

AUGUST 2008 Rs 30

# harmony

celebrate age

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The magazine for silver citizens

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the eternal  
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**All about  
Viagra**

**Theatre's  
TITAN**  
Girish Karnad



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# HERO'S HOUR

Last year, *Harmony* kept a promise: we showed the world the power of silver.

At our first annual Harmony Silver Awards, held on 3 October in Mumbai, we saluted 10 ordinary people who have done extraordinary things, setting benchmarks for themselves and society. Over 3,000 people from every walk of life attended this event, which exemplified our motto, 'Celebrate Age'.

We're gearing up for this year's edition of the Awards. Our jury is already in place: pioneering judge Leila Seth, Shekhar Gupta, editor-in-chief of The Indian Express Group, actors Om Puri and Victor Banerjee, and MP Priya Dutt will choose our 10 heroes for 2008—men and women from across India with diverse callings. The thread that binds them together is their commitment to their chosen cause and determination to surmount every obstacle.

At Harmony Silver Awards 2008, which will again be held in



October, our winners will be awarded a cash prize and citation, followed by an entertainment programme that showcases the potential of silvers.

Beyond the glitter and celebrations, though, Harmony Silver Awards has a far deeper significance. It is intended to drive home the fact that there is a hero within each one of us. If we dare to step outside our comfort zones, we can realise new realities, explore new possibilities, experience new awakenings; we *can* move mountains.

Taking a cue from our winners, we can craft our own destinies and touch the lives of countless others. For example, I read recently that an increasing number of American silvers,



RITU NANDA

concerned about ecological degradation, are becoming 'environmental stewards' in their own communities. As part of an initiative by the United States Environment Protection Agency, they supervise neighbourhood clean-ups, test air quality and enforce eco-friendly regulations across the country. In the process, they keep physically active, mentally alert and socially engaged.

What can you do to make your world a better place? Find out—and let your inner hero come to the surface.

Tina Ambani

## A Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust Initiative

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### Ageing beautifully

Time needn't diminish your  
radiance, writes Jamuna Pai



### Rock of ages

The sculptures of Mamallapuram  
enchant K Ponnuswamy

Visit [www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org) now and check out this month's stories!

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**VILAS KALGUTKER**

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## column one

One doesn't earn respect by virtue of age alone. Age needs to be embellished with worth and weight. But there's no single way to enrich our lives. For some it is through working with civil society organisations, for others it is social work under one's own steam. For some it's about staying busy, for others it's about adding value to their area of work.

For Girish Karnad, it's about staying creative. The 70 year-old playwright and actor believes that the nature of his work helps him stay ahead of the times. On the cover this month ("Theatre's Titan"), Karnad finds life's contemporariness in mythology, folklore and ancient Indian history. He creates modern classics. Creativity is also about being secular, which Karnad is—both in his plays and in life, not mincing words.

*Harmony* is where you will find voices, thoughts, perceptions and images that will help you chalk out your own points of reference.

One example is Manvendra Singh Gohil of the erstwhile royal family of Rajpipla in Gujarat. Openly gay and not silver yet, Gohil is building an old age home for India's elderly homosexuals ("A New Space"). Then there's Jharna Sur, 62, who has extended her dream of a discrimination-free society ("Vision with action") into her retirement years.

This month, we are pleased to announce a new column. Stay healthy with 'Nutrition' by Mumbai-based senior nutritionist Vijaya Venkat.

—Meeta Bhatti



I recently came across a copy of your magazine and really appreciated your idea of 'celebrating age'. I have recently joined a major corporate house in its legal department. You would be pleasantly surprised to know that at the age of 50, I did my MBA from one of the most prestigious institutes of the country, IIM - Ahmedabad. I really wonder if age has anything to do with emotions like love, faith and childlike inquisitiveness. Because of family or professional commitments, we may not be able to devote enough time for our other desires and dreams. But if those unfulfilled desires are strong enough and we are mentally committed to satisfy them, the body and mind always fall in line and our desires and dreams do become reality someday!

**DARSHA KIKANI**

*Via email*

*The letter of the month wins music CDs from Big Music*



Have you ever really wondered who prescribes your medicines? Is it a doctor, to whom you pay a fat consultation fee, or the medical representatives whose products the doctor is peddling? Are the sundry investigations mentioned in the prescription by your specialist really required?

Let me share my experience with you. When I was 65, I was diagnosed with high blood pressure and uric acid. My family doctor had prescribed a small dose of medicine for this which I was taking regularly. However, one of my friends advised me to go to a specialist to find the cause of my hypertension. After examining me, this doctor recommended a bunch of tests, that too from a laboratory far away from my residence. When I told him that I was otherwise very healthy and did not require all these investigations, he insisted that I

needed them. I found the laboratory with great difficulty and paid more than Rs 8,000 for the tests. But I did not even get to see the reports—the laboratory sent the reports directly to the specialist's residence. When I asked him for them, he said that he forgot to get them to the clinic! Then, he told me that my problems were far greater than he anticipated and that I should get myself admitted for at least a day for further investigations. I thanked him, paid his hefty consultation fee, and never set eyes upon him again. I am 72 now, and perfectly healthy. My advice to fellow silvers: if a specialist in a private clinic recommends any tests that seem unreasonable to you, don't hesitate to take a second opinion from a government hospital. Don't get taken for a ride.

**ARUN CHANDRA  
MUKHOPADHYAY**

*Kolkata*





On the fourth anniversary of *Harmony*, I congratulate Tina Ambani and your entire team for bringing value to the lives of silvers. The time is now right for you to launch a Hindi edition of the magazine so you can reach more silvers across the country.

**AWANINDRA NATH JHA**

*Jamshedpur*

Twenty years after my retirement from the Rajasthan government, I can say with honesty that I have never been busier. That's because I have made sure that I make the best use of my time and energy. I take care of my body, eat well and ensure that I get six hours of sleep. I have not earned much money since I retired but have a far greater wealth in terms of love, affection and respect from friends and family. I try and help them in every way I can, sharing their work and responsibilities without becoming a burden on them physically or financially. This has kept me healthy, and extremely happy.

I urge my fellow silvers to seek activities that keep them busy and give them satisfaction. And if you are wealthy, use your money

to adopt a village, orphanage or old age home. Let society benefit from your knowledge, experience and wisdom.

**PC SINGHI**

*Mumbai*

Your magazine is doing yeoman service for silvers with useful suggestions to overcome problems related to depression and loneliness. One of the major problems that silvers face—especially those living alone—is the prospect of sudden illness. Even if the caretaker has the presence of mind to call a doctor, the concept of a 'family doctor' is fast disappearing—except in villages and small towns. These days, doctors in most cities refuse to make house calls even in an emergency.

The sheer touch and advice of the family doctor, even if he or she is a general physician, can offer tremendous reassurance to silvers. I recall how my father was highly respected and loved for being a friend and guide as well as a family doctor for most families in Tirupur in Tamil half a century ago. Just like neighbourhood schooling, it would be wonderful to have a 'neighbourhood' doctor—not necessarily a specialist. Groups of 30 to 40 silvers can pay an annual nominal amount as maintenance fee apart from the charges for emergency visits. Instead of any group of individuals, this service can be more efficiently and easily put together by organisations like the Rotary, The Lions Club or *Harmony*. This will be especially beneficial for old couples as many do not like to opt for senior citizens' homes.

**PARVATHY SUNDARAM**

*Chennai*

## CONTRIBUTOR



"My parents and maternal grandmother taught me that gender or age need not be constraining," says writer **Vrinda Nabar**, who offers her take on feminism and ageing in 'At Large' this month.

Nabar, who turned 60 this March, studied at Mumbai and Oxford and was chair of English at Mumbai University when she threw up her job in her 40s. She worked briefly as a senior consultant with the Tata Group and has always freelanced for Indian newspapers, writing on literature, the arts, gender and culture. Her publications include the academic bestseller *Caste as Woman*; *The Endless Female Hungers: A Study of Kamala Das*; *The Bhagavad-Gita* (introduction and translation); and other co-edited volumes. She has been a consultant to the Literature Department of The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK, and continues to teach as visiting professor at Northwestern University, Evanston, USA. Nabar lives in Mumbai.

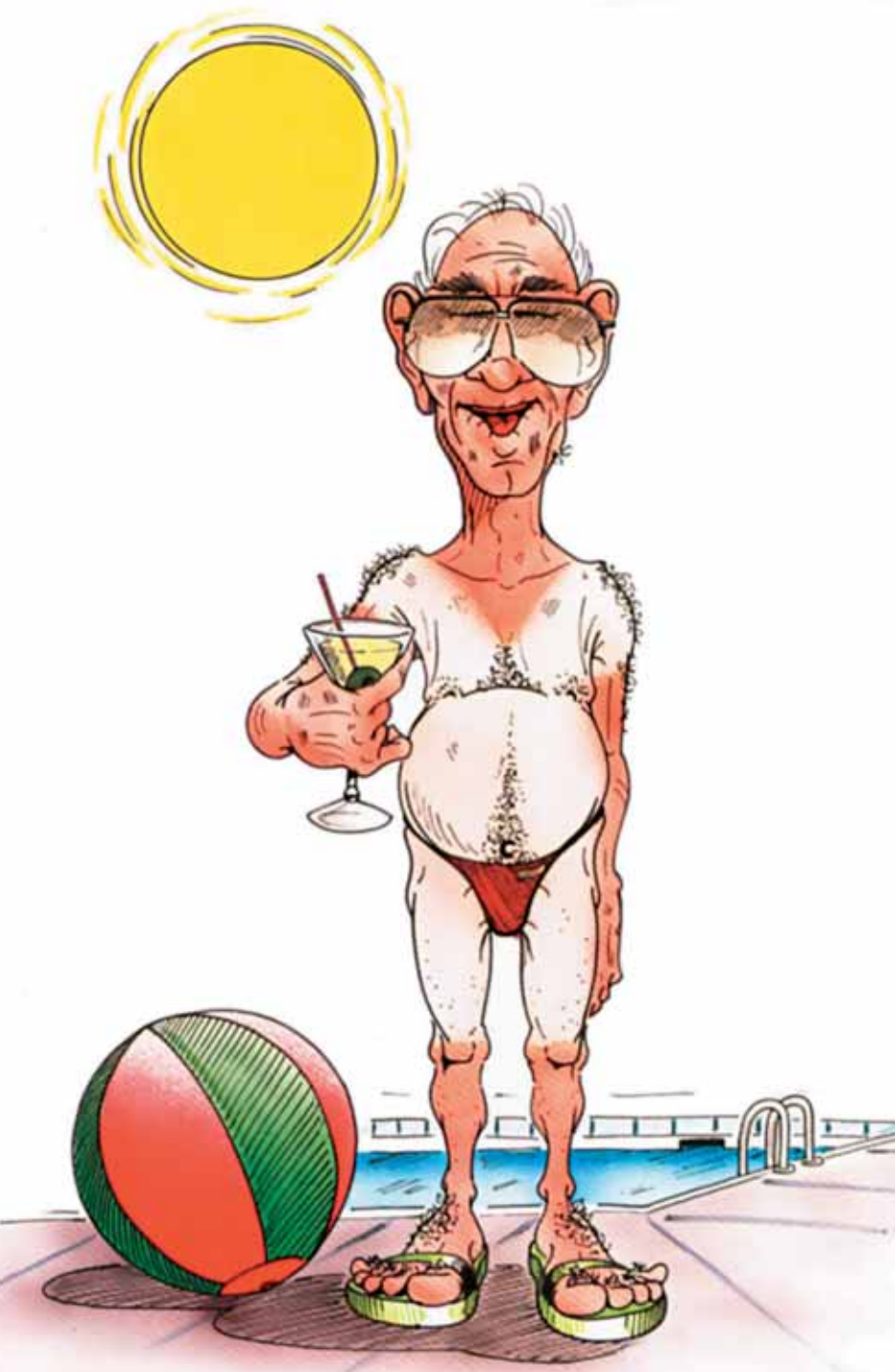
## ANALYSE THIS

### THE SILVER PITCH

Silvers are actually virgin territory for e-commerce (online) businesses world over. As American website *ecommerce-guide.com* reports, there are now more than 10 million silvers surfing the Internet in the US, looking for information, products and services—and most companies, which have always catered to the ‘young demographic’, are completely unprepared to deal with them. Here are the website’s ‘golden rules’ to capture a piece of the silver market.

■ **Know who you are selling to:** While younger folks may need a lot of colour and noise on their websites, silvers want information. And they want it packaged simply, efficiently and conveniently. Also, most active silvers don’t perceive themselves as ‘old’ and ‘has been’—something no marketer should forget.

■ **Optimise your site for an older audience:** Often most elderly find the small font size on websites very frustrating. So, apart from keeping the site simple and uncluttered, allow users to choose the font size so they can read with ease. Label buttons, tabs and menu items clearly. Use dark colours for text that contrast with the background colour. Never use reverse





type, such as white on a dark background. Make it easy to navigate, with back buttons, links to other pages or categories, and a link to the home page on every page. And use pop-ups as sparingly as possible.

■ **Show that you are trustworthy:** Credibility is a huge issue for older online shoppers. They primarily look for trusted brands or brands that are affiliated with well-known organisations. Another way to gain trust is to display a 'Secure Site Certification' on the site and to have a comprehensive 'About Us' section that explains who the marketer is.

■ **Offer products and services that provide value:** Everyone likes a good deal—and most silvers insist on it. Thus, giving them enough of a choice in terms of price range makes them feel empowered, not forced into buying a product.

■ **List a toll-free customer service number on every page:** Silver shoppers need an avenue for live communication—they may want to enquire about something they see on the site or even just call to say thank you once they receive a package.

■ **Make checkout easy:** The process of checkout—the actual process of choosing your purchase, entering your address details, paying and leaving the site—should be quick, easy and non-frustrating. So it's important to give easy-to-follow directions and prompts; give customers plenty of space to type in their information; and clearly state costs, including shipping.

## MEDIA WATCH

### REPORT ON ABUSE



In April 2006, a 'Roundtable on Elder Abuse' was organised in Pune by the India chapter of the International Longevity Centre, the Government of Western Australia, and the Singapore Action Group on Elders (SAGE). Harmony for Silvers Foundation had participated in this event along with representatives from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Singapore, Malaysia, Western Australia and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). Now, the International Longevity Centre (India) has published the proceedings of the conference in the form of a slim book, *Elder Abuse: The South Asian Context*. Apart from the keynote addresses, the book contains reports on elder abuse from India, Singapore, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Western Australia. To get a copy of the book—it's priced at Rs 25—email International Longevity Centre (India) at [longevetic@gmail.com](mailto:longevetic@gmail.com); call 020-65002595, 25862844/45; or write to CASP Bhavan, Survey No. 132/2, Plot No. 3 Pashan-Baner Link Road, Pune-21. For highlights, go to [www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org)

### A NEW SPACE

Taking a cue from the success of social networking websites like Facebook, Orkut and MySpace, British charity Age Concern has launched *Finerday.com*, a commercial website exclusively for silvers that enables them to network and stay in touch with their families. The site is easy to use with bright colours and large icons for features, such as 'Messages', 'Photos', etc. One option, 'Send a Gift', takes you to international brands with suggestions customised for silvers. Soon, Age Concern hopes to offer registered users of the site in the UK a discounted package that includes an Internet connection and a computer designed for silvers.



## NEWSWORTHY

### GETTING YOUR ACT TOGETHER

Here's the latest on the **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens' Act 2007**. The buzz in Delhi's Department of Social Welfare is that the rules for constituting a maintenance tribunal in the city have been framed and the file is now pending at the office of Lieutenant-Governor Tejendra Khanna. The Act lays down that it is the obligation of an adult child or grandchild to maintain senior citizens and ensure that they are able to lead a normal life. It also has provisions for a monthly maintenance amount of a maximum of Rs 10,000 that children are liable to pay in case they neglect their elders. Failure to pay this amount or any fine would result in an imprisonment of up to a month. These matters will be decided by a maintenance tribunal in each sub-division, which will be a body comprising three members (a sub-divisional magistrate and two social workers).

"We have got a few queries from the LG's office about the operational aspect of the Act, like the



financial implication of setting up a tribunal," says Debashree Mukherjee, secretary, Department of Social Welfare. "We are expecting an approval from them in 15-20 days." Once the tribunals are constituted, the Act will begin to be implemented in the city. We'll keep you posted.



### ANGER IN ASSAM

Silvers in Guwahati are angry — with reason. Last year, the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) had announced that it would set up parks exclusively for the elderly in the city. But the scheme has not got off the ground because the GMDA claims that there are no suitable, vacant plots available, reports *The Telegraph*. "There is an urgent need to set up parks in the city where senior citizens can go, relax and pass time in a safe, secure environment without any constraints," says a representative of the Guwahati Senior Citizens' Association. "It's sad that **the state government has not been able to create recreational amenities for the elderly in a fast growing city like Guwahati.**" The city is home to 700,000 silvers.

SHUBHAMOY B



## SELF-HELP

Over 2,000 silvers from tribal villages in Ranchi, Hazaribagh and Gumla districts of Jharkhand are reaping the benefits of 'Vridha Sangh', an initiative of NGO HelpAge India launched in December 2006. Under this project, **silvers have formed self-help groups and set up a court—Vridha Adalat—to resolve disputes related to property and family.**

"It is basically a localised concept as there is no Panchayat Raj system in the state," says Debabrata Ghosh, programme advisor of HelpAge India in Bihar and Jharkhand. "It's a step forward in our 'Elders for Elders' movement." These elderly citizens have also been made aware of their rights and government schemes such as old age pensions and Indira Awas Yojana so that they cannot be duped by middlemen. "Earlier they were making innumerable rounds of the district bloc office for availing old age pension, often paying almost 50 per cent of their monthly income as bribe," adds Ghosh. "Now, members of the

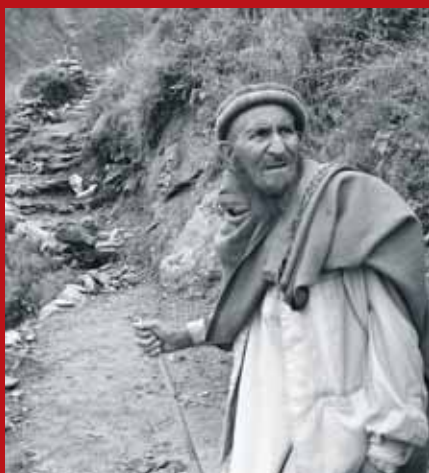


**HelpAge India**

Vridha Adalat help them with all procedures—from filling up various forms to following up at the bloc. Soon it will be a seamless process."

Another aspect of the project is the formation of 'Vridha Mitra' at the village level—these groups of

local boys visit silvers in their neighbourhood and take their problems to the authorities. Next, the Adalat will try and address the emotional needs of the elderly. A relevant move, considering that a recent WHO survey reports a steep rise in cases of depression in rural India.



**Pilot programme:** Pakistan's Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education will soon launch a **pilot programme for the welfare of senior citizens** countrywide. Under this initiative, silvers from every province will be selected to be part of a '**Senior Citizens' Welfare Council**', which will address a range of issues, including early settlement of pension cases; geriatric care; special concessions for silvers; better facilities for the elderly in public places; and welfare homes.

## LOVE THAT!

### FATHER TIME

"Clocks are second only to my wife," proclaims Robert Coffin. The 90 year-old first repaired a clock as a teenager in the small seaside village of Harrington in Maine. He has collected, sold, made and fixed clocks ever since, reports *The New York Times*. Today, **Coffin is among a dwindling number of craftsmen who repair antique wooden clocks** in the region.

Coffin served in the Army, completed a degree in engineering and worked at the Torrington Company, a manufacturer of ball-bearings, until he settled down to retirement with his wife Eleanor in 1974. He bought an old shipyard and converted it into an antiques store, all the while making and repairing clocks. Ten years ago, he closed the antiques shop to



concentrate exclusively on clocks. Coffin still drives to a job, and charges \$ 45 (approximately Rs 2,000) an hour, although he

prefers to work at home. There, while he works on clocks that run on cogs and springs—"nothing electric"—he tells time on an electronic one. "I don't have to wind it."



