

harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

JUNE 2013 ₹ 30

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NUMBER QUEEN
SHAKUNTALA DEVI'S
LAST INTERVIEW

NAVARASA
ESSENCE OF EMOTIONS

**ODE TO THE
NINE MUSES**

DEMYSTIFYING 9

**ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL**



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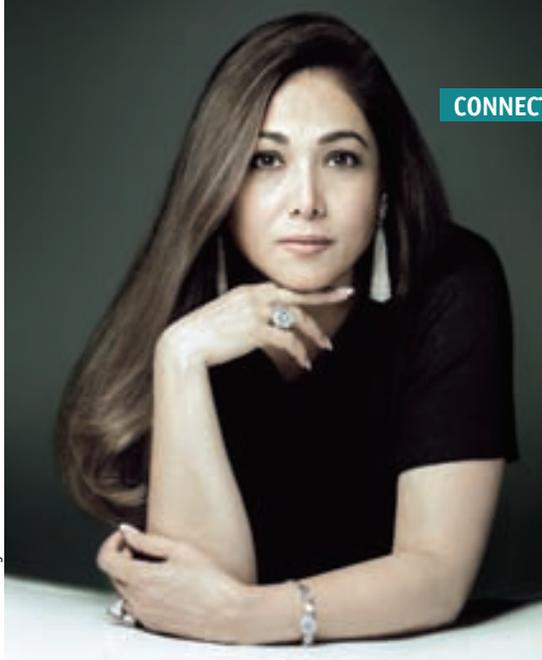
A work in PROGRESS

Progress should not be defined by how far we have come but where we are going. It's a maxim worth remembering as we turn nine this month.

This issue, we feature a short report in our 'Orbit' section about the burgeoning market for retirement communities, with the Indian chapter of a global property advisory firm commenting on the need and demand for such projects. It is a trend we forecast close to seven years ago in a cover story titled "First Resort". Still, we have a long way to go in terms of creating standalone, self-sustaining housing infrastructure exclusively for silvers across all income groups.

In a similar vein, many of the developments we have predicted, featured, discussed very early in our nine-year journey have today become the stuff of mainstream media. For instance, the increasing significance of senior citizens' associations ("My Other Family") and elders searching for—and finding—love, and matrimony ("Say Yes"). We also analysed the trend of silvers getting proactive about their fitness ("Ripple Effect") and the increasing number of products and services catering to this demographic ("55+ Ways to Make Silver Sparkle"). We delved into the research and procedures that aim to add years to lifespan even as they take years off the face

Suresh Natarajan



("Face Off") and even explored the link between happiness and wellness ("In Pursuit of Happiness").

But while these trends are crystallising into opportunities for many fortunate Indian silvers, there are many more that remain on the fringes. They have no access to basic healthcare, let alone gyms and anti-ageing procedures. They have no recourse to family, let alone friends or lovers. They have barely enough to make ends meet, let alone buy hi-tech gizmos. For them, there is no room for ephemeral concepts like happiness and wellness in the daily struggle that is life.

It is a reminder to us, and our readers, that our work as a society, a responsive community, is just beginning. We owe our silvers much more than lip service, we require to provide them shelter, security, financial and physical health through government and civil society initiatives with teeth that are workable, enforceable and sustainable. That, I believe, constitutes a true work in progress.

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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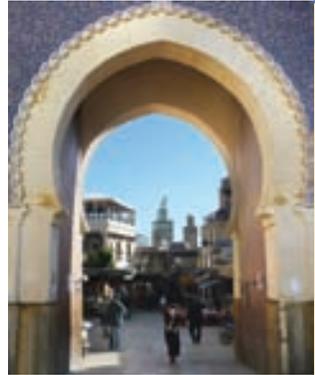
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WEB EXCLUSIVES www.harmonyindia.org



HIGH ENERGY
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan vice-chairman J L N Sastry adds meaning to post-retirement life

CULTURE CURRY
For Malaysian-born Mercy Nayagam, whipping up exotic dishes is therapeutic

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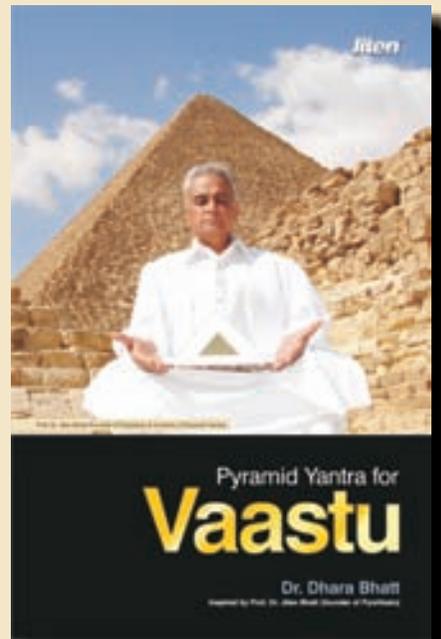
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column one

Signifying new beginnings, the number nine is special to all faiths. It's also special to *Harmony-Celebrate Age* as we celebrate our anniversary this month. Enjoy our ode to this number, whether it is the classic Indian *Navarasa* as depicted by silver dancers, a hymn to the nine muses, or an exploration of the significance of nine.

Of course, any talk of numbers and their import would be incomplete without mention of India's own number queen, Shakuntala Devi, who rendered even Einstein speechless with her mathematical prowess. We met her shortly before her demise; her last interview and photo shoot, published here, are our homage to an extraordinary life, and a mind beyond compare.

Indeed, the extraordinary is par for the course for the silvers who bring the pages of this magazine alive every month. Like our green crusaders Nusrat and Afzal Khatri who returned home from the US to craft a quiet green revolution in their native Mumbai. Roots, albeit a different kind, also form the core of much of writer Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's engaging body of work, as she tells us in an exclusive interview.

This month's health quotient is upped by V S Natarajan's advice on treating urinary incontinence and Namita Jain's dietary guidelines to rev up your metabolism. And finally, while we enchant you with the Mediterranean mystique of Morocco in all its visual splendour, we remind you that life—and humanity—can have a dark side as ace photographer Raghu Rai revisits the horrors of the 1971 war. Light and dark, hope and despair, the yin and yang of life...always in *Harmony*. Keep reading.

—Arati Rajan Menon

I am a regular reader of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* and I like the various subjects you bring to the fore. As a physician and heart specialist, who is also an octogenarian, I would like to give a few tips on healthy ageing to my silver friends. Never count years (think young and act young); keep yourself busy (develop hobbies like gardening, reading, writing); take more interest in family (to keep boredom and loneliness at bay); exercise compulsorily; self-help is the best help (don't depend on others for simple things like getting water, switching on the light); and sit under the early morning sun for 15 minutes to get Vitamin D. Finally, if you can sit, do not lie down; if you can stand, do not sit; if you can walk, do not stand; and if you can climb stairs, do not use the elevator.

Dr D P Manchanda
Moradabad

There was a time when we worried about growing old. But with advances in modern medicine and a deeper understanding of health and human nature, longevity is something many can look forward to. This may sound clichéd but think long and hard: the secret to ageing not just gracefully but with good health lies in a nutritious diet and healthy lifestyle. The *Charak Samhita*, one of the oldest texts in Ayurveda, says we would do well by focusing on *aachar* (pious and pleasant conduct); *vichaar* (refined and positive thoughts); *vyava-har* (amicable and genuine attitude); and *aahar* (a wholesome and *sat-vik* diet). The message is pithy but very powerful. However, the hectic pace of life, the many distractions and temptations that compete for our attention, and changing social customs make this simple doctrine very hard to practice. We take our body for granted without sparing a thought for its needs. The human body is very complex but with a



healthy and nutritious diet, it can stay sturdy and age gracefully. It also requires sufficient rest for restoration and repair but we often neglect this requirement.

Then there's the all-important connection between a healthy body and a healthy mind. This fact has been affirmed down the ages. It is said of our muscles, 'use them or lose them', and the same applies to our brain. Maintaining an active lifestyle keeps us physically and mentally alive and there's no reason why we can't be as proactive at 80 as we are at 30. There is also great wisdom in being positive. The mind affects not just our body but is intrinsic to our overall well-being.

Retirement is not the end of the road but a new track in life's second innings. It is a bonus time to indulge in desirable activities and creative pursuits. We can take up a stimulating hobby or a vocational course in something that perhaps had to be abandoned while earning a living. Social work is another constructive option. Just as the road we take and footprints we leave behind play a part in our destiny, they also determine the quality of our silver years. If we follow the advice of the *Charak Samhita*, our sunset years can be fulfilling.

Sakina Maniar
Pune



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- Focusing on: Health Care, Education, the Girl Child, Sustainable Livelihood, Women Empowerment Projects, Infrastructure and espousing social causes.
- Working closely with Habitat for Humanity, we have so far built more than 400 houses as part of our community outreach programme, besides supporting the building of an additional 3,600 houses.
- We are also engaged in creating model villages in rural India. We have chosen 300 villages for this transformation - whereby in a five year timeframe the villages would be self-reliant in every aspect, moving out of the "below the poverty line" status. So far more than 90 villages in India's hinterland have already reached the level of model villages.

Highlights:

- Over a million patients treated at 4,000 Medical Camps and its 18 hospitals. More than 1,200 children learnt to smile again as they underwent cleft lip surgery. We helped immunise 6 million children against polio as well.
- At our 42 Schools across India we provide quality education to 45,000 children. Of these 18,000 students belong to the underprivileged segment. Merit Scholarships are given to an additional 8,500 children from the interiors.
- Our Vocational Training Centres and the Aditya Birla Rural Technology Park accord training in sustainable livelihood projects to 80,000 people.
- Our 4,000 Self-Help Groups have led to the empowerment of 40,000 women.
- To embed CSR as a way of life in organizations, we have set up the FICCI - Aditya Birla CSR Centre for Excellence, in Delhi.
- In line with our commitment to sustainable development, we have partnered the Columbia University in establishing the Columbia Global Centre's Earth Institute in Mumbai.
- Ongoing education, healthcare and sustainable livelihood projects in Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Indonesia, Egypt, Korea and Brazil.

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INSIDE

P30: Boost your metabolism

P34: Tone the calf muscles



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► NEWSWORTHY

Safer in Goa

With forced evictions and property struggles becoming common concerns for silvers, here's a welcome piece of news. The **Goa assembly has introduced an amendment bill to protect the property rights of senior citizens, widows and the physically challenged.** By modifying Section 23 A of the Goa, Daman and Diu Buildings (Lease, Rent and Eviction) Control Act 1968, it aims to empower the marginalised to recover possession

of their premises. As the media reports, according to the amendment bill, no one can transfer through sale or any other means or let out any premises before the expiry of a period of three years from the date of taking possession of the premises. If the transfer or sale is affected within three years, the evicted tenant can apply for an order that he or she may be given back possession of the premises. We welcome the move.



"I LIVED IN 9 NEWCASTLE ROAD. I WAS BORN ON THE NINTH OF OCTOBER. IT'S (NINE) JUST A NUMBER THAT FOLLOWS ME AROUND, BUT, NUMEROLOGICALLY, APPARENTLY I'M A NUMBER SIX OR THREE OR SOMETHING, BUT IT'S ALL PART OF NINE."

JOHN LENNON

Payday!

Great news for government pensioners—the Union Cabinet has approved the proposal to increase dearness allowance (DA) to 80 per cent, benefiting about 5 million employees and 3 million pensioners of the Central Government. The hike will be effective from 1 January 2013 and employees and pensioners will be entitled to arrears. The government had hiked DA to 72 per cent last September; it came into effect from 1 July 2012.

There's more. In a landmark decision, the Delhi High Court has held that all government employees who



retired before 2006 will get revised pension according to the Sixth Central Pay Commission. What makes the judgement significant is that, despite the government's plea urging that employees should get the increased pension only from

2012, the pension will be granted from 2006. The bench has instructed the government to hand over the arrears within two months, failing which it will have to pay the pending amount at an interest rate of 9 per cent.

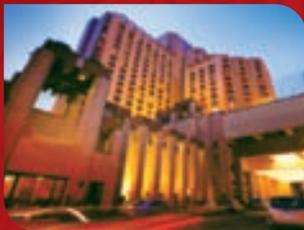
Cops that care

Drawing attention to what it calls a "trust deficit" between the police and the public, the Ahmedabad city police has taken the initiative to become more sensitive and considerate to silvers, women and children. One significant step is its 'victim assistance scheme', which assures silvers, women and children prompt attention from the first available policeman with no boundary or jurisdiction issues, consistent monitoring of the case, and speedy redress. This comes on the heels of its much vaunted Suraksha Setu, a public outreach programme that aims to extend the role of the police to proactive social initiatives. This includes measures targeted at silvers, such as establishment of ATM kiosks inside police station premises or nearby to avoid theft or tampering and make users feel more secure; training in crisis management and self-defence; setting up kiosks in neighbourhoods and public places to seek police assistance easily and arrangement of a quick help system through phones.



CUPID ON CALL
Mumbai-based NGO Silver Innings Foundation has launched Silver Innings Matrimonial & Companionship, a matchmaking bureau for men and women over the age of 50. For registration, call (0) 9167765451 (Monday to Friday, 11 am to 5 pm) or email silverinningsmatrimonial@gmail.com

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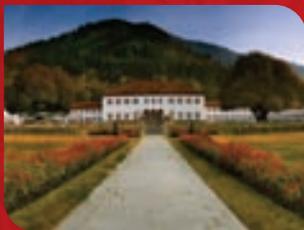
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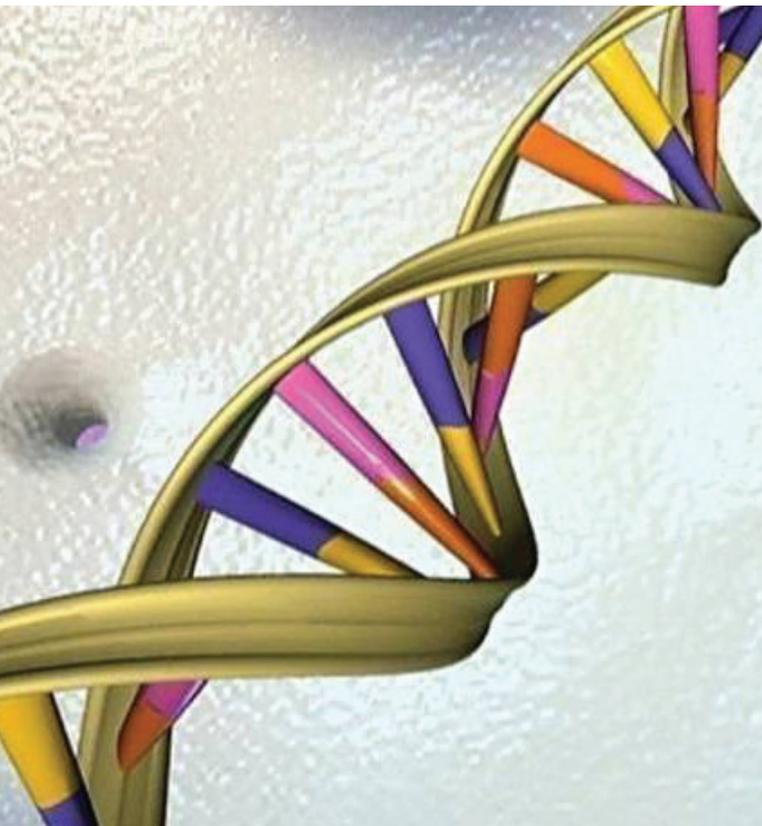
Wobbly at the wheel

The next time you're at the wheel, remember that it could be your mind—not body—letting you down on the road. A combined study by three Canadian universities suggests that **a lack of confidence inhibits people from driving as they age, leading them to lose their skills on the road.** Having enlisted over 900 Canadian silvers, some as old as 90, for the study, the researchers are using GPS and cameras fitted inside the car to gauge the speed, responses and reaction time of drivers in the ongoing study. "Preliminary findings suggest deteriorating driving habits could be cyclical; the less confident seniors are on the road, the less they drive, and the more their skills deteriorate from



lack of use," Brenda Vrkljan, professor at McMaster University and member of the Candrive Research Network, tells Toronto newspaper *The Globe*

and *Mail*. "The key to keeping seniors driving longer may be boosting their confidence through encouragement and retraining."



Gen(i)e in the bottle?

Each day brings a discovery that could help you live another day. Scientists from the University of California - Los Angeles have discovered **a gene—parkin—that may keep degenerative diseases at bay and extend lifespan.** Their study establishes that the gene, which enables cells to mark and discard damaged proteins before they become toxic and remove damaged mitochondria, can extend the healthy lifespan of fruit flies by over 25 per cent. "As we age, our cells accumulate damaged or 'mis-folded' proteins," writes senior author David Walker, an associate professor of integrative biology and physiology, in the May issue of journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. "When proteins fold incorrectly, the cellular machinery can sometimes repair them. When it cannot, parkin enables cells to discard the damaged proteins. Just by manipulating this one gene of the roughly 15,000 genes of fruit flies, the consequences for the organism are tremendous. This establishes that parkin could be an important therapeutic target for neurodegenerative diseases and perhaps other diseases of ageing."

