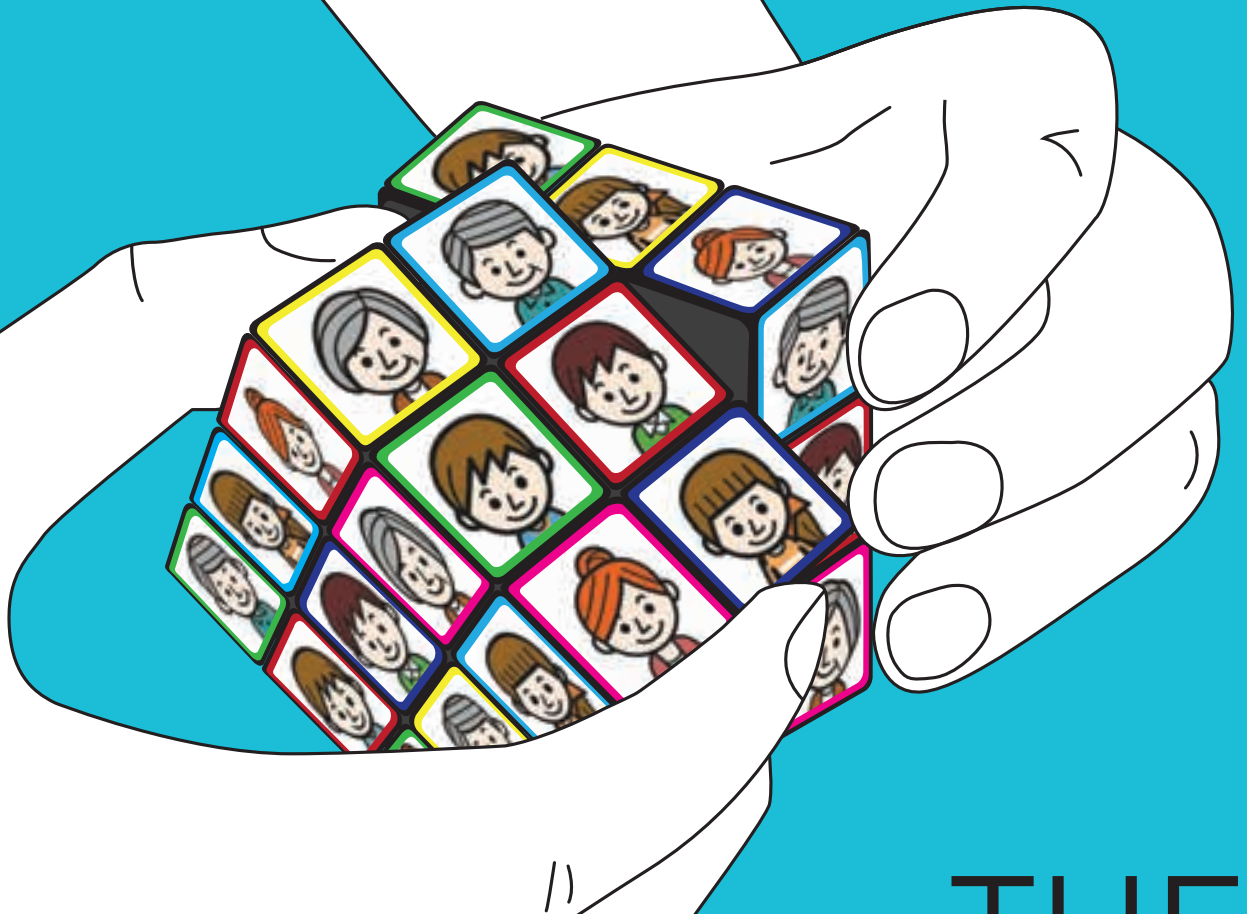


harmony celebrate age

APRIL 2015 ₹ 40

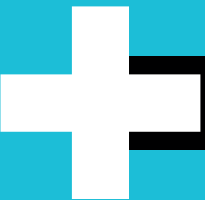
The magazine for silver citizens



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Suresh Natarajan



THE LEDGER THUS FAR

While money certainly can't buy happiness, financial security is intrinsic to successful ageing.

So what did Finance Minister Arun Jaitley offer silvers in this year's Budget? One of the highlights is the Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund, which will derive funds from a corpus set up from the funds of the EPF and PPF and roll out policies announced for silvers that were stuck for lack of money. Another notable benefit is increase in deduction in health insurance premium and medical treatment. While tax deduction under Section 80D has been raised for individuals below 60 from ₹ 15,000 to ₹ 25,000, for senior citizens, the amount has been increased to ₹ 30,000.

Also, under Section 80DDB, which allows deduction of ₹ 60,000 for treatment of specified diseases (cancer, AIDS, etc), the amount for silvers has been raised to ₹ 80,000 and the physically challenged will get assistance in terms of physical aids and devices. And the Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana, the life insurance scheme for senior citizens relaunched last year by the NDA Government, has been exempted from service tax.

Meanwhile, the indirect benefits include the establishment of All India Institutes of Medical Sciences in Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Himachal

Pradesh and Assam. Adding to the cheer was the Rail Budget, which proposed an increase in the quota of berths for silvers and the differently abled. It also announced that folding ladders would be made available in coaches for easy climbing, the middle bay of coaches would be reserved for silvers and women for reasons of safety, and greater efforts would be made to ensure lower berths for silvers and the differently abled.

While it can be argued that the Budget left a lot to be desired in terms of silver-specific initiatives, some of these proposals are certainly steps in the right direction. The question is: going forward, will the Government continue to address vital concerns such as healthcare and physical security along with financial avenues for silvers to live with independence and pride?

Only time will tell. And we'll be watching.

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

Harmony Celebrate Age—April 2015 Volume 11 Issue 11

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Printed and published by Dharmendra Bhandari on behalf of the owners, Harmony for Silvers Foundation

Printed at Thomson Press India Ltd, 18-35, Milestone, Delhi-Mathura Road, Faridabad-121007 (Haryana). **Published** at Reliance Energy Centre, Santacruz (East), Mumbai 400055. **Disclaimer:** The material provided by *Harmony* is not a substitute for professional opinions. Readers are advised to seek appropriate advice from qualified and licensed professionals in the concerned field. © Harmony for Silvers Foundation. All rights reserved worldwide. Reproduction in any manner is prohibited.

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New age *desi* solutions to keep the flock together

every issue

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SALUTE THE COP

Assam's first woman police officer reveals her artistic side

FORCE OF ATTRACTION

A fascinating trip to Aithrapally Falls, India's Niagara

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Toll-free: 1800 1800 100 Phones: New Delhi: (0120) 2479900 from Delhi and Faridabad; (0120) 2479900 from Rest of India

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Total number of pages in this issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, including covers: 84



श्री अखिलेश यादव, मन्त्री, परिवहन, उत्तर प्रदेश



अब लाइसेंस बनवाएं सिर्फ क्लिक में कभी भी, कहीं भी

लर्निंग लाइसेंस एवं ड्राइविंग लाइसेंस प्राप्त करने हेतु ऑनलाइन आवेदन की सुविधा शुरू

लर्निंग लाइसेंस एवं ड्राइविंग लाइसेंस बनवाना अब हुआ बेहद आसान, क्योंकि अपनी सुविधा के लिए परिवहन विभाग, उ.प्र. द्वारा ऑनलाइन आवेदन की व्यवस्था की गयी है। अब घर, ऑफिस या कहीं और से सिर्फ क्लिक करके लर्निंग लाइसेंस एवं ड्राइविंग लाइसेंस का आवेदन तथा उसकी सम्बन्धित फीस ऑनलाइन जमा की जा सकती है।

ऑनलाइन आवेदन के लाभ

- अब घर बैठे आवेदन करने की सुविधा।
- घरों पर प्राप्त करने, आवेदन करने एवं फीस जमा करने हेतु कार्यालय काउन्टर पर पंक्ति में खड़े होने से मुक्ति।
- ऑनलाइन आवेदकों को केवल कार्डपैट्रिवल कैम्पलिंग तथा लर्निंग/ड्राइविंग टेस्ट के लिए ही कार्यालय में उपस्थित होना होगा तथा इसके लिए भी उन्हें प्रस्थानिका देनी होगी।
- गयी व्यवस्था में किसी अनधिकृत व्यक्ति/एजेंट के पास जाने की आवश्यकता नहीं।
- परिवहन विभाग, उ.प्र. द्वारा लर्निंग लाइसेंस एवं ड्राइविंग लाइसेंस का आवेदन तथा उसकी सम्बन्धित फीस ऑनलाइन जमा करने की व्यवस्था दिनांक 8 जनवरी, 2015 से संचालन में प्रारम्भ।

ऑनलाइन आवेदन की विधि

- ऐसे व्यक्ति, जिनके पास वैधता प्राप्त करने के विचार होने पर अनुपम "निवास प्रमाण-पत्र" उपलब्ध है, के द्वारा ऑनलाइन आवेदन किया जा सकेगा।
- अनुपम निवास प्रमाण-पत्र की जानकारी सीटेलन विभाग की वेबसाइट www.uptransport.org से प्राप्त की जा सकती है।
- ऑनलाइन आवेदन के लिए आवेदक को वेबसाइट <https://sarathi.nic.in> पर जाना होगा।
- उस वेबसाइट पर दिए गये menu में लर्निंग लाइसेंस के लिए "Issue of a Learning Licence" तथा ड्राइविंग लाइसेंस के लिए "Issue of Driving Licence" पर क्लिक करना होगा।
- क्लिक करने पर Instructions पेज ओपन होगा, जिसे ध्यान से पढ़कर "Proceed" बटन क्लिक करने पर ऑनलाइन आवेदन फार्म उपलब्ध होगा। इस फार्म को सही-सही भरकर आवेदन को Submit करना सिलक करना होगा। तबसाइट परीक्षा जमा करने हेतु "Next Step" बटन क्लिक करने पर टेस्ट की ऑन लाइनेस का फीस पेज ओपन होगा, जिसके माध्यम से आवेदक टेस्ट की सही अतिरिक्त जानकारी/फैस सफलतापूर्वक के गेटवे/क्रेडिट कार्ड्स के द्वारा लाइसेंस की फीस ऑनलाइन भुगतान से जमा कर सकते हैं।
- फीस पेमेंट के पश्चात् आवेदक को कार्ड की ई-सॉफ्ट कॉपी जमा करवाया होगा।
- फीस पेमेंट सफल होने पर आवेदन पूर्ण होने की सूचना एस.एम.एस. के माध्यम से आवेदक के मोबाइल नम्बर पर भेजी जा सकेगी।
- उस प्रक्रिया को पूर्ण करने के पश्चात् आवेदक ऑनलाइन पर हुए आवेदन को प्रिंट कर, ई-सॉफ्ट तथा अन्य आवश्यक प्रपत्रों (पत्रा-निवास प्रमाण-पत्र, जन्मतिथि प्रमाण-पत्र के साथ कार्डपैट्रिवल कैम्पलिंग, फॉटो प्रमाण, फोटो एवं क्लिकेड कैम्पलिंग) तथा लर्निंग/ड्राइविंग टेस्ट के लिए या तो सीधे परिवहन कार्यालय में उपस्थित हो सकते हैं अथवा अपनी सुविधानुसार उसका वेबसाइट पर "Appointment for Slot Booking" की लिंक पर अपने लिए इच्छित तिथि व समय का सर्वोत्तम ऑनलाइन बुक कर परिवहन कार्यालय जा सकते हैं।
- ऑनलाइन आवेदन पर के "Part C: Enclosure Section" में उचित फोटो एवं जन्मतिथि व निवास प्रमाण-पत्र की प्रतिलिपि हो प्रपत्रों की जाँच के साथ कार्यालय में प्रस्तुत किया जायेगा।
- उस आवेदन प्रपत्रों के अतिरिक्त आवेदक को उस वेबसाइट से ही एक "आइडेंटिफिकेशन पत्र" को भी डाउनलोड कर प्रिंट करना पर जमा फोटो जमा करके तब इस्तफा करके परिवहन कार्यालय में प्रस्तुत करना अनिवार्य होगा।
- आवेदकों की सुविधा के लिए ऑनलाइन आवेदन करने की प्रक्रिया पर वेबसाइट "Help for Online LL Applications" पर भी उपलब्ध है।
- ऑनलाइन आवेदन से जमा फीस करने आवेदन ही परिवहन कार्यालय में स्वीकार किया जायेगा।



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बन रहा है आज, सँवर रहा है कल

सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश

column one

The past year has been a difficult one for my family. On the heels of losing a parent, to have another battling a medical crisis has been both hard and humbling, reminding us of the fragility of life and the need to keep our loved ones closer. Whatever the trigger, it is a growing realisation among Indians today, marking an important transition in our evolution as a society. After the traditional joint family and the breakout nuclear family, it's time for another shift: "The Great Indian Family 3.0", a hybrid between the two.

"Spurred by a keen desire to bridge geographical gaps and stay in close proximity with kith and kin, this homecoming is marked by a mutual give and take," writes Special Correspondent Sreirekha Pillai. "A tectonic shift is underway in the Indian demographic order in urban areas, with parents and children moving lock, stock and barrel into the same gated community, neighbourhood, and sometimes even in the same apartment, though in different flats." You will meet many of these families in our cover feature, hear their stories and, perhaps, be inspired to find your own *desi* solutions to keep your flock together.

And for the traditionalists among us, our photo essay is cause for cheer: at 1/1B/14 Ramkrishna Naskar Lane in Beliaghata, north Kolkata, the Samantas, a 112-member family, have been living together—in harmony—for over four decades. Elsewhere, you can meet RTI change agent Kris Dev, cruise through the Maldives, and hear Indian Ocean founder and lead guitarist Susmit Sen speak about his memoir *Ocean to Ocean*. Listen and enjoy.

—Arati Rajan Menon

I was enthralled by your feature "Jaipur Jamboree" ('Destination', March 2015). I have been a travel enthusiast all my life—I am now 63—and the articles that appear in this section always leave their mark. I have never been to Jaipur but the author left me enchanted with her description of this ancient city. Now, I have an insatiable urge to visit the city very soon.

Dinesh Bajpai
Indore

Surveys show that there are over 10.5 crore senior citizens in India, and about 51 per cent of them are so poor that they cannot afford even two square meals a day. Many are not able to look after themselves but regarded as a burden, others are ill treated by their family and some are abandoned. This is not an unexpected development. It was predicted by sociologists in the past and is going to get worse as the population ages and life expectancy increases. To top it off, there has been palpable indifference on part of the governments, both at the Centre and states, towards the problems of the elderly.