### NOW, YOU SEA IT...

This July, 150 silvers in the British towns of Luton and Dunstable went on a three-day 'cruise' around the Mediterranean—without stepping out of their care homes. This '**virtual cruise**' was arranged by British healthcare organisation Bupa after a national survey revealed that more than a third of the UK's silvers had not been abroad for more than five years owing to health problems and financial constraints. On this special 'cruise', residents of the St Mary's Nursing Centre in Dunstable Road, Luton, and Ridgeway Lodge Residential Home, in Brandreth Avenue, Dunstable, sampled French, Greek, Italian and Spanish food and wine, watched European films, and learnt how to dance the can-can and flamenco. "We had the time of our lives," 74 year-old Marge Baker, resident at St Mary's, tells newspaper *Luton Today*. "I went to Paris on a holiday 45 years ago but this was even better! For one thing, we didn't have to worry about rain."



## FACE OFF

### ENTER THE DRAGON

An exotic pink-skinned fruit with white polka dotted flesh could be the latest weapon in the fight against ageing. According to ingredients supplier Israeli Biotechnology Research (IBR), **extract from dragon fruit battles lines and wrinkles and tightens the skin, making it younger looking and healthier.** As the colourful fruit is part of the cactus family, IBR claims it has developed a defence mechanism against harsh conditions that can be transmitted to the skin to cope with today's harsh environment. The company will soon release this extract in the form of 'IBR-Dragon' to cosmeceutical firms for incorporation in their products, reports website [cosmeticsdesign-europe.com](http://cosmeticsdesign-europe.com)



**Super study:** An ongoing study in New South Wales (NSW), Australia, '45 and Up', has now recruited over 125,000 participants, making it the **largest ageing study in the southern hemisphere.** The study is run by The Sax Institute, a coalition of universities and research centres in NSW, in partnership with The Cancer Council NSW; the National Heart Foundation of Australia; NSW Health; beyondblue, a national depression initiative; and the NSW Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care (DADHC). It seeks to examine the factors associated with greater independence, mental health and wellbeing in later life.





## OFFBEAT

### THEIR TIME

The California Supreme Court's recent decision to lift the ban on gay marriage comes as music to the ears of gay American silvers, many of whom were persecuted in their youth for their sexual orientation, reports newspaper *The Oakland Tribune*. "I had friends who got arrested during raids at nightclubs," says Bobbie Jarvis, 74, of Fremont, California. Jarvis plans to marry her partner of 32 years, Meg Bruynell on 10 August, the day Bruynell turns 70. "I want to do it before one of us departs," she says. "I feel it would solidify our relationship and put the cherry on top." Another happy couple is John Ellefsen, 75, of Hayward, California, and his 70 year-old partner, Lawrence Fincham. They went to Vancouver in Canada two-and-a-half years ago to tie the knot, after 11 years together. With the new ruling, their Canadian marriage will be considered legal in California too. "It feels like it is a validation of our relationship," says Ellefsen.

## WILD SILVER

### OH BABY!

Did you know that a 40 year-old eagle is about 110 in human years? That's why the staff at Assiniboine Park Zoo in Winnipeg, in the Canadian province of Manitoba, was astounded when **two elderly bald eagles hatched and raised two chicks**. "It's rare for eagles to live to be 30," the zoo's curator Bob Wrigley tells news website *edmontonsun.com*, "and these two eagles are in their 40s. It's even more interesting when you equate their age to human years because it would be impossible to breed at that stage for humans."



**Pension plus:** The Madhya Pradesh government has announced that it will provide **pension to senior citizens who have been evicted from their homes** and are living in old age homes. Old widows, dependent on others, will be included in the same category.



## EVENTS

### DESIGN DIALOGUE

To explore the relevance and impact of design in influencing the quality of life of silvers, the International Federation on Ageing (IFA), in partnership with Ageing Design Montréal (ADM), will hold a **Global Conference on Ageing and Expo Ageing & Design in Montréal, Canada from 4-7 September 2008**. The conference will feature an interactive programme with panel sessions, specialist highlight sessions and workshops. Exhibitors will showcase the latest innovations in products, technologies, ageing and design that can support people as they age. To learn more, visit [www.ageingdesignmontreal.ca](http://www.ageingdesignmontreal.ca) or [www.ifa-fiv.org](http://www.ifa-fiv.org)



### DEALING WITH DEMENTIA



ARDSI – Bangalore Chapter

Dementia is expected to reach epidemic proportions in Asia in the next decade. Unfortunately, compared to many other countries, India still has a long way to go to provide adequate care and support to people suffering from dementia. To address this lacuna, the Alzheimer's & Related Disorders Society of India (ARDSI) is holding a conference titled **National Conference & Dementia Care & Research: A Roadmap for India on 27 and 28 September 2008 at the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru**. Topics on the agenda include clinical aspects of dementia; advances in treatment; genetics of dementia; mild cognitive impairment; early diagnosis; community care and services; rehabilitation; training and research; medico-legal and social aspects; and networking and advocacy. For more details, go to [www.dementiabangalore.com/8AnnualMeet/Home\\_8AnnualMeet.aspx](http://www.dementiabangalore.com/8AnnualMeet/Home_8AnnualMeet.aspx)

## FIRST RESORT

### IMPACT FOR SILVERS

Punjab-based real-estate developer Impact Group recently announced that it will invest **Rs 1 billion to develop a residential project in Amritsar for silvers**. "We are targeting retired bureaucrats, army officers and NRIs for the project," Vinay Singhal, director of the group, tells media. "We will have 250 apartments ranging from Rs 3.5 million to Rs 8 million per unit." Impact has already tied up with healthcare firm Fortis and financial services firm Religare to provide specialised services to residents. The complex is expected to be ready by the end of 2009.



## H RECOMMENDS

### ACTION PLAN FOR AUGUST

**Picture your life.** Ever thought of sharing your life with your grandchildren in the form of a collage? That's what silvers in Calgary in the Canadian province of Alberta did when they took part in the Seniors' Social Link (SSL) Heritage Collage Programme this June. "Everyone did something different to represent themselves," says Annastasia Sommer, volunteer manager of the Calgary Seniors' Resource Society, which organised the programme. For instance, while Sheila and Larry Lockrem, both in their 60s, created a traditional photo collage, septuagenarian Linda Wong, who came to Calgary from Hong Kong in 1959 drew a series of pictures because she "didn't want to just cut up stuff; I wanted to do it with my heart".



**Visit a friend for tea.** Even such a simple act can raise your happiness quotient, according to new research by the University of Queensland and the University of New South Wales in Australia. The study compared social activities and social satisfaction of people aged 66 to 91 to those aged 18 to 30 and found that silvers are just as satisfied with their social lives as the young because they seem to get much more from the few interactions they have. "The elderly are better at finding the good in their daily events," says psychologist Bill von Hippel of the University of Queensland. "It seems life experience gives you the ability to stop and smell the flowers."



**Get on your bike.** Whether done outdoors or on a stationary bike at home, cycling is proven to keep your heart healthy, your muscles toned and strong, and your weight down. It also helps reduce depression and stress and generally elevates your mood. Take a cue from the Manawatu Masters Cycling Club in Manawatu, New Zealand. The club has over 170 registered riders—most members are in their 40s or 50s, with some members as old as 76. "People are starting to get more active," says club spokesman Mike Keenan. "This time next year we could break 200."





“Godrej Renew Powder Hair Colour gives me rich colour with gentleness and shine.”

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## LIFE IS POETRY



JIT RAY

Passion for poetry: at 83, Singh is working on her second book of poems

Three years ago, at the age of 80, I published my first book—a collection of poems that I had written at various stages of my life. Though I have been writing poetry for a long time, I never consciously intended to have it published. However, a close friend of mine was very keen that I publish them.

**"I encourage my silver friends to seek out their hidden talents"**

Before I knew it, she put me in touch with a publisher and my first book *Khiddu* [ball] was out.

*Khiddu* is a collection of 62 poems—18 in Punjabi and 44 in Hindi. Though they are provoked by the oppression and subjugation of women, I have tried to infuse a positive spirit in my words. I believe that a woman, like a ball, can always bounce back from the worst adversities.

My book was launched at the Khalsa College Auditorium in Mumbai. Though I had attended

many book launches in the past, I had never imagined that I would be sitting on a dais one day, reading out my poems to an audience. It was an emotional moment. I later wrote a poem on former president Dr Abdul Kalam and sent it to him. He sent me a letter of appreciation and was kind enough to meet me when he visited Mumbai. In fact, recently my son was delighted to find some of my poems online on the website of the Association of Punjabis in North America (APNA).

I have fractured my back twice and I have had knee replacement surgery on both knees, but I am too busy to notice the aches and pains of old age these days. Another book of poetry is on the anvil and I am also writing a book on my family's journey from Lahore to India after Partition. Next on my agenda is to learn how to use computers and buy a laptop.

I believe life is full of wonderful surprises. I encourage all my silver friends to seek out their hidden talents. It's up to us to rediscover ourselves.

—Bansi Singh, Mumbai

## MUSIC IN OUR HEARTS

I run the Institute of Modern Music in Pune. I am a professional musician and an ardent fan of the famous music director duo Shankar-Jaikishan. In 1986, I got together with other Shankar Jaikishan or S-J fans—as we refer to each other—in Pune and formed the Shankar Jaikishan Music Circle. Today our group has 30 members. We regularly jam at each other's homes performing instrumental music and singing their songs. Now, we have started a Shankar-Jaikishan Community on [www.orkut.com](http://www.orkut.com) where more than 700 members—from different age groups—discuss their music.

In early 1987, when Shankar expressed a desire to have a 'Shankar-Jaikishan Nite' in Pune, I was thrilled to accept the proposal to organise the orchestra. Our jubilation was short-lived—Shankar died on 26 April 1987. His demise was a big blow to our group. The year after that, on his first death anniversary, we gathered at a friend's residence and





Kulkarni: keeping the music alive

played some of S-J's hits on the accordion as homage to the dynamic duo. From that day on, we always meet on 26 April and 12 September—the death anniversaries of Shankar and Jaikishan.

On 22 September 1993, our group organised a tribute, *Rasik Balama*, on Jaikishan's 22nd death anniversary. Zapata, the famous orchestra, performed at the Balgandharva Rangamandir in Pune. The unique feature of the programme was the group of eight violinists conducted by Nandu Chawathe, a musician from S-J's troupe. Similarly, on Shankar's 15th death anniversary, we held an audio-visual programme at Tilak Smarak. Original tracks of S-J's hit songs were played and stalwarts aired their views on the various musical scores.

Though we have heard their songs hundreds of times, S-J's compositions reveal new, unexplored nuances even today. I was 42 when I started the group. Now I am 66. Shankar and Jaikishan are no more, but their music continues to enrich my life.

—Suhaschandra Kulkarni, Pune

## SILVER RETREAT

I am 66 years old. I have been a schoolteacher for more than 30 years of my life. At present, I am the director of my family business. Over the years, I have surrounded myself with brilliant people from various walks of life, most of them silvers. I have noted a peculiar characteristic among us silvers—after we are free of our responsibilities, we believe that we have outlived our usefulness. To dispel this dreary outlook, I am planning to start a silvers'

commune in Kerala. This place will not be an old age home but a community of silvers who are encouraged to live their life the way they want to. There will be no pressure to conform to any rules, as long as they stay within the boundaries of law.

I own 15 acres of land in Palghat in northern Kerala in the midst of which is my cottage where I retreat for vacations. The landscape is serene and tranquil. I plan to start by building one-bedroom cottages with all amenities: library, medical facilities, swimming pool, restaurant and meditation halls. Electric cars will be available on hire if residents want to visit places of worship or leisure. Guesthouses will also be available on rent for visitors. The cottages will be sold at a reasonable cost and will go back to the trust upon the demise of its owner, to be resold again. This community is intended for

**“As silvers there is a lot we can do for society and for each other”**



Courtesy: ANANDI RAMACHANDRAN

Home sweet home: Ramachandran is working on offering a more cheerful alternative to old age homes

an educated circle of silvers who want to retire into a suitable environment and contribute to society. The project is scheduled to start next year and I will be inviting my friends to stay in the cottages to obtain their valuable suggestions.

So, let's forget the aching bones and the wrinkles. As silvers, there is a lot that we can do for society and for each other.

—Anandi Ramachandran, Dubai

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SAMIR PATHAK

# A new space

Manvendra Singh Gohil is building an old age home in Gujarat for gay silvers.  
Rafat Quadri reports

For homosexuals across the world, who continue to battle discrimination and prejudice, ageing brings even greater social isolation. In the West, social activists have increasingly focused on the plight of ageing gays, launching drives to educate care providers. In India, however,

with homosexuality being declared a criminal practice under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, no one has looked out for this segment of the population.

Until now. In October 2007, Manvendra Singh Gohil of the erstwhile royal family of Rajpipla

in Gujarat announced that he was building an old age home for gay silvers in the peaceful and picturesque Kumbheshwar, on the banks of the Narmada. His objective: to help gay silvers, especially those suffering from HIV/AIDS, and battle loneliness. The 46 year-old is building the home under the aegis of his own



Narmada Har Seva Ashram and his partner Sylvester Merchant's NGO Lakshya Trust.

The home will be built on two acres of land donated by Canada-based septuagenarian Jayant Trivedi. At a capital outlay between Rs 250 million and Rs 300 million, efforts are on to get 11 more acres for the home. "The home is essentially meant for gay elderly," says Gohil. "But it will be open to all, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, gender and sexuality." While there are several such homes in developed countries, this is the first of its kind in India.

As the project makes steady progress, Gohil is optimistic. "I hope other well-known gays also come forward and make similar homes in India," says Gohil, who won a UNAIDS Award in 2006 for his 13 years of work to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS. "The movement is already gaining momentum and people with similar intentions call to ask for advice and help." Call it a sign of solidarity or the new-found confidence amongst the gay community in India, according to Gohil these callers are eager to contribute to the project.

Gohil, who appeared on popular American TV show *Oprah* in October 2007 to speak about his 'coming out' experience, says he was motivated to build a home for gay silvers by his own personal experiences and observations as an activist. "One must admit that old age is a fact of life," he says. "I have seen that most men, irrespective of their sexuality, need a companion or support when they age. Ageing involves both emotional and



VILAS KALGUTKER

Daring to be different: Manvendra Singh Gohil

***"The movement is already gaining momentum and people with similar intentions call to ask for advice"***

physical changes. Ageing and being gay is not an easy combination." Merchant adds, "For homosexual men who have refused conventional marriages and decided to live a single life, it's all the more important to have a support system during old age. In such cases, an old age home is a necessity." According to Gohil, while heterosexual men

and women have access to a lot of facilities in their later years, homosexuals are subjected to terrible discrimination. "They are disrespected, shunned and mistreated all the more," says Gohil in a soft yet undaunted voice. "All these thoughts troubled me and motivated me to dream of an old age home for gay elderly."



SAMIR PATHAK

Partner in the cause: chief project officer Sylvester Merchant

## ***"I want the same hospice to serve the general population so as not to alienate homosexual silvers"***

The home will comprise two buildings—the home and a 200-bed hospice for the terminally ill and those suffering from AIDS. Also meant for the general population, the hospice will be equipped with a blood bank, oxygen supply, pathological labs and medical staff quarters. "I do not want to create any kind of segregation in the facilities that we offer. I want the same hospice to serve the general population in the neighbourhood, so as not to socially alienate homosexual silvers," says Gohil who believes that raising awareness about alternate sexuality is the only way to bring a change in social attitudes. "Creating awareness in

neighbouring areas is a part of our plan, so there is no question of protest from society for opening this home."

At the home, other facilities will include yoga, meditation, music therapy, counselling centre, library, recreation and even a crematorium. "I am a trained yoga teacher from the Yoga Institute in Mumbai and I am also a student of music and realise the immense benefit of music in relieving stress," says Gohil, who also feels passionately about environmental issues. He has planned the home as an eco-friendly project that will use non-conventional energy

resources in the form of biogas, wind energy, solar energy and other alternative sources. Other activities like gardening and involving the silvers in community kitchen are also on the agenda so people living at the home can contribute to the society in their own way.

Initially, the home will accommodate 50 people and will grow gradually, depending on availability of funds. Gohil is also looking at the home as a platform for employment opportunities for gays. "We plan to employ them as nursing staff, in the kitchen and at counselling centres," he says. "It will empower them financially so they can withstand social pressure to get married. It will also help reduce commercial sex activity and thereby the vulnerability to HIV." Gohil expects the home to be ready in two years. ■



WHO SAYS  
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CRUSADING  
KNIGHT  
NEEDS  
SHINING  
ARMOUR?



Is he less of a hero if he's carrying a dull wooden cane instead? If you are happy to give a hero his due wherever you may find him, your chance will come at Harmony Silver Awards 2008. An event that honours senior citizens whose age has only added fuel to the fire burning in their heroic hearts.





# Theatre's TITAN

His latest play *Wedding Album* has finally arrived on stage, 40 years after he first penned it. Actor, director and playwright **Girish Karnad** steps out from behind the scenes in an interview with **Rajashree Balaram**

**T**he café outside Prithvi Theatre in suburban Mumbai is buzzing. Struggling actors and writers are huddled together at the tables blowing lazy smoke-rings into an air already thick with humidity. I am halfway through my second cup of *masala chai* when Girish Karnad walks in—right on time. Despite the cacophony, I can discern the subtle nudges and whispers triggered by his arrival. Even dressed in a simple blue cotton *kurta*, his natural charisma is tough to downplay.

At 70, he doesn't look his age, though he looks slightly frazzled having come straight from the airport—he has flown in from Bengaluru to join other theatre luminaries to felicitate director Satyadev Dubey, the doyen of Indian theatre. "I'll have whatever you're having," he says, depositing his leather laptop case on the table. As I place the order for chicken patties and *chai* I can't help but wonder if my choice is slightly plebeian for this celebrated playwright and uncommon man.

Critics, however, argue that his latest offering *Wedding Album* is as common as it gets. The play, which is travelling all over India and will soon go abroad, centres on a wedding in a middle class family. Beneath the bonhomie, old insecurities simmer to the surface revealing the hidden layers in each person. Juicy, all right, critics carp; but not as thought provoking as his earlier works. Typically, it doesn't faze him.

Karnad's first play *Yayati*, which won him the Mysore State Award in 1962, reflected on the emotional intimidation of the young by the old through the story of king Yayati who, to escape the curse of premature old age, asks his son Puru to bear his ordeal. *Yayati*

**“I am not one of those people who thinks the world is going to the dogs. I prefer to look at the younger generation as my rivals—that spurs me on to think ahead of time and stay young at heart”**

---

illustrated the influence of the *yakshagana* performances that Karnad had seen while growing up in Sirsi in rural Karnataka. It also mirrored his own inner tug-of-war—a freshly minted Rhodes scholar wanting to explore the world and the son of a Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmin family caught in familial ties.

His second play *Tughlaq* moved away from the self to accommodate the upheaval of the world around him with the story of Mohammad Bin-Tughlaq whose lofty aspirations for his kingdom festered into a reign of tyranny. The play won Karnad the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1964.

Yet it was *Hayavadana* in 1972 that showcased the genius in him. Based on a story from 11th century Kashmiri author Somadeva's *Vetalpanchvimshika* and German novelist Thomas Mann's *The Transposed Heads*, it questioned the crux of man's identity: Is it his mind or is it his body? Later, *Nagamandala*, with its tale-within-a-tale plot based on two Kannada folktales and *Agni Mattu Male* on the torment of human choices, were also applauded both nationally and internationally.

“His plays may be anchored in mythology but they are written in a manner that helps us reinterpret our times,” says film director Saeed Mirza. Mirza was a student at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune

when Karnad was the director of the institute in the mid-1970s. Those were turbulent years when FTII witnessed its earliest student unrest. He can't forget the bitter face-off between students and Karnad. “He was immensely stoic against all the demands that we put him through.”

Stoic he still is but conventional he isn't. Although *Wedding Album* may make us wonder whether he is finally learning to play safe after his mythological spectacles, his political stance shows that Karnad only does and says what he believes in. In 2004, he stepped down from the jury of the Mumbai International Film Festival when 30 films were rejected purely because of their controversial political content. Whether it was condemning the demolition of Babri Masjid, speaking out against the political manipulation of communal tensions on the Idgah Maidan controversy in Bengaluru or voicing his opinion on the Kaveri river issue, Karnad does it all without ever sitting on the fence.

