manages to make good use of his range as a writer to tell his story that stretches and shrinks to accommodate fact and fiction.

—Trina Mukherjee

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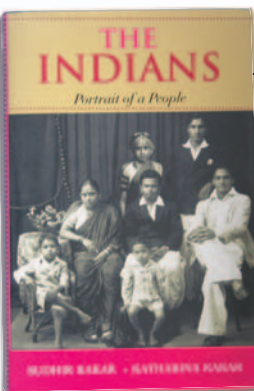
The Indians: Portrait of a People

By Sudhir Kakar and Katharina Kakar

Penguin-Viking; Rs 395; 226 pages

A few years ago, Channel [V] ran an iconic series of fillers on the idiosyncrasies of Indians—the tag line was, “We are like this only”. That’s pretty much the message psychoanalyst and writer Sudhir Kakar and anthropologist-wife Katharina Kakar seek to convey, in *The Indians*. In essence, they say, despite our diversity, an underlying, inescapable sense of identity binds and defines us. “Identity is not a garment that can be put on or taken off according to the weather outside...The cultural part of our personal identity...is wired into our brains.”

So what are we Indians really all about? According to the Kakars, despite populating the world’s largest democracy, we are the world’s most undemocratic people, obsessed by hierarchy. And though caste now plays a decreasing role in our lives, hierarchical thinking associated with it remains influential in our psyche. We learn that we are still suffering from a joint family hangover even if we don’t live in one, and are driven by the notion of a perfect marriage although most of us are confused about love and confounded by sex. The Kakars don’t shy away from Hindu-Muslim conflict either. They believe our prejudices are so ingrained that we would do better to acknowledge and work with them to build



bridges of understanding and compromise than sweep them all under a ‘secular’ carpet.

According to the book jacket, the authors drew upon three decades of sources as varied as the *Mahabharata*, *Kamasutra*, the writings of Gandhi, Bollywood movies and folklore to arrive at their conclusions. They’ve also been watching real people. For instance, they observe that the average college girl in a city, dressed in jeans or a skirt, may smile at a boy playing the clown to attract her attention. But she will hesitate to break out into laughter, “aware at some level of traditional wisdom pertaining to male-female interactions in this period of her life which holds that boys believe, ‘Jo hansī, woh phansī’.” (If a girl laughs, she is already in the net.)” Indeed, common sense and research come together effortlessly page after page in a conversational style, making *The Indians* easy to read. Digesting some of it, though, is uncomfortable. After all, looking in the mirror under the harsh glare of a tube light is not always edifying. Despite the generalisations—which the authors are unabashed about—and their lack of regard for being ‘politically correct’, most of the truths they throw at you hit home.

—Arati Rajan Menon



FIRST HAND

SRIRAM PANCHU, 55, is a senior advocate practicing constitutional and commercial law. He founded the Indian Centre for Mediation in 2001 and was instrumental in establishing the Tamil Nadu

Mediation and Conciliation Centre in 2005 and is currently its organising secretary. He speaks to *Harmony* on his first book, *Settle for More*, an attempt to create awareness about mediation.

Q Do you believe your resolution to promote the concept of mediation in India made an author out of you?

A A book is an excellent way to communicate. There is also the thrill of seeing your book in shops and reading reviews.

Q Was it an easy job?

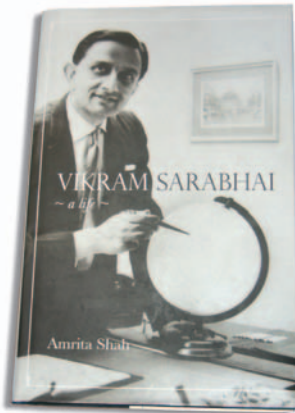
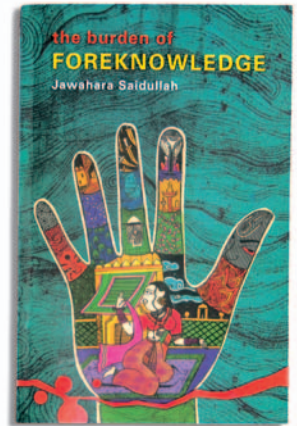
A I thought I had it under control when I wrote the first draft. I was wrong. It was tough selecting, rejecting, and looking for clarity and cogency. But I enjoyed every bit of it, even the labour.

Q Can you explain mediation and its role in different aspects of our life?

A Mediation is a process where a third person/party, who is neutral and trusted, works

BRIEFLY

A flood in the Ganga sweeps away the ground beneath Nadee's feet. On the day she is to leave home to live with her husband, she is left with nothing but a square of silk, a bedraggled feather and a nose ring. What rankles her more is the fact that she knew it was going to happen. "My destiny travels with me like a demon on my back, sinking its claws into my flesh, refusing to let go," she says in **Jawahara Saidullah's THE BURDEN OF FOREKNOWLEDGE** (India Ink-Roli Books; Rs 295; 178 pages). From Zameerpur, her devastated village, she flows to Kashi. Rescued by Dom Raja, king of pyres, she becomes his redeemer by killing him. Set in the late 16th century, the Mughal Empire as backdrop, Nadee moves from Kashi to courtesan Nafasat Bai's Agra. Soothsayer for others, she seeks peace in conversations with rivers until a chance encounter with Akbar changes her life. But she is not taken aback as there's nothing she doesn't know. Saidullah's prose is lyrically detailed and as fresh and fluid as her plot.



