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THANK YOU MR FM—THE
Union Budget for 2008-09 was a silver-friendly one.

There were a host of measures this year that brought cheer to the elderly. The tax exemption limit was raised to Rs 225,000 and the Senior Citizens’ Savings Scheme and Post Office Time Deposits were granted exemption under Section 80C. Additional benefits were introduced under Section 80D for children who pay for medical insurance for their parents—another incentive for people to help the elderly (see our Budget reckoner in the ‘Money and More’ section).

A firm believer in the potential of silvers, Harmony was also happy to read about P Chidambaram’s initiative to give millions of ex-servicemen across the country a chance for a second career in banking by serving as facilitators in regional rural banks.

For us, though, the highlight of the Budget was the clarity it brought to Reverse Mortgage. As we have iterated in Harmony, this is a loan that can be availed by silvers by unlocking the value of their home equity and giving them cash in hand. But the scheme, introduced in India last year, has faced a slow start owing to lack of lucidity about whether such a loan would be taxable.

That’s why Harmony organised a seminar this January on raising awareness about Reverse Mortgage, in association with National Housing Bank.

Following the seminar, we wrote to the finance minister urging him to clarify these ambiguities. That’s what he did in the Union Budget for 2008-09, stating unequivocally that a loan taken under Reverse Mortgage is exempt from income tax and capital gains tax. This is wonderful news as Reverse Mortgage is a financial avenue that can help silvers achieve economic independence.

Happily enough, the Railway Budget too, thanks to Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, brought its share of good tidings for silvers—30 per cent discount for male senior citizens across all classes, and an impressive 50 per cent for female silvers.

The subtext of all this is empowerment—freedom to travel, save, live in financial security. It’s heartening that silvers can benefit from an economy that’s opening its doors to the world. We urge the government to continue on this road. With this will come an enabling environment for active ageing; a chance for silvers to live their best life. And Harmony couldn’t be more proud to act as facilitator to achieve that end.

Tina Ambani
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Chitrotpala Mukherjee
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Nature's gift
Maria Ferreira
reminisces about her beloved trees
Visit www.harmonyindia.org now and check out this month's stories!

Cover photograph by SUJAN SINGH

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column one

Anger can be positive. It can actually work as an energy reserve that, if channelled intelligently and purposefully, can bring about dramatic social and environmental change. Valmik Thapar’s rage against callous government attitude towards protecting tigers has, in fact, helped prevent their extinction. On the cover this month, Thapar (“The Lone Ranger”) has worked at it for 33 years. And it hurt him the most to see the numbers shrinking to 1,411 tigers, but he never thought he couldn’t set right the wrong. Finally, the finance minister has announced Rs 500 million as grant to the National Tiger Conservation Authority. But, on the way, Thapar says he forgot how to smile. He manages it sometimes for the cameras, only genuinely smiling when he sees his five-year-old son Hamir.

Kashmir’s Senior Citizens’ Forum Against Social Evils is a like-minded group of silvers in Srinagar (“Action Men”). Riled about local issues that the municipal officers or other powers-that-be would not attend to, they proceed to find solutions that have made a difference to their own lives, and those of people in their neighbourhood.

If the proposed Community Participation Law comes into force (“Silver Activism”), every civic project planned for your area will need your approval. Common logic can also ensure that the government doesn’t push unrealistic projects.

The message is clear: Speak up! It’s time to show you ‘can’. It’s time to be silver and earnest. It’s time to be Harmony people.

— Meeta Bhatti

Hpicked

It appears senior citizens have no right to live a life of dignity in India. For instance, lakhs of seniors were waiting (after reaching the age of 58) to receive their contracted hospitalisation cover with the New India Assurance Company through the Unit Trust of India (UTI) by purchasing units under the Senior Citizens’ Unit scheme. But UTI suddenly terminated the scheme by sending a printed circular, dated 8 January 2008. Fortunately, those who are covered for hospitalisation but have crossed 61 years of age have been spared this trauma. But then there are so many people between 58 and 61 years who have been affected. Of course, the UTI justifies it because of a clause in fine print, allowing it to “cancel or withdraw the policy at any time”.

Further, nationalised insurance companies were suddenly allowed to increase the Mediclaim renewal premium for individual or family hospitalisation arbitrarily; in some cases, even to the tune of 100 per cent—even for policies where no claim has been made and which have continued uninterrupted for years. Our Consumer Complaints Cell has seen cases where seniors over the age of 70 were paying, say, Rs 12,000 per annum for a cover of Rs 500,000. Now, they are asked to pay about Rs 27,000 to continue the policy. Where will they get the money?

Even more disturbing is the increase in murders of the elderly in Indian metros because of the deteriorating law-and-order situation and lack of adequate security from the police and community. In such an alarming scenario, I seek some awakening on the part of the seniors, concerned NGOs and welfare organisations to unite on a single platform to fight for the welfare of our elderly. As a senior citizen and chairperson of the Consumer Complaints Cell, an NGO, I invite all interested parties to come together, so we can file an appropriate writ petition in the High Court or Supreme Court, to enforce our fundamental right to life, health and safety.

MOHAN SIROYA
Chairperson, Consumer Complaints Cell
Via Email; Contact: cccell@hotmail.com; mohansiroya@hotmail.com

The letter of the month wins music CDs from Big Music

I received my February issue of Harmony but I am sorry to say that I didn’t like to see an illustration on the cover. I believe photographs are more appropriate for the front cover of a magazine. I also found the hand-drawn illustrations inside for the cover story (“Money on Your Mind”) rather monotonous. I hope the team at Harmony appreciates readers’ suggestions on design.

— DR CHIRANJIT PARMAR
Mandi
I highly appreciated your coverage on Asha Jeevan Home and Care Giving Centre for the Aged in Bengaluru, in the December 2007 issue of Harmony (“Oasis of Compassion”). The women who established it deserve to be lauded for their noble venture to look after invalids suffering from Alzheimer’s and dementia. I wish them the best of success. Please continue to inform readers about other similar long-term services available in India for the elderly.

KUSUM GOKARN
Pune

Harmony is a source of inspiration for ‘silvers’. We do have magazines in regional languages for senior citizens but Harmony stands out as the most informative magazine, beautifully presented in English. The traditional Indian family system is fast disappearing. The nuclear family has replaced the joint family system with its own values and views on love, affection, devotion, money, wealth and relationships. Kerala, which has witnessed mass migration of its younger generation to other states and countries, is perhaps the most acute example. We cannot go back to the old. Therefore, we should accept changes as challenges. In this respect, I am sure your magazine shall serve as a weapon. I wish you the best.

P S RAMANKUTTY
Thiruvananthapuram

I am a 70-year-old senior citizen. Before retirement I worked for the Indian Navy as a civilian. I am a member of Dignity Foundation and keep myself busy in social activities. I also stay in touch with the municipal corporation to ensure my neighbourhood remains clean. I eat carefully and walk everyday. This year, I participated in the Nasik-Pune run, held on 12 January, and completed the 4.5-km run in 40 minutes. This gave me the enthusiasm to take part in the Harmony Senior Citizens’ Run at the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon held on 20 January. I thoroughly enjoyed myself singing and dancing with my fellow seniors. Our slogan was: “Hum hain old, lekin we are gold!” I want to thank all the Mumbaikars who cheered us on that day—it made us feel that our age was just an insignificant number and that nothing was impossible.

P M AHUJA
Mumbai

I am a regular reader and admirer of your magazine. I am 76 years old and a practicing solicitor. With reference to your article, “Patient as Consumer” (‘Legalise’, February 2008 issue of Harmony), I was president of the Association of Hospitals (AoH), Mumbai, in 1995 when the Supreme Court decided that the services provided by a medical practitioner fell within the ambit of the Consumer Protection Act. In view of the importance of the judgement, AoH held a seminar to discuss the repercussions of the decision. In my capacity as president, I expressed a concern that in view of the fact that the services rendered by the doctors were being subjected to scrutiny by a judicial forum, there would possibly be over-investigation or unwanted tests on patients. My colleagues on the dais—eminent medical professionals—all discounted my fears. However, that is exactly what has happened. To top it all, when a patient approaches a consultant with ready reports, the consultant almost always insists on the same investigations being conducted once again by agencies recommended by him. How can one stop this? Let some honest seniors from the medical profession guide us.

M L BHAKTA
Via email

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 a 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
HERITAGE WATCH

WAH TAJ!
India’s greatest tourist attraction is undergoing a makeover—literally. In February, archaeologists began applying a mud pack to the marble exteriors of the 17th century Taj Mahal in Agra to restore its gleam. “The first phase of the mud packing will take about five months,” N K Samadia, an Archaeological Survey of India official, tells Reuters. “The mud pack will remain on the marble for about two or three days and then be peeled off. This will be followed by a distilled water wash of the surface to give the Taj a new look. After we complete the exteriors, the mausoleum’s interiors will be treated.” This treatment is expected to remove the yellow tinge visible on the Taj owing to the deposition of airborne particles. The Taj received a similar facial in 2002.
NEWSWORTHY
CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

In Mumbai, 60 out of 175 murder cases involving silvers between 1 January 1996 and 19 February 2008 remain unsolved, according to media reports. The detection rate for murders of silvers is only 55-60 per cent compared to 80-90 per cent for murder cases, underworld-related killings, rapes and molestation. Now, the Mumbai police has decided to do something about it. In early March, K L Prasad, joint commissioner of police (law and order), asked all five regional additional commissioners of police in the city to review such unsolved cases in their jurisdiction. “We have already told all regional additional commissioners of police to check records of the past 10 years and find out which cases involving the elderly are unresolved,” Prasad tells Harmony. “If required, we will not hesitate to reopen the closed cases,” he adds. Meanwhile, police stations have been asked to prepare a list of domestic help and milkmen who go into housing societies in their jurisdiction. The police will also launch a fresh appeal to register silvers—right now, it has a database of 3,600 silvers in Mumbai.

E EVENT
eSangathan, a project funded by the European Union and dedicated to the inclusion of the ageing workforce in the information society, will hold a panel discussion on ‘Ageing and ICT (information and communication technology)’ at Taj Land’s End in Bandra, Mumbai, on 17 April 2008 from 9 am to 5 pm. Under eSangathan, a pilot project is running in India in Mahindra & Mahindra Corporation in order to test how the implementation of a collaborative working environment can facilitate the work of older knowledge workers. The pilot is being managed with the technical support of sister concern Tech Mahindra. The discussion will include the experiences of retiree experts in this pilot as well as topics such as e-inclusive society; digital havens and have-nots; and socioeconomic aspects of ageing. If you are interested in attending or learning more about the event, call Hemlata Sharma on 020-66018100 (extension 1727) or email hemlata.sharma@techmahindra.com
HOME FOR LIFE
All new homes in the UK are expected to be wheelchair-friendly by 2013. In February, Housing Minister Caroline Flint and Communities Secretary Hazel Blears published a list of 16 features for new houses to meet the ‘lifetime homes’ standard — this means they can be easily adapted for wheelchair users. In a foreword to the policy document, Prime Minister Gordon Brown writes: “I want our homes to be places that help us adapt as we age; safe havens rather than obstacle courses.” Falls involving silvers result in 1.25 million hospital admissions a year in the UK, according to a report in newspaper The Guardian. Research suggests that adapting homes could cut the number of falls by 60 per cent. Here’s what it takes to make a lifetime home:
- Level or gently-sloping approach to front door
- Living room and toilet at entrance level
- Space for a stair-lift
- Space for a platform lift to the bedroom
- Doors and hall wide enough for a wheelchair
- Low window sills

RIDE EASY
Silvers taking the subway or bus in Beijing are now guaranteed a better ride. The city’s Municipal Transportation Commission has started a campaign to encourage people to give up seats to the elderly, expectant mothers or others in need. “We aim to raise people’s awareness to care for their fellow passengers,” says Liu Xiaoming, deputy director of the Beijing Municipal Transportation Commission. “Municipal media will praise those who give up their seats and expose those who refuse.” According to www.chinaview.cn, the move stems from the city’s determination to “eliminate the bad habits of its residents and polish its image before the Olympics”, which will be held in the city in August. Interestingly, Mumbai’s BEST buses have been urging passengers to give up seats to silvers for years now.

MAKING A COMMITMENT

- Walls able to take adaptation
- Sockets and controls at convenient height
- Space for temporary entrance-level bed
- Distance from car park kept to a minimum
- Bathroom to allow side access to bath and toilet
- Easy route for a hoist from bedroom to bathroom
- Enough space for wheelchair turning circle in the living room
- Threshold to home covered and lit
- Parking space capable of being widened.

Shocked by the unearthing of the illegal kidney transplant racket near Delhi, a group of 48 silvers in Bhopal have pledged to donate their organs so that people don’t have to turn to racketeers. The silvers made the commitment at an organ donation camp organised by the Madhya Pradesh Varishtha Nagrik Mandal, a senior citizens’ association, and NGO Gayatri Shakti Peeth. “If each of us decides to donate our organs, there would be no room for the illegal organ trade,” S K Saraswat, president of the Mandal, tells news agency IANS.
**INNOVATION**

**NIGHT MAGIC**

Buy this bed and you’ll never want to get out. To be launched in the US in 2009, the Starry Night Bed adjusts your pillows, gives you a massage and even downloads movies! “No one in the bedding industry has put such technology into a bed,” Mark Quinn of Leggett & Platt, which has developed the bed, tells news agency ANI. “It comes with sensors, temperature controls, Internet connectivity and home theatre.” For the first 30 days, sensors in the bed will track your sleeping habit based on snoring and breathing patterns. If you are restless, it will offer recommendations for better sleep. If you snore, it will elevate to 7° to open airwaves and return to its original position when you stop snoring. And water circulating through channels in the mattress may be warmed or cooled for desired temperature level. “But one concern is that people could overdo the entertainment aspect. Watching news or films before bedtime may disrupt sleep,” says sleep specialist Rubin Naiman from University of Arizona. The bed will retail from $20,000 to $50,000 (about Rs 810,000 to Rs 2 million). To know more about the bed, visit www.starrynightbed.com

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**ANALYSE THIS**

**LENGTHENING LIFESPAN**

The study of baker’s yeast—the single-celled organism used in bread making—may hold the key to longevity. Scientists at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles have created yeast that is capable of living to 800 in yeast years (a tenfold extension in lifespan) without apparent side effects. Achieved through a combination of dietary and genetic changes, this breakthrough brings science closer to controlling the basic unit of all living systems: the cell. “We’re setting the foundation for reprogramming healthy life,” says team leader Professor Valter Longo in journal PloS Genetics. “This is the longest lifespan extension that has ever been achieved in any organism.” Despite its simplicity, yeast has led to the discovery of some of the most important genes and pathways regulating ageing and disease in mice and other mammals.

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**Blue in Israel:** As Israeli men age, they become more likely to develop **depression** than European men, reveals Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE). The research team attributes this to living in a “**constant state of war**.”
INSIGHT ON AGEING

The need to offer greater community and government support to our ageing population is the focus of The Impact of Ageing - A Common Challenge for Europe and Asia, published by the Asia-Europe Foundation and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research. This collection of essays by international experts draws attention to the latest findings and data in demography, economy and society, law and social welfare, and biomedicine. Edited by Gabriele Sinigoj from the University of Vienna and Gavin Jones, professor at the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore, the book shows the similarities and differences in the process of ageing in European and Asian populations.

“Ageing needs a multi-disciplinary approach, involving aspects from law to biomedicine, and the book addresses this,” Sinigoj told media at the book’s launch in New Delhi in February. “For example, one chapter deals with ways to improve the quality of life of the old, including ‘T-cell banks’ and the pros and cons of the human growth hormone.” The essay on India (“India–Partner in Global Solutions on Healthcare and Demographic Challenges”) has been written by Harpal Singh, chairman of the national committee on public health of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), and non-executive chairman of pharmaceutical company Ranbaxy. “The lack of social security in India is alarming, especially when you view it against statistics that imply that the number of people above the age of 65 in the country will double by 2050,” said Singh. For more information on the book, email Jaivir Singh, Vice-President, Business Development & Corporate Communications, Impact Group, at jaivirs@impactprojects.biz or call 011-24119768.