I am still talking to him when head of Prithvi Theatre Sanjna Kapoor approaches our table to greet Karnad with a warm hug. As budding theatre actors train their mobile phone cameras at him, he smiles. I couldn't help but remember what he had once said in an interview: “The playwright always carries his audience within him.”

## EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:

**Harmony: You don't look 70.**

**Karnad:** Probably because I am not one of those people who thinks the world is going to the dogs [laughs]. I think the world is a very exciting place right now... the technology and the explosion of ideas and opportunities makes me wish I was younger! Instead of feeling left behind, I prefer to look at the younger generation as my rivals—that spurs me on to think ahead of time and stay young at heart.

**How do you view ageing?**

Luckily I come from a family that's blessed with longevity—my father passed away at 92, and my mother died when she was 96. Neither of them suffered from any major ailments, nor do I. I enjoy the experience but I am not too sure if I want to live that long. I belong to a generation that believed in taking care of their parents in their old age. I don't think it's fair to expect that from my children. Today children lead such hectic lives—often far removed from their parents.

**Your outlook towards the youth is reflected in *Wedding Album*...**

The idea sprang up 40 years ago with my sister's wedding. Of course, weddings today are different—now even if two





RANGA SHANKARA THEATRE

Guiding Arundhati Nag through the rehearsals of *Bikhre Bimb*, the only play Karnad directed

people are living in different countries, they have already known each through email, SMS and Internet chat. Nevertheless, the turmoil created in a family when a daughter gets married—the tensions, the sadness, and the insecurities—remains the same.

**It must be gratifying to finally see it on stage...**

I finished writing *Wedding Album* only a couple of months ago as I had to renovate it to suit contemporary reality. Lilette Dubey, who directed the play, was not happy with the way it ended on stage. So we bounced ideas and came up with a new ending.

**Are you at times disappointed with the director's interpretation of your work?**

There is no such thing as the playwright's interpretation. The

more interpretations there are, the better the play. Different directors approach things differently and stress on different nuances. Look at the different interpretations of *Hamlet*.

**Your detractors feel your plays are based on arcane myths.**

*Bikhre Bimb* is not about arcane myths. Nor is *Wedding Album*. I have been condemned of being far removed from contemporary reality. But then people are always eager to slot you.

**Don't you ever feel compelled to direct your own plays?**

When I was in college, I excelled at everything: painting, poetry, singing, music, acting. At 18, I decided to give up painting because I knew I could only be a good painter—not a great one. At 22, I gave up the idea of

becoming a poet because I don't believe in wasting time doing something at which I will only be mediocre; I much prefer being the best at whatever I do. Similarly, I know that I am a reasonably good director but I am not among the best. I am happiest being a playwright—it's a process that consumes me.

***Yayati*, which you wrote at the age of 23, mirrored your inner conflict of wanting to settle abroad after completing your studies in Oxford and returning to India. Do your plays often mirror your inner conflict?**

It's only in retrospect that I realised that *Yayati* mirrored my inner tug-of-war. We always borrow the most creative ideas from our own experiences. It need not always be a conflict though. It can be small elements of day-to-day life that are

engraved into our subconscious and show up in our work.

**You were commissioned to write plays for the Haymarket Theatre in London and the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. What was the experience like?**

The audience abroad loved *Nagamandala* but could not make sense of *Bali*, which is a more complex play steeped in our ethos. Though I would enjoy it if my plays went worldwide, at the end of the day every writer is able to do full justice when he writes for his native audience.

**How was your stint at the Nehru Centre in London?**

I enjoyed it thoroughly. I was exposed to such a variety of creative expressions. Any theatre, as long as it's good theatre, should be savoured. For instance, I saw a Kabuki play recently when I had been to Japan. It was marvellous.

**From a small village in Sirsi to Rhodes Scholar to film star to director of Nehru Centre in London, how do you balance your middle-class upbringing with your modern worldview?**

It has lot to do with the generation I belong to. Most of us have moved to cities after spending a significant part of our lives in villages. So it's easy to stay rooted to ground realities. I am proud to be part of a generation that has been witness to the most radical era in Indian history.

**People generally consider Delhi and Mumbai to be vibrant when it comes to theatre. Do you feel isolated in Bengaluru?**

## Mythology and more...



THE PRIME TIME THEATRE COMPANY



RANGA SHANKARA THEATRE

Scenes from *Wedding Album* and *Nagamandala*

### *Yayati* (1961)

The play illustrates the taut tension between old age and youth and drives home the human obsession for eternity.

### *Tughlaq* (1964)

The descent of an over-ambitious Mughal king whose honourable intentions are overshadowed by his callous demeanour.

### *Hayavadana* (1972)

The plot, borrowed from an ancient collection of stories in Sanskrit, ponders the equation between human identity and relationships.

### *Nagamandala* (1988)

Akin to a *matrushka* doll, the tale within a tale urges the audience to look at societal mores in a new light.

### *Taledanda* (1990)

A stark display of the descent of a civil, cultured society into anarchy and terror. Winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award.

### *The Fire and the Rain* (1995)

A drought-stricken village provides the backdrop for an insightful study on greed, jealousy and violence.

### *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (1997)

Commissioned by BBC Radio in 1997 to commemorate 50 years of Indian independence, *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* looks into the secret aspirations of one of the most dynamic rulers in Indian history.

### *Bali* (2002)

Based on the 13th century Kannada epic *Yashodha Charite*, *Bali* underlines the Jain philosophy of non-violence and shows us that the chasm between thought and action is not as wide as we presume.

### *Bikhre Bimb* (2005)

Arundhati Nag plays a passable Kannada writer who ultimately gains fame after she ventures into English writing.

### *Flowers* (2007)

A monologue on the life of a priest caught between his passionate love for a courtesan and his love for God.

### *Wedding Album* (2008)

Members of a middle-class family congregate for the younger daughter's wedding when old secrets, fears and jealousies bubble to the surface.





In a pensive mood at Prithvi Theatre in Mumbai, a favourite haunt

I shifted to Bengaluru in the 1980s for my children's education. My wife Saraswati [a doctor; she also runs an NGO] and I felt Mumbai was becoming far too crowded. Most schools had 80 children per class at the primary level. We were very keen to provide our children the best education. I gave up my career in films, but I have no regrets, and shifted to Bengaluru to enroll my children at Rishi Valley School.

I do miss the vibrant theatre scene in Mumbai, but I don't miss the city as much. I would have preferred living in Pune.

**Do you think Mumbai has changed since you left the city?**

Completely. I was in Mumbai in the 1960s and 1970s. I lived in my father's flat in Mahim. Most of my theatre friends were close by. We would congregate at a

hall in Tardeo in the heart of Mumbai where an industrialist had offered space to Satyadev Dubey for rehearsals. We would get drunk and argue about how theatre should be. Everyone in theatre who had nowhere to go would land up there. Those were exciting times as colour television still had not arrived on the scene. Theatre still mattered to a lot of people back then.

**In the preface to your book *Nagamandala*, you mentioned that Satyadev Dubey rebuked you when you first met him as he assumed you wrote in English. How has the relationship endured over the years?**

He was not aware that I wrote in Kannada. We've been at each other's throats often enough [laughs]. It's also because he is so passionate about theatre. At 74, he is full of ideas and an inspiration to actors and directors.

**Do you get in touch with your friends from the film industry when you are in Mumbai?**

Well, Prithvi Theatre is my favourite hangout in Mumbai. I have very few friends in the film industry: Shyam Benegal, Naseeruddin Shah, Rohini Hattangady, Kulbhushan Kharbanda... we were part of the same movement. I did not network much, because I acted in films only to earn a living. If I could earn money by writing plays, I would never have been an actor.

**Do you think theatre is more lucrative now?**

For people who are prolific, yes. For instance, Lilette Dubey's

**“I would like to act in films if the role is big enough and if they are willing to pay me well—which they are not because I am not a big star; but it still thrills me that people think of casting me in a role”**

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group is doing three plays a day and may even soon stage *Wedding Album* abroad. That's the kind of theatre I could never have dreamt of.

**Has the audience evolved over the years?**

The audience has evolved in different ways. Films are so slick these days. Now when I see my own films from the 1970s, I am embarrassed at the quality of editing... it's so slow—what we thought was artistic. The audience back then took longer to absorb a scene. Now they're used to fast cuts, thanks to TV. As for theatre, the traffic is so terrible in the city that people don't want to come home from work and then step out again to watch a play.

**Have you given up acting?**

I have given up professional acting, unless someone offers me an intriguing role. These days, I am shooting for Nagesh Kulkarni's *Ashayein*. I'd like to act in a film if the role is big and if they are willing to pay well—which they are not because I am not a big star. Then again, it thrills me that people still think of casting me in a role. An hour ago, a young director approached me with a role in a film that he is planning to make shortly.

**People liked you a lot in *Swami* where you played a sensitive, undemanding husband.**

Oh yes, *Swami* was quite a hit. Before it was released I would jokingly tell my wife, whom I was courting then, that I would become every college girl's heartthrob. Well, I did manage to become that briefly and also ended up becoming a father figure of sorts [laughs].

**One of your earliest plays *Tughlaq* was an allegory on the politics of the Nehruvian era. Aren't you inspired to write a play on contemporary politics?**

I did not consciously try to reflect the politics of the Nehruvian era in *Tughlaq*, though as a product of those times I am sure I must have been influenced in some way by what was happening around me. If you are responsive to what is happening around you, it's bound to reflect in your work, though not necessarily in a way that you have experienced it.

**It must have been very difficult when you faced public resentment on your stand on the Kaveri river issue recently.**

There was a neutral body sitting on a judgement cogitating for 17 years. And then they pass a referendum, which is immediately criticised as anti-Karnataka. Then why elect a neutral body in the first place? There were many who agreed with my viewpoint but did not have the courage to say it aloud. I did and they burnt

my effigies and stoned my house. I had to seek police protection and was confined to my house for over 40 days. They generated all the media hype to gain publicity. Now that the elections are over, everyone's forgotten the issue. Well, good luck to them.

**The female characters in your plays are bold, even defiant. Are you a feminist?**

I was surprised when after *Haya-vadana*, Satyadev Dubey remarked that I was the first Indian playwright to have not condemned a woman for adultery. I don't think I am a feminist. In my family, female emancipation was the norm; no one really thought much about it. My mother was widowed at 19 and she later married my father in 1931. As I lived in a joint family surrounded by female cousins it was natural to be sensitive to female concerns. Look at Shyam Benegal—he has six sisters. No wonder he knows his women so well.

**Who is your worst critic?**

It's important to have a core group of critics whose opinions you take seriously. For me, it's my family and a few friends. And though my wife is very forthright with her views, my children are my worst critics—my son is a freelance journalist based in Delhi, and my daughter is a doctor in England. ■



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# All about VIAGRA

The drug is a breakthrough in treatment of erectile dysfunction and is effective regardless of the cause of the problem, writes **Swati Amar**

**T**en years ago, a little blue pill caused a major global revolution, kindling hope among men frustrated because of sexual dysfunction. Sildenafil citrate or Viagra (as it came to be known worldwide) became the magic mantra for millions, with record sales when it was first launched in 1998. An oral treatment effective because of its rapid absorption and minimal effect on heart rate and blood pressure, it increases inflow and retention of blood in the penis. Viagra has helped a broad range of patients with erectile dysfunction, including those with chronic illness such as multiple sclerosis, history of coronary artery disease, hyper-

tension, other cardiac diseases, peripheral vascular disease, Type 1 or 2 diabetes, depression, spina bifida (a birth defect causing split spine), and spinal cord injury. Viagra improves erections in up to 80 per cent of men who take it regardless of how long they have had a problem, what caused it, or how old they are. It is proven to improve the quality of life of both users and their sexual partners.

## **IS VIAGRA A USEFUL DRUG? HOW DOES IT ACT?**

Invented for erectile dysfunction, Viagra is effective if used rationally. Other drugs for erectile dysfunction (yohimbine, dopamine and serotonin) are not as effective. Taken an hour before sexual

activity, the drug helps to increase rigidity and sustenance of erection. Viagra works by enhancing the effects of nitric oxide, a chemical that relaxes smooth muscles in the penis and allows increased blood flow to cause erection.

## **DOES VIAGRA HAVE ANY SIDE EFFECTS?**

Sildenafil citrate is a relatively safe drug but, as with any pharmaceutical product, there are side effects in some people. It is estimated that only about 2 per cent of users discontinue Viagra because of its side effects. The most commonly reported side effects are headache, flushing of the face and nausea. In very few



cases, it causes stomachache, urinary tract infection, dyspepsia, diarrhoea, dizziness, rashes, and mild and temporary visual changes like colour and light perception changes or blurred vision. Stomachache and vision problems are more common with patients taking higher doses. The intensity and side effects vary from person to person and doctors prescribe the drug after weighing its advantages and disadvantages. Side effects cease on stopping use. Research to improve the effectiveness of the drug and reduce side effects is still on. Other treatments like penile injections or intra-urethral drugs are associated with several side effects such as persistent and painful erection and scarring.

### IS VIAGRA SAFE FOR PEOPLE ON OTHER MEDICATIONS?

Viagra is a prescription drug and should not be taken without consulting a doctor. There are no contraindications for heart patients, but a treadmill test is usually done and a cardiologist consulted before prescribing it. However, doctors don't prescribe the drug to those with high blood pressure. While dosage is more for patients with tuberculosis, a decreased dosage is prescribed for people above 65 years. Viagra works well for diabetics who develop erectile dysfunction if there are no other complications.

The drug is not prescribed in cases with a history of retinitis pigmentosa or retinal detachment. Viagra is also not for people taking common nitrate drugs as it reduces blood pressure, which could suddenly drop to an unsafe or fatal level. Patients taking alpha-blockers for

*Meant for erectile dysfunction, Viagra is effective if used rationally. It should, however, be taken after consulting a doctor*

treatment of high blood pressure or prostate problems should not take more than 25 mg of Viagra at the same time (within four hours). It is advisable to consult a doctor for more information.

### DOES VIAGRA HELP TREAT UROLOGICAL PROBLEMS?

Though the mode of action is not clear, Viagra has shown positive changes in urinary symptoms in

#### Medical checklist before prescribing Viagra



- HIV/AIDS
- Arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat)
- Coronary artery disease
- Heart attack within the past six months
- High or low blood pressure
- Incidence of stroke within the past six months
- Abnormal penis, including curved penis and birth defects
- Bleeding problems
- Retinitis pigmentosa or other retinal abnormalities
- Conditions causing thickened blood or slower blood flow, including leukaemia, multiple myeloma (tumours of the bone marrow), polycythemia, sickle cell disease, and thrombocythemia
- Priapism (erection lasting longer than six hours)
- Heart or blood disease
- Kidney problems
- Liver problems

### VIAGRA IN INDIA

In India, Viagra comes from France. However, several brands of sildenafil citrate are produced in India under different brand names. They are cheaper and equally effective. These include:

- Caverta by Ranbaxy Laboratories Ltd
- Edegra by SUN Pharmaceuticals Industries Ltd
- Kamagra by Exact Pharma
- Penegra by Zydus Cadila Healthcare Ltd

addition to improving sexual function. Many men above 60 have urinary irritative symptoms such as frequent urination, burning sensation and urgency to pass urine. This kind of problem is bothersome and also interferes with sexual desire and performance. Treating these symptoms also improves sexual function.

### DOS AND DON'TS FOR TAKING VIAGRA

Viagra should be taken orally about one hour before sexual activity. The dosage, decided by the doctor, is usually 25-100 mg. Effectiveness of the drug reduces if taken after a heavy meal and the stomach should be at least half empty to help better absorption. Alcohol should not be taken. Sexual intimacy, foreplay and stimulation should be present for the drug to act.



### THE PINK PILL

Almost 50 per cent of women suffer from some form of sexual dysfunction lack of desire, arousal, inability to reach orgasm. While lack of desire is most common, many women experience difficulties with lubrication owing to lack of sexual arousal. Viagra-like drugs for women are believed to help increase lubrication and relax vaginal muscles by increasing blood flow to the genitals.

Female Viagra is, however, not a solution where sexual desire

is inhibited owing to emotional, psychological or other medical factors. Many researchers are convinced that just as prostate surgery and diabetes can lead to erectile dysfunction in men, hysterectomies, high blood pressure and diabetes can lead to circulatory problems and sexual dysfunction in women. In such cases, exercise, counselling, and vaginal lubrication products are more effective than Viagra and help improve overall wellness as well.

The effects of Viagra can last up to four hours, but the response at four hours is less than it is two hours after consumption. The drug should not be taken more than once in 24 hours. A minimum of eight doses should be tried before deciding whether the drug is useful or not. Viagra is prescribed for persistent inability to attain or maintain an erection.

If erection is normal, the drug should not be taken merely to enhance erection.

### IS VIAGRA AVAILABLE OVER THE COUNTER?

No, Viagra is not available over the counter; it is available only by prescription. Self-medication in case of Viagra, like other drugs, could be harmful. ■

*With inputs from Dr Prakash Kothari, professor and chief of sexual medicine, KEM Hospital and G S Medical College, Mumbai; Dr D Narayana Reddy, consultant in sexual medicine, Dega Institute, Chennai; and Dr N Anandan, urologist & andrologist, Fortis Malar Hospital, Chennai*



# KNEE REPLACEMENT SURGERY

The knee joint is one of the strongest, largest and most complex joints of the body. Once damaged, it can wreck havoc on your body. Fortunately, today's advanced medical technology makes it possible to replace the knee joint with an artificial one that reduces pain, allows you to strengthen your legs, and improve quality of life. Knee replacement is a common procedure worldwide and has an outstanding rate of success.

## HOW THE KNEE JOINT FUNCTIONS

The human knee is designed to withstand a lifetime of stress. However, sometimes arthritis interferes with the knee's ability to cushion the body from this stress, and eventually cause pain that dramatically erodes quality of life.

## WHAT IS ARTHRITIS?

It is a degenerative or inflammatory disease of the joints that is not necessarily part of the normal ageing process. One of the most common forms of arthritis is called osteoarthritis.

## ALL ABOUT TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT SURGERY

Surgery and manufactures have made remarkable advances in joint replacement technology over the last few years. The materials are long-lasting and durable. The surgery has been fine-tuned, and the chances for a successful outcome are excellent.

## BENEFITS OF KNEE JOINT REPLACEMENT

These include:

- Reduced joint pain (maybe no pain!)
- Increased movement and mobility
- Correction of deformity
- Increased leg strength (if you exercise)
- Improved quality of life-ability to return to normal activities and free time activities

Most likely running, jumping, or other high impact activities will be discouraged.

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS OF A KNEE REPLACEMENT SURGERY

- **Choice of implant:** It is important to discuss the choice of implant with your orthopedic surgeon. Clinically proven Imported implants have much higher rate of survivorship than low quality local implants.
- **Choice of hospital:** Nicely maintained, fully equipped hospitals that follow strict infection prevention protocols show low rates of infection in patients.
- **Choice of surgeon:** Choosing a surgeon for knee replacement is an individual's decision. It's advisable to speak to your family physician and friends for the same.
- **Understanding the procedure:** It is extremely critical to discuss the pros and cons of the procedure so as to be mentally prepared for the same. A well-informed patient is a happy patient.

## GETTING READY FOR TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT

Here are three essential steps that will help you get into shape before knee replacement surgery.

- **Commit to the success of your surgery.** Working as a team, you, your physician and your family must adopt a positive attitude towards the success of your surgery.
- **Lose weight.** Because excess weight causes strain on already-damaged joints, losing weight is one of the best ways to improve the condition of your knee and optimise surgical results.
- **Start a physician-approved, low-impact exercise plan.** It will strengthen your knee without creating further damage. Do not attempt an exercise programme without consulting your physician.

## RISKS OF KNEE JOINT REPLACEMENT SURGERY

**Infection.** Because a bacterial infection from your mouth could infect your new joint, complete all dental work before surgery.

**Blood clots.** TKA (Total Knee Replacement or Total Knee Arthroplasty) surgeons prescribe anticoagulation medications after surgery. You may also need to wear elastic stockings for several weeks to minimise the risk of blood clots.