There was hope from corporate houses when contribution to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was made obligatory. The



expectation was that at least 8-10 per cent of CSR budgets would go into financing programmes related to ageing issues. The reality, however, has been disappointing. It has been found that CSR inflow for this cause has been even less than 1 per cent. When CSR teams of some companies were contacted, it was found that the main reason for this apparent indifference was that most of them were not aware of the problems and concerns of the ageing population. Hence, it is said, awareness is the first step to action. If that's all that is required for seniors to be given some attention, surely the problem is easier to tackle than earlier thought.

R N Mital
Hyderabad

CONTRIBUTOR



Mridula Dwivedi is a professor of management at a private business school in India, who completed her PhD from the Indian Institute of Technology - Kanpur. She got bitten by the travel bug rather late in life but is trying to make up for all the lost time. In this issue, she writes about the charms of Maldives in 'Destination'. Dwivedi, who considers her trek to the Everest Base Camp in Nepal as the trip of a lifetime, dreams of going to Antarctica

and tells us she has no bucket list—because everything is on her list. She loves to trek and travel, in that order. Dwivedi combines a love for reading along with travel. These days, travelling with her seven year-old daughter is a priority; she has taken her daughter and niece, aged nine, alone to Hong Kong and survived to tell the tale! Check out her blog, traveltalesfromindia.in



FACE OFF

Chocolate fix

This could well be the most delicious piece of research to emerge from the hallowed halls of Cambridge. Researchers from the university have developed what they call **'the world's first beauty chocolate', Esthechoc**. Combining two powerful antioxidants—cocoa flavanols and marine carotenoid astaxanthin—the makers claim that just 7.5 gm of the chocolate will deliver the same amount of flavonols as 100 gm of dark chocolate and the same amount of astaxanthin as 300 gm of premium salmon. Also called Cambridge Beauty Chocolate, the chocolate will be sold by a firm incorporated by the inventors, Lycotec. "After three to four weeks of daily intake by 50-60 year-old volunteers, the Beauty Chocolate was able to not only suppress markers of sub-clinical inflammatory damage in their blood, but reverse their age-related depression of microcirculation and blood supply to such peripheral tissues as subcutaneous fat and skin," Dr Ivan Petyaev, director of Lycotec, says in a media release. "This consequently resulted in a significant boost of oxygen delivery to these tissues and restoration of their respiration—the essential physiological need in controlling and supporting skin health. In fact, the biomarkers of the participants' skin were brought back to those of a 20 or 30 year-old person." What's more, the low-calorie nature of the chocolate—38 calories for 7.5 gm—makes it safe for diabetics. The price tag, yet to be announced, is sure to be steep but that won't stop the long lines at the supermarket, to be sure.

BOUNCE BACK

Time and gravity are not a bosom's buddies. But now, a host of anti-ageing treatments are allowing you to **claim back your cleavage**. British consultant plastic surgeon Miles Berry, author of *The Good Boob Bible*, tells London newspaper *Daily Mail* what's on offer.

- **ChestSavers**; £ 43 (about ₹ 4,000); *chestsavers.com*: To be worn while you sleep, this bra leaves your breasts exposed while adjustable support bands separate them and support the weight. Claims to smooth out chest wrinkles and prevent new ones from developing.
- **Vampire Breast Lift**; £ 800 (about ₹ 76,000); *vampirebreastlift.com*: A small amount (60 ml) of your blood is extracted. The platelets are separated from the red blood cells and stimulated to produce 'growth factors' (proteins to aid cell renewal), which are then re-injected into the breasts. Claims to stimulate new collagen and blood flow and firm and lift breasts within three weeks.
- **Breastox**; £ 1,000 (about ₹ 95,000); offered by cosmetologists: Botulinum toxin (used for Botox) is injected into the skin around the pectoral region to force the muscles into temporary paralysis. Once frozen, the chest muscles compensate by contracting and lifting. Claims to keep breasts lifted for up to six months.
- **The Firming Bra**; £ 29.40 (about ₹ 2,800); *firmingbra.com*: A bra infused with moisturiser that includes retinol to increase cell production, ceramides to tighten skin and aloe vera to soothe. Claims to moisturise, firm and tone the breasts, making them look younger; lasts at least 100 washes.
- **Wellness Breast Kit**; £ 110 (about ₹ 10,400); *naturalbiotechlife.com*: Includes 'Intensive Beauty Breast Gel' and 'Concentrated Breast Push-up Effect Serum' with ingredients including plant stem cells, hyaluronic acid, marine collagen and oils such as argan, jojoba and borage. Claims to lift and firm the breasts.
- **Ultherapy**; £ 1,000 (about ₹ 95,000); offered by cosmetologists: In this non-surgical breast lift, focused ultrasound waves are delivered via a handheld applicator. Claims to stimulate collagen deep within the skin, enabling new collagen to be produced, so breasts are plumped out and skin tightened.
- **Collagen Growth Factor Décolletage Mask**; £ 14.99 (about ₹ 1,400); *skinpep.com*: A hydrating gel mask with snail gel, antioxidants, peptides, and hyaluronic acid that is smoothed on the chest area and left on for 30 minutes. Claims to plump and moisturise skin, improve elasticity, stimulate collagen and reduce pigmentation and the look of wrinkles.



Dinodia Photo Library

CLOSE SHAVE?

Could it really be so simple! The beauty pages across the world are screaming out **the latest anti-ageing secret: shaving your face**. Yes, really. The swipe of a razor, every day, is apparently all it would take for women to age better. If you don't believe us, listen to the experts. British dermatologist Dr Neal Schultz explains

anti-ageing SECRET

to *The Independent*, "Most men shave their faces—and thereby exfoliate two-thirds of their face—regularly for years. That's the reason that by their 30s and 40s, men's skin often looks better than women's skin." Dr Michael Prager, aesthetic clinician at London-based Prager Beauty Clinic, agrees. "From an anti-ageing point of view, home shaving has some effect," he tells newspaper *Daily Mail*. "It's like a mild form of microdermabrasion, so it encourages collagen production, which reduces wrinkles. Whenever there's trauma to the skin, collagen is stimulated to help cell renewal." And American Alexis Wolfer, editor of blog *The Beauty Bean*, says to ABC News, "One reason men are thought to get fewer wrinkles is that they're constantly exfoliating their faces every time they shave, literally shaving away the outermost layers of skin and encouraging your skin to create new layers."



lofty end

Futuristic farewell

This is seriously hi-tech funeral planning—if you can get past the ‘eerie’ factor. In response to a rapidly silvering Japan where space is at a premium, **‘skyscraper graveyards’ with smartcard access for families**

are emerging as a popular trend. According to the Associated Press, these fully automated graveyards can store thousands of urns; relatives enter with smartcards and use the help of robotic arms to retrieve their loved one’s ashes from vaults.

For example, at one such facility in Shinjuku in Tokyo, thousands of tiny Buddhas represent the family crypts. You just use your card to activate the crystal Buddha, which then glows and lights up the vault behind it. Whatever will they think of next?



WATCH OUT! CHINESE ELECTRONICS COMPANY HAIER HAS DEVELOPED A ‘SMARTWATCH’ FOR SILVERERS THAT IS EASY TO READ AND HAS A REMOTE LISTENING FEATURE THAT HELPS FAMILY AND CAREGIVERS KEEP IN CONTACT WITH THE WEARER. WITH A 0.96-INCH OLED SCREEN, THE WATCH—WITH A CHOICE OF RED OR BLACK LEATHER STRAP—HAS A BATTERY LIFE OF TWO DAYS AND IS WATERPROOF UP TO 30 M. IT’S EXPECTED TO HIT STORES LATER IN THE YEAR.

WELCOME HOME: *The Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) has urged the Government for an amendment in the Income Tax Act stipulating that silvers who return from overseas will be taxed only on their income earned in India, not their global income.*



8
new day-care
centres for
silvers

HAPPY DAYS

The days just got brighter for silvers in Navi Mumbai. Its municipal corporation has announced it will build **eight new day-care centres for silvers in CBD Belapur, Nerul, Sanpada, Vashi and Airoli**. This is in addition to the 11 such centres that have already been constructed. To be located within public gardens, the centres, which will have sloping roofs to prevent water ingress and glazed windows for a view of the garden, will have room for silvers to conduct meetings, play board games, read and celebrate functions as well as toilet facilities. “Unlike the earlier structures, a lot of attention is being given to the aesthetics of the new centres,” executive engineer Shankar Pawar, who is in charge of the project, tells media. “The idea is to make senior citizens feel like they are visiting a resort.”

CANCER CHALLENGE: ACCORDING TO CANCER RESEARCH UK, HALF OF PEOPLE IN BRITAIN BORN AFTER 1960 WILL BE DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE. FOR PEOPLE BORN EARLIER, THE RISK IS ONE IN THREE. THE STUDY, PUBLISHED IN *BRITISH JOURNAL OF CANCER*, URGES PREVENTION EFFORTS ON A WAR FOOTING AND CALLS ON THE GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP MORE TREATMENT FACILITIES.



HAPPY DAYS: Silvers in Mogavoor, a suburb of Kozhikode in Kerala, will soon get their first *pakal veedu* ('day house'). The centre, which will give lonely silvers a place to interact and relax, will have the capacity to accommodate 50 people; it will comprise a spacious living area and veranda, library, kitchen and toilets.

RIDE EASY: THE BOMBAY HIGH COURT HAS DIRECTED THE RAILWAYS (CENTRAL/WESTERN) TO RESERVE 14 SEATS FOR SILVERS IN SUBURBAN TRAINS BY 15 APRIL 2015. THIS IS APART FROM THE SEATS ALREADY RESERVED FOR PREGNANT WOMEN AND THE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED.



Pension plus

Good news. **The Punjab government has simplified payment for its pensioners by allowing them a digital life certificate.** News agencies report that beneficiaries can obtain a digital life certificate online by the government agency by showing the Aadhaar biometric authentication—the document can be accessed on the website www.jeevanpramaan.gov.in by the pension disbursing agency without insisting either on personal appearance of the pensioner or life certificate by the competent authority.

State of shame

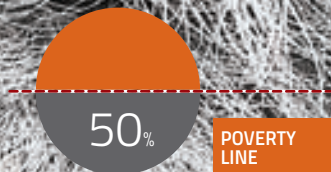
These statistics tell a tale of neglect, apathy and abuse. NGO HelpAge India's annual *State of Elderly in India* report makes it evident that we are not doing right by our silvers, financially or socially. Here are some highlights, as reported in media:

↑270%

Silvers are India's fastest growing population demographic, expected to cross 324 million by 2050, an increase of 270 per cent over current levels



The Government spends only 0.032 per cent of its GDP on pensions; this covers only 25 per cent of the population



About 50 per cent of senior citizens in India live below the poverty line



Elder abuse has doubled in 2014 from the previous year—among the senior citizens surveyed, the number of those who said they had been abused grew from 23 per cent in 2013 to 50 per cent in 2014



A majority of abuse happened at home, at the hands of daughters-in-law (61 per cent of the instances) and sons (59 per cent)

2.167%
of the country

The ongoing National Programme for Health Care for Elderly is being implemented in only 13 of around 600 districts

41%

Of those who suffered abuse, 41 per cent didn't report it to the authorities for fear of shaming their family



Selfie-help

NON-PROFIT AGE UK HAS HIT UPON AN INNOVATIVE IDEA TO RAISE MONEY FOR SILVERS—AND SHOW THEM THEY'RE NOT ALONE. ITS **#NOTBYMYSELFIE** CAMPAIGN ENCOURAGES PEOPLE ACROSS THE UK TO POST A SELFIE WITH THEIR FAVOURITE SILVERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA SITES TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM WHILE DONATING £ 3 TO AGE UK. VERY COOL.

home
truths



Danish director Michael Noer's *Key House Mirror* has proved to be a winner on the festival circuit. The film, set in a senior citizens' home, is an intense and gritty drama starring two Scandinavian acting legends: Dane Ghita Norby and Swede Sven Wollter.



THEY'RE BACK

Dame Judi Dench is back in the sequel to the popular film about expats who choose a retirement home in India. The 80 year-old shines once again in *The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, with the inimitable Dame Maggie Smith (of *Downton Abbey* fame), also 80, and 62 year-old Celia Imrie for company. A welcome addition to the cast: 65 year-old silver fox Richard Gere.

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feline
retirement

Purr-fect haven

Felines have never had it so good. The Lincolnshire Trust for Cats has created **Britain's first retirement home for cats**. As the BBC tells us, the 7-acre home on the outskirts of the village Osgodby with an open fire, heated beds, small sofas and expansive open spaces is home to close to 80 ageing cats. The trust also runs a rescue facility for abandoned cats. "For cats to come to us, people have either got to make a provision in their will, or they hear about us from friends and come to look round," says Jain Hills, founder of the trust. "The home really fulfils a crying need. It can be more expensive to take care of older cats owing to veterinary bills and the majority of people opt to adopt younger cats."



OCTO-COUNT

A new method has made it much easier to **determine the age of octopuses and learn about their lives**. A study commissioned by the Australian Department of Fisheries a few years ago revealed that the weight of the stylet—a cartilage-type structure in the head—indicates the age of an octopus. "This discovery has made the process of ageing octopuses much faster and more efficient," team leader Stephen Leporati tells website sciencewa.net.au. "Using this method, we were able to 'age' 3,494 wild-caught *Octopus tetricus* between 2008 and 2012." They found that males and females have similar maximum ages at 1.5 years, with males reaching maturity at 243 days, compared to 379 days for females."



Dinodia Photo Library

WAYS OF WHALES

Your scars often speak for themselves—literally. UK-based Whale and Dolphin Conservation has **identified, catalogued and studied ageing Baird's beaked whales, also called giant bottlenose whales, based on the numerous scars on their body** and gained insight into the social behaviour of this little-known whale species. "In trying to piece together the social behaviour of these whales, most striking was the long-term relationships the whales appeared to form," writes team leader Erich Hoyt in journal *Marine Mammal Science*. "We discovered one alliance of two whales that were together four times—the animals were apparently repeatedly meeting up with one another over a period of more than three years. Sadly, these whales are getting caught in nets, they're getting harpooned, so there's an international responsibility for this species that is getting overlooked at the moment."

SHORE AND SEA

Fresh air is good for the body—and the mind. The silvers at Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, South Mumbai, enjoyed a small picnic (*bottom left*) at the nearby S K Patil Garden on 24 February. It was a happy morning with fellow members playing games, singing and savouring healthy snacks.

