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FLASHBACK

2005

AS WE NEAR THE END OF another year, it's time to look back. Every year brings with it the good, the not-so-good, and the momentous—2005 was no exception. It was a year of change, for me personally, and for the Harmony Initiative, a year of growth, challenges, victories and, yes, disappointments too.

Harmony, the magazine, continued to break new ground. Our January 2005 issue, with its "Silver Hotlist", evoked tremendous response, while the May issue featured 'A Day in the Life of K Lal', an exposé of real life in an old-age home in Delhi—the article got a response from the Department of Social Welfare, with the announcement of a new home. It was heartening to see that *Harmony* is making such impact. In June 2005, we turned one, and explored what it means to be silver. *Harmony* resounded with the voices of India's elderly, some famous, most unknown, all significant. And in October, we presented our signature guide to assistive products and services.

Meanwhile, the Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, Mumbai, has developed into a vibrant community with over 400 members. Over the year, the centre has celebrated festivals, held yoga and T'ai Chi classes, organised health talks and has taught new skills from computers to cookery. And our website www.harmonyindia.org continues to grow in popularity—it attracts between 18 and 25 lakh hits a month. Popular additions to the site this year have been the 'Head Hunters' and 'Second Careers' modules, which invite recruiters and job seekers to display their profiles online.

Our biggest victories this year, though, were the two runs we organised: the 5 km Silver Run in January and the 4 km Senior Citizens' Run in October. Over 1,000 silvers took to the streets of Mumbai and over 3,000 did the same in the capital, blazing a trail in their yellow T-shirts.

The silver lining aside, there is a concern. The Initiative's vision to bring silvers and those who work

RITU NANDA



towards their welfare under one umbrella is yet to be realised. Most NGOs working for the elderly still remain localised, and the needs of seniors are still not taken seriously enough by a youth-centric society. Events like the marathons show how silvers can propel themselves into the public eye and imagination. But these are merely flashes of what is possible—we need to convert such succession into a sustained groundswell of support. Ultimately you hold the key. Stand up for your rights, and demand a better life. Make yourself heard—in *Harmony*, and society at large. Imagine, together what a difference we could make!

Tina Ambani

A Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust Initiative

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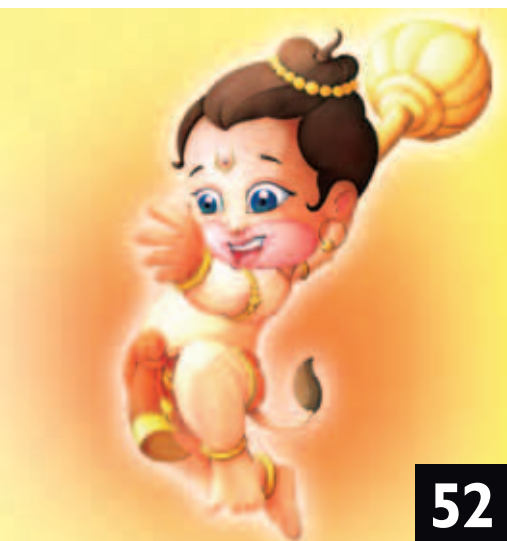
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column one

Will it be a new you for the New Year? Take a few tips on zestful living from some silvers featured in this issue. Tarla Dalal, the indigenous mistress of spices, on the cover this month, has crossed 110 cookbooks and is planning another television show.

Of course we will be the first ones to inform you when and where.

Then there is 71-year-old filmmaker V G Samant, who after 46 years in the animation industry, has finally tasted success with his blockbuster animation feature *Hanuman*. He gets a kick out of hearing children laugh. He is scripting a new spirited story to animate in 2006. Also, watch out for Dr Sharad Shah's *bhajan* album with the verses of Mahavir Bhagwan and Padmawati Mata. Dr Shah divides time between his homoeopathic clinic and making music (Second Careers, "Music On His Mind").

More and more seniors like Dr Shah are escaping the routine in search of new horizons. Dr Harish Saxena (Speak), a PhD in Animal Sciences finds satisfaction in bringing light to blind people's lives, and businessmen and retired professionals in Amritsar fund and run the country's oldest fire brigade station.

So, will it be a new you for the New Year? As always, it's about the choices we make. How we choose to live is our prerogative. *Harmony* reflects the fire in the men and women it features—the fire to innovate, progress and evolve. The magazine is looking ahead too—we will add new features and sections in the new year. Keep the faith!

—Meeta Bhatti

Thank you!

The October 2005 issue of *Harmony* was educative for us—as well as our readers. Some were happy to read about the many assistive devices for seniors available in India. Others, like Bibijee from Bhopal and K N Ramachander from Bangalore, were disappointed with these “expensive” products and felt our featuring them was a blatant attempt at “crass commercialisation”. We accept your views, positive and negative, but want to share the story behind our ‘special’ issue.



While sorting through articles sent by you, our readers, for the ‘Your Space’ column, we came across one written by Colonel (retd) Arun Moghe (see photograph), who wrote to us about his years of work in order to compile a book on assistive devices for seniors. We published his observations in our July 2005 issue. “Advancing age brings with it innumerable restrictions,” he wrote. “Simple things like sitting on a chair or reading a book or newspaper begin to feel arduous. Here, modern technology can come to the rescue.” That’s where *Harmony* stepped in. We met Colonel Moghe in Pune a few months ago and found out more about his book, which has listed around 1,400 items in terms of their usefulness, costs and availability. And yes, ‘commercial viability’, too. Only 15 per cent of the products he listed are made by Indian manufacturers, he told us, and price tags are often steep. However, he believes prices would come down if more and

more Indian manufacturers started coming up with such products. “But people must first know that such products exist, and exist within the country.”

So, Colonel Moghe, who’s now awaiting a sponsor to print his book, was happy to share his list of assistive devices with us. In turn, we scouted around for more such devices available on the market and decided to share our collective findings with our readers. If you found them useful or informative, we achieved what we set out to. For those of you who found them meaningless ‘commercial’, our regrets. Either way, your response is valuable to us—it shows us you care about *Harmony*. We couldn’t ask for more, and will try harder to live up to your faith in the magazine and what it stands for you.

—Editors

The cover feature of your October 2005 issue, ‘55 Plus Ways to Make Silver Sparkle’, was very useful. At 72, I can manage to read crossword puzzles with my glasses but I have decided to keep the information on magnifiers handy as I may need them someday! Of the products featured, the first thing I wanted to buy right away was the Soma cube set as I am a puzzle buff. I also take great interest in Su Doku puzzles. It would be nice if you introduce them as a regular feature in

Harmony. Unfortunately, the colour scheme you used for printing the Su Doku puzzle in the October issue wasn’t good. The small red numbers in the box were not easy to read against the light purple background.

SURESH M MODY

Mumbai

I was disappointed with your October 2005 issue and don’t think there was anything special about it. You cannot make the magazine into an advertising feature at the cost of regular

reading space. Instead, you should have added a supplement. This is crass commercialism. Though a few of the items may be of interest to some, I think the majority of the products were too expensive. Also, I wish you would use larger font sizes and print the page numbers on all pages in black.

BIBIJEE

Bhopal

Thank you for the suggestion. From this issue, page numbers are in black.

—Editors

With the help of your special feature on products and services in your October issue for silvers, I hope all *Harmony's* readers will 'celebrate age', irrespective of theirs.

KIRIT PARIKH

Mumbai

I read your October 2005 special issue on products and services with interest, and found "Trial Room—In A New Light" very informative. I never knew magnifying gadgets like CCTVs are available in the Indian market, that too at an affordable price. My brother suffers from problems with his vision and I plan to ask him to invest in one.

BHAI SWINDER SINGH

New Delhi

I came across your magazine recently and really liked it. My husband, Lt Col (Dr) N Gopalakrishnan, who works as chief consultant in Chennai's Apollo Hospital, has now become a regular reader. I strongly believe in your motto: Celebrate age. I lost my first husband in 1978, when I was 42. I brought up my children—two boys and a girl—all alone. Once they were settled, I felt the first pangs of loneliness. When I was 50, I had a chance

meeting with Gopalakrishnan. He was a close friend of my husband during our medical college days and had lost his wife recently. In 2003, we decided to get married. Though people criticised me for remarrying at the age of 67, our children stood by us. Today, at 70, I am at peace.

DR C JAYA KUMARI

Chennai

I am 74 years old and enjoy reading *Harmony*. But I was very disappointed to find that you literally converted your October 2005 issue into an advertising medium by featuring various gadgets. Do you intend to convert *Harmony* into a shopping guide? Seniors may not need most of the gadgets featured, especially the high-end products. And all this at the cost of your regular features—disappointing indeed!

K N RAMACHANDER

Bangalore

Certificates and other records show that I am nearing 70. But I don't feel it, physically or mentally. I feel I am still 40! Twelve years ago, I couldn't understand why I had to retire. All my life, I have religiously followed the lesson from the

Bhagavad Gita: "Do your duties, don't hanker after the results." That has always kept me happy.

Simple living is my mantra: eat less, exercise in the morning for an hour and practice *pranayama* in the evening for half an hour. My flat is on the third floor and I take the stairs several times a day. My advice to everyone is to practice *pranayama* and other exercises to keep physical and mental stress at bay. I can say that with confidence, as I have never had medical problems. I go for a routine check-up every month, and each time the doctor scribbles the same thing on a chit of paper: Pressure, normal; chest, clear; pulse, 72 or 80. Another thing I never think of is death. When death is not within our control, why waste precious time thinking about it? Adopt a positive attitude and lead a full life.

ARUN CHANDRA MUKHOPADHYAY

Kolkata

I am a 65-year-old retired police officer. I subscribe to your magazine and find it very helpful to senior citizens. However, I have two suggestions to make. First, I wish you would give the

AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY



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

- You had an experience related to money or finance which others can learn from
 - You faced a serious health problem and conquered it
 - You know of someone who has done something exceptional after the age of 55
 - You want to share your hobbies and interesting travel experiences with others
 - You have a funny or insightful anecdote about your grandchildren
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addresses of the person or institution you feature at the bottom of the page. For instance, if we have any queries on yoga, isn't it possible for us to directly address our questions to Shameem Akthar? Second, I feel you feature personalities from Delhi and Mumbai. What about other states? I would be happy if you could feature unsung heroes too.

GOVIND SAHU

Berhampur, Orissa

We appreciate your suggestions. Unfortunately, it isn't possible for us to print the contact numbers of our columnists. However, as promised, we direct all your queries to them and send you their answers. And addresses and contact details of institutions featured in our magazine are always printed on the 'Resources' page. As for your second suggestion, we have regularly featured unsung heroes and we will do so more often.

—Editors

In the October 2005 issue, I read "The Last Word" by Srila Prabhupada. What appeals to me the most about him is that he began working towards establishing the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) at an age when people usually retire. In 1965, at the age of 69, he reached New York on a freighter. Practically penniless, he struggled for almost a year to establish ISKCON. In 1968, he started ISKCON's first rural farm projects in the US, laying special emphasis on *goraksha* (cow protection). In 1972, he introduced the Vedic system of primary and secondary education in the West by founding the Gurukula School in Dallas, Texas. Since then, under his supervision, his disciples have

established children's schools in the US and the rest of the world. By 1990, there were fifteen such schools worldwide, with the principal educational centre in Vrindavan, India.

His most significant contributions are his books. Some are used as textbooks in colleges. The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, established in 1972 to exclusively publish his

works, has become the world's largest publisher of books in religion and philosophy. Before he passed away on 14 November 1977, ISKCON grew to a world-wide confederation of over 100 *ashram*. In just 12 years, Srila Prabhupada's footprints are deeply etched in the sand. Surely, we can follow his example.

DEVIDAS VAIDYA

Mumbai



I congratulate the *Harmony* team for its excellent arrangements at the Senior Citizens' Run at the Hutch Delhi Half Marathon held on 16 October. Among the participants were members of the HAR-MIT Trust & Home for Senior Citizens,

which I run. After visiting your Interactive Centre

in Mumbai in December 2004, I had divided India into two parts—one north of the Vindhya and the other south. The enthusiasm of the people in the south stood out against the cynicism and indifference of those from the north. Your run helped bridge this divide in attitude.

To explain how, I must narrate these two incidents: Dr Kiran Datar, dean of Delhi University, suffers from acute pain in her knees. But when I requested her to participate in the run, she readily agreed. On the day of the run, I asked her not to walk alone but wait for me to escort her. However, after seeing the charged and vibrant mood everyone was in, she decided to walk as far as she could. She not only walked the entire stretch but also a kilometre more with me to the car park. While bidding me goodbye, she said, "Thank you for inspiring me."

Eighty-plus Savitri Pargal was extremely active until six months ago, when she suffered near-fatal injuries in a hit-and-run accident. She's still recovering but when I requested her to join us a spectator, she insisted on participating in the run. When the event began, I lost her in the crowd and presumed she had gone home. I was in for a surprise. I saw her a little later, walking on the track along with other participants. She told me she decided to prove to herself and her family that she had overcome her injuries! That's the spirit of empowerment the marathon generated.

MAJOR (RETD) JASBIR SINGH

Delhi

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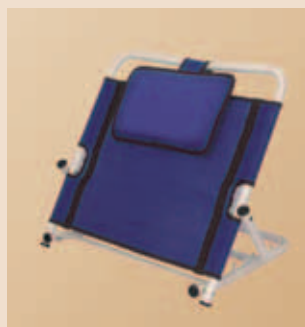
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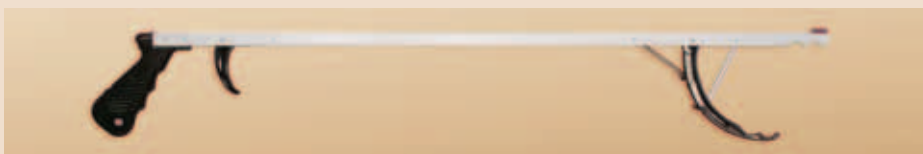
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NEWSWORTHY

A LESSON IN TECHNOLOGY

In New York City this October, a group of silvers went back to school. At a seminar organised by Older Adults Technology Services (OATS), they were introduced to gadgets their grandkids take for granted. "The idea was to have seniors come and touch technology, operate a mouse, hold a digital camera," says Tom Kamber of OATS. "Our volunteers were on hand to show them how everything worked. Digital cameras and iPods [digital music players] seemed to draw the most attention." One visitor was Jack Delaney, 72. "There are so many like me who are ignorant of all the new advances in technology," he said. "I'm at the brink of diving into a whole new world."

STORMING THE HOUSE

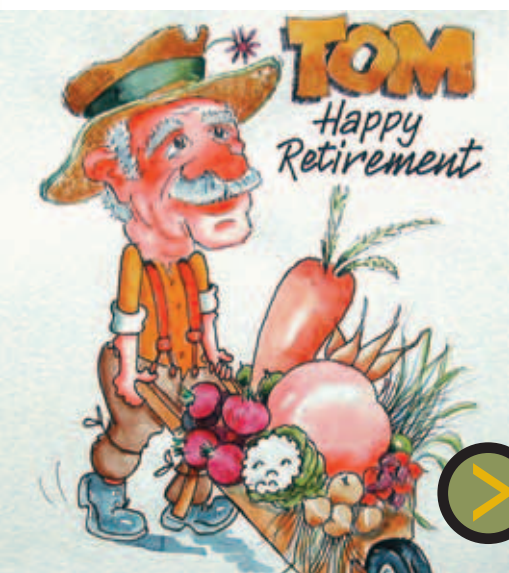
On 16 October, hundreds of pensioners from across the UK descended on Parliament to show their support for the new **Pensioners' Charter** of the National Pensioners Convention (NPC). The charter has been created after months of nationwide discussion among thousands of older people. It states that every pensioner should be entitled to a basic state pension linked to average earnings; free healthcare and an annual health check; a warm and comfortable home; free community care to assist living at home; free travel on all public transport; free education and access to services and benefits. "It would ensure that retirement was no longer synonymous with poverty by ensuring dignity, respect and financial security in the later years," says Joe Harris, general secretary of the NPC.



RETIRE RETIREMENT

Europe needs to stop subsidising the early retirement, according to a report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an international agency that supports programmes designed to facilitate trade and development. Several European countries have been striving to sustain their early retirement culture as a way to tackle unemployment among the youth. "There is no link between these two factors," argues Mark Keese, an analyst with OECD. "Sweden or Denmark have the highest participation of older workers, but they also have the highest rates in youth employment."

As living conditions in developed countries improve, the number of years workers spend in retirement is on the rise. This could lead to major burdens on public finances. The OECD feels governments should either **stop having a fixed retirement age**, or raise it. At the moment, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the UK score in terms of older workers participating in training.



The rising: Silvers in Manipur are displeased—and they're showing it. On 21 October, the Manipur State Pensioners' Union staged a rally in Imphal demanding arrears of 'dearness relief' to pensioners and beneficiaries of family pension with a single payment as early as possible, and not in three equal instalments as the government plans to do. They also want immediate payment of leave encashment. Following the rally, members of the union began an indefinite 'sit-in' on 24 October to draw attention to their demands. "In case the government fails to act, we are ready to resort to drastic steps," says M Surendro Singh, general secretary of the union.

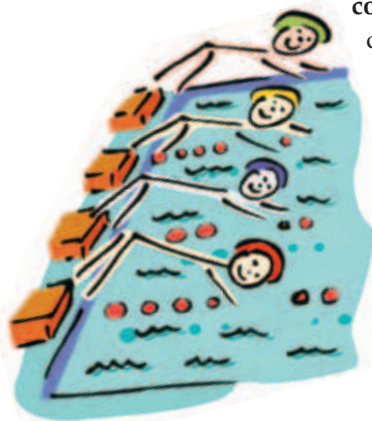


SMOOTH SUPPLY

In Chandigarh, the administration has simplified the procedure to obtain **kerosene cards** through the Public Distribution System for silvers. They can now fill up and submit a form at their local kerosene depot instead of going to the Food and Supplies Department. The cards will be delivered home within 10 days of the receipt of the application form.