SAUCY SISTER

For Sister Anastazja, God is in the condiments. The Polish nun and author of four blockbuster cookbooks cites divine inspiration for her recipes—she says they come to her in her dreams. “The hard part is remembering to write them down when I wake up before I forget!” she tells news agency AFP. With saucily titled recipes such as ‘The Drunk’, ‘The Coquette’ and ‘Mother-in-Law’s Breast’, the 58 year-old is not afraid to share her sense of humour, a fact that has earned her some criticism. “One lady wrote to me saying that I’d been disrespectful to a certain part of the female anatomy,” she says with a chuckle. “She must have been a mother-in-law.” Now, Sister Anastazja is planning to release a 51-minute DVD, Perfect Cakes, which gives easy-to-follow tips on baking tarts. Despite all this excitement, she insists that her life hasn’t really changed. “Sometimes I have a little less time, but I make sure I have time for prayer.”
FACE OFF

SPICE, GIRLS
Now, you can turn up the heat on wrinkles with an anti-ageing cream that contains chilli peppers. According to a media release by US-based skincare brand SiCap, they help the skin absorb the active wrinkle-fighting ingredients in its new beauty formula, Youthful Trends. “The pepper extract increases blood flow and absorption at the skin’s surface so the ingredients penetrate immediately,” says company founder Wayne Perry. “Traditional anti-wrinkle creams have the right idea by using collagen and peptides, but the ingredients don’t penetrate the skin the way Youthful Trends does.” The price: $39.95 (about Rs 1,500). To learn more, go to www.sicapindustries.com

BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS
After pulping exotic fruits like kiwi, melting 24-karat gold and even lacing anti-ageing cream with snake venom to bite back at the ageing process (‘Orbit’, February 2008), researchers are now turning to two rather unlikely sources for help: camels and donkeys. Studies are now underway at the National Camel Research Centre in Bikaner to test the efficacy of chemical-free ‘camel milk cream’ in erasing wrinkles, reports The Hindu. Cosmetic companies and scientists from India and overseas are said to have displayed great interest in the research.

Meanwhile, new Swiss skincare line Câlinesse is making donkey’s milk— Cleopatra’s beauty secret—popular all over again in Europe. The range features face, eye, bust and body creams for women and skincare products for babies containing donkey’s milk and organic plant extracts. According to website www.cosmeticsdesign-europe.com, the milk, which is rich in vitamins C, D, A and E, is considered regenerative for the skin because of high levels of protein and ceramides, while its rich composition makes it an excellent moisturiser. The range starts at € 28 (about Rs 1,700) for the baby lotion, going up to € 75 (about Rs 4,500) for the eye cream. You can buy it online at www.mademoiselle-bio.com

Silvers in shape: The elderly in Taiwan exercise more than young adults, with one in four silvers regularly participating in sports activities, according to a study by the country’s National Health Research Institute.
With the birth rate on the decline in Japan, Tokyo's Disneyland is targeting the country's fastest growing segment: silvers. On 1 March, Oriental Land Co., which operates Tokyo Disneyland and the adjacent DisneySea, launched a discounted annual pass for visitors above 60 years of age, a first for any of the world's Disneylands, reports news agency AFP. For 35,000 yen (about Rs 13,500), silvers can visit one of the parks as many times as they wish in a year—a 22 per cent discount on a regular pass. If they want to go to both parks, they will have to shell out 55,000 yen (about Rs 21,500), a 27 per cent cut. "We already see an increasing number of middle-age and senior couples in the parks," says Hiroshi Suzuki, spokesperson for Oriental Land. "As the country ages, we need to take measures addressed at senior visitors." Tokyo Disneyland, which was Disney's first theme park outside the US, marks its 25th anniversary this year, while Tokyo DisneySea opened in 2001.

PLAY TO WIN
Taking a cue from the city of Nuremberg in Germany, which opened a playground for pensioners last year ('Orbit', January 2007 issue), Manchester in the UK has opened an 'Older People's Play Area'. Like the Nuremberg park, this project was inspired by a study conducted at the Finnish University of Lapland in 2007, which showed that silvers experienced improvements in balance, coordination and speed after only three months of 'playing'. "You might say I'm being daft but it gives you a real buzz and afterwards you feel fantastic," Manchester resident Peggy Yuill, 74, told Reuters. "We can't believe how it has taken off." The park, which cost £15,000 (about Rs 1.2 million) to build, has six pieces of equipment that help to strengthen hips, tone legs and train the upper body, including a static cycling machine, another that mimics the workout given by skiing, and others that can be used by wheelchair users.
Elder abuse in Hong Kong: The number of cases of abuse of the elderly in Hong Kong rose 38 per cent in 2007, according to welfare group Against Elderly Abuse. There were 1,570 reported cases last year compared to 1,136 in 2006. Around one-third of them involved money matters, and one-fourth of the cases were classified as psychological abuse.

EVENT

PAINTING THE TOWN GREEN
On the evening of 21 March, 125 silvers—from senior citizens’ organisations, old age homes and Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, Mumbai—got together with college students to celebrate a ‘Green Holi’. The event was held at Rajni Patel Memorial Dada Dadi Park, Worli, in South Mumbai.

The silvers planted trees with the youth; enjoyed performances by singer Sonu Nigam and students from the Rotaract Club of H R College; and played holi—with flower petals. Dignitaries present included Mumbai Sheriff Indu Shahani (above left), former Maharashtra finance minister Jaywantiben Mehta; and former sheriffs F T Khorakiwala and Bakul Patel (above right). The event was a collaborative effort between the sheriff’s office and Harmony for Silvers Foundation, and was supported by the Rajni Patel Memorial Foundation and the Rotary Club of Mumbai.

TRENDS

MIDLIFE CRISIS
The term ‘midlife crisis’ is not just an overused figure of speech but living reality, insist researchers. A team from Warwick University in the UK and Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, USA, analysed data from 2 million people from over 70 nations and found a consistent pattern: happiness and depression follow a ‘U’ shape over a lifetime, with the happiest times being at the start and end of life. The peak age for depression was about 44 while pensioners experienced the same degree of happiness at 70 as at 20. What’s more, these results stayed consistent across different socioeconomic groups and countries, both developing and developed. “We believe the U-shaped effect stems from internal changes that are hard to explain,” says Professor Andrew Oswald from Warwick University in Social Science & Medicine Journal. He believes signs of midlife depression have no connection to external factors such as having young children in the house, divorce, or changes in jobs or income. “Some people do suffer more than others but in our data the average effect is large,” he adds. “It happens to men and women, single and married people, rich and poor, and to those with and without children. Nobody knows why we see this consistency.”
Art attack! New York City's Department for the Ageing, Department of Cultural Affairs and City Council have forged a $1 million partnership between cultural organisations and centres for the elderly. On offer will be programmes like storytelling, circus arts, horticulture, blues cabaret, jewellery design and cinema.

H RECOMMENDS

ACTION PLAN FOR APRIL

Chronicle your memories. Hunt down fellow alumni of your school or college and record the past. Take a cue from the alumni of Sacred Heart School in Church Park, Chennai, which will celebrate its centenary in January 2009. To commemorate the event, they are seeking out archival material and interviewing former students and teachers to compile the history of the institution. “We invite people to share anecdotes and photographs with us,” says Asha Rammoohan, president of the alumni association. “We require information for 1909-1927, as there is a dearth of records of this time. This would be of invaluable help in creating a lasting testimonial to the school we know and love.” You can contact the team at churchpark100@gmail.com

Stay on guard: Protect yourself against attackers by joining a self-defence class. For instance, The Ipswich Cane Work Club, a new club to teach pensioners how to fight off attackers with their walking sticks, was launched in Ipswich in the UK in February. “My aim is not to create a mob of grey-haired ninjas but to inspire confidence in the elderly to walk the streets without fear,” instructor and martial arts expert Kevin Garwood, 58, tells local newspaper The Evening Star. The first to sign up was Ronald Mulley, 76. “There are so many louts about and you never know when something could happen,” he says. “I thought it was important to protect myself.”
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
I retired as additional general manager from Gujarat State Fertilizers & Chemical Company (GSFC) in 2000, after a 34 year-long career. After retirement, I have been conducting seminars on stress management, anger management and longevity at various clubs, companies and senior citizens’ associations in Vadodara.

In 2006, one of my close friends died of kidney failure. His death made me realise how prohibitively expensive medical treatment can be in case of kidney failure. I wanted to do something more than just brood over the situation. I started meeting nephrologists and urologists to understand how the kidney works and read every book on kidney ailments and treatment—at least everything I could lay my hands on. For the past one-and-a-half years, I have focused on spreading kidney health awareness through various seminars in Vadodara and Surat. My focus is on early detection and prevention of kidney failure—mainly the anatomy of the kidney and the urinary track; the function of kidneys; kidney ailments; symptoms of imminent kidney failure; treatment options; expenses involved; and the simple steps we can follow to keep our kidneys healthy.

These seminars are done entirely free of charge. All I need from the institutions I approach is a laptop computer, an LCD screen and a projector to conduct my PowerPoint presentation. I encourage the audience to call me after the presentation to discuss any doubts or queries they may have. Most people are not aware that a brain-defunct person can donate his kidneys to someone who needs it. My mission in life is to make people more aware about kidney health. Soon, I intend to take my seminars to small villages and towns where awareness is even lower and people find dialysis and kidney transplantation out of their reach. It’s distressing to note that only 5-10 per cent of people who suffer from kidney failure are able to afford treatment—90 per cent of patients die without any treatment. Awareness is the only long-term solution.

I also feel that awareness will prevent kidney rackets and scams that are suddenly so rampant in our country. I am 65 years old and this is my mission now. Some people might say I am in my twilight zone. But I think life has just begun.

—Anil Popat, Vadodara

**BACKWATER BUZZ**

Kerala is a fantastic get-away-from-it-all treasure trove. It is my idea of a great vacation filled with relaxation, discovery, unspoiled vistas, adventure and good food. I visited this beautiful slice of paradise in December 2006.

The best way to experience Kerala is to take a ride in a kettuvallam (ketti: tied; vallam: boat), a houseboat made of local eco-friendly materials. It is ingeniously constructed without nails, with planks packed together with coconut husk and stitched with coir. My boat ride took me from Kollam to Alleppey, a distance of 86 km. Palm-fringed narrow canals wound through the vast expanse of paddy fields and the banks of the waterways were lined with tiled cottages set in gardens vibrant with bougainvillea, red bananas, pepper vines and coconut trees.

The houseboats had comfortable furnished bedrooms with toilets and a private balcony and kitchen. The crew included a chef and two oarsmen. The cuisine was of traditional Kerala flavour along with local fish. The people on the banks were very friendly and clapped, sang and waved as
our houseboat sailed past. Some children held out pens so I thought that they wanted to sell them; it turned out that they wanted me to give them pens just like the foreign tourists did. We saw women washing their clothes on stones, toddy tappers scampering up toddy trees, kids herding cows. Men dove into the water for prawns and shellfish as flocks of ducks swam around and tiny birds pranced overhead.

Our boatman even stopped to pluck coconuts from trees and served me fresh coconut water. I visited a farmer’s house—a self-sufficient family with coconut trees, jackfruit trees, paddy fields, hens and ducks on a small piece of land around their hut. Here, boats are used to ferry children to school and there was a salesman who came in a boat selling household goods, from utensils and buckets to onions, potatoes and groceries.

At night we dropped anchor in the middle of a side canal. I dined on the deck and watched the twinking lights of the village around me. I could also hear the splashing of the fish as they jumped in and out of the water. Indeed, the cruise was a memorable experience where I saw nature at its pristine best and life at its simplest.

—Nina Dinshaw, Pune

**ENCOUNTERS IN MEDITATION**

The most valuable lesson I ever received on the art of meditation was from my swimming instructor. I was only five years old when he taught me to float on the water, lying on my back. Though I remember being more than a little scared, I obeyed my instructor’s words and there I was, floating like a leaf on water! Thirty-five years later, when my meditation guru asked me to sit straight-backed and relax, I suddenly recollected the words of my swimming instructor: “Relax, leave your arms and legs loose, lie on my hands supporting your back... be like a baby in the lap of his mother.” Today at 79, I apply the same technique to release tension from my body through meditation.

When I first started learning to meditate, I realised that relaxation of the body is not as difficult as relaxation of the mind. My initial attempts in this direction stirred more tension in my body instead of releasing it. Later, with expert guidance from a meditation guru, I discovered that relaxing the mind is possible only by allowing our thoughts to run loose. I learnt not to control the mind; instead I sat still—a quiet witness—as my mind ran around like an untamed horse. When I witnessed the audiovisual being played inside my head, I finally accepted the idea of ‘I’ being separate from my mind. The experience of watching it objectively confirmed my identity as the owner of the mind—just like I own a book or my feet.

The next step was learning to watch my breath. It is surprising that the act of breathing, which keeps us alive, becomes alienated from our consciousness. The technique of concentrating on each breath is quite simple.

All I had to do was focus below my nostrils and ‘watch’ cold air being sucked in and warm air coming out. After practising breath observation for a couple of years, I found that my normal breathing rate of 15 breaths per minute dropped to a count of five in 15 minutes of meditation. Just watching my breath for a few minutes every day helps calm my mind. I have finally learnt to meditate without any conscious effort. Today I meditate not just to reduce stress but to transcend the mind, and thereby achieve the highest level of awareness of the ‘self’.

—Wing Cdr (Retd) S K Gorowala, Secunderabad

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Breathing easy: Gorowala

Memoirs of an idyllic vacation in God's own country: Dinshaw
Action men

A group of senior citizens in Srinagar is taking the initiative to improve quality of life in their state, says Wani Riyaz

Every Wednesday, about 70 people aged between 50 and 70 meet in the hall of a stuffy classroom in a school at Lal Chowk, in the heart of Srinagar. Together they condemn and complain. But the plaintive tenor of their meeting has nothing to do with their personal problems. Today, reputed satirist Zarif Ahmad Zarif, 62, is reading a story from a local newspaper on the polluted Dal Lake, Kashmir’s heritage water body. “Nothing is going to save the lake if we don’t act,” says Zarif to the ready nods of the group. Right away, the meeting swings into business, discussing the ills of society and ways to tackle them. And before the meeting is over, the group is ready with a plan of action.

Kashmir’s Senior Citizens’ Forum Against Social Evils was established in April 2006 by some of the city’s notable citizens—Zarif, journalist Imdad Saqi, former commissioner secretary in Jammu and Kashmir’s general administration department Qazi Muhammad Amin, retired principal and educationist Syed Qasim Qazmi, hotelier Bakshi Qayoom, broadcaster Abdur Rasheed Banday and medical practitioner Dr Zafar Mahdi. They were outraged at the rising levels of corruption and the plunder of the state’s natural resources. The immediate trigger, however, was the deplorable state of Dal Lake. “The shrinking lake prompted us to act,” says Zarif, president of the forum. “We think that by contributing our time and experience we can make a difference.”

After the group was established, its members embarked on a peaceful march to raise awareness about the deteriorating condition of the lake. The march,
They hired a shikarah and cleaned up the polluted Dal Lake

initially taken out by a group of 20 people, walked the Boulevard around the Dal with banners and placards bearing a simple yet powerful message: Save Dal.

The following week, armed with a concrete programme of action and more volunteers, the group launched its own cleaning drive. They pooled money, hired shikara and took a ride up the most polluted recesses of the lake. “We removed several kilos of polythene bags and glass bottles. We also cleaned some drains emptying into the lake. The sewerage had spilled on to the banks and was smelling foul,” says Muzamil Hussain Khan, a 55 year-old functionary of the forum. Khan is a contractor and is passionate about preserving the Valley’s environment.

The forum soon demanded a stake in the government’s drive to conserve Dal Lake. “We told

the authorities that as citizens we have a stake in our environment,” says Khan. “We demanded details of how the money meant for the lake was spent and why, despite millions of rupees being spent, Dal’s deteriorating condition had not improved.” Their exemplary work even inspired some German tourists to contribute their mite. Marc Strollreiter, who visited the Valley last year, was so shocked by the amount of garbage dumped into the lake that he hired around 50 workers and launched a clean-up drive.
While Dal continues to be the forum’s main concern, it has already moved on to take up larger environmental and social issues. “We are not a group of out-of-work old men trying to find some engagement,” says Khan. “Our forum comprises environmentalists, academicians and former bureaucrats—a rich pool of know-how.” The group is also working actively towards the development of Srinagar. Its main concerns are encroached footpaths, dilapidated roads, the ineffective transport system, dying water bodies, and unhygienic conditions in hospitals. Though the state has been moved for redressal of some of these problems (the relocation of Dal dwellers from the lake or the ongoing widening of the downtown city roads), the forum feels its primary job is to seek government intervention for pressing issues that concern citizens.

In June 2007, the forum took out a ‘lantern procession’ from Nehru Park to Lal Chowk, bringing to light the indifference of the government towards the city. “It got the people interested in issues that should concern them,” says Zarif. “As a result of the violence of the past two decades, people in Kashmir have stopped demanding a better deal. We aim to change this mindset.”

The forum hasn’t stopped at Dal. In its first meeting in December 2005 with Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, it brought to his notice the urgent need to remove encroachments from the banks of river Jhelum. “Jhelum’s banks have been vandalised by encroachers by raising concrete structures and growing popular for profit,” says Imdad Saqi, a senior journalist. “This has divested the river of its scenic splendour. What remains is a dingy, congested embankment.” He feels media has a primary obligation to highlight environmental degradation.