Some days later, on 13 March, the members attended a session by government-recognised yoga teacher and multi-skilled therapist Rajashree Vora, who briefed them about pain management through alternative therapies, focusing on Su-Jok acupuncture. The members were introduced to Korean scientist Park Jae Woo, founder of the technique. The philosophy of Su-Jok therapy is to treat pain with appropriate pressure through a needle-shaped instrument at appropriate points in our hands and feet. (Su-Jok in Korean means hands and feet.) No other medicine is used and there are no side-effects; once the patient is trained, the pressure can be self-administered at the right points on the hands or feet. Vora also demonstrated the technique to members (*bottom right*). The session ended with a question-and-answer session.



Natasha Rego

Following this on 16 March, about 50 members went out to sea in a boat against the backdrop of a glorious sunset (*above*). They sang, danced and competed in games, actively trying to outdo each other. The evening began with a game where the first person who ran up with the object requested—picture of a woman, jewelry with nine stones, specific denominations of change, most colourful clothes—would win. Rajnikanth P Karya, 73, won the first round for carrying a picture of his beloved wife in his wallet. The second game was for silvers who dared to run about a swaying boat—musical chairs with a twist.

When the music stopped, players had to touch the chairs with the odd part of the body called out: ear, hair, and the conventional rear end. There were no winners or losers, but the ones who participated were lauded for their daring. This was followed by boisterous rounds of *antakshari*, the star game of the evening. “It might seem like we’re at each other’s throats,” guffawed 77 year-old Usha Nadanika, the most comical of them all, “but it’s all in good fun.” While the Centre has informative activities for silvers week after week, this was one of those days to let your hair down and dance your heart out.



Haresh Patel

An innings to remember

Photographs courtesy Silver Innings



It was an unusual cricket match, between a young team captained by a 16 year-old, pitted against a silver team captained by a 60 year-old. Appropriately, it was called 16 vs. 60.

The youngsters were very confident. This should be easy, they thought. After all, they were competing against silvers! The elders, on the other hand, were a tad uneasy. Stepping onto the field to clash with youngsters made the cricket team of Dada Dadi Park in Mumbai's Borivali, very nervous. But what the silvers lacked in energy, they made up for in experience, daily practice and determination. Their

strategy in any game, as team member Jimmy Dordi reveals, is simple: to win.

And long before the match was over, the silvers were indeed winning. "They were overconfident, I think," says captain Bhaskar Joshi about the young team. "Towards the end of their innings, they became careless and we grew even more alert."

The silvers were "super-amazing", confesses Pritesh, the 27 year-old manager of Silver Innings FC, the football club of the Mira Road-based Silver Innings Foundation that had organised the match. "They were not prepared to lose a single wicket and

won by seven wickets with three overs to go," he adds.

Although the competitive element turned the event into an edge-of-the-seat thriller, the real aim of the event was to facilitate the NGO's goal to bring about an elder-friendly society. Silver Innings FC is a football club started by the NGO in 2013. In the short time it has been a part of the Mumbai Football League, it has earned a reputation for being the only club that has qualified for the second division straight after the first season.

"It seems silvers think the youth are not very respectful," observes Sailesh

The cricket team of Dada Dadi Park with the Silver Innings FC; (opposite page) The winning silvers

Mishra, founder of the Silver Innings Foundation. Believing this perception can be altered only by changing the attitude of the youth, he uses sports as a means to achieve the change.

The players, aged between 15 and 27, go through a unique selection process that tests their temperament to make sure their sensibilities match the club's cause. They often involve themselves in intergenerational activities like the 16 vs. 60 cricket match. At league matches, they wear jerseys with the message, 'Stop Elder Abuse'. The jerseys are distributed by silvers associated with the foundation. There is a sense of ownership and belonging created among the silvers, and the players in turn sense that they have a certain responsibility when they step onto the football field. As Pritesh proudly proclaims, "Silver Innings FC is the only club in the world that stands for silvers."

Mishra says, "Through sports, we can do anything," adding that he wants to use sports to bring about a silver revolution. But what is a silver revolution without the participation of silvers themselves? So, while in one part of Mumbai, Mishra sensitises youth to the needs of silvers, in another part of the city there's a group of elders rediscovering long-lost passions. Members of Dada Dadi Park in Borivali meet for a couple of hours every morning and evening to indulge in all the activities they were too busy for during their working lives. "The senior citizens of Borivali have greatly benefited from this organisation," says 67 year-old Bhaskar Joshi. "From chess and carom to music, computer classes, cricket and tennis, everyone has their pick."

Funded by the Pushpa 'Maa' Foundation, there are now three Dada Dadi Park units in Borivali, covering 5,000-odd silver members. A lifetime



The young members of Silver Innings FC learnt not to underestimate age, which is a deadly combination of experience, stubbornness and humility, while the old-timers learnt to have more confidence in their abilities

membership fee of ₹ 102 (₹ 100 for a magnetic identification card and ₹ 2 as admission fee) is all it takes to sign up.

Musical evenings, birthday celebrations, national and religious celebrations, IQ competitions and sports tournaments are just some of the special activities and occasions the silver members organise throughout the year. And they are an ambitious lot. Says 76 year-old Jimmy Dordi, a member of the Managing Committee of Dada Dadi Park, "We have two *Limca* records to our credit—a laughter record with the largest number of senior citizens, and the record for the maximum number of senior citizens singing the National Anthem in one spot."

It was Dordi, who is closely associated with Sailesh Mishra, who proposed the 16 vs. 60 match. "Our members were very enthusiastic but also a little hesitant. This was going to be the first time we were playing against young sportsmen," Dordi confesses.

So they practised every day and they practised hard. The rest, as they say, is history. But that's not where they stop. Having tasted first blood, the silvers are on the lookout for more teams to test their skills. "Even if we fail, that will not stop us," says a determined Dordi.

Indeed, the match was insightful for players of both teams. The young members of Silver Innings FC learnt a valuable lesson in their training towards becoming discerning citizens: not to underestimate age, which is a deadly combination of experience, stubbornness and humility. And the old-timers learnt to have more confidence in their abilities.

There will be a rematch between the Silver Innings FC and the cricket team of Dada Dadi Park this month. This time, they will walk onto the field as equals, each bringing their A-game, now more educated about the other's strengths and weaknesses. Game on!

—Natasha Rego



Open your art! Express your talent and put up an exhibition with fellow silvers at your community centre. Visual arts like painting, drawing, photography and pottery are proven to banish depression and stress, regulate blood pressure, and enhance cognitive and memory skills. Take a cue from the *Art is Ageless* show held at the Fulton Presbyterian Manor in Missouri, USA. Intended to display the diverse backgrounds of silvers in the community and reaffirm 'the agelessness of human creativity', the show featured over 450 works in media including acrylics, oils, watercolours and photography.

Then: Old denim jeans Now: Funky bag

Want a fab gift for your granddaughter? Repurpose an old pair of jeans into a funky new bag. Other than the jeans, you'll need scissors, all-purpose thread and basic sewing skills. To begin with, cut off the legs of the jeans. Next, cut through the crotch and then straight across. Turn the jeans inside out and sew the bottom closed; make sure to leave around ½ inch of fabric. Turn inside again to make it the right way and check the bottom for an even edge. Now, it's time to give your bag handles using the legs of the jeans. Cut the inside seams of the legs and sew them at the ends of your bag. To make your bag more stylish, you can sew a bandanna on the handles or sew a monogram at the front of the bag with a different coloured thread. Another great option: insert a ribbon in the loops of the waist and make a bow in the front.



RECYCLING FACTS

- Synthesised indigo, used to make jeans blue, is produced using chemicals that are harmful to humans and the environment. On the other hand, extracting natural indigo is much safer.
- The Pearl River in China has exceeded the limit of lead, copper and cadmium as set by 'soil environmental and quality standards' owing to the waste released by factories producing jeans.



MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. JUST CUT THE INSEAM OF AN OLD PAIR OF JEANS LONG ENOUGH TO BE WRAPPED AROUND YOUR WRIST, THREAD SOME WIRE THROUGH IT, LEAVING AN INCH STICKING OUT FROM BOTH THE ENDS, AND THREAD A BEAD TO BOTH THE ENDS. SECURE THE BEADS AND SHAPE YOUR BRACELET AS YOU LIKE.
2. CONVERT THE WAISTBAND OF AN OLD PAIR OF JEANS INTO A COOL NAPKIN RING BY SIMPLY REMOVING THE BELT LOOP, CUTTING IT ACCORDING TO THE SIZE REQUIRED, AND GLUING THE ENDS.



Hariharan



Queen Elizabeth II



Vinod Mehta



Terence Pratchett

BIRTHDAYS

Singer and composer **Hariharan** turned 60 on 3 April.

Veteran actor and chairman of Balaji Telefilms **Jeetendra** turned 73 on 7 April.

Martial artist and actor **Jackie Chan** turned 61 on 7 April.

Former UN Secretary General and diplomat **Kofi Annan** turned 77 on 8 April.

Former actor and Rajya Sabha MP **Jaya Bachchan** turned 67 on 9 April.

Queen Elizabeth II turns 89 on 21 April.

Actor **Moushumi Chatterjee** turns 62 on 26 April.

IN PASSING

Renowned ornithologist and environmentalist **K S Lavkumar Khachar** died on 3 March. He was 84.

Journalist **Vinod Mehta** died on 8 March. He was 73.

Former Lok Sabha member **Sadashivrao Dadoba Mandlik** died on 10 March after a brief illness. He was 83.

Noted sports journalist **K Baskaran** breathed his last after a brief illness on 11 March. He was 80.

Fantasy author **Sir Terence David John Pratchett** (Terry Pratchett) passed away on 12 March. He was 66.

Pioneer of Israeli cinema **Lia van Leer** died on 13 March in Jerusalem. She was 90.

MILESTONES

- ✎ VETERAN SINGER **LATA MANGESHKAR** WAS AWARDED THE LAADLI VOICE OF THE CENTURY AWARD AT THE NATIONAL LAADLI MEDIA AND ADVERTISING AWARDS FOR GENDER SENSITIVITY 2013-14.
- ✎ FORMER UNION MINISTER AND SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER **M VEERAPPA MOILY** WAS SELECTED FOR THE SARASWATI SAMMAN 2014 FOR HIS KANNADA POEM *RAMAYANA MAHANVESHANAM*.
- ✎ INDIAN-AMERICAN PHYSICIAN **RAHUL JINDAL** WAS SELECTED FOR THE PRESTIGIOUS FULBRIGHT-NEHRU DISTINGUISHED CHAIR AND WILL BE HOSTED BY AHMEDABAD-BASED HL TRIVEDI INSTITUTE OF TRANSPLANTATION SCIENCES.



OVERHEARD

“Today, feminism, like the media, is ageist and focuses on young women of reproductive age in relationships to the exclusion of children and the elderly. There is heaps more pressure on women to look and act a certain way than there had been when I wrote *The Female Eunuch*. In our society, elder women have no respect. Give me the right to grow up, let me age.”

—Renowned Australian feminist, academic and author **Germaine Greer**, 76, at an event to celebrate International Women's Day at the Sydney Opera House

Black. magic

Green tea isn't the only healthy chai on the block. A recent study at Framingham State University, Massachusetts, contends that people who consume **black tea regularly are less likely to get Type 2 diabetes**. Indeed, this study only bolsters a large body of work that swears by the benefits of the brew. Research has established that it can lower blood sugar by blocking the enzyme that turns starch into glucose; in fact, theaflavins and thearubigins, both compounds found in black tea, behave like insulin. Further, it slows down absorption of sugar by the small intestine and is high in antioxidants, which are known to reduce inflammation. Time for a cuppa!



WHITE TEA

Wilted and unoxidised



YELLOW TEA

Unwilted and unoxidised, but allowed to yellow



GREEN TEA

Unwilted and unoxidised



OOLONG

Wilted, bruised and partially oxidised



BLACK TEA

Wilted, sometimes crushed and fully oxidised



DARK TEA

Green tea that has been allowed to ferment

Health benefits of tea

- Helps keep hydrated
- Bolsters immune defences
- Increases metabolism
- Protects against cancer
- May help prevent diabetes
- Protects bones
- Free of calories
- Contains antioxidants
- May reduce risk of heart attack
- Has less caffeine than coffee

Dinodia Photo Library



Reason to THRIVE

A sense of purpose doesn't just put a spring in your step—it can also keep your heart ticking. Scientists from New York's Mount Sinai St Luke's and Mount Sinai Roosevelt assert that **having a purpose in life can reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke**. Their study, presented at the American Heart Association's EPI/Lifestyle 2015 Scientific Sessions conference, defines purpose in life as "a sense of meaning and direction, and a feeling that life is worth living". And among people who had a high sense of this 'purpose', they found a 23 per cent reduction in death rates and 19 per cent reduction in cardiovascular events. For their study, the team reviewed the data of 137,000 people from 10 relevant studies. Going forward, they believe the focus should be on the development of strategies to improve one's sense of purpose. Commenting on the study, Dr Suresh G Vijan, consultant interventional cardiologist with Lilavati Hospital, Fortis Hospital and Hinduja Healthcare in Mumbai, says, "It's a very timely research. Our society is undergoing change; the joint family is gradually collapsing and elders have to look after themselves. We need to develop new interests to keep going. Keeping elders engaged does prolong useful life. Now, we need to discover just how a positive attitude changes our internal chemistry so we can work to improve it."

Heard this?

Cochlear implants may not only boost hearing in silvers with severe hearing loss but enhance their emotional state and thinking abilities, says a new study published in journal *JAMA Otolaryngology—Head & Neck Surgery*. Researchers found that the implants were associated with improved quality of life, lower rates of depression, improved thinking skills, and better perception in quiet and noisy settings.

FITTER WITH FOLIC ACID



This valuable prenatal supplement is now showing its power across the life spectrum. A study by Peking University First Hospital in China states that **folic acid can reduce risk of first stroke in adults with hypertension.** For their study, they divided 20,702 adults with hypertension but no history of a cardiovascular event in two groups. While the first group was given hypertension medication enalapril combined with folic acid, the second was given enalapril alone. During the four-and-a-half-year study, 282 participants suffered from their first stroke in the first group; while the number was 355 in the second group; the study showed 0.7 per cent absolute risk reduction and 21 per cent relative risk reduction for the first group. The group also displayed a lower risk of ischemic stroke and composite cardiovascular events.

VEGGIE BENEFITS

A fibre-rich vegetarian diet can reduce the risk of colorectal cancer among silvers, according to a study by the Seventh Day Adventist Church, published online by journal *Jama Internal Medicine*. Of the 77,659 participants in the long-ranging study, the vegetarians were found to have a 22 per cent lower risk of colorectal cancer, 19 per cent lower risk of colon cancer, and 29 per cent lower risk of rectal cancer than non-vegetarians.