**Pneumonia.** Pneumonia can sometimes develop in patients who are lying in bed after surgery. Getting out of the bed soon is encouraged.

## LONG-TERM CARE OF YOUR KNEE

You can protect it by taking a few simple steps:

- **Watch out and prevent.** Because your new knee is sensitive to infections, you must be diligent about preventing them. You may need to take antibiotics before seeing the dentist. If you suspect a bacterial infection, notify your physician right away.
- **Follow up care.** Your physician may want to check you several times during the first year and annually thereafter.
- **Weight Control.** Keeping your weight under control will reduce the amount of pressure and stress on your new knee. Avoid high-impact sports and participate regularly in low-impact activities such as walking, swimming, golfing or cycling.

\* Results may vary from patient to patient.

*For more information on arthritis call toll free 1800222882 or 022-32907624 and register for a Patient Forum near your home.*



# Tackling diabetes

A majority of diabetics are older, cautions Dr Ashok Jhingan

**Q I am 59 years old. I don't have typical symptoms but the diagnosis has revealed diabetes. Is that usual?**

**A** In older persons at risk of developing diabetes or who already suffer from diabetes, classic symptoms like excessive hunger or thirst, weight loss and frequent urination may be masked. You may have symptoms of dehydration like dry mouth and eyes, confusion, urine incontinence or dizziness. Sometimes it can manifest itself as painful neuropathy, agitation, forgetfulness, anorexia, and depression or extreme muscular weakness. Diabetes is sometimes detected when a patient is hospitalised for some other medical problem. You are lucky that you were diagnosed correctly.

**Q Is diabetes common among older people? What are the conditions that trigger diabetes?**

**A** In India, about 20 per cent of the elderly have diabetes and over 25 per cent have impaired glucose tolerance (IGT). Type 2 diabetes is the most common form. Insulin, which is produced in the pancreas, helps body cells use sugar from blood. Diabetes means that the body doesn't make enough insulin, or doesn't properly use insulin and consequently high levels of sugar build up in the blood.

**Q What is hypoglycaemia? What are the symptoms and who could be at risk?**

**A** Hypoglycaemia is abnormally low levels of sugar (glucose) in the blood. Your target level of sugar should be around 110mg/dL fasting and 150mg/dL two hours after food. A serious complication of diabetes management, symptoms of hypoglycaemia like dizziness, weakness and confusion result in impaired cognition (unconsciousness) and fall. Fearing hypoglycaemia, many patients stop oral medication or insulin instead of being aware about its treatment and prevention. When sugar

level falls, have something that has sugar—glucose tablets, candy or fruit juice. At night, keep sugar tablets or juice by your bedside. Hypoglycaemia is usually not seen among non-diabetics.

**Q What kind of treatment is required for controlling diabetes?**

**A** Diabetes management needs individualised care including a functional assessment. Treatment involves making lifestyle changes like eating healthy food, being more active, losing weight if needed, and quitting smoking. Medicines should be taken regularly. Exercise like walking, gardening and weight training is beneficial not only for impaired diabetes control but also for muscle strengthening and gait balance. Impaired physical functioning and cognitive impairment make adjusting to a diabetes care routine difficult.

**Q Could you recommend some simple tips for healthy eating?**

**A** In meal plans, include foods you like as you are more likely to be following them regularly. Eat high-fibre choices such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Instead of saturated fats like ghee, butter, fatty meats and cheese, have good fats like omega-3 fats in fish and vegetable oils. Limit salt intake to control blood pressure. Eat small but frequent meals.

**Q What are the major health risks associated with diabetes?**

**A** Diabetes-related complications involving the eyes, heart, kidney and nerves are common. Diabetes is also the leading cause of kidney disease. Diabetics are more likely to have heart disease. Many of them have nerve damage and problems related to gait. Diabetes also increases the risk of cataract and glaucoma. As high blood sugar makes it difficult for the body to fight infections, diabetics may be at greater risk of many other illnesses.

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*Dr Ashok Jhingan is a senior consultant diabetologist and chairman, Delhi Diabetes Research Centre*



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JIT RAY

# Vitamin boost

In the first column of a new series on nutrition, **Dr Vijaya Venkat** tells us about the benefits of potatoes and melons

## MELON MAGIC

American writer Mark Twain once called melons the food of angels. These fruits were equally eulogised on the other side of the “pond” with French author Alexandre Dumas once offering all his published works and future publications to the city council of Cavaillon in exchange for “a life annuity of twelve melons per year”.

This fulsome praise is justified. Melons, which belong to the gourd family, are nature’s own thirst quenchers, power packed with minerals. Available during hot summer months, they rejuvenate, nourish and cool the body, and automatically eliminate the need for diuretics, laxatives, supplements and substitutes.

Sugars present in melons get quickly absorbed into the bloodstream and, reaching the organs, deposit body chemicals needed to carry away waste. Consequently, there is zero indigestion, zero toxicity and normalisation of sugar levels in the blood.

Of the many varieties of melon, watermelon, cantaloupe and honeydew are most popular. Among nutritionists, the watermelon gets more brownie points as researchers have established that its high concentration of lycopene—an antioxidant—helps fight cancer and other diseases. Fat and cholesterol-free, and low in sodium and calories, it is a good source of vitamins A and C.

Made up of 92 per cent water, watermelon is hydrating and easy to digest for silvers. Beneficial for kidney disorders, low blood pressure, diabetes, heart and macular degeneration to name a few, ice cubes of watermelon pulp help prevent mouth blisters in chemotherapy. An ideal diet food, watermelon is not just a great energy booster but perhaps the most refreshing thirst-quenching fruit.

### Calorie count (in a 100 gm serving)

- Watermelon: 28
- Cantaloupe: 34
- Honeydew: 36

Cantaloupe, or muskmelon as it is more commonly called, provides the maximum beta-carotene (Vitamin A) in the entire melon family. Besides being fat and cholesterol-free and very low in sodium, cantaloupe offers

large amounts of vitamins A and C and is a good source of folate, potassium and beta-carotene. It is a favourite in fruit salads with its delicate sweet taste and light fragrant smell. Sweetest of all the melons, though, is

honeydew, which is popular served alone or in fruit salads, cold soups, desserts and garnishes. Fat and cholesterol-free, low in sodium and rich in vitamin C, honeydew tastes as good as it sounds!

## *Melons rejuvenate, nourish and cool the body, thus eliminating the need for diuretics, laxatives and supplements*

### **POTATO POWER**

If you think French fries equal fast food from McDonald's, think again. When American president Thomas Jefferson—credited for introducing French fries to America—served them at a dinner at the White House in 1802, his predecessor John Adams thought Jefferson was showing off by serving “such novelties”. Another misunderstanding about the humble potato is that it is useless and fattening: high on starch and carbohydrates, short on health and nutrition. But believe it or not, you can get almost all the nutrients you need from a ‘potato-only’ diet.

Studies have revealed that a potato baked with its skin rivals the bean in nutritional value. And if the choice at the dining table is rice, noodles or bread—white or brown—potatoes are a better nutritional bet any day. Unlike foods like rice, wheat and sago that lose all their nutrients in the refining process, potatoes retain their natural wholesome goodness. Potatoes rank high as one of the best sources of complex carbohydrates, giving the body all the energy it needs. An excellent source of Vitamin C, potatoes also provide important B vitamins and a host of important minerals like potassium, copper, magnesium and iron. Containing 80 per cent water, potatoes are free of fat, cholesterol and sodium. Even in terms of conventional numbers and calorie content, potatoes fare well vis-à-vis other highly rated foods like milk, eggs, bread, biscuits and chicken. Compared ounce for ounce, a steamed potato has fewer calories than cottage cheese, rice bran flakes or most non-



#### **Calorie count (in a 100 gm serving)**

- Boiled potato: 80
- Baked potato: 85
- Potato chips: 153
- French fries: 200

vegetarian food—with a medium size potato containing only 100 calories. And a potato that size contains about 3.2 gm of high quality protein with better nutrient density than cow's milk.

Without much cajoling and pampering, this vegetable cooks easily. Boiled or baked, it can be eaten as a snack or even a complete meal. And together with salad,

it's a guilt-free combination for the diabetic or obese. More easily digestible than grain-based *khichdi*, it is good for silvers suffering from stomachache or other stomach-related problems.



VILAS KALGUTKAR

*Dr Vijaya Venkat, nutritionist and health activist, is founder and head of the Health Awareness Centre, Mumbai. If you have any questions, write to her at [contactmag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contactmag@harmonyindia.org)*



# Seafood secrets

Dr Pushpesh Pant presents his two favourite Bengali recipes

I have always made sure vegetarian silvers have something to read every month. Now I am back to what I love most—fish and prawns. And

I love them the Bengali way. They are not rare and exotic, but steamed and stir-fried they are the best for us.

## BHAPE MACHH (STEAMED FISH IN MUSTARD)

*Hilsa*—or *ilish*—is arguably the most prized fish in Bengal. It has a lot of bones and should be eaten carefully. You may substitute this regional favourite with your preference and stay with the boneless version.

**Preparation time:** 15 minutes

**Marinating time:** 30 minutes

**Cooking time:** 20 minutes

**Serves:** 4-6

### INGREDIENTS

- *Hilsa* steaks (or any other preferred fish): 8 large (cleaned)
- Yellow mustard seeds: 4 tbsp
- Green chillies: 8
- Mustard oil: 4 tbsp
- Salt to taste
- Banana leaf: softened over a low flame and cut into 8 pieces
- Cloves: 8

### METHOD

Grind yellow mustard seeds and green chillies to a fine paste. Add mustard oil to paste and mix thoroughly. Rub salt and paste over each piece of fish and marinate for 30 minutes. Wrap fish steaks individually in banana leaf pieces and secure with a clove. Steam fish parcels in a flat-bottomed steamer for 20 minutes. Serve with freshly steamed rice.





VILAS KALGUTKER; Food styling: ANITA SARIN

## CHINGRI MAACHHER MALAI CURRY (PRAWNS IN COCONUT CURRY)

This creamy textured dish rekindles memories of days when intrepid Indian traders sailed across the Bay of Bengal to touch the Malay Peninsula and brought back not only spices but also mouth-watering recipes.

**Preparation time:** 45 minutes

**Cooking time:** 25 minutes

**Serves:** 6

### INGREDIENTS

- Coconut: 1 large
- Hot water: 2 cups
- Tiger prawns (medium sized): 500 gm
- Turmeric: 1/2 tsp
- Ghee: 2 tbsp
- Green cardamom: 2
- Cloves: 4
- Cinnamon: 1-inch stick

- Bay leaves: 2
- Green chillies: 4; slit lengthwise
- Ground mace (*javitri*): 1/2 tsp
- Salt to taste

### METHOD

Grate the coconut and extract the cream by squeezing the flesh through a piece of muslin. Add hot water to the residue coconut and squeeze out the milk. Keep milk and cream separately. Alternatively, use readymade coconut cream that is easily available in cartons or reconstitute it from powder. This in turn can be diluted to obtain the required quantity of 'milk'. Coat the prawns lightly with turmeric and salt and stir-fry for about two minutes in hot ghee in a non-

stick pan. Remove from pan and keep aside. In the same pan, stir-fry the green cardamoms, cloves, cinnamon and bay leaves. When the spices release their aroma, add the coconut milk and let it simmer for five to seven minutes. Add the prawns, chillies and salt to taste. Let it simmer for 10 minutes. Add the ground mace and simmer on very low heat for another two minutes before adding the cream from the coconut.



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



# 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.

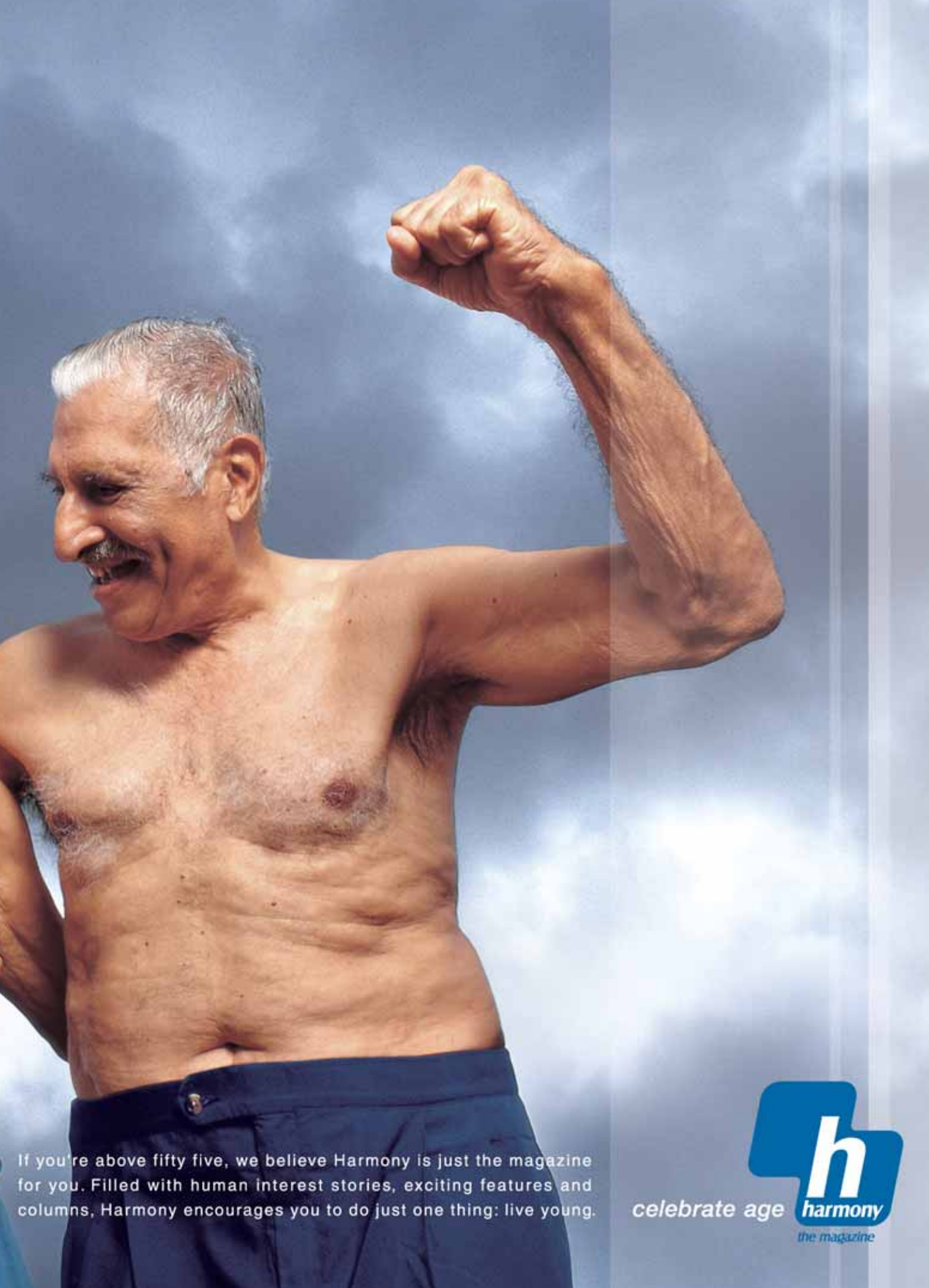
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# Yoga to go!

Shameem Akthar discusses *asana* you can practice on the move

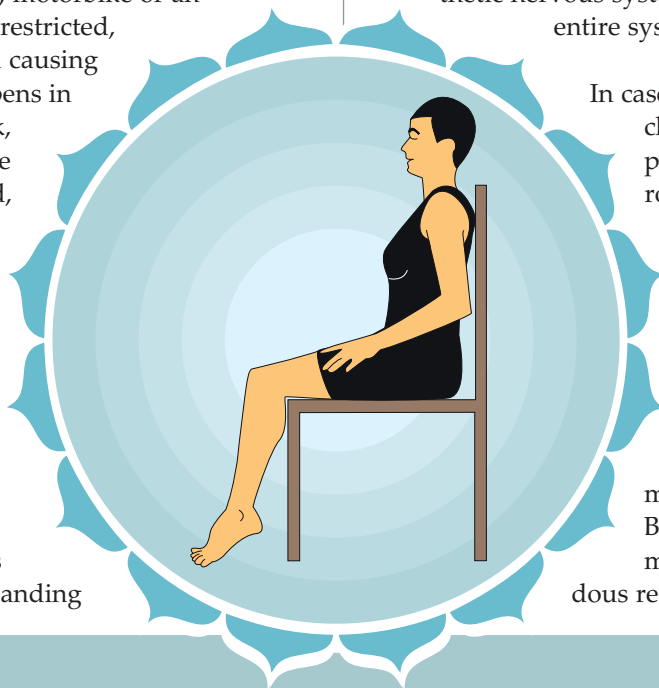
On your next flight overseas, don't be surprised if you find a 'Travel Yoga' leaflet along with the in-flight magazine. International

airlines have been among the first to create specific charts for the confined traveller, highlighting yogic practices that can be done even when seated in the plane. After all, a traveller needs yoga as much, if not more, than a desk-bound worker.

When the muscles are kept static in one position for long hours in a car, train, motorbike or an aeroplane, blood flow is restricted, freezing the muscles and causing pain. This typically happens in the shoulders, back, neck, feet and wrists. The spine is the most compromised, leading to severe back-ache. As travelling also interferes with lymphatic drainage, oedema or swelling of the feet occurs, which can be painful.

Whether it is stiffness, swelling or just plain jet lag, yoga can help. Poses like the tree (*tadasana*), standing

twist (*kati chakrasana*), all the four neck moves (*greeva sanchalana*), toe flexions (*pada anguli*), ankle flexions (*goolf chakra*), wrist flexions (*manibandha chakra*), standing cow-face (*gomukh*), extended tree pose or executive stretch, shoulder shrugs or circles (*kandhar chakra*), and the simple dancing Shiva (*saral natraj*) can be done anytime, anywhere. Throw in a few breathing exercises (like abdominal breathing or *ujjayi pranayama* which can be done anywhere) to clamp down on the mind's unnecessary chatter that can aggravate fatigue. Practicing these moves also acts as a form of meditation, helping you restore the body's repair and rest mechanism (parasympathetic nervous system), thus rebooting your entire system.



In case you are rushed for time, choose a few standard poses that have an all-round impact. Keeping the list simple and practical is the best way to ensure that you do them regularly. For instance, *asana* like the *tadasana*, *kati chakrasana*, *kandhar chakra* and *goolf chakra* should take you a maximum of five minutes. But this five-minute investment will give you tremendous returns. ■

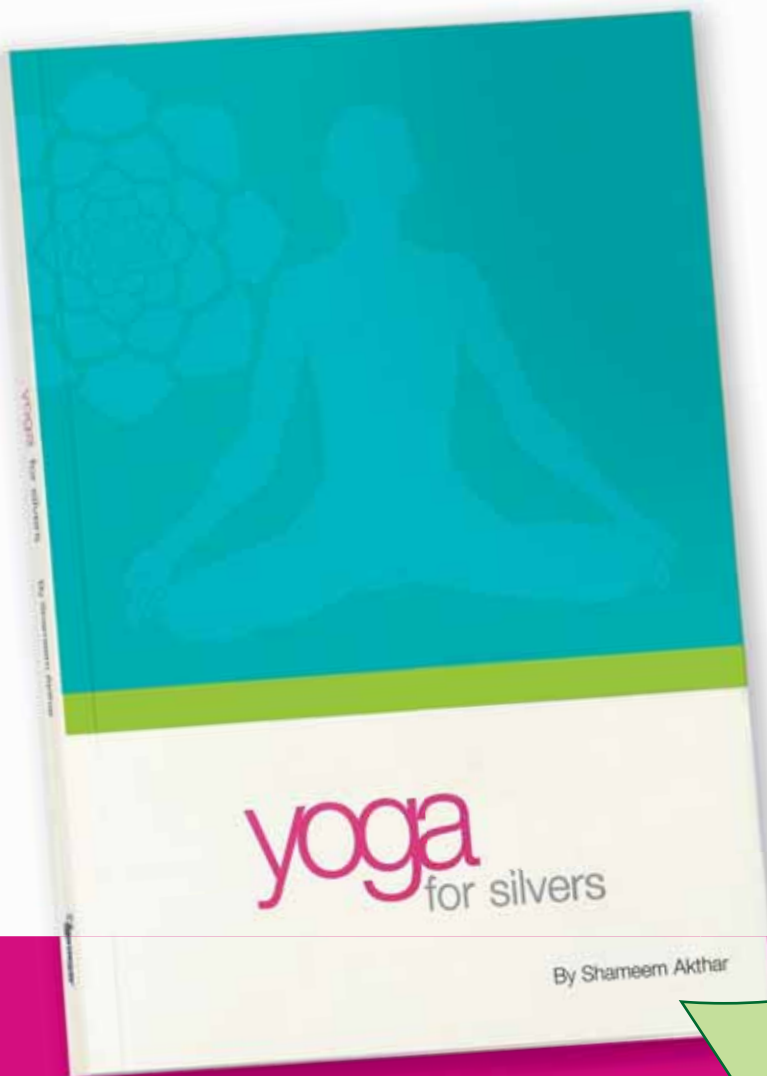
## Yogic moves

### Ankle bend (*goolf naman*)

This pose may be done seated in a chair, while travelling. Remove your shoes. Sit back firmly. Inhale. Bend right foot at ankle, pointing toes downwards. Place toes on ground, holding straight heel up. Exhale. Then rest foot flat on ground. Do up to 10 rounds. Then repeat entire sequence for left leg.