SUPER SILVERS

An 81-year-old diver from Flamborough and a 67-year-old roadie from Bridlington have been named as two of the **UK's coolest over-60s** in a national 'Stay Cool' campaign run by Powergen Staywarm, a company that provides energy services to the elderly. "I still love diving and certainly think my actions defy my age," says Reginald Thompson, who has even written a book about his adventures. Meanwhile, Gwen Hullah manages her 24-year-old daughter Ida's singing career and acts as roadie (a person engaged to load, unload, and set up musical equipment and perform errands) when Ida goes on tour. "This is no job for the weak-hearted," she says. "It's a challenge that would keep any older person young."



Calling all silvers: In Kerala, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd has launched a post-paid scheme, Plan 100, for government employees and pensioners. Silvers do not need to pay activation charges or security deposit for STD and national roaming. They need to submit their pension certificate.

LOVE THAT!

GROOVY GRANS



You could learn a lot from today's grandmothers—and we're not talking knitting. A survey of 2,000 women with an average age of 69 (87 per cent of them have grandchildren) by UK-based over-50s magazine *Yours* finds that **today's grans are young, trendy and adventurous**. The numbers say it all: 83 per cent say they enjoy good health; 77 per cent say they are 'happy'; 61 per cent drive a car; 96 per cent enjoy eating out; 24 per cent have a daily tippie (white wine is the favourite); 58 per cent wear makeup everyday; 43 per cent colour their hair; 89 per cent love dressing up for a night out (with 57 per cent getting out the high heels); 75 per cent have a mobile phone and use it to 'text'; 48 per cent have a computer and use it; and 70 per cent of those with a partner still enjoy a good sex life. They also never give up on finding love—24 per cent of the single women polled have already been on dates; 14 per cent would like to use a dating agency, 20 per cent would put an ad in the paper; 11 already have; and one in 10 would like to try speed dating. Go gran.

OFFBEAT

TOMORROW NEVER DIES

Get this. A British computer scientist, and self-taught gerontologist, claims there's **no reason why people cannot live to 1,000 years of age.**

Forty-year-old Aubrey de Grey threw down the gauntlet at a conference in Queen's College, Cambridge University, in October. Prove me wrong, he told the assembled gerontologists, and I'll give you £10,000 (about Rs 8 lakh)—there have been no takers yet.

De Grey calls his doctrine 'Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence', or Sens. While a couple of his solutions, such as using stem cells to engineer new tissues, organs and nerve cells, are already in the works, some of his other ideas are yet to be tried. One of these is a body-wide rubbish removal programme



that would clean up the junk that tends to accumulate inside cells by implanting genes in people from soil bacteria that have the ability to metabolise waste.

"At the moment, people tend to put increased longevity in the same bracket as transponder beams, in other words, science fiction," says de Grey. "But soon scientists will fall in behind my theories and the public will insist politicians make these therapies available to everyone." Not everyone's convinced. "There's no doubt that Aubrey is an interesting guy but I don't buy a lot of his hyperbole," is all David Finkelstein, the program director of the US National Institute of Ageing, had to say.

TRENDS

PROSPECTING FOR SILVER

Here's a phrase you're sure to hear a lot of in coming years: **silver industries.** With silvers seeking to live independently, new businesses to help them do so are mushrooming in the US. You have tailors for retirees who cannot mend anymore, geriatric-care managers to oversee a parent's care, and even

daily money managers. Two examples: Nine years ago, in Havertown, Pennsylvania, 40-year-old Margit Novack started Moving Solutions to help the elderly sort, pack and move. In Marlton, Burlington County, 46-year-old seamstress Debbie Hackman goes to retirement communities, helps sew shorten hems or replace elastic bands.

BANKING ON THE NET

Harmony helped the Purohits switch to **online banking** last year. And now, they have lots of company online. A new study by UK-based Internet bank Cahoot reveals that close to two-thirds of the 55 to 64 age group are now online, with half the over-50 online community banking over the web. "Though it will never replace face-to-face contact for some seniors, many others like the convenience of the Internet, with the ability to open accounts and conduct transactions at any time without leaving home," says John Goddard, managing director of Cahoot. To learn more about banking online, see the 'Technology' section in the February 2005 issue of *Harmony*. The Purohits feature in our technology column every month.



ANALYSE THIS

GO FIGURE



In a survey of 500 men and women over 60 in Tokyo, conducted by advertising company Creative Senior, 41.3 per cent of male respondents said they still had '**romantic feelings**' toward their wives but only 18.9 per cent of the women felt the same way about their husbands.

UNDER PRESSURE

Meet the **sandwich generation** — people aged 50 to 64, who have to care for younger family members, older relatives and still provide for themselves. Despite



being financially stable, they are less happy than those over 75, according to a study by NGO Australia Active Ageing.

WORK FOR LIFE

A new research says **working till late in life might actually boost longevity**. Over 26 years, Shell Health Services analysed the health of about 3,500 former employees of Texas-based petrochemical company Royal Dutch Shell PLC. It concluded that those who quit at 65 were likely to enjoy a longer life than those who did at 55. The findings were published in the October issue of the *British Medical Journal*.



MEDIA WATCH



SOUND OF SILENCE

This October, old men flying kites and silver women performing T'ai Chi exercises at the Altar of the Sun, an ancient park in Beijing, stopped to listen to the mellow tone of chiming bells. The sound came from 16 CD players nestled at regular intervals around the foot of the wall enclosing the park, installed by avant-garde British musician Brian Eno. He did this because of the silvers he saw exercising, strolling, chatting and playing cards there. "Everybody makes music for younger people but I wanted to **make music for old people**," said the 57-year-old. "But, I didn't want to mar the tranquillity of the place so I wanted a sound that would not break the peace." His answer: the bell. The locals were interested, if not impressed. Fu Yangsheng, the 64-year-old park gatekeeper said, "I don't understand it. But it sounds fairly nice."

HOT LINES

Varicose veins and Viagra commingle with some seriously steamy sex in Rexanne Becnel's new romance novel, *Old Boyfriends*. "It was such a pleasure to write about thunder thighs," says the author. Welcome to **'Matron Lit'**, which publishers are eagerly churning out, and silvers are lapping up. For example, Harlequin's new 'Next' line, available in large-type editions, deals with failed marriages and widowhood, more identifiable for older women than puppy love. "Women at a critical stage of life who are willing to say,

'What's next?'," says Next editor Tara Gavin. It's not just fiction. *Flings, Frolics, and Forever Afters* by divorcee Katherine E Chaddock, 57, and her widowed sister, Emilie Chaddock Egan, 60, offers dating advice, while *Rescue Me, He's Wearing a Moose Hat* by Sherry Halperin is about the pitfalls of later-life dating. "I can't tell you how many men complain about the cost of Viagra," says Halperin.

CANDID CAMERA



After a slew of B-grade skin flicks like *Girlfriend*, filmmaker Karan Razdan changes track with his new film, *Umar*, which is about "the hardship in the lives of older people". The story revolves around three older men—Prem Chopra, Satish Kaushik and Kader Khan—living abroad, who are neglected by their families, and the bond they develop with a young fugitive. "This is not a melodramatic film where the oldies are a depressed lot," says Razdan. "My protagonists are determined people, willing to fight for what they believe in." *Umar* will be released in 2006.

H RECOMMENDS

ACTION PLAN FOR DECEMBER

1. Tell your story: Record your history for your grandkids. A group of silvers in Southborough, Massachusetts, got together to do that. Rosita Bartolini, 78, spoke about compulsions on girls when she was at school. Her account, along with many others, was compiled into a videotape, *Memories*, which is now available in the community library.



2. Act it out: Give your energy and time a creative outlet by setting up a theatre group in your neighbourhood. Like Sage Age Players in Peterborough, Ontario, in Canada, which, for the past five years, has urged seniors to see the lighter side of issues such as dementia. "We're retired folks with a lot of time on our hands, yen to act and a great sense of humour," says founder Tom Marshall, 66.



3. Embrace yourself: Take another look at yourself! In Little Rock, Arkansas, in the US, gerontologist Dr David Lipschitz tells his elderly patients to get naked in front of a full-length mirror and say "I'm beautiful". "To live a truly good life, you need love, faith, a purpose in life, self-esteem, and a brand new look at yourself," he says.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



HAPPY DIWALI

This Diwali brought good news to silvers in Patiala. On 5 November, the Punjab Pensioners' Association organised a function in the city where a **free directory and medical guide** for silvers was released. Akali Dal MLA Surjit Singh Rakhra, the chief guest, donated a piece of land for building homes for pensioners and Sohan Singh, senior manager of Canara Bank, donated Rs 10,000 to the association.

WHEN I'M 66



What do people associate old age with? And how accurate are they? Those are the questions *Sixty-six*, an exhibition at the Museum Baselland at Liestal near Basel, in Switzerland, grapples with. The exhibition, which will run until August 2006, is deliberately aimed at the young, to let visitors who are not yet old mull over 'positive ageing' through films, photographs, installations, dates, information and activities. While the history of caring for the elderly and the concept of social security are

explained, the contributions of the elderly to society are also highlighted, especially their role in neighbourhood-volunteer work and looking after grandchildren. "We were struck by the one-sided view of the elderly as weak people suffering from illness and loneliness," says museum spokeswoman Claudia Pantellini. "But there's also this contrasting image of the super grannies and granddads, constantly on the go. We wanted to confront the stereotypes, and banish them."



SILVER RUN

Recently, New Delhi was alight in a blaze of yellow as more than 3,000 silvers hit the streets on 16 October, to participate in the *Harmony*-sponsored 4.3 km Senior Citizen's Run, part of the Hutch Delhi Half-Marathon. Silvers proudly showed us how age can be reduced to a meaningless number when the adrenaline flows.

It's time for the running shoes to come out once again—the **2006 Mumbai Marathon** will be held on 15 January, and *Harmony* will again sponsor the 5-km Silver Run. Registrations are open till 15 December 2005. So if you're active, healthy and over 60, hurry up and get your entry forms—up to 3,000 silvers can participate this time. *Harmony* will have a special marquee at the event. For details, contact the Harmony Interactive Centre, next to Ram Mandir, Zaobawadi Lane, Thakurdwar, Girgaum, Mumbai-400002. Tel: 022-30976440/1, or 98706 60000.

Welcome to the section where you, our readers, can share your thoughts and experiences on anything under the sun. Write in, and make this space your own

WILL AND GRACE



To do full justice to the achievements and perseverance of my 86-year-old mother Dr R Lakshmi Deir, an independent, courageous and disciplined lady, you need to take a peek into her younger days.

In 1933, when my mother married my father R Narasimhiah, she was 14 and he was 30. He was a doctor, and she had studied only till Class VIII. Soon after their marriage, they moved from Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh to Satyamangalam, a mofussil town at the foot of the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu. In the years that followed, they raised five children—four daughters and a son. Despite a busy domestic schedule, my mother found time to help my father at his clinic. Looking at the prescriptions my father wrote, she would pack medicines for patients.

The freedom struggle was gaining momentum. And such was the popularity of Hindi as the language used to propagate the struggle that no one remained unaffected by it, even in South India. My mother was not an exception. Wanting to join the freedom struggle, she wrote a letter in broken Hindi to Mahatma Gandhi. She got a prompt reply from his

secretary Mahadev Desai asking her to spread the message of freedom and educate women in Hindi. At 22, she decided to learn Hindi formally and enrolled herself at the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha in Madras. She soon passed the 'Pravin Parangat' exam (equivalent to a Masters in Hindi) and started teaching the language to women in Satyamangalam.

She continued teaching till we moved to Bangalore in 1950 for our higher education. Once the family was settled, my mother joined the Mysore Riyasat Hindi Prachar Samiti in 1953 for *pracharak* (teachers') training. Eventually, she supported one of her acquaintances, Rajam Saraswathi, to set up the Women's Peace League (WPL) Girls High School. She joined the school as a teacher and later became a member of the school committee in 1956.

After years of teaching, she decided to complete her education. She appeared for her school final examination in 1969 as an external candidate, and later finished her PUC from Mysore University in 1972. She got her BA degree (with a first division) in 1976, the same year she retired from school. Two years later, she got her MA degree from Bangalore University, again securing a first division.

But she didn't stop at a post-graduate degree. She enrolled herself for a PhD. The subject of her thesis was 'Realism in Kannada and Hindi after Independence'. When it was time to submit it, her oral examiner asked her what she would do with a doctorate degree at 62. She replied, "To gain knowledge, age and gender isn't a constraint." She did her research work without any of us realising what she was up to, and surprised us with a doctorate in 1979.

Today, she continues to be the president of the school committee and attends the school's activities thrice a week. She has been a member of the Theosophical Society since 1945. After my father passed away in 1984, she took up writing seriously. So far, apart from writing short stories and novels in Kannada, she has also translated English and Hindi

books into Hindi and Kannada. She's also an active member of the Women's Writers Association, and has been recognised for her work. The way I see it, her secret to longevity, energy and grace is her strict disciplined life and will power to excel. She has instilled the same values in me, and as a daughter I am proud of her achievements.

—Arundhati N Joshi
Bangalore

THE SILVER ALPHABET



I am a retired journalist living in Mumbai. I recently received a funny poem by an unknown writer from an acquaintance in Europe and wanted to share it with my fellow *Harmony* readers. I look at it in a lighter vein, and hope you do too. Here it is:

A for Apple, **B** for Boat,
That used to be right, now it won't float!
Age before beauty is what we once said,
But let's be a bit more realistic instead.
Now **A**'s for arthritis,
B is the bad back,
C is the chest pains, perhaps car-d-iac?
D is for dental decay and decline,
E is for eyesight, can't read that top line!
F is for fissures and fluid retention,
G is for gas, which I'd rather not mention.
H is high blood pressure—I'd rather it's low,
I for incisions with scars you can show.
J is for joints, out of socket, won't mend,
K is for knees that crack when they bend.
L is for libido, what happened to sex?
M is for memory, I forget! What comes next?
N is neuralgia, in nerves way down low,
O is for osteo, the bones that don't grow!
P for prescriptions, and I have quite a few,
Q is for queasy, is it fatal or flu?
R for reflux, one meal turns to two.
S for sleepless nights, counting my fears,
T for tinnitus, there's bells in my ears!
U is for urinary, big troubles with flow,
V is for vertigo, that's 'dizzy' you know.
W is for worry, that I carry,
X is for X-ray, and what might be found.
Y is another year I've left behind,
Z is for zest that I still have in my mind.
I've survived all the symptoms, my body's
complied,

And I've kept twenty-six 'doctors' fully employed!

—Ravi Chawla,
Mumbai

We reserve the right to select articles, which will be edited to suit space and editorial considerations. Harmony takes no responsibility for advice offered in this column. **For more contributions, log on to www.harmonyindia.org**

The first day at school.

The first time you rode the bicycle.

The first crush you had at thirteen.

The first drama you got a part in.

The first day at college.

The first date you went on.

The first kiss.

The first time you proposed.

The first job interview.

The first board meeting you addressed.

The first day after retirement.

Butterflies never retire.

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



A Dhirubhai Ambani Memorial Trust Initiative

Don't warehouse silvers

AN OLD-AGE HOME IS NOT EVERYONE'S CHOICE

for later years. But if you have to go it alone, it must at least provide decent living. Recently, I read a report in *Mid-Day* about an old-age home in Borivali, in suburban Mumbai. Its residents had complained about being ill-treated, even beaten, and made to sleep without clothes because they wet their beds. When the daughter of a resident heard about it, she decided to take her father back home. But not everyone there had that option.

The photographs accompanying the article were shocking—distraught, half-clad seniors, shrinking from the camera. The article brought home the reality of how several senior citizens, forced by either circumstances or their children to live in old-age homes, spend (and sometimes end) their lives without dignity. Just imagine it. First the shock of fending for yourself after making your children financially independent; and then the trauma of losing all self-respect.

I know several seniors who have opted to live alone—either their children live abroad or they don't get along with them. And as safety is a major concern nowadays, many shift to senior 'communes' or communities. However, these enclaves are either middle-class residential areas or resort-like settlements. These people have the money to afford that kind of living. It's a far cry from the home in Borivali. Which, I'm sure is the reality for most residents of old-age homes in India.

The state of affairs at the Borivali old-age home was reported by a concerned and aware neighbour. You could be that neighbour next time around. How

about using your time constructively and visiting an old-age home in your neighbourhood? You could give company to your fellow seniors and at the same time observe the behaviour of the staff towards them. Any good old-age home should allow you visiting hours; if it doesn't, insist on it, and bring it to public notice. It just proves there's something to hide. If the government is letting its old-age homes go to seed, there's no reason why we should all turn away and let the rot set in.

On the other hand, if the home is receptive to your visits, do what the government originally set out to do with old-age homes—but lost sight of after building walls around a whole generation of people. Give the residents your time and attention.



RAM BHERWANI

You could give company to your fellow seniors in nearby old-age homes and observe the behaviour of the staff there

Sit down with your contemporaries, share the memories of days gone by, share life's joys and woes – remember they built this nation with you, and raised their children just as well as you did; they were just less fortunate. Your efforts could go a long way in raising their self-esteem.

As part of their safety drives, police in various cities often talk about getting young people to give company to seniors living alone. It's a good idea—the company of the young never fails to brighten elderly faces.

Whenever you can, take your grandchildren along to meet your new friends. It will open up their young minds to the bitter realities of life—the fact that all mothers and fathers deserve better. And when they grow older, they may think twice about warehousing the elderly. ■

Shabana Azmi, 55, is an actor, activist and former Rajya Sabha MP

The last right

Senior residents of Noida transformed a run-down and mismanaged crematorium into a peaceful sanctuary. And they didn't stop there, as **Teena Baruah** discovers

Life comes full circle at Antim Niwas, or 'final resting place'. Situated just three km from Noida's busy Atta Market, it is

spread over 13 well-maintained acres. There are 10 shaded pyre platforms. For the past nine months, an unknown benefactor has donated firewood. Waters

from Ganga and Yamuna rivers are pumped into the bathing *ghat* (where the dead are bathed in holy water). Nearby, there's a meditation hut stocked with religious books for the bereaved. And guarding Antim Niwas is an idol of Lord Shiva, considered the presiding god of crematoriums.

Things were very different just three years ago. Until 2002, Antim Niwas was shrouded in neglect. The bereaved had to navigate their way through an overgrown jungle, dodge sudden leaping flames from other funerals, and keep an eye out for potholes and rubble on the road from Sarita Vihar to Antim Niwas. The rubble came from half-a-dozen illegal stone crushing machines churning Badarpur sand by the tons.