Time to flex

While the benefits of exercise for people with Type 2 diabetes are well-known, it has to be done at the right time to have the desired effect. According to researchers at the University of Missouri, exercising after dinner proved the most beneficial, reducing both sugar and fat levels. One must bear in mind, though, that these decreased levels don't carry forward—maximum benefits require a sustained daily exercise regimen.



KICK THAT BUTT

Another reason to stop smoking, this time for men. A study of current and former smokers between the ages of 45 and 80 published online in the *Annals of the American Thoracic Society* says that male smokers are more likely to get osteoporosis than women. Osteoporosis leads to a decrease in bone mass and density, increasing the risk of fractures.

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.

FIFTY WITHOUT BLEMISH

I am 78 and I like to say I have three children: two sons, Anand and Anil, and a daughter, my beloved car Anupama, a 1964 Fiat 1100, who has stuck by me for over 50 years.

I decided to buy a car in 1964, when I was a research assistant at the Bureau of Economics and Statistics with the Maharashtra government. I paid a deposit of ₹ 4,000 at the General Post Office and booked the 1964 Italian Fiat. It turned out to be the last cut-glass model of the series and I was told it could take up to four years for the car to arrive all the way from Italy.

Three years had passed and I suspected it would take well over three years more for me to see my car. Around this time, a well-known architect from Bhuleshwar had just received two of the same cars simultaneously. An acquaintance of mine told the architect about 'a good lady in Mumbai, a lady of status, a professor at the university' who had just booked the same model. It seems lightning

struck the blessed architect and he said, "If it is a lady of that status, she will have my car." I paid him ₹ 22,000 and we had the car transferred to my name. From there, I drove it to Dadar.

Anupama is much more than just a vehicle; she is more an extension of me. She has empowered me through my career as professor of economics at Mumbai University; as senior economist in the Indian Merchants' Chamber; and finally as special officer to industrialist and obsessive collector Pranlal Bhogilal.

I spent 30 years at Pearl Colony, Dadar, and my car has transported the blind, the handicapped and cancer patients to and from places they've needed to be. I am proud of the service she was able to render at funerals, ferrying mourners to the cemetery or church. Once she had to carry the dead body of a three year-old boy from the clinic to his home in Pearl Colony. Now in Vashi, when I am at the wheel, I feel amused to see other commuters craning their necks for a second look at my baby. Kids, especially, feel thrilled and start waving at me till I am out of sight.

Then and now: Prof Lobo with her treasured Anupama



Just before she turned 50 last year, her carburettor started giving way. With much difficulty I found the necessary part. I did have a grand thanksgiving celebration with prayer and worship to Almighty God who has gifted me this priceless possession. My Anupama is going to outlive me and form a small part of my legacy. And for all that she has done for me, I will ensure she is preserved till long after cars learn to drive themselves.

—Prof Matilda Lobo, Navi Mumbai



Natasha Rego



Hemant Patil

COUNT EACH BLESSING

The saying goes, 'When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.' I believe that when life gives you lemons, it also makes sure you have everything you need to make lemonade; you just have to accept it with open arms.

As most young women did back in the day, I got married and started managing my home early in life. But having watched my family in the hospitality industry, my husband and I moved to Pune to be part of the hotel industry. I took to it quite naturally and we grew a fledgling 28-room hotel to a 100-room hotel. But fate had other plans and we moved to Jaipur, where we ended up running a very successful eatery. And, just when it looked like it might be the place to settle, it was time to move again.

Back in Pune, we discovered that the family business had started falling behind, so we put our noses to the grindstone. But, this time it took its toll. My husband, who had uncomplainingly worked hard all his life, took ill and passed away, leaving me to fend for myself. I was determined not to succumb and took up the suggestion of my mother and brother to move to the US. But I found nothing to hold me back there. So, I gave up my green card and winged it back to Pune.

It was at this crossroads of my life that I stepped into the world of flowers. A prestigious five-star hotel in Pune had a flower shop and needed someone to manage it. I took over the reins and turned it into a flourishing business,

Blooms and blossoms make Khanna's life special

which included exporting blooms. I ran the shop called Foliage for 24 years and loved every minute of it. I made friends and shared their joys and sorrows. I was very busy and enjoyed being among flowers and people who loved them. However, life comes with no guarantees—suddenly the management of the hotel changed and everyone was asked to vacate the premises within 15 days. I literally had to bundle up all my supplies and pending orders and find another space in a hurry. This time, I chose one closer to my home. But I paid a price for the constant kneeling and squatting that my business entailed and I gave up the shop to stay at home, four years ago.

The flowers and bouquets continued to come as it is not easy to break away from something you have been doing most of your life. I would get requests from friends and acquaintances to arrange flowers and create something 'special'.

I have never needed kitty parties to keep busy. I am happy pottering about the house and making sure it runs smoothly. Friends call or come by and so do my children. One grieves for what is lost but must be open to what comes along too. I recently got to meet and spend time with two of my granddaughters whom I had never met before, just after losing my oldest son, their father. The shadows are there but flowers learn to thrive in sunshine and in shadow. We must learn from them.

—Swaraj Khanna, Pune



Goodbye gluten? Examine the health benefits before giving gluten a miss from your diet

I am a 58 year-old suffering from obesity. For a year, I have tried to stay away from foods rich in carbohydrates without much success. Can I try a gluten-free diet?

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. It's a common protein source and processed food filler, found in many foods, medications and everyday items like bread and cookies. Other foods like cereal, soy sauce, whey products, alcoholic beverages, such as beer, and even beauty products, such as lip balms, may have gluten in them too. There are people who suffer from an autoimmune disorder called celiac disease—their small intestines cannot process gluten properly and it causes a serious response in their digestive system.

Some people choose to follow a gluten-free diet for healthier eating. However, unless you have celiac disease or are allergic to gluten, going gluten-free will not give you any additional health benefits.

Not automatically healthier

Gluten-free food doesn't automatically mean it is low calorie or healthy. In fact, gluten-free foods are not only more expensive but full of extra calories and sugars to make up for taste and texture when alternative products are swapped. They also tend to have less fibre than their gluten-containing counterparts are not always equally nutritious. An apple and a gluten-free sugar cookie are both gluten-free but their nutrients vary drastically; as mentioned above, gluten-free cakes, cookies and sweet treats are often high in sugar and fat, making them dense with calories. Unless people are careful, a gluten-free diet can lack essential nutrients as a lot of gluten-free products tend to be low in B vitamins, calcium, iron, zinc and magnesium. Also, don't confuse 'gluten-free' with 'low carbohydrate'; some gluten-free pastas are actually higher in carbohydrates than regular pasta.

That said, if you follow a gluten-free diet by eating mostly naturally gluten-free foods, you might experience



Dinodia Photo Library

Gluten-free food doesn't automatically mean it is low calorie or healthy. In fact, gluten-free foods are not only more expensive but full of extra calories and sugars to make up for taste and texture when alternative products are swapped

weight loss. But that would be because you have replaced low-nutrient processed foods with fresh, nutrient-dense foods, which are always recommended for weight loss. If you give up eating gluten the right way, by cutting out refined carbohydrates and eating more fresh produce, lean proteins and gluten-free whole grains, you may very well feel better and have more energy, because you'll be eating fewer processed, high-calorie foods.

So while there's no evidence that simply getting rid of gluten will result in weight loss, eating gluten-free may often cause you to eat more whole, unprocessed foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes and lean meats.

A balanced diet

There is no harm in avoiding gluten but remember to consume a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables and legumes. When you're trying to lose weight, the key is to make conscious choices about eating whole, real foods and getting produce without pesticides, and meat without hormones and antibiotics. In general, select more fruits, vegetables, lean meat and more naturally gluten-free grains, like brown rice or quinoa. Also, keep in mind that some gluten-free foods can be processed in factories that also process gluten foods leading to cross-contamination.

Weight management

You lose weight when you expend more calories or energy than you consume—not by avoiding gluten. Thus, diet and exercise are both important components of weight management. Take a look at the rest of your eating habits first. Your weight gain could have more to do with your addiction to sugar-packed coffee drinks, for example, than your gluten intake.

Rely on fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, dairy and lean meats to get the nutrients you need. Avoid products that list refined white rice flour, potato starch, tapioca flour or corn as the first (and second and third) ingredient. Look for those made with more wholesome flours such as almond, amaranth, quinoa and millet, as well as other nutritious ingredients, including ground flaxseed, hemp seed, chia and nuts.

READERS ASK

I am 70 years old and have been noticing increased water retention in my body for the past few weeks. What are the foods I need to consume and avoid to reduce the condition?

Dehydration makes your body hold on to water. Drink plenty of water; a well-hydrated body is less likely to retain fluid. Drink a glass as soon as you wake up and keep sipping all day. Slip in a few slices of lemon, lime or orange as citrus is high in potassium, which balances sodium levels and can relieve water retention. Melons are another rich source of potassium. Start your day with a fruit salad or smoothie. Foods like leafy greens, celery, tomatoes, carrots, onions and peppers and the flavonoids in vegetables (and fruit) can alleviate water retention. Get your fill by tossing veggies into a salad at lunch and dinner. Loaded with omega-3s, salmon is a super food that is not only good for the heart, brain, and joints but can also fend off water retention. Other rich sources of omega-3s include tuna, herring and flax. Include salmon and other fatty fish in your diet at least twice a week. Vitamin B5, calcium and Vitamin D help the body excrete excess fluids. Include fresh fruits and low-fat dairy foods in your daily diet. Reduce the amount of salt in your diet; stop salting your meals at the table. Avoid processed foods like manufactured meats, potato chips and salted nuts.

People who eat a protein-rich breakfast are less likely to indulge in high-calorie snacks later in the day, according to a 2013 study published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. So don't just reach for a morning bowl of high-sugar cereal, whether it has gluten or not. Instead accompany an egg with toast. Or cook certified gluten-free oats and top with plain yogurt and fruit.

Like refined carbohydrates, foods high in sugar not only load you with empty calories but also cause blood sugar spikes and dips that can increase feelings of hunger and cravings. Avoiding these foods may make it easier to choose better foods that support weight loss. Make health, not weight loss, your primary goal. And keep in mind that if you're sensitive to gluten, switching to a healthy gluten-free diet might cause you to gain appropriate weight because your body will better absorb nutrients as it heals.

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



Dealing with disability: While they can be debilitating, most disabilities are preventable and treatable

“Pain is pain. Broken is broken. Fear is the biggest disability of all. And will paralyse you more than you being in a wheelchair.”

—Nick Vujicic

A disability hinders the capacity to function competently and thereby lead a normal life. As such old age is viewed as a permanent disability. This is because it is an avenue for multiple physical, psychological and social disabilities. Indeed, silvers tend to have more diseases and disabilities compared to younger adults. Most of the diseases are chronic and elders often have multiple diseases simultaneously. Disease and disability can greatly limit independence, thereby increasing the need for support. How well a person functions is determined by the ability to perform essential activities of daily living, such as eating, dressing, bathing, transferring between bed and chair, and using the toilet. One of the goals of care is to keep elders independent and functioning well for the maximum possible time. In a perfect world, people would remain fully functional and totally independent until death.

Chronic conditions—heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes—that cause disabilities are the same that commonly cause death. Other chronic conditions—arthritis, osteoporosis, and vision and hearing loss—are unlikely to cause death but affect how well people are able to function. A youngster may have a single disability, but an elder could suffer from poor vision, progressive hearing loss, memory disturbances, and paralysis of limbs or fractures owing to a fall. Multiple disabilities contribute to one another and accentuate the hardship.

That said, disability is a type of dysfunction that has to be differentiated from impairment and handicap. Here are some examples to differentiate these terms.

Impairment	Disability	Handicap
Amputation of lower limb	Walking difficulties	Inability to climb stairs
Dementia	Forgetfulness	Inability to live alone
Dysphasia	Communication difficulties	Inability to shop or travel alone



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Disability may be temporary (chest infection) or permanent (stroke); single (amputation) or multiple (heart disease, cataract, deafness, depression); static (blindness) or progressive (Parkinson's, dementia).

Activities of daily living (ADL)

A disability takes a heavy toll on ADL. These are the functional abilities a person needs to live with minimum dependence. A comprehensive evaluation of physical and cognitive abilities required to maintain independence is called a functional assessment. It is basically the ability to function within the arena of daily living.

The consequences

The consequences of disability may vary from mild to very serious. The common consequences include:

- Immobility
- Instability
- Incontinence
- Impairment of memory

Causes of immobility

- **Pain:** In bones (trauma, osteoporosis, cancer); in joints (arthritis, gout); in muscles (poly rheumatic, ischemia)
- **Weakness:** Diabetes, thyroid, anaemia, cancer, stroke
- **Psychological:** Anxiety, fear, depression, dementia
- **Iatrogenic:** Caused by drugs (over sedation)

Potential consequences of prolonged bed rest

- Loss of joint mobility (contracture)
- Reduced muscle strength (weakness)
- Predisposition to venous thrombosis
- Pressure sores
- Urinary infection/incontinence
- Respiratory complications (pneumonia)
- Dehydration

Instability

Instability leads to falls. Falls are certainly very common in old age, their causes being many and their outcome often serious. Fear of falling may demoralise a person to the extent that they give up in the battle against disability.

Dependency

Disability is a major predisposing factor for dependency. Physical disability leads to restriction of movement. About 20 per cent of silvers are housebound. This will lead to less contact with others, which in turn leads to loneliness, depression and sometimes even suicidal tendencies.

Planning a rehabilitation programme

There are four processes in the planning of a rehabilitation programme:

1. Estimating the level of activity prior to the episode that resulted in the need for rehabilitation
2. Assessment of the present physical, mental and emotional state of the patient
3. Setting of short and long-term goals
4. Determination of the techniques necessary to achieve these goals

Prevention of disability

Silvers are more prone to multiple disabilities, but most are either preventable or treatable. People with disabilities should look forward to ways to overcome them. And others should take steps to prevent them, as follows:

READERS ASK

I am 70 years old and don't suffer from any major illness. Recently, I developed sudden weakness on the right side of my face. I consulted my family physician and he said it was owing to paralysis of a facial nerve. He prescribed some tablets and advised physiotherapy. Now, I have recovered almost 80 per cent but remain doubtful whether the problem is related to a stroke. Please advise me.