**Benefits:** Our legs suffer most when we remain passive for long. This simple exercise cranks back blood circulation and works out the entire lower limb. Also, when the leg is worked, however gently, both heart and brain enjoy a positive impact as overall blood circulation is given a boost.

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



# yoga for silvers

Yoga shiromani and acharya **Shameem Akhtar** urges the elderly to heal body, mind and soul with ancient yogic habits that are easy to learn. From the philosophy behind practices and poses to step-by-step instructions with illustrations, this is a comprehensive guide written especially for Silvers.

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## HEALTH BYTES



**49.2%**  
of the elderly in Delhi  
suffer from psychiatric  
disorders

**LOSING IT**

A recent survey conducted by Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi and S M Sehgal Foundation in Gurgaon reveals that 49.2 per cent of the elderly in Delhi suffer from psychiatric disorders. The diseases listed are depression, dementia and anxiety. Here are some figures: 55.5 per cent of elderly women suffer from it; the risk increases with age, 44.1 per cent in the 60-64 year age group compared to 88.9 per cent

in the 80-plus age group; and the widowed elderly are more prone to it (52.3 per cent). "The stigma associated with mental disease results in failure to seek appropriate care," says Dr Archana Chowdhury, programme leader (rural health) at Sehgal Foundation. "Loss of loved ones, chronic disorders and isolation lead to emotional starvation which, combined with financial hardships leads to mental illness."

**THE Q FACTOR**

**Eight government hospitals in Delhi are working hard to change the way we feel about India's public health service.**

Lok Nayak, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Deen Dayal Upadhyay, Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences, Maulana Azad, Institute of Dental Studies, G B Pant and Chacha Nehru Bal Chikitsalaya are going through inspections and advancement to receive quality control certificates from the Quality Council of India (QCI). A team from National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers and QCI has already undertaken a baseline survey or preassessment of the hospitals and rated them on 503 different parameters including patient satisfaction, hospital infection control, patient rights and education, management of medication, management, procurement norms, and HR practices. The results of the first survey were not very encouraging—Guru Tegh Bahadur, for example, scored a dismal 2.8 out of a possible 10. We can only hope that the situation improves soon.



## A FIRM STAND

A month after we reported the ASSOCHAM study that revealed the alarming growth (20-25 per cent) of the fake drug market, the Health Ministry has come up with a landmark amendment proposal. The Drugs and Cosmetics (Amendment) Bill, 2005—already cleared by the Union Cabinet—stipulates that **“those caught producing and selling counterfeit drugs which are likely ‘to cause death or serious harm to the body, solely on account of such a drug being administered’ shall be punishable for not less than 10 years but may extend to life term.”** The guilty will also pay a fine of Rs 1 million or three times the value of the drugs. Relatives will receive the compensation—spouse, minor legitimate son, unmarried daughter or a widowed mother. In case the victim is a minor, the money would go to the parents. At present, the jail term for those involved in manufacturing and marketing spurious drugs stands at five years with a fine of just Rs 10,000.

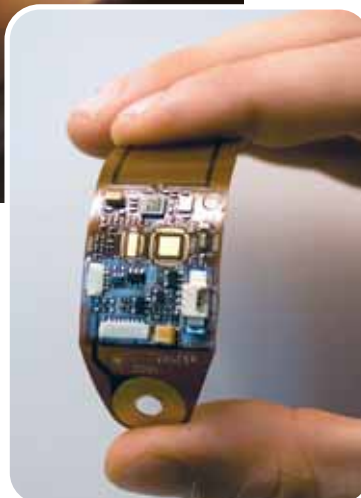


## HAVE A HEART

Looking for a perfect gift for your spouse? Consider a silicon heart monitor. **The toffee-sized silicon locket is the world's smallest wearable ECG monitor.** Developed by Professor Rakesh K Lal of the School of Bioscience and Bioengineering, Indian Institute of Technology -

Mumbai, it can detect irregular heartbeat and sends the last few seconds of electrocardiogram (ECG) data as an SMS to your doctor. Alternatively, when a user feels uneasy, he can press a button to mark that data so a doctor can later analyse marked segments and check cardiac activity before the irregularity. It can store a week's ECG data and can distinguish between jerks

from running, working out or climbing stairs, and arrhythmic heartbeat. Existing ECG monitors are much larger; at least as large as an iPod or a digital music player. “The locket is a hi-tech solution delivered in a low-tech fashion,” says Professor Dinesh Sharma of Tata Consultancy Services, which funded the research. The gadget is ready and awaiting a manufacturer.





## HEALTH BYTES

## DISEASE-PRONE

Silvers in Delhi and Kerala are more prone to falls, fractures, weight loss, asthma, tuberculosis, diabetes and high blood pressure compared to silvers in 10 other surveyed states (including Assam, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu). The Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry and the World Health Organisation carried out the study covering 10,035 individuals above 60 years from rural and urban areas. The research reveals high incidence of tobacco abuse and hearing problems among the elderly in Delhi. Chennai in Tamil Nadu and Raipur in Madhya Pradesh have the largest number of elderly with hearing impairment while silvers in Guwahati in Assam have the highest number of visual problems. A shocking 23.6 per cent of elders living in Jodhpur in Jaipur and Vellore in Tamil Nadu suffer from diseases like



## Medicines that increase the risk of falls

**Alprazolam:** used to treat anxiety

**Codeine:** used to cure pain and diarrhoea

**Methadone:** painkiller

**Estazolam:** sedative

For the complete list, go to <http://uncnews.unc.edu/images/stories/news/health/2008/drugslist.pdf>

depression, Parkinson's and paralysis. The study also reveals that 27 per cent of elderly in India are widows or widowers. "These individuals [those staying alone] may require help from others in problems related to health, nutrition, social needs, rehabilitation or referral to an old age home," says Dr R K Srivastava, Director-General of Health Services, adding, "The ideal health system for older people should be affordable, accessible, comprehensive and holistic."



## DR ROBOT

AIIMS in Delhi is back to making history. Recently, its urology department performed the **world's first robotic surgery to remove a rare urinary bladder tumour that causes high blood pressure**. Dharam Chand Bansal, 53, had the tumour called pheochromocytoma removed. He had suddenly developed high BP and had trouble passing urine. "Earlier, we would make a large incision in the gland," says Dr N P Gupta, head of the urology department. "With the robot, we managed to have five smaller entry points." So far, AIIMS has executed 257 robotic surgeries and has conducted the maximum number of robotic surgeries for cancer of the prostate in India, and the world.

## RATING ROBOTIC SURGERY

## FOR

- Higher accuracy.
- Better reach, as robotic arm rotates 60°
- Minimised error

- Minimally invasive, hence better healing

## AGAINST

- Procedures yet to be standardised
- Expensive

- At present, technology is available only in few hospitals: Hiranandani Hospital and Hinduja Hospital in Mumbai; AIIMS, Escorts and Army Hospital in Delhi; Care in Hyderabad; Chettinad in Chennai



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The first job interview.

The first board meeting you addressed.

The first day after retirement.

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The first click of the mouse. [www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org)





# Look within

Make peace with yourself, urges Rev John Dear

**M**ahatma Gandhi was once asked about his greatest enemy. He spoke of the British and his struggle against imperialism. Then he reflected on his own people, and his struggles against untouchability, bigotry, and violence in India. Finally, he spoke of himself, and his own inner violence, selfishness, and imperfection. The last, he confessed, was his greatest opponent. "There I have very little say."

Peace begins within each of us. It is a process of repeatedly showing mercy to ourselves, forgiving ourselves, befriending ourselves, accepting ourselves, and loving ourselves. As we learn to appreciate ourselves and accept God's gift of peace, we begin to radiate peace and love to others. This lifelong journey toward inner peace requires regular self-examination and an ongoing process of making peace with ourselves. It means constantly examining the roots of violence within us, weeding out those roots, diffusing the violence that we aim at ourselves and others, and choosing to live in peace. It means treating ourselves with compassion and kindness. As we practice mercy toward ourselves, we begin to enjoy life more and more and celebrate it as an adventure in peace. But this process of making peace with ourselves can be one of the most difficult challenges we face. Each one of us wrestles with our own demons. The daily challenge is to befriend those demons, embrace our true selves, make friends with ourselves, disarm our hearts, and accept in peace who we are.

But inner peace does not mean we float around in blissful tranquility, talking to the birds, untouched

by everyday mishaps, personal tragedies, or world events. In fact, true inner peace pushes us into the thick of the world's problems, where we rub elbows with all kinds of people and confront their greatest terrors. From the hustle and bustle of a crowded subway to the death of a loved one to turmoil at the workplace to the threat of nuclear destruction, life presents daily challenges to our inner resolve, but it is possible to cultivate and pursue inner peace no matter what obstacles come our way. Through the grace of God, all our frustrations, turmoil, and tragedies can be transformed. If we do not address the violence in the world, our inner peace is an empty illusion. Likewise, we cannot seek peace publicly and expect to help disarm the world while our hearts are filled with violence, judgement, and rage. Our work for peace cannot bear fruit if it is rooted in violence.

The roots of war, violence, injustice, and the threat of global annihilation lie within each one of us. Unless we recognise our complicity in global violence, we can never accept God's gift of peace.

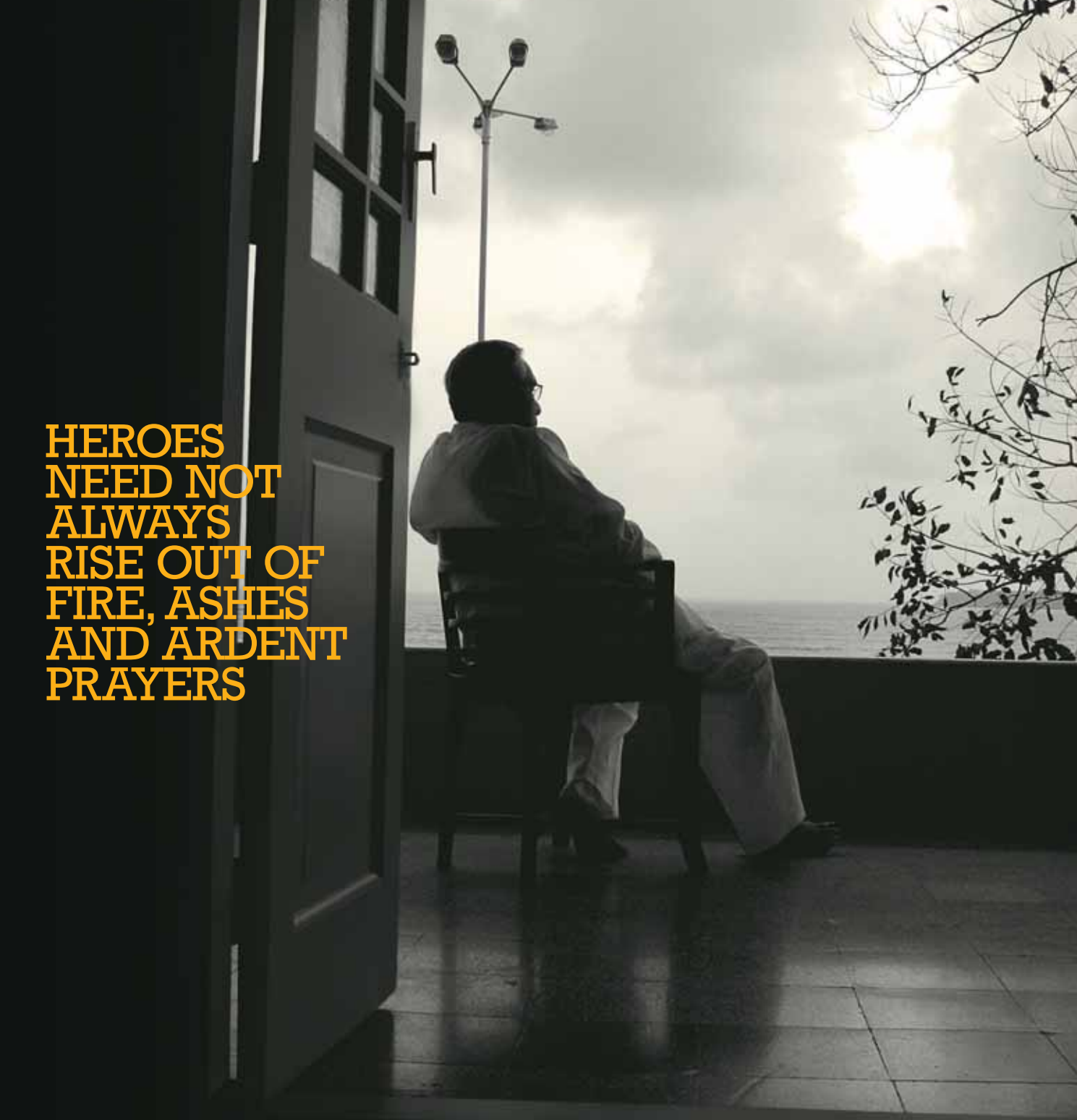
***If we do not  
address the  
violence in the  
world, our inner  
peace is an empty  
illusion***

If, however, we acknowledge and confess the violence within us, we allow God to begin the process of our disarmament, first in our own war-torn hearts, and then in the world itself.

Pursuing peace at every level of life—beginning within our own hearts and souls, and reaching out toward every human being alive on the planet—is the greatest and most fulfilling challenge one can undertake with one's life. But making peace in a world at war is an act greater than any of us. It is a spiritual journey that begins in the heart and takes us on a road not of our own choosing. But because it is a spiritual journey, a course charted by the God of peace, it is filled with the simplest but greatest of blessings. ■

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*Excerpt from Living Peace: A Spirituality of Contemplation and Action; Image; 240 pages. John Dear is a Jesuit priest and executive director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an interfaith peace organisation. He has worked with the homeless in Washington, DC and New York City, and at a human rights centre in Belfast, Northern Ireland*



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NEED NOT  
ALWAYS  
RISE OUT OF  
FIRE, ASHES  
AND ARDENT  
PRAYERS**

Is he less of a hero if he rises out of a rocking chair instead? If you are happy to give a hero his due wherever you may find him, your chance will come at Harmony Silver Awards 2008. An event that honours senior citizens whose age has only added fuel to the fire burning in their heroic hearts.

# myblog.com

Silver Netizens in India are discovering the joys of blogging, writes **Teena Baruah**



UTKARSH SANJANWALA



Australian silver Olive Riley, who called herself the world's oldest Internet blogger, died at the age of 108 on 14 July 2008. Riley posted her final message from her nursing home on 26 June on [worldsoldestblogger.blogspot.com](http://worldsoldestblogger.blogspot.com), her blog (web log). "How the days have flown, even though I've been in bed most of the time... Penny, who's in the next bed, had a visit from her daughter, who's a professional singer. Guess what happened! She and I sang a happy song, as I do every day, and before long we were joined by several nurses, who sang along too. It was quite a concert!" Riley's great grandson Darren Stone later told news agency AFP, "She had people communicating with her from as far away as Russia and America on a continual basis, not just once in a while. Her blog kept her mind fresh."

## *seniorsworldchronicle.com, Ravi Chawla's blog, is a daily digest of human interest stories about silvers from journals all over the world*

A blog is a free, personal webpage which takes the form of an online journal. You can post your stories, poems, photographs or even recipes; rant and rave about anything and everything going on around you; write reviews of books you've read or films you've seen; and provide links to other blogs that may be of interest to your friends and other visitors. This method of expressing yourself has proved so popular that in December 2007, blog search engine Technorati reported the existence of over 112 million blogs.

Not surprising then, that silver Netizens in India are also getting on the bandwagon. For instance, Mumbai-based IT company owner Kothanda Srinivasan, 60, started a blog five years ago to chronicle his travel diaries—check out [kothanda.srinivasan.googlepages.com](http://kothanda.srinivasan.googlepages.com) for photographs and a detailed report of his recent trek to Roopkund in Uttarakhand and Sandakphu on the Singalila Ridge that spans Nepal and West Bengal. Chennai-based Vasantha Krishnaswami, 72, painstakingly documents every home remedy and

natural healing technique she learns about in her two blogs; [helpmeheal.blogspot.com](http://helpmeheal.blogspot.com) and [keytowellness.blogspot.com](http://keytowellness.blogspot.com). And 77 year-old Parthasarathy Krishnaswamy, also from Chennai, who claims to be the oldest Indian blogger, uses his page [earlydays.blogspot.com](http://earlydays.blogspot.com) to pen his musings.

While some avid bloggers post new entries several times a day, most bloggers post daily. Actor Amitabh Bachchan, who uses his new blog to communicate with his fans, posts an entry every-day. The most recent entry sits at the top of the blog and features a title, text and the time it was posted. While the majority of blogs have a small audience—friends and family—some blogs go on to find a community of loyal readers. For instance, Thiruvananthapuram-based Chandra Kumar, 65, a retired additional secretary from the Indian Audit and Account Service, digs up corruption cases and highlights them on his Malayalam blog [sarkkaarkaryam.blogspot.com](http://sarkkaarkaryam.blogspot.com)—it's becoming increasingly popular with journalists and social activists in the state.

Harmony meets three more silver Netizens who have discovered the pleasures of blogging...



Courtesy: RAVI CHAWLA

### **RAVI CHAWLA, 72** *Mumbai*

**The blogger:** A retired journalist who worked for several news agencies like UPI, Chawla resents the idea of imposing his views on readers and prefers being called a "catalyst". Thus, his blog,

*seniorsworldchronicle.com*, is a daily digest of human interest stories about silvers collected from journals



## Cherian used to maintain her 90 year-old mother Rebecca Chandy's blog for her. After Chandy passed away, her blog comforts Cherian

across the world. But his articles are not selected randomly—he checks their source, copyright, credibility and publishes them only if he agrees with their content. For instance, he refused to carry any article on reverse mortgage because he doesn't approve of it.

**Starting up:** “In 1999, I had a bypass surgery,” says Chawla. “While I was in hospital, I witnessed terrible loneliness and frustration amongst the elderly patients there and that got me started on the subject.” He adds that his blog is not meant to be a self-promotional vehicle and therefore has no mention of himself in it. Chawla urges more silvers to take up blogging, but warns that you must get used to being criticised online by those who disagree with you. And you have to accept the fact that some visitors to your site may know more about the subject than you do and tell you so.

**Net worth:** “My weblog has been running for a long time because of which I’m reasonably well known in the community,” he says. “It gets about 750 feedbacks a day so I must be doing something right.” Chawla says blogging has changed his life. “I am a recluse and now my blog has given me a good excuse to stay away from the mindless social visits and parties that are usually the bane of retired life,” he says. The only negative fallout is his daily battle with his 70 year-old wife Prema: “The computer is in the bedroom and I usually blog between 2 am and 6 am!”