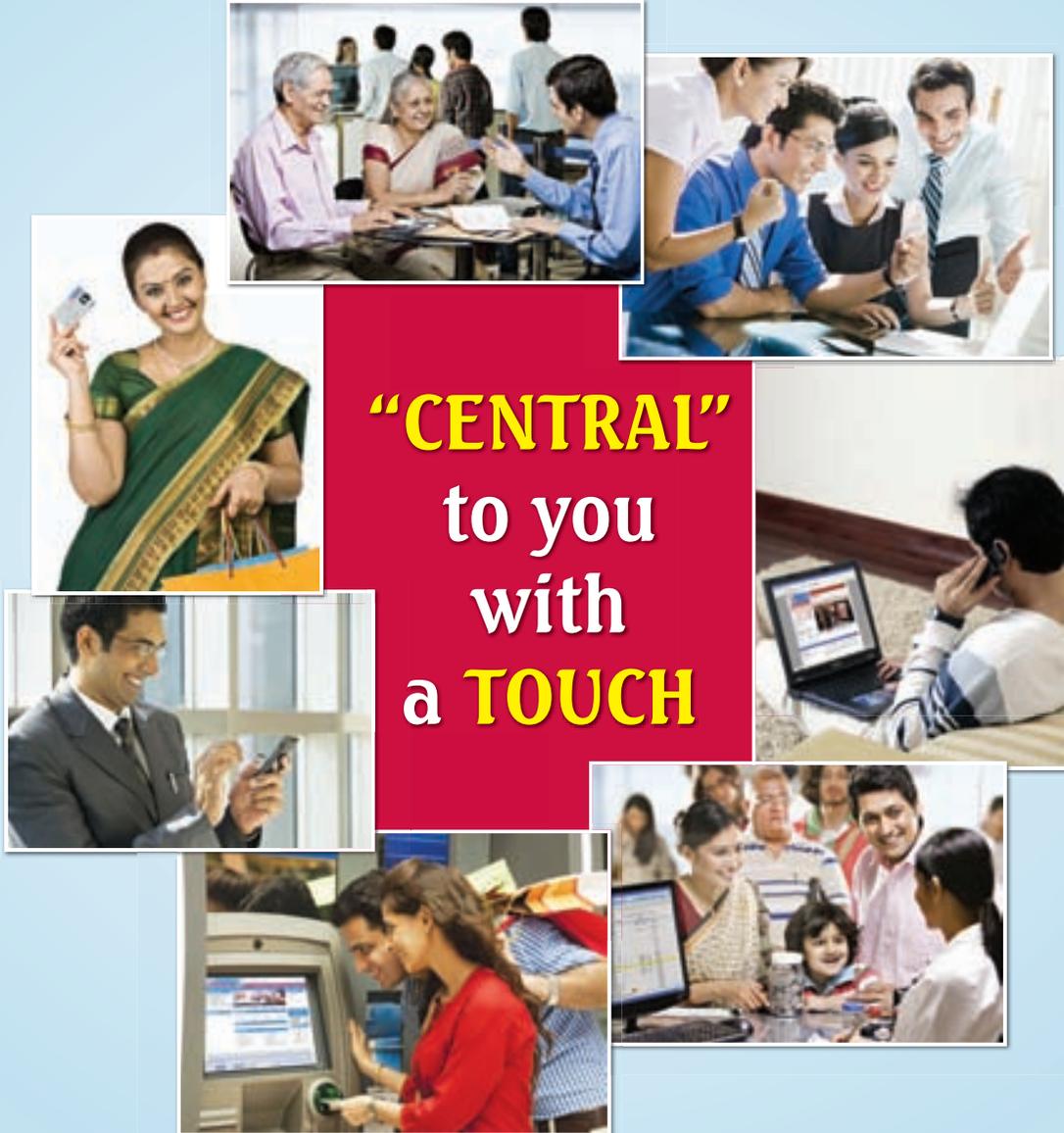


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Write on

This centenarian still has love on her mind. At 105, **Ida Pollock is the world's oldest romantic novelist** and she continues to churn out her steamy and lush tales of passion—her 124th book, *The Runaway*, will be out this summer. Born in London, she started writing young; she finished her first thriller, *The Hills of Raven's Haunt*, when she was just 14 before switching over to the romance genre. Pollock went on to sell millions of copies of her books under her own name and 10 pseudonyms, which include Susan Barrie, Pamela Kent, Averil Ives, Rose Burghley, Mary Whistler and Marguerite Bell. Though her 69 year-old daughter Rosemary now does her typing at their country home in Cornwall, Pollock's plots still remain very much her own. "A romance is never just a romance, there's adventure, mystery and movement," she tells London news-



paper *The Daily Mail*. "You need a grand, dramatic setting and a chance meeting, on a train, a cruise, or perhaps a desert island. Young men lack the maturity to take control so an older man is essential to provide the reassurance the heroine needs. There's always a fair amount of turbulence before he sweeps in to save the day. A happy ending is an absolute must."

RETAIL THERAPY

The world's favourite online store now has a silver display. **Amazon.com has launched its 50+ Active and Healthy Living Store**, which will sell nutritional, wellness, exercise, fitness, medical, personal care, beauty and entertainment products targeted at the 'mature' demographic. In what is a brilliant piece of marketing, Amazon

has dovetailed two other programmes with the site: 'Subscribe & Save', which allows users to automatically reorder frequently used products (vitamins, pain relief and incontinence products, for example) with a 15 per cent discount; and a 'Coupons' section for spot discounts on products that users can 'clip' virtually and apply at checkout. "We're excited to offer customers in the 50+ age range a place to easily discover hundreds of thousands of items that promote active and healthy living," says Chance Wales, director of beauty and health and personal care for Amazon in a media release. "This is a destination where a customer can purchase anything from vitamins and blood pressure monitors to skincare items and books on travelling the world." Start shopping at www.amazon.com/50activeliving



Care for caregivers

In a much-needed nod to the needs and tribulations of caregivers, a new UK web service has been designed to provide services and support to people supporting their elderly parents. Check out www.whentheygetolder.co.uk





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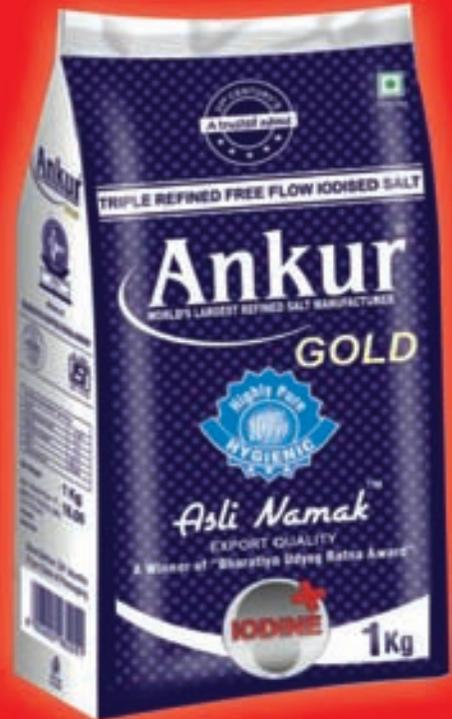
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The A list

Their beauty secrets may be varied but there's one thing these women have in common: they make the A list as the **10 women ageing most gracefully** in a poll of close to 2,000 women by fashion website *MyCelebrityFashion.com*:

1. **Demi Moore**, 50 (with 55 per cent of the vote)
2. **Olivia Newton-John**, 64 (with 41 per cent)
3. **Helen Mirren**, 67 (39 per cent)
4. **Michelle Obama**, 49 (29 per cent)
5. **Michelle Pfeiffer**, 55 (25 per cent)
6. **Twiggy**, 63 (19 per cent)
7. **Sharon Stone**, 55 (16 per cent)
8. **Oprah Winfrey**, 59 (12 per cent)
9. **Jamie Lee Curtis**, 54 (9 per cent)
10. **Madonna**, 54 (4 per cent)



Michelle Obama



Olivia Newton-John



Helen Mirren



Michelle Pfeiffer



Madonna

DIY

A magic wand to zap your wrinkles is no longer the stuff of fairytales—or expensive visits to the cosmetologist. The **Palovia skin renewing laser** is a hand-held anti-wrinkle and skin rejuvenation device you can operate yourself. Recently approved by the US FDA for safe use at home, it pulses laser light into the skin, reducing fine lines and wrinkles and breaking down cellulite. As *Allure* magazine, which awarded the product its annual 'Best of



Beauty' honour, reports, the body's natural healing system then replaces the area with new collagen and elastin, resulting in a smooth, youthful appearance. It's not recommended around the mouth area (for fear of damage to the lips); for people who already have professional fillers injected into their skin; and for people whose skin is infected, burned or cut. There's also a list of must-dos, like applying a special gel before using the laser, and moisturisers and sunscreens afterwards. The laser retails for \$ 499 (about ₹ 27,300); for more details, go to www.palovia.com

Joint effort

At 63, when Lalitha Mehta first felt a shooting pain in her knees while climbing the stairs, she paid little heed to the issue. She ignored it for a few years till the pain got unbearable and, finally, discovered she was suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. She decided to undergo a knee replacement surgery on 5 January 2013. "Apart from the pain, I had an unsteady gait due to arthritis. Undergoing joint replacement surgery was the best decision that I ever made," she says, smiling. Today, she leads an active life and enjoys playing with her grandchildren.

She was among the thousands of silvers who hit the road on a bright sunny Sunday morning to participate in the Senior Citizens' Run supported by Harmony for Silvers Foundation at Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on 19 May 2013. Also in the limelight were a few more who had undergone knee-replacement and were determined to conquer the disease. They had fought against arthritis and wanted to show the world that, indeed, there was life beyond arthritis. Having gone for joint replacement surgery in time, they are now able to breeze through their daily activities without any pain or need for help.

Speaking at the 'Fight with Arthritis' programme that was held at the



Senior Citizen's Marquee at the Tata Consultancy Services World 10K Bangalore 2013--hosted by Harmony for Silvers Foundation--eminent orthopaedic surgeon Dr HPC Khincha informed, "Arthritis pain not only restricts your day-to-day activities like walking, sitting, standing and climbing stairs, but also stops you from enjoying precious moments with your family. In spite of the increasing prevalence of arthritis in India, senior citizens often delay informing their near and dear ones about the pain and discomfort, and continue to pull on with the daily routine."

Interacting with more than 400 people and addressing their myths and concerns about the joint replacement surgery, Dr Khincha elaborated on the

efficacy of the surgery and the innovative products that enable the patient to sit cross-legged easily. "Total knee replacement surgery is one of the most successful long-term surgical procedures in the world. Minimally invasive techniques require only a small incision that not only reduces blood loss and tissue damage but also expedites the recovery process," he added.

Dr Khincha's patients, who had undergone successful joint replacement surgeries earlier, shared their real-life success experiences and encouraged fellow senior citizens to make the second innings of their life more beautiful and bountiful by taking timely and well-informed measures to manage arthritis pain.



More, more, more



In our cover story in the December 2006 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, we predicted that well-heeled silvers would soon be spoiled for choice when it came to retirement communities. Slowly but surely, it appears to be happening. According to a new report by property advisory firm Jones Lang LaSalle India, **Indian developers are building more homes for senior citizens** with Bengaluru, Pune, Chennai and Coimbatore being the most active cities in the segment. According to the report, there are currently about 30 projects for silvers in the country, with an equal number on the anvil. Of the proposed projects, five to six are in Bengaluru, three in Chennai and three in Goa, other than a variety of single projects in other cities. “The gradual shift visible in Indian society, with the emergence of financially independent and lifestyle-oriented seniors, has triggered the growth of high-end to luxury senior living products in the range of ₹ 6 million to ₹ 10 million and upwards,” writes B Sridhar, national director - social infrastructure practice (education, healthcare and senior living) at JLL India. “The current estimated demand for senior housing in India is about 300,000 units.” Read more from the report at www.joneslanglasalleblog.com/realestatecompass/real-estate/2013/04/senior-assisted-living-sector-india

Hello, TATA

Luxury has a new address: **Riva Residences, an exclusive project for silvers in Bengaluru by the Tata Housing Development Company.** Launched at an investment of about ₹ 700 million, the 4.5-acre project is part of a 25-acre Tata Housing township. Targeted at people over the age of 55, Riva Residences will feature 187 units with modern utility-based design and silver-friendly amenities; 800-sq-ft one-bedroom units will cost ₹ 4.5 million,



while 1,200-sq-ft two-bedroom units will be priced at ₹ 6.5 million. “Riva is our effort to create a special offering for the seniors of our society,” Brotin Banerjee, managing director and CEO of Tata Housing, tells media. “The project is designed for a well-educated, meritocratic and progres-

sive audience conscious about its post-retirement plans that connects with the idea of wellness and an active post-retirement lifestyle. Going forward, we plan to develop more housing projects for senior citizens across the country.” Go to www.tatahousing.in



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The run **continues**

It is now a familiar sight—but no less thrilling. The brightness of the sunny morning matched the enthusiasm of the silvers in bright yellow at the Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru. The Senior Citizens’ Marquee at the Tata Consultancy Services World 10K Bangalore 2013, hosted by Harmony for Silvers Foundation, on 19 May, brimmed over with eager participants, who turned up in their best race gear, from caps to running shoes. The marathon was flagged off by former cricketer Syed Kirmani, theatre artist Vinayak Joshi and Kannada film actor Meghana Gaonkar. For octogenarian Aravindakshin, it was a wonderful experience. “I have never come across such an event before,” he said enthusiastically. “It is best suited for senior citizens.” This first timer, who proudly completed the race, was among over 1,000 silvers who put their best foot forward.





Build new bonds. Form a club or association of your own and banish the blues. Take a cue from a group of 12 people in Tangra, Kolkata, ranging from the ages of 20-65 years, who have established a group called Baghban, which intends to bring silvers together under a common platform and enable them to interact with each other and the younger generation. Formed in April 2013, the group will organise monthly community events; the first, Baghban Phulwari, saw over 100 people from all age groups come together for an evening of entertainment and gaiety.



Then: Phone book Now: Stationery holder

Instead of tossing that chunky phone directory into the trash, make a handy stationery holder out of it with just some glue and a pencil. First, remove the front and back covers, and cut the phone book to the desired length of the holder.



Divide this into five equal sections using binder clips. Then, roll the spine and stick it firmly around a half-cut pencil with the rubber-end sticking out—this is your holder's handle.

Next, bend a section into a loop to make a petal. Cut off the edges so that all the page ends align and it's easier to stick them to the crease along the spine. Once all the petals are in form, put glue along the sides of the petals and pinch them together with adjacent petals to make them firm and strong. Use a cardboard cutout for the base.

Now splash some colours on to the petals, and give your pens and pencils a fancy new home!



FACTS

- » Ranked as a highly polluting manufacturing industry, paper production stands at the fourth place among other industrial sectors when it comes to releasing toxic chemicals into water, and third in such releases to air. However, recycling and reusing paper, instead of making it from new materials, causes 74 per cent less air pollution and uses up to 50 per cent less water.
- » In India, around 31 per cent of total paper production comes from raw materials such as wood and bamboo, while around 47 per cent comes from recycled wastes.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. LEAVING OUT THE FIRST SECTION OF THE PHONE BOOK, GLUE THE REST TOGETHER ON THE OUTER SIDES OF THE BOOK. USE A BLADE TO CARVE A SECRET COMPARTMENT IN THE BOOK TO KEEP SMALL THINGS SAFE.
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Low



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FLUID JOINTS

The World Health Organisation has estimated that about 80 per cent of Indians over the age of 65 are likely to suffer from osteoarthritis in 2013 with potential to deteriorate into severe disabilities. Arthritis is not life-threatening but inevitable. However, better pain relief may be on the way with the development of



a **synthetic polymer lubricant that smoothes friction between the joints.** Designed by a team from Boston University led by Professor Mark W Grinstaff and Harvard orthopaedic surgeon Brian Snyder, the lubricant mimics the natural synovial fluid in the joints. Their tests prove that this supplement is better than the current fluid supplements available, because its large molecular weight makes it less likely to seep out of the joint. Existing synovial supplements last a day or two, providing insufficient lubrication, while this new synthetic synovial fluid can last up to a fortnight.

Double **VISION**

Every other day, researchers find a new way to keep cholesterol, the urban killer, at bay. A recent study, if applied, can kill two birds with one stone. According to it, medically approved **cholesterol-cutting eye drops could prevent blindness caused by age-related macular degeneration (AMD).** AMD damages the macula, which is part of the retina that facilitates vision for reading or driving. AMD degenerates vision, causing the loss of photoreceptors. While one type of AMD (its dry form) leads to gradual loss of vision, the second, referred to as neo-vascular AMD, leads to growth of abnormal blood vessels that leak blood and other fluid into the eye, causing blindness. It has been known that drusen, which are large yellow deposits that contain cholesterol and other debris, collect under the retina and can increase the risk of AMD. The study in question,

led by Dr Rajendra Apte at the Washington University in St Louis, analysed the process in mice and concluded that AMD could be aggravated by older and less efficient macrophages, which are types of white blood cells that scavenge for, engulf and process debris and cholesterol. These cells require a protein called ACA1 to re-release this processed cholesterol back into the bloodstream. The research team had earlier found that this protein was not sufficient in older people. As a result, these cells begin to lose efficiency at processing cholesterol, causing the macrophages to inflame and promote blood vessel growth. Eye drops that are known to raise levels of ACA1 could help treat old macrophages and clear away cholesterol. Drugs such as liver X receptor (LXR) are known to enhance cholesterol transport in the cells and inhibit growth of blood vessel cells in the eye.



Stay clear

A new study suggests that **many older adults are undergoing needless colonoscopies and might actually be at an increased risk of bleeding and other side-effects.** Kristin M Sheffield and her team at the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, arrived at this conclusion by assessing Medicare claims for colonoscopies between 2008 and 2009 in Texas, including a sample from the rest of the country. They found that 23 per cent of colonoscopies performed on people above 70 were potentially inappropriate. Also, they found that

physicians and healthcare systems tend to influence patients to undergo second colonoscopies too soon after negative results. According to Sheffield, more than 30 per cent of the colonoscopies performed by some physicians were inappropriate. The American College of Physicians, however, recommends colorectal cancer screening once every 10 years between the ages of 50 and 70, bearing in mind factors such as family history and risks. The US Preventive Services Task Force advises that the procedure need not be performed for adults over 75.



TO CHANGE THE BELIEF THAT MEDICINES ARE THE ONLY WAY TO SUPPORT AGE-RELATED AILMENTS, KOHINOOR HOSPITAL IN MUMBAI COLLABORATED WITH SHIVSRUSHTI SENIOR CITIZENS' CLUB TO ORGANISE A 'HEALTH DAY OUT'. THE INITIATIVE WAS TO RAISE AWARENESS AMONG SILVERS ABOUT REGULAR MEDICAL CHECK-UPS AND APPROPRIATE MEDICATION, AND SPREAD THE WORD THAT PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES CAN BE REJUVENATING AND ENABLE CONSISTENT GOOD HEALTH.