You are suffering from a condition called Bell's palsy, where one of the nerves in your face (facial nerve – VII) is affected, leading to paralysis of one side of the face. The precise cause of this condition is not known. However, it is now believed that viral infection could be a reason. It may be secondary to autoimmune reaction or tumour, which is unlikely in your case. Previously, situations that produce exposure to cold (chilly wind, cold AC, driving with car open) were considered triggers for Bell's palsy. The symptoms include sudden onset of weakness of one side of the face, deviation of mouth, poor eyelid closure, numbness of cheek, watering of eyes, blurred vision, etc. Persons with Bell's palsy generally have spontaneous recovery and excellent prognosis. They respond well to treatment with corticosteroids, anti-virals and analgesics. A variety of non-pharmacological measures, including physical therapy and eye care, aids in the recovery. Unlike Bell's palsy, stroke causes weakness limited to the lower half of the face and is usually associated with speech disturbances and/or weakness of limbs, which is not your case. Hence, you can relax and hopefully wait for a complete recovery.

- Undergo periodic health checkups and take necessary treatment according to ailments, for diabetes, hypertension, obesity, thyroid diseases, etc
- Improve your balance with regular exercise
- Give adequate care to eye, ear, teeth
- Avoid multiple drugs
- Early ambulation will prevent many disabilities
- Do not hesitate to undergo physiotherapy if necessary

In conclusion, never forget that the sum total of all our abilities is a thousand-fold higher than our disabilities. As they say, once you choose hope, anything is possible.

Padma Shri 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



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

It is an interesting medical revelation that the much-joked about obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is not so much a 'mental' problem as a biological one. The behaviour pattern is triggered when the primitive part of the nervous system is flooded with sensory information that it is conditioned to see as dangerous. This part of the nervous system does not listen to the reasoning part of the cortex, which is a rather recent entrant in the evolution of our nervous system. So trying to talk yourself out of OCD, in fact, can create a counter response, with the primitive part of you clinging even more firmly to its fears. If we see this aspect of the problem, finding an appropriate response could help us sort it at the root instead of tinkering at it superficially.

ARIES

21 March to 19 April

For the high-energy Aries, who is very goal-oriented, yoga must be challenging. As an ambitious fire sign, an Aries personality needs a yoga practice that is sweaty, and mentally and physically demanding.

One way of dealing with this is to have poses that naturally grow into more ambitious ones. For instance, the basic and classic boat pose (*naukasana*) can be transited with core strength into an arm balance like the crooked eight-limb pose (*astavakrasana*). Sun salutations (*surya namaskar*) with either interesting variations in certain poses or sequences or static holds in all the poses can also be very difficult, exciting and stimulating.

To tone the fire sign down, and keep it balanced so it does not hurt itself or others around it, requires that a section of the practice is also balancing and calming. Grounding oneself with practices like alternate nostril breathing (*anulom vilom*) and pacing the challenge of an otherwise high-energy *sadhana* with some staid and simple poses will be the best way to ensure this sign does not suffer burnout. The intermingling of the exciting and grounding parts of one's practice must be planned ahead. As with other signs, it is very important to have a regular timing for one's practice. And some soothing practices should be a constant in one's daily practice.

Problem areas for Aries include lower back issues, any physical problem that can attack the region over the neck (headaches, colds), and emotional problems of most other fire signs that include instability, high ambition that can be exhausting, anger and irritability. Owing to the latter, they are likely to suffer nervous tension that will affect cardiovascular health and the kidneys. Thus, poses that tone down the fire sign are ideal, such as all forward bends and leg raises. Inversions in all forms are great, as well as standing balancers, to help contain irritability.

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)



Psychic union pose (yoga mudrasana)

Sit cross-legged. If possible, do so in the classic lotus pose (*padmasana*). Place hands loosely behind, interlocking fingers.

Inhale. Exhale, drop the forehead down as shown, keep the hands loosely behind. If the forehead does not touch, you can use a small stool, cushion or bolster on which to rest the head. Breathe normally throughout. Hold for 15 seconds initially, increasing time gradually to a minute or so. For an advanced variation, you can interlock the fingers and lift the arms up in the air to put a positive stress on the upper back. Further advancements may involve dropping the chin on the ground, or the chest, challenging flexibility even further. **Benefits:** This is a spiritually powerful pose, calming the mind and removing stress. Further, it boosts metabolism and respiratory capacity (especially the second variation).

Model: Anita Namole,
Harmony Interactive Centre
Photographer: Haresh Patel

The first day at school

The first time you rode the bicycle.

The first crush you had at thirteen

The first drama you got a part in

The first day at college

The first date you went on

The first kiss

The first time you proposed

The first job interview

The first board meeting you addressed

The first day after retirement

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The first click of the mouse.

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HIS LADLE LOVE BY PRATIBHA JAIN

A proud legacy

SURESH KIMTEE • HYDERABAD

An engaging series about silver men who wield a deft ladle in the kitchen

'A dedicated memory' is the phrase that came to mind when I was speaking with Suresh Kimtee, a 63 year-old Marwari residing in Hyderabad. His family name 'Kimtee' is bestowed by none other than the hero of Mewar, Maharana Pratap. In a calm and unwavering tone, he narrates the incidents, like a seasoned storyteller, painting the words with rich text and subtext. It is the memory of this history that shapes his entire being

and affirms his very existence. He is described by his family and friends as calm and serene, knowledgeable in every field, dependable and, above all, passionate about cooking. Sisters and nieces wait for their jars of pickles every summer, which he prepares with his own hands.

Namaste Sureshji. First of all, tell me about the intrigue that surrounds your family name.

That would take me back to my ancestors. We, the Kimtees, can trace our family history back to 17 generations, right up to Lalsinghji Dhupia, the father of Gangaramji. In the famous battle of Haldighati in 1576, between the Rajputs and the Mughals, Gangaramji and his family pledged their allegiance to Maharana Pratap and fought the battle. Most of the male adults lost their lives in the battle while the children and women escaped to the forests. Touched by the devotion and sacrifice of the family, Maharana Pratap himself is said to have stated, "*Yeh ek kimtee tyag hai*," which translates as, "This is a rich sacrifice." The king then bestowed the title of 'Kimtee' upon the family and the family adopted the title as their surname.



What an awe-inspiring episode!

Yes, I feel humbled to belong to this lineage. Whatever I have heard and seen of my ancestors has truly made its imprint upon me.

I will be delighted if you can tell us about the astrological prediction about your family fortune.

My great-grandfather Pannalalji Kimtee migrated from Chittor to Rampura, a village near Chambal in Madhya Pradesh, where he led a humble existence with his family. One morning, he met an astrologer who told him that he must leave that place immediately if he wanted to find his fortune. He also told him that if he left that very minute without looking back, one of his descendants would become a multimillionaire.

And he believed the man?

Yes, he instantly got up and, in the very same clothes, started walking towards the South. He asked a villager to inform his family. It took him six months to reach Bombay. There, he worked for a jeweller and learnt to evaluate gemstones. After four years, he left for Hyderabad. As he did not find a good job there, he joined the Nizami state. Mehboob Ali Pasha, the sixth Nizam, was impressed with his valuation of gems and made him chief valuation agent. He spent the rest of his life here. His younger son Ramlalji adopted a son in 1973 whose name was Sampatlalji—my father.

I have heard much about Sampatlalji Kimtee and his rise to fame and success.

My father was well-read and held a degree in law, but he was not a practising lawyer. He started his career with a job in an import-export unit in Hyderabad. His performance was exemplary and after some years, he started on his own in the share market. Unfortunately, he incurred huge losses and brought ill-fame to

the family by his borrowings. After a few years of struggle, my father's luck turned. He took Taj Glassworks Private Limited on a lease for five years, appointed 800 workers, and rose to success. The ruling government asked him to surrender the company. He refused and that led to trouble. The labour union rebelled at the same time and the unit was shut down. A lawsuit was slapped on him. His education held him in good stead at this point and he fought his own case. The trial went on for six months as many senior officials were involved. Finally, he won the case. After that, there was no looking back. He bought land and started the pawn-broking business. Later, he started a dairy farm and a dal mill.

“Cooking is no big deal; all it needs is passion and dedication. Every step is important in cooking, right from choosing the vegetables to chopping them to perfect sizes, to cooking with patience”

How did this turn of luck change his life; for instance, his social standing?

Apart from the comfort wealth can bring, my father also gained a lot of social respect. He formed marriage alliances for his children with the finest families in our community. It was truly a case of rags to riches, but the one good thing it did was taught us to pitch in for the housework. Even though most men in my community do not get involved in housework, I grew up learning that one should not be ashamed to do any kind of work. I used to see my mother managing so much of work all the time that I simply started helping her. I also liked being around her more than going out

and playing. Her cooking was simple, yet special, and I wanted to learn whatever she prepared.

So you have been cooking since your younger years?

In the beginning, I was simply helping my mother. It was around 1999 that my wife Thara fell unwell and the doctors asked her to rest completely. So, gradually, I started spending more time in the kitchen. For the past 10 years, I have been cooking almost every day.

Tell me about your mother.

My mother was a disciplinarian. She was quite strict with all her six daughters and six daughters-in-law. We had a conservative upbringing and were expected to adhere to the family rules. I don't ever remember sitting in front of my father. We would stand before him in a subservient manner and answer his questions in monosyllables. Our house functioned like military rule.

Yet, a much-loved place for the large extended family....

Oh yes, hospitality was the first rule [laughs]. Holidays were fun times when my cousins, aunts, nephews and nieces came for the summer stay. All these memories are part of an old-world charm.

Along with the summer pickles?

Yes, I always assisted my mother in pickle making. When the mango season would be in full swing, we would buy sacks of 2,000 mangoes at a time.

A ritual that has continued, no doubt. I have heard much about your pickle making and pickle distribution.

Yes, more than 40 jars are sent out every year. We enjoy interacting with our large extended family and love having family and friends over at our

place. Maintaining good relationships is an important aspect of our life.

Indeed, your niece describes both of you as an extremely hospitable and dependable couple. Tell me, what is the secret to good cooking?

Cooking is no big deal; all it needs is passion and dedication—*dil se*

banao. I think my passion for cooking intensified at Gokul Chaat, the finest *chaat* shop in Hyderabad. I would spend hours watching how they prepared the delicacies and absorbed their meticulous attention to detail. Every step is important in cooking. Right from choosing the vegetables to chopping them to perfect sizes, to cooking with patience.

Sambhariya

A rich side dish with potatoes and onions

A delicious side dish, a cherished memory, this recipe reminds Sureshji Kimtee of his mother and her penchant for perfection. This is a much-loved family recipe and a favourite



Yamini V

for decades. He says the trick is in choosing potatoes and onions of the same size and shape—perfect 1-inch rounds—but not baby potatoes and baby onions.

Ingredients

- Small potatoes: ½ kg
- Small onions: ½ kg
- Cumin seeds: ½ tsp

- Chilli powder: ½ tsp
- Jaggery: 2-3 tbsp
- Tamarind pulp (thick): 1 tbsp
- Oil: 3 tbsp
- Ghee: 1 tbsp
- Coriander leaves to garnish

For the gravy

- Small potatoes: 3; coarsely grated or chopped very fine

- Small onions: 3; chopped very fine
- Gram flour (*besan*): 2 tbsp
- Garam masala: ¼ tsp
- Cumin powder: ¼ tsp
- Chilli powder: 1 tsp to 1 tbsp
- Turmeric powder: ¼ tsp
- Coriander powder: 1 tbsp
- Green chilli: 1; chopped fine
- Coriander leaves: a few sprigs; chopped fine
- Salt to taste

Method

Add the ingredients for the gravy along with 1 tbsp oil. Set this mixture aside. Peel the potatoes and onions and quarter them. Heat water in a pan, add the quartered potatoes and cook until parboiled. Take care that they are not cooked fully. Now add the quartered onions and boil for 10 more minutes. Set aside along with the water.

Heat the remaining oil in a wok. Add the cumin seeds and as they splutter, add ½ tsp chilli powder. Immediately add the mixture for the gravy. Sauté for 2 minutes and add 2 cups of water. Allow to cook until the potatoes in the mixture have cooked fully. Add the jaggery and tamarind pulp and allow to cook for 5 minutes. Add the boiled potatoes and onions along with the water. Allow to cook until it looks like a thick gravy. Adjust the salt and quantity of water. Add the ghee and switch off the flame. Garnish with coriander leaves. Serve with *roti* or *parantha*. In the Kimtee family, they enjoy eating this dish with steamed rice and *kadhi*.

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



After celebrating your 25th anniversary, celebrate your first.

The first time your eyes met.
The first time you mustered up the courage.
The first time you bared your heart.
The first time you heard "Yes".
The first date.
The first time you held hands.
The first fight.
The first time you made up.
Shouldn't you be celebrating, that first rush of love
before life
and the babies and the bills intruded?
Because for the first time
you're at an age when
you can fall in love with each other
all over again.





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Tech-tonic shift

Kris Dev, a tech-savvy change agent, stays focused on anti-corruption, transparency and accountability, reports **Jayanthi Somasundaram**

Kris Dev's Facebook status announces his most recent RTI petition. It is aimed at a neighbour who has allegedly violated the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority rules. Turns out, instead of two storeys, his neighbour has built four. "Following this development, another neighbour has built three storeys, and each one is pointing a finger at the other," says the 59 year-old change agent and Right To Information (RTI) activist.

Gopala Krishnan Devanathan, fondly known as Kris Dev, has been leveraging technology to introduce transparency into the working of the public and private sectors. His foray into RTI activism was an offshoot of this larger endeavour. It all began when he started working with the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) as a management trainee, after he acquired an MMS degree at Madras University. During the 17 years he spent with SAIL, liaising with various government departments and officials at all levels, Dev gained an insight into how public corporations and other government agencies operate.

During the next six years, he gained the exact opposite perspective, when he left SAIL and joined the L N Mittal Group in North America. "When I returned in 2000, I noticed a major difference between our country and others—over there, when they mean business, they mean it. Here, we don't. When I compare working systems abroad and in India, it is obvious that we are intelligent individually, yet collectively we are not. There is no synergy," Dev says, adding that the perspective he gained from his

overseas experience made him realise that he could help India get a better governance methodology.

So, as a next step, he set up 'Life Line to Business', a start-up IT company, and in 2002, he launched an e-governance product called 'e-administration tool for e-Governance'. Dev implemented the portal on a trial basis at Electronics Corporation of Tamil Nadu (ELCOT), the nodal government organisation for implementing e-governance in the state. He and his team thus proved that transparency was possible and government paperwork need not take so much time.