Though Azad’s predecessor Mufti Muhammad Sayeed had taken on the clean-up as a priority, it had not been followed up after Azad assumed office. Now, the state government has allocated Rs 250 million for the beautification of Jhelum’s embankment, out of which Rs 90 million has already been spent. “We don’t claim that the government reacts only to our appeal,” says Zarif. “We project the concerns of citizens who now want a more responsive government.”

What is unique about the forum is the resilience of its members. Most members have retired from government, yet they have been consistently active on many fronts. On 15 January, the forum underlined the need for a Green Movement in the Valley, urging the state government to make urban forestry a priority area. “It is time we compensate for our past wrongs by planting trees in a big way,” says Khan. With five parks for a population of 1.5 million, Srinagar is gasping for breathing space.

Even though the forum keeps diversifying its agenda, Zarif and his friends in action say their hands are not yet full. They plan to rope in more silvers from across the Valley and create a new social consciousness. “Our desire and ambition is to empower people across the state to fight for a better deal from the authorities,” says Khan. Meanwhile, the forum has also taken up the preservation of the endangered Chinar, Kashmir’s gigantic heritage tree, as the latest focus of its attention. “The number of the trees has halved from 40,000 in the 1970s to under 19,000 now,” says Khan. “That’s as alarming as tigers becoming extinct.”
Experience

A second childhood

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The lone ranger

The tiger stands on the brink of extinction in India, but tiger conservationist Valmik Thapar refuses to abandon hope, writes Rajashree Balaram

The meeting is scheduled for 10.30 am. I enter the gates of Valmik Thapar’s bungalow in Delhi’s posh Maharani Bagh area 10 minutes ahead of schedule and find Thapar prowling the driveway waiting to meet me. He is not over-eager; instead he looks like he can’t wait to get it over with. As I meet his fierce, intent gaze, I am reminded of all the adjectives the press has often used to describe Thapar: abrasive, combative, contentious and reclusive.

Thapar does not believe in small talk or trivial niceties—we start the interview two minutes after I greet him. His hefty frame is intimidating even when seated; his baritone feral even at its lowest pitch. Clad in casual shirt, trousers and chappal, the 55-year-old refuses to dress up for the photo shoot. After some coaxing, he shrugs into a black jacket.

As birdsong wafts across the lawns and two garden lizards stare down from the ceiling of the verandah, it occurs to me that
meeting Thapar is no less unnerving than facing the tiger. He admits he does not smile much. But after spending the past 33 years striving to save the tiger, Thapar finds little reason to be cheerful standing in the middle of the appalling wildlife scenario in India. From an estimated 40,000 tigers in the beginning of the 20th century, the tiger population in India has plunged to 1,411, as declared by the National Tiger Conservation Authority of India in February 2008.

Is the situation utterly hopeless? “If you had asked me the same question last year, I would have readily admitted to hopelessness and misery,” says Thapar. “But NDTV’s aggressive ‘Save the Tiger’ campaign followed by the finance minister’s recent announcement of a Rs 500 million grant to the National Tiger Conservation Authority makes me clinging to hope.” The bulk of the grant will be utilised to raise, arm and deploy a special Tiger Protection Force.

Slim silver lining apart, Thapar continues his crusade tirelessly. A day before meeting Harmony, he was at the Carl Zeiss Wildlife Conservation Awards where he discussed the magnitude of the wildlife crisis with Union Minister for Science and Technology Kapil Sibal—Thapar has been part of the awards’ jury for the past eight years. In April, he will be in Brussels to speak about tigers to select members of the European parliament, an event similar to the one in The Hague last year where he raised the decibels against China’s exploitation of tigers. Between talks, conferences and seminars, Thapar fires countless letters to heads of state urging for proactive measures to curb the crisis. Besides making recommendations to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on wildlife affairs, he is a member of several wildlife organisations and committees—National Board of Wildlife, International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Cat Specialist Group, Steering Committee for Determining Critical Wildlife Habitats under the Tribal Rights Act, and till last month the Central Empowered Committee instituted by the Supreme Court. (“I have been part of more than 150 federal and central wildlife committees so far.”) The irony of his situation doesn’t escape him though—though his wisdom on tigers makes him a much sought-after figure on almost every wildlife committee, his expert recommendations usually run into a hard wall of government indifference and sloth.

For over a decade now, Thapar has paced the corridors of power trying to convince prime ministers, chief ministers and bureaucrats about the urgency to save the tiger. He has walked away from countless meetings astounded by the bureaucratic morass, corruption and official apathy that block his mission. In his book The Last Tiger, Thapar has named two prime ministers who slept through a meeting convened with members of the forests and wildlife authorities.

In a way, he has grown up learning to steel himself against administrative lethargy. He was raised in the political thickets of Delhi; his mother Raj and father Romesh Thapar, both journalists, were close friends of Indira Gandhi. Such proximity to power circles afforded him a ringside view of the political circus very early in life. He had clear insights into how politics worked—or rather how it didn’t. In typical rebellion that has marked much of his life, he refused a cushy job with Shriram Chemicals after topping Delhi University in sociology. “I couldn’t imagine myself doing anything in the corporate world.” Still in search of that indefinable mission, he dabbled in photography, then went on to make several documentary films—many of which won national and international awards.

It was while filming one such documentary, Deep in the Jungles of Rajasthan, that he first came to Ranthambore Wildlife Reserve.

“In India, nature is like a bank with no guards outside to protect it”

A seemingly ordinary visit that changed his life and the way he viewed the world.

“I started spending more time at Ranthambore,” reminisces Thapar. “So much so, that my
parents wondered why I disappeared into the forest for two weeks every month!” What his parents didn’t know then was that their son had fallen under the hypnotic spell of arguably the most mesmerising animal on the planet. One night, sitting besides a campfire in Ranthambore, Thapar heard the fear-stricken calls of deer and other wildlife signalling the presence of the amber-eyed predator nearby. The split second in which he caught a fleeting glimpse of the tiger rustling through the grass forged an irrevocable bond between man and beast. “I felt connected... as if this was the unknown that I was seeking all my life,” says Thapar, the awe of that moment still echoing in his voice.

Soon, the spartan rest house in Ranthambore became Thapar’s second home. His jeep became a permanent fixture in the reserve’s deciduous forests and grassland. He spent long backbreaking hours studying pug marks, observing and making notes on tiger behaviour, and analysing predator-prey equations. As he started following the tail of the tiger, he phased out filmmaking and turned to writing. Over the years, he has written 14 books on the tiger and also hosted BBC’s famous television series *Land of the Tiger*, which earned him worldwide recognition. His books lovingly document his experiences with the magnificent animal that for centuries has been an icon of virility and power throughout Asia. Thapar remembers nights when he along with his ‘tiger guru’ Fateh Singh Rathore, then park director of Ranthambore, walked the jungles with jingling cowbells to entice the nocturnal creature out of the shadows. When asked if he has been in any potentially life-threatening situations with the tiger, he retorts, “I find crossing the busy Ashram Road in Delhi far more dangerous than walking in the jungles with the tiger.”

In the 1980s, with the hunting ban in place, tiger sightings became more common. “I used to come across as many as 16 tigers a day,” says Thapar. His eyes light up as he talks about Genghis, a male tiger, who disliked being watched while he ate, and Nasty, a tigress, who hid in the grass and issued a rip-roaring mock growl every time a jeep passed by. The object of his affection was elusive through much of the 1970s, though. Thapar had to wait five years before he saw a tiger at the watering hole in Ranthambore in 1981. The animal had every reason to be wary — rampant...
poaching and encroachment of its habitat made it shun the company of man. There were many villages within the forests that depended on forest produce and wildlife for sustenance. After realising that one of the chief threats to the survival of the tiger unborn child of India. Where is he going to get water from? More than 600 rivers and perennial streams flow out of the tigers’ forests. If we do nothing to protect the forests, 100 million people are going to suffer from lack of water.”

“In India, wildlife trade is the second largest illegal trade after narcotics”

was human invasion of the reserves, Thapar struggled to convince villagers to relocate to the outer periphery.

“In a country where 25 million people are added to the population each year, land is the most precious commodity. And where does this land come from?” thunders Thapar. “Naturally everybody feels it’s alright to squeeze out the forest land. No one stops to think about the Thapar is aghast that a country that is endowed with forest value worth up to $2 trillion is so indifferent to preserving its natural wealth. We are losing more than 10,000 sq km—roughly worth $12 billion of dense forests—to the timber and land mafia every year. “In India, nature is like a bank with no guards outside to protect it. Over the years, our political leadership and inept bureaucracy have allowed such exploitation of our natural treasury that everybody has gone away with their pockets filled.” He minces no words when he says that the policies—which offer business interests the freedom to plunder the forests at will—are as much to blame as the timber mafia or poachers. “It is ironic that Indian tycoons fly their personal jets to Africa to enjoy a vacation in Masai Mara, but feel no corporate responsibility towards preserving the wildlife in their own homeland.”

In an effort to keep human habitation inside the forest at bay, he started the Ranthambore Foundation in 1987. The foundation launched many welfare initiatives to improve the lives of the villagers: a women’s cooperative to generate income through local handicrafts; free immunisation programmes; family planning drive; literacy programmes; and a pilot project to grow fodder for cattle to reduce grazing inside the park. Biogas generators were also set up to produce gas from cattle dung, so villagers needn’t risk foraging for firewood in tiger turf. “I had the idealistic hope that I could work with local people to save the tiger,” says Thapar with a sigh. Today, he is bereft of that idealism after discovering the strength of the government’s monopoly over the forests and disillusioned by forest dwellers who collude with the timber mafia to get a higher foothold on the economic ladder.

Thapar concluded his role in Ranthambore Foundation in 2000. Earlier, in 1992, when Ranthambore was in the eye of a poaching...
Caught in his study with one of his rare smiles

2000, when he drove to Khaga in Uttar Pradesh, where border police had seized wildlife contraband heading to China through Nepal. “There were 546 leopard skins and 40 tiger skins wrapped in New Delhi newspapers,” growls Thapar. That night when he hit the bed, tough-as-nails Thapar couldn’t stop the tears from flowing. His passion for the animal runs deep. As P K Sen, executive director of Ranthambore Foundation, describes it, “I have yet to meet a man who is more obsessed with the tiger. Valmik lives, breathes, thinks... the tiger.”

When Thapar sounded the warning alarm on the current tiger crisis two years ago, most state governments chose to defend fudged tiger counts to save their pride. “Despite the Sariska tragedy we have not learnt our lesson,” he rues. “Today there are only three male tigers in the Panna Wildlife Reserve in Madhya Pradesh, but the state government insists there are 23!” Sen admires Thapar’s fearless nature. “He is completely unafraid of expressing his fiery views regardless of the power and position of the person he is talking to.”

It’s impossible to sit with Thapar and not be singed by the passion he feels for his cause. “Valmik, with his sheer intensity, is truly the uncompromising voice of the tiger,” says close friend and renowned wildlife researcher Ullas Karanth. “As a science-based tiger conservationist, I find him a bit too impulsive in his actions. He could accomplish

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Cover feature

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Crisis, he was forced into the terrain of government decision-making when then minister for environment and forests Kamal Nath inducted him into the steering committee of Project Tiger, a wildlife conservation project initiated in 1972 by former prime minister Indira Gandhi, who was a passionate wildlife and environment enthusiast.

Part of the blame, he believes, is also because forest guards in India are vastly unequipped. As poachers stalk through the wilds, Thapar feels it is imperative that government empowers guards with more than just a bamboo staff. He points to the Masai Mara wildlife reserve in Kenya—an exemplary model for wildlife reserves around the world that earns Rs 24 billion a year as gate fee alone—where forest guards have shoot-at-sight orders when they confront a poacher. He still remembers vividly the night in

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even more for the tigers he cares so deeply about if only he could be a bit more reflective.”

The vitriol Thapar spews at the administration is not borne out of raging idealism alone; he is frustrated with the lack of action being taken despite the perilous situation that we are in. In 1994, he had submitted a report to the government in which he had suggested establishing a Wildlife Crime Bureau. After extended hemming and hawing, the bureau was set up in 2007, but no one has been hired to lead it yet. “In India, wildlife trade is the second largest illegal trade after narcotics and yet we have found no one to man the Wildlife Crime Bureau. Is there any excuse for such lethargy and idiocy?” While I write this, there is a tannery in Khaga that is curing and tanning leopard skins, right opposite a police station; a restaurant in China serving tiger bone soup; and a bottle of tiger bone pills being sold for Rs 1 million in Japan. Most of them, of course, derived from tigers smuggled from India.

As we talk, Thapar’s five-year-old son Hamir—named after a 13th century Rajput king of Ranthambore—peeps in through the glass door trying to seek his attention. As father and son share a smile, I can see the fire in those blazing eyes softening to a warm glow. I ask Thapar how it feels to be a father so late in life—he became a father at 50. He smiles. “Physically it’s very demanding keeping pace with such a young child. But at the same time, I am learning so much at this age.” As Hamir loves swimming, Thapar has now learned to snorkel so they can explore underwater reefs together. Thapar is married to Sanjna Kapoor, 40, daughter of actor Shashi Kapoor and director of Prithvi Theatre, Mumbai. They met when she interviewed him on the television show Amul India Show in 1998, around the same time he had won acclaim for hosting the BBC television series, Land of the Tiger.

Akin to the jungle cat protecting its cubs, Thapar is fiercely protective of his personal life. I have been tersely warned well in advance to keep out intrusive personal questions. Yet, this is the closest I’ll ever get to provoking a tiger, so I venture anyway. How has life changed after marrying so late? He mulls over the question for a moment and then answers softly, “I am known to be the roughest guy who walked this earth. Probably if marriage and fatherhood hadn’t happened when it did, I would have been more reclusive and more abrasive…. Fatherhood, particularly, mellows you down.” Watching Hamir grow up brings him the same joy he felt watching a young cub grow into a tiger. He admits he no longer has the freedom to disappear in the jungles whenever he desires, but he is happy to plan his expeditions around Hamir’s school vacation. “I think I am lucky. Tell me how many people get to discover fatherhood at 50?”

There are more firsts to come. Thapar plans to collaborate with an art historian on a book that explores the symbolism of tiger in Indian art. By the end of this year, he will be in UK as part of the jury of the Wildscreen Festival, the world’s largest festival on wildlife and environmental films. Today, he sees himself as a semi-retired campaigner keen to talk to young people who are contemplating a career in wildlife. He urges the younger generation to take up a more active role in protecting the wildlife—“Today’s youth do not want to get their feet dirty in the jungles; they are far too busy escaping to foreign universities.”

As the interview comes to an end and we enter his study for a brief—and for him, reluctant—photoshoot I realize that the tiger indeed follows Thapar everywhere. The shelves are lined with countless books on wildlife; the rugs have tiger motifs; and black-and-white photographs of tigers adorn the bookshelf. I fire one last question at the tiger man: if he had another chance to do it all over again, would he still do so

“Tell me how many people get to discover fatherhood at 50?”

knowing that there may be no light at the end of the tunnel? “If I had a chance to see the tigers that I did,” he says, “and walk the same jungles that the magnificent beasts did, I would do it again and again—and again.”
When I was in medical school, I witnessed a shocking incident where a patient was given milk through an intravenous line while an injection of saline was given through a tube in his stomach. Of course, the nurse who was responsible for this act of ignorance got the prescription order reversed in her mind. This is one of many common cases of medication errors. Nearly one-third of drug side effects are because of prescription errors, if studies are to be believed.

**WHO IS AFFECTED?**

It is a matter of interest and concern that 50 per cent of prescription errors affect the elderly. This occurs because this group is liable to be taking several drugs together, increasing the chances of error. Elderly people also tend to forget whether they actually took the morning’s dose or not, for example. It has been estimated that medication errors account for injuries to 1.5 million people annually in the US, costing about $3.5 billion to the economy. (No similar study has been conducted in India.)

**ERROR REPORT**

Among drugs that need specific red-alert labelling are (to name only a few) anaesthetic drugs, oral anti-diabetic meds and insulin, and drugs that affect blood pressure and heart rate. These medicines must be given after verifying that the correct
prescription is being referred to for the correct patient. The patient may even be dispensed the wrong drug by the chemist. How could this happen? Drug strips may look alike or their names may sound alike. Even if they don’t, the doctor’s handwritten prescription often has the ability to create optical illusions. The results could be fatal.