Valuing humanity

Dipak Kumar Fakey, an Indian residing in the UK, was recently felicitated with the Order of the British Empire (OBE). Widely recognised by the Indian and British communities in Leicester, UK, for his efforts towards education and community cohesion, Fakey is actively engaged in work that encourages positive development in children. “It feels good when your efforts are recognised by people,” Fakey tells *Harmony-Celebrate Age* on a recent visit to India. “I never wanted any honour; I just want to make sure I keep serving humanity.” One of Fakey’s contributions to child development is the invention of board games that help children understand the difference between good and bad. “One of them revolves around cards,” explains Fakey, who also



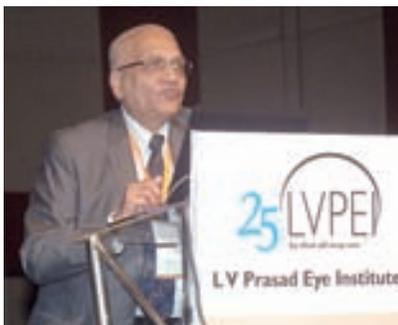
Haresh Patel

teaches human values at a primary school. “A child has to pick up a card and say the first thing he can think of. This explains the mentality and personality of the child, which helps us mould the child further.” To discover new ways for their mental development, he arranges events for children. Asked about introducing similar development techniques for schools in India, he tells us that is precisely the reason he is here. “This country has such a strong background of war and negativity that children here need as much positive upbringing as they can and I will try my best.” True to his word, some of the schools he has approached will soon be starting human values as a subject.

—Radhika Rajee

An eye on the future

He may be over 60 but **Dr Taraprasad Das** has no plans to retire. The eminent Bhubaneswar-based ophthalmologist, who was conferred the Padmashri 2012 for contribution to the field of medicine, prefers working more than thinking about awards. “Why should I retire?” he asks. “Old age merely restricts you physically. If your mind is alert, nothing should stop you from



doing what you enjoy. I have a lot to accomplish; I want to give back to my birthplace, Odisha [sic]. Although L V Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI), of which I am a part, is now a super specialty eye hospital in Bhubaneswar, I want to make inroads into rural areas and provide eye care to the poor.”

“The hospital in Bhubaneswar has given me great satisfaction. Now, patients from Odisha and neighbouring states need not go southwards for eye treatment. We have the latest machines, and, more important, very committed people,” he says with pride. Trained in medical and surgical management of vitreo retinal diseases, Dr Das has received 16 research grants and has led or is currently leading a number of research programmes in diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular

degeneration. His research interest includes infective endophthalmitis.

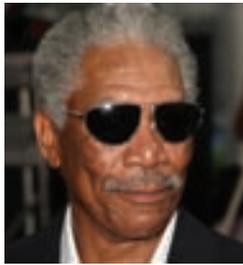
In addition, he has published 156 papers, 30 book chapters and has authored/edited seven books as well as delivered over 300 lectures in India and abroad. Where does he get time to do all the writing? “I write on Sundays and don’t like to take any break from work,” he responds. “Most of the writing is based on research work or patient case studies and is an extension of the work I do.” Dr Das has also published a book of poems and has penned his memoir, which is currently with his publisher.

Speaking of the Padmashri, he says, “It’s a great honour to be recognised by the country, but this is just a beginning; I have a lot of work left to do.”

—Ruby Nanda

BIRTHDAYS

● Versatile character actor and Hollywood's favourite voice for documentaries **Morgan Freeman** (right) turned 76 on 1 June.



● **Nancy Sinatra**, daughter of Frank Sinatra and a musician herself, turns 73 on 8 June.



● Hindi film diva **Dimple Kapadia** (left) turns 56 on 8 June.

● Retired IPS officer and social activist **Kiran Bedi** turns 64 on 9 June.

● Winner of three National Film Awards **Mithun Chakraborty** (right) turns 63 on 16 June.



● Man Booker Prize-winning British-Indian author **Salman Rushdie**, widely known for his *Midnight's Children* and the controversy surrounding *The Satanic Verses*, turns 66 on 19 June.

IN PASSING

● **T K Ramamurthy**, a violinist and Tamil music composer who has also worked for Telugu and Malayalam films, died following prolonged illness on 17 April at 91.



● Award-winning Carnatic violinist and composer **Lalgudi Jayaraman** (right) passed away on 22 April at the age of 82 after a cardiac arrest.



● **Shamshad Begum** (left), hailed as one of the first playback singers of the Hindi film industry, passed away in Mumbai after a prolonged illness on 23 April. She was 94.

● Former Chief Justice of India **Jagdish Sharan Verma**, who headed a three-member panel to examine laws on crimes against women, breathed his last in Gurgaon on 23 April. He was 80.

● Photo-journalist and celebrity photographer **Jagdish Mali**, father of actor Antara Mali, died of multiple organ failure on 13 May. He was 62.

MILESTONES

● **Sir Alex Ferguson**, the 71 year-old Scottish manager of English soccer club Manchester United, ended his 26-year career as the club's longest serving, and most popular, manager on 19 May. The club won 38 trophies under his stewardship.



● **Shanta Sinha**, 63, chairperson of the National Commission for Protection of Children's Rights, was awarded the Special Social Lifetime Achievement Award at the Godfrey Phillips Bravery National Awards 2013, for her tremendous efforts in child rights activism.

● **Rana Kapoor** (left), the 55 year-old founder and CEO of Yes Bank, was awarded the Asian Banker CEO Leadership Achievement Award for India, at the Asian Banker Leadership Achievement Awards, held in Indonesia on 29 April.



OVERHEARD

"People get all screwed up and afraid of ageing when, in fact, every year is a celebration. It means you're still here. To deny your age is to deny your life. I think about 9/11. I think about the people who were 28 and 37 and 46 and 64, who never saw another day, not to mention another year. Equally sad is thinking about those seven and eight year-old children in the Newtown school shooting who will never get to see the age I am. So I celebrate the life that they're not able to live and honour that through my own."

—TV host and philanthropist **Oprah Winfrey**, 59, in an interview to US TV show Extra

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

THIS IS THE PLACE TO DO IT. REACH OUT TO FELLOW READERS WITH INTERESTING ANECDOTES, INSPIRING STORIES AND HEARTWARMING MOMENTS FROM YOUR LIFE. WRITE IN WITH FULL CONTACT DETAILS, AND MAKE THIS SPACE YOUR OWN.

ITCHY FEET!

Hans Christian Andersen said 'to travel is to live' and I am very happy to say that my wife and I are living our lives to the fullest. I think this is possible because we regard age as a mere number. My wife Savithri and I are 69 and 77 respectively. We have travelled to around 35 countries and are still on the go. Apart from the excitement of visiting new places, travelling opens the mind to new cultures, makes us tolerant of people and helps us appreciate small miracles.

I developed an itch for travelling when I was a senior executive in the firm where I worked. As I am blessed with a wife who also has itchy feet, we simultaneously travelled for pleasure. That was 30 years ago. Our first trip was to Europe and the US. This is still among our most treasured holidays. Perhaps it is the poise with which Savithri carries herself but, at Milan airport, she caught the eye of a lady journalist, who was intrigued by the sari she was wearing.

Rao with his wife at Jaisalmer



Why, she even interviewed Savithri for her newspaper! Indeed, all our travels are sprinkled with lovely anecdotes. So whether our recent trip to Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia or our Europe tour, Savithri and I have tons of stories that could fill an entire book!

Any frequent traveller has a bag of memories about lost baggage and we have our share of tales. But rather than tales of woe, we have had angels step in and rescue us from hours and hours of agony. While on a trip to the US, we lost our check-in baggage in Pittsburgh on our way to Washington. When our baggage could not be traced, we checked into our hotel and were prepared to do some emergency shopping till the airline found our luggage. We checked in at supertime and, would you believe it, four hours later, there was a knock at our door and our missing baggage was delivered to us!

We had a similar experience while travelling to Yelagiri, a hill station near Vellore in Tamil Nadu. We had forgotten one of our bags in the train and realised this only after we arrived at our hotel. I immediately telephoned my nephew, who is a doctor in Chennai. I narrated the train's schedule to him and he picked it up at the local train station, intact! He then sent it to us via one of his patients, who then handed it over to a niece of mine, who in turn got it delivered to us. All this in four hours flat!

Next up on our agenda is New Zealand. I am yet to draw up our itinerary for that trip, something I always look forward to. Who knows what magical experiences fate has in store?

—Bhaskar Rao, Bengaluru

BORN TO SERVE

I was born under the shadow of Partition. My parents moved to Jodhpur from Hyderabad in Pakistan's Sindh province when I was



THE MYTH OF THE NINE UNKNOWN MEN REFERS TO A TWO MILLENNIA-OLD SECRET SOCIETY OF LEARNED MEN FOUNDED BY EMPEROR ASHOKA TO PROTECT KNOWLEDGE THAT COULD BE HARMFUL FROM FALLING INTO WRONG HANDS AND TO PURSUE KNOWLEDGE THAT WOULD BENEFIT MANKIND.

just 10 days old. Life was not easy for my father, who worked as an accountant to make ends meet. Life's hardships and the agony of Partition had a traumatic impact on him, leading to depression.

I inherited 'struggle' from him and tried to help him raise my six siblings. Owing to family circumstances, I could only study up to graduation. I was selected for the job of a telephone operator at the age of 19 and several transfers took me to different places including Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Ambala and Udaipur. But, finally, Kota turned out to be my *karmabhoomi*, as it was here that I successfully established my business in flooring and modular furniture.

I believe in karma and hold that it is greater than dharma, although I am not an atheist. That is why, perhaps, when I joined the Lions Club 23 years ago, I developed a sense of service. It gave me a sense of purpose and direction, to do something for society. I have never looked back.

However, the turning point in my life came at the age of 60, when I joined the Regional Senior Citizens' Organisation. My association with them lasted only two years but it inspired me to set up the Varishthjan Kalyan Samiti (senior citizens' welfare committee) in Kota. It started with 12 members and has since swelled to 80 members, all from distinguished fields. Silver citizens have tremendous experience or *anubhav sampada*, so why not share it for common human welfare?

Social service is my passion. However, whatever recognition I have is owing to the unconditional support of my wife Lata, who passed away in 2006. My elder son, a chartered accountant, has settled down in Mumbai while the younger one looks after my showroom in Kota.

I believe in working for the cause of senior citizens with passion and commitment. Like Arjuna, I move on with a focused approach. The Rajasthan government felicitated me in 2008 for my selfless service. My work with the Lions Club also led to my association with the Sindhu Social Circle, a group of progressive



Askandani is guided by the motto of selfless service

Sindhis, in 2009-10. I had a successful tenure as president and organised several camps that benefited hundreds of people. Further, I am proud to be one of the patrons of the All India Senior Citizens' Confederation of Nations, which is headquartered in Mumbai. I am also associated with the University of The Third Age, popularly known as U3A.

When I learnt how important cadaver donations were for the sake of medical studies, I signed up in 2007. Since then, I have persuaded many others to take the pledge. Kota is an education hub and lots of students plunge into depression as they press ahead with aspirations of joining IIT and the medical stream. I am part of the Hope Society that runs 24x7 counselling services, to help those in despair. It is never too late to start anything—*jab jago tabhi savera* [when you wake up, it is morning]!

—Shankar Askandani, Kota

My paper necklace

SNEHLATA PRATAP, 60, HYDERABAD

When you look at my bead necklaces for the first time, you feel they are like the normal ones on the market. But when you look closely, you can make out that the miniature drum-shaped beads are actually different from the others. The little beads are actually paper rolled tight with nothing else on them except a type of glue that makes sure they don't come apart. The colours are from the original brochure or magazine of which the paper was a part.

I have been a 'green crusader' for a very long time. For all my 30 years as a teacher and principal of a school, I advocated recycling of waste, planting of trees, and sparse use of chemicals in pottery. In fact, children in my school were taught to make clay idols of Ganesha without any chemical paints on them.

After retirement in 2011, I had a lot of time on my hands and decided to teach myself a new craft. I began rolling out beads from scrap paper. I had no teacher except the Internet and I turned out to be a good student to my e-tutor! A lot of diligence, oodles of patience and a steady hand along with a lot of time finally bore results. It took me almost a fortnight to make my first set of 20 beads. Then I set about designing and planning whatever else I could add to the hand-rolled beads to make a wearable necklace with matching earrings. By the last week of May 2012, I had my first necklace and earrings to match. I felt quite satisfied with my work—I knew it was wearable and it would sell.

I pick out colourful sheets of glossy paper that come in brochures and magazines. Then I cut them into thin strips, coat them with glue and then

start rolling them on a toothpick. My bead could be cylindrical, elliptical (drum-shaped), conical or round. The last is the toughest, as it is very difficult to ensure that when the rolling is on, it is symmetrical and the end product comes out looking like a round ball.

Once I have enough beads of different colours, I plan the addition of coloured glass beads, metal separators and pendants to lend a rustic yet urban appeal. Hence the charming and dainty sets in blue, green, red and black. For every customer, I have a slip of paper with careful and detailed care instructions. If you go swimming with these earrings on, the beads will come apart. But with rain and sweat, they won't fall apart. So if you are careful, the set can last you many years!

I live with my husband Pratap, a retired chief engineer from Doordarshan, in Mehdiapatnam, Hyderabad. Our two sons live in the US and my two daughters-in-law Shradha and Mina are my greatest motivators. They suggest ideas for design and colours—they were the ones who pushed me to hold my first exhibition in July last year. I had 25 sets and about 50 pairs of earrings, ready to go.

And go they did— I sold almost 70 per cent of my products. My prices ranged from ₹ 150 for a pair of simple earrings to ₹ 500 for a full set. Since then I have had two more exhibitions in Hyderabad and one in the US with the help of my sweet and encouraging daughters-in-law. I complete one year in this new venture and can look back with fond appreciation. I have had loads of positive feedback. At first, people found it difficult to believe



that the beads were made of paper, so I kept a few of them separately so people could touch and feel the texture.

I have not made a lot of money; I guess it will never be commercially viable. My first exhibition was the best as I sold most of my stuff—at that time the curiosity factor was high. But I am quite satisfied with my work and my product even though no two beads

DRIVE THE FUTURE

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

I am a 57 year-old man who was in the car sales business most of my working life. I am now thinking of starting my own car rental service. How do I go about it?

To decide on your fleet of cars, you will first have to decide whether you want to cater to tourists or events such as weddings and funerals. Tourists would prefer family-size cars that offer more mileage, or safari drives if you are based in hilly or desert regions. For events, on the other hand, people would prefer luxury sedans and limousines.

There's also the option to rent out exotic cars, though purchasing these cars can be a little steep. Once you have invested in a handful of cars, you have to work out insurance policies for each vehicle for damage and accidents.

Apart from this, your start-up capital would also include maintenance budgets for each car. You could either tie up with a local garage workshop or hire your own maintenance staff; the former is a better option when you are just starting out. At the same time, you have to find a place to keep the cars safe; ideally, a secured parking space with day and night security guards.

If you don't have space of your own, you will need to rent it, which would need additional capital. After this, all that's left to do is spread the word and advertise in newspapers or through social media.

—Karan Bhaskar is the manager of Bright Star Car Rentals in Nashik



Anand K Soma

come out looking alike. At times I have to really work hard to ensure that at least two beads are somewhat alike in texture and colours, especially for the earrings.

I sell my creations under the name Shramin Collection. The name is a combination of the names of my two adorable daughters-in-law, Shraddha and Mina. While the two girls ply me with ideas, my usage of the Internet is

also rising and I would like to thank my husband for having given me the initial lessons.

I am forever in search of bright ideas to make my jewellery more wearable and unique. In my latest innovation, I have made pendants out of cardboard and newspaper. Each one is a one-inch square and has a little message on it.

—As told to Shyamola Khanna



Rev up your metabolism: The key to health and the right weight

Pooja Desai, 62, leads a fairly active lifestyle. But she has gained several kilos in the past decade and is worried about her excessive weight. As she was slim in her early 50s, the increase worries her. "I eat little and often skip meals to lose weight," she says. "I also walk 45 minutes every day but my weight refuses to budge."

The reason for Pooja's weight gain is slow metabolism. She is not able to shed and keep off those unwanted kilos because her metabolism is not supporting her. Indeed, a healthy metabolism is your body's best fat-burning friend.

Metabolism is the process of breaking down proteins, carbohydrates and fats to yield the energy your body needs to perform different processes. Some of these are breathing, blood circulation, controlling body temperature, cell growth, brain and nerve function, and contraction of muscles.

Metabolism affects the rate at which a person burns calories and dictates maintenance, gain or loss of weight. Your metabolic rate accounts for about 60-75 per cent of the calories you burn every day. There are many factors that affect metabolism, like age, gender, physical activity, genetics and lifestyle. Swift metabolism aids weight loss and muscle growth because the body burns fat cells and stored calories to meet the increased demand for food.

Here are the changes I suggest to rev up your metabolism:

- **Aim for balance.** A healthy, well-balanced diet comprises carbohydrates (55-60 per cent of your diet), proteins (15 per cent) and fat (25-30 per cent). Carbohydrates serve as fuel for energy; proteins help repair tissues; and fat, apart from being a source of energy, helps in the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins like A, D, E and K.
- **Eat grains, vegetables and fruits for carbohydrates;** milk, eggs, meat, fish, legumes and sprouts for proteins; and some oils, nuts and seeds for your daily fat fix.
- **Make eating a multi-sensory experience.** Fruits and vegetables may sound boring but need not be if they are cut artistically and presented in all their multi-hued glory. Garnishes like coriander can stimulate your appetite and make you feel good about your food.
- **Don't watch TV or read when you eat.** Eat slowly, pausing in between to check if you are full. Chew, don't gulp. And relish every morsel. This helps digest food better and prevents overeating.
- **Know when to stop.** It's the world's best-kept secret to weight loss.





READERS ASK

I am a vegetarian and need to lose about 7 kg of weight. I have tried many diets to lose weight. It goes down but comes right back when I stop dieting. Is there a diet plan I can stay consistent with?

Here's the plan I would recommend for you. Start your day with two glasses of warm water and a bowl of grapefruit or papaya and tea (with skimmed milk). Your breakfast could be oat porridge in skimmed milk. Have a bowl of vegetable soup, two chapattis (made from *jowar*) with one cup of any green vegetable, a cup of salad, and a bowl of yoghurt or glass of buttermilk (made from skimmed milk) for lunch. Have a cup of herb tea or regular tea (use skimmed milk) in the evening with fruits such as oranges and sweet limes. For the evening snack, have a cup of puffed rice and a small cup of steamed *mung*. Dinner should be similar to lunch. Stick to one chapatti at night if you can.