"A biometric smart card can link a person to a bank account directly. It is a foolproof system. No ghost beneficiaries, duplicate beneficiaries or forged signatures"

The product was appreciated and was even implemented by the Puducherry government on a trial basis. "In Puducherry, we were able to link 20 departments and the chief secretariat could check on all of them with a click of a button," explains Dev, who adds that the portal was used only for a year before the administration changed.

Shyam Sundar, a former colleague who worked closely with Dev for 15 years at SAIL, remarks, "Both of us have had several discussions

on things that need to be changed in society. We kept tabs on various procurement activities to ensure things were in place." Sundar now trades in commodities in Chennai. On the challenges Dev faced, Sundar adds, "He did not have a rosy path and faced several hurdles. However, he is a man of perseverance and focus."

Bala Sandilyan, who coordinates events and workshops at the Indian Institute of Security Management, has had endless discussions with Dev on using technology for better governance. "Today, to take the right decisions, we need to be tech savvy. People need to be connected and we should be able to track movements. Dev had always envisioned this setup and worked towards it."

He decided it was time to take technology to the people and worked on a unique biometric identification using a biometric smart card. He got a break when a local NGO in Ananthapur District, Andhra Pradesh, invited him to use this technology for 200 beneficiaries in a remote village for the 'Work For Food' programme. "Later, when floods hit one of the poorest of the poor areas of Andhra Pradesh, an international NGO provided some funds which were misappropriated by a smaller NGO, thereby not reaching those in need. They requested us to do a field visit and provide a solution."

Dev set up a unique biometric system for the 200 beneficiaries in Gurrempetta village in Khammam district and it worked wonders. His work won him a similar project in Western Andhra Pradesh, following which he was invited by the Bihar government's Principal Secretary for Panchayat Raj

in 2007 to create a foolproof system in that state. "A biometric smart card can link a person to a bank account directly. It is a foolproof system. No ghost beneficiaries, duplicate beneficiaries or forged signatures," he explains.

Dev's work has won him several awards, like the Manthan-AIF Award 2006 for creating India's best e-Content for e-Inclusion and Livelihood Creation. He is also the recipient of the Innovations 2009 Award (Ideas in Practice) for implementing e-Administration: e-Platform for e-Governance, from the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay Alumni Association and The IndUS Entrepreneurs (TiE), Pune. Our crusader's work in e-governance inevitably introduced him to the RTI Act. Dev attended the National Convention on the RTI Act in 2006, addressed by both the President and Prime Minister of India, and returned to Chennai to share it with more people. "RTI is a fantastic tool, if used properly. Simply put, Section 4 (1) a of the RTI Act explains that the government should make information accessible to the public at any given point."

The first RTI petition he and a group of activists filed was against the Punjab Warehousing Corporation, a Punjab government organisation. The media had reported that India was importing food produce, which did not reach the people as it was rotting in the warehouse. "We asked them how much was spoilt and received an answer in 30 days. The value of the spoilt items was over a ₹ 100 crore!" says Dev. "Soon I started filing more RTI petitions and was assisted by people who had been using the RTI Act before me."

In no time, Dev was conducting workshops for the public through various NGOs in Chennai and other parts of Tamil Nadu. As silvers actively participate in community events, this helped build an audience. "I urge citizens to ask all sorts of questions—even if it is about a streetlight not



Dev anchoring a counselling session

working. I was helping a silver couple find out if a piece of land belonged to them as someone else had claimed it. They used the RTI Act and discovered that the property was their ancestral land and that they were the rightful owners," smiles Dev.

RTI assignments and requests were now coming in thick and fast but there was one workshop that Dev conducted that was a real eyeopener. Govinda Krishnan, member of the State Planning Commission for Disability, and founder of Nethrodaya, a residential resource centre for the visually challenged, had invited Dev to speak on the Act to 50 visually challenged individuals. "The RTI is a powerful weapon and, armed with the knowledge that the authorities fear it, many of the workshop participants later filed petitions to empower themselves," recalls Dev.

He makes an astute observation—that it is not an achievement to file so many RTIs; it is actually a reflection on the flaws in the system. "If the government can make information accessible and transparent, we need not file petitions. That's how it is meant to be according to Section 4 (1) a of the Act."

Our crusader's work turned into a campaign long ago and Dev is often mentioned in the media. "Even if I haven't attended his workshops, I have been closely following his work," says Dr V Suresh, a high court lawyer and national general secretary for the People's Union for Civil Liberties.

As an RTI activist, there's never a dull moment. In 2006, Dev co-founded the Transparency and Accountability Network (TrAcNet), a global network of social organisations and activists who exchange ideas on creating a community-centric sustainable development framework using the principle of transparency for accountability. "We have participants from all over the world exchanging ideas and it keeps me thoroughly engaged." He has also assisted in a project for the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India, in its effort to integrate districts with blocks and panchayats for devolution of 3Fs— functions, funds and functionaries.

With so much on his plate and so much still to be done, does he ever mentally log out? "When offline, I travel, take long walks and spend time in my garden." 🌸

SAMAJWADI SHRAWAN YATRA 2015



A JOURNEY TO GOD'S DOOR

The legend of Shrawan Kumar carrying his blind, aged parents on a pilgrimage of holy places, in a bamboo scale suspended from his shoulder, has recently been caricatured in a novel way in Uttar Pradesh. Donning the mantle of Shrawan Kumar, young Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav has launched Samajwadi Shrawan Yatra, an all-expenses-paid trip to holy places, for UP's senior citizens (with an attendant). In the first batch that was flagged off on 14 March 2015, about 1,000 seniors were taken from Lucknow to Haridwar and Rishikesh on a special train. The state government has tied up with IRCTC (Indian Railways Catering Tourist Corporation) for this trip. A medical team accompanied the pilgrims in case of emergencies. For instance when Mr Ram Sanehi

suffered a heart problem in Haridwar, he was immediately administered medical aid. Needless to say, when the group returned, they were all praises for the initiative. Many expressed their joy for being enabled to make this trip, one that they've been planning for years but could not afford to go on. Nathu Ram Lashkari, a disabled pilgrim from Banda, was overwhelmed by the arrangements. Draupadi Devi from Siddharthnagar appreciated the good food and clean beddings, and also the attention to detail when it came to the small things like mosquito coils. Encouraged by the success of this maiden trip, the state government is planning more such pilgrimages in the days to come.

—Manish Shukla



THE GREAT
INDIAN FAMILY
Bond



:: cover feature ::

TODAY, BOTH JOINT AND NUCLEAR FAMILIES ARE PASSÉ. ENTERPRISING INDIANS ARE RETHINKING FAMILY EQUATIONS TO STRIKE THE PERFECT BALANCE BETWEEN FREEDOM AND DEPENDENCY, WRITES **SRIREKHA PILLAI**



VS Rajappa Kurup lives by the clock. His routine—from 4 am yoga to supper at 7.30 pm—is meticulously set to the movement of the clock. Such is this 77 year-old's fastidiousness that his 68 year-old wife Nandini gets flustered if the queue at the neighbourhood supermarket takes longer than usual, because she has to be back in time to get a warm lunch on the table at the stroke of the hour. The lifestyle of their daughter Archana and son-in-law Anil, who live upstairs, couldn't be more different. "We are very easygoing," says Archana. "My kids study when they want to, eat when they feel like, and mostly have their meals while watching television, a practice my parents don't particularly approve of. For them, meals are sacrosanct family time around the dining table."

The senior and junior generations may have diametrically opposite lifestyles, but they share a beautiful relationship based on mutual affection and respect (**page 52**). Living just a floor apart in the heart of Thiruvananthapuram, the Kurups have an ideal living arrangement that ensures they are there for each other in times of need and yet retain their independence. “Dad has hard and fast rules about life,” adds Archana. “Though my lifestyle might seem chaotic to them, at least I feel I’m in control of my home.”



With increased prosperity,
jobs and a surge of
migration from villages to
towns and cities,

63%

of households in urban
areas and

59%

in rural areas went small

A NEW PARADIGM

Welcome to The Great Indian Family 3.0, the newest version of the Indian family—a hybrid between the traditional joint family and the modern nuclear home. Spurred by a keen desire to bridge geographical gaps and stay in close proximity with kith and kin, this homecoming is marked by a mutual give and take. Yes, a tectonic shift is

ALL IN THE FAMILY

A LOOK AT HOME DYNAMICS WORLDWIDE



Rain Shelter House, designed
by Japan's Y+M Architecture,
for intergenerational living

www.diandian.com

Recent research by British multinational banking and financial services company Barclays reveals that most people believe the solution to an ageing population is to move towards a multigenerational household. While over half the 2,000 adults surveyed said they would need to move house to accommodate three generations, a fifth considered building an annex or extension for an elderly relative. Given the scenario, it's no surprise that multigenerational houses are making a strong rebound around the world.

Besides senior caregiving, a move towards multigenerational houses is the product of several factors, such as struggling economies and higher unemployment, rising cost of living and insufficient supply of new affordable dwellings. Evidence suggests that in the US and Australia, nearly 20 per cent of households are now multigenerational.

US With a hike in demand for multigenerational homes, the construction industry is designing houses that are compatible. Private spaces,

acoustics conducive to the needs of all generations, and easy access and

mobility throughout the residence are just a few of the features receiving attention in these homes with 'Universal Design' or 'Design for All'. Most have large, independent, first-level bedrooms, ideal for silvers, with no-step entries, lever door handles, non-slip floors and single-touch appliances. The once popular 'mother-in-law quarters' are also staging a return to the housing market. Such an arrangement includes two complete living spaces, i.e. kitchen, bedroom/bath, living room, which are included as part of the same house or as a residence with a second detached unit.

JAPAN With a burgeoning silver population and high cost of land, multigenerational households have special social relevance in Japan. Called *nisetai jutaku* (two-generation homes), they generally house three generations. Popularised by Asahi Kasei Homes in 1975, they are basically two homes in one: two kitchens, two bathrooms, two living rooms, in some cases even two *genkan* (foyers), the point being that two generations could still live together but not have to see each other all the time. The arrangement is popular in large cities where property values are high. Interestingly, the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami in 2011 has hiked the demand for such homes. Statistics reveal that while the demand for *nisetai jutaku* was more than 10 per cent in 2011 around Japan, in Hokkaido and the Tohoku—regions mainly hit by the quake—the demand for such homes is 20 per cent. Meanwhile, Japan's Y+M Architecture has developed another innovative solution called Rain Shelter House. Placing separate micro-buildings under one large canopied roof, this setup resembles an extremely small village. Striking just the right balance of connection and privacy, it has four bedrooms, with the grandparents residing in a separate building.

EUROPE Given its agricultural past, the strong influence of the Catholic Church, and the weakness of the welfare state and its institutions, southern Europe has traditionally had intergenerational homes. With one of the highest percentages of residents aged 65 or above in the world, it's not surprising that Germany has been experimenting with alternative multigenerational living schemes, giving people an opportunity to live together in long-term, vibrant communities that extend beyond family ties. These are communities where the young and old, families, single parents and singles live close, and give and take support from each other. These kinds of living schemes already exist in a number of towns and cities in Germany; while some are owned by municipalities, others are privately owned. It has worked well because most silvers are keen to stay out of institutionalised care.

SINGAPORE Dual key condos—two homes sharing a common foyer, yet on a single title—are making waves in Singapore. Also known as two-in-one layout, they are one single whole apartment that can be divided into two separate apartments within the same single unit, with one bigger two- or three-bedroom apartment and a studio unit. Both apartments have their own kitchen and toilets, and a separate set of keys.

Besides senior caregiving, a move towards multigenerational houses is the product of several factors, such as struggling economies and higher unemployment, rising cost of living and insufficient supply of new affordable dwellings

underway in the Indian demographic order in urban areas, with parents and children moving lock, stock and barrel into the same gated community, neighbourhood, and sometimes even in

the same apartment, though in different flats. A mutually beneficial arrangement, it provides both parents and children with the comforting presence of dear ones nearby without any compromise on individual freedom, finances and privacy.

Evaluating this trend, Prof Vimla Nadkarni, President, International Association of School of Social Work, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, remarks, "Family relationships need to be revived." Rueing the "extreme depersonalisation" marking our relationships, she adds, "Today, communication is mostly technology-driven; instead of face-to-face communication, people are messaging each other on WhatsApp." Sharing the story of her well-to-do 75 year-old cousin, who has been gifted a beautiful flat in a prime Mumbai locality by her children who are settled abroad, Nadkarni says, "My cousin misses her children and grandchildren and keeps telling me how they think they have taken care of her needs by gifting her that flat. Children probably don't realise that all parents need are personal moments to cherish, not material benefits."

NUCLEAR EXPLOSION

This realisation is gradually beginning to seep back in, following the dissipation of the traditional joint family, the bedrock of the Indian social structure, over the years and its replacement by the nuclear

unit. With increased prosperity, jobs and a surge of migration from villages to towns and cities, 63 per cent of households in urban areas and 59 per cent in rural areas went small. This apart, social differences defined by each generation—from food, fashion and entertainment to even the gods they worship, or don't—became grounds for differences, forcing young couples to find their own private haven.

A detailed analysis of the 2011 Census, though, shows that the trend towards smaller families is more evident in southern India, with Andhra Pradesh accounting for a mere 10.7 per cent joint families, and Tamil Nadu 11.2 per cent. By contrast, many households in north India still practise the joint family system, with Uttar Pradesh leading the way with 27 per cent, as against the national average of 18 per cent for joint families. Most of these households have more than five married couples cohabiting—though perhaps not as amicably and harmoniously as depicted by the Barjatyas and Johars of Bollywood! However, there are exceptions, such as the Samantas of Kolkata (see *'Bonds' on page 54*).

In the current scenario though, with more women educated and working, not many couples are comfortable sharing their day-to-day life with in-laws. The Mehtas of Mithapur in Gujarat are an example of a disintegrating joint family. Of late, this family, which had 58 members just a decade ago, has shrunk to 35, thanks to the migration of youngsters in search of better job avenues and marriage. Despite this, the entire family meets twice annually, when everybody flocks to the ancestral home that resembles a hotel with bedrooms with attached toilets and a common corridor besides the large kitchen, dining and living spaces. This apart, the resident members continue with the five



THE GILON-SUBRAMANIAMS CHENNAI

The two-bedroom house behind Koyambedu bus terminus in Chennai has every amenity any modern young couple would want. But it wasn't the infrastructure that caught their fancy. Rather, the fact that Bala Subramaniam's parents live just 4 km away tipped the scales in favour of renting the apartment.