Some years ago, in a government hospital a physician had prescribed a patient Injection Metronidazole (a common drug used for serious anaerobic or amoeba infections) 500 mg thrice a day. The nurse read it as 50 ml. Each 100 ml bottle contains 500 mg. The patient received five bottles thrice a day instead of three in the whole day! More serious are cases where the name of the drug is misunderstood. For the treatment of fungal infection, a dermatologist prescribed Flucon, an antifungal ointment. The patient took Fludac, an antidepressant. In fact, the idea of eliminating the handwritten prescription altogether is gaining currency to cut down on such errors.

Some people also make the mistake of crushing tablets (like sustained-release forms of sedatives and anti-allergic medicines) that may cause severe drowsiness. In fact, a recent US report says that many Americans break capsules into two to rationalise drug costs!

It is a matter of concern that 50 per cent of prescription errors affect the elderly.

**MAKING DRUGS SAFER FOR USE**

**Barcode labelling:** Imagine the following scenario in a US hospital. When patients enter the hospital, they get a barcoded identification wristband that can transmit information to the hospital’s computer. Nurses have laptop computers and scanners on top of medication carts that they bring to patients’ rooms. Nurses use scanners to scan the patient’s wristband and the medications to be given.

Barcodes provide unique, identifying information about drugs given at the patient’s bed-side. If there is any error in the name or the drug, a warning pops up and alerts the nurse. This system has reduced errors by 86 per cent in the recent past.

**Drug nomenclature:** In order to prevent confusion with names, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has decided to scrutinise drugs with similar-sounding names. It sends letters to doctors warning them about these drugs. In some cases, it has even forced changes in the name of drugs. For instance, it forced a company to change the name of its drug from Levoxine (for thyroid disease) to Levoxyl because the former name was too close to Lanoxin, a drug for heart failure.

**Drug labelling:** Statutory labels in the packages of medicines are too inconvenient for doctors to use, and efforts are being made to make these more user-friendly. In addition, a free online system of drug information is available to physicians in the US.

**CLOSER HOME**

In India, the scene is chaotic. It is quite common for the patient to pop over-the-counter medicines prescribed by a shopkeeper rather than going to the doctor. Often the man behind the counter starts considering himself as a doctor, and believing in his own experience a bit more than optimism would warrant. These over-the-counter prescriptions are dangerous. Till such practices are stopped, there is no point in thinking along the lines of American technology-based error reduction. The latter would work in a corporate hospital, not in a community scenario.

Another bane in our country is the fact that many patients and pharmacists are barely literate. Quite often, they are left to understand the doctor’s prescription themselves.

**HELP YOURSELF**

Know the generic name of the drug along with the brand name.

Also, tell your doctor about any pills you may be taking, whether they are for constipation or insomnia. Drugs interact with each other and tend to have unseen effects on the other.

If in doubt, always ask your caregiver about the drugs. This simple act could save you from untold complications.

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*Dr B Ramana is an advanced laparoscopic surgeon at Wockhardt Hospital, Kolkata; Website: www.bramana.com; Blog: http://rambodoc.wordpress.com*
Sexual concerns

Dr D Narayana Reddy answers questions on erectile dysfunction

Q How common is erectile dysfunction in men over 55, especially after they have had prostate cancer surgery?

A Compared to younger men, erectile dysfunction (ED) is quite common in men over 50. While psychological factors are the likely culprits in younger men, physical factors are responsible for ED in the elderly. Prostate cancer surgery can result in ED owing to damage to nerves during surgery. Apart from this, the debilitating effects of cancer can also contribute to ED.

Q Does age have something to do with erectile dysfunction? Should I visit a psychologist, urologist or a sexologist?

A Age definitely plays a crucial role in ED. As we age, our blood vessels thicken, reducing the quantity of blood flowing into any organ, including the genitals. The endothelium (inner lining of the blood vessels) loses its elasticity and becomes brittle. This allows blood cells to stagnate and a thrombus (blood clot) can be formed obstructing blood flow either partially or completely.

Ageing also affects our nervous system and reduces our perception to sensations like touch. The muscle tone in an older man becomes lax and getting a firm erection becomes difficult. However, we must remember that ageing does not completely rob us of sexual function; it only slows it down. If you suffer from ED, consult a sexologist. If no sexologist is available in your area, consult your family physician. He may be able to decide whether you need the help of a doctor or a psychologist.

Q Viagra is being hailed as a wonder drug. What is it exactly? And how does it work?

A Viagra is the brand name of the chemical compound sildenafil citrate. It is easy to use (it is taken orally) and highly effective. It need not be taken regularly but only when required (approximately one hour before planned sexual intercourse). Sildenafil citrate dilates blood vessels and tissue spaces in the penis. This allows more blood to pool in the penile tissues. Viagra also allows blood to stay in the penile tissues for a longer duration.

Dr D Narayana Reddy is consultant (sexual medicine); a certified supervisor of sex therapy; chairperson of Council of Sex Education and Parenthood International; president of Indian Andropause Society and adjunct professor of Reproductive Endocrinology and Sexual Medicine at University of Madras
Chlorella – A Whole Food

For the first 5,000 years of civilization, humans relied on foods and herbs for medicine. Only in the past 50 years have we forgotten our medicinal ‘roots’ in favor of patent medicines. While pharmaceuticals have their value, we should not forget the healing properties of whole foods. Nature, in her infinite wisdom, does not produce isolated nutrients, and for good reason. Vitamins and minerals cannot act as nutrients by themselves. They must be coupled with other food constituents for the body to recognize and utilize them. Isolated and synthetic nutrients are foreign to the body, completely unnatural, poorly absorbed, offer incomplete results, imbalance body chemistry, deplete the body of co-factor nutrients, and usually have significant toxicities. Therefore it is better to consume WHOLE FOODS.

The nutrients found in these whole foods are not isolated. They are highly complex structures that occur in combination with enzymes, coenzymes, trace elements, activators and other unknown or undiscovered factors working synergistically to enable the nutrient complex to do their job in our body. One such whole food is CHLORELLA.

Chlorella is an emerald green, single-celled freshwater micro-algae widely recognized as one of the most potent nutritional whole foods on Planet Earth. Chlorella gets its name from its high content of chlorophyll (the highest of any known plant). One reason chlorella has stood the test of time is its strong cell walls, which provide a useful armour. It is the cell walls together with the chlorophyll content of chlorella that have a detoxification effect in the body. Unfortunately the tough cell walls also make chlorella hard for humans to digest. In 1970s, Sun Chlorella, a Japanese firm devised a means of breaking down the cell walls without removing them from the product (Patented Dyno®-Mill pulverization technology), as the cell walls are an important source of nutrients too.

Chlorella pyrenoidosa contains a water-soluble substance, Chlorella Growth Factor (CGF). It is a nucleotide-peptide complex present in the nucleus of the Chlorella cell. CGF is named for its growth-stimulating properties. It is an amalgam of RNA, DNA, amino acids, vitamins and minerals whose exact properties have not been identified yet. It is central to Chlorella’s amazing ability to heal the human body. In children it promotes rapid growth; in adults, it builds immune systems while promoting rapid tissue healing, both internally and externally. CGF has been shown to stimulate healthy cell growth and turnover at rapid rates, which can slow aging and encourage healing.

Chlorella is one of nature’s finest foods, containing a rich variety of amino acids (protein), enzymes, vitamins, minerals and carbohydrates. In fact, it is thought to contain every nutrient required by the human body. Chlorella is the most abundant source of chlorophyll. It has been shown to be effective in detoxifying the blood and provides magnesium for the heart to function well.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF CHLORELLA
Chlorella has been shown to be useful in:

- Strengthening immune system
- Accelerating healing of wounds, injuries and ulcers
- Normalizing digestion
- Tissue growth and repair
- Retarding aging
- Protecting against radiation
- Serving as a nutrient dense food
- Protein and Nucleotides
- Detoxification of chemicals and heavy metals
- Anti-inflammatory
- Growth of Probiotics
- Fighting cancer

Chlorella has the tremendous ability to detoxify, energize, nourish and ultimately balance all the body’s systems for optimal function. In Japan, an estimated 5 million people consume Chlorella daily as a curative measure, while in the US an equal number of people consume Chlorella for good health and fitness.

More information about Chlorella can be obtained from the website www.chlorella-india.com or M/s. Chlorella India Naturals, Mumbai; Tel: 022-25276725/6; Fax: 022-25230234; Email:chlorellaindia@gmail.com

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The second chance

Somasree Roy bounced back from cancer with a stronger purpose and now helps people who have given up all hope on life, writes Ruma Dasgupta

Somasree Roy was always an exuberant multitasker. Everyone admired the ease with which she switched from no-nonsense efficiency to homespun warmth. On one hand, she was handling a hectic job as the senior administrative and public relations manager in a busy hospital in Kolkata. On the other, she was the indulgent homemaker—staying up late to warm up her husband’s dinner when he returned from work, and ensuring there were no stray bones in the fish that she served her 21-year-old son Neel. Roy approached both roles with unswerving dedication and a sunshine smile.

In July 2000, Roy felt a shooting pain in her breast. Her doctor attributed it to hormonal disturbance peculiar to middle age and put her on hormonal therapy. Three months later, when the skin on her breast showed a distinct change, she decided to go in for further diagnosis. “Though there was no palpable lump, the skin had hardened a bit and resembled a porous orange peel,” recalls Roy, now 55. On her husband’s insistence, she went in for a mammogram and fine needle aspiration test—the diagnosis confirmed the worst.

In October 2000, with her composure intact, Roy told her family that she had advanced breast cancer and was scheduled for a mastectomy. “It’s happening to so many people,” she told her

Where empathy runs deep: Roy offers solace to a silver at the hospice
distracted husband Próbir. ”Why are you so shocked that it has happened to me?” Just before she was wheeled into the operation theatre, she told her friends that she had already placed an order for a wig and wanted it firmly in place even before post-operative chemotherapy so subsequent hair loss would not be noticed. A fortnight later, when she was discharged from the hospital with one breast removed and her left arm swollen owing to fluid retention, doctors grimly predicted she would not live more than a year.

Roy, however, refused to accept defeat. At the end of the month following her surgery, she was back at work in full swing. To prevent her illness from interfering with her workload, she carefully fixed appointments for her chemotherapy sessions on cancer survivor though. To make her second chance at life more meaningful, she decided to tend to people who were terminally ill, including silvers who were neglected and abandoned by their families.

In February 2002, Roy hired a nurse from the hospital where she worked and started Somasree’s Hospice from a tiny rented apartment in Modern Park, Santoshpur, in central Kolkata. To raise funds, she organised a rock music concert with local band Bhoomi—her husband being a producer of television serials, his celebrity network came in handy. The proceeds from the concert helped build a small kitty to provide for the initial essentials. She roped in physicians and surgeons who had put her back on her feet to

On birthdays, Roy arrives with cakes and gifts and hosts a special dinner

Saturdays. With medical assistance from her hospital and the love and motivation of family and friends, Roy battled cancer over the next 12 months in characteristic defiance. She kept her nails manicured, went for a brisk morning walk to shed excess flab, and refused to let her son brood over the crisis. Though the prosthesis nearly suffocated her and the constant postoperative pain and relentless nausea threw her off kilter at times, nothing could keep her away from the multiplex on Saturday evenings or from her kitchen on special occasions. Her hair grew back and she even received a salary increment at work. Roy did not want to be just another offer free consultation. Seeing her enthusiasm, friends and relatives started volunteering time and donating money.

Though she had conquered cancer, Roy had to fight social prejudice. Within weeks of opening the hospice, locals in the area refused to tolerate a ‘home’ that tended to people afflicted with cancer, tuberculosis and leprosy in their midst. They forced her to close down her fledgling shelter on the pretext that all such diseases were contagious. Roy was astounded by the utter irrationality of it all. However, it was not long before she found an alternative location further away from the city, in Narendrapur.

Word spread and those in need found their way to the hospice. Lekha Das, 62, was brought in 2004 with a broken hipbone by volunteers. She was mentally imbalanced after being beaten up by her husband. Malati Biswas, 65, came in 2004 from a hospital where her sons had admitted her with a broken femur—they never showed up to take her home. Jayanti Chakraborty’s daughter was burnt by her in-laws; unable to deal with the tragedy, her husband committed suicide. Numbed by the twin trauma, Chakraborty, 67, lost the ability to walk and was admitted into Somasree’s Hospice. To Laxmi Narayan Das, Roy is “Ma” and “the most beautiful woman in the world”. Nearly 80, Das has a pacemaker that has been replaced many times over the years. At the hospice, these lonely silvers found another chance at life, much like Roy who found hers after conquering cancer.

The hospice is simply furnished with inexpensive curtains, plastic flower vases and fluorescent lights. “I avoid clinical whites and plush furnishings as I want

Though there is no miracle cure for breast cancer, the following steps can help prevent it:

- Maintain a healthy body weight; weight gain in mid-life has been shown to increase risk of postmenopausal cancer
- Avoid alcohol
- Have as many fruits, vegetables and nuts as possible
- Exercise regularly
- Include soy in your regular diet
- Always keep a positive outlook
them to feel at home,” explains Roy. The passage that connects the women’s dormitory with the men’s area is lined with images of gods. In the evening, as an attendant lights incense sticks for the daily puja, the women gather around the TV just like in any Indian household. They keep Roy posted on the latest plot developments in TV soaps; in return she regales them with office gossip.

All silvers at the hospice are taken for regular medical check-ups and a doctor is readily available during emergencies. On birthdays, Roy arrives with gifts and hosts a special dinner for everyone. She refuses to allow silvers at the hospice to work, even if it is to make pickles or knit woollens. Instead, she organises sponsored health camps and uses the money earned to offer her newfound family a better life. Roy is struggling for funds and often pleads with individuals and companies for donations. Frequently, she even donates a large part of her salary to the hospice.

Still under oral medication, Roy refuses to agonise over the past. As long as the expenses for the hospice are met and she can cook great meals for her family and catch a movie every week, she considers her life well-lived.

For more information on breast cancer, contact:

Cancer Patients Aid Association 5, Malhotra House, Opposite GPO, Mumbai-1. Tel: 022-22698964, 2269 3790

Indian Cancer Society Q-5A, Jangpura Extension, New Delhi-14. Tel: 011-24311010

Indian Cancer Society 6 G, Elgin Road, Kolkata-20. Tel: 033-22476674

Indian Cancer Society Lady Ratan Tata Medical & Research Centre, M Karve Road, Cooperage, Mumbai-21. Tel: 022-22029941, 22029942

KNOW YOUR BODY
Breast cancer is the primary cause of death in women aged 40 to 55. Statistics reveal that one out of eight women who live to be 85 develops breast cancer. Examine your breasts regularly to detect any abnormal changes. Look for:
- Any new lump, which may or may not be painful or sensitive
- Unusual thickening of the skin
- Sticky discharge from the nipples
- Puckering or dimpling
- Unusual increase in the size of one breast or one breast lower than the other

SELF EXAMINATION
Stand in front of a mirror, arms at your side. Inspect your breasts facing forward and turning from side to side. Look for signs of dimpling, puckering and change in size, shape or symmetry. Check if your nipples are turned or inverted. Look for the same signs with your hand on your hips and chest muscles flexed, and with your hands raised behind your head and palms pressed together. Lie down with a pillow under your left shoulder. Put your left hand behind your head and feel your left breast with the pads of the three middle fingers of your right hand. Start at the outer edge and work around your breast in circles, getting closer to your nipple. Gently squeeze your nipple to check for any discharge. Repeat the procedure for your right breast with a pillow under your right shoulder. Consult your doctor immediately if you find any abnormality. Often it may only prove to be fluid-filled cysts. Yet early detection is the key to beating cancer.
"Your Beacon in Old Age"

Highlights of Bhubaneswar Project
- Dignified and independent post retired life
- Social interaction and community living
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- 24 hours ambulance service
- Hospitals tie ups
- Taxi and doctors on call
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- Meditation cum yoga centre
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Bangalore: Village Madanayakanahalli, Post Madavara, Off. Tumkur Road, Bangalore North-562 123, Tel:080-23716574.
Mushrooms on the table

Dr Pushpesh Pant caters to the popular palate

Mushrooms are not just a much sought-after part of Continental cooking. Indian chefs have long broken that myth with mouth-watering dishes like mushroom mattr (peas), mushroom keena and mushroom kebab. Now snack on your favourite mushrooms by making non-stick tikki and wash it down with lassi. Healthy and light!