Make eating a multi-sensory experience. Fruits and vegetables may sound boring but need not be if they are cut artistically and presented in all their multi-hued glory. Garnishing can stimulate your appetite and make you feel good about your food

● **Eat. Don't fast.** Skipping meals doesn't help lose weight faster. In fact, hunger causes a drop in blood sugar and this, in turn, generates craving. Instead, eat small, nutritious meals every three hours to boost your metabolism and avoid feelings of extreme hunger. Contrary to popular belief, crash-dieting doesn't work most of the time. Eating wisely does.

Here are the important meals you must not skip:

● **Breakfast:** This first meal of the day comes with a diktat: never skip it. Post-dinner is the longest your body goes without a meal and it needs replenishment. Therefore, it is better to work with your body and give it what it needs when it needs it. Also, the calories consumed in the morning are burned more easily and work their way out of your system. So make the most of breakfast!

● **Lunch:** No matter what form it takes—bag, box or buffet—lunch is an important meal. Midday is when your body is going full throttle. So you can (and need to) eat a fairly substantial amount to sustain your energy at this time of the day.

● **Dinner:** Light is how this last meal of the day should be. I agree that the temptation can get to you—first, tucking into a rich dinner and then tucking yourself into bed. Please do not do it. Based on your metabolic activity, dinner should be your lightest meal of the day and I earnestly advise you to follow this rule and avoid sleeping on a full stomach.

● **Snacks in between meals:** Snack three to four times a day. It fires your metabolism into energy-burning mode. Make light, wise choices such as popcorn, *kurmura*, roasted *khakra*, fruits and yoghurt. For beverages, choose green tea or coconut water. This will ensure variety in your diet and keep your palate interested.

Namita Jain is a wellness specialist and celebrity nutritionist at Diet Mantra and has written bestsellers on diet and fitness. Visit www.dietmantra.in. If you have any questions for Namita Jain, write to contact.mag@harmonyindia.org



Urinary incontinence: Treat and cure it

Soft-spoken, silent, sweet and shy are words that described yesterday's woman. That also meant that she concealed certain health conditions and diseases like breast mass, menstrual disorders and urinary incontinence. Though times have changed for the better, women still conceal some of these—like urinary incontinence—viewing them as social embarrassments rather than what they are: treatable health conditions.

Urinary incontinence, though not commonly talked about, is a very common complaint among silvers and troubles one out of every three older people. Women suffer from this more than men. However, it is treatable and curable. In fact, the emotional stress arising out of incontinence causes greater trauma than physical stress. Owing to the fear of wetting while out of the house, many silvers avoid socialising.

Causes and symptoms

In post-menopausal women, the urinary sphincter does not hold back urine in the bladder as effectively. This is because the decrease in the levels of female hormone oestrogen (after menopause) leads to shortening of the urethra and thinning and fragility (atrophy) of its lining. Experts have tried to categorise incontinence into urge incontinence, stress incontinence, overflow incontinence, functional incontinence and mixed incontinence, according to the basic cause of the problem.

Urge incontinence

Urge incontinence is an intense urge to urinate that cannot be suppressed, followed by an uncontrollable loss of urine. People with urge incontinence usually have very little time to get to the bathroom before they have an 'accident'. The sense of needing to rush to the bathroom is especially disturbing and potentially dangerous for people who have a disorder that limits their mobility or stability, such as arthritis or Parkinson's disease. This is the most common type of persistent incontinence, the cause of which is usually unknown. Conditions that irritate the bladder, such as atrophic vaginitis in women, or severe constipation can also contribute to urge incontinence.

Stress incontinence

Stress incontinence is the uncontrollable loss of small amounts of urine while coughing, laughing, sneezing, or during any activity that suddenly increases pressure within the abdomen. Any condition or event that reduces resistance of the urinary sphincter or urethra can cause stress incontinence. Childbirth, for example, can weaken the urinary sphincter in younger years, as can surgery involving organs or structures in the pelvis, such as the uterus (for example, hysterectomy). In post-menopausal women, lack of oestrogen weakens the urinary sphincter's ability to hold back urine by allowing the lining of the urethra to become thinner and more fragile, a condition called atrophic urethritis. Obesity can worsen stress incontinence because extra weight adds additional pressure on the bladder.

Overflow incontinence

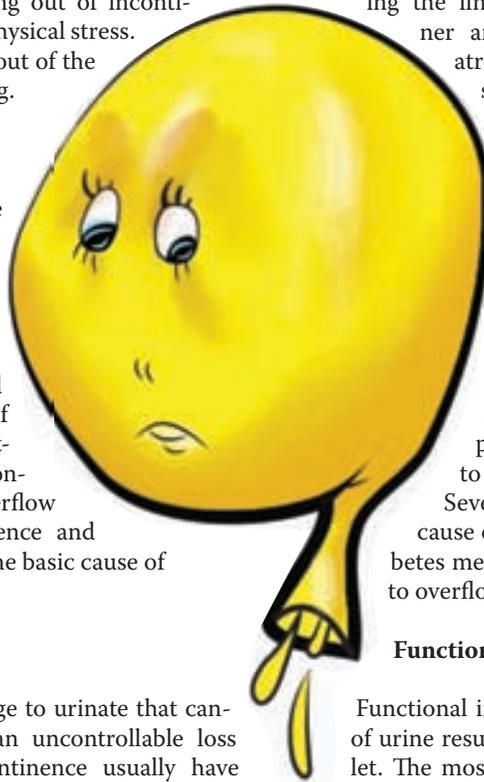
Overflow incontinence is the uncontrollable leakage of small amounts of urine, usually caused by some type of blockage or weak contractions of the bladder muscle. Sometimes, scar tissue narrows or even blocks the lowest part of the bladder, where it connects to the urethra or blocks the urethra itself. Severe constipation or stool impaction can cause overflow incontinence. Stroke and diabetes mellitus can paralyse the bladder, leading to overflow incontinence.

Functional incontinence

Functional incontinence refers to involuntary loss of urine resulting from the inability to get to a toilet. The most common causes are conditions that lead to immobility, such as stroke or severe arthritis and conditions that interfere with mental function, such as dementia owing to Alzheimer's disease.

Mixed incontinence

Mixed incontinence involves more than one type of incontinence. The most common type of mixed incontinence occurs in older women, who often have a mixture of urge and stress incontinence.



READERS ASK

Diagnosis

A detailed history elicitation together with a physical examination can provide valuable information. A rectal examination can confirm whether the person is severely constipated or if stool is impacted. Nerve damage contributing to or causing incontinence may be detected by an examination of sensation and reflexes in the lower body. In women, a pelvic examination can help identify problems that may contribute to or cause incontinence, such as atrophy of the lining of the urethra and dropping down of the bladder into the vagina. Stress incontinence is sometimes diagnosed simply by observing the loss of urine while the person is coughing or straining. The amount of urine left in the bladder after urination (residual urine) can be measured with ultrasound. Examination of the urine with a microscope (a urinalysis) can help determine whether an infection is present.

Urinary incontinence is a very common complaint among silvers and troubles one out of every three older people. Women suffer from this more than men. However, it is treatable and curable

Treatment

Treatment varies according to the type and cause of incontinence. The person is advised to avoid fluids that may irritate the bladder, such as caffeinated beverages, or to reduce intake. If specific disorders or drugs are causing or contributing to incontinence, treatment involves an effort to eliminate or minimise these factors.

Urge incontinence: Performing pelvic muscle exercises (Kegel exercises) can be very helpful. These exercises involve repeated contraction of the pelvic muscles many times a day to build up strength. The person learns to use these muscles properly in situations that cause incontinence, such as the sight or sound of running water, coughing and standing with a full bladder. Drugs that relax the bladder by reducing muscle contractions may also help.

Stress incontinence: Urinate about every two to three hours to avoid a full bladder. Kegel exercises are usually helpful. Stress incontinence in women seems to be because of atrophy of the urethra. Applying oestrogen cream inside the vagina or to the area immediately surrounding the opening of the urethra may help. Many people with severe stress incontinence that does not respond to treatment benefit from surgery.

I am a 67 year-old man suffering from frequent urination and enlarged prostate. My doctor has advised me to go in for an investigation of prostate specific antigen (PSA) in a blood test. Could you throw some light on this test?

The prostate glands present exclusively in men secrete PSA. When the prostate enlarges, the PSA levels also shoot up. In case of cancer of prostate, PSA levels are abnormally high.

Other causes for raised PSA are:

- After a per rectal examination to see if the prostate gland has enlarged
- Infection in the prostate
- Sudden blockage in the passage of urine
- When a urinary catheter is fixed
- After cystoscopy

Cancer of prostate is a silent demon, which grows very slowly and shows itself only after the cancer has reached a dangerously high grade. Hence PSA serves as a valuable screening test to confirm the absence of cancer of the prostate in silvers who have prostate and urinary tract-related problems. PSA levels also help to predict further growth of the cancer, its spread and its response to therapy. If there is a family history of prostate cancer, a test should be done after the age of 50. For men who have crossed the age of 60, it is better to go in for yearly investigation.

Overflow incontinence: When the cause is a blockage of urine flow, incontinence is treated whenever possible by eliminating or reducing the blockage. When the cause of overflow incontinence is weakness of bladder muscle contractions, simple approaches may help. Gentle pressure can be applied to the bladder to promote emptying. With hands placed over the lowest part of the abdomen or pelvis (the area over the bladder), pressure is applied by squeezing and pressing.

Outlook

Untreated urinary incontinence can greatly depress a person's quality of life. A specialised field has evolved to deal with problems of urinary incontinence in women. If you are one of those suffering from incontinence, never hesitate to consult a uro-gynaecologist immediately.

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



Calves to action: Tone up the most visible part of your legs

The calf muscles bear the brunt of your entire day. They have to support your body when you stand and take the maximum pressure of your walking or running. While the calf muscles start off as strong supporting muscles, they need to be exercised with special movement to tone them and enable them to remain supportive. If they become weak or flaccid, they will pass on the pressure to your joints, including your ankles, knees and hips. While recovering from any joint pain, therefore, they are the muscles you focus on, after the thighs, to build tone, strength and stamina. They are also the most visible part of your legs and signify both real fitness and aesthetic appeal. Interestingly, there is a correlation between the suppleness of your leg muscles and your heart and respiratory health.

There are several simple poses to tone these muscles. They include the mountain pose (*tadasana*) often also referred to as the palm tree pose. You can start this with feet flat. But later on, try-

ing this pose on your toes will challenge all the major muscle groups in your legs. Others include all standing poses, such as the crescent (*ardha chandrasana*) in all its variations; the triangle pose (*trikonasana*) with its variations; most yogic squats such as the dancing Shiva pose (*Natrajasana*) in its variations; and the squat (*utkat*) pose in its variations.

When you start with these poses, you may initially be able to hold them for only a few seconds, up to 15 seconds. Repeat them till your physical stamina builds up, trying each pose thrice. Once technique and stamina improve, to really tone up, you need to hold the pose continually for 30 seconds or more. This can be very exciting and boost your mood immediately with a keen sense of achievement. These poses are also mentally very grounding and ease anxiety and depression. You may need to have a large proportion of your daily practice devoted to this, building up the stamina to a solid 10 minutes over six weeks or so.

YOGIC MOVES

Dancing Shiva pose (*Natrajasana*)

Stand up with your feet about two feet apart. Flare them out. Raise arms overhead, ensuring that your arms are close to your ears and bring palms together in the prayer pose. Inhale. Exhaling, lower hips lightly, still keeping your feet flat. Focus on your back, trying to maintain your posture and avoiding the tendency to lean forward. Continue normal breathing, holding initially for a few seconds. Repeat thrice.

Progress in the pose: After a few weeks of practice in this basic posture, learn to advance by going up on your toes in the final one. This requires the ability to balance. Look ahead while holding the final pose as that will control the tautness of your muscles. Hold for as long as you can, building stamina with regular practice. To finish the



pose, inhale, straightening legs at the knees. Exhale, drop heels back, standing up straight and bringing feet back together. Avoid if you have weak knees or ankles.

Benefits: This pose tones the calves powerfully and builds the hip and thigh. Further, it powers mental stamina, builds focus and elevates the mood.

Model: Indira Fozdar,
Harmony Interactive Centre
Photographer: Haresh Patel

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

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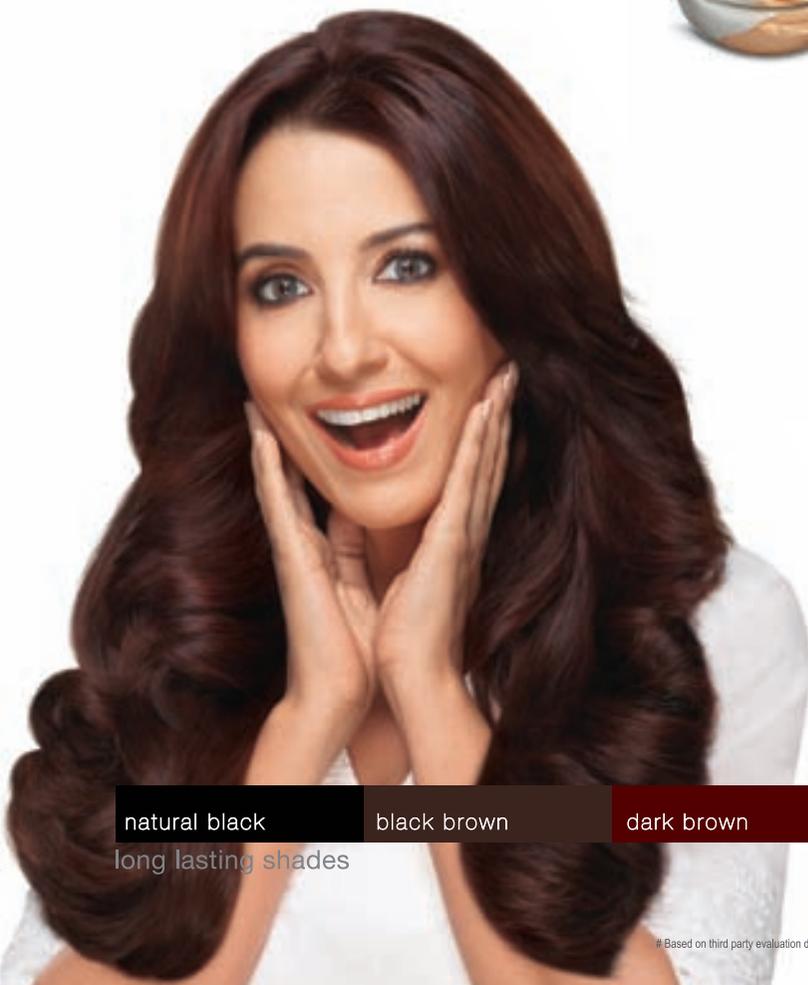
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THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN
SMT SHANTA KUMARI, CHENNAI

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



As strains of the Carnatic song *Varaveena mridu paani*, played on a grand piano, filled the air, I stood mesmerised looking at this beautiful and radiant great-grandmother whose fingers glided over the keys. Her joyous energy defied her 93 years. Chithirala Shanta Kumari smiled at me, happy that I had identified the song; her eyes had not missed my lip-sync.

Shanta Kumari's roots are in Andhra Pradesh, though she is a Chennaiite at heart. Blessed with five children, eight grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren, she enjoyed answering my questions in English and proved to be a great conversationalist.

First, tell me about this piano. Is it a family heirloom?

Yes, it is a gift from the Mutha Venkata Subbarao family who were related to us. Seeing my daughter's love for playing the piano, they gifted their piano to my family.

Have you always lived in Chennai?

Yes, I was born and brought up in Chennai. This is the city where I have spent my entire life. My maiden name was Meenakshi. I was married into the Chithirala family. My husband Dr C Ranganathan worked as honorary assistant physician in General Hospital and later as honorary physician in Royapettah Hospital.

Your family speaks about your love for documentation....

[Laughs heartily] I have always enjoyed maintaining family histories, dates of birth and death, travel dates and important events.

Photographs by Chennai Pix

Nalini (granddaughter): She documents just about everything, like the British. Recipes, daily menus and daily schedules of the family are recorded meticulously in her diary. She preserves relevant cuttings from the daily newspaper for each of us. [All of them show me her diary and pages, filled meticulously in English. I was truly inspired by her language skills and passion for history.]

This is a novel experience for me. So far, the grandmothers and great-grandmothers I have met have inspired me to document their recipes, thoughts and views, but you yourself are a documenter.

Hasika (great-granddaughter): She even records my exam schedule! All of us like seeing her notes; and I have now made a family tree from all the information in her diaries.

Smt Shanta Kumari: Yes, they all laugh at me, but keep looking into my papers. I enjoy making notes about all things, big and small.

Apart from playing the piano and documentation, any other hobbies?

Yes, I also play the veena. I have also done a lot of cross-stitch and crochet. This cloth with the peacock motif that covers the piano is one of my favourite crochet works. I have received a lot of appreciation from visitors. I completed my certification in shorthand from the London Chamber of Commerce at the age of 14.

Do you experiment in the kitchen?

I learnt basic cooking from my mother. But after my marriage, I have not cooked much because we always had cooks at home. I was treated and pampered like a daughter, and hardly did any work. But I enjoy good food and have written down many recipes.

As you did not have to do the domestic chores, how did you occupy yourself after marriage?



“Do you know that we prepare a different rice dish every single day during the Tamil month of Marghazhi?”

My mother-in-law used to take me to the Ladies Recreation Club where we played badminton, carrom and cards. We were also fond of going to the movies and were invariably present at the first show on the first day of screening. I also did secretarial jobs like typing letters for my husband on the old Remington typewriter, and used shorthand to take down dictated letters.

Your favourite recipes?

Too many to name! But I would like to mention the rice dishes prepared during the Tamil month of *Marghazhi*. Do you know that no dish is repeated during this month? We make a different rice dish every single day of this month.

I have compiled that list and will share a couple of them with you.

This is an amazing practice. Is it still followed at home?

Yes, many families still follow this tradition. The women wake up early, have a bath and then go into the kitchen. My daughters-in-law still follow this practice.

Is there a tradition you truly enjoy?

The Navaratri festival. Our house was known as the *kollu veedu* or house of dolls. We were famous for our Navaratri celebrations when the entire house was filled with decorations. We had five large cupboards of dolls, which would be taken out during this



festival. One room would represent the Vishwamitra *yaagam* and another would be filled with a huge toy train. Yet another would show the story of Shiva Bhakta Nandanar complete with a mechanised Chidambaram Temple, where the Nandi would move; shrine doors would fling open, offering a vision of the lord to the untouchables, who were not allowed into the temple. Neighbours, relatives and friends came from near and far to see the *Kollu* house during that week.