VIKRAM SARABHAI (Penguin; Rs 425; 248 pages) by **Amrita Shah** is an ode to multitasking. Many people know about the prolific work life of 'the father of India's space programme'—apart from scientific research and running a thriving pharmaceutical business, he set up a textile research cooperative, a market research organisation and the seminal Indian Institute of Management (Ahmedabad). Fewer may know that he also juggled two brilliant women: wife and dancer Mrinalini and fellow scientist Kamla Chowdhury. From his troubled personal life to his professional ups and downs, Shah paints the picture of a man perpetually on the move, struggling to cram 48 hours into every day, impelled by personal belief to oppose India's move towards conducting a nuclear test despite having helped create an enabling technological environment for it. In her foreword, Shah candidly admits her "limited expertise" of Sarabhai's interests. Though scientists may hold this against her, this is a well-researched effort—the first one—to tell the story of a man far ahead of his time, who died (at the age of 52) too young.

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with disputants to reach an agreement they can all accept. The mediator does not give a verdict or have any power to make decisions. That is entirely in the hands of the parties. Agreements reached in mediation are enforceable by court. For business houses, it saves cost and time. In personal disputes, parties can avoid the acrimony of court proceedings. It also works in public disputes by making people see the broader picture.

Q How is the Indian Centre of Mediation faring?

A Earlier, we focused on creating awareness among lawyers and judges, and the corporate community. However, mediation took off only in 2005. The country's first mediation centre attached to a court

was created in the High Court of Chennai and we were asked to run it. We have trained about 250 mediators in Tamil Nadu and helped the High Courts of Delhi, Kolkata and Allahabad to set up such centres. Private centres are also coming up.

Q What's next on the agenda?

A I want to write more books—a novel with characters drawn from the legal world or maybe one on mediation with a social and historical context. As Robert Browning says, "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" There is plenty to do in policy and training and I need to get back to my private practice.

—Nadia Asif



Forever young

Taking a cue from her family, **Namita Gokhale** refuses to grow up

My family is full of people who refused to grow old. My grandmother Shakuntala Pande remained a determined 17 year-old until her death at the age of 94 last December. I called her *Ija*, mother, as my own mother did. Generations of my family and friends continued to call her just that.

In the world of quantum physics, age is an accident of time and space. We grow, age and mature at different paces in the course of our complex individual life journeys. *Ija* defied age, and continued to carry and exude a vitality that is usually the prerogative of youth. In other words, she refused to grow up.

Married when she was just 13, she had been a tomboy, cycling through Nainital in her sari, and a rebel, speaking her mind in a progressive family. But after marriage she had to contend with the regressive ways of a remote village in Kumaon. This is when she first asserted herself, and remained, until the very end, 17 going on 94.

What did I learn from her? The value of doing your own thing, unashamedly. She had grace, generosity, optimism. When my husband died at an absurdly young age, it was my *Ija* who held my life together. "Don't weep," she cautioned. "Not a tear. We will carry on." It is this last quality, of unflagging optimism, that makes us young or old, not the ravages of time.

Genetically, my mother is cast in the same mould. A yoga freak, prone to surprise visitors by attempting an impromptu headstand. I called my grandmother *Ija* mother, and I call my mother *Nani*, grandmother, for that is how my children address her. She learnt classical Indian dance at the age of 56 and had her *arangetram* [first show] when she was 57. What have

I learnt from my youthful mother? Optimism again, and a respect for survival. And the fact that age is defined not by facial wrinkles, but by the flexibility of the human mind, and the fortitude of the heart.

I am from the Kumaon Himalayas, a *pahari*, and I suspect there is something in the rarefied mountain air that makes us regard age as a sort of friendly adversary. When *Ija* was living in Bhimtal, near Nainital, until a few years ago, her dearest friend was her neighbour Dr C C Pande, already in his mid-90s. 'C C' was a skilled medical doctor who walked miles uphill and downhill to visit patients. He regularly shamed generations of youngsters who puffed and panted after just a little strain. I remember watching a golden sunset with him, while he told me of a recent trek. "I got out of breath towards the end," he said. "I need to get into shape again." Dr C C Pande died a few months later, in an accident. The irony is that both C C and *Ija* had suffered health problems when they were younger. "As you grow older, the body learns to be more cunning, and to outwit disease," he had explained to me, when I asked him about the secret of his glorious health.

It is unflagging optimism that makes us young or old, not the ravages of time

My grandfather Dr C D Pande (not to be confused with Dr C C) lost his right leg when he was 75 and had to put up with the trauma of adjusting to an artificial leg. He continued for another 10 years, without a word of complaint.

Walking, laughing, sharing, and accepting, help defy conventional caveats about age. Wisdom is not about slowing down, but honing hard-won knowledge and experiential resources and deploying them with style and grace. At 52, I feel younger than I did at 18, and less confused, less afraid, more in charge than I have ever done. I have faced cancer, loss, and a host of 'incurable' diseases. But with the blessing of this stubborn DNA, I am determined to grow younger every year. ■

Namita Gokhale, 52, is a writer, publisher and development consultant. She has authored eight books

WHERE ELSE
WOULD YOU FIND
SOMEONE ABOVE
55 YEARS
WHO'S PERFECTLY
IN TUNE WITH YOU?