LASSI
MASALEWALI

Preparation time: 20 minutes
Serves: 4

INGREDIENTS

- Curd: 2 cups
- Water: 1 cup
- Fresh green chillies: 2 finely chopped
- Dried ginger powder: 1 tsp
- Cumin powder: 1/2 tsp
- Black pepper powder: 1/4 tsp
- A small pinch of rock salt
- Salted shelled pistachio and honey roasted almonds: 1 tbsp each
- A large pinch of dried mint leaves (crumbled)
- A sprig of green coriander
- Rose petals, to garnish

METHOD

Grind all the spices into a fine powder. Whisk the curd and water till well blended. Add powdered spices along with rock salt. Pour the drink into individual tall glasses and garnish with a sprig of fresh coriander and dried crumbled mint leaves. Want to add some more pizzazz? Top up with salted pistachio slivers and honey-roasted almonds to enrich the beverage.
KHUMB KI TIKKI

Preparation time: 15 minutes  
Cooking time: 45 minutes  
Serves: 4

INGREDIENTS
- Button mushrooms: 100 gm; cleaned well and chopped  
- Onion: 1; small, peeled and chopped coarsely  
- Carrot: 1; small, washed, scraped and chopped coarsely  
- Cauliflower florets: 100 gm; washed and chopped coarsely  
- Peanuts: 25 gm  
- Yeast extract: 1 tsp  
- Breadcrumbs: 150 gm  
- Green coriander: 1 tbsp; chopped  
- Breadcrumbs or oatmeal for shaping

METHOD
Cook the mushrooms in a non-stick pan without any oil. Keep stirring briskly for about 10 minutes till the moisture evaporates from the mushrooms. Process the onions, vegetables and nuts in a blender till they bind together and form a thick mixture. Stir in the breadcrumbs and oatmeal, shape into balls and flatten as tikki. Coat each ball with breadcrumbs and cook the tikki on a non-stick frying pan in batches and serve with onion rings and cherry tomatoes.
Rev up

Yoga helps treat chronic fatigue, says Shameem Akthar

A lthough chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is now accepted as a medical problem, it is not taken too seriously as it is often clubbed with other psychosomatic ailments. Caregivers tend to treat it as a mentally created problem that will subside once the external stressor is removed.

However, as CFS expresses itself through anaemia, impaired immunity and non-localised pain, it must be treated with the same urgency accorded to other chronic ailments. It can also cause sleeplessness or sleep deficit where you may have slept at night but wake up feeling tired; irritation and over-reactivity; depression; low libido; impotence; and a propensity to addiction. Research suggests that even extreme boredom can trigger CFS—a certain amount of ‘eustress’ (pleasant or curative stress) is needed for the well-being of any organism.

Yoga understands where and when the mind transmutes these emotional issues into biological symptoms. Even if the body is rested, subconscious anxiety creates biochemical reactions that send signals of extreme tiredness throughout the body in a bid to force the organism into resting. Consequently, we continue to suffer the undercurrent of anxiety that keeps them in a mode of extreme tiredness. There are three types of asana used to treat CFS. The first comprises downward-facing poses where the flow of blood to the head and heart helps rejuvenate both. The second set of poses includes chest openers that boost immunity. They also uplift us emotionally. Finally, the third set consists of rejuvenating poses that help heal the body-mind complex.

Inversions include the headstand (sirsasana), psychic union pose (viparita karani mudra), downward-facing dog (adhomukha svanasana), downward-facing, hare (shashankasana), forward bend (adhomukha paschimottanasana) and spread-legged forward bend (prasarita padottanasana). Chest-openers like the camel pose (ushttrasana) and lying thunderbolt (supta vajrasana) work on the immune gland, thymus. The improved breath capacity also helps remove lethargy. Finally, the restful set of poses includes the lying leg lock (supta baddhakonasana), wide-legged angle pose (upavista konasana), and butterfly (titital). These poses are therapeutic for practically every ailment and remove stress-induced stiffness. In addition, the rejuvenating breathing exercise (pranayama) called ujjayi can be practised any time during the day. It can also be done in any position, unlike other pranayama that can only be done seated. Practising ujjayi while walking or doing other exercise can also have a recuperative impact.

**Yogic moves**

**Wide-legged angle pose**

*(upavista konasana)*

Sit up straight, both legs touching. Ensure back is erect. If you have respiratory problems, sit on a folded towel or thin cushion to accommodate deeper breathing. Spread out legs as wide as you can comfortably. Initially, don’t spread the legs too wide. The width must be increased with regular and daily practice. Place hands on the thigh or on the floor on either side of the thighs. Close your eyes, relaxing in this pose for a minute or so.

**Benefits:** Because of its impact on the uro-genital system, it causes emotional upliftment and defuses stress. It also corrects spinal defects, especially lower back problems; improves breath capacity; tones the legs; and induces a meditative and calm temper.

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)
Uttarakhand Tourism and Parmarth Niketan Ashram, Rishikesh—in association with Patanjali Yog Peeth and Shantikunj Ashram, Haridwar—organised the International Yoga Festival from 1 to 7 March 2008. Inaugurated by Honorable Chief Minister of Uttarakhand Shri B C Khanduriji and Honorable Tourism Minister Shri Prakash Pantji, it was held at Parmarth Ashram.

An annual feature since 1999, the Yoga Festival is growing and expanding each year. This year’s festival was the largest and was attended by 500 delegates from 32 countries, including Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Romania, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, UK and USA.

During the one-week festival, participants familiarised themselves with the nuances of Kundalini Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Meditation, Pranayama, Kriya Yoga, Yoga Nidra, Nada Yoga, Reiki, and much more. Add to this the special cultural events organised by Uttarakhand Tourism every evening and the experience was holistic.

The participants were also blessed with the presence, satsang and divine words of saints and spiritual masters, including H H Pujya Sri Shankaracharyaji, Bhanpura Peeth, Swami Divyanand Teerthji, H H Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji, H H Pujya Swami Ramdevji, H H Acharya Balkrishanji and H H Pujya Swami Vishwanandaji.

The concluding ceremony was performed by Governor of Uttarakhand Honorable Shri B L Joshiji on 7 March 2008.
What is 60?

The number of push-ups you have to do this week.
The number of movies you have to catch up on.
The number of bad jokes you cracked last month.
The number of times you told your grandson
to get away from the TV set and get a life.
The number of places you have to travel to.
What it’s not, is your age.
At least not in your head.
Or in your heart.
If you're above fifty five, we believe Harmony is just the magazine for you. Filled with human interest stories, exciting features and columns, Harmony encourages you to do just one thing: live young.
SMS FOR BLOOD
In grave emergencies, blood can save life. However, looking for
volunteers to fill the need can be difficult. Now, help is at hand
with volunteers only an SMS away. Launched to act as a link
between donors and recipients, IndianBloodDonors.com—an
e-social service venture by Nagpur-based Khushroo Poacha
has now ‘mobile-enabled’ its helpline. If you need blood,
just SMS Blood<Space>Your City STD Code<Space>Blood
Group<Space>Your Name to 5676775 (For example, Blood 022
B positive Khushroo). Following this, you will receive an SMS
with the name and contact details of one voluntary donor.
If you need another donor, SMS again. The service is free of cost.
If you wish to donate blood, SMS Donor<Space>Your City STD
Code<Space>Blood Group<Space>Your Name to 5676775. The
website, functional since March 2000, boasts of contact information
of over 45,000 registered donors from across the country. With the
Internet still not accessible to the masses, the mobile service is
expected to reach a larger, yet untapped section of society.

LISTEN WITHOUT PREJUDICE
Do you hear voices that comfort you in the face of
difficulty or instruct you to act in a certain manner?
You could be experiencing ‘auditory hallucinations’. Many therapists feel that the anti-psychotic
medication often used to treat the condition fails to
relieve stress. UK-based Hearing Voices Network
(HVN) is working towards a different approach to
treat this condition. Psychiatrist Dr Marius Romme,
a former professor at the University of Maastricht,
Netherlands, advocates ‘the exchange of personal
stories’ among affected individuals to come to terms
with the voices. His team asks people to get to the
origin of their voices—which could be the death of
a loved one or abuse—and tackle them at the root.

REVISITING FOLKLORE
The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has
announced its intention to document, scientifically
validate, digitise and popularise the country’s folk
medicinal practices and start institutes to save these
traditions from extinction. While alternative medical
disciplines like Ayurveda, homeopathy and Unani
have always enjoyed support, folk health heritage
is losing its popularity. “People in India’s interiors
have a strong immune system, and this government
initiative aims at tapping into their lifestyle and
medicinal practices to pass on the benefit to society
at large,” says Verghese Samuel, joint secretary in
the Ministry. To begin with, the government has
announced the establishment of the North Eastern
Institute of Folk Medicine at Pasighat, Arunachal
Pradesh, for which the state has already granted
about 40 acres of land. The institute, which is
expected to cost nearly Rs 330 million, will have
branches in Orissa, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and
other states in years to come.
CANCER DATABASE

To boost independent study of Indian brain tumour cases, Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, has established the NeuroOncology Society of India (NOSI). It was inaugurated on 29 February to facilitate sharing of knowledge among neurosurgeons, oncologists, radiologists and therapists. NOSI will put together a national database of patients, where age, gender, type of tumour, treatment and outcome will be recorded. “At Tata, we detected 676 cases in 2007, as compared to 250 in 2001,” says radiation oncologist Dr Rakesh Jalali, head of the Brain Tumour Foundation at Tata Memorial Hospital. He says the trend until recently was to extrapolate data from the West and apply it to India. “It’s time to devise strategies to apply to our socioeconomic milieu.”

OBESITY ALARM

The Oxford Health Alliance (OxHA) annual summit—titled ‘Building a Healthy Future: Chronic Disease and our Environment’—held in Sydney, Australia, from 25-27 February, emphasised that world governments should take obesity as seriously as terrorism. Obesity and other ‘lifestyle diseases’ are killing millions of people globally, concluded health and legal experts. “Heart and lung diseases, diabetes and cancer account for 60 per cent of the world’s deaths,” said Stig Pramming, executive director of the Oxford Health Alliance, which works towards preventing and reducing the global impact of chronic disease. “It is true that new and re-emerging health threats such as SARS, avian flu, HIV/AIDS, terrorism, bio-terrorism and climate change are dramatic and emotive. However, it is preventable chronic diseases that will send health systems and economies to the wall.”

MENOPAUSE BLUES

A new study published in The Journal of Advanced Nursing, USA, says that living in a rural environment can add extra pressures to coping with menopause, as menopausal women in rural areas have less access to medical care and may undergo more stress owing to multiple caregiving roles and lower income. Researchers interviewed 25 menopausal women in rural Nova Scotia, a Canadian province where many people live in remote areas. They found that women were often surprised by the intensity of the psychological, physical and social affects of menopause. While this is a likely response from most women, the study notes that lack of access to support groups, female health care workers and gynaecologists (especially in rural and semi-developed regions), whom women can talk to and confide in, made the experience especially difficult. The study holds special significance for India in light of the latest UN projections—although half the global population will live in cities by the end of this year, the percentage of urban elderly in India will be 29 per cent.
INNOVATIONS AND PRODUCTS

Inspired by the life of a foetus in the womb, a team of 20 scientists from R&D company Virtus Techno Innovations has developed a nanotechnology-based gene repair therapy (GRT) that can revolutionise treatments for various chronic diseases like AIDS, cancer and diabetes, and even reverse the ageing process. Called Mitsanika, this GRT helps in the rejuvenation of dead and inactive cells in humans by using water as a medium to absorb the required minerals and metals.

Widex India has launched its new micro-BTE (behind the ear) hearing aid. The m-BTE is loaded with versatile acoustic options, is virtually invisible, has customised ear moulds and is powered by tiny 10-size batteries. “The m-BTEs are almost 30 per cent smaller than conventional hearing aids,” Shakeel Rizvi, marketing head, Widex India, tells Harmony. “There is a lot of social stigma in our country against wearing visible hearing aids. People choose to suffer but don’t want others to see that they need an aid. We have launched the m-series keeping this in mind.” The m-BTE costs between Rs 65,000 and Rs 130,000.

Scientists have developed a thermo sensor to monitor vital body signs such as blood pressure and pulse rate, sending the data to a wireless receiver. Such a device frees nurses from manually taking a patient’s body temperature every few hours and enables the patient to get uninterrupted rest. It is already being used in three hospitals in Singapore and in intensive-care wards in hospitals in Bangkok and Taipei. With the gathered data, nurses will also be able to identify clusters of patients developing fevers at the same time, possibly indicating an infection making the rounds. A modified version of the sensor can also track the movement of a patient from one department to another within the hospital for tests or treatment, adding to the convenience of the hospital’s supervisory staff.

As part of the five-year-old ‘MyHeart’ project funded by the European Union, electronics major Phillips will create a sensor bed that keeps a close watch on the health of patients who have undergone cardiac arrest. Cardiologists believe that the need for emergency hospitalisation may be reduced if beds and clothing items are equipped to regularly monitor a patient’s heart health. The devices, packed into the bed, will include sensors that measure heart rate, breathing rate, and body movements while sleeping.

Pfizer India has launched a non-nicotine smoking cessation prescription drug. Called Champix (varenicline), it has been developed specifically to act on reducing nicotine craving as well as the pleasure of smoking. “Traditional smoking cessation solutions work only on controlling withdrawal symptoms,” Dr Anjan Chatterjee, medical director, global product team, Pfizer Inc, tells Harmony. “Champix goes a step ahead and reduces the smoker’s sense of satisfaction derived from smoking.” The 12-week Champix prescription course will be available across 17 cities in India for Rs 9,500. Pfizer has also announced that it will partner with physicians and hospitals to set up 600 smoking cessation clinics across India to help smokers stay on track while quitting.
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The inner voice

Get a grip on your mind, says Swami Muktananda

It is the mind that makes us perceive this universe as being filled with diversity. God created the universe in one way, but the mind makes us see it differently. It erases God’s creation, replaces it with its own, and shows us duality in God’s unity. The teaching of the Upanishads and all the saints is ayamatma brahma, “The inner Self of a human being is God.” Actually, the Self does not experience anything, but through the mind it mingles with the senses and takes on two aspects. Mingling with the senses of perception, it makes us feel that we are the experiencer. Mingling with the organs of action, it makes us feel that we are the doer. Thus, it is the mind that is responsible for our feeling of imperfection.

But if the mind were to become pure, to discard all its thoughts and doubts, it would experience God everywhere. The mind, which is the cause of all suffering, would become our greatest friend. The Upanishads say that God immediately reveals Himself to one whose mind has become pure. In fact, mental purity is not only for great beings or for those who want to attain liberation. It is necessary for people in every field, because if the mind is impure, you cannot understand things correctly. A psychotherapist spends many hours a day talking to mentally disturbed people, and if his mind is weak, then he is affected by their state. He does not realise that this is happening, but over the years the effects accumulate, and he may begin to experience mental suffering.

In Jnaneshwar’s commentary on Srimad Bhagavad-gita—Jnanesvari—Lord Krishna says, “If you purify your mind with thoughts of the Lord, with contemplation of the Lord, with repetition of the name of the Lord, you discover a new creation of the Lord within yourself.” The mind is often compared with a mirror. If a mirror is dirty, it cannot reflect objects clearly. In the same way, a mind that has become dirty by association with outer objects cannot reflect the inner Consciousness. But if it is cleaned by the practice of spiritual discipline, you can see the Self reflected in it. God is very close to the mind. In Kashmir Shaivism it is said, svacchatma sphaerati satatam cetasi sivah, “That is supremely pure and independent, and can be experienced throbbing constantly within the mind.” According to Kashmir Shaivism, the Self has two aspects: prakasa, light, and vimarsa, understanding. Prakasa illuminates everything in this world. Vimarsa understands that which is illumined. Through prakasa, we are able to see an object. Through vimarsa, we are able to identify it; we are able to understand.

Once King Janaka asked the great sage Yajnavalkya, “Where can I find God?” Yajnavalkya replied, “God is the Witness of the mind.” When the mind is full of thoughts and doubts, the inner Knower, prakasa and vimarsa, perceives and identifies them. No matter how bad or how good we feel, that Knower remains detached from all our surges of feeling. At night, we leave the waking state and enter the state of sleep. But even when we go to sleep, that Knower within us does not sleep but remains awake and reports to us on our dreams. That inner Knower is the Self. It lives within the mind, yet remains different from the mind. In fact, the mind that is alive, strong and one-pointed, that has become one with the inner Self, has the same power as the Self. It is not different from the Self. For this reason, in Jnanesvari the Lord says, “O Arjuna, do not become entangled in the creation of your mind. Bring your mind under your control. Make your mind very strong and make it move in Me.”