A memory you cherish....

As a bride, I was carried in a palanquin gifted to my forefathers in 1816 by The East India Company.

FROM SMT SHANTA KUMARI'S KITCHEN

Shantaji reminisces about the rice dishes cooked during the month of *Marghazhi*—a different rice dish every day during this month. Here are two examples.

Melon Seed Rice (*Dosa Vithulu Annam*)

This simple preparation uses the seeds of musk melon.

Ingredients

- Rice: 1 cup
- Musk melon seeds: 1 cup
- Red chillies: 3
- Asafoetida
- Salt to taste

Method

Boil the rice and set aside. Roast melon seeds on a low flame until golden brown after sprinkling 2 tsp of water on them. Allow to cool. Grind along with the red chillies, salt and asafoetida. Add the ground powder to hot rice with a dollop of ghee. Mix well and serve.

Mustard Seed Rice (*Kadugu Chithra Annam*)

Ingredients

- Rice: 1 cup
- Turmeric powder: ½ tsp
- Juice of one lemon
- Oil: 1 tbsp
- Salt to taste

For the masala

- Cashew nuts: 10
- Mustard: 1 heaped tsp
- Red chillies: 5
- Coconut: ½ kernel, grated

For tempering

- *Urad dal*: 1 tbsp
- *Channa dal*: 1 tbsp
- Mustard seeds: 1 tsp

Method

Boil the rice and allow it to cool. Each grain of the cooked rice must be separate. Heat a teaspoon of oil and roast the ingredients for the masala. Grind along with salt and turmeric using very little water. Heat the remaining oil in a wok. Add *urad* and *channa dal*; as they turn golden, add mustard. Allow it to pop well. Immediately add the ground paste and sauté for a couple of minutes. Add the cooked rice, lemon juice and stir gently.

Serve hot with fried *papad*.

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

A COMPANY THAT
LIGHTS UP
THE COUNTRY,
SALUTES THE COMPANY
THAT LIGHTS UP
THE LIVES OF
OUR SILVER CITIZENS.

Bajaj Electricals congratulates **Harmony** on completing nine years, and on doing such a fine job of 'celebrating age'.



A photograph of a man and a woman sitting on a large rock in a lush, green garden. The woman is on the left, wearing a grey top and brown pants, and the man is on the right, wearing a red and white striped polo shirt and dark shorts. They are surrounded by various plants, including large green leaves and some red flowers. The background shows a large tree trunk and more foliage.

Green crusaders

Photographs by **Gautam Ruparel**

The Khatriis traded a cosy life in New York to return to their roots in Mumbai and put the green back into urban sprawl, reports **Gautam Ruparel**

Retirement is the ugliest word in the language, said author Ernest Hemingway. The Khatriis couldn't agree more. After an emotional return to Mumbai from the US 12 years ago, the couple decided to leave a green footprint wherever they tread. Their determination is rooted in a strong urge to give back to their "motherland". "Even when we were in the US, we felt there was something missing," says Nusrat. "We had been away for 13 years and there was a sense of attachment with India. So we decided to come back."

Gratitude is expressed in many ways and, for the Khatriis, it started with local clean-up drives, beginning with their own neighbourhood. Since then, they have implemented a range of environment-related projects in pockets of suburban Mumbai, always with the participation of local communities. Their projects range from greening and beautifying open spaces, rainwater harvesting and other water conservation projects to educating schoolchildren and adults about solar energy, solid waste management and the benefits of biogas. And, no, the Khatriis don't come



THE NAVRATNA (NINE JEWELS) OF EMPEROR AKBAR WERE NINE EXTRAORDINARILY GIFTED INDIVIDUALS AND MEN OF LETTERS, INCLUDING TANSEN AND BIRBAL, WHO WERE INFLUENTIAL IN THE EMPEROR'S COURT.

with an 'NGO' tag. Nusrat is 60 and Afzal Khatri two years older. The two are just ordinary people doing some pretty extraordinary things.

Engaged in a plastics business in New York, the couple left behind a comfortable life to come back to Thakur Village in Mumbai's Kandivali suburb. It didn't take them long to know where their heart was. "We love to travel and, as a result, fell in love with nature. After our first few weeks in Mumbai, we realised the environment needed a lot of attention in this city," says Afzal. With ample scope for improvement in their own neighbourhood, where the pavements had become almost invisible because of debris and garbage, the two approached the local civic ward office. Instead of turning up with a volley of complaints, Nusrat and Afzal asked permission to clean it up themselves. "The ward officer never expected someone to do the cleaning up and he readily agreed," says Nusrat with a chuckle. Both of them hired a few rag pickers and, by the end of the day, the pavements were spanking clean and the garbage was neatly stacked by the side of the road. The ward officer couldn't believe his eyes and sent across garbage trucks that very evening to cart away the rubbish.

Among the Khatri's flagship projects is their work at the Samta Nagar police station in Kandivali. In 2008, Afzal had noticed the compound strewn with garbage 4-5 ft high and abandoned cars scattered all over. "With the help of volunteers, we physically lifted all the vehicles and set them aside," he recalls. "The BMC then moved out all the debris. After five days, 11 truckloads were taken away from the police station compound." S Kurhade, the environment engineer with the local ward office, remarks, "We are happy to help any social organisation or advanced locality management (ALM) that works towards the betterment of the community."

Next, the couple went about developing an 'eco park'. They initiated a tree planting drive and roped in the municipality to build a compost and water harvesting pit to make the place self-sustainable. "It took me totally by surprise to see ordinary people like the Khatri's taking keen interest in their surroundings—full credit to the two of them," says Vinayak Mulay, police inspector (investigation), who the Khatri's first approached with their plan.

But Samta Nagar police station is more than just a beautiful place. Here, schoolchildren receive a free lesson in

environmental conservation every Thursday. They are first asked to stand in the sun for a couple of minutes before they move under the shade of a tree. "The difference in temperature is an incredible four to five degrees, and they can actually feel it," explains Afzal. After this simple exercise, the children are shown a short film on global warming, followed by a presentation on water conservation. Practical learning then follows a few theory sessions.

Chaitali Chakraborty, principal at Thakur College of Science and Commerce, has been supporting the Khatri's for a while. "We have environmental studies as a subject and I encourage my students to go out and learn practically," she says. "Initially, they were hesitant to get their hands dirty but now they beg to be sent for another couple of days!" Schoolchildren in Mira Road have also benefitted from the Khatri's environmental zeal. "We were invited to Cosmopolitan High School at Mira Road to make students

aware of environmental cleanliness," shares Nusrat. "This is when we noticed a large vacant plot adjacent to the school; it was reduced to a dumping ground. The school management was more than happy to let us convert it into a garden." With soil, manure, grass, trees and plants provided by the school, the happy band of green warriors spent two months building a little Eden around the school. "The school now conducts all their functions and other activities for students in the garden," she adds with pride.

Another memorable experience was getting 150 resident doctors from

Lokmanya Tilak Municipal General Hospital at Sion in Mumbai to perform surgery of a different kind! "The head of the radiology department requested us to help clean up and beautify the eyesore around his workplace," says Nusrat. "The municipality took away as many as 18 truckloads of waste. After we had beautified the surroundings, the doctors assured us they would take care of the area themselves."

Perhaps their most strenuous project was developing a biodiversity zone at the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP), Mumbai's only green lung. "When we carried out our tree plantation drive there, we were careful to select plants and trees that would attract butterflies and birds," recalls Afzal. "Owing to financial constraints, we sourced saplings and cuttings from various parts of Mumbai. It was a tough challenge but we didn't once think of giving up." Apart from the plants, the Khatri's added 75 trees, all indigenous varieties, to SGNP. "Some of them are flower bear-

"We still work purely out of passion. Initially it used to be difficult to find hands and we had to pay to get help. Now, we just need to make a call and school and college students are more than happy to help"

ing, some fruit bearing and some have a huge canopy. All of them have a lifespan of over 100 years.” The couple explains that to help people reconnect with nature, you have to sensitise them to the environment first. To do this, it is imperative to draw the local community into their projects. That’s why the garden they developed at the police *chowki* under Aarey flyover on the Western Express Highway is managed by the Rotary Club and Lions Club—and a group of homemakers in the vicinity.

As the husband and wife toiled tirelessly, word spread beyond the communities they worked with. In 2009, Afzal received a telephone call informing him that he and his wife had been nominated for the Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar, an award conferred by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests. “Initially, I thought someone was playing a prank,” he says with a smile. The Khatri received the award on 5 June, World Environment Day, from then President of India Pratibha Patil.

Although surprised and happy with the honour, the award didn’t change anything. “We still work purely out of passion. Of course, initially it used to be difficult to find hands and we had to pay to get help. Now, we just need to make a call and school and college students are more than happy to help,” says Nusrat. She pauses and adds, “The honour reinforced our belief in our mission and we realised that this was not the end but the beginning of a long innings. Since then, we’ve diverted our attention to shaping young minds. They can be instrumental in changing things for the better.” The Khatri work with students from eight schools and two colleges, no mean feat in a city where youngsters would rather hang out at a café than pick up a trowel and garden shears.

So where does this unusual passion to create clean and green spaces spring from? “I always give people the example of a mango tree planted by my mother when I was a young child in Santa Cruz,” reveals Nusrat. Apart from her, no one else knows who planted that tree. Yet, people still enjoy the fruits of her labour, only because she thought of making a difference to the lives of others. It’s God’s *prasad* and it will never get over, she feels.



(Top) Afzal Khatri enveloped in greenery at Samta Nagar police station;
(above) Nusrat Khatri on a clean-up drive with children from the neighbourhood

During their green journey, the Khatri have not only inspired a lot of people but made a number of friends. “From the garbage truck drivers to environmentalists, they all wave to us when they see us. No one ever refuses to help when we call them. It’s heart-warming to know they believe in us and what we do,” says Afzal, adding, “Sincerity has a magnetic power.”

There are times when the Khatri have no time to rest. “Some people say we are busier than people with full-time jobs,” laughs Nusrat. “But it’s something we love to do and are committed to. Nature has given us a different perspective on life. We don’t dream of owning a bungalow or a really big car. We are simply happy to improve our surroundings.” There is no stopping this happy twosome in their endeavour to make the world a better place to live in. ✨

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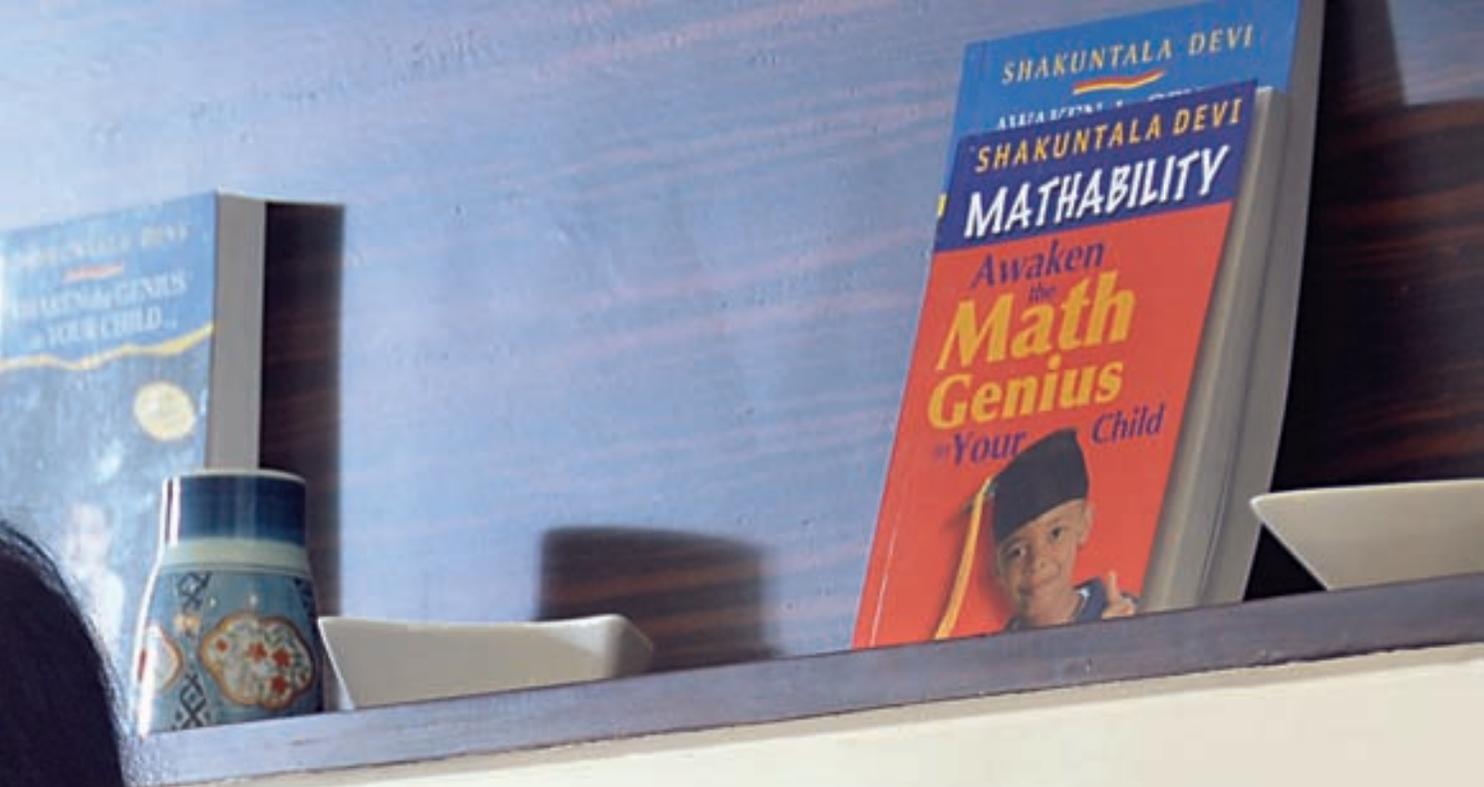
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Numero Uno

SHAKUNTALA DEVI BEWILDERED AND PUZZLED THE WORLD WITH HER GIFT FOR NUMBERS. IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW TO *HARMONY-CELEBRATE AGE*, GIVEN A COUPLE OF MONTHS BEFORE HER DEMISE, SHE REVEALED HER LESSER KNOWN SIDE TO **SRIREKHA PILLAI**





“Number nine is the most powerful number in the universe. Nine represents attainment, satisfaction and accomplishment. As the highest number, nine marks the completion of all that was started by the numbers that came before and the mastery of all the challenges faced by numbers that precede it. Nine also represents highly developed intuition and spirituality. It beseeches you to recognise your internal attributes and make a positive difference to the world. We also have the *navaratna*, *navagraha* and *navarasa*.”

it wouldn't be wrong to say that numbers chose her. Right from the age of three, when she filled in for her father at a local circus, to her demise on 21 April 2013 at 83, Shakuntala Devi's life was a smorgasbord of mathematical equations, logarithms and square roots. She would 'simply' add a 16-digit number to another, multiply the result with an equally ferocious array of numbers, find the cube root of the resultant number and come up with the accurate answer, all in the time taken by ordinary mortals to wink!

It's this numerological advantage that took a young Devi from Bangalore across the seas—prestigious universities, reputed television shows, even an audience with eminent physicist Albert Einstein. Einstein set her a complicated mathematical problem involving a whole set of algorithms, least expecting an answer in less than three hours because that is what it would have taken him, by his own admission, to solve it. But here she was, ready as ever, with the right answer instantaneously. Devi's intuitive understanding of numbers left Einstein speechless, as also an august gathering of learned mathematicians many years later at a university overseas in 1977, when she extracted the 23rd root of a 201-digit number in just 50 seconds.

Pitting her grey cells against the most complexly constituted superchips, Devi triumphed every single time, earning the moniker Human Computer and a mention in *The Guinness Book of World Records*. When she appeared on a BBC show, her answer to a difficult question was different from the interviewer's. Much to the BBC's embarrassment and consternation, it turned out Devi was right. Her marathon of public performances that started with a show at the University of Mysore at the age of six took her to schools in Karnataka and Mumbai. Carol Lobo, a former student of Apostolic Carmel High School in Mumbai, recalls being wonderstruck at Devi's ability, "When we were told we had to assemble in the main hall of the school to meet Shakuntala Devi, none of us knew who she was. But when she started throwing up answers to the most complex

mathematical equations in just seconds, we were dumbfounded. What she had was a God-given gift."

It is precisely this God-given gift that kept the fire burning in her kitchen; she was pushed to give public performances by her parents. Unfortunately, Devi's inherent and intuitive skills with numbers were reduced to providing 'numero-astrological' solutions in the latter part of her life. Our interview at her apartment in Mumbai was interrupted intermittently by phone calls and the ringing of the door bell, people seeking an audience with her for quick fixes to mend bad relationships, finding better jobs, monetary gains and happiness. The living room, serving as a waiting room for clients, proudly displayed a framed photograph of her with Shah Rukh Khan and a shelf stacked with books authored by her, including *Mathability: Awaken the Math Genius in Your Child*, *Puzzles to Puzzle You* and *In the Wonderland of Numbers*, among others. It speaks volumes about Devi that, despite the growing line of consultation, not once did she get restless, posing patiently for our photo shoot. None of us knew then that it would be her last photo shoot and interview to the media. Two months later, curtains came down on a life that was a reminder of the infinite possibilities of the human brain.

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW

From a toddler aged three, you have literally grown up with numbers. What do they mean to you?

Life is all about numbers; they are all around us. Numbers are there in your date of birth, time and year; in the calories of energy you draw from the food you eat; in the number of times your heart beats. Numbers are an integral part of our lives.

Is there any switch on or switch off time for you when it comes to numbers?

Not at all. Numbers constantly buzz in my head. While I'm on the road, I read the



Life is all about numbers; they are all around us. Numbers are there in your date of birth, time and year; in the calories of energy you draw from the food you eat; in the number of times your heart beats. Numbers are an integral part of our lives





registration numbers of other vehicles and try adding them up to see if the result is a prime number or not. Even when I'm pottering around the kitchen, the measurement of ingredients transforms into numbers in my head.

You have published a cookery book, *Cookery Book for Men: And Other Beginners*. How much of a foodie are you?