The resurrection of Antim Niwas began after one such harrowing trip by 78-year-old K L Sachdeva. So troubled was Sachdeva that he telephoned his neighbours and lamented, "Why bother about good deeds and nirvana when in the end one has to undertake this hellish journey?" Word got around and Sachdeva and his friends banded together to form a group, christened the Noida Lok Manch (NLM). NLM placed advertisements in local dailies, calling like-minded people to their group.



AJAY GOYAL

(Top) An idol of Lord Shiva guards Antim Niwas, in Noida; the bathing *ghat* at the crematorium

One such advertisement caught the eye of K C Khemka, a former professor of Hindi. “Initially, I thought Noida Lok Manch was a drama company because of its name,” he recalls. “Subsequent ads spoke of plans to revamp the crematorium and set up a public library there so I signed up.” Two strokes and a bypass surgery failed to hold back Kemka, 74, who took an active interest in the formation of the NLM along with other members like 60-year-old Mahesh Saxena, a businessmen turned social activist.

Around the same time, in February 2002, the body of 24-year-old Kargil martyr Lt Vijayan Thapar was brought back to Noida, his hometown. One lakh people were expected to pay homage. This meant a lot of public attention. Recognising this, Kemka and his team met officials from the Noida Authority and gave them an update on the abysmal condition of the crematorium. They left with an ultimatum: Revamp the crematorium in 24 hours or Lt Thapar would be cremated in a public park. The Noida Authority had no option but to succumb to the warning.

The look of the crematorium improved in just 24 hours. The stone crushers were gone, so were the potholes. Eventually, in February 2002, the Noida Authority handed over the site to NLM for maintenance. It was a victory, of sorts—the upside was that the crematorium would finally be maintained the way residents wanted it to be; the problem was that the members of NLM, who were former corporate executives, businessmen, soldiers and academicians, had no clue about how to run it.



(Top) Antim Niwas has 10 pyre platforms; the library set up by the Noida Lok Manch has 26,000 books and periodicals

It didn’t deter them though. They began by visiting the existing crematoriums in and around Delhi. Two months later, in April 2002, the results left them

The social status of the deceased often decided the fees of the *pandit* needed for the last rites. At one funeral site, there were different pyre platforms for

For those who can’t afford the cremation cost of Rs 500, charges are waived off

shocked. Death, it seems, had become a lucrative business for many. At Rajghat, priests set up rows of shops selling materials for funerals at an incredible rate.

different castes. Khemka and his team realised they needed to steer clear of such misdeeds. But first, they had to get the crematorium into shape.



NLM members maintain vigil for newborns at the government hospital

NLM hired a landscapist for Rs 8,000 per month. He left after just three sessions, saying he found the place “disconcerting”. He was replaced by NLM member Girija Singh, 58. Armed with a Master’s degree in Zoology and the experience of tending a garden with 100 varieties of rose plants in her ancestral home in Varanasi, she proceeded to landscape the crematorium. “It’s all trial and error,” she says. “Recently, I spotted beautiful

mango, banyan and *pipal* trees. She also plans to plant berry trees to draw migratory birds.

In March 2005, NLM members installed a 16-ft Shiva idol on the premises. “We also broke many taboos along the way,” adds Khemka. At the *puja*, they distributed sweets although they had been warned by some that eating or drinking at a crematorium is sacrilege. Everyone present at the *puja* accepted the

NLM envisions a forest with trees like *amla*, *neem* and *banyan* in Antim Niwas

hedge fencing at a local restaurant. I took my gardener to show him what I wanted. We tried to reproduce the same around the 15-ft diameter of the pond at the crematorium. But it backfired.” She switched to damage-control mode: lotuses in the pond. Singh envisions a forest in Antim Niwas, based on the mythical Panchavati forest in the Ramayana, with *amla*, *neem*,

prasad. And to this day, NLM members follow the ritual of having a cup of tea at Antim Niwas every morning. Another break from tradition: instead of reselling bed sheets and shawls donated by the bereaved, they dry-clean and distribute them.

All this costs money. Every month, apart from earning Rs 7,000 to Rs 8,000, about

Rs 50,000 comes from donations. A part of it is used for paying the salaries of the staff; the rest is being saved for a proposed CNG gas funeral chamber. “It would be far more eco-friendly,” says 60-year-old NLM member Ramesh Johri. Impressed by NLM’s work, the Noida Authority has now asked the group to manage two more crematoriums in Greater Noida.

NLM’s activities go beyond the crematorium. The group manages a ‘May I Help You?’ counter at Noida’s only 100-bed government hospital in Sector 30. It was the brainchild of member Mahesh Saxena. “Our counter, manned by NLM members, functions seven days a week, from 8.30 am to 2.30 pm. We help poor patients from neighbouring villages get admission in the hospital, arrange for free lunch, and also guard newborns as kidnapping is rampant here.”

While the responsibility of protecting a newborn ends in the hospital, the moral responsibility of a child’s future has only just begun. The NLM members keep an eye on 32 government schools in and around Noida. “We keep the Noida Authority informed about what is required to make the school function efficiently. After all, today’s children are tomorrow’s citizens,” says Saxena as he looks at his watch.

After spending the afternoon at the government hospital, Saxena spends the rest of the day with the *Harmony* team at the crematorium. It’s 7 pm. With the final rays of daylight fading, Saxena signals the gatekeeper to close for the day. Dawn is just round the corner. ■

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She is India's recipe queen. And over three decades, Tarla Dalal has retained her crown by keeping up with the tastes of middle-class India, writes **Ruchi Shah**

Food Dalal

Thirty years and Tarla Dalal is still cooking for desperate housewives. Before December curls up, Dalal will have three more cookbooks in stores, taking the count to 110. “And there I was, wanting to give it up 10 years ago,” she recalls. “At 59, the biggest thing was to look forward to retirement, no more big moves, big risks and big eats.” Her family, especially her younger son Sanjay, helped her drive the thought of retirement out of her head. They told her she wasn’t done yet.


In the 10 years that followed, Dalal corralled the recipe market like never before, with a television show on Sony; a bi-monthly magazine *Cooking & More*; the portal www.tarladalal.com, created in 1997; and 50 of the 107 books published so far. “After all, how long could I have partied and played cards,” says Dalal, happy that she decided to continue. The icing on the cake: the Woman of the Year Award in 2005 from

Indian Merchant Chambers. Tarla Dalal’s present is a future any woman would want when she turns 69.


Now, Dalal is finally taking a break from the kitchen. “I don’t cook at home anymore,” she says. “I just buy the vegetables. And supervise to the last detail. A team of nutritionists and chefs create

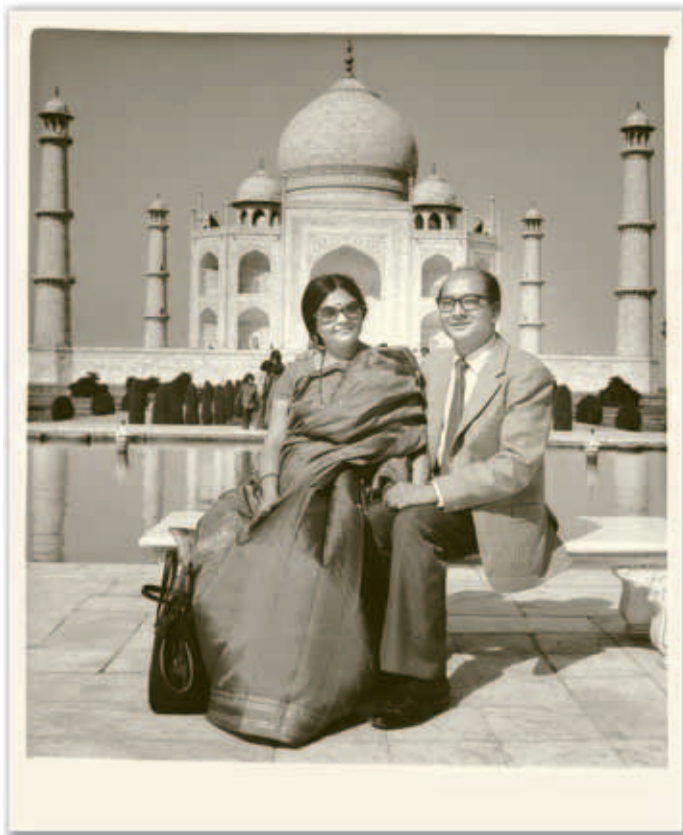
recipes for my books.” Her team is currently busy with her next three books: *Good Food for Diabetics*, *7 Dinner Menus and Healthy Sabzis* and a Jain food special, still untitled. The only time Dalal cooks herself is when her nine-year-old

granddaughter Tarini demands cheesecake—it’s her favourite too. Dalal has also taught Tarini how to use the microwave to make cheese and crackers. The doting grandmother is delighted that even though her three children, Deepak, Sanjay and Renu, weren’t inquisitive about her recipes, one of her grandchildren is.



“After all, how long could I have partied and played cards”





Dalal with husband Naveen in her younger days

Of late, she's also found more time to devote to her lavish Napean Sea Road apartment in South Mumbai. For the first time in the past 30 years, she's changed the upholstery of the sofa—she's chosen an extravagant red, as if to add the colour that left her life with the demise of her husband of 45 years, Naveen, early this year. "It's a battle living alone," she confesses. "It needed all my courage. Ironically, I found the strength not by drowning myself in work but by taking time off. It's not about lazy hours, though, but spending time constructively."

Dalal has her time management down pat. After a breakfast of cereal or porridge, she spends the first half of the day in her Lower Parel office. She comes back home to a Gujarati thali cooked by the book before hitting the gym at 3 pm (on alternate days), followed by an hour of rest. In the evening, her daughter Renu comes over to spend time with her for an occasional accounting session—keeping tabs on the portal, book sales and occasional workshops. Earlier, her husband handled her accounts. Dalal breaks the grind with regular visits to Nair Hospital



"Ironically, I found the strength not in work but in taking time off"



to chart diet plans for diabetic children. She also spends time at some charitable organisations through the Rotary club, to which she donates returns from her cookery workshops, dominated mainly by the Gujaratis, in India and abroad. "But that's only once a week," she declares.

Every other afternoon, Dalal sweats it out for an hour at Gold's Gym, in Breach Candy. Warming up on the treadmill, dressed in beige pants and a floral *kurti* with a red *dupatta* wrapped around her shoulders, she says, "I love coming here, especially during the cricket season. I like working out while watching cricket." Her favourite player is Virender Sehwag, and she's upset about his poor form. A member of the gym for the past two years, Dalal's own form is zealously monitored by her instructor Pooja Agarwal. When Pooja questions Dalal about her week-long absence the previous month, she counters in Gujarati, "*Aa to mari sasu che* (she is my mother-in-law)." Then, there's a chuckle.

She's even happier a few minutes later when a young woman stops to tell her, "You really rock at this age." She receives all compliments with child-like laughter, thanking those who proffer them with healthy cooking tips, cultivating more fans in the process. At home, Dalal spends an hour every day replying to emails—many of them from people thanking her for saving their marriages.

Her rise to 'recipe queen' began in 1974 with a book—not hers. At the time, she was conducting cooking classes in Pune. One of her students produced a book that sold like hotcakes. "I was just a housewife and I could barely speak English. But I was a good cook," recalls Dalal, who started with teaching six women. "I didn't know what *dhana jeru* [coriander and cumin seed powder] was called in English. And when I saw a book by

someone else with my recipes, my husband convinced me to write my own. He took dictation from me and we constantly debated over the English names to the ingredients."

She released her first cookbook, *The Pleasures of Vegetarian Cooking*, in 1975—it took her 18 months to compile—and her classes became increasingly



Dalal with her younger son Sanjay, at the launch of her website www.tarladalal.com

popular. Dalal remembers an incident that touched her deeply. "Once, a 60-year-old came to attend my cooking class," she says. "I would tease her, telling her to go home and let her daughter learn cooking instead. The woman insisted on staying, saying her family members had become very fond of her after she started the classes. The recipes she learnt from me had her family eating out of her hands."



**"Cooking is a Science.
A good dish is about
right proportions and
not who has made it"**



food or healthy food is not just for the rich to relish," she says. "And I realised if I introduce a series priced below Rs 100, I could please a wider range of people." She did. And her son Sanjay

helped cement her success by creating www.tarladalal.com. Pegged as 'an invitation to anyone who wants a taste of the genuine, gastronomic soul of India', the site offers visitors three types of membership: 'gold',

Dalal's stock rose even further with the release of more cookbooks. She began with traditional recipes and gradually began to diversify, with quick-fix recipes books such as *Snacks under 10 Minutes* and *Easy Chinese Cooking*. To her credit are books on Italian food (*Pizzas and Pastas*), Mexican cuisine (*Mexican Cooking* and *Sizzlers and Barbeques*) and Thai food (*Thai Cooking*). Her fans love her for Indianising international cuisine. Two of her books were also translated into Dutch and Russian. In keeping with the times, in 2004, she released a series of health cookbooks like *Low Cholesterol Recipes* and *Cooking with 1 Teaspoon of Oil*. Her *Healthy Breakfast*, released the same year, has sold over 25,000 copies.

To broaden her readership base, Dalal now prices her books affordably. Earlier, they used to be in fancy format and hence more expensive. "Fancy

'silver' and 'free'. Gold members get 20 per cent discount on her books and free subscription to weekly food mailers. For this, residents in India pay Rs 1,000 every year, while non-residents pay \$40. Silver members pay Rs 600 in India and \$25 abroad. Sanjay claims the site has 2.98 lakh members.

It's business at its savviest. But Dalal disarmingly attributes her success to her training as a traditional homemaker. Her mother-in-law retired from the kitchen when Dalal joined the family as a new bride, her children were well fed before they went to school (with packed lunch boxes), and her husband was served hot meals every day. Household regimens aside, surely cooking needs a 'special hand'? "No," she asserts. "Cooking is a science. A good dish consists of the right proportion of salt, chilly, pepper and sugar." With 5,000 recipes to her credit, you'd best believe her. ■

From Tarla's kitchen, for silvers

CORN CHOWDER

An American-style thick soup with a pleasant hint of celery

INGREDIENTS

- Corn: 3/4 cup, cooked
- Water: 3 1/2 cups
- Onions: 1/4 cup, chopped
- Celery: 2 tbsp, chopped
- Flour (*maida*): 2 tbsp
- Milk: 2 cups
- Butter: 1 tbsp
- Nutmeg powder: to taste
- Salt: to taste
- Freshly ground pepper: to taste

FOR GARNISH

- Celery: 1 tbsp, chopped
- Tomato cubes: 2 tbsp (optional)
- Grated cheese: 2 tsp

PREPARATION

Heat the butter in a pan. Add the onion and celery and sauté till the onions become transparent. Stir in the flour and remove from the heat. Add the water and milk gradually. Return to the heat and simmer gently for 5 minutes. Add the corn, salt, pepper and nutmeg powder and boil for another 10 minutes. Serve hot, garnished with the celery, tomato cubes and grated cheese.



SET DOSA

INGREDIENTS

- Parboiled rice: 1/2 cup
- Raw rice: 1/2 cup
- Split black gram (*urad dal*): 1/4 cup
- Baking soda: a pinch
- Salt: to taste
- Oil: for greasing

PREPARATION

Wash and soak the parboiled rice, raw rice and *urad dal* together for 4 hours. Drain and grind to a smooth paste. Add water to the batter to obtain a thin flow of paste. Cover and keep aside to ferment for 10 to 12 hours. Then add the baking soda and salt and mix well. Grease a non-stick pan on medium flame and pour a ladleful of batter on it. Spread to get a 5 mm thick dosa. Cover and cook till one side is golden brown. Serve hot with chutney.



PINEAPPLE KESARI

INGREDIENTS

- Semolina (*rava*): 1/2 cup
- Pineapple: 1/2 cup, puréed (Choose ripe pineapple for best results)
- Milk: 1/2 cup
- Water: 1 cup
- Sugar: 5 tbsp
- Saffron (*kesar*): a few strands

with 1 tbsp milk

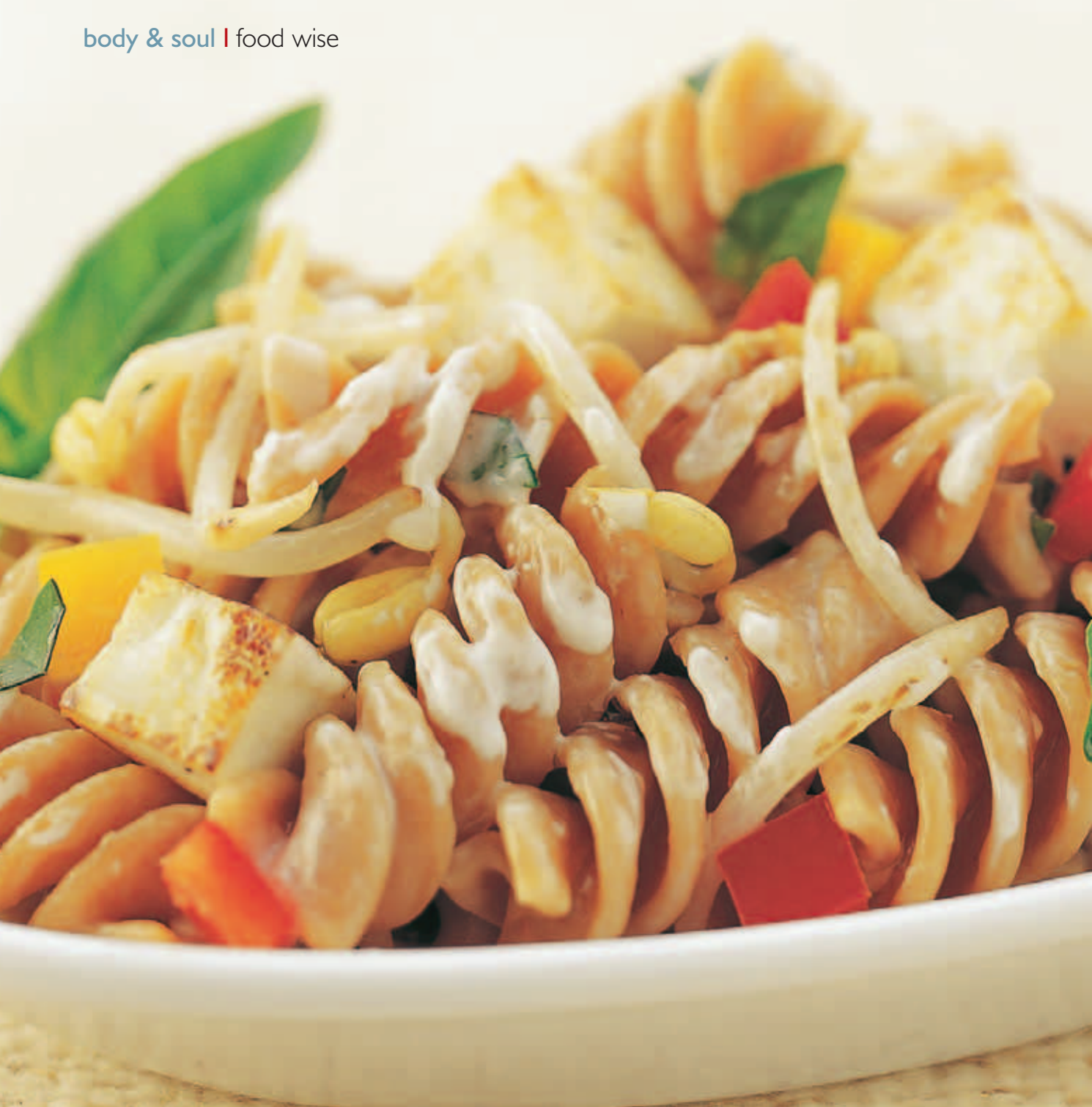
- Clarified butter (ghee): 2 tsp
- Cardamom (*elaichi*) powder: 1/2 tsp

PREPARATION

In a microwave-safe bowl, mix the pineapple purée and 1 tbsp sugar together and turn microwave on 'high' for two minutes. Keep aside. In another microwave-safe bowl, mix the milk, water, remaining sugar and

saffron together and microwave on 'high' for 2 minutes. Keep aside. In yet another microwave-safe bowl, mix the semolina and ghee and microwave on 'high' for 2 minutes, but keep stirring after every 30 seconds.