Bala and Catherine Gilon, both journalists, decided not to live with either set of in-laws. "From the beginning, we decided to live alone, yet close to our parents," explains Catherine. "Being an interreligious marriage and given the generation gap, the way we approach life is very different, from the way we dress to choice of entertainment, religious rituals, food and even the timings we keep. That's why we thought this arrangement would be ideal." Bala adds, "We leave our two year-old Aashita with my folks three times a week. They are retired and happy to spend time with her." Catherine agrees, saying this system gives her daughter the best of both worlds. And to keep the family close-knit, the couple drives to Puducherry once a month to visit Catherine's parents.



Interestingly, Catherine works from home but says she needs her in-laws to step in three times a week because looking after the home, meeting professional deadlines and raising a child can get a tad unmanageable. “We owe my in-laws for helping us do the balancing act,” she says. Both in their 30s, Catherine and Bala are especially grateful to have Bala’s mother around when, say, Aashita takes ill. “We don’t panic when she catches a cough or cold as my mother-in-law comes up with some excellent home remedies,” says Catherine. “I also have to say we are saving a great deal by not sending Aashita to a day-care centre.”

The benefits are even greater, though, as Catherine confesses that given her anxious nature, she may have given up her career to care for her child if her in-laws were not around. Bala makes a poignant observation. “My father was busy working when I was growing up and I didn’t spend as much time with him as I would have liked,” he says. “Watching him with Aashita more than makes up for what I didn’t have.” There is another upside of this living arrangement—as the two families meet so frequently, it helps them rise above their differences.

—Jayanthi Somasundaram

decade-old tradition of congregating in the wide courtyard to sing *bhajan* every Saturday from 10 pm to 3 am. In fact, the family runs like a well-oiled machine with each person assigned a specific job. The kitchen has a fixed menu and the women take up washing, ironing and cooking by rotation. The joke doing the rounds in the Tata Chemicals Township of Mithapur is that the day the Mehtas prepare *pav bhaji*, all shops run out of *pav* (bread)!

While the quest for financial and personal independence spurred

The empty nest syndrome—which is forcing silvers to spend lonely years in unsafe circumstances, and young couples to balance careers and children—is forcing a rethink on family equations once again, spurring innovative *desi* solutions

the trend of nuclear families, in the late 20th century, the Government too reinforced the shift to smaller families with the ‘*Hum do, hamare do*’ campaign. However, the resultant empty nest syndrome forcing silvers to spend lonely years in unsafe circumstances, and young couples struggling to balance careers and children, is forcing a rethink on family equations once again, spurring innovative *desi* solutions.

MAKING A MOVE

Consider the case of V N Ramachandra Nayak and his wife Suseela. When their daughter Sai Prabha married Sudarshan Kamath of Mumbai, the Chennai-based couple decided to shift cities to be closer to their only child. Says the 69 year-old Nayak, “The separation was tough on both of us; my wife even took ill. Both of us were longing to spend time with our daughter.” When he retired in 2004,



Many households in north India still practise the joint family system, with Uttar Pradesh leading the way with

27%

as against the national average of

18%

for joint families

the couple bought a flat a stone's throw from their daughter's. “I have always viewed Mumbai as a city of opportunity,” he beams. “Today, I'm not just happy to see my daughter and grandchildren whenever I want, but am leading an active life by pursuing a second career.” As for the 65 year-old Suseela, her life has become meaningful once again with the jabber of her grandchildren, who drop in to relish her cooking and share their stories. Luckily, the children get to

THE SENS AND MENONS **KOLKATA**

After their marriage in the early 1990s, when Pushpa and Gora Sen started looking for a new home, Parnasree, a quiet middle-class residential suburb in southwest Kolkata, seemed like a natural choice. Not only would it offer a nice and safe locality relatively close to the bank where they both worked, with all the conveniences of modern living, but Pushpa would also be able to stay close to her parents, Indira and Achattil Unnikrishnan Menon—Keralites who call Kolkata home. The Menons had also recently moved there and knew the locality well. So helping the young couple set up a home in the same locality, walking distance from their own home, was easy.

Over two decades later, they know it was the perfect move for both the Sen and Menon families. Having Pushpa's parents help her raise her two children was nothing short of a blessing. “When they were young, I would leave them in my parents' care for the whole day and go to work,” says Pushpa. And the grandparents were more than happy to lend a hand. It kept them busy in a happy and productive way for several years.

Pushpa has a sister and brother but neither of them lives even close to Kolkata. So Pushpa and Gora take care of the senior Menons, from health checkups and chores to banking and dealing with plumbers and electricians. When the need arises, Pushpa stays overnight at her parents' place and house-sits for them when they travel. “Many of my colleagues at work are envious of our arrangement,” she says with a smile. “They wish they too could stay close to their parents as there is a lot of give and take between both families. I am very lucky.”

—Sudipto Roy



Shilbhadra Datta



THE TRIPATHYS AND MAHAPATRAS **ROURKELA**

Of all the things she could have wished for, here's what Chhanda Mahapatra, 44, wanted most: to live near her parents as they aged. As it turned out, her dream came true six years ago, when she and her husband Devendra bought a plot of land around 500 m from her parents' home in Rourkela. Till then, Chhanda's parents were pillars of strength as and when the couple moved around on postings, but it was only when they moved, lock, stock and barrel to Rourkela that dream fell into place perfectly.

The Mahapatras were married in 1995 and Devendra, now a manager with Punjab National Bank, was posted in Bihar. Chhanda had just taken her banking exams and landed a job with State Bank of India (SBI) in Rourkela. When her daughter was born a year later, Chhanda couldn't believe her luck. "I used to leave my daughter in my mother's care and go to work. Then Devendra and I got a joint posting to Sambalpur, Odisha, and we shifted there," says Chhanda, a senior assistant with SBI.

In 2005, the couple had a son and they tried their best to return to Rourkela so Chhanda's mother could help raise the boy. Their wish was finally fulfilled in 2009, when they bought a plot of land near Chhanda's parents' home. "Initially, my father asked his tenant who lived downstairs to leave and we stayed on the ground floor for two years while our own house was being built," recounts Chhanda. "We paid my parents rent because that has been their only source of income since my father retired from Rourkela Steel Plant."

Chhanda's mother Sajailakshmi Tripathy, 58, remarks, "The pleasure of seeing your children with your own eyes whenever you want to is very important in old age. Chhanda's staying near us is great help when we are sick. We are at mental peace with them staying close by." Meanwhile, Devendra believes it was a good idea to pick a plot close to his in-laws. "When we stayed downstairs, we were totally dependent on them for everything," he says. "Now we trouble them only when it is necessary as they are getting old. They have been great help, especially while looking after our son as both of us are working parents." Both families meet every weekend over lunch and drop in at each other's homes every now and then. In Chhanda's view, the biggest beneficiaries are her children. "As there is a large age difference between my daughter Shreya and son Om, my son has no one to play with. I happily pack him off to grandma's as she is his best friend!"

—Ruby Nanda

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In the present context when both parents are working, grandparents play a vital role by not just grandparenting but also parenting, taking care of the grandchildren and shaping their personality. For their part, they feel wanted and taken care of when they constantly interact with their children and grandchildren

Dr R Parthasarathy,
Senior Professor,
Psychiatric Social Work,
NIMHANS, Bengaluru

bond not just with their maternal grandmother but their paternal grandmother too, who lives in a separate flat in their apartment building. "Amma is among the first woman graduates in the Konkani community and takes her independence seriously," says Sudarshan Kamath, 47, a chartered accountant. "We didn't want to restrict her to a single room in our flat. We bought a flat in the same building so we could take care of her without encroaching on her personal space."

This mutual respect for each other's space was the guiding factor behind the decision of neighbours-turned-sweethearts Dr Gatha Mohanty and Sandeep Nayak of

Bhubaneswar (*page 50*) to buy a separate flat near their parental homes, a decision that has worked well for all the three families concerned. Interestingly, it was Sandeep's father, 67 year-old Purna Chandra Nayak, who suggested the young couple live independently. "When they returned to Bhubaneswar after stints in other cities, I was still working as a manager in SBI and my wife was also working in the state government secretariat," says Purna Chandra. "They were young and their lifestyle was different from ours. We also needed space of our own. Therefore, I suggested they live separately and come over on holidays for lunch!"

BONDS ACROSS GENERATIONS

Every family has its own story—each equally compelling. For 67 year-old Annamma George, who worked with Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL), Delhi, and C M George, 72, who was with the United States Educational Foundation of India, retired life would have been spent in the idyllic environs of a lake-facing home in Kochi, if not for their son Ashok and daughter-in-law Jayati. The younger couple suggested the Georges visit their gated community home in the pristine environs of North Bengaluru. "We fell in love with the place," confesses Annamma. "A nudge from my daughter-in-law was all it took for us to make up our mind." With Ashok, 44, heading operations of the Middle East-based KDD in India and Jayati teaching at Bangalore International School, family get-togethers mostly take place on Sundays and holidays. However, 15 year-old Abir and Ananya, 12, practically live with their grandparents, sometimes even sleeping over. "This arrangement has worked wonderfully well for all of us," says



THE KONDATHS SECUNDERABAD

Wing Commander (retd) Venugopal Kondath, 86, marks time every morning, for at 7 am sharp, his son-in-law drops in to say 'Hi Dad!' while out on his morning jog. It is one of the many golden moments that Venugopal and his 78 year-old wife Narayani share, what with their daughter Leela, 51, son-in-law Sreekumar and grandson Valmik living not 500 m away from their bungalow in Sainikpuri, Secunderabad.

The Kondaths moved into their Sainikpuri home in 1988, when Venugopal retired from Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, after 30 years in the Indian Air Force. While Leela, Sree and their son Valmik moved to Jamaica and then to Zambia, her parents raised her sister Devaki's children, Dhriti and Dhruv, after Devaki tragically passed away. Then, in 2003, Leela decided it was time to move back home. "Dhruv and Dhriti were turning into adolescents and I was not sure my parents could handle it. Also, Sree had inherited a plot from his mother in Vayupuri. We had been gradually developing it and it was almost ready for us to move in. At this point, Hyderabad was also opening up globally and Sree was willing to try his luck." While Leela's home was getting the finishing touches, she and Valmik stayed with her parents. At the time, her brother-in-law and niece and nephew were also living there. "It was houseful!" laughs Narayani. "We were eight of us, six cats, a dog and no servant. We had a great time as the kids grew closer."



Anand Kumar Soma

The family home, although cheerful, now lacks the bustle it once had. But the Kondaths take comfort in knowing that Leela is just down the road. "Leela visits us very often even though she is very busy at the school, where she works with special kids," says Narayani. "We do not burden her with our small aches and pains because we know she worries. As for Sree, we love him as if he is our own son. He is very affectionate. We are very lucky because so many elderly people are living alone and depend on friends in case of an emergency."

For her part, Leela has made sure she gives her parents ample breathing space. "When Valmik was born, we took it for granted that we would be looking after the infant," recalls Venugopal. "But our son-in-law insisted on taking the baby to Jamaica. Initially, we felt bad but we later realised he was thinking of our welfare. Even when they came back from Africa, we felt Sree and Leela would sit with us every day and chat about all sorts of things. But they are both busy with work. Slowly, we got used to the idea that they have a life of their own." According to Narayani, they wouldn't have it any other way. "I would like to continue living independently for as long as I can manage the household. I hope to do that for a long time yet."

—Shyamola Khanna



The trend towards smaller families is more evident in southern India, with Andhra Pradesh accounting for a mere

10.7%

joint families, and Tamil Nadu

11.2%

Annamma. "Thankfully, our retired life is filled with laughter and love, not loneliness." As Dr R Parthasarathy, Senior Professor, Psychiatric Social Work, NIMHANS, Bengaluru, observes, "In the present context when both parents are working, grandparents play a vital role by not just grandparenting but also parenting, taking care of the grandchildren and shaping their personality. For their part, they feel wanted and taken care of when they constantly interact with their children and grandchildren."

The benign influence grandparents exert over grandchildren can't be overstated. Pushpa and Gora Sen of Kolkata (*page 46*), who had a cross-cultural marriage, with Pushpa being a Malayali and Gora, a true-blue Bengali, are happy their children have imbibed the culture and language of both, all thanks to their grandparents. "The kids grew up in three homes literally, paternal grandparents', maternal grandparents' and finally ours," says Pushpa. "The bond they share with

With the 'living-together-yet-apart' concept catching on, builders have been quick to sense the inherent business opportunity. For instance, real estate developers DivyaSree announced the 77° Place project in Bengaluru that features 'linked joint family homes'

both sets of grandparents is to be seen to be believed!" For many silvers leading a retired life, grandchildren become their raison d'être. Gushing over her two year-old granddaughter Aashita, Shanti Nataraj of Chennai (page 44) says, "When I know she is coming, I change the menu of the day to ensure it suits her taste. We spend the whole day playing with her and time just flies." Echoing her sentiments, grandfather Natarajan, 60, who retired recently, adds, "We eagerly look forward to having the little one over!"

BUILDING OPPORTUNITY

With the 'living-together-yet-apart' concept catching on, builders have been quick to sense the inherent business opportunity. For instance, in what is a first for India, real estate developers DivyaSree announced the 77° Place project in Bengaluru that features 'linked joint family homes.' Called a 'doublement', each unit comprises two attached apartments, one larger than the other, so families

THE MOHANTY-NAYAKS BHUBANESWAR

This young couple in Bhubaneswar is twice blessed, living as they are a stone's throw from both sets of parents. Apart from the practical benefits, Dr Gatha Mohanty and Sandeep Nayak believe living together reinforces family values. Gatha, a dental surgeon who is also pursuing a Master's degree, and Sandeep, a senior HR manager, are in their 30s and were raised in Bhubaneswar. As they are both elder siblings with younger brothers settled outside Odisha, Gatha and Sandeep have always felt responsible for their parents' welfare. Interestingly, it was Sandeep's father, a retired banker, who suggested the couple live independently when they decided to settle in Bhubaneswar in 2009 after short job stints in Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

As luck would have it, a new apartment building was being built near Gatha's parents' home and the couple bought a flat there. It was a good decision as Gatha's mother and father have been able to look after their five year-old grandson. "Our time passes so quickly with Atiksh around," says 61 year-old Sarojini Mohanty. "I am lucky to be able to care for at least one of my grandchildren."

Sometimes, the bright lights outside do beckon to the talented young couple but the peace that arises from their living arrangement makes them quickly dim. "My younger brother is settled in Kolkata and I feel it is my duty to look after my parents," explains 35 year-old Sandeep. Gatha, too, believes living five minutes away from her parents is a blessing. "My mother picks up and drops my son from school and he stays with my parents till we return from work," she shares. "After college, I drop in at their home every day, spend an hour-and-a-half with my son and parents, and then proceed to my clinic. I return at 8 pm to pick up Atiksh. Sundays and festivals are reserved for visits to Sandeep's parents' home."