Courtesy: SUSAN CHERIAN

**SUSAN CHERIAN, 57**  
Kottayam, Kerala

**The blogger:** A preschool teacher, Cherian uses her blog—*mtwardhafamily.blogspot.com*—to post vignettes from her daily life and wildlife photos, which she clicks on her cell phone. Her weblog is just another

### GET YOUR OWN BLOG



- Setting up a blog requires very little expertise and is absolutely free. For example, starting a blog at *blogger.com*, the website that popularised blogging, takes little over two minutes (we tried it)—step-by-step instructions make the whole process a breeze.
- *Typepad.com*, *blogware.com*, *wordpress.com*, *movabletype.com*, *expressionengine.com* and *xanga.com* are other popular blog platforms.
- Many social networking sites such as MySpace and Bebo also let users create a personal webspace.
- If you regularly read several different blogs, a free newsreader—*bloglines.com* or *kinja.com*—can come in handy.
- These services let you view content from multiple websites, putting it all in one place so you don't have to waste your time surfing.
- After you register, you simply type in the web addresses of sites you like.
- Your choice is stored in folders under the My Feeds tab.
- Every day, the newsreader pulls together the latest news stories and posts from every site on your list and displays them on a page, which it calls 'Your Digest'.



method of communication for her. "I could use email, but sometimes it's easier if I post things to my blog."

**Starting up:** Her inspiration comes from her 90 year-old mom Rebecca Chandy, who passed away last year, and was an avid blogger ([rebeccachandy.blogspot.com](http://rebeccachandy.blogspot.com)). "I used to type her memoirs on her blog for her," she says. "Now, when I miss her I just go back to her page and feel comforted." Initially, Cherian felt awkward discussing her personal life on the Web. But gradually, she says, the "exhibitionist" in her took over.

**Net worth:** "I am a feminist and won't be able to share my views so freely in my small town," she says. "But on the blog you see me with my guard down. So, in a way I feel I am more real in my blogs than in my day-to-day existence." Cherian says her blogs have brought her in touch with feminist writers from across the world, including Malta, the US and Australia. "For a kindergarten teacher, this is nothing short of a miracle."

**Josephine Fernandes has made many friends through her blog. She has also learnt to deal with criticism and take it in her stride**

on the lines of Bridget Jones's Diary. "It touches me, my family, my friends and those with whom I interact daily," she says. "I pour my heart and soul into it."

**Starting up:** A self-taught computer enthusiast, Fernandes began blogging five years ago for a lark. "Initially, they were just tentative steps into posting entries, commenting on what other people said and trying to attract an audience, however modest," she says. Later, the blog became more personal. Being single, she has even posted blogs on her crushes, receiving stern criticism from her daughter! "In the blogosphere, people aren't judgmental," she says. "That's why it's so much fun."

**Net worth:** Fernandes has made many friends through her blog. She's also learnt to deal with criticism. A year ago, someone wrote that she rambles because she has nothing else to do. She took that in her stride. Once, though, her foster son stopped communicating with her for a year because he found one of her posts offensive. "Keeping a website that is updated frequently is a great way to learn about new sites, technologies, ideas," she says. "Today, I even download music for my aerobics class from the web." One thing she still has to learn: how to upload pictures on her blog.

Courtesy: JOSEPHINE FERNANDES



**JOSEPHINE FERNANDES, 61**  
Mumbai

**The blogger:** A former manager in an export house, Fernandes (Jo to her blogger friends) runs a fitness studio at her Mulund residence in suburban Mumbai and specialises in kickboxing, Pilates, aerobics and weight training. Her comments on urban living can be found on [jestyjoan.rediffblogs.com](http://jestyjoan.rediffblogs.com), which she describes as being



# Vision with action

Jharna Sur works to make a positive difference to the lives of the blind

**A**fter retiring from the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP), Kolkata, the prospect of a discrimination-free society inspired Jharna Sur not to hang up her boots. Today, as principal of the Welfare Society for the Blind, the 62 year-old endeavours to bring back the visually challenged into the mainstream.

Sur started her career more than 25 years ago as special educator in IICP, formerly known as the Spastics Society of Eastern India. From 1982-92, she taught children with special needs, but as they grew up she was often concerned about their future. At that point,



SHILBHADRA DATTA

Sur with one of her students

the opportunity to go to the UK under the British Council's Colombo Plan was almost

fortuitous. She saw and later implemented the process of bringing young adults with



## Silver voice

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement



**I always enjoyed acting and extempore recitation during my student years. Occasionally, I acted in amateur plays. Now I am 57 and would like to work as a voiceover artist. How and where do I begin?**

Though voiceover is used for 90 per cent of television and radio advertisements, demand for artists over 50 years is limited as the requirement is very need-specific. First, locate a good recording studio and get a demo CD made. Record four or five scripts—a movie dialogue, lines from a popular ad, a poem, a brief story extract—but ensure that the CD does not exceed five to seven minutes. Your acting background would help, as voiceover does not involve just speaking but modulating the tenor of your voice and emoting. After the demo CD is ready, get multiple copies made. Approach produ-

cers, voice coordinators, studio managers or sound engineers, and leave your contact details and a copy of the CD. Voiceover is a competitive profession and getting the first break is sometimes difficult.

—Trevor Devadiga

*Devadiga is chief sound engineer at Globe Studios, an audio recording studio in Mumbai*



**I am a 58 year-old homemaker. Now that we are settled in one place after my husband's retirement, I wish to start a beauty parlour at home. I did a beautician's course some years ago.**

**Is it a feasible idea?**

With fashion, food and beauty being today's mantras, a salon is a lucrative but competitive business. A minimum investment of Rs 250,000 for basic infrastructure and raw material is required

disability into the mainstream. "After coming back, I co-wrote a curriculum for children with special needs," she recollects. Around the same time, the Adult Training Centre—with focus on training and placement of young adults—was set up at IICP. In 1994, Sur enrolled for a Masters in Special Education from Birmingham University. She retired from the institute in 2007 but she did not want to retire from her mission—to rehabilitate the challenged.

She started working at Welfare Society for the Blind where her role is varied—she supervises students' training and grooming, counsels them, and helps them develop their interactive skills. Set up in 1970 for vocational training and rehabilitation of the visually impaired, the institute

## Recently one of Sur's blind students bagged a job at IBM

conducts computer courses, besides preparing students for competitive exams. "We charge only a nominal fee as most of them are not from a strong financial background," says Sur. At present, about 34 students are undergoing training in basic and advanced courses with the help of JAWS software. Specially made for the visually impaired, the software reads aloud the information on the screen.

While the basic course teaches students MS Word, calculator and spell-check, the advanced

course helps students learn MS Excel and Internet. Though most students of this course have been able to get jobs, the greatest success came when one of the students—Ashish Jha—bagged a job in the IT security department of IBM.

Conducting preparatory classes for competitive exams is no mean feat either. The centre conducts sessions mainly in history and general knowledge. As higher level books are not available in Braille, they are specially recorded in the institute's in-house studio and transferred onto CDs. "We have received immense support from volunteers who lend their voice for recording these CDs," says Sur. "It's been fulfilling to see many adults strike out on their own."

—Sonali Majumder

even for a home-based parlour. You have to buy furniture, various equipment and gadgets, as well as cosmetics and other beauty products. Even if you do client consultation and hair styling yourself, you will need at least one trained assistant for jobs like facials, threading, waxing, head massages, colouring, manicures and pedicures. A helper for washing, cleaning, sweeping, swabbing and doing laundry is also necessary. Besides a refresher course, it is essential to do advance training courses and attend seminars regularly to keep track of latest techniques and developments in the beauty industry. You could start a specialist nail bar—a parlour for manicures, pedicures, massages, colouring and nail art—instead of a hair and beauty salon.

—Priam Barua Dkhar

*Barua Dkhar is proprietor of Elegance, a beauty clinic in Shillong*



I am 56 years old. I am interested in working. I don't want to work full time though—only for a few hours every day. I have a large circle of

## contacts. Will becoming an insurance agent be a good option?

If you enjoy meeting people, becoming an insurance agent is an excellent option. Besides flexibility and independence, you can set your own income targets. To become an LIC agent, you need to give an interview and then undergo a 100-hour training programme. The schedule covers the mandatory Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) training and a product-training module. You receive a licence only after clearing these. Other than a nominal licence fee, there is no other capital investment. Though there are no fixed working hours, your earning through commission depends on the amount of time you put in. It is also obligatory to get a minimum business of 12 life insurance policies annually. As your performance improves, you become eligible for exclusive perks from LIC by way of various club memberships.

—Sumana Bose

*Bose is a member agent of the divisional manager's club of Life Insurance Corporation of India in Kolkata*

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# Under pressure

Amita Malik wonders when we'll let up on our children

**T**he case of Shinjini Sengupta—the 16 year-old from Kolkata whose parents alleged that she was paralysed after being rebuked on

a TV reality show—is exceptional. But that does not absolve either the parents and relatives of contestants or the judges from blame for putting young contestants through stress, anguish and, in many cases, a lifelong feeling of inferiority. I have been watching these so-called reality contests for some years now and have come to the conclusion that they constitute a not so subtle form of cruelty that is more to satisfy the egos of parents and judges than a fair contest between youngsters.

In fact, I feel the whole atmosphere of these contests is wrong. First, the judges behave like gods, with smug smiles on their faces as the young contestants touch their feet before the contest has even begun. Instead of trying to put these contestants at ease, the judges try to put them on the defensive from the start. They look more frightening than encouraging to begin with. And then, when the time comes for comments, they talk down to the contestant in a manner that can only be described as humiliating. Often I have seen young people with an air of expectancy on their faces dissolve in tears by the time the judges have given their adverse verdict and then followed it up with comments that are cruel and destructive.

So much for the judges. But what about the parents? They put their children on show like performing animals and show their displeasure in no uncertain terms when they do not succeed. The children are treated as failures for the rest of their lives. I cannot help contrasting the National Spelling Bees held in Washington that are being shown on TV these days. With a formidable line-up of brilliant children com-

peting, it is inevitable that there will be winners as well as losers. But as children who have done their best drop out one by one, their parents hug them and console them as to say: “You did your best child, and better luck next time.” And that’s how it should be.

I am sorry to say this, but Indian parents tend to put too much pressure on their children to do well, especially in studies. Coming from a family that prided itself on always being first in everything, I came a disgraceful fifth in class when in the fifth standard in school because my two weakest subjects, drawing and needlework, had let me down. So scared was I that I ran away from school and when mother asked why I was home so early I mumbled something about a stomachache. I had clearly run away to be absent from the line-up in the school hall for the proclamation where the marks and the position of children in class were announced. The stomachache excuse did not work with the school headmistress either. The proclamation was held all over again; for the first time in my school career I stood fifth in line and not first, as I had always done, and after it was over I burst into tears. That is when the headmistress summoned me to her room. After she had offered me a handkerchief and some toffees, she said: “Remember something child. You must never run away from defeat. It happens sometimes but you must face up to it, only then can you succeed next time.”

*Reality shows are more to satisfy the egos of parents and judges than a contest between youngsters*

It is a lesson I have never forgotten. Especially because as a result of that advice from the headmistress, I tried extra hard next time and emerged first. This was a wonderful example of character building that only the best schools—and I do not mean the most expensive ones—can carry out with confidence. It is good teachers who make good pupils and that is something one can never forget. ■

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



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# Sweet sixty

Vrinda Nabar explores the link between feminism and ageing

**H**ow do you begin writing about feminism and ageing? Perhaps it makes sense to begin by reiterating that feminism is about

economic and social emancipation—the recognition that gender has little to do with ability, fundamental rights, or rigid social roles. Looked at this way, feminism’s insistence on equal opportunity and mutual respect can impact ageing, because the experience of ageing is not gender-specific.

What is it like when that old Beatles number becomes the now and ‘*when I’m 64*’ isn’t a vague possibility? Around 60, you begin to discover some of the answers—a mixed, often humorous, occasionally frustrating, somewhat humbling process. Walking down the street in small-town Canada, a friend’s mother heard someone in a group of scuffling schoolboys say, “Take care you don’t knock the old lady down.” Touched by his thoughtfulness she looked around to spot the old lady, and found it was her! This woman’s belief that you are only as old as you feel was clearly not shared by the cautious schoolboy. Sprightlier, better-read, more spirited and progressive than many a younger person she was doubled over with infectious mirth as she recounted her rueful awakening to how strangers must see her. In Arnold Wesker’s one-woman play *Letter to a Daughter*, his protagonist observes how when you’re 14, 16 is old and 20 is middle-aged and 30 is ancient and if you make it to 35 it’s surprising to them you’re still alive! It’s a sentiment we’ve all known in our younger days, just as the boundary that marks old age keeps moving farther back in our minds the older we grow.

Those who’ve steered clear all their lives of feminism’s ‘corrupting’ influence could benefit from

being more open to its larger message. Many of us today find ageing complicated because of externalities that have more to do with the pressures of social conditioning than with the physical process. Like my friend’s mother, you may believe that growing old has little to do with age and a whole lot to do with attitude; that letting your hair grey has not diminished your zest for life; that you feel more full of beans, more sensual even than many of the people around you. Even so, battling the stereotype isn’t easy when the human race seems obsessed with discovering the elixir of youthfulness and being different carries its own price tag; when a few grey hair can suddenly reduce you from an angry young person to being simply angry and old! You catch yourself eyeing other people, wondering if all that separates you from them is a handful of jars. It’s tempting to give in, to experiment with all those age-defying facial products, startling shades of hair colour, lotions that promise to banish double chins, sagging cheeks, and that crêpe-like texture the skin on your arms is starting to resemble.

**Feminism  
motivates you to  
look at yourself in  
the mirror with  
humour and  
acceptance**

Besides such obvious concerns with appearance, ageing introduces people to a whole new set of insecurities. It would be dishonest to claim that feminists are entirely indifferent to these but it’s also true that feminism provides strategies to try and combat them. It teaches you to question the stereotype and this includes the conventional imaging of old age. It bolsters your self-esteem because it motivates you to

look at yourself in the mirror with humour, irony, and acceptance. In this way feminism helps guard against loneliness and self-pity, making it somewhat easier not to feel slotted or marginalised—emotions that generally accompany growing old. It encourages you to do your own thing the way you’ve always done because it recognises that individualism and fellowship are not mutually exclusive but part of the larger process of living, loving and sharing. ■

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*Vrinda Nabar, 60, is a feminist writer based in Mumbai*



# divine waters

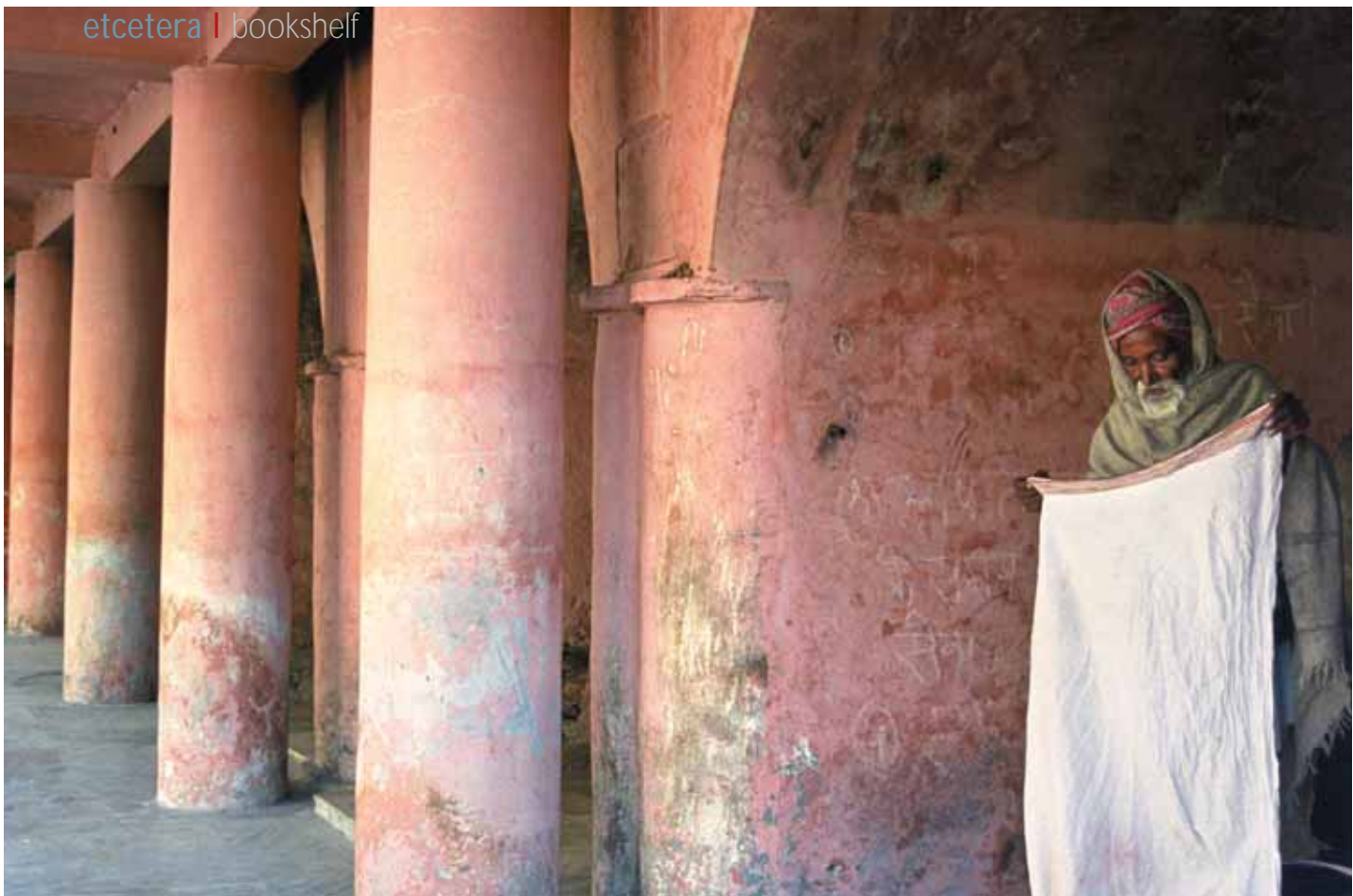
For millions, the Ganga is more than just a river—she is a living goddess, a symbol of divine consciousness, fount of healing and purification, and the emblem of an entire civilisation. For 56 year-old Vijay Singal, an income tax commissioner in Mumbai, the river is a symbol of faith. “She binds us all together,” he says. “She flows through our hearts and our lives.”

Singal chose to express his reverence in the form of *Ganga: A Divinity in Flow*, a pictorial journey that traces the path of the 2,510-km-long river from its source in the Gangotri glacier down to the Ganga Sagar, where it merges into the Bay of Bengal. The culmination of a three-year journey by Singal and photographer Atul Bharadwaj, 32, this simply written book merges legend, travelogue, and a warning about the ecological degradation that has ravaged the river over time. The beautiful photographs drive the point home. “I hope this book helps us reconnect with our culture and preserve our heritage,” says Singal. “We need to celebrate what is timeless and eternal in our country.”