Add the semolina to the milk mixture and microwave on 'high' for 4 minutes. Remove it and add the pineapple cardamom powder and mix. Serve hot.



CREAMY HERB PASTA

INGREDIENTS

- Cooked whole wheat pasta: 3 cups
- Garlic: 1 tsp, finely chopped
- Green chillies: 1 tsp, finely chopped
- Cottage cheese (*paneer*): 1 1/2 cups, cut into cubes
- Milk: 1/2 cup
- Fresh parsley: 1 cup, finely chopped
- Fresh basil leaves: 1/2 cup finely chopped

- Cream: 2 tbsp
- Butter: 1 tbsp
- Salt: to taste

PREPARATION

Heat the butter in a pan and add the garlic and green chillies. Add the *paneer* cubes and sauté for some time. Add all the remaining ingredients and mix gently. Cook till the pasta is hot and serve immediately. ■

For more recipes from Tarla Dalal's kitchen, log on to www.harmonyindia.org

Nature's secrets for your family's health.

by **Rajendra M. Dobriyal**

Herbal Research, Hindustan Lever Research Center, Mumbai

In today's lifestyle, full of stress, pressure and competition, it is your health and your family's health on an ongoing basis. One of the basic requirements to lead a healthy life is good immunity. But what is this immunity?

Put simply, immunity is the power of our body to resist infection. The magnitude of this defense mechanism varies from person to person, and is affected by many factors like genetic constitution and nutrition uptake including vitamins, minerals, proteins, personal and environmental cleanliness.

Interestingly, Ayurveda had recognized the concept of Immunity thousands of years ago. In fact, the **Rasayana** therapy in Ayurveda is a unique way of acquiring and maintaining health by boosting immunity.

Rasayana herbs nourish, restore and balance body functions. They are used to rejuvenate the body's general health to achieve maximum potential. Most of these rasayana herbs can be used regularly as food for maintaining a balanced mental and physical health. They may be used either alone or as a combination.

Ayurveda recommends consumption of such rasayanas on a daily basis to keep the body in a balanced state. Some of the well-known Rasayana herbs, which can be used on a regular basis, are:

Ginger helps improve digestion and prevent cough and cold. It helps remove accumulated toxins especially in and around joints which otherwise create joint disorders. The health benefits of ginger are many, and it has anti-inflammatory, digestive, respiratory, immunomodulatory and antioxidant properties.

Tulsi helps improve the immune system and fight against infections. Ayurveda considers it beneficial for respiratory functions, liver functions and for optimizing the digestive functions. It is also considered to clean the impurities in our body.

Ashwagandha a unique Rasayana herb in Ayurveda, which not only helps improve our immune system, but also helps us acclimatize to changed environmental and climatic conditions. It also helps to enhance stress tolerance and invigorate the body.

Ayurveda recommends **Cardamom** for improving respiratory health. Its regular use helps combat the upper respiratory tract infections. It is frequently used to get rid of common cold along with honey. Its regular use also helps optimize digestive functions.

Licorice, which is commonly called as **Mulethi** is considered to prevent an array of disorders if taken regularly. Its tonic, cooling and rasayana properties make it ideal for round the year consumption. It is also bestowed with anti-inflammatory and expectorant properties.

The list of recipes in Ayurveda to maintain one's immunity can go on and on, but one can try some of them to make a humble beginning. However, your Ayurvedic physician can always give you better individual advice, hence consider taking an appointment with one.

Surely, you will agree that your immunity is extremely important – in fact, it is like your 'Life Insurance Policy' from nature! But the instalments for this insurance will have to be paid by none other than you. And these instalments are a good daily and seasonal routine, exercise, behavior, food and of course, the beneficial recipes and herbs. So make sure that you take good care of your health and your family's health and live a full, hale and hearty life – naturally!

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The goodness of tea enhanced by natural flavours of **Ashwagandha, Ginger, Mulethi, Tulsi and Cardamom**

Ab Pyar ka Pyala, Sehat wala!*

*With the natural flavours of Ashwagandha, Ginger, Mulethi, Tulsi and Cardamom



The truth about teeth

Dentistry for silvers has come of age. **Dr Dilip Deshpande** explains common dental problems faced by the elderly, and offers solutions for them



Remember that toothpaste commercial with a grandpa biting into the hard shell of a walnut, cracking it into two and smiling at the camera? It's possible in real life too, provided you take timely care of your teeth. Here are some tooth truths to chew on.

With advances in technology in the recent years, dentistry has come of age, especially for senior

citizens. Silvers can now demand and get specialised attention from dental professionals—in medical terms it's known as geriatric dentistry and also includes clinical problems such as discomfort while chewing, muscle spasms in the head, neck and jaw, migraines, toothache and pain in the face or jaw.

KNOW YOUR TEETH

Our teeth are part of a system called the 'stomatognathic'

system, which also comprises the mouth, jaws and pharynx, temporomandibular joint (which connects the lower jaw to the skull), neuromuscular elements and salivary glands. All work in unison and any imbalance in one will affect the others.

For example, when you eat, the teeth prepare the bolus (soft mass of chewed food inside the mouth) and send inputs to the joint and muscles about the exact amount



of pressure to apply for that particular type of food to be masticated. This process is helped by secretion of the right quantity of saliva. The presence of teeth also helps maintain the health and shape of the jawbone and the temporomandibular joint. When you begin to lose your teeth, these too start to weaken.

TEETHING TROUBLE

Wearing out of the teeth is called attrition. This creates gaps on top of the teeth, causing them to become sensitive to hot and cold stimuli. Wearing of the teeth from the sides is called abrasion. Usually, teeth begin to curve inwards close to the gum line where food collects, leading to dental caries.

Ageing, chewing *paan* and wrong brushing techniques lead to wear and tear of teeth

Gums are also affected by ageing. In a young adult, the teeth are in constant contact with each other and the gums surrounding them are attached firmly.

Ageing leads to shrinkage of gums around the teeth and creates gaps between the teeth, leading to collection of food particles. This causes secondary decay of the teeth and, eventually, tooth loss. This loss leads to malfunction of the stomatognathic system and affects chewing or mastication. The tendency of the teeth to shift when the adjoining or opposing tooth is missing only aggravates the

DENTURE CARE

- Brush your dentures daily to remove food deposits and plaque
- Use a denture-cleaning paste on a soft bristle toothbrush
- Don't use hot water to clean it
- Mild hand soaps can be used to clean them, but keep your dentures away from bleach and vinegar
- Always use a proper case or box to store your dentures
- While you sleep at night, soak your dentures in a cleanser recommended by your dental professional



problem. This leads to loss of efficiency and collection of food particles between the teeth.

several ways to replace lost teeth—a simple bridge (fixed prosthesis), removable partial denture and implant-supported prosthesis are some of the options. But the treatment depends on the number of teeth and the condition of the remaining teeth.

The natural ageing process causes wear and tear to the teeth. But the extent of dental decay depends on the dietary habits of the individual. For example, chewing *paan* (betel nut) would definitely wear out teeth sooner. Another common cause for wear and tear is the wrong brushing technique.

GETTING HELP

Treatment of worn-out teeth is of utmost importance. In many cases, filling materials do not adhere to worn-out teeth. Instead, new adhesive materials (composites) have been introduced to treat attrition. There are

Another innovative treatment option for missing teeth is an implant. Implants are made of titanium, a material that induces and enhances bone contact with the teeth and is accepted by the jawbone. These implants are surgically placed inside the jawbone to act as roots of missing teeth and help maintain the health of the bone and shape of the teeth. The cost depends on the number of implants required and the condition of the patient's teeth. Generally, an implant costs about Rs 35,000, while full upper denture implants would cost about Rs 1.5 lakh.





Technological advances in dentistry has led to high-tech dental chairs

DRY MOUTH

Another concern for the elderly is retaining water balance in the mouth, which is crucial to prevent dehydration of oral tissue. Negative water balance results in a severe drop in secretion of saliva. 'Dry mouth' also called xerostomia is a major cause of denture discomfort as well as failure. Prior to denture construction, the prosthodontist is advised to inspect and, if possible, correct dehydration of the oral tissue. Xerostomia can lead to difficulties in eating, chewing, swallowing, and, in some cases, speaking. Consult a dentist immediately in case you

think you suffer from 'dry mouth'. To guard against it, drink plenty of water and avoid aerated drinks, sweets, alcohol and tobacco.

STAY ON GUARD

Though it may not be a senior-specific problem, you cannot ignore the dangers of oral cancer, which generally occurs to people over the age of 40 and in some cases younger than that. Regular dental checkups can help diagnose the disease early for effective treatment. Even if you have lost your natural teeth, visit your dentist for regular oral cancer exams. Consult your

dentist immediately if you have swelling, numbness, sores or lumps inside your mouth. Other signs of oral cancer are difficulties in chewing, swallowing, and moving your jaw or tongue.

FINALLY...

The best dental care begins at home. Eat and drink healthy, avoid tobacco, snuff or *paan masala*, eat plenty of fibrous vegetables, greens and fresh fruits and drink plenty of water. Avoid sugar and brush and floss your teeth regularly. And don't forget to visit your dentist regularly. Wear your smile, sunny side up.

Dr Dilip Deshpande is a Mumbai-based prosthodontist. He was head of the Department of Prosthodontics, Crown and Bridge, Nair Hospital Dental College in Mumbai from 1993-1998. Dr Deshpande now conducts programmes, workshops and surgical demonstrations on prosthodontics and implants across the country.

DENTAL CARE

Sound bite

Since the primary function of teeth is mastication, missing teeth can affect nutrition. Silvers suffering from dental decay or missing teeth usually opt for soft and easy-to-chew food, giving fresh fruits and vegetables a miss. This dietary change can upset the nutrition ratio drastically. In some extreme cases, it can even lead to a higher risk of hypertension, diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Sudden changes in taste and smell should not be considered signs of ageing but an alert to seek professional help.

Silvers using dentures may find that they are not as comfortable and efficient in chewing as natural teeth. In many cases, denture failure in seniors may occur more from shrinkage of gums than any other technical inadequacies. A recent study in Ireland found that seniors equipped with new dentures did not revert to their old food choices. "Food selection among the group studied was not ideal, and not improved by the provision of new dentures," said the study. The subjects were rated as medium risk for poor nutritional status on the Mini Nutritional Assessment score (is an assessment tool developed by Nestlé and leading international geriatricians to identify geriatric patients at risk of malnutrition).

To restore the nutritional balance, eat soft and well-cooked food, including stewed fruits and vegetables. You must also retain water balance. Increase your daily intake of soups, broths and fruit juices rich in vitamins and containing many of the soluble nutrients essential for tissue health. This is more beneficial than merely increasing intake of water or beverages.

For those who have switched over to dentures, with or without implants:

- Have boiled and soft foods cut into small pieces
- Chew slowly and use both sides of your mouth to prevent dentures from tipping or slanting
- For those going in for implant operation, consume a liquid or semi-solid diet containing nutrients.
- A high-protein (cereals), mineral diet is recommended for healthy patients. A diet of *daal-chawal*, *roti-subzi* along with milk and fruits is fine.



Brain wave

Revive, rejuvenate and rewire your grey cells with yoga, says **Shameem Akthar**

LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY COULD CAUSE mental decline, warns anti-ageing expert and yogi Dr Dharma Singh Khalsa. As we age, our changing blood pressure affects blood circulation and impacts cerebral health. Though the brain is 2 per cent of the total body weight, it consumes over 25 per cent of the fuel generated by the body.

Exercise is crucial to keep our brain fit. Mental aerobics like puzzles rewire the brain. Augment this with dietary modifications as certain foods encourage a slow release of energy to this fuel-hungry organ. If you are reluctant to let go of your favourite foods, at least try to eat a colourful plate of fruits and vegetables every day. 'Memory fruits' include cranberries, blueberries, oranges, red grapes and strawberries, and 'memory vegetables' include beets, spinach, broccoli and cauliflower.

Some yogic poses are powerful in rejuvenating the brain. This is especially true of inverted poses or forward bends where the blood gushes into the cerebral region, opening up clogged micro-tubules, toning blood vessels. Yoga particularly takes care of the spine, a passageway for nerve messages.

Advanced *asana* for brain health include the head pose (*sirsasana*). Intermediate poses include the shoulder stand (*sarvangasana*), while beginners can

attempt *asana* like the seated forward bend (*paschimottanasana*), hare pose (*sashankasana*), psychic union (*yoga mudra*) and the standing forward bend (*uttanasana*). Other poses that strengthen mental stamina include the eye exercise series called *trataka*, as also candle gazing, nose-tip gazing and *yantra* gazing. Brain hemisphere co-ordination may be achieved by alternate nostril breathing (*nadi shodhana*).

The skull-cleansing breathing practice, *kapalabhati pranayama*, facilitates hyperventilation of the lungs and speeds up blood flow to the region above the neck. It also powers the respiratory mechanism so that the flow of oxygen to the brain is achieved effectively and quickly. To benefit from these *asana*, you must follow a yoga programme daily and strictly. Some of the poses mentioned above may be tough if you have led a sedentary lifestyle for long or suffer from an acute back problem. But you can modify these poses to enjoy the same benefits.

For instance, those with severe back problem may not be able to do a complete seated forward bend. But you can use a bolster on your lap to rest your head, and yet relax the pressure on the spine. Similarly, some may find the standing forward bend tough. Soften the intensity by placing your hands on a tabletop or back of a chair. Your spine will become flexible and open up the blood flow to the brain. ■



Yogic moves

Seated forward bend (*paschimottanasana*)

Sit with legs stretched out in front. Inhale, raising your hands overhead. Exhale, while lowering your hands and head towards the legs. Hold your legs



wherever you can, continue breathing, trying to reach your head to the thighs. This pose contributes to brain health by rushing blood to the head and is also therapeutic for diabetes, obesity, skin problems, neck problems, respiratory ailments, flatulence, constipation and controlling anger.

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



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KILL PILL



It's like something out of a Robin Cook medical thriller. Less than a week after pharmaceutical companies Bristol-Myers Squibb and Merck & Co introduced Pargluva, a **new diabetes pill**, a study by doctors from the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, US, in October found it could be linked to heart attacks and strokes. The drug, generically known as Muraglittazar, was endorsed recently by a food and drug administration panel in the US as a treatment for Type 2 diabetes—the most common form of diabetes that often affects obese people. The report by the Cleveland Clinic has been posted on the website of *The Journal of the American Medical Association* for public safety. The manufacturers, however, haven't yet reacted to the study.



SEE IT EARLY

There's help at hand for potential glaucoma patients. A new **glaucoma risk calculator**, which estimates a patient's risk of developing glaucoma from high eye pressure or ocular hypertension, was unveiled at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology on 17 October in Chicago. "The risk calculator is a tool that allows doctors to better assess patient risk levels and, if needed, recommend treatment options that can help decrease the progression of glaucoma," says Robert N Weinreb, director of the Hamilton Glaucoma Center at the University of California and co-developer of the calculator. High eye pressure is the leading risk factor for glaucoma, and, if untreated, could lead to continued vision loss, finally causing blindness in some individuals.

PILLS OR PLACEBOS?

Take a careful look at the pills you pop on a regular basis—they may do nothing for you. The National Commission of Macroeconomics and Health (NCMH), established by the Health Ministry, says many **popular drugs** fall into the "irrational, useless or needless" category. The list includes Liv-52, a "useless liver drug", and Digene, a "needless antacid". According to NCMH's report, Financing and Delivery of Healthcare Services in India, "Ten of the top 25 products sold in India in 1999 belonged to one of these categories: blood tonic, cough expectorant, non-drug, analgesics, nutrients, liver drugs, etc, which are non-essential or irrational." NCMH claims these drugs make their way to the market because some drug companies get illegal marketing licenses from state drug controllers without procuring the necessary manufacturing license from the Drug Controller General of India. The silver lining: these drugs are harmless.





DON'T MIX YOUR DRUGS

Here's a warning for those who take an aspirin everyday for their heart and an occasional ibuprofen or a similar drug for pain relief. Researchers in the US indicate that combining the two could increase the **risk of gastrointestinal (GI) complications**, including ulcers, bleeding and perforations, by two to three times. Patients taking both ibuprofen and aspirin were found to have a 3.4 times higher risk of serious GI problems than patients taking just ibuprofen.