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Access for all

Amita Malik demands better facilities for the physically challenged

Some years ago, I had a freak accident in our government flat. A ventilator came down suddenly on my feet, missing my head by a whisker. It also fell perpendicularly on the foot, which almost sliced off a toe. Had it fallen horizontally, said the doctor, we would have been picking pieces of glass from my foot for months. My husband rushed from office and took me to the emergency section of Delhi's best known government hospital. The wheelchair had a wheel missing and I had to be painfully helped up to the steps to the emergency room where the only bed was covered with blood from the last patient. Once I got home, I wrote an article asking why there was no ramp and a functioning wheelchair for accident cases. The hospital finally woke up and a ramp is there, but I can only hope the wheelchair works.

Last week I went to the capital's most luxurious and expensive cinema to see Mira Nair and Jhumpa Lahiri's riveting film *The Namesake*. Here again I had to negotiate some steps with the help of friends and a stick (I suffer badly from arthritis in the knees) to get past the entrance inside the cinema. Although the lift was functioning, our seats were high up in the balcony and again I had to negotiate endless steps with the help of friends and felt very embarrassed. Surely the cinema should have proper ways to help those who cannot negotiate steps? Instead, they seem to be more busy selling popcorn and cokes that are brought into the cinema though the screen keeps on reminding those inside that eatables and drinks are not allowed inside the cinema.

The Delhi Metro has at least taken steps to ensure that the physically challenged get tickets and enter the platform and train as comfortably as possible. But that is not the case with buses. Every few weeks, TV channels show visuals of physically challenged users of buses being ridiculed and pushed around if

they try to board a bus.

It is also a case of civic sense where able-bodied young people stand and stare and sometimes laugh, instead of trying to help the elderly or physically challenged. This should normally be taught at school and by parents. I would not like to dismiss all young people as callous. Whenever I attend a film festival in India or abroad, some young person springs to the rescue when they see me struggling to my seat or going up some steps.

And now there is another civic need that is being strongly voiced in Delhi and I hope other places join the chorus. This is the lack of facilities for the physically challenged at monuments, museums, art galleries, theatres, and entrances to clubs and restaurants. To visit the famed Qutab Minar in Delhi is a nightmare for the physically challenged. I suppose it is the same for the Elephanta Caves, Ajanta and Ellora. It is only when a VVIP visits an important site that

Wheelchair ramps and attendants are only provided when a VVIP visits an important site

the Archaeological Survey of India springs to life and makes ramps and provides wheelchair attendants and other facilities that should be available to every citizen, especially when heavy entrance fees are now demanded to visit monuments and other protected areas.

Care of the physically handicapped is looked after by a few brave individuals, many of them physically

challenged, who have formed associations to press for facilities. As a result, some signs of action are visible. But it is up to those who do not need such facilities to urge the civic authorities to do something about it. That means you and me. This is a cause periodically taken up by print and electronic media. But more needs to be done. Perhaps the Supreme Court, which has recently taken up many worthy causes, can also come into the picture. ■

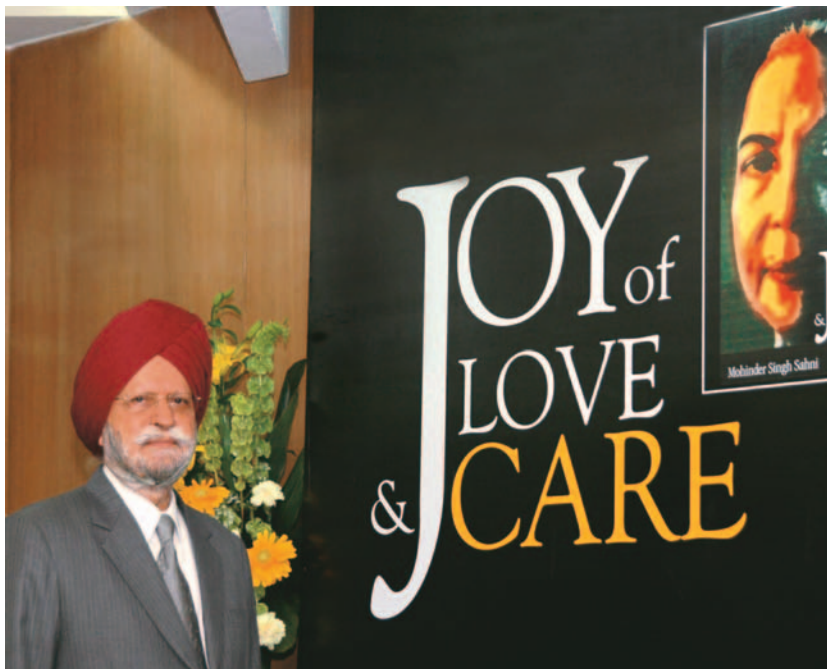


Amita Malik, often referred to as 'the first lady of Indian media', is a columnist and film critic

H PEOPLE

BEDSIDE STORY

Don't associate cancer with death, says Delhi-based businessman **Mohinder Singh Sahni**. He realised it after spending nine years "loving and looking after" his wife Ranjit Kaur, who suffered from ovarian cancer. Recently, the 76 year-old released his debut book *Joy of Love and Care* (Star Publishers). It details how Sahni, diagnosed with prostate cancer himself, helped his wife cope with the disease as she lost confidence with every chemotherapy session. "I was determined to make her see the world for a few more years," he says. "And I did." The book, a 180-page Rx, is a message to cancer patients not to give up.