(Clockwise from top) A view of Shivalinga peak (21,466 ft) taken on the way to Gaumukh, the source of the Ganga; bells at the entrance to a 15th century temple dedicated to goddess Ganga at Gangotri; a devotee offering worship on the banks of the Bhagirathi at Gangotri









(Clockwise from top left) A night shelter at Dev Prayag, a popular destination for pilgrims; ladies performing *puja* standing in the Ganga on the first day of Chhat in Patna; devotees singing and dancing at Ganga Sagar; a girl clutching offerings made by devotees at Ganga Sagar; an *akhara* (training centre) for wrestlers in Varanasi



***Ganga: A Divinity in Flow***  
Text by Vijay Singal (right);  
Photographs by Atul Bhardwaj  
Vision India Publications;  
240 pages; Rs 3,000

Readers can buy the book at a special price of Rs 1,350. Email [visionindiapublications@rediffmail.com](mailto:visionindiapublications@rediffmail.com) or call (0)9911223161 for details

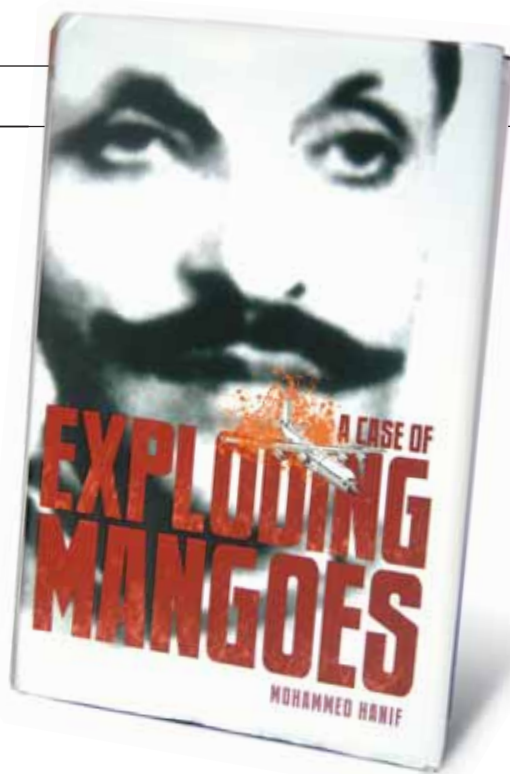


# Salute the dead

*A Case of Exploding Mangoes* by Mohammed Hanif  
Random House; Rs 395; 297 pages

At the close of *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, General Zia-ul-Haq on board Pak One with all his top generals asks Arnold Raphel, the 18th US ambassador to Pakistan, "Tell me how will history remember me?" He can't believe it when Raphel says that the world would remember him as a bit of a bore. In ...*Exploding Mangoes*, though, General Zia is hardly a bore. In fact, Mohammed Hanif portrays him as "one endless cosmic joke" through his fight against communism, his role in bringing the Kremlin to its knees, at home with the First Lady, and even in his death. In the process, the 'divine and devious' Zia becomes more human and less of the crafty dictator—he has worms eating his innards, he ogles at white, buxom journalists, cuts out newspaper articles praising him, really wants to know what civilians think of him, and loves mangoes enough to have a 'mango party' on Pak One.

*This book is not about rectifying historical misconceptions but about distorting history to script a whodunit of sorts*



This book is not about rectifying historical misconceptions but about distorting history to script a whodunit of sorts, recreating the incidents leading to the plane crash that killed General Zia two decades ago—it is believed that a nerve gas canister in a box of mangoes caused the crash. So you get a General with a bulging belly (that he calls "the only civilian part of my body and hence out of control") and a twirling moustache, and followed by an army that only wants to "widen the gap between what he knows and what he would like to know"—an army that wants him dead.

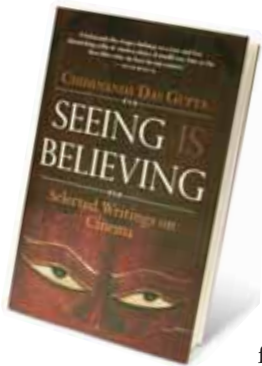
Under the scanner are Junior Under Officer Ali Shigri whose father Colonel Shigri hung himself from the fan in his house; Cadet Obaid-ul-Ilah, Shigri's (room) partner and American Lieutenant Bannon's partner-in-crime; Major Kiyani in civvies, running his affairs with a packet of Dunhills and an unregistered car; the outspoken, towering General Akhtar Hussain Malik who doesn't want to soldier on silently; and a crow carrying the curse from blind Zainab thrown in the dungeon for being gang-raped. They all salute Zia knowing they are saluting a dead man.

On the way, Hanif makes unsympathetic digs at India and America, not sparing Pakistan, a country that battles over Asha and Lata [Mangeshkar], tea and coffee, Coke and Pepsi, and Shia and Sunni. A couple of pages of clichés on Pakistan aside, ...*Exploding Mangoes* is a glorious escapade.

—Meeta Bhatti



## BRIEFLY



**C**hidananda Das Gupta, co-founder of the Calcutta Film Society, has written on cinema since 1946. **SEEING IS BELIEVING** (Penguin Books; Rs 499; 295 pages) is a compilation of Gupta's best writings over the past 60 years and shows why he is admired as one of the most incisive film critics in India. Unlike contemporary film critics who evaluate cinema purely for its public appeal, Gupta plunges deep into the craft to analyse the influence of various factors on films: politics, women, non-violence, and religion.

Towards the end, there are essays on five of India's finest film directors—Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Mrinal Sen and Shyam Benegal. The words are weighty but the pronouncements are insightful. And though the book borders on the scholarly, it draws you in with its honest passion for cinema.

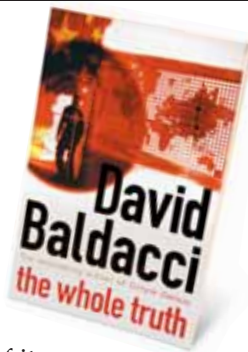
**A** Franco-Russian beauty, a megalomaniac with a deformed hand, his slimy sidekick, and a secret agent with a licence to kill. This is **DEVIL MAY CARE** (Penguin; Rs 395; 295 pages), British journalist-turned-author **Sebastian Faulks's** homage to Ian Fleming, released to commemorate Fleming's birth centenary. Zipping at a pace that would put James Bond's beloved Aston Martin to shame, Faulks piles on the frequent flier miles (France, Iran, the Soviet Union) with enough caviar and martini moments to punctuate the murder and mayhem. The only difference: Faulks's 007 is slower on the uptake, whether it comes to the ladies, or his gun. Eventually, though, he gets into slam-bang-kill mode—and it's a heck of a lot of fun. Can't wait for the movie.



**F**amous for creating TV shows like *Hum Log*, *Buniyaad* and *Mungeri Lal ke Haseen Sapne*, **Manohar Shyam Joshi** wrote equally celebrated novels *Kasap* and *Hariyaa Hercules ki Kahani*. **T'TA PROFESSOR** (Penguin; Rs 299; 139 pages; translated by Ira Pande) is one of his avant-garde works where Joshi becomes a character himself. Dreaming of writing immortal stuff, he is the new Ma'at-saip (Master Sahib) in a school in Kumaon where Professor Khashtivallabh Pant teaches science and English. The brunt of jokes for always carrying a dictionary under his arm, T'Ta Professor (because he pronounces Ta-Ta as T'Ta) and a young Joshi set up a tale of lechery and sex in rural idyll. The voyeur in Joshi can't decide whether to write a proletarian love story, a tragic tale or a tale of lust and longing. A psychological and social commentary on the bourgeois.



**I**t took American crime thriller writer **David Baldacci** five years to write and publish his first book *Absolute Power*. In the past five years he has written 10, and it's catching up with him. The slackness shows in **THE WHOLE TRUTH** (Macmillan; Rs 500; 406 pages). Shaw is looking for an exit from death-on-every-turn life. Cleansing the world of its nuclear bomb-toting demons is taking its toll on him, and that's not how he and his girlfriend Anna



Fischer want their married life to be. On what he thinks is his last assignment, he partners with journalist-turned obit writer Katie James. The story pans from Russia to Tajikistan to Ireland to America, where Nicolas Creel is engineering a war for his armament business. Baldacci creates characters that remain etched in the reader's mind. He is also a master at make-believe stories. This time, the global scale is rickety, diluting the kick that his thrillers are known for. For first-timers, though, this book will rock.

All titles are available at Oxford Bookstore, Kolkata, Bangalore, Mumbai, Goa and New Delhi, and on [www.oxfordbookstore.com](http://www.oxfordbookstore.com)



# Tell me your secret

*Something to Tell You* by Hanif Kureishi  
Faber; Rs 495; 345 pages

Even before you open *Something to Tell You*, you know it's about relationships—the cover, which shows couples in a variety of (tasteful) positions, is a dead giveaway. Kureishi sets his tale of discordant and dysfunctional relationships against the backdrop of Britain in the 1970s and 1980s—his stomping grounds of the past (*The Buddha of Suburbia*, *My Beautiful Laundrette*). The sexual hedonism and drug culture of the 1970s segueing into the gloomy Thatcherism of the 1980s is fertile ground for any writer—and Kureishi tills it with glee. His protagonist Jamal is a psychoanalyst who proclaims, “Secrets are my currency.” But he’s hiding his own—murder—the little ‘something’ he has to tell us as he tries to put his past behind him and come to terms with his suddenly middle-aged existence. First, though, he has to negotiate the minefield of relationships, past and present, that

drive his life: his son Rafi, who’s growing older, and away from him; his estranged wife Josephine who has found new love; his best friend Henry, a theatre director grappling with impotence, both creative and sexual; his tattoo-pierced savant sister Miriam and her taxi-driving business partner Bushy; and his first love Ajitha who he’s never quite got over. And it is these whacky characters—who are never allowed to degenerate into caricatures—coupled with Kureishi’s pithy observations on changing times (from Freud and Mick Jagger to Islamic militancy and Viagra) that reel us in even as Jamal confronts his unresolved traumas. And for Kureishi fans, the clever special appearances by characters from his earlier books are icing on the cake.

—Arati Rajan Menon



ONE  
-on-  
ONE

Personal Classifieds



I am 57 years old. I have a large collection of stamps, coins and books on handwriting analysis. I also write on serpent power and astrology. People who are interested in my work can contact me at:

**Dr Kamal P Agrawal**  
Shree Dham, 47, Hussani Bazar,  
Chandausi-202412.  
Mobile: (0)9412140444  
E-mail: chakrapanikp@yahoo.co.in

I am a 68 year-old, retired chemist. I am interested in music, movies, cooking, making friends and reading books on homeopathy, ayurveda and yoga. People who share similar interests may contact me at:

**Raymond Almeida**  
1097-23, Geetha, D D Road,  
Mulund (W), Mumbai-400080.  
Mobile: (0) 9869380521

I am 70 years old. I am interested in nature cure, the *Bhagvad Gita*, music and enjoy watching television. I am a keen gardener and a financial advisor. People who share similar interests can contact me at:

**Shankerlal R Fatnani**  
Anupam Building, Shanti Nagar,  
Raipur-492001, Chattisgarh.  
Tel: 0771-2424193, 4035950  
E-mail: srf.fatnani@yahoo.co.in

HEROES  
DON'T  
ALWAYS  
WEAR  
SWISHING  
CAPES  
AND  
MYSTERIOUS  
MASKS

Is she less of a hero if she wears a cotton sari and a toothy grin? If you are happy to give a hero her due wherever you may find her, your chance will come at Harmony Silver Awards 2008. An event that honours senior citizens whose age has only added fuel to the fire burning in their heroic hearts.



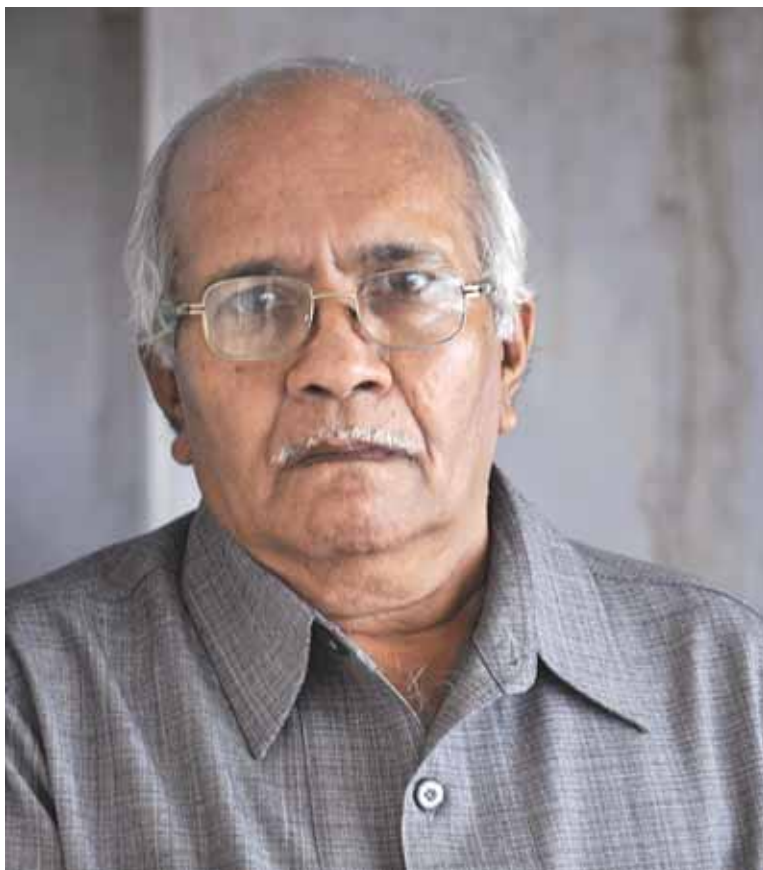
HEMANT PATIL

### LIFE IS A CLASSROOM

At 81, Pune-based social worker **Mandakini Dravid** is still thinking education. She recently got a PhD degree on 'Medical and Psychiatric Social Practitioners' Process Analysis' from the University of Pune. She began her research in 2001, but took a sabbatical after her son succumbed to cancer the same year. She finished her doctoral thesis in 2006. "Discipline and the urge to document everything I know made me take up this challenge," she tells *Harmony*. Dravid began working at 15, while she was still in school. She married early and separated from her husband in 1948. She returned to education while she was working at Sassoon General Hospital in Mumbai as a linen keeper and completed her bachelor's degree from SNDT College. Later, she joined the Tata Institute of Social Sciences to complete her master's in social work. In order to complete her PhD Dravid, who works as a social worker in hospitals like the Yerawada Mental Hospital, Muktangan Deaddiction Centre and Seva Sadan, worked on her thesis at night.

### E-WARRIOR

Retired chief engineer of Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation **M R Shah**, 68, whose battle against plastic bags led to the ban of thin plastic bags in Maharashtra in 2006, has found a new enemy. This time he's gunning for 'e-waste'. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority has roped him in to help the city get rid of old computers and electronic waste. With computers and peripheral equipment becoming commonplace, Mumbai is generating a shocking quantity of e-waste. Most of it comprises plastic and metals and disposal is gradually turning into a major concern. "The problem is the lack of clear guidelines on e-waste," says Shah. "Like bio-medical waste, it is not considered solid waste, which falls within the purview of municipal corporations. Hence, no one bothers to dispose of e-waste." If he wins the battle, MMRDA hopes to establish a model for the rest of Maharashtra.



VILAS KALGUTKER





### OUCH!

"When rainforests get slashed, it changes our climate," says American actor **Harrison Ford**, 65. "And it hurts." And to demonstrate just how much, he has waxed his chest. A recent advertisement aired by environment group Conservation International (CI) shows the star wincing in pain as he submitted to the final frontier in male grooming. "Every bit of rainforest that gets ripped out over there really hurts us over here," he says as the esthetician pats down a wax strip and then rips it off. "I was there when he filmed it, and it really hurt," Peter Seligmann, chairman of CI tells newspaper *Daily Mail*. "There's nothing about the expression on his face that was fake."



HT

### SILVER SUMMIT

Nepalese trekker **Min Bahadur Sherchan**, 75, has become the oldest person to reach the 8,848-m-high summit of Mount Everest. Sherchan's successful feat broke the previous record held by Katsusuke Yanagisawa, a 71 year-old Japanese school-teacher. "I want to be an inspiration for the citizens and the youth in our country," said Sherchan, speaking at a press conference recently organised by Nepal's tourism ministry in Kathmandu. "Many Nepalese have established records on Mount Everest. I wanted the record for the oldest Everest climber to belong to a Nepali." Unfortunately, his team member Dharma Bahadur Rai, 76, was seriously injured when he took off his gloves during the ascent to help Sherchan put on his clothes, socks and shoes. The chore took almost 10 to 15 minutes and left him with severe frostbite that led him to lose his fingers and toes.

## MILESTONES



DHRUBAYOTI NATH

**Awarded.** The Lifetime Achievement Award to **Mrinal Sen**, 85, at the Osian Film Festival in Delhi. Sen is credited as the founder of independent cinema in India with several acclaimed films like *Bhuvan Shome* (1969), *Mrigaya* (1976), and *Ek Din Pratidin* (1979), to name a few. "Initially, I felt slightly uncomfortable," he says. "Uncomfortable, because every time I watch my own films, I wish the same were treated as dress rehearsals so that I can go about it all over again. Which, I confess, I can't afford."

**Honoured.** **Nelson Mandela**, 90, whose life story will make it to Broadway. A leading group of Broadway producers are planning a show that will tell the story of Mandela's 27 years in prison and his work with other African National Congress leaders to end apartheid. It will be based on the upcoming memoir by Zindzi Mandela, a daughter from his marriage to Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. Zindzi was 18 months old when her father was jailed. She was only allowed to visit him for 30 minutes every six months for the 18 years he was held on Robben Island. In 1995, a year after he became South Africa's first democratically elected president, she told *Thandi* magazine: "From the day my father was free, we had to share him with the rest of the world. It sounds cynical but since he is free, we see less of him than before."



**Awarded.** The all-time Best Booker Prize to **Salman Rushdie**, 61, at the 40th anniversary of the Booker Prize, for *Midnight's Children*. The book won the Booker Prize in 1981 and went on to take the Booker of Bookers in 1993, an award to mark 25 years of the award. Rushdie's name was short-listed from a list of six authors—J M Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, Pat Barker, Peter Carey and J G Farrell. The author, who is currently promoting his latest book, *The Enchantress of Florence*, said he was "absolutely delighted". His sons Zafar and Milan received the award in London on his behalf.



HT

Right to Information campaigner and social activist **Kewal Semlani**, 71, dedicated his life to filing public interest litigations on civic issues like illegal speed breakers, potholed roads and the high mortality rate amongst Bombay Municipal Corporation workers. He was always available when anyone wanted help with drafting RTI applications. "Even at his age he carried out several campaigns in Mumbai and travelled all over to encourage the use of RTI," says Arvind Kejriwal who leads the RTI movement from Delhi. Rajesh Darak of Whistleblowers India remembers him as a pioneer in spreading awareness on RTI through his website [www.mahadhikar.org](http://www.mahadhikar.org).

Semlani had undergone a bypass surgery and three angioplasties. He died on 7 July.

Padma Vibhushan and Military Cross awardee Field Marshall **Sam Manekshaw** was born in Amritsar to Parsi parents. His father was a doctor and wanted him to study medicine, but he joined the Army in 1934. The highlight of his four-decade-long career was a victory in the 1971 war against Pakistan, which led to the creation of Bangladesh. Affectionately called 'Sam Bahadur', Manekshaw was known for his quick wit—he once called Indira Gandhi the "only man in the Cabinet". Manekshaw died in Military Hospital in Wellington in the Nilgiris on 27 June from progressive lung disease. He was 94.



HT



Philanthropist **Sir John M Templeton** amassed his fortune in global stocks and gave away hundreds of millions of dollars to foster understanding in what he called "spiritual realities". Born in Tennessee, Sir Templeton dazzled Wall Street, organised successful mutual funds, led investors into foreign markets, wrote books on finance and promoted search for answers to "Big Questions"—in the field of science, faith, God and humanity—and established charities under the Templeton Foundation that now gives away \$ 70 million a year. The foundation is now one of the world's richest. Sir Templeton died on 8 July in the Bahamas. He was 95.

Renowned for his talent-spotting skills, coach **K P Krishnan** (*see photo; person on left*), 87, groomed hundreds of football aspirants over the past six decades. He arrived in Mumbai in 1940 to pursue his love for the sport. The Tata Sports Club noticed his skills and Krishnan got a chance to play in Rovers Cup, following which he was picked for the Bombay squad. He retired soon after the team won the Santosh Trophy and dedicated his life to coaching young footballers, starting from Matunga where he set up base for over 60 years. He died on 16 June. "He always used to leave the ground from the side where the goalpost is," says his friend A K Iyer.



THE INDIAN EXPRESS



HT

Pioneering heart surgeon **Dr Michael DeBakey** developed the lifesaving bypass surgery. He helped design dozens of surgical instruments, including the roller pump, which is a part of the heart-lung machine that makes open-heart surgery possible. He also developed artificial hearts and heart pumps to assist patients waiting for transplants. "Dr DeBakey treated heads of state, entertainers, businessmen and presidents, as well as people with no titles and no means," says Ron Giroto, president of the Methodist Hospital System, Houston, where DeBakey was receiving treatment for a damaged aorta before he died on 12 July. He was 99.