BEST FOOT FORWARD



On 14 November, World Diabetics Day, pharmaceutical firm Dr Reddy's launched its '**Save the Foot**' initiative to generate awareness (through 1,000 workshops across the country) about foot care among doctors as well as diabetics. "Diabetics need to take utmost care of their feet. The simplest way to avoid ulcers is to wear good footwear, even inside the house," says Dr Arun Bal, president of Diabetic Foot

Society of India. The 'Save the Foot' initiative comes soon after the launch of Plermin, an indigenously manufactured foot ulcer ointment. Dr Reddy's claims Plermin, which costs Rs 1,000 for a 7.5 gm tube and Rs 2,000 for a 15 gm tube, reduces healing time of foot ulcers by 60 per cent. For details, call **1600-22-3242** (toll-free).

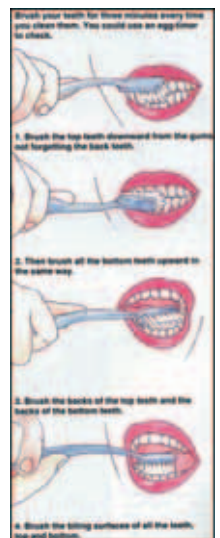


STAY REGULAR

What's stopping **silvers in Chennai** from visiting their doctors? Lack of motivation, according to psychotherapist Ravi Samuel. Samuel studied 50 senior citizens—25 living in their own homes and 25 in old-age homes—over a period of three years. He found that 70 per cent of those living in their homes had not visited a doctor in the past three months, whereas 64 per cent of those living in old-age homes underwent regular health check-ups, perhaps owing to regular visits by doctors. "It's not that seniors here don't want to spend on money on doctors or medicines, they are just lazy about it," says Samuel. The average monthly medical expenditure of a senior citizen is Rs 60.

TOOTH TRUTHS

You've heard it before: Brush your teeth twice every day and visit your dentist regularly. Now hear this. A study published in the November issue of the *Journal of Periodontology* reveals that individuals suffering from periodontitis (bleeding and swollen gums) experience tooth loss more than others. **Periodontitis is not age related**, but it's linked to arthritis, diabetes, hypertension and poor dental hygiene. Of all the volunteers, only 16 per cent brushed twice daily; and 60 per cent never brushed or used a tooth brush irregularly.



Harmony does not take responsibility for the validity of the research published in this section. Please consult your doctor before following any advice offered here

On a 3

Harmony's super silvers and their dreams for 2006



I hope, by the grace of God, the winning streak continues in the New Year, and I am able to live up to the expectations of my fans.

—Amitabh Bachchan



I am looking forward to my new book on transformative leadership and my new assignment as the Director-General, Home Guards.

—Kiran Bedi



I hope to spread the message of harmony through my music. I also wish that sarod becomes as popular as guitar this year.

—Amjad Ali Khan



I plan to work with Aakansha, an NGO that works with under-privileged children. I hope 2006 unfolds a new chapter in my life.

—Anu Aga



I am working on my next film and autobiography. With so much happening next year, I should have the last laugh.

—Dev Anand

65° roll

I alter my plans not by the year, but by the minute. Right now, waking up each day is a tiny miracle in itself.

—M F Husain



I would like to pursue my modelling career. My main goal and worry is to find a home or institute for my 28-year-old autistic son.

—Shehnaz Daruwalla



With age, one learns to figure out a new pace of life and I continue to live as well as I can.

—Julio Rebeiro



I will go for another major ambitious project in 2006 which is also related to aviation.

—Vijaypat Singhania

One needn't wait till the year-end to make resolutions. In fact, I feel, it should be made every other week.

—Om Puri



The year would not be any less exciting for me...there is another cookery show in the pipeline and many more cook books from my end.

—Tarla Dalal



Virtues of *dharma*

Make an honest attempt to recover the ideal of life, says **Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati**

THE REAL NAME OF OUR PHILOSOPHICAL system is *Sanatana Dharma* or the Eternal Law. It does not date from a particular point of time or begin from a particular founder. All beings born and to be born belong to it. No one can escape this law, which is unchangeable, universal and eternal. Such is our *Sanatana Dharma*.

All religions and spiritual paths are but aspects of the *Sanatana Dharma*. The intrinsic worth of anything is always there whether one recognises it or not. A diamond remains a diamond whether you accept it or not. Similarly, *Sanatana Dharma's* validity and value remain unchanged whether accepted or not.

Today, if we do not have the mental peace and happiness of our ancestors it is due to our gross neglect of *dharma*. Almost everyone complains of restlessness, depression and unhappiness. Alcohol, drugs and suicides are on the rise. Suffering began when the practice of *dharma* declined. But do not blame the times for your suffering. The so-called bad days are of your own making. We can, at any moment, put an end to them by reverting to the simple faith and the upright conduct, the religious fervour and the peaceful contentment of our forefathers.

Realise the depth of your fall from the true ideal of life and make an honest endeavour to recover it.

Dharma makes man richer than the richest, stronger than the strongest, happier than the happiest. Persons who are placed in high positions and influence the conduct of others have a double

responsibility. They are answerable to themselves and for others. The future of the land is really in the hands of the people in power. They should set, by example, a standard of right conduct.

Young children have no conception at all of right or wrong, nor have they the ability to form any such conception. With them ignorance is inevitable and therefore not a sin. To commit a sin, it is necessary to have the capacity to discriminate between right and wrong. But when the child grows up and acquires the capacity of discrimination and is able to

understand the distinction between right and wrong, he becomes responsible for his actions and incurs sin if he acts wrongly. The fact that he allows his capacity of discrimination to sleep by reason of ignorance will not lessen his responsibility.

Does fire refuse to scorch a person who touches it without knowing that it will scorch him or who refuses to accept its power to scorch? Similarly, if you go against God's laws you are bound to suffer. If a person commits a sin he must suffer, even if he did not know what he was doing was wrong, provided he has the capacity to know.

Dharma is two-fold, one which takes the form of ritual that requires a large number of persons and accessories to carry it out; and the other, *japa*, *bhajan* and

meditation which is to be done by the individual seeker. Both these forms of *dharma* purify and calm the mind of the seeker and help him realise his identity with God. ■



Today, if we don't
have the mental
peace of our
ancestors, it is
due to our gross
neglect of *dharma*

Excerpts from Golden Words; Rs 25; published by Sri Sharada Peetham, Sringeri. Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Mahaswamigal (1892-1954), the 34th acharya of the Sringeri Sarada Peetham, ascended to the Sringeri title in 1912 when he was just 20 and already an accomplished scholar

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Satellite service

Dinesh C Sharma promises the Purohits great pictures, fabulous sound and freedom from the cable man's shenanigans with direct-to-home television

I was enjoying a lazy evening at home, going through scores of Diwali and Eid cards when my cell phone beeped. It was an SMS from the Purohits: "Shubh Deepavali. W8g to hear fm u on DTH." I realised that on my last visit to Mumbai, I had promised to discuss direct-to-home (DTH) television with them and had then forgotten all about it.

It was time to make amends. A few days later, I was in Mumbai, and my first stop was the Purohits' apartment. I received a warm welcome and Mrs Purohit sat me down with a steaming cup of coffee and a plateful of homemade *kaju barfi*. Outside, the neighbourhood children were finishing off the last of their Diwali crackers and Mr Purohit was trying in vain to hear the news on television amid the loud whistles and pops.

A few mouthfuls later, Mrs Purohit got down to business. "You have to tell us more about this DTH before we decide to send our cablewallah packing,"

she told me. "In fact, we haven't gone in for a satellite radio yet in case DTH can give us the same benefits at no extra cost."

The couple was evidently fed up with poor service and high charges of their local cable operator. "I read somewhere that with DTH, you get much better

picture and sound quality," said Mr Purohit. "But how can that be? After all, cable TV signals also come from satellites."

I told him he was right, that the television channels we receive through cable are satellite signals. But they suffer a loss of quality as they are distributed through



cable networks. On the other hand, with DTH, as the name implies, satellite signals are received directly by users on their television sets at home. In effect, your home is directly connected to a satellite, leading to superior quality reception.

Like a cable service provider, DTH service providers offer customers a bunch of television channels from a satellite. To receive these channels, you need a dish antenna and a decoder, popularly known as a set-top box, to unlock encrypted signals for viewing on a television set. "Is the dish antenna very big?" wondered Mrs Purohit. "Our apartment is not very large." No, I assured her. As the signals are powerful, you only need a small dish of a diameter of about 60 cm to 90 cm unlike the large antenna that you see at your local cable hub. It can even be fixed on a window grill if you don't have a balcony.

be expensive," said Mr Purohit with a frown. "Actually, this is a free-to-air DTH platform, which means users don't need to pay a subscription fee," I replied. But you do need to buy a dish antenna and a set-top box at about Rs 3,500 as a one-time investment. This equipment is sold by dealers all over the country—details are available at www.ddinews.com.

"That's fabulous!" exclaimed Mr Purohit. "All the news channels I love to watch!" I noticed that Mrs Purohit wasn't looking as pleased. She had cottoned on to the fact that I hadn't mentioned any of the popular entertainment and movie channels available through cable. "What about my favourite programmes?" she asked me plaintively. "She can't live without her *saas-bahu* nonsense," butted in her husband with a chuckle. While she silenced him with a glare, I told her there were other options too.

Rs 6,500. After the first year, you pay between Rs 150 and Rs 300 a month, depending on the channels you have chosen. They are offering some discounts too. You can get all the details if you call your local service provider or log on to www.dishtvindia.in.

"Now, that sounds more like it," said Mrs Purohit, sounding considerably more cheerful. "And with more providers coming in, prices are sure to go down," added her husband, his eye, as always, firmly on the bottom line. True enough. T-Sky, a joint venture of Tata and Star TV, will be launched soon. Moreover, the competition will be more in the nature of new features and services over the DTH platform. For instance, you can buy a set-top box with an in-built digital video recorder and record TV programmes. If you are watching your favourite soap and are interrupted for some reason, the digital recorder will record the rest of the show. Or while watching one channel, you can record programmes on others. And if you are away at news hour, you can programme it to record the show for you. Other services possible on DTH platforms are gaming and pay-per-view for watching movies.

"Basically, check out the available options, the channels they are offering and compare the prices before you make a decision," I advised the Purohits. I needn't have bothered. As Mrs Purohit poured me my second cup of coffee, Mr Purohit was already booting up his computer, anxious to get online to find out more. ■

The initial package includes installation, equipment and annual viewership fee

Mr Purohit was ready with his next question: "What channels do you get?" Well, currently, All India Radio and Doordarshan are the largest DTH service providers in India with nearly 3.5 million subscribers. Their service is offered under the name DD Direct+, and includes about 20 Doordarshan channels, 14 private channels (including *Aaj Tak*, *BBC World*, *Headlines Today* and *ETV Marathi*), and a dozen radio channels. "That must

Dish TV, a DTH platform promoted by Zee Television, offers 140 channels in various packages, which you can customise to suit your needs. The initial one-year package, which includes the dish antenna, set-top box and other equipment, besides activation charges and membership, costs around Rs 6,500—the basic package without *Star* and *Sony* costs Rs 4,000, and a upgraded one with these and other film channels costs

Stand up for your rights

Retired CGHS beneficiaries can claim damages for service deficiency, says **G S Lobana**

Recently, the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) declared that retired government employees are 'consumers' under the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS). That means they can take the government to court for damages or compensation in case of deficiency in healthcare services provided to them and their dependents by clinics or dispensaries operating under CGHS. The verdict was a result of a petition filed by a retired government employee in Kanpur. He claimed that he was refused medicines for his wife by the CGHS dispensary in the city. He also claimed damages of Rs 4 lakh, alleging that his wife died because of the negligence of the medical officer, who refused to refer her to a hospital recognised by CGHS equipped to handle cardiac cases.

The announcement has come a decade after the Supreme Court verdict in 1995 that serving Central Government employees are consumers under the CGHS scheme for healthcare facilities and services. The verdict by NCDRC enables all serving as well as retired government employees to be treated as consumers under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

Q In what situation can a CGHS beneficiary sue the government?

CGHHS dispensaries are required to provide health and care services to the beneficiaries of the scheme, extended to serving and retired

employees and their dependents. Its other beneficiaries include Members of Parliament and their families, accredited journalists, employees of statutory canteens, employees and pensioners of ordnance factories, and freedom fighters and their families. If the doctors at CGHS clinics and dispensaries fail to provide healthcare in time, do not refer serious cases to hospitals or show negligence in attending to patients, resulting in serious consequences, they would be held guilty. In such cases, beneficiaries can file a complaint with their District Consumer Forum, which is communicated to the State Consumer Forum and then to NCDRC in Delhi. Following this, NCDRC will appeal to the Supreme Court on their behalf.

Q How can one approach the Consumer Court? Is it necessary to engage a lawyer for filing a complaint?

It is not necessary to engage a lawyer to claim relief for deficiency in healthcare services. The complainant can file the complaint with the forum. It can be written on a plain piece of paper before an official witness in the District Consumer Forum of your area. Give complete details of the case

and the coordinates of the dispensary/specialist/hospitals against whom the complaint is filed for deficiency in service. No payment is required. The Consumer Forum will issue a notice to the parties concerned and the Consumer Court can decide the case without involving any other court and within a reasonable period of time. ■



G S Lobana, 72, is an advocate at Central Administrative Tribunal, Delhi High Court, and honorary legal consultant to Bharat Pensioner's Samaj. For free advice, call him on 09810238999



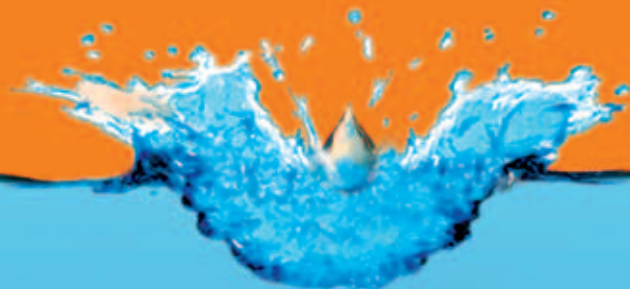
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Date	Period	SIP returns of RGF	BSE 100 Returns
Nov. 1, 2004	Last 1 year	44.73 %	26.79 %
Nov. 1, 2002	Last 3 years	73.37 %	36.60 %
Nov. 1, 2000	Last 5 years	62.47 %	28.22 %
Oct. 8, 1995	Since Inception	37.98 %	15.23 %

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Performance as on October 31, 2005. Dividends are assumed to be reinvested. While calculating returns dividend distribution tax is excluded. Compounded annualised returns of Growth Option. Inception Date : October 8, 1995. Wherever the returns are unrealistically high it is due to market conditions. # Assumptions : a) SIP happens on 10th of every month. b) Entry load of 2% till Oct 04 & 2.25% from Nov 04 is considered. c) Each SIP is of Rs 1000 (which also includes the first installment). *You can open an account by putting in a minimum of 6 cheques of Rs.1000/- each or 12 cheques of Rs.500/- each or 4 cheques of Rs.1500/- each (in multiples of Re.1/- thereafter) Sponsor: Reliance Capital Limited. Trustee: Reliance Capital Trustee Co. Limited. Investment Manager: Reliance Capital Asset Management Limited. Statutory Details: The Sponsor, the Trustee and the Investment Manager are incorporated under the Companies Act 1956. Investment Objective: The primary investment objective of the Scheme is to achieve long-term growth of capital by investment in equity & equity related securities through a research based investment approach. Entry Load : For Subscription below Rs.2 crore - 2.25%, For Subscription of Rs 2 crore & above but below Rs.5 crore - 1.25%, For Subscriptions of Rs.5 crore & above - Nil. Exit Load : Nil. General Risk Factors: Mutual Funds and securities investments are subject to market risks and there is no assurance or guarantee that the objectives of the Scheme will be achieved. As with any investment in securities, the NAV of the Units issued under the Scheme can go up or down depending on the factors and forces affecting the capital markets. Past performance of the Sponsor/AMC/Mutual Fund is not indicative of the future performance of the Scheme. Reliance Growth Fund, is only the name of the Scheme and does not in any manner indicate either the quality of the Scheme; its future prospects or returns. The Sponsor is not responsible or liable for any loss resulting from the operation of the Scheme beyond their initial contribution of Rs. 1 lakh towards the setting up of the Mutual Fund and such other accretions and additions to the corpus. The Mutual Fund is not guaranteeing or assuring any dividend/ bonus. The Mutual Fund is also not assuring that it will make periodical dividend/bonus distributions, though it has every intention of doing so. All dividend/bonus distributions are subject to the investment performance of the Scheme. For details of scheme features apart from those mentioned above and scheme specific risk factors, please refer to the provisions of the offer document. Offer Document and Key Information Memorandum cum Application Forms are available at AMC office/Investor Service centres/AMC website/Distributors. Please read the offer document carefully before investing.

Follow your calling

Experts at www.naukri.com answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement



Q I am a retired professor and want to teach poor children in Kolkata, where I live. I would also like to help social workers in rural areas to write or edit their manuals and reports. I am also keen to start part-time coaching for students who work to earn a living and finance their own education. Who do I approach? I have saved some money to invest in such a venture. I also have space to start a coaching centre but would need more funds to go ahead. Any suggestions?

Education is the best gift you can give someone. But when it comes to social work, you need the right attitude. The thought of providing social workers a helping hand is noble but it can also be emotionally and physically demanding on you. But if you are really keen on doing some social work than you can offer your assistance to non-governmental organisations and government welfare agencies in your city. Here are some of the agencies you can approach. The Calcutta City-Level Programme of Action for Street and Working Children is committed to extending basic services and protection to poor children. Another option is to enrol yourself with www.indianngos.com, which lists volunteers for social work. All you need to do is let them know your area of interest, some personal details and the number of hours you are willing to spare to teach street children. Starting a coaching centre is a good idea but you'll have to do a considerable amount of legwork to raise the necessary funds. Begin by helping out a local NGO and later, when you think you are ready, you can start a coaching class for street children.

Q I am 51 and work as a senior executive in a private firm. I also have a diploma in photography from a reputed institute. I always wanted to be a still photographer but wasn't confident about making a living out of it—the fear

lingers but the desire is stronger. My friends have advised me to open a studio but I would rather freelance. What should I do?