Courtesy: MOHINDER SINGH SAHNI



UNLIKELY DON

Imagining veteran actor **Avatar Krishna Hangal**, with his kindly mien and affable smile, as a 'Don' is a bit of a stretch. But that's the role the 90 year-old has bagged in debut filmmaker Mashhoor Amrohi's *Hum Laakh Chhupayein Pyaar... Magar*, which is scheduled for a monsoon release. "I play a don-like character, wearing a hat, with two young girls on either side," he tells *Harmony*. The film is a South African production. "I don't want the roles to stop coming because people start associating me with the frailty of my age, which does not exist," adds Hangal. Still craving meaty roles, the former freedom fighter with Communist leanings refused to watch his last film *Paheli* because director Amol Palekar retained only one of his scenes.

BUILDING A TREE

Recently, American **Derrell Teat**, 63, found herself trailing a man who she believed was the last male descendant of her great-great-great grandfather's brother. When he refused to give her his DNA sample, she retrieved his coffee cup out of the garbage to do the test. Today, Teat belongs to a team of amateur genealogists in America who are using inexpensive genetic testing to trace their family tree. A retired wastewater coordinator, Teat has founded an organisation called the International Society of Genetic Genealogy that "will go to great lengths in pursuit of genealogy". All her volunteers are pensioners who opted for this assignment. Teat believes procedures like DNA testing hold out new hope for adopted children searching for their biological relatives. By next year, close to half a million people will have taken a DNA genealogy test, she adds confidently.



SPEED DEMON

Mumbai-based cyclist **Vinod Punmiya**, 50, has set a new speed record. On 25 March, he competed with Deccan Queen Express and covered 140 km from the outskirts of Pune to Dombivli in Mumbai, arriving 18 minutes ahead of the train. He covered the distance in two hours and 10 minutes. Punmiya, who sells imitation jewellery for a living, has been passionate about cycling for over two decades. He completed this feat after several failures. A native of Rajasthan, Punmiya ran away from home after failing twice in high school. He came to Mumbai and worked as a cook. Then, he shifted to Pune, where he worked at a photocopy shop before becoming a dealer of imitation jewellery. "I am aiming to get into the *Limca Book of Records*," he tells *Harmony*.



Courtesy: VINOD PUNMIYA



HEAVYWEIGHT CAUSARATI

Heavyweight boxing legend **Muhammad Ali** has not lost his touch. He recently organised 'Celebrity Fight Night XIII' in Phoenix, Arizona (in the US), to raise funds and awareness for Parkinson's research. Now in its 13th year, Celebrity Fight Night has raised more than \$

38 million (about Rs 171 million) with much of the money going to Ali's Parkinson's Center at Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix. This year, about 1,300 people—including actor Sharon Stone, business baron Donald Trump and singer Diana Ross—paid more than \$ 2,000 (about Rs 84,000) each to attend the event. Since 1996, Ali, 65, has been suffering from a brain disorder that causes tremors and slows his movements. "He's fighting the fight of his life and not quitting either," his friend Jimmy Walker told Associated Press.

VISITOR

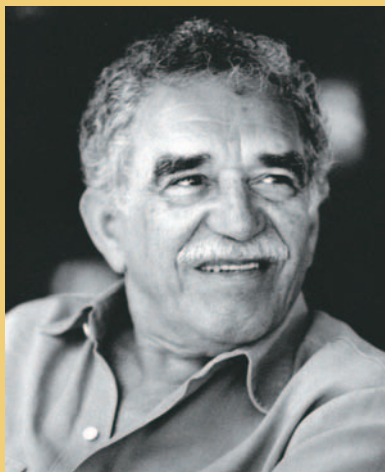


27-28 MAR

Who: Briton **Miles Hilton-Barber**, 58

Agenda: Barber lost total vision in both his eyes at the age of 38, but he has walked to the South Pole, climbed the Himalaya, scuba-dived 20 km under the Red Sea, and circumnavigated the world using over 80 different forms of transport. Now, he's flying a customised microlight plane—using a speech-output technology—to fly 22,500 km from London to Sydney. Mumbai was a stop-over, where Barber gave motivational speeches to raise part of the \$ 1 million he's aiming to collect for charity, Seeing Is Believing.

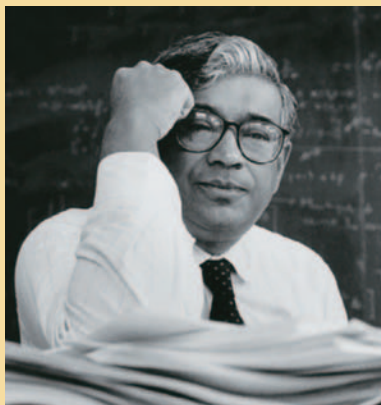
MILESTONES



Honoured. Nobel laureate author **Gabriel Garcia Marquez**, 80, at the fourth gathering of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language in Cartagena, Colombia, with a commemorative edition of his most famous work, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The gathering was held on 27 March. According to Associated Press, "Fellow writers Carlos Fuentes of Mexico and Tomas Eloy Martinez of Argentina praised the writer, affectionately known as Gabo, for breathing life

into and remaking Spanish, a language now spoken by nearly 500 million people, the official tongue of 21 nations, and the fourth most popular after Chinese, English and Hindi."