Excerpt from Mystery of the Mind (Chitshakti Publications; Rs 63; 43 pages). Swami Muktananda was the founder of Siddha Yoga, a spiritual path of discipline that involves mastering the mind and senses with teachings and practices.
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**Mumbai’s most attractive figures.**

**RATE OF INTEREST WITH EFFECT FROM 1ST JANUARY 2008**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATURITY PERIOD</th>
<th>Interest Rates in Percentage (Per Annum)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 days to 45 days</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 days to 90 days</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 days to 180 days</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181 days to 1 Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Above 1 Year to 2 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Above 2 Years to 3 Years</td>
<td>9.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Above 3 Years to 7 years</td>
<td>8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB Tax Gain Scheme</td>
<td>8.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB Money Multiplier Scheme*</td>
<td>Deposit doubles in 94 Months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB Senior Citizen Money Multiplier Scheme*</td>
<td>Deposit doubles in 87 Months.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No additional rate of interest will be applicable for the said deposits.*

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Moderate tax relief, inclusion of the Senior Citizens’ Savings Scheme in Section 80C (for deduction of tax investments), health insurance incentives for younger people with older parents, and tax-free flow from reverse mortgage; this year’s bouquet offers hard cash allowance. Read on to know how

- Threshold exemption limit for income tax has been enhanced from the current Rs 195,000 to Rs 225,000. Though the increase does not meet pre-budget expectation, it still means a reasonable amount of savings in tax outgo. The extra cash can be put into investments to see you through retirement.

- PAN (Permanent Account Number) is now compulsory for all financial market transactions in the country subject to certain predefined threshold exemption limits. The government now plans to link individuals to a unique PAN, akin to the social security number in the US.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax liability (in Rs; including surcharge and education cess)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taxable income</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs 200,000/yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs 400,000/yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs 600,000/yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs 800,000/yr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- There is no change in education cess and surcharge rates. Unfortunately, the finance minister has belied the hopes of
many people who would have welcomed a reduction in (if not removal of) the cess and surcharge. No change would mean that, individuals whose income is in excess of Rs 100,000 would be subject to the surcharge @10 per cent of the tax.

- Additional deduction of Rs 15,000 allowed under Section 80D to an individual paying medical insurance premium for his/her parent/s. With this, children can pay for the health insurance of parent/s and avail of an additional deduction of Rs 15,000, thus taking the total deduction up to Rs 30,000.

- Tax on short-term capital gains of eligible shares/mutual funds increased from 10 per cent to 15 per cent. The intention behind the hike is to bring parity between the taxation of dividend @ 15 per cent (in terms of dividend distribution tax) and capital gains tax.

By increasing the tax rate, the finance minister intends to push investors to stay invested for longer periods. By holding on to your investments for a period in excess of 12 months, you can enjoy zero tax status.

- The Senior Citizens’ Savings Scheme 2004 and Post Office Time Deposits have been covered under Section 80C (deduction for eligible tax investments). This provides an additional safe-tax avenue, so make use of these safe investment options to further enhance zero tax status (see table).

- Reverse mortgage transactions do not amount to ‘transfer’ and the stream of revenue received by the individual will not be treated as income. This proposal will be a welcome relief to all senior citizens who wish to avail of this scheme.

- Reduction in excise duty on all medicines from 16 per cent to 8 per cent. However, the excise will now be levied on 64.5 per cent of the MRP as against the earlier levy on 57.5 per cent.

The net impact of the reduction in rate of duty and increase in the valuation rules would still mean a reduction of 4.58 per cent in MRP on all medicines.

- National health institutes will be set up to deal with geriatric treatment.

- Public-sector banks, especially in the rural sector, have been asked to employ retired bankers and servicemen to act as loan counsellors and business consultants. This could provide employment opportunities to retired individuals who desire to have second careers.

### Tax savings under the Senior Citizens’ Savings Scheme and Post Office Time Deposits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gross total income</td>
<td>Rs 345,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less: Section 80C Investment - PO Time Deposit</td>
<td>Rs 100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less: Section 80D health insurance premium paid</td>
<td>Rs 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total deduction</strong></td>
<td>Rs 120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taxable income</strong></td>
<td>Rs 225,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total tax</strong></td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### UNFULFILLED

- Standardisation of the age of a senior citizen for eligibility to benefit from various schemes has not been achieved. You need to be 60 to benefit from railways and bank schemes; 62 for airlines; 65 is the age for income tax benefits—and retirement age is generally 60.

- Seniors were expecting tax exemption on rental income or at least increase in standard deduction currently available on rental income from 30 per cent to 50 per cent. By renting out property, seniors were hoping to generate reasonable regular returns.

- Seniors were also hoping for reinstatement of Section 80L, i.e. deduction for interest on time deposits with banks and the post office. This would have reduced the overall tax burden of the debt investor.
Connecting the dots

Bindi Mehta helps you understand your mobile phone bill

Is your mobile phone bill more than you bargained for? You are not alone. Though mobile phones are now an integral part of our lives, many of us are hard-pressed to explain just what we’re paying for every month, no matter who the service provider. So if you want to understand how you are being charged—or if you are planning to go mobile for the first time—Harmony presents a quick guide to mobile billing.

CHOOSING A NETWORK
To be a mobile subscriber, you have to be affiliated to a mobile communications network. There are two types of networks in India: Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) and Code-Division Multiple Access (CDMA). GSM digitises and compresses data and sends it down a channel with two other streams of user data, each in its own timeslot. GSM is thus a variation of time-division multiple access (TDMA), which assigns each call a certain portion of time on a designated frequency. CDMA, on the other hand, gives a unique code to each call and spreads it over available frequencies. It allows numerous signals to occupy a single transmission channel, optimising the use of available bandwidth. Vodafone, Airtel, BPL and BSNL are the main players offering GSM connectivity in India, while Reliance, Tata Indicom and Virgin offer CDMA network services. Whatever network you choose, cost division and bill structuring are done in a similar way by all providers.

STARTING OUT
After buying a handset, you need to get yourself a SIM card from a vendor affiliated to your chosen provider—typically you also get a chance to choose a number from the ones available with him. A Subscriber Identity Module or SIM card is a chip that securely stores all data used to identify a subscriber or a user. Providers typically charge Rs 99 for a SIM card, which contributes towards the cost of the card as well as activation charges. (Some CDMA operators offer a connection that includes the phone along with an inbuilt SIM card.) You then choose between a prepaid or postpaid connection.

THE PREPAID OPTION
A prepaid connection simply means that you pay first and use the talk time later. You buy a SIM card to activate your account. The cost components in a typical prepaid plan comprise processing fees, service tax and talk time and SMS charges. The processing fees are valid for a fixed period (generally on a monthly basis) and are nominal (between Rs 12 and Rs 15). A prepaid connection allows restricted usage to the subscriber according to the amount paid towards talk time. Once you have

If you opt for a prepaid connection (explained later), you pay for the card separately while in a post-paid or billing connection, the amount is generally adjusted in the first bill. If a handset is lost with the SIM card inside it, or if the SIM is locked and cannot be accessed—if you incorrectly type in the security code to your handset—all franchisee outlets of the provider will give you a duplicate SIM free of cost.
exhausted this amount, you can ‘top up’ your card at any service point. This term signifies that you are buying more talk time, while your processing fees are still valid. So if you top up your prepaid card worth Rs 200 with Rs 50, no processing fees are deducted from this amount. However, if the validity of your processing fees has expired, you have to recharge your card, which means you have to pay the processing fees all over again. As a prepaid subscriber, you should be alert about the validity of the prepaid facility so that you can top up your card in time. Contact points for servicing prepaid cards are widely available today, with everyone from a grocer to a tobacco vendor offering these facilities.

**POSTPAID CONNECTION**

A postpaid connection works like a regular phone service; you use the phone and pay whatever is due at the end of the month. Thus, it is also known as a billing connection. Here too, you buy a SIM card to activate your account. The various cost components in a postpaid bill include rental charges, call charges and SMS charges in addition to taxes. You pay your network provider a monthly rental. This normally remains unchanged from month to month unless the provider revises charges, or if you change plans. Call charges are over and above this.

There are many postpaid plans available. You can choose one that most suits your needs. For example, there are plans that allow users cheaper STD/ISD calls in return for charging a higher monthly rental. There are also plans that allow discounted or even free calls between two numbers after charging a flat fee for the service (very convenient if you talk to your family a lot). Some schemes allow cheaper calls during certain parts of the day, like late evening. And those who prefer SMS (short messaging service) text messages to voice calls can opt for a SMS-friendly plan, where you pay less for SMS.

Remember, you don’t get unrestricted usage even with a postpaid plan. Most providers set a ‘credit limit’ according to your usage and plan. For instance, if you’re allotted a limit of Rs 5,000, the company will notify you if your usage exceeds that amount in one month. Thus, you are given an alert to keep a tab on your monthly phone spend. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has established directives stating that services should not be suspended for a user exceeding his credit limit; however, this is not the case in reality.

**CALL CATCH**

At present, no company in India charges users for incoming calls. Outgoing calls are charged according to pulse rates. Generally, one minute or 60 seconds is identified as one pulse across providers. However, pulse rates vary according to providers and plans (between Rs 0.50 and Rs 1.99 per minute for local calls). Besides, there could be different pulse rates for mobile to mobile calls with the same provider, mobile to mobile calls with different providers, and mobile to landline calls. For example, in the same plan mobile to mobile (same provider) call charges could be Rs 0.30 per minute; mobile to mobile (different provider) call charges could be Rs 1.20 per minute; and mobile to landline call charges could be Rs 1.20 per min. Also, pulse rates are constantly updated.

How is the user overcharged for calls? The catch is that all short duration calls are charged as one-minute calls. For instance, you call your daughter who says she is busy and tells you she’ll call back—usually such a call may not last for more than a few seconds. But you will still be charged for one pulse. Beyond one pulse, if you talk for 15 more seconds, you are charged for a second pulse. Also, if the call gets cut in the middle of a conversation owing to a network failure, which is beyond your control, you still have to pay for it. Service providers claim that calls are charged only when answered and the duration of the call is calculated only after the connection is established. However, users have no way of verifying this. Typically, most mobile phone networks don’t work in elevators, basements and some other enclosed areas. Never make a call before entering such areas as the call will get automatically disconnected and result in bill inflation.

**SMS TRAP**

The SMS or Short Message Service allows users to send short text messages from one phone to another. These are charged at different rates for local, national and international recipients. For example, an SMS sent to a local mobile number can
cost you Re 1, the same SMS sent to a national mobile number can cost you Rs 2, while if you send it to an international cell number, you’d pay Rs 5. India is predominantly a ‘data-service-friendly’ country—we prefer to send messages rather than using voicemail (this allows callers to leave messages on your phone) or voice calls, according to Mobile Trends Guide, an international report by mobile device management company SmartTrust (published in journal Convergence Plus in November 2006). The report says 95 per cent of Indians who use mobile phones use SMS. Thus, we need to be careful about how we use this text facility. Like a pulse rate of one minute for charging calls, providers have a rule for SMS too. If you type a message up to 160 characters (this includes spaces and punctuation marks in addition to letters), it is considered one message and you are charged for one SMS. However, if you type even 161 characters, you are charged for a second SMS. So the next time your phone displays ‘SMS 2’ while typing, you know you are shelling out that much more.

Also, beware of the SMS trap while participating in TV contests, polling/voting campaigns or activating horoscope alerts and news updates. Premium rates (starting at Rs 3 per SMS) apply for all such messages sent to a short code or special number (say 56789). In fact, according to one provider, participation in any ‘Bid and Win’ TV contest via SMS could cost a user as much as Rs 10 per SMS. Festivals, public holidays and days like Friendship Day, when users typically send a lot of text messages, lay the ground for another kind of SMS trap. Even if you have an SMS-friendly scheme, where you can send a certain number of free or discounted messages, any SMS you send on such ‘black-out’ days will be charged at a normal rate, i.e. you can’t avail of any cost-free or discount options. There’s more. Generally, there is always network congestion during festival time with many users sending multiple text messages. To avoid jamming the network, providers stop sending delivery reports to users about dispatched messages. So users have no way of knowing whether their greetings have reached their intended destinations—but they have to pay for them—and then charge you for it. (Itemised bills give users a break-up of calls made from their phone with details like time, duration and destination numbers.) Or they could offer you add-ons like free caller tunes, special ring tones, astrology alerts, news updates and the like for a certain period, and then charge you for the same after the expiry of that time simply because you forget to opt out of the service. With regard to caller tunes, for example, you normally pay Rs 15 for one caller tune for three months but you provider may automatically ‘subscribe’ you to the enhanced service, which offers you a choice of three caller tunes for Rs 30—without telling you how to unsubscribe. In another instance, an SMS may be sent stating, “If you do not wish to unsubscribe from these alerts, please send NO to XYZ.” The careful (and confusing) choice of words would ensure that most people send back a ‘NO’ message without realising that they are actually opting to continue the service.

Thus, you must check your bill carefully for any such service that you have not chosen but are charged for. Details of long-distance calls should also be checked carefully. TRAI mandated early this year that all postpaid subscribers should be given an itemised bill for long-distance calls free of cost.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER
As a mobile phone subscriber, look carefully at the plans on offer and consider your usage pattern and needs before finalising a contract with your provider. And once you’ve signed on, check each bill carefully to ensure that you are using what you are paying for. Stay alert. ☞
Pump up the volume

Harmony surfs online radio sites

Do you love music but detest radio jockeys? Find it hard to get a radio station that plays your kind of music? Have a yen to listen to music from around the world? If you answered yes to any of the above, Internet radio may be the solution. Internet or online radio has been around for well over a decade now and has a huge global listener base. And today, there are thousands of radio stations available to you 24/7 on the Net—completely free—from all over the world.

So how do you find these sites? A Google search for ‘Internet radio’ or ‘online radio’ will yield more options than you can probably handle. You also need to watch out for malicious spyware or adware (software that accesses personal information from your computer). But don’t worry, there are plenty of safe websites out there—here are some of our picks.

First, windowsmedia.com/Mediaguide/Radio—if you are using Internet Explorer as your Internet browser, you’ll find this user-friendly site already listed among your list of favourites. With 40 genres of music—from country to Christian, rock to reggae—and a list of about 70 radio stations to choose from, you are completely spoilt for choice. The site also lets you make a list of your top stations. Other sites that offer a huge variety of stations are shoutcast.com with a ‘Quick Search’ option that helps you locate songs you want to hear; music.yahoo.com/launchcast, a beautifully designed site, nexusradio.com, which also lets you ‘capture’ music from any station for your digital music player; and omninet.com/radio, which features live radio stations across the world, arranged by country. Sky.fm and vh1.com/music/radio are two other sites that run their own radio service covering different musical genres and time periods.

You’d be hard-pressed to find Indian music—classical or popular—on any of these sites, other than Nexus and Omni. But go to ‘International’ on the live365.com index and you’ll find a good selection of Hindi and Tamil radio stations. Our favourite destination for Indian music, is raaga.com, which plays popular Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada and Bengali songs, and Carnatic and Hindustani classical music. Other great sites for desi music are thehindimusic.com, desi-radio.com, apmaradio.com, ballballeradio.com, airtamil.com, onlinehindiradio.com, and bollyfm.net, which even lets you download the latest hits.

One last thing: to listen to any of these stations, you will need to install the ‘media player’ recommended by the site. While many sites use Windows Media Player—installed in every computer that uses the Windows operating system—others may ask you to install another player, such as Real Player or Win Amp. The good news: these players too are free and can be downloaded from the site.

—Arati Rajan Menon
Silver activism

The newly proposed Community Participation Law, an offshoot of the Bhagidari scheme, can enhance your role in government projects in your area.

Are government agencies pushing unrealistic projects in your neighbourhood? The solution may lie in the Community Participation Law proposed by the Delhi government—if approved, it will make it mandatory for the government and its agencies to get the opinion of citizens’ groups and residents’ welfare associations (RWAs) before starting any project. The law can prove as forceful as the Right to Information Act (RTI) in empowering citizens. A copy of the cabinet note on the law can be obtained from the legal department of the Delhi government by filing an RTI application.

In accordance with the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), the note proposes that municipal committees, ward committees and below-ward committees should ensure participation of RWAs in decision-making. Then, for every infrastructure project the government agency would need to present the proposal to RWAs to submit objections and suggestions.

It’s a step ahead of Bhagidari (Citizens’ Participation in Governance), a government scheme with a very strong presence of RWAs. And while the Delhi government processes Harmony for Silvers Foundation’s RTI application for a copy of the cabinet note proposing the law, we take this opportunity to briefly tell you about Bhagidari. An offshoot of the 73rd and 74th amendment of the Constitution, Bhagidari—launched in 1998—ensures democracy at the grassroots in our panchayat and municipalities. It ensures that citizens and government officials meet, interact, overcome inhibitions, act together and solve problems together. Since the launch of Bhagidari, RWAs have participated in scores of projects. These include water harvesting for residential areas, desilting of sewers, electricity meter reading, replacement of low-tension wires and faulty meters, house tax collection, maintenance of community parks, management of community halls, sanitation services, door-to-door garbage collection, public awareness about sanitation, tree plantation drives, drives against plastic bags, neighbourhood watch system, police verification of domestic help and preventing encroachments.