My book has basic recipes easy for a beginner to rustle up. I'm a frugal eater. My breakfast is *idli* or *upma* and lunch is *ragi mudde* [a Kannada staple] and *sambar*. I don't particularly enjoy eating out. So, wherever I am, I try to have home-cooked food as much as I can.

Tell us about the early years.

I was born into a poor Brahmin family. My mother was only 14 when she married my father, who was 60. Of the eight siblings, I was the eldest. Only rich Brahmin families sent kids to school those days. Children just grew up like that, with daughters learning household chores and getting married, and sons learning priestly duties. My father decided to go against the grain and became a lion tamer and 'human cannonball' in a circus troupe. He also used to do card tricks, memorising the entire sequence of a deck. Once, he was unable to perform and asked me to step in. I was about three at that time. Soon, my shows became the highlight of the circus and gradually I started travelling to schools, colleges and universities to perform. By the time I was five, I was the family's sole breadwinner. I used to travel to schools in Karnataka and Mumbai. In Mumbai, I used to make ₹ 30 a day, which was a princely amount those days.

Do you regret not having a normal childhood?

I have seen tough times. Whatever my father earned in the circus was hardly enough to make ends meet. When my parents discovered I had a way with numbers, they started sending me to schools for shows. I didn't want to do those shows, travelling all over. When I refused, my father would beat up my mother and she in turn would beat me up.



Family matters: Shakuntala Devi with her daughter and granddaughters

Did you miss going to school?

I was admitted to St. Theresa's Convent in Bangalore but was expelled after a month because my parents could not afford the monthly fee of ₹ 2. A few years ago, the school management approached me, asking me to participate in the alumni function. I refused point blank.

You are a prolific writer. How did you educate yourself?

I have always enjoyed reading. I'm a self-taught reader. I began with simple stories, slowly graduating to poetry and serious reading. I read all kinds of books. I enjoy reading Somerset Maugham, Shakespeare and T S Eliot, who is my favourite author. When I was hunting for a property in England, I came across a house that belonged to him. I bought it and stayed there for a while. I have antique furniture which belonged to Eliot at my Bengaluru house.

You wrote a book on homosexuals, *The World of Homosexuals*, in 1977. How did that come about?

While I was in Canada, I met these bright young boys who invited me to their house one day. They served such an amazing meal that I told them, "You don't need to marry. You cook exceptionally well." They laughed and told me that they were married to each other. I was taken aback, because I had no idea about homosexuality then. Later, when I came back to India, I wrote an article on it. A publisher happened to come across it and commissioned me to write a book. Those were still the early days when people in India didn't speak about it.

You are constantly sought out by celebrities for numerological solutions. Is there any interesting encounter you would like to share?

I'm sorry, I can't reveal my clients. But, yes, during my travel once, I saw this gentleman at the airport checking in with a huge sitar. I walked up to him and asked him whether he played sitar. I also told him I was a great fan of Pandit Ravi Shankar. Later, I found him seated next to me in the flight. After a while, I dozed off. Suddenly,



Once, my father was unable to perform at the circus and asked me to step in. I was about three at that time. Soon, my shows became the highlight of the circus and gradually I started travelling to schools, colleges and universities to perform. By the time I was five, I was the family's sole breadwinner



Decoding destiny: At one of her numero-astrological sessions

in a semi-conscious state I realised the gentleman was none other than Panditji. I squealed, “You are Pandit Ravi Shankar!” Panditji just smiled. I shared with him my love for musical instruments, particularly the sitar and the flute, which I play rather well. A few days later, his wife Sukanya called up to say that he had told her how he had bumped into Shakuntala Devi and that she almost didn’t recognise him.

What is your recollection of Albert Einstein?

He was sick and ailing when I met him. He set me a mathematical problem and when I gave him the correct answer, he was amazed. He told me, “Keep believing in numbers. They’ll help you along the way.”

Would you agree that we are losing out on our mathematical abilities because of our dependence on machines for calculations?

We hardly use our brain to its fullest potential. Just the way muscles become atrophic if not utilised properly, the brain shrinks if not used optimally. There is this young boy in a furniture shop I frequent in Bengaluru. He used to flick out his calculator to do simple math with two-digit numbers. I scolded him one day. Now, he’s wary of me and keeps his calculator locked away in my presence.

What is the connection between math puzzles and keeping Alzheimer’s at bay?

Just like the body needs exercise to keep it going, the brain needs exercise as well. Calculations exercise the brain. The more you use your brain, the sharper it stays. Solving puzzles is one way of keeping your brain active.

NUMBERQUEEN

- In January 1977 at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Shakuntala Devi extracted the 23rd root of a 201-digit number in 50 seconds. It took a UNIVAC 1108 computer (one of the fastest super-computers ever created) 62 seconds to confirm that she was right after it was fed with 13,000 instructions!
- On 18 June 1980, she was asked to multiply two 13-digit numbers: 7,686,369,774,870 and 2,465,099,745,779, picked randomly by the Computer Department of Imperial College, London. She gave the correct answer, 18,947,668,177,995,426,462,773,730, in a mere 28 seconds!

You practice numero-astrology, offering solutions based on numerology. What is the connection between math and astrology?

Astrology is nothing but calculations, based on the position of planets, the time and date of birth. My grandfather was a well-known astrologer, and I am the seventh generation astrologer in my family.

Not much is known about your family.

I was married to an IAS officer from Kolkata, Paritosh Bannerji, who is no more. We separated long back. I have a daughter, Anupama, who is happily married and settled in Bengaluru and is a mother to two lovely daughters.

You’ve opened your own varsity in Bengaluru, the Shakuntala Devi International Institute of Management Sciences and Pre University. What does it aim to do?

I find that most schools today teach computers and software. But we have moved away from our roots. My university delves into the secrets of Vedic Mathematics and makes learning math an enjoyable experience.

On a parting note, how do you think the gift of numbers happened to you?

[Thinks for a while ... smiles] In my childhood, I lived in Tiruchirapalli, which has a famous Ganesha temple. One day I decided to make that Ganesha my friend. He has shown the way. ✨



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TO THE nines



To mark our ninth anniversary, we invited silver doyens of dance to don the greasepaint and bring alive the *Navarasa*, the nine intrinsic emotions that form the bedrock of Indian performing arts. Blending animated facial expressions with immaculate hand gestures, they posed exclusively for *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, a perfect picture of poise and grace. Whether it is *shringaara* that depicts love and beauty, *haasya*, an expression of joy or mirth, *karuna* (grief and compassion), *roudra* (anger), *veera* (heroism or bravery), *bhayaanaka* (fear), *beebhatsa* (disgust), *adbhuta* (wonder and curiosity) or *shaanta* (serenity and peace), our dance exponents evoke the different shades of life.

Photographs by **Shilbhadra Datta & Haresh Patel**

POUSHALI MUKERJEE 54
Odissi

SHRINGAARA



PEJAVARA SATHYANANDA RAO 57
Yakshagana

HAASYA



ASHIMBANDHU BHATTACHARJEE 55

Kathak

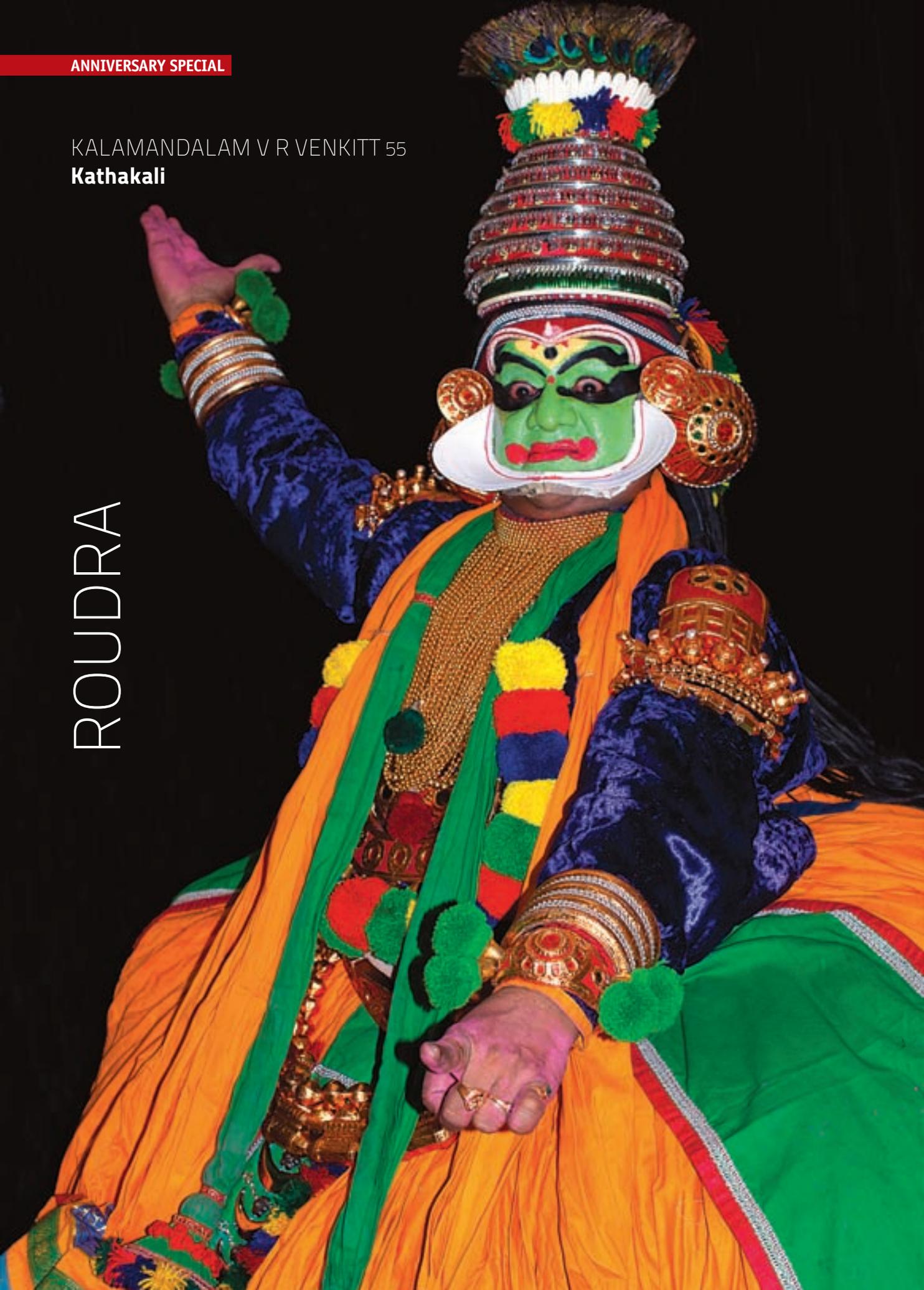


KARUNA

KALAMANDALAM V R VENKITT 55

Kathakali

ROUDRA



DEEPAK MAZUMDAR 57
Bharatanatyam

VEERA



DR RAJYALAKSHMI SETH 65
Kuchipudi

BHAYANAKA



NILANJANA SEN 56
Rabindra Nritya



BEEBHATSA

JAYASHREE NAIR 61
Mohiniyattam

ADBHUTA



YAIKHOM HEMANTA KUMAR 53
Manipuri



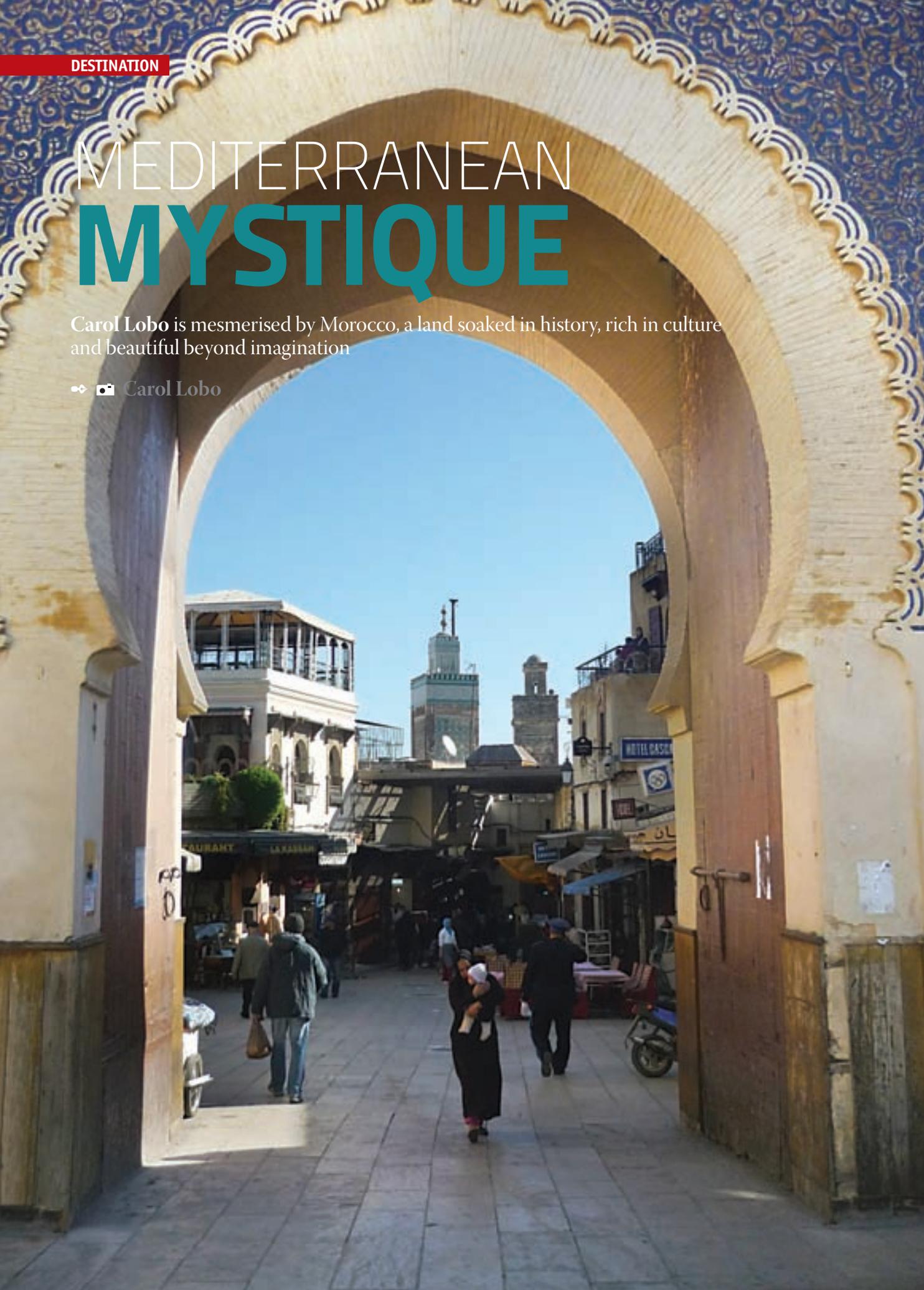
SHAANTA

DESTINATION

MEDITERRANEAN MYSTIQUE

Carol Lobo is mesmerised by Morocco, a land soaked in history, rich in culture and beautiful beyond imagination

📷 Carol Lobo





Magical Morocco juxtaposes ancient *kasbah* with modern-day cafe culture

Clad in traditional *djellaba* and riding a mule, a Berber tribesman canters up a dusty dirt road flanked by mud-brick walls. Framed against the setting sun amid the grey, arid desert, this Moroccan native of a nowhere town in the Sahara is on his way to the local market. The town of Tamsahelte is an outpost in Zagora Province, where Berber traders barter goods that have made their way all across the Maghreb.

For a split second, just a split second, you've stepped back a few hundred years in time. Between the rocky outcrops in the distance, crumbling *kasbah* (mud-brick fortresses) that still dot the southern Moroccan landscape and sand swirls that dance in the wind, little seems to have changed since warring tribes battled over this ancient land and our lone horseman's trip to the marketplace. Freeze frame.

Elsewhere in the Sahara, en route to the great dunes of Merzouga, a caravan is on the move. Comprising a train of a dozen camels, always in single file, the caravan emerges from behind a sandy hillock, only to pause at the town of Ouarzazate, before melting into the Sahara once again. His saddlebags laden with gold, ivory and spices, the Tuareg cameleer is a miniscule link in the trans-Saharan trade that stretches across North and Sub-Saharan Africa. Once again, past magically meets the present. If centuries later, his precious cargo has been substituted for more mundane items, the Tuareg cameleer, his face wrapped in signature blue scarf, is still Prince of the Desert. Freeze frame.

These are just some of the images that become etched in your mind as you traverse this mystical and magical land. It's a land soaked in history, rich in culture and beautiful

beyond imagination. Despite latter-day influences and the current wave of modernisation sweeping across the country, the ancient and exotic heart of Morocco pulsates around every bend—whether in the bejewelled, picture-postcard countryside; the famed *medina* (old walled cities) that still occupy large areas of the big metros; or in the hypnotic rhythms of the Gnaoua musicians at the Djemaa El Fna square in Marrakech, the past is within touching distance everywhere.

We'll leave you to unwrap gems like these yourself. But here's a teaser of what you can expect. Morocco is a tiny country, less than 1.5 times the size of Maharashtra. But packed into this little kingdom in North Africa is pretty much every traveller's every dream.

So you have giant, rose-coloured sand dunes, rocky desert expanses, snow-capped mountains, a ski resort town, seaside promenades and, in each city, an ancient walled *medina* or old town, dating back to between the 4th and 11th centuries. While the journey from Mumbai to Morocco is long—15 to 22 hours, including stopovers—it's well worth it, and then some.

CASABLANCA

Just the name of this seaside city calls to mind romantic trysts and windswept beaches. Casablanca, situated smack on the Atlantic coast, is all that, and more.

Hotels are aplenty in the bustling city centre, with rooms for every budget. Once you've checked in, take a quick walk down to the docks and you're transported to the elegant 1940s, courtesy Rick's Café, a trendy bar in the port area that seeks to recreate the mood of the fictional bar in the famous

Humphrey Bogart-Ingrid Bergman film *Casablanca*. Set aside an evening to sip on cocktails at Rick's as a musician tinkles on the piano and handcrafted lamps throw patterns of soft light on the wooden interiors. Upstairs, in a cosy den, the Hollywood classic plays on a loop. The drinks are surprisingly affordable, the service impeccable, and the experience one that must not be missed.