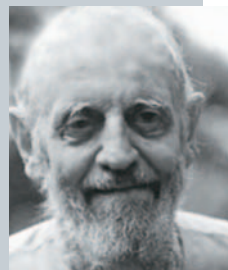
Awarded. The \$ 975,000 Norwegian Abel prize, also known as the Maths Nobel, to Indian-born **Srinivasa S R Varadhan**, 67, for 'his fundamental contributions to probability theory'. Varadhan teaches at Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences, New York University. "Probability theory is the mathematical tool for analysing situations governed by chance," says the citation from the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters. "Varadhan's work has great conceptual strength and ageless beauty. His ideas will continue to stimulate further research for a long time."



Featured. **Shyama Chona**, 64, principal of Delhi Public School, R K Puram, in the 2007 edition of the *Limca Book of Records* for her 'contribution to education'. "It is like a dream come true to be a part of the fraternity of incredible achievers mentioned in the book," Chona told media.

IN PASSING

Born in Birmingham, architect **Laurie Baker** made India his home in 1945 after meeting Mahatma



Gandhi in Mumbai. Baker built homes and hospitals for leprosy patients in Uttar Pradesh, where he met Elizabeth, a doctor from Kerala. They married and settled in Kerala where he lived for 44 years. Baker passed away on 1 April, leaving behind a legacy of eco-friendly architecture backed by red bricks. He was 90.

She once wrote, "Those who have forgotten their own childhood can never write for children."



Bengali writer **Leela Majumdar** could never be accused of that. Niece of Upendrakishore Roychowdhury, pioneering children's writer and publisher, Majumdar kicked off her career in children's fiction with a story for his magazine for children, *Sandesh*. She went on to edit and write for the magazine her entire writing life. She also wrote novels for adults (*Sreemoti*, *Cheena-lanthhan*) and a biography of Tagore. She died on 5 April at the age of 99.

SAY IT OUT LOUD



Being busy does not always mean real work. The object of all work is production or accomplishment and to either of these ends there must be forethought, system, planning, intelligence, and honest purpose, as well as perspiration. Seeming to do is not doing.

—American inventor Thomas A Edison (1847-1931)

Laziness may appear attractive, but work gives satisfaction.

—German diarist Anne Frank (1929-1945)

There is joy in work. There is no happiness except in the realisation that we have accomplished something.

—American businessman Henry Ford (1863-1947)

Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion.

—British historian C Northcote Parkinson (1909-1993)

When a man tells you he got rich through hard work, ask him: 'Whose?'

—American author Don Marquis (1878-1937)

THE WORD IS OUT

hyper-evolution *n.* Extremely rapid evolution, particularly as a result of manmade factors; extremely rapid change. Also: **hyperevolution**. Will global warming speed the pace of evolution as plants and animals adapt to a hotter world? Scientists such as Andrew McAdam, a Canadian researcher at Michigan State University, say they don't know the answer to that question — but there is evidence that changes are already occurring. A 10-year study he and his colleagues did near Kluane Lake reveals that, because of rising temperatures, red squirrels are now having babies in late April instead of mid-May. The change is at least in part genetic—the offspring of mothers who gave birth earlier in the season have daughters who do the same—making this the first mammal to evolve in response to climate change. However, even if this doesn't prove the tipping point for **hyper-evolution**, prepare yourself for a weedier world. Weeds (as well as pests) may be able to adapt more quickly to a changing environment because they often have shorter life cycles and can go through many generations in rapid time.

—Anne McLroy, "The New Climate Almanac",
The Globe and Mail, 17 February 2007

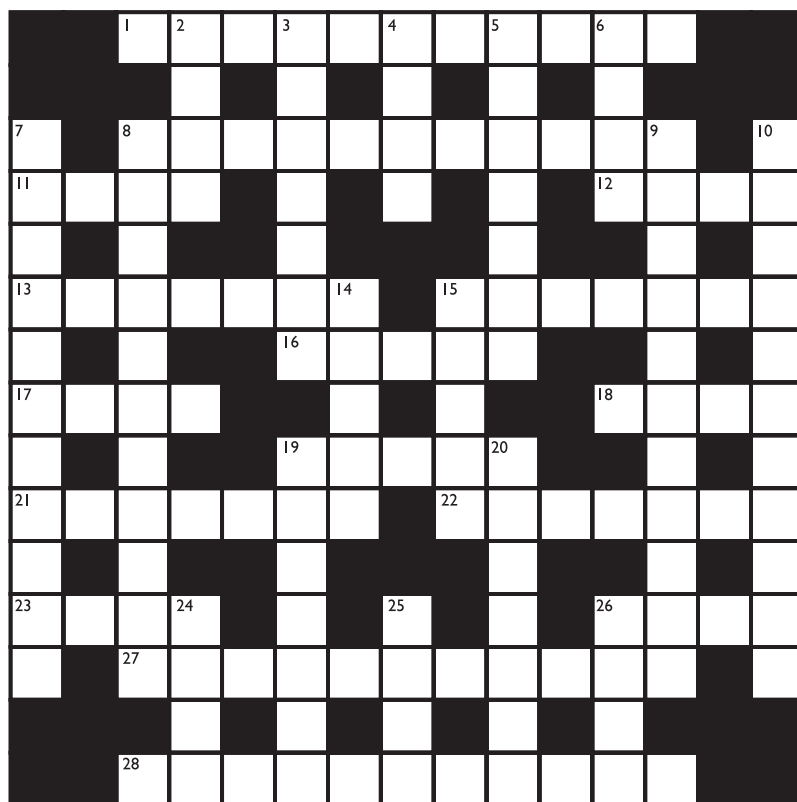
photolurker *n.* A person who obsessively and anonymously browses strangers' photos posted to online photo-sharing sites.