## SAY IT OUT LOUD



I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship.

—American novelist Louisa May Alcott (1832-1888)

Between the optimist and the pessimist, the difference is droll. The optimist sees the doughnut, the pessimist the hole.

—Irish playwright Oscar Wilde (1854-1900)

An optimist will tell you the glass is half full; the pessimist, half empty; and the engineer will tell you the glass is twice the size it needs to be.

—Anonymous

Having a positive mental attitude is asking how something can be done rather than saying it can't be done.

—American motivational speaker Bo Bennett

It is better to be an optimist who is sometimes wrong than a pessimist who is always right.

—American writer Mark Twain (1835-1910)

## THE WORD IS OUT

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

**requel** *n.* A movie with the same subject matter as an earlier film, but it is neither a remake of that film nor does it continue the plot line.

**Example:** Nearly every James Bond film has been **requeled** at least once, and *Star Trek 7* and *10* were both requels of *The Wrath of Khan*.

—Roger Ebert, "Wake up and smell a secret", *Chicago Sun Times*, 7 December 2007

**BlackBerry prayer** *n.* The head-down, slightly hunched position that is characteristic of a person using a BlackBerry or similar device.

**Example:** There's been a revolution in smart phones like the Treo and BlackBerry that allow people to communicate by email and IM and access the Web from soccer fields and doctors' waiting rooms. If you haven't used them yet, you've almost certainly been to a dinner party or school event where someone's hunched over in the **BlackBerry prayer**, thumbing an email response.

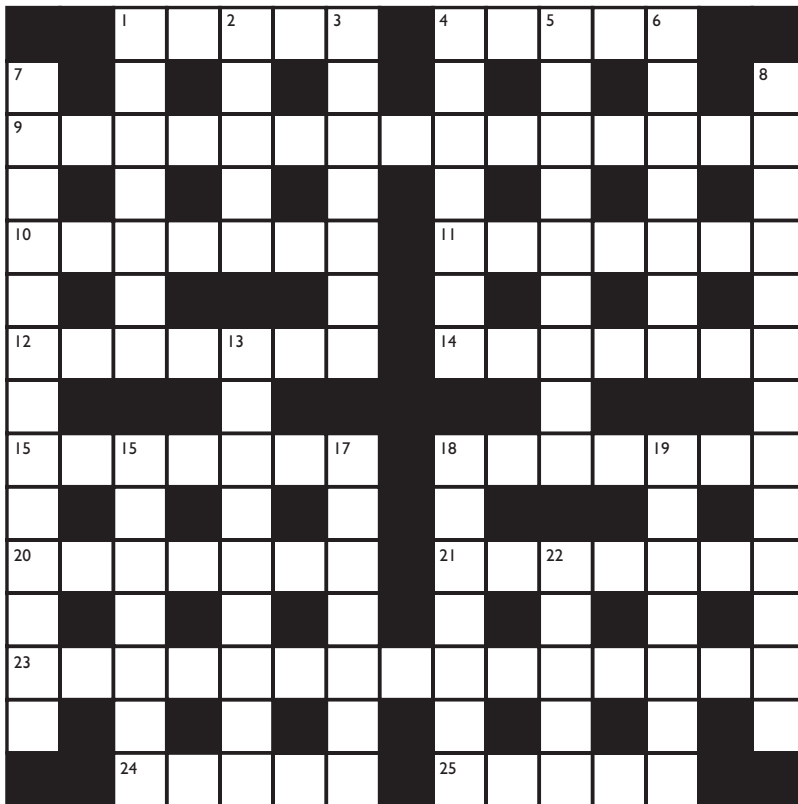
—Kerry Hannon, "What's changed at work while you were out", *US News & World Report*, 1 February 2008

**microboredom** *n.* Boredom caused by having nothing to do over a short period of time. Also: **micro-boredom**.

**Example:** A decade ago, those monotonous minutes were just a fact of life: time ticking away, as you gazed idly into space, stood in line, or sat in bumper-to-bumper traffic. Increasingly, these empty moments are being saturated with productivity, communication, and the digital distractions offered by an ever-expanding array of slick mobile devices. A few years ago, cell-phone maker Motorola even began using the word '**microboredom**' to describe the ever-smaller slices of free time from which new mobile technology offers an escape.

—Carolyn Y. Johnson, "The joy of boredom", *The Boston Globe*, 9 March 2008

Courtesy [www.wordspy.com](http://www.wordspy.com)



## EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 46

By Raju Bharatan

### ACROSS

- 1 It's down for making the softest of quilts! (5)
- 4 Imagine, this 1961 film's *Raag Pilo* Suraiya solo, *Mast aankhon mein shararat*, had that singing-star, side by side, rendering the same number, playback, on co-star Nimmi! (5)
- 9 Cooling agent associated with football that the hot-headed Sourav Ganguly now threatens to play for Chirag United (3-12)
- 10 Collect in cash, understand? (7)
- 11 Raj Kapoor's cinematic vision of inflation! (7)
- 12 Raj Kapoor's *Mera Naam* bugbear, complete with initials (5 1 1)

- 14 Brinda Karat on TV is and isn't (7)
- 15 Nation having men for core? (7)
- 18 Is it any wonder Sonia, as one, looks marble-smooth at times on TV? (7)
- 20 Legend *a la* embodying Babi return (3 4)
- 21 Azmi-Rai team-up, bravo! (7)
- 23 *Babes In The Wood*, shall we say? (6 3 6)
- 24 Conjuring image of one coming from 'behind' to leave Rekha startlingly behind (5)
- 25 That of Shane Watson to the IPL Trophy was impressive indeed (3-2)

### DOWN

- 1 What's music today but this to us vintagers! (7)

- 2 *Odhni* we don't get to see on TV during the Tests now on in Sri Lanka (5)
- 3 Something Mumbai's bargirls are still ironically waiting for (7)
- 4 Sounds a BJP citadel: spur to hold Institute of International Transport (7)
- 5 Playing Malang Baba was for Pran where it came to shedding the badman mantle, a Manoj Kumar *Upkar* this Sikand could never forget! (1 4 4)
- 6 What our 9-to-5 concept of sticking to the same institution through donkey's years could look in hindsight? (7)
- 7 In which you envision Murli Manohar Joshi 'Hindutvaingloriously' dreaming of being installed? (3 5 5)
- 8 To which the hold-up man, brandishing a meaningful axe, brought the train (1 8 4)
- 13 Does it, the idea mooted of the postman's dropping all mail meant for the skyscraper in a gigantic ground-floor box? (4 1 4)
- 16 Timely advice if it's that skyscraper's topmost floor your missive's got to reach! (4 3)
- 17 US State elevating our own Kanan Devi? (7)
- 18 Of late, what India's Test batting order is all but turning V V S Laxman into? (7)
- 19 How Goldie Vijay Anand, as a dancing *Guide* himself, could demonstrate what, precisely, he wanted from '*Piyaa Toh Se*' Waheeda Rehman (2 1 4)
- 22 Ask your breakfast-serving air-hostess how that thing she's wearing comes to mean 'an area on the airfield used for manoeuvring or parking the plane'! (5)

For answers, see Page 81

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

**TIPS FOR BEGINNERS:** A whole variety of clues goes into framing a cryptic puzzle. For instance, the anagram. The clue here could be: *Unresting opponent of authority* (*Unresting* being the 9 letters of *insurgent* rearranged). Another variety of clue is the palindrome—*DEIFIED*, when viewed backward or when viewed up in a Down clue, reads *DEIFIED* all the way. Next, there could be the clue (8-letter answer) reading: *Complete view of daughter sandwiched between parents*—*PANORAMA* (*PA/NORA/MA*). The 8-letter solution to the clue, *The framework of our constitution*, is *SKELETON*. At times, what looks straight could prove tricky. For example, the clue, *How we stand*—has *UNITED* for its 6-letter answer. The clue, *How we fall*, has *DIVIDED* for its 7-letter answer.

## HEADSTART

## BRAIN GYM

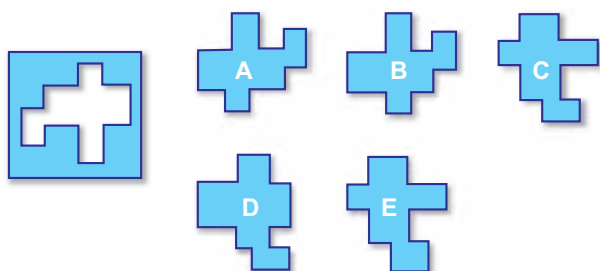
## COLORAMA

Here's a workout for your brain without any solution or answer at the end. Quickly read out the colour you see in every word below—not the word itself. Known as the Stroop Test, this exercise is used in neuro-psychological evaluations to measure mental vitality and flexibility. It illustrates how efficiently you are able to manage your attention, or stop one response in order to say or do something else.

RED	WHITE	GREEN	BROWN
GREEN	RED	BROWN	WHITE
WHITE	BROWN	GREEN	RED
RED	WHITE	GREEN	BROWN
BROWN	GREEN	WHITE	RED
WHITE	BROWN	RED	GREEN
GREEN	WHITE	BROWN	RED
RED	BROWN	GREEN	WHITE

## FRAGMENT OF YOUR IMAGINATION

Can you identify the missing piece?



## SYLLABLE SMART

Fill in the answers by selecting the correct syllables from the list below. You can use each syllable only once. The numbers in the brackets represent the number of syllables you are allowed to use. When the words are filled in, the first and last word as you read down from one to 10 will reveal a popular proverb.

CAL, DU, EM, EN, END, I, KARD, KING, LAN, LESS, LIN, MI, MI, PAS, PI, RI, RING, SAL, TAN, TATE, TERN, TRA, VO.

1. Lamp \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (2)
2. Lasting \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (3)
3. Drinking vessel \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (2)
4. Fusillade \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (2)
5. Connecting \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (2)
6. Perpetual \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (2)
7. Derived from experiment and observation \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (4)
8. Smoked beef \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (3)
9. Copy \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (3)

## WHAT'S WEIRD?

How quickly can you find out what is unusual about this paragraph? It looks so ordinary that you would think that nothing was wrong with it at all and, in fact, nothing is. But it is unusual. Why? If you study it and think about it you may find out, but I am not going to assist you in any way. You must do it without coaching. No doubt, if you work at it for long, it will dawn on you. Who knows? Go to work and try your skill. Par is about half an hour.

## POETIC RIDDLES

1. A hoard of rings am I  
but no fit gift for a bride  
I await a sword's kiss
2. My life can be measured in hours  
I serve by being devoured  
Thin, I am quick  
Fat, I am slow  
Wind is my foe



## SUDOKU FOR YOU

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

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.

3. Screaming, soaring/seeking sky  
Flowers of fire/flying high  
Eastern art/from ancient time  
Name me now/and solve this rhyme

4. It cannot be seen, cannot be felt  
Cannot be heard, cannot be smelt  
It lies behind stars and under hills  
And empty holes it fills  
It comes first and follows after  
Ends life, kills laughter

5. A harvest sown and reaped  
on the same day  
in an unplowed field,  
which increases without growing,  
remains whole though it is eaten  
within and without,  
is useless  
yet the staple of nations.

### NUMBER HUNT

Can you find the following sets of numbers in the maze?

02098 04899 10514 11231 22078 23334  
38894 39234 43297 51399 63883 74382  
84437 84983 90428 92838

5	6	7	6	5	6	7	8	3	9	2	3	4	6	3
8	6	4	9	8	7	3	8	3	9	2	2	7	3	3
2	0	2	0	9	8	7	8	3	3	4	8	4	9	4
2	4	7	4	8	4	9	4	8	0	0	2	2	8	4
0	1	9	2	7	4	6	5	8	4	9	3	0	0	5
7	0	9	8	7	3	8	4	9	8	3	7	4	8	9
8	4	7	5	6	7	5	8	4	7	4	7	4	8	4
7	8	9	9	9	8	7	4	9	3	4	8	7	2	3
1	1	2	3	1	3	6	3	5	4	7	3	6	3	8
1	0	1	0	7	9	0	3	9	8	7	2	3	8	3
7	5	8	5	9	3	4	8	2	3	6	3	8	8	3
0	1	9	1	9	3	8	3	8	3	7	3	6	3	5
7	4	8	3	8	2	9	8	3	7	4	3	2	9	7
1	7	8	9	0	3	9	8	4	7	5	4	3	7	3
9	8	7	9	8	7	4	3	8	2	2	4	7	3	2

## KOFFEE WITH KAKURO

	15	36		8	6	9	36	9
9			18					
36			10					
8					5			17
11						11		
5			6			4		
	9			6	8	6		
36								
15						8		

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.

## LAUGH LINES

The local news station was interviewing an 84 year-old lady because she had just gotten married—for the fourth time. The interviewer asked her questions about her life, about what it felt like to be marrying again at 84, and then about her new husband's occupation. "He is a funeral director," she answered.

"Interesting," the newsman thought. He then asked her if she would tell him a little about her first three husbands and what they did for a living. She paused for a moment, taking time to reflect on all those years. Then she smiled and explained that she first married a banker when she was in early 20's; then a circus ringmaster when in her 40s; later on a preacher in her 60s; and now in her late 80s, a funeral director.

The interviewer asked her why she chose people with such diverse careers. "Easy son," she smiled. "I married one for the money, two for the show; three to get ready; and four to go."

Jacob, 92, and Rebecca, 89, are all excited about their decision to get married. They go for a stroll to discuss the wedding and on the way they enter a drugstore. Jacob addresses the man behind the counter: "Are you the owner?" The pharmacist answers yes.

Says Jacob: "We're about to get married. Do you sell heart medication?"

Pharmacist: "Of course we do."

Jacob: "How about medicine for circulation?"

Pharmacist: "All kinds."

Jacob: "Medicine for rheumatism, scoliosis?"

Pharmacist: "Definitely."

Jacob: "How about Viagra?"

Pharmacist: "Of course."

Jacob: "Medicine for memory problems, arthritis..."

Pharmacist: "Yes, a large variety."

Jacob: "What about vitamins, sleeping pills, Geritol, antidotes for Parkinson's disease?"

Pharmacist: "Absolutely."

Jacob: "You sell wheelchairs and walkers?"

Pharmacist: "All speeds and sizes."

Jacob says to the pharmacist: "We'd like to register here for our wedding gifts, please."

.....

An elderly woman decided to have her portrait painted. She instructed the artist, "Paint me with diamond earrings, an emerald necklace, a ruby bracelet, and a Rolex watch."

"But you're not wearing any of those things!" the artist said.

"I know," she replied. "But if I should die before my husband, I'm sure he'll remarry right away, and I want his new wife to go crazy looking for the jewellery!"

.....

When a grandmother was in her late 80s, she decided to move to Israel. As part of the preparations, she went to see her doctor and get all her reports.

The doctor asked her how she was doing, so she gave him the litany of complaints: this hurts, that's stiff, I'm tired and slower. He responded with, "Mrs Siegel, you have to expect things to start deteriorating. After all, who wants to live to 100?"

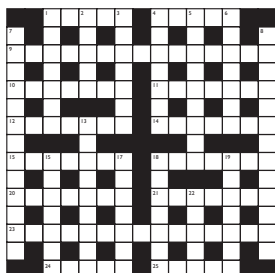
The grandmother looked him straight in the eye and replied, "Anyone who's 99."

## SOLUTIONS TO EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 46

77

### ACROSS:

1 eider (down); 4 Shama; 9 air-conditioning; 10 realise (means *understand* and *collect in cash*); 11 Padmini (RK vision of inflation, as coming through in *Jis Desh Men Ganga Behti Hai*); 12 Johar I S (of *Mera Naam Johar* notoriety); 14 redhead (Red/Head); 15 Armenia (Ar/*men*/ia: *men* as core); 18 Italian (*marble*); 20 Ali Baba (*a l/ibaB/a*); 21 Shabash (*Shab/Ash*: Azmi-Rai); 23 *Hansel and Gretel*; 24 Walia (the Sonu girl in *Khoon Bhari Maang*); 25 run-up



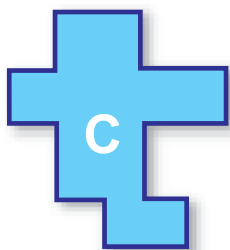
### DOWN:

1 earwash (variant of *eyewash*); 2 Dhoni (*odhni* is 5 letters of *Dhoni* rearranged); 3 redress; 4 Sitapur (*s/ITA/pur*: *spur* to hold *ITA*); 5 a good idea; 6 asinine (*asi.nine*); 7 Ram Rajya Sabha; 8 a grinding halt (idea of *axe to grind*); 13 ring a bell; 16 Mail now; 17 Alabama (elevating, reads: *Am a Bala*: Kanan Bala, as we fondly knew Kanan Devi); 18 insider (stuck in the pavilion, padded up); 19 in a step; 22 apron

## SOLUTIONS TO BRAIN GYM

78

Fragment of your imagination



### Syllable smart

LANTERN  
ENDURING  
TANKARD  
SALVO  
LINKING

ENDLESS  
EMPIRICAL  
PASTRAMI  
IMITATE  
Proverb: Let Sleeping Dogs Lie

### What's weird?

The paragraph does not contain a single instance of the letter "e", the most common letter in the English language.

### Poetic riddles

1. A suit of chain-mail (used in sword fights)
2. A candle
3. Fireworks
4. Darkness
5. War

### Number hunt

5	6	7	6	5	6	7	8	3	9	2	3	4	6	3
8	6	4	9	8	7	3	8	3	9	2	2	7	3	3
2	0	2	0	9	8	7	8	3	3	4	8	4	9	4
2	4	7	4	8	4	9	4	8	0	0	2	2	8	4
0	1	9	2	7	4	6	5	8	4	9	3	0	0	5
7	0	9	8	7	3	8	4	9	8	3	7	4	8	9
8	4	7	5	6	7	5	8	4	7	4	7	4	8	4
7	8	9	9	8	7	4	9	3	4	8	7	2	3	
1	1	2	3	1	3	6	3	5	4	7	3	6	3	8
1	0	1	0	7	9	0	3	9	8	7	2	3	8	3
7	5	8	5	9	3	4	8	2	3	6	3	8	8	3
0	1	9	1	9	3	8	3	8	3	7	3	6	3	5
7	4	8	3	8	2	9	8	3	7	4	3	2	9	7
1	7	8	9	0	3	9	8	4	7	5	4	3	7	3
9	8	7	9	8	7	4	3	8	2	2	4	7	3	2

79

## SOLUTIONS TO SUDOKU

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

## SOLUTIONS TO KAKURO

	15	36		8	6	9	36	9
9	5	4	18	1	4	2	8	3
36	4	1	8	7	2	3	5	6
8	1	5	2		5	4	1	17
11	3	8				11	7	4
5	2	3	6			4	3	1
	9				6			
9	7	2	6	8	1	2	3	
36	8	6	1	2	3	5	4	7
15	1	2	3	4	5	8	6	2





TEXT &amp; PHOTO: SHILBHADRA DATTA

**"The aim is not just to spread literacy. We also underline the importance of etiquette, humility and social responsibility, and help our students become better human beings."**

*Egiyae Chalo in Kolkata is unlike any other school—its students are young girls and women who work as domestic help. Started in 1990 by three friends, **Sadhana Gupta**, **Renuka Banerjee** (second from right) and **Sunanda Ghosh** (extreme right), the school is a symbol of compassion and determination. Gupta, who was a professor at Pilani University, started the school in her apartment in south Kolkata. After her death in 1995, Egiyae Chalo was on the brink of closure till a close friend Manojmohan Sanyal, 84, and his wife Gayetri, 76, offered a part of their two-storied house to conduct classes. Today, Banerjee, 78, and Ghosh, 74, manage Egiyae Chalo with renewed zeal. Monetary help comes from donations. Banerjee and Ghosh, along with 58 year-old Chinmoyee Dasgupta, take lessons in Bangla, math, history, geography and life sciences. This year, they have also introduced English. At present, there are 18 students; the youngest is 16 and the eldest 39. For Ghosh and Banerjee, convincing the girls' employers to relieve them every day between 6 pm and 8 pm was a hurdle initially. The effort was worth it—today they are proud of the hundreds of empowered girls they have educated, many of whom have gone on to find better jobs.*



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