Some success stories

■ RWAs collect payment of water bills by cheque on fixed date and time.
■ 267 RWAs actively participate in observing water leakage and register them with Delhi Jal Board.
■ 140 RWAs have taken up water harvesting measures.
■ 143 RWAs have voluntarily participated in replacement of old/leaking service pipes in their areas.
■ Extensive plantation drives have been taken up by several colonies.
■ The Federation of Group Housing Societies in the residential areas of Indraprastha Extension, started the meter reading scheme by RWAs with participation of zonal officers of Delhi Vidyut Board. RWAs collected readings from 23,000 meters and were paid Rs 2 per reading.
■ The Indraprastha Extension Federation, representing 50,000 citizens, also helped Delhi Police conduct verification of tenants, security guards and domestic help in the area. The federation also educates residents about safety devices for vehicles and home security.
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Social forces
Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

I am a 55 year-old homemaker living in Mumbai. I practise yoga every day since I learnt it from my friend five years ago. It gives me immense peace and strength. I would love to teach yoga to other women. How should I start?

Yoga is a wonderful way to stay physically and mentally fit. You can certainly impart the knowledge to others. However, to be well equipped, you should learn the art of yoga and its principles from a guru. There are many institutes that teach yoga. Mumbai has the Yoga Institute in suburban Santacruz, Iyengar’s Yoga Institute (with centres all over India), Nimbalkar’s Yoga Institute, Shri Ambika Yoga Kutir, and Yoga Vidya Niketan, to name a few. You can approach any of these to be trained professionally. Mumbai University also has a degree course in yoga, offered at Somaiya College in the suburbs.

You also have to decide how you want to operate. You can start from your own home by having small batches of people over to learn or join an institution as a yoga teacher. You can even offer your voluntary services at organisations serving those in need.

— Premlata S Kashyap
Kashyap is a yoga teacher with Shri Ambika Yoga Kutir in Mumbai, and has been teaching yoga since 1992

I live in Bengaluru with my son’s family. My husband passed away six months ago. To keep myself occupied, I would like to start a woman’s group comprising local members to work for a socially relevant cause. How do I go about it?

I suggest you first get women of similar interests together and form an informal group to understand your area of work—children, women, elderly. Then, focus on the needs of the target group. For example, if you wish to work with underprivileged children, you could start study classes in the evenings, as most of these children do not get educational support at home.

You could also look into their other needs like personality and life skills development. Once your group is clear about this, you need to formulate goals and plans for working with your target group. With this accomplished, you can approach the Charity Commissioner’s office and get yourself registered as an NGO.

— Nigama Mascarenhas
Mascarenhas is director of Family Service Centre, a Mumbai-based NGO that supports adoption and other family-related causes

I have retired from a bank. Having grown up in Delhi, I have seen the city evolve and would now like to share my knowledge with tourists. How can I start off as a guide?

In bustling global cities like London, a fair number of tourist guides are retirees who know their city in and out and can serve local and international tourists well. It’s also a great way to ward off loneliness as you interact with new people every day. However, this trend still has to catch on in India. First, you need to approach the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) office in Delhi and register yourself, in addition to taking any of their training courses (if necessary). Being the capital, Delhi enjoys a constant inflow of local and international tourists all year round. Most big tour operators in the country also have in-house training institutes. You can approach any company that organises city tours and try and get yourself a job with them.

— Veena Patil
Patil is director of Kesari Tours Pvt Ltd, which has offices across India
Guiding aspirations
Three air force officers discover their zest for teaching after retirement

After their career with the Air Force, three friends went their own ways. They retired at different times but Group Captain (retd) Peter D Woodman (61), Air Commodore (retd) U N Ganguly (58) and Air Commodore (retd) Adip Banerji (60) found themselves living in the same colony in Hyderabad, never imagining they would become colleagues again.

After taking premature retirement in 1992, Woodman felt the need to continue working as his children were still studying. After a brief stint in a real-estate firm, he spent five years as general manager (security) with Andhra Bank before moving on to academics. As a trainer with the local chapter of Inlingua (a global language training centre) for a couple of months, he taught verbal communication skills to potential call centre aspirants. He also started generating content for a portal—dedicated to the intricacies of English language—before teaching English to students at Paramount, a centre that trains students for their SAT and TOEFL exams, required for admission to universities abroad.

Banerji was doubtful about getting a job when he retired in 2002. Besides living far from town, he had a problem with his vision. However, one of his course mates requested him to help his daughter with mathematics—a subject he loved—and he agreed. A few of her friends joined in and soon he was on a roll. He taught XI and XII grade students for some months when Woodman asked him to join Paramount to teach mathematics. Six months on, and Inlingua. Both were selected and trained. Woodman soon left Inlingua, but the Gangulys continued. Today, Ganguly is director of studies and Jaya, a faculty member. They work from 8 am to 8 pm. Both Ganguly and Banerji express their gratitude to Woodman—they feel they could not have forged these new careers on their own.

Meanwhile, Woodman is also a consultant to IT companies for developing written communication skills of their engineers. He plans to specialise in teaching creative writing techniques to students wanting to study abroad. “Retired officers have a lot to contribute,” he says with pride. “Once the right job comes their way, they can do wonders.”

“We should do what we can with what we have”

he loves his job. “After retirement, we should do what we can with what we have,” he feels.

Woodman also helped put Ganguly and his wife Jaya, 55, on the academic track. After retiring in 2003, Ganguly tried several ventures before Woodman asked him and Jaya to apply at

Send queries to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org; for second career options, log on to www.harmonyindia.org
Silver service

Volunteers can help silvers who live alone, says Amita Malik

About five years ago, when I was more mobile, I received a small pamphlet. I am sorry I mislaid it because it was full of important information that I need now.

It offered, at something like Rs 5,000 per year, the voluntary services of young people for the elderly, especially those living alone. It said that responsible and trusted youngsters, who werevouched for by the organisation, an NGO, would visit the homes of elderly people and help them with chores that they could not manage on their own. This includes paying their water and electricity bills; depositing their cheques and collecting cash on their behalf; keeping track of their insurance and other annual payments; filing their mail and sending off replies if required. By themselves, these are minor chores, but for an elderly person they can pile up beyond control if not disposed of in time.

Of course this is a wonderful idea, provided the young who volunteer are utterly trustworthy and responsible. If one of them is even remotely dishonest or unreliable, it can ruin everything and put an elderly person to great distress. Which would be the opposite of what was intended in the first place. For one thing, the volunteer should be sufficiently educated and proficient in the language required; English, Hindi, Marathi, Bengali or whatever. Then, there should be a certain familiarity with the sort of correspondence to be dealt with, whether it is domestic problems, professional ones ranging from technical matters to culture and the arts, or any other field of human activity. A good deal would depend on the skill in the art of communication of the person being helped. They must not assume the familiarity of the volunteer with the problem concerned. They should explain it in advance and then dictate slowly and clearly, whether it is being typed, taken in short hand or, most difficult, in long-hand. Once these essentials are observed, familiarity will take the place of confusion and both parties will enjoy the whole process as it will give the satisfaction of something achieved to both. Also, in cities where transport is difficult and timings sometimes difficult to keep, allowances must be made to avoid any hard feelings over being made to wait if the volunteer fails to arrive in time.

As a professional writer who is a freelancer and writes at home, the main difficulty I have encountered is in the area of language. My professional work is done in English and frequently I am sent people who have not learnt their English from those who write and speak it well but some teacher in a modest school who teaches several other things but not English as a language. The person concerned is not familiar with the way certain words are pronounced and then asks for clarifications in Hindi or Bengali. I insist that while at work they must speak to me only in English, as we are working in that language, although they are welcome to chat in Hindi or Bengali when work has not yet begun or has been finished. Laxity in this direction can lead to frequent misunderstandings and one should not be soft or apologetic about it. If they ask me in Hindi what the mistake was, I ask them to ask the question in English and I similarly reply only in English.

It’s a wonderful idea provided the young who volunteer are trustworthy and responsible. Otherwise they will never learn.

We have travelled a long way from that pamphlet I have mislaid. If anyone in Delhi knows about it, they should share the information with readers of Harmony. I am sure silvers all over India would be grateful for such help. And all good wishes to those who organise it and those who carry out this service for elders, particularly those who live alone.

Amita Malik, often referred to as ‘the first lady of Indian media’, is a columnist and film critic.
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Ammi: Letters to a Democratic Mother by Saeed Mirza
Tranquebar Press; Rs 395; 307 pages

“With a name like Saeed Akhtar Mirza I have to confront the fact that so many of the mindless acts of suicide bombings and killings that have taken place around the world were done by people who claimed to be followers of the faith both my parents believed in,” broods Saeed Mirza in *Ammi.*

The book is not a lamentation on or a tribute to Islam; instead, in typical honesty, the filmmaker admits to being alternately proud and befuddled by his religion.

The book opens with the subdued romance brewing between dapper, progressive Nusrat Beg and a sheltered Afghan girl Jahanara Begum amid the cloistered confines of a sprawling Pathan household in northern India. Fact and fiction mingle as Mirza’s fecund imagination tries to reconstruct the love story of his own parents through Nusrat and Jahanara. As they embark on the rollercoaster ride of matrimony, Mirza abruptly abandons the plot and we suddenly find ourselves in a modest tenement in suburban Mumbai. From a gossamer fine love story between two contrasting characters, the plot moves to a part-memoir-part-commentary on childhood innocence, secularism, communism, middle-class aspirations, parental dictates and Islamic norms. Mirza airs his views on everything from international politics to Indian poverty, rural hospitality to quaint Turkish customs. Towards the end the book even manages to slip into the shoes of a travelogue. If there is one constant to Mirza’s mercurial musings, it’s his intriguing *ammi,* a dignified lady who is supremely democratic in her outlook yet delightfully Islamic in practice.

Though his films have been known for their spare cast and monochromatic settings, in *Ammi* Mirza pulls together a flamboyant multi-starrer. Philosophers like Confucius, Al-Beruni and Ibn Senna; Sufi poets; Turkish kings; and folktale characters like Mullal Nasruruddin flit through the pages faster than you can blink an eye. At best, the book is a quilt of thoughts where each patch is distinctly different from the other—the skeins that hold it together are Mirza’s sense of humour and sensitivity. Some passages are succinct and delightful; for instance, school-going Mirza trades his boring lunch box for a friend’s ham sandwich only to realise that he has ‘sinned’. And some pages are profound—the author’s three-month jaunt through rural India and the generosity of spirit he witnesses there. There are other pages too, the ones that meander into unexpectedly weighty issues and slacken the pace.

Though the book attempts to show off a stylishly bohemian touch of disorder with its unruly nostalgic pondering, it’s this very chaos that leaves the reader disoriented at the end. The disjointed flow hurls us into a maze so complex that, at times, we are too busy finding our way through it to enjoy the anecdotes and fables that whiz past. As we close the book, we are tempted to borrow a title from one of Mirza’s movies and add our own spin to it—*Saeed Mirza ki Ajeeb Dastan.*

—Rajashree Balaram
FIRST HAND

How challenging was it writing a book?

It was completely different from making films because the journey in the book was inwards and then outwards. From the whimsical and personal to the polemical and historical.

Why is a portion of the book dedicated to Turkey?

It was just a chapter. But the reason for the essay on Turkey was because it is a country that is trying so hard to be, look and feel European. In it is a lesson for all those countries that are trying to adopt the same path by denying memory and history. And, as I wrote in my book, trying to find new meanings of words that I believe have lost their meanings. Words like modern, civilised, democratic.

The book fluctuates between memoir and fiction. Why did you adopt this mixed style?

It was the only way I was able to combine the personal with the political and historical.

Have you been keeping a diary of your thoughts all these years or was the book reconstructed out of nostalgia?

It was a combination of both notes and nostalgia.

How long have you been working on the book?

About two years of actual writing but, perhaps at least three years more in trying to sort out the immense confusions and questions that cropped up in my mind in trying to decode a world that I had inherited.

Did you set aside time everyday for writing the book?

For two years, yes. From 10 in the morning to about 5 in the evening.

What are your other interests?

Travelling. Travelling. And more travelling.

---

I am 77 years old. I have travelled extensively to Kedarnath, Rishikesh, Haridwar, Mussoorie, Shimla and Nainital and would like to guide people who are interested in exploring any of these places (including Delhi).

Y P Duggal
F-106, Lajpat Nagar-I
New Delhi-110024
Tel: 011-29812326

I am 56 years old. I would like to meet like-minded silvers who are interested in travel, music, Hindi movies and Indian culture. You can contact me at the following address:

Ghansham H Bharucha
59, Magan Baug, Sun Mill Road,
Mumbai-400 013
Tel: 022-29984028
Mobile: (0) 9323910881

I am 83 years old. I would like to exchange letters with silvers who need motivational advice on how to make life more fulfilling. Please write to me at the following address:

B S Inamdar
Ground Floor, Amar Building
Sir Phiroz Shah Mehta Road, Mumbai-400001.
Tel: 022-2266 0863, 2620 6315
Role reversal

The Pregnant King
By Devdutt Pattanaik
Penguin; Rs 295; 349 pages

If a man gives birth to a child, is he then father or mother? That’s the dilemma of Yuvanashva, the childless king of Vallabhi who accidentally drinks a magic potion meant to make his wives pregnant and goes on to give birth to a son, Mandhata.

Yuvanashva’s obscure tale—told in the Mahabharata to the exiled Pandavas by the sage Lomasha—so fascinated Devdutt Pattanaik (medical doctor by training, marketing consultant by profession, and writer of non-fiction books on Indian gods and myths) that he decided to retell it, as his first work of fiction. His aim: to question the roles assigned to gender by society.

Each character in the story struggles against society’s straitjackets. Among them are Yuvanashva’s widowed mother Shilavati who rules Vallabhi but cannot be king because she is a woman. Somvat, a Brahmin boy who surrenders his manhood to marry his best friend but finds himself barred from entering heaven for contravening the laws of dharma. Simantini, Yuvanashva’s first wife, who attempts to raise the king’s son as her own though she knows that his father is really his mother. And of course, the king himself, who is forced to play the proud father and forceful monarch when all he wants to do is spend every waking moment in the women’s chambers, nursing and rearing his child.

His life gets even more complicated when his second wife Pulomi gives birth to another son, Jayanta. “I am not sure that I am a man,” says Yuvanashva. “I have created life outside me as men do. But I have also created life inside me, as women do.” Tragically, when Mandhata discovers the truth, he is repulsed and spurns his father—he finally acknowledges the fact that Yuvanashva gave birth to him only at the very end, that too with his silence when asked his father’s name at a ceremony to honour forefathers.

Although the tale of Yuvanashva actually predates the Mahabharata, Pattanaik sets his story alongside the epic so he can use episodes from it as counterpoints—the tale of Amba who is reborn as Shikhandi (a woman who later ‘becomes’ a man with the help of a yakshai) to take her revenge on Bhishma; Arjuna dressing up as a woman for his last year in exile; the unspoken rebuke that the blind Dhritirashtra was fit to become a king, while the eminently capable Shilavati was not, purely because of her gender; and Krishna assuming the form of Mohini the enchantress to grant doomed warrior Iravan (one of Arjuna’s many sons) a night of conjugal bliss before he faced his fate on the battleground of Kurukshetra.

Pattanaik’s book is simply written. The language is rather plain; in fact, many of the author’s metaphors seem artless, even naive—“after a night of bliss... he forgot her, like yesterday’s meal”. What gives this book complexity is that it forces us to confront our own prejudices and the constricting vocabulary of society. It also serves as a timely reminder that just like life, our complex and rich mythology is not black and white, despite the attempt of many to hijack it and presume its moral absoluteness. That’s why, near the end of this brave book, when Jayanta weeps for “his father, the pregnant king, for the imperfection of the human condition, and for our stubborn refusal to make room for all those in between”, he is as relevant today as in the days of the Mahabharata.

—Arati Rajan Menon
**BRIEFLY**

India’s highest paid actor by a mile, Shivaji Rao Gaekwad aka Rajinikanth is a phenomenon, a man whose rags-to-riches story—he grew up motherless and worked as a coolie and bus conductor—just begs to be told. Chennai-based ophthalmologist Gayathri Sreekanth attempts to do that in a rather novel way: without meeting or interviewing him even once. The result is **THE NAME IS RAJINIKANTH** (Om Books; Rs 495; 375 pages), a pointless pastiche of information on the actor from a variety of Internet sites. Whatever little original work is found in the book is completely off the wall. Like the author’s analysis of the significance of numerology in his success. Worse, the book is riddled with errors; grammatical and factual. For instance, fans would be apoplectic to see the acclaimed drama *Moondru Mudichu*, where the superstar plays a villain, characterised as slapstick comedy. Rajini deserves better.