—**photolurking** *pp.*

But perhaps most disturbing of all was the detection of **photolurking**, which involves an obsession with browsing online photo albums of strangers. Since the popularity of photo-sharing sites exploded, the lives of snap-happy citizen journalists have been there for the lurking. And like the experience of Robin Williams' photo developer in *One Hour Photo*, happy family photos offer the perfect escapism from an unpleasant reality. Perhaps the **photolurkers** aren't entirely to blame. Some photographers are posting their most private moments online, without any password protection, for all the world to see. It's not as if lurkers are hiding behind a bush taking pictures at your family gathering.

—"Online Snappers Told To Beware Photolurkers",
The Guardian, 23 January 2007

HEADSTART



EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 3 I

By Raju Bharatan

ACROSS

- 1 How to trust the hangman who's so deep in debt? (2 2 3 4)
 8 In which you once royally came for the day's work from Poona to Bombay (6 5)
 11 Umrigar century? "Dowe shalt not bowl!" ran the Windies crowd-chant, as Sunil Gavaskar tore into this fastie during his knock of 124 on the opening day of the mid-April '71 Fifth Test at Port-of-Spain (4)
 12 Just the spread for the woman with a male appetite all her own? (4)
 13 Dig deep for hoard in which he turns (3 4)
 15 How 'doggedly' Abhishek keeps looking into them remains to be seen (3-4)

- 16 Cut and ---, form in which copra is sold (5)
 17 With her there on stage, could Dilip Kumar be far behind? (4)
 18 Rai, Aishwarya acting without consideration (4)
 19 A Landing Ground before Indian Army denoting pain in a certain part? (5)
 21 Air Service Command register flourish to a signature representing a seal? (1 6)
 22 A game hanging on the cliff's edge? Trust V V S Laxman, then, to 'walk' the plank! (1 3-3)
 23 Met a Baba (4)
 26 Come across as a master did Gautam Ghose, here, in having Naseeruddin Shah and Shabana Azmi working for a piggy-bank pittance! (4)
 27 Just the 'coinage' to sum up Tapan Sinha's 1977 thematising

of *Safed Haathi* (11)

- 28 The last thing you hope to find in a recipe (4 2 5)

DOWN

- 2 Hammer part for Pen Holder of Eminence (4)
 3 South African umpire prone to turn apple-red when angry with a player? (7)
 4 Fully charged is Navjot Sidhu even with only ten against his name! (4)
 5 Trust him to make Mohammed Rafi (like himself) sound *Amar* with just one song in the film (against that singer's name) in the eternal Bhairavi mould of *Insaaf kaa mandir hai yeh Bhagwaan kaa ghar hai* (7)
 6 Hill England failed to overcome as Australia (in 1901-02) won The Ashes (4)
 7 Believe it or not, as 'Singing Star' Suraiya, here, did SONY (end-January 2004) identify Sheela Dalaya, playing Madhubala's chambermaid Suraiya (opposite Ajit), even as Lata warbled *Ae ishq yeh sub duniya waale bekaar kii baaten karte hain!* (6-1-4)

- 8 Tame comediettas (11)
 9 The first to celebrate? (3 5 3)
 10 Sharmila's firm directive to Saif and Soha as far as Papa and Poaching go? (4 3 4)
 14 Bore practitioner needing a dose of his own medicine! (5)
 15 Alice Shakespearian (5)
 19 Rock steady in clinging, doggie in no position to race for the ball thrown? (1 6)
 20 Look how even the one sensible Hindi serial we got to see on our TV had 'the boob' for its core! (7)
 24 A she seal (4)
 25 Some master of Othello! (4)
 26 Footnote on saint used to attract attention surreptitiously (4)

For answers, see Page 81

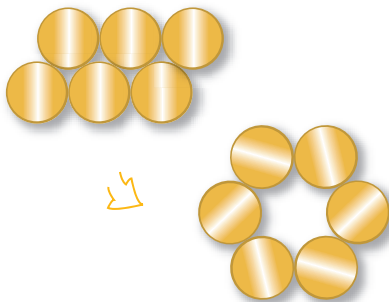
Raju Bharatan is the originator of the 'Sunday Cryptic' crossword in *The Times Of India*, where he set the first 1,500 puzzles

TIPS FOR BEGINNERS: A whole variety of clues goes into framing a cryptic puzzle. For instance, the anagram. The clue here could be: *Unresting opponent of authority* (*Unresting* being the 9 letters of *insurgent* rearranged). Another variety of clue is the palindrome—*DEIFIED*, when viewed backward or when viewed up in a Down clue, reads *DEIFIED* all the way. Next, there could be the clue (8-letter answer) reading: *Complete view of daughter sandwiched between parents*—*PANORAMA* (*PA/NORA/MA*). The 8-letter solution to the clue, *The framework of our constitution*, is *SKELETON*. At times, what looks straight could prove tricky. For example, the clue, *How we stand*—has *UNITED* for its 6-letter answer. The clue, *How we fall*, has *DIVIDED* for its 7-letter answer. The clue, *Walls have them yet they hear not*, has *EARS* for its answer. Next, *pertinacity* could split into *Pert* in a city, *face* to *face* into *facet* of *ace*. For *ANISEED*, the clue could be: *Carminative I see inside and outside*—*AN(I SEE)D*. The possibilities are endless.