The next morning, you can take a taxi to the 20 year-old seaside Hassan II mosque, the largest in Morocco, and spend an hour or two watching the Atlantic send its waves crashing onto the rocky coast of the White City. Casablan-

ca, the commercial capital of Morocco, is the largest city in this country. But if you're looking for ambience and mood, head for the other cities.

MARRAKECH

It is easy to see why the Almoravids made straight for Marrakech to establish their empire here in the early 11th century. Stand on any street, face slightly upturned so that your gaze skims the tops of the date palms that grow everywhere, and look into the distant evening sky. Around 1,000 years ago, this massive desert oasis, or *plamarie* in local parlance, simply begged to be



settled. Its abundance of water, date palms and extensive orchards offered shelter and ambrosia for any wayside traveller, let alone an army of Berber people who were intent on setting up a dynasty!

But back to present-day travellers and our arrival from Casablanca. Getting from city to city within Morocco is easy and inexpensive, thanks to the efficient and comfortable rail system in the northern and central half of the country. As the four main tourist destinations—Casablanca, Marrakech, Fes and Tangier—lie in this general area, you do not need internal flights.



Erg Chebbi dunes

Located in the centre of the country, Marrakech is a four-hour train ride from Casablanca. Here, in this once medieval trading centre, there are three sites you must not miss: the *medina*; the large public square called Djemaa El Fna; and, yes, the railway station.

Djemaa El Fna: Ideally, you should walk to this large square to get a feel of the city, with its orange trees and street-side cafés. Aim to get there after 7 pm, when the food stalls start to open and the street performers begin to stage their acts. Once you're in the vicinity, the loud, pulsating call of the Berber musicians announces your arrival.

As you wander about, wending your way between groups of drummers, singers and fortune-tellers, watch your wallet; Djemaa is notorious for its pickpockets.

On offer at the little stalls is everything from boiled snails to *harira*, the delicious tomato-and-lentil Moroccan soup. You can also buy lanterns, leather bags and knick-knacks here, or just sit at a street-facing café table and sip on mint tea.

The Medina: The old, fortified town in Marrakech is the only one in Morocco you can wander about on your own. Be sure to use a guide in the other cities or you could get hopelessly lost. Here, however, there are helpful signs in every narrow, winding lane in the vicinity, pointing to 'the greatest show on earth'. So feel free to amble from colourful markets to quiet residential zones, marvelling at tiny blue windows and heavy cedar-wood doors buried in thick stone walls hundreds of years old. Whatever you do, do not waste time on a trip to the Majorelle Gardens. You will hear a lot about them but this expanse of unlabelled green could only cause such excitement in a desert country.

The railway station: If you do not arrive in Marrakech by train, make your way to the four year-old railway station just to marvel at its crystal-like glass façade, giant clock and traditional chandelier. Inside are flower-filled gardens, gleaming marble floors and trendy cafés offering everything from Italian cuisine to bistro-style desserts.

THE SAHARA

The Sahara Desert in Morocco is located in the southern reaches of the country and the only time you will need your own transport in Morocco is on your desert tour. Pick a 4x4 and set off from Marrakech, over the High Atlas mountains, to Du Sud or The South.

It is hard to describe the desert in words. Adjectives fail; descriptions seem trite. Maybe we can start with sunrise, and sunset. These are magical times in the vast, rocky expanses of the Sahara, with vivid shades of magenta looming over windswept black rock and tawny scrub. Through the day, a howling wind keeps you from feeling the relent-



FES IS A GREAT PLACE TO SHOP IF YOU WANT TO BUY LEATHER AND POTTERY—THE TWO PRODUCTS MOROCCO IS BEST KNOWN FOR

less heat, a wind that will rock your SUV like a big toy if you stop and open the windows. Every so often, along the asphalt road that cuts through vast expanses of rock and scrub, you will see a worn leather tent in the distance, or a trail of camels on a parallel path, signs that a Tuareg herdsman or trader is passing through.

If you're lucky, you'll come across a friendly nomad family in a clearing. Be sure to stop; chances are, they will offer you unleavened flatbread to be dipped in hand-pressed olive oil, followed by hot mint tea. They will wave away your offers of payment with a smile. They have no need of money. They make their own food and clothes, travel by foot and camel, and barter goats in exchange for essential purchases.

Life is stark and simple in the Sahara. And, as they say in Morocco, hospitality is the daughter of the desert. Time and space seem to change dimensions here, and the laws of nature often reversed. Wind creates patterns in solid rock and snow-capped mountains seem impossibly close in a wasteland of scorched earth.

Du Sud is also the region of ancient and prehistoric fossils. In the Alnif area, you will spot narrow chasms—essentially the sites of archaeological and paleontological digs. From within these depths, buried in limestone and sedimentary rock, emerge the skeletal remains of sea creatures that lived before the dinosaurs. There are also remains of whales, giant teeth that date back to when the desert held an ocean. You can pay a few hundred dirhams to take

back a whole box full of these remains. Amid this exotic wilderness are well-appointed hotels with carpeted interiors and the traditional architecture of pillars, fountains and pools. If you look closely, you will notice they exist only in the oases, whose outer reaches are defined by rows of palm trees. Even today, you cannot choose your location in the desert!

ERG CHEBBI

The dunes form only a small part of the desert in Morocco. But even from a distance, they are riveting. They appear on the horizon rather suddenly, as if someone had just tipped over a giant pail of sand. Rosy pink from a distance, they have rippled, golden surfaces that end so abruptly, you wonder what keeps them from cascading. They are also changelings, the dunes, going from pink to gold to fawn as you get nearer.

Hotels in Erg Chebbi stand at their edges, dwarfed by the giant mounds of sand that stretch all the way to the border with Algeria, about 55 km away. The only way to really be amid the dunes is to trek inward from the edges atop a camel, preferably to spend the night in a tent pitched in their midst. If the tent seems too radical, you can opt for a dune-view room and watch the sun rise over them from the rooftop the next morning. After a cosy breakfast, it's time to drive over the Anti-Atlas Mountains to Fes.

FES

Any visit to Morocco must include one stay at a *riad*, a traditional home for a Moroccan joint family, located by



definition within a *medina*. With families drifting apart or moving to the cities, many *riad* are now being turned into hotels. Situated in the northern part of the country, Fes is perhaps the best place to pick a *riad* because it is home to one of the largest *medina* in the country, one that is also a UNESCO world heritage site. Be sure to check that your *riad* is actually an old one and not a new construction built in that style. As one guide put it, "For it to be a *riad*, there must be a fountain and a garden in a courtyard inside."

You must book a guided tour of the Fes *medina*. Only with a local will you be able to navigate and interpret the many winding lanes, make the most of your visits to the ancient *madrassa* and mosques, and find just the right place to have a lunch of fried fish and kebab under a tree in a market square.

Another must-visit is the Al-Qarawiyyin religious school built in 859 AD, one of the oldest functioning *madrassa* in the world. Also visit the 11th century tannery, one of the largest on the continent, where raw skins are processed in vats of lime solution, then coloured with natural dyes.

And don't miss out on the pottery workshops. If you want to buy leather and pottery—the two products for which Morocco is best known—Fes is a great place to shop.

The rest of your time here can be spent exploring your *riad*, which should typically have winding stone staircases, circuitous corridors and sunny terraces that look out onto the rest of the low-slung expanse of Old Fes. All too soon, it will be time to move on, to the seaside city of Tangier.

TANGIER

As you make your way to the Fes railway station, there's an inevitable tug at your heart. You will arrive in Tangier, sure that it will in no way compare with what you have foolishly left behind. You will be wrong. One look at the vast blue expanse of the Mediterranean outside your window (book a room at a hotel by the sea) and you will feel your spirits rise. If you look closely, you will also see the coast of southern Spain in the distance.

Tangier has a small *medina* you can explore in one morning. The view from the *kasbah* atop a hill offers a stunning view of Tarifa, the southern tip of Spain, which is a 35-minute ride away!

Next, head to Cape Spartel, where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic over northwest Africa. Then, to the Cave of Hercules, where the Greek God is said to have rested after he pushed apart the two continents of Europe and Africa. After that, it's a short, scenic drive to the seaside town of Asilah, just 40 km away. The route

DOS AND DON'TS

- Do travel by train within Morocco. The service is punctual, the coaches are comfortable and the stations very easy to navigate, even with luggage. Book your tickets in advance, though, so that you can be sure of a seat in the luxurious first-class coaches.
- Do shop. Signature crafts are leather, pottery and metal lamps/lanterns. If you do the desert tour, the tiny town of Alnif yields the best quality fossils. Don't pick up any from the markets elsewhere.
- Do bargain. Everywhere. Even in showrooms and boutiques. It is considered almost impolite not to! You can safely start your pitch at 1/2 or 1/3 the price first named.
- Do linger. Shopkeepers are eager to show their wares and talk about how they are made. They don't mind if you don't buy anything.
- Don't hesitate to wander about at night. This is a very safe country for residents and tourists alike. Dress codes are non-existent.
- Don't take photographs of residents, especially in the *medina*. They find it offensive. It is also illegal to photograph officers of the law, especially palace guards!
- Don't expect any bacon at breakfast. There is virtually no pork available in this Muslim country, although alcohol is cheap and available at most hotels.

runs mostly along the ocean, ending in a sunny beach sprinkled with picnickers.

Asilah has a pretty, white-and-blue *medina* with neat lanes and picturesque homes. Watch where you wander, though, you could still get lost. Wandering done, settle down at a sea-facing café for some crab or shellfish, or just a Spanish omelette with a side of olives.

Back at your hotel, it will soon be time for a goodbye glass of wine, and you will feel that tug at your heart again, only stronger. Finish your wine. It will be all right. You can still look forward to a last, spectacular sunset over the Mediterranean. And, if it's a rainy day, you might even catch a rainbow! ✨



Photographs courtesy: Raghu Rai

HISTORY

1971 revisited

He's a master storyteller who lets his images do the talking. Iconic photo journalist Raghu Rai's *Bangladesh: The Price of Freedom* (Niyogi Books; ₹ 1,495; 115 pages) captures the birth pangs of a nation caught in turmoil, recording the highs and lows, the agony and anguish. **Srirekha Pillai** speaks to the ace lens man, whose rediscovered images of the 1971 war were recently exhibited in Bangladesh.

How did you rediscover the negatives of the 1971 liberation war, which form the backbone of your book *Price of Freedom*?

Soon after the Bangladesh war, the Ministry of External Affairs wanted me to compile all the pictures related to the war. But a senior friend, Kishore Parekh, published

Bangladesh: A Brutal Birth immediately afterwards. So I dropped the idea and forgot all about it. I stumbled upon the box containing the negatives when I started digitalising my work recently.

What was the kind of horror you witnessed?

When the freedom struggle broke out, I used to travel to the Indo-Bangladesh border almost regularly, as thousands of refugees were crossing over to India. Fear was writ large over their faces. Most of them had lost not just their belongings but someone close to them. Their body language and expression spoke of silent reconciliation. Young women raped by Pakistani soldiers looked stoned, completely devoid of any emotion. It took me days to get over the sadness in their eyes.



(Clockwise from top) Many families took shelter in hume pipes to survive the wrath of rains; camps overflowing with refugees; rape was a common occurrence and young girls were mercilessly assaulted by Pakistani soldiers; Indira Gandhi visits the camps; (facing page) Young men willing to fight the tyrant regime, picked up a flag of their own, calling themselves Mukti Bahini

Are there any specific survival stories that touched a chord with you?

I was really struck by the suffering of children because that brought back memories of my own childhood spent shifting from one refugee camp to another during Partition. Irrespective of time and space, all migrations and geographical divisions bring about a lot of pain.

Was there any attempt to censor the media?

Though refugees from Bangladesh, then called East Pakistan, were flooding into India, no one was willing to believe us. The Pakistan campaign machinery was doing exceptionally well, with support from America. The world was made to believe that Indira Gandhi was being unnecessarily dramatic about the refugee problem. That is when the government asked me to travel to Europe and America with my images. I held exhibitions around Europe and the US and gave interviews on television. My pictures were



carried on the front pages of important dailies like *The New York Times*, *Le Monde* and *The Times*, resulting in a change of perception. The government acknowledged my contribution by honouring me with the Padmashri in 1972.

If you had to choose one lingering image of the time, which one would it be?

I find the image of the raped young girl lying down, wrapped in a sari, with her eyes still and dry and a pregnant belly, particularly haunting. To me, she conveys loneliness and listlessness and the untold misery of the war.

IN FOND MEMORY

GURUDEV RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S FAMOUS WORKS OF ART ARE UP FOR VIEWING AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART (NGMA) IN MUMBAI. TITLED *THE LAST HARVEST*, THE SHOW HAS BEEN CURATED BY ART HISTORIAN P SIVAKUMAR TO COMMEMORATE TAGORE'S 150TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY ON 8 MAY LAST YEAR. PLANNED AS A NINE-CITY TOUR, THE EXHIBITION IS A COLLECTION OF 104 ORIGINALS DIVIDED INTO FOUR THEMES: DISCOVERY OF RHYTHM, IMAGES OF NATURE, THEATRE OF GESTURES, AND BETWEEN MASKS AND PORTRAITS. A STEP AHEAD FROM NATIONALISM TO UNIVERSAL HUMANISM, THE SHOW



IS NOT JUST A TRIBUTE TO A GREAT LIFE BUT A REFLECTION OF CHANGING TIMES. THOUGH DRAWING FROM THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF A POET AND THINKER, IT FOUND INSTANT CONSONANCE WITH THE UNIVERSAL THEME OF BEING HUMAN AND LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST. ACCORDING TO P SIVAKUMAR, TAGORE'S PAINTINGS HAVE AN "ELEMENT OF PLAYFUL INVENTIVENESS AND INVOLVE MORPHOLOGICAL CROSS-PROJECTIONS THAT DEFY PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE". THE EXHIBITION WILL BE ON TILL MID-JUNE.

The taste of **TRADITION**



Photographs by Anshuman Akash Jha

The royal Mughlai food legacy has been zealously guarded for over 100 years at Karim's in Delhi, writes **Ambica Gulati**

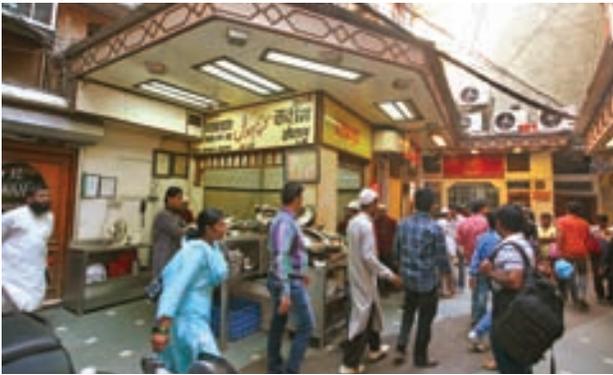
Located in the perennially crowded Jama Masjid area in Old Delhi, Karim's—the link between royal Mughlai food and the common man—is a must visit for natives and tourists alike, including the world's who's who. Whether it is the *Shahjahanī kabab* (special deep-fried minced mutton stuffed with dry fruits) or *Akbarī murgh masala* (chicken cooked with yoghurt, blended in savoury spices), Karim's has been doling out unadulterated Mughlai delicacies untiringly for 100 years.

"I personally taste all the dishes before they leave the kitchen," says Haji Zahuruddin, 80, managing director of the iconic eatery. "Since my grandfather Haji Karimuddin's time, we have maintained

superior quality. *Zabaan ek kasauti hai kudrat ki di hui, zabaan ka taluq sukoon se bhi hai* [the tongue is God's gift; it is also related to peace]. It is not possible to eat fast food every day, but Karim's is one place you can enjoy a daily meal."

LEGACY

Zahuruddin's legacy dates back to the royal chefs of the Mughal emperor Babar. Karimuddin's father Mohammed Aziz is said to have worked in the royal kitchens of Lal Quila. The royal kitchens, however, faded out after the 1857 mutiny, when the last Mughal King Bahadur Shah Zafar was dethroned. Karimuddin's ancestors fled to Farukhnagar in Ghaziabad district, Uttar Pradesh, to save themselves from the clutches of the British. Living in disguise, they tried different livelihoods



The hustle and bustle at Karim's; Zahuruddin with his younger son Ziauddin

but the art of cooking 'royal food' was kept alive by imparting the wisdom to the next generation. In 1911, when the Delhi Durbar was held for the coronation of King George V, Karimuddin opened a *dhaba* for visitors from all over the country. He set up a kiosk near Gate No 1 of Jama Masjid, selling *alu ghosht* and *dal* with *rumali roti*. The Durbar came to an end but the *dhaba* continued its journey. Karimuddin's modest eatery became Karim's in Gali Kababian in 1913.

"My grandfather offered one chapatti for one paisa and 64 chapattis for ₹ 1; on festivals, the chapatti was priced at two paisa," says Zahuruddin with a smile. "My father Haji Nooruddin added *nihari* for breakfast and *paaye* [also known as *kharode*]." All dishes were cooked in ghee but the British passed a law that ghee was to be tested before use, so they started using Vanaspati. "On 26 January 1952, my father had a sale of a princely sum of ₹ 1,000 and gifted every member of the family ₹ 1," he reminisces with great pride. As enquiries poured in about their tasty treats at affordable prices, they opened their first branch in the 1960s at Nizamuddin, in Delhi. And as their popularity grew, so did opportunities

to interact with the rich and famous. Zahuruddin narrates the experience of catering for the Id parties organised by late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi: "The food was checked and tasted many times before being served; her son Sanjay Gandhi was also one of our fans."

Whether it is *bakre ka ghosht* or *Akbari chicken*, each dish has a unique spice combination and a distinct taste and flavour

Today, the restaurant is listed among the top restaurants of Asia, and not without reason. From their most popular dish *bakre ka ghosht* to new additions like *Jahangiri* and *Akbari chicken*, each dish has a unique spice combination and a distinct taste and flavour. The menu is in tune with the times and many dishes are added to suit the evolving palate. Adding a new dish is a rigorous process—the family tries out the dish several times, invites select customer feedback, and

only then does the dish find its way to the menu. Each recipe is a prized secret. Spices are carefully measured and handed to the kitchen staff and they are all trained to follow them to the last detail. "We still buy spices and meat from the same vendors my great-grandfather used to buy from. Though we have been approached by many vendors over the years, we have never changed loyalties," explains Zahuruddin's younger son Ziauddin, 50, director at the Jama Masjid outlet.