**BOLLYWOOD MELODIES: A HISTORY OF THE HINDI FILM SONG** (Penguin Books; Rs 295; 261 pages) is a labour of love. Hindi film song buff Ganesh Anantharaman took almost 20 years thinking about the book, and another five writing it. The result is a delightful read tracing the evolution of Hindi film songs—a cultural barometer in India. Researching the works of over 50 outstanding composers, singers and lyricists from the 1930s to the 1990s, he discusses influences that shaped different genres in each era: Rabindra Sangeet in the 1930s, folk songs in the 1940s, classical music in the 1950s, pop and jazz in the 1960s. While interviews with icons like Dev Anand, Pyarelal, Gulzar, Manna Dey and Lata Mangeshkar give the book a personal dimension, the comprehensive index of songs make the book a ready reckoner—and a must for popular music enthusiasts.

A chance encounter with a stranger transformed Gay Hendricks’s life irrevocably. In **FIVE WISHES: HOW ANSWERING ONE SIMPLE QUESTION CAN MAKE YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE** (Michael Joseph; Rs 420; 149 pages), he wants to help transform yours. The stranger asked Hendricks to imagine himself on his deathbed and consider the question: “Was your life a complete success?” Answering no, he was invited to come up with the five wishes he would have liked granted to make his life complete. The stranger then urged him to turn those wishes into goals. It worked for Hendricks, who achieved his five dreams—lasting love, tying up loose ends, writing from the heart, feeling God, and savouring life. Though there’s no guarantee that the author’s detailed blueprint (including a ‘Five Wishes Worksheet’) will work for you, this is a smart little book that serves up a very practical lesson: don’t wait until it’s too late for anything.

Clinical psychologist and wildly successful crime author Jonathan Kellerman brings us his 21st novel starring child psychologist Dr Alex Delaware and his best friend Milo Sturgis, a gay LAPD detective. In **OBSESSION** (Michael Joseph; Rs 410; 347 pages), Tanya, a former patient, returns to tell Delaware of the deathbed confession of Patty, her aunt and adopted mother—she claimed to have committed murder. Soon after Delaware and Sturgis begin their investigation to establish whether there was a murder at all, people really begin to start dying, beginning with Patty’s former neighbour. It’s racy, meaty stuff to begin with but unfortunately Kellerman is unable to string out the suspense till the end. We find out far too early who did it—and the rest is pretty much downhill.

All titles are available at Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata, Bangalore, Mumbai, Goa and New Delhi, and on www.oxfordbookstore.com
CENTENARY NOTES
True talent is ageless. Proof of that is Ustad Abdul Rashid Khan, who turned 100 in December. At a concert held in Mumbai in March, he wowed audiences with his enthralling taan and layakari (rhythmic improvisation). A direct descendant of Miyan Tansen, the fabled singer in the court of Mughal emperor Akbar, Khan spent his formative years in Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh and trained in the Gwalior school. “Hindustani classical music is our legacy and we must treasure it,” he tells Harmony. To keep the music alive, he has been training aspiring vocalists at Sangeet Research Academy in Kolkata for nearly a decade. “I am glad to pass on this cultural wealth to the youth,” he says. And he still spends two-and-a-half hours every day on his riyaaz as he believes “practice strengthens the vocal chords”. His ultimate high, though, comes from performing live: “Zindagi lain tab tak gata rahoonga.” (Till there is life in me, I will keep singing.)

GENE POOL
As donations go, this was a cracker—81 year-old Vadodara resident Purushottam Gurjar recently handed over Rs 1 crore to the Centre for Genome Research in M S University, Vadodara. “I believe that education and research are the foundation stones of our future society,” the retired businessman and one-time professor of economics and sociology, tells Harmony. “Genome research has the potential of decoding how humans function. There could be no better way to spend my money fruitfully, helping millions world over. And MS University has an international reputation for research.” The Centre is working towards solving local problems related to food and basic healthcare with the help of gene research. Gurjar’s other passions are poetry—he has published eight books of ghazal with four more on the way—and politics: he aims to establish his own ‘Freedom Party’ one day with “honest and sincere people to serve fellow citizens”.

etcetera
**SHERIFF TO THE RESCUE**

Women in Mumbai just got some help from their sheriff. In January, **Indu Shahani**, 54, launched a phone helpline for distressed women. And on 28 February, she extended it to an email helpline in association with website Rediff.com. “After we launched the phone helpline, I received emails from distraught women seeking information about NGOs that could help them,” she tells *Harmony*. “I realised that many women were not comfortable making calls so we decided to launch a website as well.” If you require help, email call1298@rediffmail.com. In a matter of seconds—we checked—you’ll receive the information. The sheriff, and principal of HR College of Commerce and Economics in Mumbai, also plans to start a blood donation campaign and a water helpline where people can call and seek the help of licensed plumbers.

**LOVE AT 89**

With a combined age of 178, UK residents **Cyril Sergeant** and **Madge Robbins**, who tied the knot on Valentine’s Day (14 February) this year, now hold the record of being Britain’s oldest newly-weds. “For most people it’s love at 18 but for us it’s love at 89,” Robbins says in *The Telegraph*, UK. The couple first met in 2006 at St James’ Church in Birmingham through mutual friends. Although Sergeant says he was immediately attracted to Robbins, it took him three months to offer her a lift to church and ask her out. “I never expected to marry or settle down with somebody ever again,” says Robbins, whose first husband Ron died 14 years ago. Sergeant too lost his wife Anna four years ago. “I wanted Madge to live with me but then I thought it would be even better if we got married,” he says. “She’s a very attractive lady and is always beautifully dressed.” According to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, the oldest couple ever to wed are a French pair who married in 2002; aged 96 and 94.

**RUSSIAN ROCK**

On 14 March, Russian rock ‘n’ roll legend **Boris Grebenshchikov** performed at Siri Fort Auditorium in New Delhi. The 54-year-old—who cuts a striking figure with his flowing beard—says his parents were ardent fans of 1960s Bollywood music and claims to be deeply influenced by films starring Raj Kapoor. Rock music was illegal in the Soviet Union through all of the 1950s, 60s and 70s—Grebenshchikov’s band Aquarium introduced Russians to Indian spiritualism and American rock ‘n’ roll when they first performed in 1974. BG, as he is popularly known, has been performing for the past 34 years. The poet-cum-musician, who has more than 70 albums to his credit, is also inspired by oriental mysticism and the philosophies of spiritual guru Sri Chinmaya. Grebenshchikov also performed in Bengaluru.

**BIRTHDAYS**

- Lyricist **Sameer** turned 50 on 26 February
- Actor **Shashi Kapoor** turned 70 on 18 March
MILESTONES

Awarded. Retired US Air Force brigadier general and astronaut Charles Moss Duke, Jr, 72, the lifetime achievement award by D Y Patil University, Nerul, Mumbai. Duke holds the record for being the youngest of only 12 men to have set foot on the moon. He was part of NASA’s Apollo 16 mission in April 1972 and has compared his walking on the moon to a “duck waddle”. At the award ceremony, he told Hindustan Times, “The moon is a magnificent place. It is desolate, yes, but I felt very much at home there.”

Appointed. Economist Parthasarathi Shome, 57, who quit his high-profile job as advisor to Finance Minister P Chidambaram, as economic advisor in Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) or the British tax office. Shome is the first Indian to be appointed to a senior post in the British Government. Chidambaram selected Shome, a former executive with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to work with him in 2004 while he was serving as director of New Delhi’s National Institute of Public Finance and Policy. During his tenure as the finance minister’s advisor, Shome oversaw three budgets, and introduced online filing of tax returns, VAT or value-added tax, and fringe benefit tax. His mantra for a successful tax structure: simplicity.

IN PASSING

Tamil writer S Rangarajan, who used his wife’s name Sujatha as his pseudonym, drew thousands of youngsters to Tamil literature with his style of writing. His works were spread across various genres—short stories, science fiction, plays, historical pieces and screenplays for films. Recent movie credits include the 2007 Rajinikanth hit Sivaji – The Boss and the comedy Dasavatharam featuring Kamal Hassan currently running in theatres. An engineering graduate from the Madras Institute of Technology, Rangarajan started writing short stories during his stint with Bharat Electronics in Bengaluru, where he was instrumental in designing and producing the electronic voting machine (EVM) used successfully for the first time in Kerala. Rangarajan passed away in Chennai on 27 February. He was 72.

A science fiction writer who drew up timelines for what he called “possible futures”, Sir Arthur Charles Clarke effortlessly weaved scientific expertise and poetic imagination together in his books. Author of over 100 books and 1,000 short stories and essays, he first proposed the idea of global communications satellites in 1945—it turned into reality only a decade later with the launch of ‘Early Bird’, the first commercial satellite. Clarke was knighted in 1998, nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994 and received the UNESCO Kalinga Prize in 1961, among other honours. A Briton who moved to Sri Lanka in 1956, he was accused of paedophilia by a British tabloid in the late 1990s, but the charges were retracted following an investigation by the Sri Lankan police. He passed away in Colombo on 19 March at the age of 90.
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SAY IT OUT LOUD

A single death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic.
—Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin (1879-1953)

Statistician: A man who believes that numbers don’t lie but who admits that under analysis some of them won’t stand up either.
—American humorist Evan Esar (1899-1995)

There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.
—British statesman Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881)

Smoking is one of the leading causes of statistics.
—American writer Fletcher Knebel (1893-1981)

I could prove God statistically.
—American statistician George Gallup (1901-1984)

THE WORD IS OUT

New terms that have made their appearance in newspapers, magazines, books, websites and other recorded sources

Streisand effect n. The widespread dissemination of information caused by an attempt to suppress that information. Also: Barbra Streisand effect
Example: The Digg-DVD donnybrook is the latest example of what’s come to be called the Streisand effect, in which efforts to squelch a bit of online information lead to that information being much more widely disseminated than it otherwise would have been. The name stems from singer Barbra Streisand’s 2003 lawsuit aimed at forcing a photographer, who was documenting coastal erosion, to remove photos of her seaside mansion from his previously obscure website.

lifestreaming n. An online record of a person’s daily activities, either via direct video feed or aggregating the person’s online content, such as blog posts, social network updates, and online photos.
—lifestreamer n.—lifestream v., n.
Example: Lifestreaming, like the movie Being John Malkovich, will allow you to climb inside the head of someone and experience their day via a digital smorgasbord of public text messages, blog posts, GPS-tagged photos and a live video stream of them as they move around their world.

upcycling n. A process that takes used or recycled materials and creates a new product with a higher quality or value than the original materials.
Example: Mr. Kalin is big on upcycling, a process whose name was coined by William McDonough, an architect, and Michael Braungart, a chemist, in their 2002 book, Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things.
Courtesy www.wordspy.com
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**-**NORAMA**. The 8-letter solution to the clue, The framework of our constitution, is **SKELETON**. At times, what looks straightforward can 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.
FOUR BY FOUR
A six digit number 312132 has two 1s, two 2s and two 3s. This number has a very interesting attribute: 1 digit exists between two 1s, 2 digits exist between two 2s and 3 digits exist between two 3s. Can we add two more 4s to become an eight digit number and still holding the above attributes plus 4 digits exist between two 4s?

HIDDEN NUMBERS
Every alphabet represents a different digit from 1 to 9 to make the calculation. What are they?

WHAT A MATCH!
18 matches made 6 small triangles and 2 large triangles. Please move 6 matches to make 6 equal diamonds.

MATH MAZE
Fill in numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 into boxes to make the equations work:

\[
\begin{align*}
\square + \square &= \square \\
\square - \square &= \square \\
\square &= \square \times \square
\end{align*}
\]
GO PLACES
There are five countries hidden in the following paragraph. Can you find them?

Dominic had a certain way with animals; he could almost talk to them. By tickling it under the chin, a tiger would roll over and let its belly be tickled. This technique is used to good effect in gaining its trust and allows a vital yearly treatment to be performed safely, the removal of nits, whereby a special blend of malt and water is rubbed into the skin.

POOLSIDE STORY
A family has a swimming pool in the garden situated between four beautiful oak trees (see picture). They are disappointed with it and want to double the length of each of its sides and keep it perfectly square. On the other hand, they do not want to cut down the trees. How can they fit a new square swimming pool, which is exactly four times the size of the current one (twice as long and twice as wide), within the trees?

NUMBER CRUNCH
Can you find a five-digit number in which:

- the third digit is twice the first digit
- the fourth digit is the third digit plus three
- and the fifth digit is the difference between the first digit and the fourth digit?

FIGHTING FIRE
A fire engine was rushing to a small fire, 15 miles away. The fire engine set out with 120 gallons of water. However, the water tank had a leak and the fire engine was losing water at the rate of two gallons per minute. Fifty gallons of water were required to douse the fire. The fire engine travelled at a constant 30 miles per hour. Did the fire engine have enough water when it arrived?

BAND OF BOYS
The Drumbeats records company recently held auditions across the country to form a new band. The four guys chosen are now superstars. Can you work out each guy’s previous day job, his age (19, 20, 21, 22) and hometown?

1. Greg is exactly two years younger or older than the guy from Cleveland who once used to be a truck driver.

2. Either Darren or the guy from Seattle (who may or may not be Patrick) used to deliver pizzas.

3. The guy from New York is younger than Daniel but older than the one who used to be a carpenter.

4. The 22 year-old from San Francisco isn’t the one who used to be a waiter.

LAUGH LINES
Fitness can be fun. Don’t believe us? Take a look at these wisecracks that we found on the Internet. And while you are reading it, remember that a bit of laughter can do your heart almost as much good as a round on the treadmill.
My grandmother started walking five miles a day when she was 60. Now she’s 97 years old and we don’t know where the hell she is.

Walking can add minutes to your life. This enables you at 85 years old to spend an additional five months in a nursing home at $5,000 per month.

The only reason I would take up exercising is so that I could hear heavy breathing again.

I joined a health club last year, spent about 400 bucks. Haven’t lost a pound. Apparently you have to go there.

I have to exercise early in the morning before my brain figures out what I’m doing.

I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me.

I have flabby thighs, but fortunately my stomach covers them.

The advantage of exercising every day is that you die healthier.

If you are going to try cross-country skiing, start with a small country.

I decided to take an aerobic class. I bent, twisted and jumped up and down for an hour. But by the time I got my leotard on, the class was over.

I don’t exercise at all. If God had wanted me to touch my toes, he would have put them up higher on my body.

The older you get, the tougher it is to lose weight because by then, your body and your fat have become really good friends.

I’m not into working out. My philosophy is no pain, no pain.

The only exercise I get is jumping to conclusions.

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.

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

Four by four
The number will be 41312432
or 23421314. Of course these 2 numbers are actually the same, just reverse the direction from one to become another one. The way to solve this is, first all, put down two 4s and reserve 4 spaces between these two 4s. Then you determine the positions for two 3s. Since you cannot put both 3s between 4s, one 3 must be outside of two 4s.

Hidden numbers
A to I are 1 to 9.

A=1
B=7
C=4
D=6
E=8
F=2
G=5
H=9
I=3

Math maze

1 + 7 = 8
9 - 5 = 4
6 = 3 \times 2
Go places
Chad, China, Italy, Togo and Malta

Dominic had a certain way with animals, he could almost talk to them. By tickling it under the chin, a tiger would roll over and let its belly be tickled. This technique is used to good effect in gaining its trust and allows a vital yearly treatment to be performed safely, the removal of nits, whereby a special blend of malt and water is rubbed into the skin.

Poolside story
They should rotate the pool's layout by 45°.

Number crunch
23,475

Fighting fire
Yes. The journey took 30 minutes. In that time the fire engine lost 60 gallons of water, leaving 60 gallons with which to fight the fire.

Band of boys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>truck driver</td>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darren</td>
<td>pizza delivery</td>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg</td>
<td>carpenter</td>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>waiter</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOLUTIONS TO SUDOKU

SOLUTIONS TO KAKURO

SOLUTIONS TO EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 42
ACROSS:
1 Live for the day; 10 extreme; 11 Dak Bahu; 12 canard (C/Anar/D);

DOWN:
2 intense (in/Ten/se); 3 exedra (Red Axe, its 6 letters rearranged); 4 over; 5 Todi; 6 eskers (See SRK, its 6 letters rearranged); 7 anatory (Am/a/Tory); 8 Peacock Throne; 9 Suffering cats! 13 dreaded (D/read E/D: read English in DD: Doordarshan); 14 address (address standing for 'Spot get-up'); 15 cut shot; 21 Sinatra (Sil/Na/ra: Nat ‘King’ Cole); 23 bambino (Bl/a MB/into); Bo is Miss Derek, a MB is a May Brit; 24 titbit (tit/bit); 25 Navy US; 28 Nemo; 29 spin
“MAGNIFICENT”
THE DAILY MAIL

“SUPERB”
JONATHAN ROSS. FILM 2007

“BREATHTAKING”
THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

“DAZZLING”
THE TIMES

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