BRAIN GYM

FIGURE IT OUT

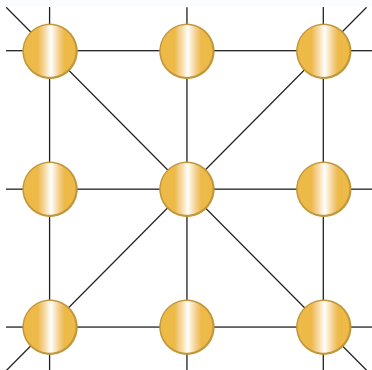
1. Place six pennies on the table in two rows as shown in the top left of the image. The object is to turn these two rows into the coin circle shown in the bottom right in only three moves. A move consists of sliding one coin to a new position, where the moved coin has to touch two other coins.



2. Copy the board below and cut it into four identical pieces. Question: Is it possible to assemble the pieces again in order to form a geometric shape without holes?



3.



A square of nine coins shown in the illustration contains eight rows of three coins each (indicated

with the lines)—three horizontal rows, three vertical rows and two main diagonals.

The objective is to move the minimum possible number of coins to new positions to form 10 rows of three coins each.

4. At noon and midnight, the hour and minute hands of a clock are exactly coincident with each other. How many other times between noon and midnight do the hour and minute hands cross?

SOLVE IT

1. Here are some teasers for you to solve. Example: 26 L in the A. Answer: 26 letters in the alphabet.

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. 12 I in a F | 6. 7 W of the W |
| 2. 365 D in a Y | 7. 52 C in a D |
| 3. 2's C, 3's a C | 8. 18 H on a G C |
| 4. 101 D | 9. 6 0's in a M |
| 5. 7 D S | 10. 14 D in a F |

2. Provide the animal-verb (carniverbs!) that best matches the definition of each of the following. Some carniverbs are used twice, and the figure in brackets indicates the number of letters in each carniverb.

1. to outwit by cunning [3]
2. complain [6]
3. to defraud by cheating or swindling [4]
4. to strike with great force; move quickly [3]
5. to harass or annoy persistently [6]
6. to offer for sale by calling out in the street [4]
7. show off [7]
8. to give way; falter; recoil in fear [5]
9. to become silent [4 + up]
10. to give birth to; to produce as yield [4]
11. equivocate; to evade an obligation [6 + out]
12. to chatter [3]
13. engage in sycophancy [4 + y]
14. to show affection; to court favour by flattery [4]
15. to eat greedily; devour [4]
16. to stand or move with legs and arms extended [spread + 5]
17. to store away for future use [8 + away]
18. to make secure against leakage or passage [4]

SUDOKU FOR YOU

					4		6	8
		3						2
		9				5		
2							1	9
		6	7			2		
		8	1					
8	1					7		
	6			2			4	
		7			5			3

Choose a number from 1 to 9, and place it in the grid. Every digit from 1 to 9 must appear once, and only once, in each of the columns, rows and in each of the sets of nine boxes.

KOFFEE WITH KAKURO

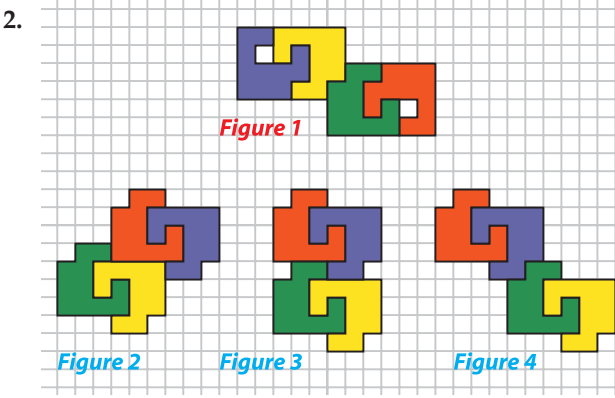
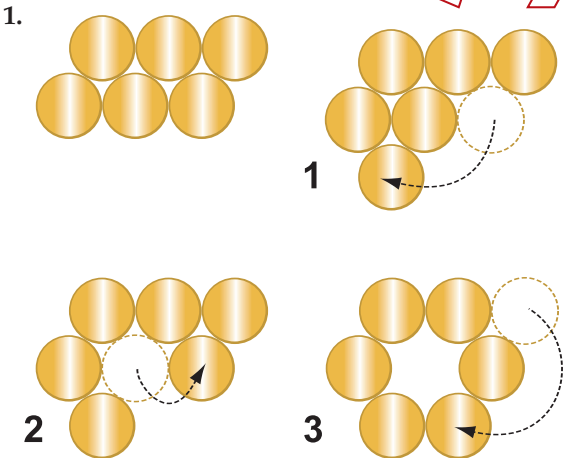
	17	22	24					
24					16			
29							23	
	28							10
3					14			
5					5	9		
	10							3
		10						
			6					

The object of a Kakuro is to insert digits from 1 to 9 into the white cells to total the clue associated with it. However, no digit can be duplicated in an entry. For example, to total 6, you could have 1 and 5, 2 and 4 but not 3 and 3. You may, however, use a number again in the same row or column.