Some things have changed with time though. "My great-grandfather had about 15 employees; we have more than 100," says Ziauddin. His elder brother Zainulabedin, 55, handles other associated work. Zahuruddin's late brother Kamaluddin's sons are also part of the family business that has branches across Delhi and the NCR. The pricing, however, varies with location.

Now, the next generation is set to follow in the footsteps of their elders; Zahuruddin's 21 year-old grandson Zoheb Ahmed, who holds a hotel management degree from Amity University, handles the outlet in DLF Mall, Saket. A century-old tradition is proud to find roots in the 21st century.

HE'S THE MAN

HINDI CINEMA LEGEND RISHI KAPOOR'S AVATAR IN *D-DAY* IS GENERATING MUCH CURIOSITY. SAID TO BE BASED ON THE LIFE OF NOTORIOUS TERRORIST DAWOOD IBRAHIM, HE PLAYS THE 'MOST WANTED MAN'. HOWEVER, THE MAKERS OF THE FILM (IT IS BEING DIRECTED BY NIKHIL ADVANI) DENY THIS AND CLAIM THAT KAPOOR'S ROLE IS THAT OF A RAW OFFICIAL. IT IS SAID THAT IT TOOK THE MAKERS SIX MONTHS TO CONVINCED KAPOOR TO PLAY THE CONTROVERSIAL ROLE.

When stories bloom

Two of her books, *The Mistress of Spices* and *Sister of My Heart*, have been made into motion pictures. And *The Palace of Illusions* not just retold *The Mahabharata* from Panchali's perspective but also contemporised the epic. With her latest work *Oleander Girl* (Penguin, ₹ 499, 288 pages), award-winning author, poet and teacher Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni revisits her favourite themes of immigration and self-discovery, which are at the heart of most of her books. In an interview with **Srirekha Pillai**, Divakaruni shares the scars of 9/11, her work methodology, interest in painting and much more.

9/11 is a recurring motif in your book, *Oleander Girl*. What was the change it wrought in the psyche of Asians in the US? And as a writer, how did it affect you personally?

It left a deep scar in the heart of a country where a terrorist attack of such proportions had never occurred. Indian Americans and Indians in the US had to suffer a double tragedy in the wake of 9/11. In addition to personal tragedies—a close friend of mine lost her son in the Towers—we had to deal with additional suspicion, prejudice and hate crimes because we looked 'dangerous' to some people. Our Sikh brothers, particularly, felt the repercussions of this. We, including those born here, were forced to question whether we or our children would ever be accepted as truly 'American' or whether we would become scapegoats whenever things went wrong. Korobi Roy in *Oleander Girl* experiences some of this when she comes to America and sees the vandalism of Indian-owned businesses after 9/11.

You have dedicated *Oleander Girl* to your grandfather, whose life inspired the story. How much of the story is taken from his experiences?

The character of Korobi's grandfather is based on his character. He was a very strong man with definite views on the world. He ruled his household with an iron fist—but gloved in velvet. He was very intelligent, a real patriarch. I had a deep bond with him, which is again reflected in Korobi's

closeness to her grandfather. Like Korobi's grandfather, mine too had certain secrets.

Does the story of Korobi have any personal parallels?

Not really, except that she comes from Kolkata, as do I, and is steeped in traditional Bengali culture, the way I was brought up. My story is closer to her mother's, because her mother also comes to the US for higher studies.

Though it is essentially Korobi's story, you have multiple narrators: Korobi, Rajat, Sarojini and Asif. How challenging was it working around different points of view?

I am fascinated by multiple narrators. Many of my novels, such as *Sister of My Heart*, *Vine of Desire* and *One Amazing Thing*, have multiple narrators. This allows me to present the contradictions and ironies between how two or more characters understand the same event in their lives. This is certainly the case in *Oleander Girl*. For instance, Asif's take on the world is very different from that of his employer, Rajat. Yes, it is challenging to weave these different narratives into the text, but it's very satisfying too.

Whether it is Korobi and her mother-in-law or Korobi and Rajat, there is an inherent power play between the characters. Do you subscribe to the view that most relationships are complicated?

Yes, I do think human relationships are often complicated. Korobi and Rajat love each other, but because they come from such different backgrounds—one traditional, the other modern—they have many conflicts. Korobi's grandparents also have a complicated relationship because her grandmother is forced by her grandfather to keep a dark family secret from Korobi against her will.

How do you go about developing and fleshing out various characters?





"THE 9 IS LIKE THE 6 UPSIDE DOWN, A SYMBOL OFFERING SYMPATHY AND COMPASSION TO EVERYONE; A RESERVOIR OF GIVING WITH A GENEROUS DOWNWARD SPOUT."

ANONYMOUS

I keep a writer's notebook in which I write down everything I can come up with about a character. I have to imagine characters deeply and get into their heads, even characters I don't necessarily like.

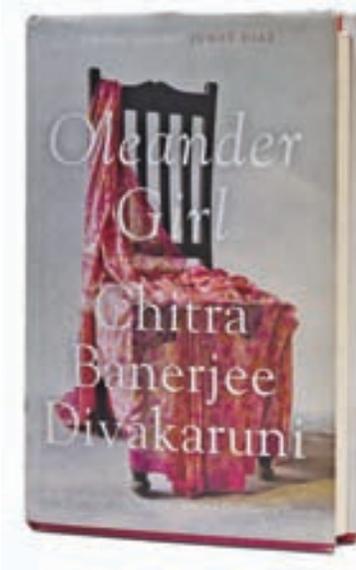
There's mention of a secret door in Korobi's ancestral house in Bengal as well as a temple where Subhash Chandra Bose used to pray. Where have you drawn these references from?

From books I've read and stories I was told, especially about the Independence movement while I was growing up. Some of them I've imagined. Temples like the one in *Oleander Girl* are not uncommon in old Kolkata homes.

Being a trained artist, who among the Indian artists do you hold in high esteem? Also, do you still paint?

I no longer paint, though I love to look at paintings. At a certain point in my life

I did focus on art much before I decided to write. However, because I was a painter, I am very much in tune with visual imagery and colours, and those occur often in my work. Some of my favourite painters are S H Raza, Gogi Saroj Pal, M F Husain and, of course, Anjolie Ela Menon, whose (fictional) painting plays a part in *Oleander Girl*.



The Palace of Illusions told the Mahabharata from Panchali's point of view; while your next seems to be a retelling of the Ramayana from Sita's perspective. Can you share a few thoughts about it?

I am excited about writing this novel on Sita. She has played such a large part in shaping concepts about womanhood in India. I think she has been misrepresented in the popular psyche. I look forward to imagining her inner life. I see her as a strong woman of integrity. I know this will be a challenging novel to write.

After celebrating your 25th anniversary, celebrate your first.

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- The first time you heard "Yes".
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Hymn to the muses

As we turn nine, we call upon the nine muses, who have been invoked by ancient poets from Homer to Hesiod, and are the inspiration for literature, science and the arts. Here's an extract from the translation (1914) of Hesiod's *The Theogony* by Hugh G Evelyn-White



Come thou, let us begin with the Muses who gladden the great spirit of their father Zeus in Olympus with their songs, telling of things that are and that shall be and that were aforetime with consenting voice. Unwearying flows the sweet sound from their lips, and the house of their father Zeus the loud-thunderer is glad at the lily-like voice of the goddesses as it spread abroad, and the peaks of snowy Olympus resound, and the homes of the immortals. And they uttering their immortal voice, celebrate in song first of all the reverend race of the gods from the beginning, those whom Earth and wide Heaven begot, and the gods sprung of these, givers of good things. Then, next, the goddesses sing of Zeus, the father of gods and men, as they begin and end their strain, how much he is the most excellent among the gods and supreme in power. And again, they chant the race of men and strong giants, and gladden the heart of Zeus within Olympus...the Olympian Muses, daughters of Zeus the aegis-holder.

Them in Pieria did Mnemosyne (Memory), who reigns over the hills of Eleuther, bear of union with the father, the son of Cronos, a forgetting of ills and a rest from sorrow. For nine nights did wise Zeus lie with her, entering her holy bed remote from the immortals. And when a year was passed and the seasons came round as the months waned, and many days were accomplished, she bore nine daughters, all of one mind, whose hearts are set upon song and their spirit free from care, a little way from the topmost peak of snowy Olympus. There are their bright dancing-places and beautiful homes, and beside them

the Graces and Himerus (Desire) live in delight. And they, uttering through their lips a lovely voice, sing the laws of all and the goodly ways of the immortals, uttering their lovely voice. Then went they to Olympus, delighting in their sweet voice, with heavenly song, and the dark earth resounded about them as they chanted, and a lovely sound rose up beneath their feet as they went to their father. And he was reigning in heaven, himself holding the lightning and glowing thunderbolt, when he had overcome by might his father Cronos; and he distributed fairly to the immortals their portions and declared their privileges.

These things, then, the Muses sang who dwell on Olympus, nine daughters begotten by great Zeus, Cleio and Euterpe, Thaleia, Melpomene and Terpsichore, and Erato and Polyhymnia and Urania and Calliope, who is the chiefest of them all, for she attends on worshipful princes: whomsoever of heaven-nourished princes the daughters of great Zeus honour, and behold him at his birth, they pour sweet dew upon his tongue, and from his lips flow gracious words. For it is through the Muses and far-shooting Apollo that there are singers and harpers upon the earth; happy is he whom the Muses love: sweet flows speech from his mouth.

Hail, children of Zeus! Grant lovely song and celebrate the holy race of the deathless gods who are for ever, those that were born of Earth and starry Heaven and gloomy Night and them that briny Sea did rear.

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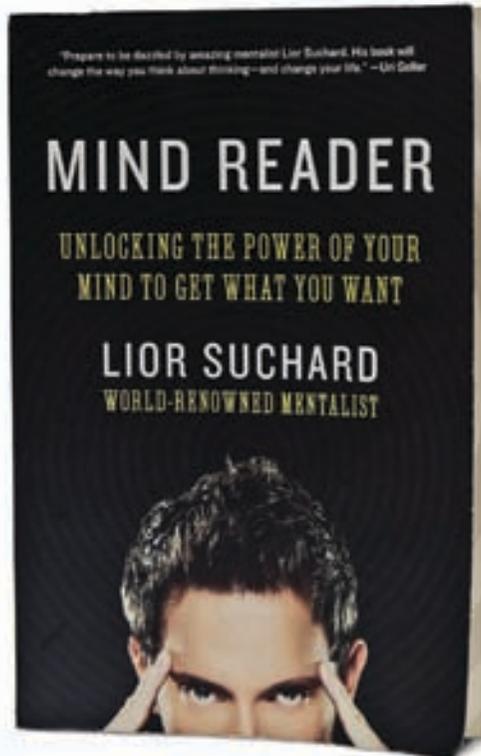
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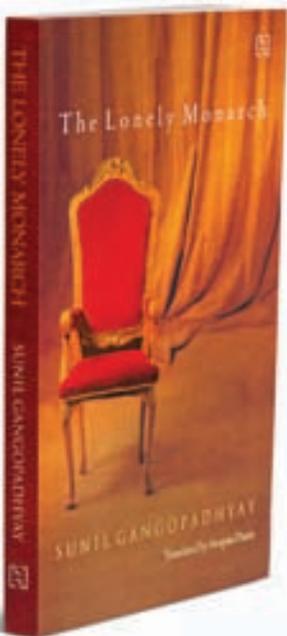
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BETWEEN THE LINES

“One plus one doesn’t always equal two. Sometimes it equals eleven.” That’s the basic premise of the world that mentalist **Lior Suchard**—an ‘infotainer’ shuttling between stage and television shows, celebrity events, slipping into the role of corporate ice-breaker and sleuth—inhabits. Synthesising the analytical with the intuitive, the literal with the contextual and the parts with the whole, Suchard directs the reader towards a holistic path. **MIND READER: UNLOCKING THE POWER OF YOUR MIND TO GET WHAT YOU WANT** (HarperCollins e-books; \$ 15.00; 225 pages) celebrates the extraordinary capacity of the human mind. In a world that places a premium on following the rule book, imagination and creativity often get the boot. With our responses and reflexes conditioned and perennially being on ‘auto-pilot’ mode, thinking laterally is more of an exception. Urging the reader to revisit those nooks and crannies of the



brain that are generally glossed over in the rush to conform to the standard, Suchard tells you to embrace the inner mentalist by listening to that little voice inside your head. The book is filled not just with illusions, riddles, puzzles and practical tips, but the findings of psychological studies. Suchard does a Rhonda Byrne, telling you to make things happen with the power of positive thinking. Though the book borrows extensively from Suchard’s life, right from his earliest tryst with his psychic self as a young boy of six, his experiments on his elder brothers and the regular five minutes of showtime during math lecture in high school, it still does fall short of imparting too many tips and trade secrets. Nevertheless, his cues on reading body language and other non-verbal expressions are interesting and applicable. Written in a fun and engaging manner, the book pulls you in; you become a silent spectator in a super entertaining Suchard show.



A simple book about a complex man, **THE LONELY MONARCH** (Hachette India; ₹ 350; 236 pages), beautifully unwraps the layers of hope, defiance, ambition, despair and pride that typified Sisirkumar Bhaduri, the man who revolutionised Bengali theatre in the early 20th century. In this translation of **Sunil Gangopadhyay’s** Bengali novel *Nihanga Samrat*, **Swapna Dutta** keeps her prose stark and her poetry flowing. Snatches of Tagore and Cummings call into bas relief the creative and personal loneliness of a man whose self-doubt and near-alcoholism are compounded by petty marketing tricks by competing theatres, a constant scramble for funds and a near-total lack of female talent. As he struggles on, losing friends and making new ones, finding, losing and rediscovering love, you’re drawn into a

world where there is more drama behind the curtain than before it. You glimpse the agony of a widower reflected in his cries for Sita as he portrays the epic hero Rama, his grief and guilt lending new tones to the character. You see a man so sure of his way and yet so unsure of his ability to reach his destination that he is often driven more by defiance and courage than confidence. Around him, you glimpse a nation in flux. In the book, artists and freedom fighters who are otherwise stars of their own biographical tributes, act as facilitators, secondary actors on a unique mission to transform Bengali theatre. And, even if you know how the story ends, it is still remarkable that one flawed man could have set himself such a grand mission, with nothing to guide him but passion and instinct.



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All is Brahman

God manifests himself in various forms, says **Sathya Sai Baba**

Today, people quite often ask about the relationship between the external world and *Brahman*. Actually, both are the same! This world is the effect while God or *Brahman* is the cause. In this world, there is nothing except *Brahman*. Here is an example. You have planted a seed in the soil and it has sprouted into a sapling. Soon it grows into a tree, with branches and leaves. In the tree are flowers and fruits. Where have these flowers, fruits, branches, and leaves come from? They are all born out of the small seed. It is the seed that became the branches. It is the seed that became the tree. It is the seed that has become the fruits and flowers. You are hence seeing the same seed in various forms and sizes. That is why it has been said in the *Bhagavad Gita*: “*Bijam maam, sarva bhuta naam*” (I am the seed, I am also the various shapes originating from the seed).

*The mud is one, pots may be many.
Milk is one, cows may be many.
Gold is one, ornaments may be many.
God is one, His forms are many.*

Everything is God alone. Only the bodies are different; their names and forms vary. This truth must be understood by everyone who has ventured into the path of spirituality. Unfortunately, today all the educated ones hanker after money and give prime importance to money alone in their lives. Wealth is essential, no doubt. Without money, one cannot live long in this world. However, the desire for money must be well within limits. Money must be spent in

tasks that would be of some benefit to others. If it is simply stashed away, money will be just like the stones buried in the ground. Do not hide it. There are several valuable stones embedded in the ground without our knowledge. Of what use are they to us? They must be dug out, polished, and brought into the world if they are to have some value and use. They must be put to good use. Similarly, if the precious stone of humanness is not taken out and put to good use, it would become rotten and useless.

*When wealth increases, pride grows.
When pride grows, bad qualities grow.
If wealth is limited, pride is controlled.
If pride is controlled, the bad qualities would leave.*

Wealth is essential. However, remember to use it for charity, righteous acts, and welfare of the world and learn to sacrifice. This great spirit of sacrifice is also seen in the *Ramayana*. Rama gave up everything. The *Vedas* have declared, “Neither by actions, nor by progeny, nor by wealth but by sacrifice alone can one attain immortality.” This is why the Kingdom of Rama earned such an everlasting fame. Rama gave up His royal robes and was prepared to go away to the forests. He gave away in charity a number of cows. He was prepared to give Himself away if need be. It is because of this quality of sacrifice that the Principle of Rama has become immortal. He did not take anything with Him and even gave away His footwear. That is an ideal example for *vairagya* or renunciation that is born of total sacrifice.

Extract from Summer Showers in Brindavan 1996: Discourses of Sri Sathya Sai Baba on Ramayana (Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust Publications; ₹ 35; 156 pages). Sri Sathya Sai Baba was an Indian spiritual guru and philanthropist

Nine signifies **new beginnings**. In **Sanskrit**, *nav* denotes new and nine, while in **French**, *neuf* is the word for both. Nailed on the cross, **Jesus Christ** expired at the ninth hour; Christ appeared nine times to his disciples and apostles after resurrection. **Beethoven** wrote nine symphonies. In the **Tarot**, nine symbolises completion of a process. **Ramadan**, the month of fasting and prayer, is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. In **China**, nine is the number of celestial power; the nine-storeyed pagoda is a symbol of heaven. A '**nine days' wonder**' is something that creates a short-lived sensation. The **Bahai** faith is symbolised by a nine-pointed star. A game of **squash** is won by scoring nine points. A **polygon** with nine angles and nine sides is called a nonagon. Major **Buddhist** rituals involve nine monks. The phrase '**on cloud nine**' came into use in the 1950s from a term used by the US Weather Bureau. For the meteorologists 'Cloud Nine' is a cumulo-nimbus cloud at a height of 10 km, high even by the standard of clouds. **Zoroastrians** believe the soul has nine parts. Nine months is the average gestation period for **human babies** to develop to full term. In **Hinduism**, there are 18 *Purana* and 108 *MahaPurana* (*Upanishad*). The *Mahabharata* has 18 chapters, the *Bhagavad-Gita* has 18 chapters, and the *Srimad Bhagavat* has 18,000 verses. The sum of individual digits of each of these numbers is 9!



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