Photography is a viable career move with various options, such as press, advertising, fashion, industrial, food, forensic and wildlife photography. With journalism coming of age in India, and several new publications hitting the stands, you stand a good chance to get your work printed. Begin with sending samples of your work to various publishing houses. If you are interested in product photography, send your photos to magazine editors and people working in advertising. Spread the word around through friends and contacts, and don't be deterred by initial rejection. It's wiser to set up a studio only after you have established yourself.

Q I am 63 years old and recently handed over my garment export business to my son. I know a lot about gemstones and would like to venture into buying and selling them. Do I need a degree in gemology?

The process of inspecting and evaluating the quality of gems, determining how best to cut, polish and set them, requires special skills. A course in gemology will help you. Several institutes offer long and short-term courses in gemology and jewellery design, ranging from a few months to two years, such as the Indian Diamond Institute, Surat; Gemological Institute of India, Mumbai; Gemstone Artisans Training School, Jaipur; Indian Institute of Gemology, New Delhi; Indian Gemological Institute, New Delhi; and the Jewellery Design and Technology Institute, Noida (Uttar Pradesh). Visit the International Gem Society's website www.gemsociety.org to learn more. It also offers online courses but that requires membership at \$44 (Rs 2,000) per year. You also need to pay \$30 (Rs 1,350) each for two examinations.

Music on his mind

After years of homeopathic practice, Dr Sharad Shah changed track to take up music

Dr Sharad Shah trained to be a doctor but lost faith in allopathic medicine when nothing could cure his six-year-old daughter's asthma. Finally, homeopathy did the trick—and Dr Shah changed track. He went on to study homeopathy at Mumbai's Institute of Clinical Research (ICR) in 1983 and set up a clinic in Juhu, in the city's suburbs.

In 1990, Shah, then 45, decided to cut down eight hours at the clinic to four in the morning to pursue a new calling: classical music. "I wanted my younger daughter to become a singer," he recalls. "I accompanied her and started learning from Malay Banerjee, a disciple of Pandit Bhimsen Joshi." Juggling two careers was a familiar concept for Shah. His brother, Dr Tushar Shah, is a cardiologist and professional emcee, and his nephew, Dr Sanjay Shah, is a dentist and ghazal singer.

Music has always been Shah's passion. He can play the guitar, flute, harmonium and harmonica. The classical music lessons fuelled his fire and after 10 years of training, he started composing devotional music. In a happy coincidence, Ajit Kohli, marketing manager for T-Series, walked into Shah's clinic two years ago as a patient, giving him a backdoor entry into one of India's largest music companies. Soon enough, Shah's compositions were featured in *Bhajanama Ganpate*, a collection of eight Hindi *bhajan*, which went on to sell 1 lakh copies. This was followed by two more devotional albums with T-Series—the Hindi album, *Shiv Bhajan*, sung by Suresh Wadkar and Anuradha Paudwal; and the Gujarati album, *Jai Shiv Shankar*, sung by Anuradha Paudwal and Parthiv Gohil.

Now 60, Shah is composing a *bhajan* album with the verses of Mahavir Bhagwan and Padmawati Mata. He has also composed a pop album but feels marketing it won't be easy. "Realising the pop album is still a dream," says Shah, who is now learning to play Spanish guitar to get closer to it.

—Ruchi Shah

ASHESH SHAH



Dr Sharad Shah can play several instruments

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

Taking stock

Members reflect on the time they spend together at the centre, learning and growing



HIREN MEHTA

OVER THE SHORT SPAN OF ONE-AND-A-HALF years, the Harmony Interactive Centre, Thakurdwar, Mumbai, has developed into a vibrant community of 400 active members. Silver power will now spread to Pune, where the Harmony Initiative, in association with local seniors' associations, plans to set up two more interactive centres.

At the centre in Mumbai, the past year was a busy one, with members celebrating World Elder's Day (October 1) and Children's Day (November 14); and attending various lectures. Through the year, the staff have acted on feedback from in-house surveys of members to improve efficiency at the centre.

Their efforts have paid off. "Going to the centre is refreshing," says Madan Engineer, 71, a member since the centre's inception in June 2004. "Before I joined, I suffered from depression and had to be hospitalised. Now, I am relaxed." Engineer enjoys playing carom and attending computer classes and hopes the centre will introduce more activities.

Meanwhile, D K Vaidya, 62, a member since September 2004, says he is happy with the existing facilities. "The centre is first class!" he says happily. This former senior government officer says he learnt how

to play carom at the centre and likes reading newspapers and playing chess. "I am at home here," he tells us. "I only wish the centre would print notices that announce new programmes and fee structures in Hindi too."

Dutta Kumar Pai, 86, joined the centre in July 2005. For Pai, a trained commercial artist, the centre reminds him of his student days in London, where he did a course in commercial advertising. "I used to watch seniors truly taken care of there," he recalls. "They used to come together in many clubs and homes to exchange notes and have fun. The Harmony Centre, too, is on the same lines."

Pai has an idea to make the centre even better. "Harmony can help needy members, get new ones and save costs at the same time," he says. His plan: the centre could waive subscription fees—or at least a part—for needy or new members who do not have adequate monthly income. These members could be used as in-house resources—as many of them are computer trained or qualified in many ways, they can conduct classes and workshops according to their expertise, whether it is computers, yoga or arts and crafts. Now, that's an idea.

IN DECEMBER

YOGA

Mondays, Wednesdays; 10.30 am-12 noon (men); 3 pm-4.30 pm (women). Classes by instructors from Kaivalyadham Centre, Marine Drive

COMPUTERS

Monday to Saturday; 10.30 am to 12 noon; 3-4.30 pm

DANCE PRACTICE

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays: 5-6.00 pm

COMMON BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

December 29: Fancy dress competition—4 pm onwards.

Programmes are subject to last-minute change

To know more about the centre and its activities, call us at (022) 30976440/6441 or email centre.thakurdwar@harmonyindia.org



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except illness and disease!
If only my dependents and
I were covered by
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- Alexander the Great

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Lord of the ring



With the box-office success of *Hanuman*, V G Samant, 71, has helped boost the Indian animation industry, says

**Aparna
Narayanan**

The children who packed a Mumbai cinema on a warm November evening roared with laughter. On the screen in front of them, an infant Hanuman—the doe-eyed, pudgy hero of the animated feature film *Hanuman*—had whisked a meditating *sadhu* from the ground and stranded his unwitting victim on top of a sheer cliff.

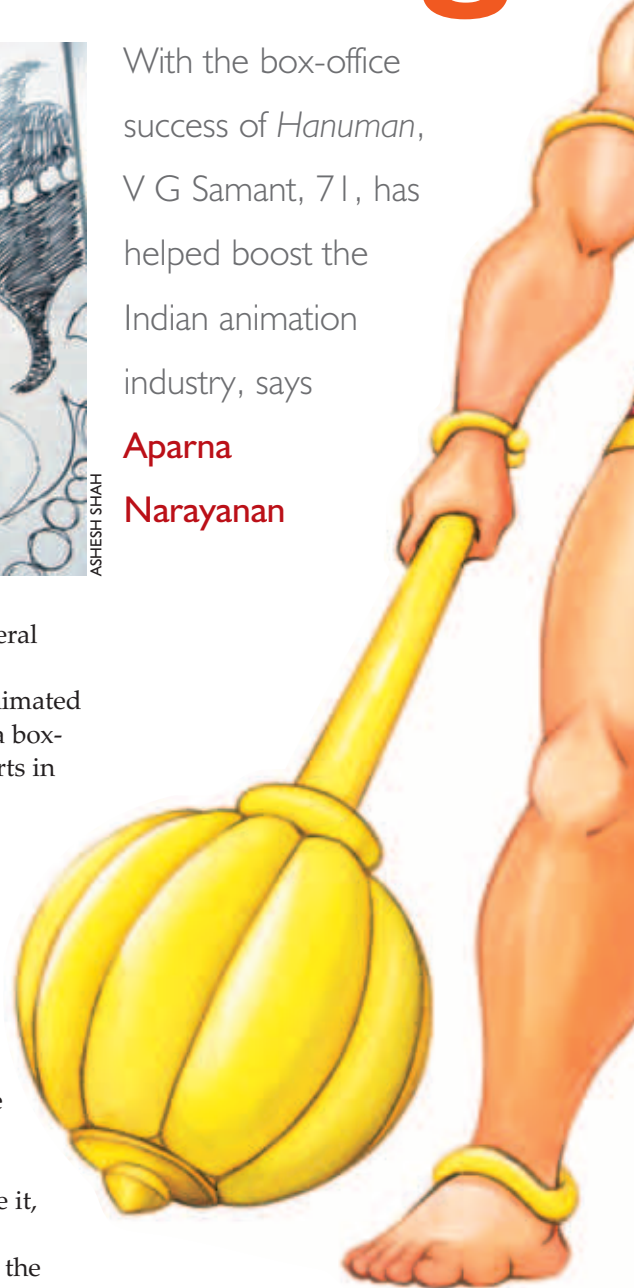
Hanuman is being toasted as the biggest indigenously produced animation success in Indian film history. Though some criticize its scratchy quality, it has achieved what may be regarded as impossible—a *desi* toon film achieving blockbuster status—with as much ease as the monkey god himself lifted mountains. And it's left in its wake the anticipated chart-topping antics of another muscle-bound star, Salman Khan and his film *Kyon Ki*.

V G Samant, the 71-year-old filmmaker, had faith the movie

would work, although several others of its kind didn't. A recently released, partly animated film called *Bhagmati* was a box-office dud, and earlier efforts in the medium too had little commercial success. That didn't stop Samant from investing Rs 3.5 crore and involving 160 animators on a project that took nearly two and a half years to complete.

"I said, children will be the judge," says Samant, who says he loves to hear children laugh. "If they like it, I can connect to God." The septuagenarian researched the story, wrote the script, designed the characters and spearheaded the direction of the movie for his animation company, Silvertoons.

He also cannily focused a chunk of the action on the childhood of the monkey god. But Samant makes it clear that the super-



Samant knew the film would work; a publicity still of the film *Hanuman*

human high jinx of Hanuman isn't a lame copy of Western animation. "It is not He Man or Superman," he says. "It creates ethics."



classical animation,” he says. He made more than 120 films during his stint there, notably *The Lion and the Rabbit*, which a skittish Kashmiri government viewed as election

first animation film at Metro cinema. Samant then decided: “This is an art for me.”

In 1990, Samant retired from the Films Division, determined “to do something for children, entertainment plus something else”. He soon started Silvertoons, an animation studio in Mumbai, conducted animation workshops for young children and students

“My mind is quite young. My mind is always saying, ‘Yes, do it’”

propaganda and wanted banned, and *The Tree of Unity*, in which bald characters, speaking gibberish, managed to convey the message of national integration.

Samant describes his career in animation as accidental. He grew up in the Konkan, studying simultaneously for an advanced diploma in fine arts and his Senior Secondary Certificate degree. He came to

Bombay as a young man to become an engineer, but missed

“from Tiruvananthapuram to Guwahati”, and made another 60 films.

Earlier this year, he launched Pansoft School of Animation in Mumbai. He has also started work on his next animation film project, but declines to divulge any details.

Finding something to do has never been a problem for Samant. He describes himself as excelling “in each and every art” — talented carpenter, splendid cook, great tailor, fine actor and gifted fixer of broken air-conditioners, sound systems and televisions.

Samant’s immodesty is almost childlike. But then Samant has always cherished childlike values, such as simplicity. “I am a simple man,” he says, explaining that he regularly travels by public transport and lives in the middle-class neighbourhood of Goregaon in northern Mumbai.

The child within him also speaks when he says, “My mind is quite young. It is always saying, ‘Yes, do it.’” And so, he does. ■

Samant has always pushed the envelope. He joined the government’s Films Division as a junior animation artist in 1959, but rose rapidly, largely on the strength of his experimental, risk-taking work. “I made puppet films, trick films, besides regular

admission. An aunt, who found him sitting dejected over the turn of events, advised him to complete his diploma in fine arts and go ahead and get a Master’s degree in the field. That led to the JJ School of Art. A friend he made there took him to see his

Leave the world behind

Rediscover the art of
holidaying at Devbagh
resort in Karwar, a place
full of charming
contradictions, urge **Hugh**
and **Colleen Gantzer**



Photos: HUGH AND COLLEEN GANTZER

Only three km from the nearest railway station, and yet it is delightfully remote. It is on the mainland, and yet accessible only by boat. Run by Jungle Lodges and Resorts of Karnataka, it attracts well-heeled and discriminating visitors from all over the world, yet you don't need to be rich to be able to afford this green getaway, which is priced reasonably at Rs 1,750 for a day—meals, taxes and freebies included. We'll come to that later.

Devbagh is set among whispering casuarinas (also called whistling pine) and an island-like promontory on the right bank of a broad rivulet of Kali Nandi, facing Karwar district in

Karnataka. From the moment we sit in the speedboat at Karwar jetty, we leave the hurrying world behind. Ahead, Devbagh is a green blur that grows into a grove of feathery trees behind a white beach. We always enjoy the walk down the path winding through the casuarinas. If the staff haven't plied their brooms on it recently, you'll find yourself bouncing on a springy, brown carpet of pine needles, and you'll be wreathed in the faint, dry, incense odour of resin. It reminds us of strolling through a pinewood in the Himalaya.

The resort grows organically out of the casuarina grove. Eighteen bark-sided and thatch-covered huts, most of them on stilts, give

it a rustic ambience. When you close your front door and lock yourselves into your eyrie, you feel reassuringly secure and cosseted. All you can hear is the sighing of the wind in the casuarinas, the shuffling of surf on the beach at the edge of the grove, and the occasional call of a sea eagle cruising across the sky above.

With only 18 cottages in an area 3 km long and 2 km wide, you are unlikely to tread on anyone's toes, and yet you'll never feel cut off from human companionship. We enjoy our meals in the traditional Gol Ghar—a circular, thatched and open-sided dining room also on stilts. It is a great place to meet other guests. We spend a lot of time in Devbagh



The bark-sided, thatch-covered cottages (above), mostly on stilts, compliment the pristine beaches of Devbagh

reading, sharing thoughts and experiences and opinions. It is very easy nowadays to neglect the elegant art of conversation; it is very easy in Devbagh to hone that skill again. And then we take the complementary dolphin-watching cruise. No one can guarantee your sighting of a pod (a group) of dolphins or even of one of these graceful creatures, but we've always been lucky.

We also recommend you treat yourself to a snorkel experience, even if you don't swim—one of

us doesn't. For this, you take a trip across the bay to the strangely named Lady's Beach, a wild and wonderful spot. It would be best if you wore your swimming costume under your clothes. That way you won't have to find a suitable spot to hide while you change for your snorkelling experience.

Once you are down to your costume, your instructors will help you strap on a life jacket, slip into your flippers, step life-jacket-high into the water, wear

your snorkel, and then tow you face down behind a slow boat. You have become a sea creature floating weightlessly above the gardens at the bottom of the sea like a wide-winged eagle gliding silently above the earth. It's an indescribably ageless, timeless encounter with another magical world.

You don't have to be activity-oriented to enjoy Devbagh. We walk on the firm sand of the beach and rediscover the innocent delights of beach combing. The shells and pebbles and driftwood washed up by the persuasive surf are the stuff of fantasies. What have the little creatures that once lived in those shells seen? Are these pebbles the remains of ancient planets destroyed in titanic explosions? And what strange tales of love, revenge, hate and passion could those pieces of driftwood tell us about their interactions with humans on some distant shore? Imagination? Certainly. But imagination opens your soul. Set yours free in Devbagh, the garden of the gods. ■



Dining at the circular, open-sided Gol Ghar is as much fun as snorkelling in the Kali Nandi rivulet



It's time to get out the snorkelling gear and take a refreshing walk down the shores of the Kali Nandi as evening sets in



FACT FILE

When to go

Best time to visit is October to May

How to get there

By Air: You can fly to Dabolim Airport (Goa) and drive south for two and a half hour.

By train: Alight at Karwar station, drive 3-km drive to Karwar jetty. If you reserve in advance, transfers

are complimentary. Alight at Madgaon (Goa) or Ankola to reach Karwar by road.

By road: Overnight bus service from Bangalore; buses also ply between Madgaon and Karwar.

Tariff

Rs 1,750 per person per day at Jungle Lodges and Resorts Ltd; includes meals, transfers, dolphin spotting and beach barbeque. There is a 15 per cent discount for silvers. Excursion to Lady's Beach and snorkelling: Rs 600.

Contact details: Jungle Lodges and Resorts Ltd, Second Floor, Shrungar Shopping Centre, M G Road, Bangalore-560001. Tel: 080-5582458, 5597021; Email: junglelodges@vsnl.com

In the line of



fire

He's been putting out fires
in Amritsar for 57 years.

Seventy-five-year-old
Mulk Raj Khurana, captain
of Seva Society Fire
Brigade in Amritsar, tells
Payal Khurana what in the
blazes keeps him going



(Left page) Khurana with other senior volunteers of the Seva Society Fire Brigade; getting ready for a mock drill; (Below) The first fire engine brought from Lahore in 1935



Photos: RANJIT SINGH

FOR THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE

I have a busy job managing the Seva Society Fire Brigade, especially during the summers and monsoons. Fire often breaks out in the narrow by-lanes of the old city in Amritsar. Around 90 per cent of the houses here are over a century old. They have wooden roofs and decrepit wiring. Water seeps into the cracks and causes short circuits.

When there is a fire in any part of the city, I sound the siren. The shopkeepers and other people from the neighbourhood leave what they are doing and rush to the headquarters, in Dhab Wasti Ram, Amritsar. They take the fire engines out and are off within seconds. These volunteers get special

training in fire fighting. Anyone can join; the only prerequisite is the will to serve. Seva Society is, perhaps, India's only fire brigade run and funded entirely by citizens themselves. All the volunteers hold honorary posts in the managing committee and don't draw salaries—it is against the rules of

This is the only fire brigade in India run by the people

the society to drink a cup of tea at the expense of those they have saved. Instead, they contribute money towards the functioning of the fire brigade.

We even have permission to use the water from the Golden Temple *kunj* (pond) to douse any fire that breaks out in the neighbouring alleys.