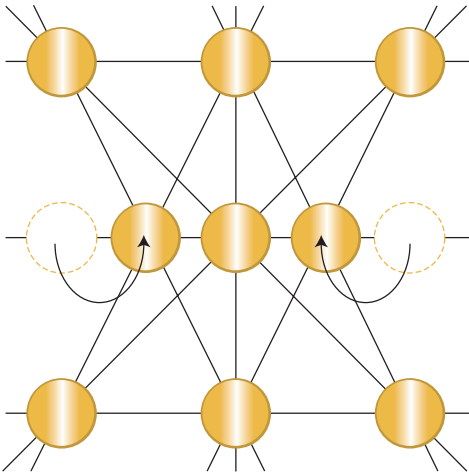
SOLUTIONS TO BRAIN GYM

Figure it out

79



3. This puzzle can be solved in just two moves shown in the illustration above. This makes exactly 10 rows of three-in-a-row coins each.



4. Ten times (not 11, as most people seem to think)

Solve it

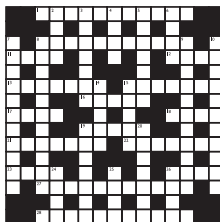
- 1.
- 1.12 inches in a foot
2. 365 days in a year.
3. Two's company, three's a crowd.
4. 101 Dalmatians
5. 7 Deadly Sins.
6. 7 Wonders of the World
7. 52 cards in a deck.
8. 18 holes on a golf course.
9. 6 0s in 1 million.
10. 14 days in a fortnight.

- 2.
1. Fox
2. Grouse
3. Rook
4. Ram
5. Badger
6. Hawk
7. Peacock
8. Quail
9. Clam up
10. Bear
11. Weasel out
12. Yak
13. Toady
14. Fawn
15. Wolf
16. Spread eagle
17. Squirrel away
18. Seal

EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 31

ACROSS:

1 up to his neck; 8 Deccan Queen; 11 Uton (U-ton: *Umrigar century*, Uton Dowe is the Windies pacer); 12 Menu (Men/u); 13 hoe hard: ho/eh/ard, he turns in hoard, hoe hard is Dig deep; 15 cat-eyes (of Aishwarya); 16 (cut and) dried; 17 Lata (Mangeshkar); 18 RASH (R standing for Rai, ASH for Aishwarya, rash means acting without consideration); 19 ALGIA (A/LG/IA: A Landing Ground before Indian Army, algia denoting pain in a certain part); 21 A SCROLL (ASC/roll: ASC is Air Service Command, roll is register, a scroll is flourish to a signature representing



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a seal); 22 a see-saw; 23 (Baba) Amte: Met a, the 4 letters of Amte rearranged; 26 Paar; 27 elephantasy; 28 salt to taste

DOWN:

2 PEEN: PE(E)N, Pen Holder of E(minence), *peen* is hammer part; 3 (Dave) Orchard; 4 IONS (IO/NS, IO is ten, NS is Navjot Sidhu); 6 Clem (Hill); 7 Mughal-e-Azam (Neha Daliya, playing chambermaid Suraiya, is Ajit's would-be sweetheart in this K Asif epic); 8 domesticate (the 11 letters of comediettas rearranged); 9 New Year's Day; 10 Mum's the word; 14 drill (Dr/ill, drill means bore, Dr/ill is practitioner needing a dose of his own medicine); 15 Celia (the 5 letters of Alice rearranged); 19 a limpet (a lim/p/et); 20 Astitva: As(tit)va, the boob for its core); 24 Elsa (the 4 letters of seal rearranged); 25 Iago; 26 PSST (PS on ST, Footnote on saint)

SOLUTION TO SUDOKU

5	2	1	9	7	4	3	6	8
7	4	3	5	8	6	1	9	2
6	8	9	2	3	1	5	7	4
2	7	4	3	5	8	6	1	9
1	3	6	7	4	9	2	8	5
9	5	8	1	6	2	4	3	7
8	1	2	4	9	3	7	5	6
3	6	5	8	2	7	9	4	1
4	9	7	6	1	5	8	2	3

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SOLUTION TO KAKURO

	17	22	24				
24	8	7	9	16			
29	9	5	8	7	23		
	28	4	7	9	8	10	
3	1	2		14	5	9	
5	2	3	5	9	2	1	
	10	1	3	2	4	3	
		10	2	4	3	1	
			6	3	1	2	



TEXT: KHURSHED DINSHAW; PHOTO: HEMANT PATIL

“Disabled people should not use excuses, tears and self pity as crutches. Instead of expecting others to make their life comfortable, they should make an effort themselves. All they need is strong will power. I know. I’ve been there.”

Shernaz Poonekar was struck by polio when she was two, but never let it get in the way of life. She went to a normal school and would drag herself to play every sport with her peers. Recipient of Arjuna Award for disabled sports (swimming; 1978), she has won 12 gold, three silver and six bronze medals at international sports competitions. She travels all over the world, drives her own three-wheeler, and is secretary of her cooperative housing society in Pune. Poonekar, now 57, has been extending her experience and knowledge to physically, visually and mentally challenged people, and their families, for the past 25 years. She guides, counsels and helps build acceptance of the situation on both sides, besides making people aware of the facilities available to them. Whenever she can, she also provides equipment like wheelchairs and crutches to the poor. Her strongest ally is husband Dr (Col) Pradeep Poonekar, an orthopaedic surgeon. She believes that the challenged must have access to mobility and basic education, and explore their talents to live a fulfilling life.

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