FIRST STEPS

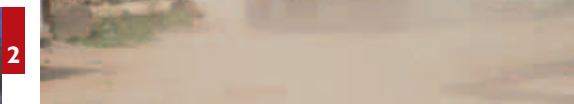
Lala Radha Krishan and Ishwar Das started the Seva Society Fire Brigade on Baisakhi in 1903. Whenever fire broke out in the city, there was no help available. The founders taught the local people to act as their own fire fighters. They responded to all

one of the volunteers who responded to the distress call. The evening sky was ablaze. As we battled the flames, I could see the desperate faces of the people trapped inside. Suddenly, shots rang out. The Muslims were firing at us. The boy next to me was hit. He died that night.

That year, I was on duty at the railway station every night. Trains kept coming in from Pakistan. I helped the passengers disembark and distributed food,



1 In a mock drill, volunteers of the Seva Society Fire Brigade demonstrate how they attend SOS calls



emergency calls, extinguishing the fire using buckets of water. Over the years, they shifted to handcarts with water pumps, and then to a lorry with a steam-powered water pump. In 1932, the Seva Society got its first modern fire engine from Lahore.

TRIAL BY FIRE

I joined the society as a volunteer in 1947, when I was 18. Amritsar was burning, with rioters setting houses and factories alight. One incident still haunts me. The Muslims, who dominated the Karam Singh marketplace, had set the Hindu houses ablaze. I was

clothes and medicines. We had a round-the-clock *langar* for refugees and fed about a thousand people every day.

There were other equally difficult times—the Amritsar floods in 1955, and then the two Indo-Pak wars, in 1965 and 1971. Another tough year for Amritsar was 1984, when terrorism was at its peak. Wherever there was a fire, we were there. Thankfully, we were never harmed. After Operation Blue Star, bodies were piled up inside the Golden Temple. The volunteers of the Seva Society Fire

Brigade and the Red Cross were the only people allowed inside the complex to pick up the corpses. It was a difficult job.

Tough times never last, but tough people do. In 2002, when the country was poised for war with Pakistan, the movement of Indian troops to the border increased. The Army laid minefields along the border to prevent enemy infiltration. When villagers or cattle inadvertently stepped on

serviceable in the narrow city lanes. I supervise the vehicles to make sure they have enough fuel and are in working condition. The water tanks in the fire engines should always be full. I also manage the five paid drivers, deputing them during emergency calls. My sons, Satish, 46, and Lalit, 38, look after my wholesale shop of gunny bags. They are also



5



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7



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9

Within minutes of reaching the site, volunteers roll out the hose to control the fire

them, they exploded and fires followed. We were really busy then. We were called to the border almost every day to put them out.

CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP

Today, 58 years after I joined, I am captain of the society. Other senior volunteers hold the other important positions, like president, vice-president and general secretary. We have two fire engines, four ambulances and a hearse to pick up unclaimed bodies from the streets and arrange for the last rites. Our fire engines have small portable pumps that are

volunteers at the society. When they hear a siren, they don't hesitate to jump out of their beds in the night, even in the winter chill.

HOT TIMES

Diwali is the busiest period for us. On this day, volunteers stay at the society office all day and night, going home only for *puja* and meals—we don't even get time to sleep. Each year on Diwali, we put out about 10 to 15 fires. It's a difficult job with only two fire engines. We return home the next morning, exhausted but satisfied with a job done



Khurana with his team of young fire-fighters at the Seva Society Fire Brigade office

well. On a November night in 1999, when fire broke out in a wholesale market stocking Diwali fireworks, 40 shops were gutted and two people died. The boys reached the market in time, but to our dismay there was no supply of water from the municipality. Moti Lal, a young volunteer, opened a manhole and went down the sewer. He started pumping up the dirty water, which we used to control the conflagration. He was inside for hours, but not once did he complain of the stench or muck. Had he not done it, all the shops would have burnt down. This is the fire that burns in my men.

Another time, I got a distress call during our centenary celebrations on 23 March 2003. The siren sounded, and everyone rushed out leaving the chief guest—Vijay Chopra, chief editor of *Punjab Kesri*—waiting to finish his speech. The next day, he wrote a long column on the front page of the newspaper, praising our dedication.

STRAPPED FOR CASH

Our monthly expenditure will soon touch Rs 1 lakh. Most of this goes towards buying fuel. We are not economically sound. We have a fixed monthly

expenditure but no definite source of income. We are totally dependant on donations. The local businessmen and industrialists are generous. Recently, though, we approached Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh for help, but came back disappointed.

Every year, our local MLA Darbari Lal gives us Rs 1 lakh from his personal fund. But this is not sufficient to realise our future plans. We are already involved in setting up gynaecological, eye and skin camps in the city and we now plan to build a charitable hospital. Further, we want to increase our fire-fighting capacity by adding more fire engines.

A while ago, our MP Navjot Sidhu visited our office and asked us if we wanted anything. Hesitantly, we asked for a fire engine. Sidhu was silent for a moment as it costs Rs 11 lakh. But when we told him more about our work, he was so impressed that he promised to pay for the engine from his own pocket if the government did not sanction it. He said, "I'll sit on the fire engine and come to your office, ringing the bell all the way." We hope to get the engine soon. ■

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Contact Dr Shivshanker Lal at Pasratta Bazar, Chandausi-202412. Phone: (05921) 250151-250951; Mobile: 09837006851.

I am a 69-year-old retired teacher based in Agartala. I am unmarried and would like to make pen friends with senior citizens to share and discuss problems related to silvers.

Contact Hare Krishna Chakraborty, Post Box No 1, PO Agartala, ONGC, Tripura (West)—799014.

I am a 71-year-old man from Kochi. I have a good collection of Indian and foreign stamps, first day covers, telephone cards for exchange or sale at a reasonable price.

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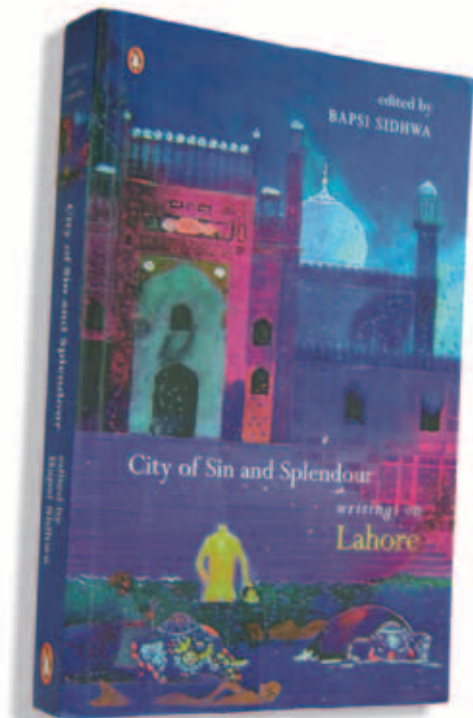
I am a retired senior officer of State Bank of India. I am fairly healthy and am interested in serving as an administrator, care taker, auditor etc particularly in service industries like holiday homes and resorts.

Contact Prakash Vishnu Thosar at 02632-243824.

I am a 60-year-old retired professor. I keep good health and have a positive approach to life. Senior citizens, who are going through a rough patch in life, can get in touch with me to share their views and thoughts.

Contact V R Sethi at 09417431308

City of joys



City of Sin and Splendor—Writings on Lahore

By Bapsi Sidhwa

Penguin India

Rs 395; 373 pages

Lahore! "To belong to Lahore is to be steeped in its romance, to inhale with each breath an intensity of feeling that demands expression," writes Pakistani Parsi Bapsi Sidhwa, author of popular novels like *Cracking India* and *The Ice Candy Man*, in her introduction to the anthology *City of Sin and Splendor—Writings on Lahore*. Traversing the city from the cantonment on one end to Nur Jehan's tomb off the Grand Trunk Road on the other, be prepared to be whisked through centuries of transmogrification, which this erstwhile Paris of the East has absorbed in its vast horizontal sprawl, like 'a quiet song only the heart can hear...'

Despite the present political efforts towards peace, since the bloody Partition of the subcontinent in 1947, most of us in India have been left with little real access to our neighbours, friends or family across the border in Pakistan, and to think that Lahore is a mere 30-minute drive from Amritsar!

This haven for poets and grammarians is returned to in this little gem. "At times I have felt that the magnificent tombs of Lahore, the mosques and gardens, and the colonial edifices built by the British, form only an essential background; it is the people who throng Lahore's bazaars and streets and inhabit the city's buildings that occupy centre stage," writes Sidhwa.

Verse and prose (essays, stories, chronicles and profiles) are organised into seven sections. The contributors are those who share or have shared something intimate with(in) this city. Like gardeners with an equal eye for weeds as well as blossoms, the emotional landscapes they tend lie vulnerable with their gates open.

Lawyer, philosopher and populist poet Muhammad Allama Iqbal transports us to the banks of river Ravi where "the old man shakily sprinkles crimson in the sky"; E D MacLagan, governor of Punjab in the 1920s, sneaks us into a most splendid princely banquet; artist, designer, educator and author Samina Quraeshi writes photographically in "The City Within", taking us right into the heart and the perimeter of the Andhrooni Shehar (Inner City); and with Ismat Chughtai, who opened new avenues for women writers in Urdu fiction, at "The 'Lihaaf' Trial", one has the feeling of being in the company of old friends, intellectuals, artists and, most important, partners in crime.

Head of New-Delhi based publishing house Zubaan, author and activist Urvashi Butalia achieves the impossible in "Ranamama"—walking a tightrope, she pays tribute to the 'partitioned generation' and the complexity of human relations inextricably linked to a tumultuous historical moment. It is difficult to hold back the tears thinking of the (non)choices that tore asunder loved ones from each other. And in the essay titled "A Love Affair with Lahore", interactors at *Chowk.com* (an online platform to discuss and debate writings on a variety of issues that are important to the people of India and Pakistan) pour their hearts out.

This sumptuous collection on this city beloved has the devotion of a lover as expressed on Chowk.com: *Lahore is a love affair, it has nothing to do with reason.*

—Tejal Shah

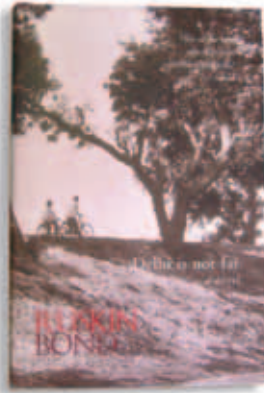
Capital dreams

Delhi Is Not Far
By Ruskin Bond
Viking
Rs 195; 111 pages

Fans of Ruskin Bond can now look forward to *Delhi Is Not Far*, published as a stand-alone novel for the first time. Written in the 1960s, the original novella was revised several times and even cut down to short story length before being included in the collection *Delhi Is Not Far: The Best of Ruskin Bond* in 1994.

Bond effortlessly transports the reader to the dull and dusty town of Pipalnagar—a place where all the days and nights are the same. Weaving meticulously detailed characters into the fabric of his story, he

depicts the inhabitants leading mundane lives and dreaming their improbable dreams of making it big in Delhi hardly 200 miles away, with sensitivity.



His protagonist Arun is a struggling writer of cheap thrillers, exploited shamelessly by his publisher. While he waits for inspiration to churn out the blockbuster that will fetch him fame and money, Delhi beckons like an elusive temptress. Meanwhile, he continues to live in his mohalla, sharing his small room with the orphan Suraj, homeless and epileptic, and the young prostitute Kamla, resigned to her fate. An unlikely friendship evolves between them.

Others living in Pipalnagar also touch Arun's life in their own ways. One of them is Seth Govind Ram, who is not only his landlord but also of half of Pipalnagar, and owns a bank, a paunch, a wife and a mistress. Though based in the plains, the novel would have been incomplete if it had not detoured through Bond's beloved hills. Yes, time stands still here. An earthquake on a wet night is perhaps the most momentous happening in a long time.

—Anjana Jha

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Triumph of the spirit

Anjana Basu reviews three books that chronicle journeys of faith and discovery

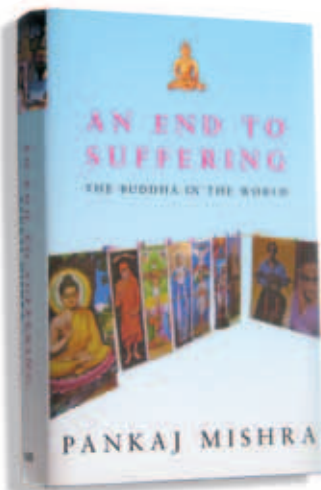


This one is very different from **Joanne Harris'** other works, like the bestselling *Chocolat*, much darker and more ambitious in scope. But, the trademarks that one has come to expect from Harris are still there—the Gallic setting, strong yet spiritual female protagonist and a pervasive sensuality. Set in 1610, *Holy Fools* is the story of a dancer-tightrope walker-turned-nun and her daughter. Juliette has reinvented herself as Soeur Auguste in a convent and buried her past. However, five years later, the death of the Reverend Mother marks a turning point—a new abbess arrives, all of 11 years old, accompanied by the father of Juliette's child in the guise of a priest. While Harris' prose conjures up 17th century France, the medieval setting does not detract from the modernity of this story of a single mother's struggle to bring up her child and recover from her relationship with an unsuitable man. The subtext, in Juliette's own words: "Churches, like any other institution, are only as good or bad as the individuals who serve them."

Black Swan; Rs 272; 384 pages

The author was born in Allahabad, brought up in Delhi, but settled in the melting pot of Hong Kong. Aware of a troublesome deficit in her life, a lack of history so to speak, **Mishi Saran** found a very different way to deal with the problem. She invented a pilgrimage and found a 1,400-year-old mentor, the monk we know as Hieun Tsang, though the Chinese now call him Xuanzang. Xuanzang's account of his travels to India mark the start of Buddhist history for practically every Indian school child. "One way or the other, I would have tried to find my way home through history," Saran says. "Xuanzang had such a startlingly similar bisection of his life that he seemed the perfect guide." **Chasing the Monk's Shadow** is Saran's account of her wanderings, ending in Afghanistan, just before the Taliban shot the Bamiyan Buddha statues to pieces. Travelling seamlessly through time, shuttling between the 7th century and the 21st, Saran reveals the past with practised skill even as she brings the present to life.

Penguin; Rs 495; 446 pages



A friend once told **Pankaj Mishra** that the Buddha was one of the luxuries that India could no longer afford. That resulted in *An End to Suffering*, written out of a desire to reconcile the bygone era in which the Buddha lived with the reality of life around Mishra. What relevance could Buddhism have in a world where poverty, terrorism and state repression cast a constant shadow? To understand this, Mishra started on a voyage of discovery that encompassed the small towns of India, "where shiny glass buildings loomed over shacks of corrugated iron", through Kashmir and Pakistan where he witnessed the futile struggles of young Islamists, to America and Europe, "whose famous cities echoed a glorious history but offered a limited view of the world's future". It was only as he reflected on these experiences and his own past that Mishra began to understand how the Buddha had dealt with problems of personal identity and alienation in his own times.

Picador Books; Rs 495; 422 pages

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Sound the bugle

With the murder of silvers on the rise in urban India, it's time to act, says **Amita Malik**

I WRITE THIS COLUMN TWO DAYS AFTER THE gruesome murder of a senior couple in New Delhi. Although you get to read of such incidents increasing in Mumbai, and to a lesser extent in Kolkata, Delhi no longer lags behind. Last year, Delhi reported several murders of senior citizens living alone.

Recently, a retired banker and his wife were murdered in their Greater Kailash residence just two days before their London trip, where they were to celebrate the 50th birthday of their son. The crime was committed in broad daylight at around 3.30 pm and within shouting distance of a local police station. At the time of going to press, the crime remains unsolved with the police interrogating possible suspects. The incident has left the seniors in Delhi terrorised.

Murders such as these stem from several factors, mostly contemporary urban life. The joint family system, which used to look after every family member, is almost unheard of in cities. Nuclear families no longer have the time or space for older people. The film *Baghban*, though a little far-fetched at times, was symbolic of how attitudes have changed towards parents. In Delhi, there have been alarming cases of parents being pushed out of their homes by children and courts having to intervene to give them back their shelter. Also, youngsters are increasingly emigrating abroad, leaving their parents when they are needed the most.

Besides, nowadays, one gets the dregs for domestic service as people are more educated and look for better jobs. Flats no longer have servant's quarters. And reliable live-in help is hard to find. The so-

called employment agencies providing domestic help are mostly dubious. They give no guarantee on efficiency or reliability nor do they conduct police checks. It's like a relay race—they promise a substitute if the first person turns out to be unsatisfactory, and after the third change, they throw their hands up in the air and say they did their best but you are difficult to please. This way, a friend of mine forfeited the deposit of a month's salary—Rs 2,000 to be precise. Otherwise, Delhi teems with part-timers who take on five or more jobs, whiz in and out of each job with the minimum of work for a tidy sum.



Don't employ domestic help from Bangladesh and Nepal as we don't have a repatriation treaty with them

We should pay attention to police warnings. The police have repeatedly warned against employing people from certain countries, such as Bangladesh and Nepal. The reason: We don't have a repatriation treaty with them. Nationals from these countries can commit crimes and escape by simply crossing the border. But working people, who desperately need domestic help, end up taking undue risks and paying the price.

Even as I write this, senior citizens are reacting to the latest murder. One elderly woman has decided to move in with her brother rather than live alone. And the senior citizens of a particular locality in Delhi are busy drawing up plans to keep in touch with each other through interconnecting phones, alarm bells, even sirens.

It's time we take this problem seriously and find a solution. The way I see it, senior citizens, their relatives, friends, the police and the local authorities should get together to make life safer for the silvers. It's time to sound the bugle. ■

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

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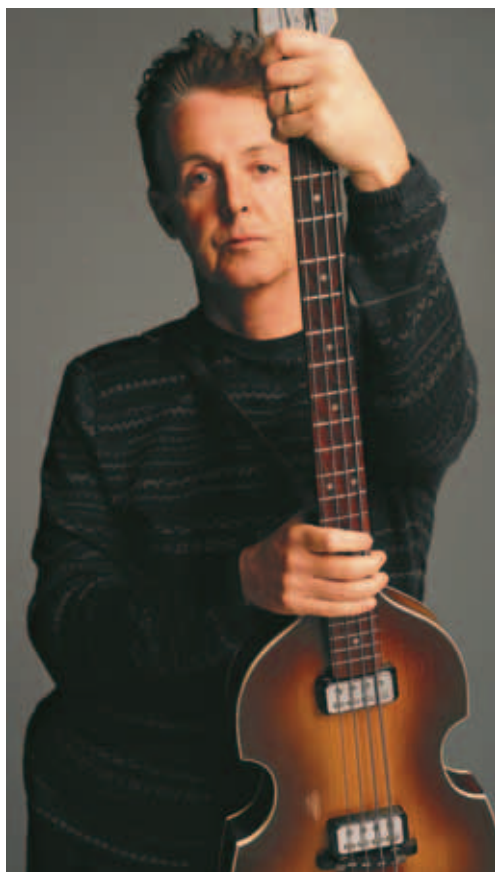
BACK IN FORM



Meet the new poster boy for embryonic stem-cell research: former Chhattisgarh chief minister **Ajit Jogi**. The 59-year-old Congressman, who was paralysed below the neck after an accident in 2004, underwent stem-cell therapy at Nu tech Mediworld clinic in Gautam Nagar, Delhi. The results were encouraging. According to Jogi, soon after the stem cell injections given to him earlier this year under the supervision of Dr Geeta Shroff, director of Nu tech Mediworld, his breathing became normal, his bladder control improved and he was able to sit without back support for as long as he wanted. When Nu tech Mediworld, registered with Vitro Fertilisation and Genetic Centre in Delhi, made a presentation to Union Health Secretary Prasanna K Hota on 17 November to claim it had improved the medical condition of 100 patients suffering from Alzheimer's,

Parkinson's and paralysis using the technique, Jogi was in attendance. Hota's response: "Stem cells research needs some discipline, certain protocols and ethical issues need to be put in place." Currently, there are no clear guidelines for stem cell research in India. A practical guide of dos and don'ts associated with stem cells would soon be prepared and Indian Council of Medical Research would take a lead in this regard, Hota said. This, he said, was to dissuade rampant research and quackery.

BEATLE IN THE SKY



The music of the Beatles has reached every corner of the world—and on 13 November, it went further when **Sir Paul McCartney** became the first musician to perform live to an audience in space. The 63-year-old sang the Beatles' hit *Good Day Sunshine* for astronauts at the international space station with the help of a link-up provided by space agency NASA. Astronauts Bill McArthur and Russian cosmonaut Valery Tokarev enjoyed the show, 220 miles above Earth. McCartney offered to perform for the astronauts after hearing that the song was used as a wake-up call for the shuttle, Discovery. "I was extremely proud to find out that one of my songs was played for the crew of Discovery this summer," he said. "I wanted to repay the favour."

SOLE FETISH



"Like every girl, I love shoes," says **Cherie Blair**, wife of British Premier Tony Blair. On 7 November, The 51-year-old inaugurated a celebrity shoe auction to raise funds for UK-based organisation Breast Cancer Awareness, after the premiere of the film *In Her Shoes* at London. Cherie, patron of Breast Cancer Awareness, donated a pair of Nine West sandals, and opened the bidding on actor Cameron Diaz's pair of strappy Jimmy Choo shoes—they finally sold for over £4,000.

MILESTONES



Sworn-in. Justice **Y K Sabharwal**, 63, as Chief Justice of India on 1 November. Justice Sabharwal, who succeeds Justice R C Lahoti, has openly spoken out against the

death penalty. His octogenarian mother Jaswant, present at the swearing-in ceremony in Delhi, said, "My son has fulfilled his father's dreams."



Appointed. **Rajat Gupta**, 57, the former head of management consulting firm McKinsey & Company, as special advisor to the UN by Secretary General Kofi Annan on

3 November. Gupta, a US citizen of Indian origin, will advise Annan on reform projects.



Awarded. The Dhanvantri Award to former vice-chancellor of Bombay University **Dr Snehalata Deshmukh**, 65, for her contribution to the field of medical science, on

October 30. This follows the Dr B C Roy National Award she received for pioneering work in paediatric surgery.

IN PASSING



From humble beginnings—he was born in a thatched hut in Uzhavoor in the Kottayam district of Kerala—former president **K R Narayanan**, went on to dabble in journalism for five years before joining the Indian Foreign Service. He entered politics in 1984 and was thrice elected to the Lok Sabha from Kerala's Ottapalam constituency

on the Congress ticket. In 1997, he became the first Dalit president. He passed away on 9 November at the age of 85.

Veteran socialist and former Union minister **Madhu Dandavate** passed away in Mumbai on 12 November after a prolonged battle with cancer. He was 81. Before joining politics, he was a lecturer of nuclear physic at Sidhartha College of Arts and Science, Mumbai. His last wish was to donate his body to Sir J J Hospital.



The first female recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Padmashri, **Amrita Pritam** was renowned for her poignant stories and poems in Punjabi. Her works were translated into several languages in India and abroad. Confined to her bed since 2002, she died on 31 October in New Delhi. She was 86.

John Fowles worked as a teacher before turning to writing full-time in 1963 after the success of his first novel, *The Collector*. His best-known work *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, in 1969 was adapted into an Oscar-nominated film, starring Meryl Streep and Jeremy Irons, in 1981. Fowles, 79, died on 5 November.



Rosa Parks, the black seamstress who refused to relinquish her seat to a white man on a city bus in Montgomery, Alabama, almost 50 years ago, helped trigger off the civil rights movement in the 1950s in the US. She passed away at her home in Detroit, US, on 24 October. She was 92.

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LAUGH LINES



A married couple in their early 60s was out celebrating their 35th wedding anniversary at a restaurant. Suddenly, a fairy appeared and said, "For being such an exemplary married couple, I will grant you each one wish." The wife promptly said, "I want to travel around the world with my husband." The fairy moved her magic stick and, abracadabra, two tickets for a luxury sea cruise appeared in her hands. Now it was the husband's turn. He thought for a moment and said, "An opportunity like this only occurs once in a lifetime, so, I'm sorry my love, but my wish is to have a wife 30 years younger than me." The fairy made a circle with her magic stick and, abracadabra, the husband became 92 years old.

Three sisters—92, 94 and 95 years old—were living together. The oldest went upstairs one evening to bathe. As she was getting in the tub, she called down to her sisters, "Am I getting in the tub or out of the tub?" The 94-year-old decided to go upstairs to help. She got to the third step and stopped, then called out, "Was I going up the stairs or down?" The youngest sister, sitting at the kitchen table, knocked on wood and said, "I hope I never get as bad as my sisters." A second later, she wondered, "Was that the front door or the back door?"

A little girl was sitting and watching her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother had several strands of white in her hair. She looked at her mother and asked, "Why are some of your hair white, Mom?" Her mother replied, "Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one hair turns white." The little girl thought about this revelation for a while, and then said, "So, Mom, you must have been a really bad girl as grandma's head is all white."

A dignified old lady was among a group looking at an art exhibition in a newly opened gallery. Suddenly one contemporary painting caught her eye. "What on earth is that?" she enquired of the artist standing nearby. He smiled condescendingly. "That, my dear lady, is supposed to be a mother and her child." "Well, then," snapped the lady, "Why isn't it?"

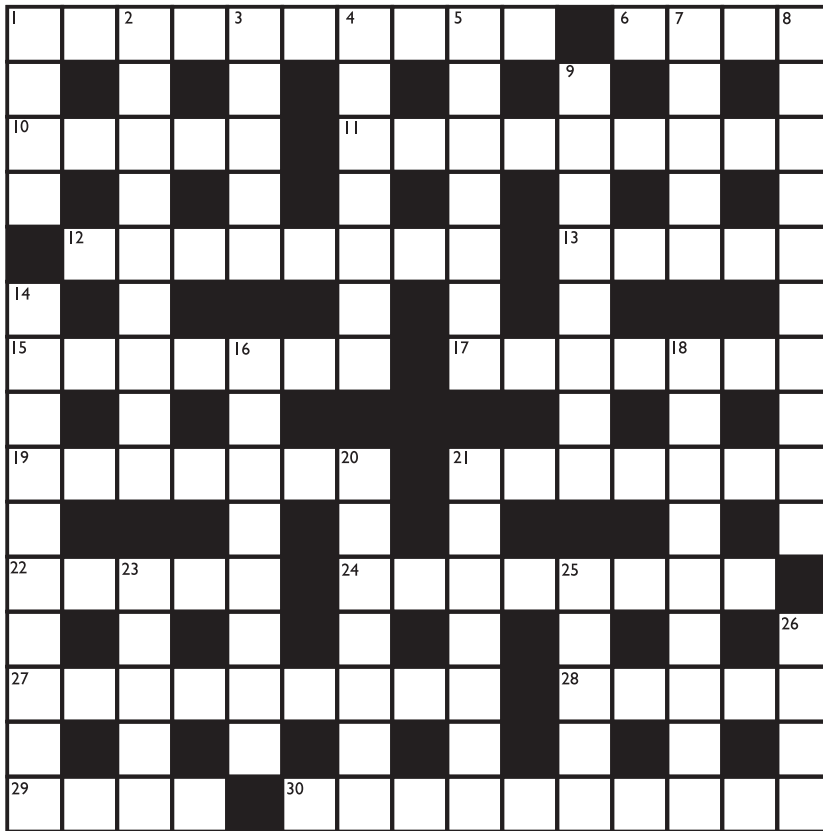
BRAIN GYM



WORD SCRAMBLE

The following four puzzles each use the following set of letters: ACEHILMNSTUV. The answer to each problem is a word that can be formed with these letters. All the letters will be used, but not necessarily in each problem. Also, some letters may be used multiple times in each problem. The puzzles give two hints about what the answer is, and tell you how many letters are in the answer.

1. Homes for certain flying creatures and a type of allergic reaction (5).
2. Last and greatest (8).
3. Sometimes added to injury and a rude statement made toward someone (6).
4. Used in writing and the length of time that some people must stay in a place (8).



EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 15

By Raju Bharatan

ACROSS

- 1 The lowest urging Marilyn Monroe to sway her hips, surpassingly tantalisingly, as in that *Niagara* walk down Memory Lane? (4 6)
- 6 The thing a fading icon took light years to hand on (4)
- 10 Soap artiste confessing to being a born non-performer (5)
- 11 Starting with Simi Garewal, which pretty lady was not his 'niece'? (9)
- 12 Cut to size (3 5)
- 13 Queen of India Visitors? (5)
- 15 Film that 'saw' Wazir Mohammad Khan (on 14 March 1931) bringing

the sound of music to the cinema in India with 'De de Khuda ke naam pe pyaare taaquat ho gar dene kii' (4 3)

- 17 Dead as Theo accommodating DD carrying nothing? (3 4)
- 19 Television is the way it reflects the speed at which Jai Prakash Yadav bowls (1 6)
- 21 Before lunch? On the contrary (4, 3)
- 22 Gary Sobers's Joey deputy during India's historic 1971 Test series in the West Indies (5)
- 24 Roster featuring ad for open car with rear seats (8)
- 27 Thereby sofa parting Indian Police

- & Central Telegraph Office (4 5)
- 28 Lagos in the net (5)
- 29 To turn to something made from rose-petals (4)
- 30 Man eating fountain-pen (4-6)

DOWN

- 1 K A Abbas's 1953 eponymous Dev Anand starrer in which that idol and Nalini Jaywant had Lata-Hemant rendering, on them, Anil Biswas's *Ek kali do patiyaan* (4)
- 2 Youthful India did, one-day, under Rahul Dravid vs Sri Lanka (4 2 3)
- 3 Royal Indian director (5)
- 4 'Attribute' characteristically Indian? (2 5)
- 5 How enriched an O P Nayyar score still sounds (7)
- 7 A six-footer Indian commentator (5)
- 8 Some square deal! (10)
- 9 Who says Anjum Chopra signals their end on Indian Television? (8)
- 14 Harmonicas mixed as liqueur (10)
- 16 The one standing between a woman and her child's being born? (1 7)
- 18 Ravi Shastri as six-hitter and telecaster alike (2 3 4)
- 20 The success of Nair's *Salaam Bombay* was when it came about (7)
- 21 No match decider? (4-3)
- 23 Directive from an editor failing to comprehend the nuances of a crossword such as this? (5)
- 25 The 1951 Rehana-Premnath starrer in which Lata-Talat delectably dueted as *Mohabbat mein aese zamaane bhi aaye*, as composed by C Ramchandra (5)
- 26 Who but our Sachin could have first elevated Geoffrey Boycott as (1 3)

For answers, see page 79

Raju Bharatan is the originator of the Sunday Cryptic in *The Times Of India*

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

BACK TO SCHOOL

MERRY CHRISTMAS!



Did you know this about Christmas?

The word Christmas comes from the words Cristes maesse, or Christ's Mass.

No one knows if 25 December was really the day Jesus was born. What we do know is that Christian leaders in 336 AD set the date to 25 December in an attempt to eclipse a popular pagan holiday in Rome called Saturnalia.

The tradition of bringing an evergreen tree home and decorating it is a German one, started in 700 AD. In the 1800s, the tradition of a Christmas tree was widespread in Germany, then moved to England and then America through Pennsylvanian German immigrants.

Kissing under the mistletoe is a tradition that is said to originate from the Viking goddess of love (Frigga). Scandinavians believed that mistletoe had the power to raise humans from the dead.

And in the first century, the Druids in Britain believed mistletoe could provide fertility and heal diseases. Christmas time is also called Yuletide

because, in olden days, a huge log was used as the foundation of the holiday fires. The legend of Santa Claus began with a real person, Saint Nicholas from the 4th century, who developed a reputation for generosity and went on to become the patron saint of Russia and Greece, and of children, sailors, unmarried girls, merchants, and pawnbrokers. The Dutch called him 'Sinterklaas' and the name was soon Anglicised to Santa Claus.

Why do children place oversized socks for Santa to fill? Well, according to an old tradition, the original Saint Nicholas left his very first gifts of gold coins in the stockings of three poor girls who needed the money for their wedding dowries. The girls had hung their stockings by the fire to dry.

Christmas is often spelt 'Xmas', because the word for Christ in Greek is Xristos. The use of the shortened form, Xmas, became popular in Europe in the 1500s.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.

—French philosopher and writer Voltaire (1694-1778)

If you talk to God, you are praying; if God talks to you, you have schizophrenia.

—American philosopher and psychiatrist Thomas Szasz

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you an automobile.

—American evangelist Billy Sunday (1862-1935)

Hope, like faith, is nothing if it is not courageous; it is nothing if it is not ridiculous.

—American novelist and playwright Thornton Wilder (1897-1975)

Each religion, by the help of more or less myth which it takes more or less seriously, proposes some method of fortifying the human soul and enabling it to make its peace with its destiny.

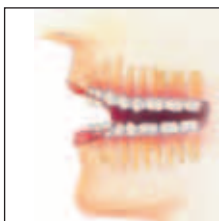
—Spanish philosopher and writer George Santayana (1863-1952)

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SATELLITE SERVICE

There are two websites giving out more information on Direct-to-Home satellite dish. They are:

■ www.ddinews.com/Sci-Tech/DTH: has a detailed, statewide dealers' list on Direct-to-Home satellite dish

■ www.dishtvindia.in: For more information, you can email customerinfo@dishtvindia.com or call on 1-901-108-3474; Address: Dish TV, FC-19, Sector 16A, Film City, Noida-201301, Uttar Pradesh

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SOLUTIONS TO BRAIN GYM

1. Hives.
2. Ultimate.
3. Insult.
4. Sentence.

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Gemstones Artisans Training School

Jhalana Mahal, Jaipur-302 017
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Arch Gemology & Jewellery Institute

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Jaipur, Rajasthan
Tel: 0141-2702163, 3096203;
For details log on to: www.archedu.org

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EXCLUSIVE HARMONY CROSSWORD 15

ACROSS:

1 rock bottom; 6 lamp; 10 HAMAM (ham/am); 11 Khushwant; 12 not large; 13 (Queen) Ratna; 15 *Alam Ara*; 17 THE DODO—THE/D(0)D/O: *Theo* accommodating DD carrying 0 (nothing); 19 a medium; 21 past tea; 22 (Joey) Carew; 24 roadster (ro/ad/ster); 27 *ipso facto* (IP/sofa/CTO); 28 goals (5 letters of *Lagos* rearranged); 29 Otto (ot/to); 30 self-filler (*man eating*)

DOWN:

1 *Rahi*; 2 come of age; 3 Bimal (Roy); 4 to Karma; 5 Opulent (OPulent); 7 Anant (*an/ant*)—every *ant* is a six-footer: reference to *Anant* (Setalvad); 8 Pythagoras; 9 charmers; 14 maraschino (means *liqueur*, *harmonicas*—10 letters of *maraschino* rearranged); 16 a midwife; 18 on the ball; 20 Miracle (*Mira/cle*); 21 play-off (*no drama*, while *play-off* means *decider*); 23 Reset; 25 *Sagai*; 26 A Sir

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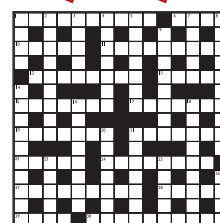




Photo: HEMANT PATIL; Text: RUCHI SHAH

“I know that 2,225 corneal transplants is not a large number in a country where over 2 million people suffer from corneal blindness. However, every person who has gained eyesight after the surgery has brought me contentment.”

Ten years ago, *Dr Harish Saxena* saw visually impaired people queued up at a Pune hospital, awaiting sponsors for corneal transplant surgery. A PhD in Animal Sciences from Washington, Saxena was running a poultry consultancy firm in Pune at the time. He decided to become a liaison between patients and sponsors. Initially, Rs 3.5 lakh came from the Indian chapter of Volkart Foundation, Switzerland, a 150-year-old foundation committed to social projects in India. That was enough for 100 corneal transplants. Later, in 1999, Saxena became the president of the Rotary Club of Pune Central. Volkart and Rotary Club helped fund 2,000 surgeries in the state. Volkart pays Rs 3,500 per surgery, which otherwise costs Rs 8,500 to Rs 10,000. The proceeds from Saxena's two books—*Beyond Ganges* and *The Twelve That Touched My Life*—have also gone towards the project. Saxena says Helen Keller's words drive him. She was once asked, “Is there anything worse than being blind?” Her reply: “Oh yes! Having sight but no vision.”

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