Her father Dr Ramchandra Mohanty, who retired as head of the botany department at Utkal University and is now emeritus professor, endorses the arrangement wholeheartedly. "Having Gatha and Sandeep nearby gives us a lot of confidence that they will be around whenever we need them, even late at night if necessary," says the 65 year-old. "In 2012, when I was diagnosed with cancer and had to go to Mumbai for treatment, Gatha and Sandeep made all the arrangements. Gatha even gave up her job at the railway hospital as she required four months' leave to be with us in Mumbai. It was a turning point and brought us even closer as a family."

—Ruby Nanda



Piusha Mohanty



Amit Gaur

THE BHARADWAJS **NAVI MUMBAI**

Soumya Bharadwaj, 18, shares a special relationship with her grandmother and, much to their delight, the two have discovered they have a lot in common. “We are both left-handed, neither of us can eat our meals without a green chilli on the side, and both of us have very similar aesthetic tastes,” says Soumya with a smile. This uncommonly close bond can be attributed to their living arrangement. While 78 year-old Sahil Bharadwaj lives on the ground floor of a two-storey house in Vashi, Navi Mumbai, her son Shivendra, wife Anupama and granddaughter Soumya live on the first floor. The two family units not only share their highs and lows but also responsibilities and chores, making the going that much easier for everyone.

Seated on their modest porch, the Bharadwajs explain how they came to live together in the verdant environs of Vashi. Sahil was widowed only a year ago; her husband Wasudev was an officer with the Indian Railways and the couple and their three children were posted all over the country while he was in service. After Wasudev took voluntary retirement, the couple and their son Shivendra eventually settled in the railway quarters at Dadar while their two daughters, now married, stayed in hostels as they were still studying. The Bharadwajs built their Vashi house in 1987. “It was meant to be a regular row house but when we realised how it would work out for all of us later, we decided to build two houses, one above the other,” reveals Shivendra, who works as the corporate sales head of an Indian MNC in the hospitality sector. When Shivendra married Anupama, the couple moved into the first floor, an arrangement that worked even better when they had their daughter and Anupama decided to start working.

“It affords both our families the privacy we need and has brought us closer over the years,” says Shivendra. “I think the advantages of this kind of living arrangement are even better than those of a joint family structure.” Anupama agrees. “There are times when both Shivendra and I are so delayed or stressed at work that we are not even aware of what is happening at home,” she says. “It is a big relief that my mother-in-law lives right below us and it takes a weight off our shoulders that Soumya has her *daadi* to go to in case of an emergency.” The arrangement has worked so well that the Bharadwaj family have set a trend in their colony, where at least five young couples and their children live in a similar row-house arrangement with their parents. As Shivendra says, “It’s a win-win for everyone.”

—Deepa Narayanan

can live together without compromising their freedom; a common foyer connects the twin units as well as a common balcony. Each doubling has a single sale deed and it’s up to the family to divide payment for the units. Bhaskar Raju, Managing Director, Divyasree, confirms that over 70 per cent of the inventory has been sold. Given the tremendous response to the project, the realtor is planning to take the concept to three more cities. “As of now, we cannot name these locations because we are bound by a non-disclosure agreement and the paperwork is still at a preliminary stage,” he adds. In fact, such intergenerational homes are a growing trend worldwide (*see page 42*).

Meanwhile, in the absence of more such projects in India, families are improvising the best they can. For the Bharadwajs of Navi Mumbai (*left*), the answer lies in a unique row house. Says Anupama, the lady of the house, “This living arrangement has helped our family evolve into a close unit today.” Her daughter Soumya chips in, “*Daadi* is my go-to person for Ayurvedic tips, home remedies and spirituality. One ritual I look forward to is going through the cut-outs she keeps for me from newspapers and magazines on various topics ranging from lifestyle issues to politics.” Similarly, the Kondaths of Secunderabad (*page 48*) are separated by

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Families and relationships are getting redefined with time. Just one word, one smile and one hug can work wonders

Rekha Murthy, Karnataka head, HelpAge India

a mere 500 yards geographically—and are closer than ever emotionally. Leela, who works with special children at the International School of Hyderabad, makes it a point to drop in at her parents' home daily, no matter how hectic her working day. But, at the end of the day, she's happy to retire to her own space for a variety of reasons, from food habits to planning her lessons in advance.

THE COMFORT FACTOR

Such living arrangements allow the extended family to respond to the give and take of kinship obligations. In addition to economic and caregiving reasons, the emotional need for involvement in the lives of children and grandchildren, rather than being geographically isolated, is also responsible for this desire to reverse the trend of a scattered family. Rekha Murthy, Karnataka head, HelpAge India, observes, "Families and relationships are getting redefined with time. Just one word, one smile and one hug can work wonders." Reiterating this, 62 year-old Shashanka Sekhar



THE KURUPS THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

After an anxious day spent dispensing cash and tallying accounts at the Indian Overseas Bank, Thiruvananthapuram, Archana Kurup, 46, zips back home on her scooty, parks it in the garage, takes out the car and drives her mother for an evening appointment with her physiotherapist. She has been following this routine religiously for a month now. Nandini Kurup, 68, who retired as vice-principal, Chinmaya Vidyalaya, Thiruvananthapuram, underwent a complicated surgery in November 2014 to remove a block in one of the arteries in the neck, following a stroke that rendered her movements weak. Fortunately, regular physiotherapy has helped her regain her gait and flexibility of limbs. "When I was hospitalised, my daughter took leave for two weeks to be with me," says Nandini. "She was a great support as my son, Manoj, who is in Delhi, couldn't make it. Even after I got discharged, every evening she would give me a shower after returning from work."

In fact, during the recent crisis, the entire family rallied together, with the son-in-law of the house, Anil S, 49, a project engineer with HLL Lifecare, taking care of the couple's two sons, Abhishek, 18, and Abhimanyu, 10, while his wife practically lived out of the hospital.

Incidentally, Archana's father V S Rajappa Kurup—who retired as editor at the Publications Division of Chinmaya Trust in Thiruvananthapuram—had



Vivek R Nair

suffered a severe bout of jaundice in 2008, forcing emergency hospitalisation at night. This impelled the senior generation of Kurups to move to the ground floor of their daughter's house. Earlier, the ground floor—an independent unit with a separate entrance, kitchen, living space and bedrooms—was rented out. “Dad’s hospitalisation shook my parents,” says Archana. “They felt helpless for the first time and started wondering what they would do if there was an emergency at night.”

The arrangement works well for everyone. “With my parents around, I don’t have to worry about my kids” says Archana. “Mom makes sure they have a nutritious meal when they return home. Also, I don’t have to tag along my little one to office on his holidays.” A strict disciplinarian, the 77 year-old grandfather, now a yoga teacher, exhibits his softer side only when he whips up something special in the kitchen, ensuring that a share goes to his grandchildren. For her part, the doting grandmother bonds with the kids over board games, school tales and food. “When my kids were born, I was working and couldn’t devote much time,” says the former teacher. “Now, through the pranks and mischief of my grandchildren, I relive those days. Also, I’m exposed to new ways of learning while helping my little grandson with his projects.” The clincher for her, though, is that feel-good factor of “being needed”.

—Srirekha Pillai

In addition to economic and caregiving reasons, the emotional need for involvement in the lives of children and grandchildren, rather than being geographically isolated, is also responsible for this desire to reverse the trend of a scattered family

Tripathy of Rourkela (**page 47**) says, “It’s common to get easily disturbed by unnecessary worries and concerns about children and grandchildren. Seeing them regularly and spending time with them are reassuring.” Understanding the dynamics and need for family proximity, even senior citizens’ homes are offering guestrooms for relatives. P Viswanathan, managing director, Serene Senior Living Pvt Ltd, with projects in Coimbatore, Puducherry, Kanchipuram, Bengaluru and Hyderabad, says, “Though we have decent occupancy round the year, it’s during summer vacations—when grandchildren come calling—that the guestrooms in all our projects run full.”

Dr Parthasarathy of NIMHANS sums it up succinctly, “As we age, it’s important to have people around to support and engage us. It brings purpose to our days and meaning to our lives.” Indeed.

**With inputs from
Deepa Narayanan, Jayanthi
Somasundaram, Prarthana
Uppal, Ruby Nanda, Shyamola
Khanna and Sudipto Roy**



FAMILY FIRST

ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST SUCCESSFUL JOINT FAMILIES—THE SAMANTAS OF KOLKATA—DEMONSTRATES HOW AN OLD INDIAN INSTITUTION CAN SWIM AGAINST THE TIDE AND COME UP TRUMPS, REPORT **PARTHA AND PRIYANKA MUKHERJEE**

This is what the daily grocery list of the Samanta family looks like: rice (20 kg), fish (14 kg), chicken (12 kg), wheat flour (10 kg), potatoes (20 kg), other vegetables (40 kg), milk (20 kg), sugar (5 kg), edible oil (3 litre) and *mithai* (5 kg). "Yes, we love to eat and drink and we consume at least 200 cups of tea a day," says 75 year-old Anukul Samanta, tongue-in-cheek, adding that the family's annual clothing tab amounts to a minimum ₹ 3-4 lakh.

Clearly, this is no ordinary joint family. And you can see that Anukul is quite used to rattling off his grocery list,



as if on cue, for this is Kolkata's most famous family: the Samantas of Beliaghata. In times when the family structure in India's urban areas is becoming increasingly nuclear, the 112-strong Samanta clan is an extreme example of the classic Indian joint family.

Drop in at Ganaudyan, 1/1B/14 Ramkrishna Naskar Lane, and see for yourself. Living in two five-storey buildings and one three-storey building in this north Kolkata suburb, this family has gone against the grain and, incredibly, has made it work. They couldn't have done so without each

member's contribution to this shared goal. While the younger members cherish the guidance of their elders, the silvers in turn appreciate the obedience of the youngsters. "We might be growing with time, but we must follow the path set by our elders. They never impose their decisions on us and we have grown up to respect their wishes," says 46 year-old Soma Maity, daughter of Dasarathi Samanta, 80, the eldest of the six Samanta brothers.

Believe it or not, this family is run by a 'board of directors' with members that represent each generation,

and follows a 'constitution'! Some highlights: "Juniors in the family will have to pay attention to their studies; each and everyone in the clan should be a follower of discipline, honesty and the family deity; they will have to shed their ego and be merciful to others; no youngster should fail to return home before the sun sets; children and grown-up boys and girls should spend their extra time in the company of their cousins, uncles and aunts; no practice of personal deposit should be encouraged; personal expenses will be provided by the common funds formed by the total earnings of the earning members of the family..."



Photographs by Shilbhadra Datta

Female members busy preparing meals; (opposite page) The oldest of the Samantas, 90 year-old Padma Rani Mandal, and her brothers—Anukul (left) and Dasarathi—along with the newest addition, one week-old Nairiti Shee, and her mother

The current head of the family is Anukul and matriarch Pratibha Samanta, 55, wife of Mahadeb Samanta. "If you happen to visit us on a weekend evening, you will find us in an almost 'corporate' kind of meeting attended by the entire family," reveals Anukul. "I chair these meetings, where every problem, even trivial rifts among youngsters, is sorted out. We discuss day-to-day affairs, review budgets of family expenses and get them ratified by the members. No one disobeys my decisions as they respect and trust me."



The roots of this family go back four decades, to when Sonamani, mother of the Samanta siblings, settled here with her family after a life of hardship in Magrahaat near Diamond Harbour.

Soon, her eldest son Dasarathi started manufacturing brushes while Anukul took up teaching in a boy's school. In 1986, the brothers forayed into manufacturing fibreglass products for



The 'code of conduct' is strict and unyielding but everyone appears to accept it happily. Being part of this setup has taught young and old to put the needs of others before their own and to veer towards the greater good rather than individual gain

the Indian Railways and have since grown the trade into a family business called A B Composites. While financial issues are the cause of so much strife in joint families today, the Samantas have been spared any such friction. Here, no one is allowed to have personal savings and the income of every member goes into a central pool, from where each member gets his or her allowance according to the individual's needs.

The 'code of conduct' is strict and unyielding but everyone appears to accept it happily. Being part of this setup has taught young and old to put the needs of others before their own and to veer towards the greater good rather than individual gain. "While differences of opinion and personal problems are inevitable in a family as large as ours, they are always resolved with as much earnestness as possible," says Pratibha. "Any per-

sonal dispute, if not addressed within three days, calls for the intervention of the elders."

Incredibly enough, while individuality rules the lives of youngsters today, it is furthest from the minds of the young Samantas. "Belonging to this family is like belonging to a holy shrine, where one learns to drain the filth from one's mind," says Soma's son Aritro, a grade 10 student. "When differences of opinion, absence of discipline, lack of harmony and lack of honesty are tearing people apart, my grandpas and grandmoms have set a unique example of living together in such a pleasant way. I am sure I speak for my cousins in my age group when I say that it is a pleasure growing up in such a genial atmosphere."

But what is it like for a family member who was not naturally initiated into this philosophy? Rumpa, one of the

Samanta daughters-in-law, writes in *Samtaranga*, the family's annual bulletin, "It was after my wedding that I was made to understand that my new family had a few values, the most important ones being sacrifice and mercifulness. I was taught that if only I could shed my ego, forego and forgive, I could become an ideal soul. I hope my son grows up with these values ingrained in him."

And why not, for there couldn't be a better example of unity and solidarity than a family that requires an entire parking lot at a polling booth and a football field to celebrate family get-togethers. The silvers spend their years with dignity and security while the youngsters have a beacon to guide them through life's challenges. In times when the joint family appears to be reinventing itself, the Samantas have not had to take the circuitous route home. ✨



Magical Maldives

Crystal clear waters, picturesque landscape and water sports make this a traveller's delight

✦ 📷 Mridula Dwivedi



Water huts at
Fihalhohi Island



As the plane started its descent over Malé Airport, I could see more water than land. Soon I was standing in the 'Visa on Arrival' queue, which was unusually long, many flights having landed around the same time. However, the visa was free of cost and eventually we emerged out of the serpentine queue, all smiles.

While planning a trip to Maldives, the most crucial aspect is to sort out the transfer from the airport to the desired island. The airport is on an island and even to go to Malé, the capital city, a ferry is needed. The cheapest way to move around in Maldives is the public ferry, which has fixed schedules. If there are no ferries after your flight lands, you can either opt to stay in Malé or get a speedboat to your destination, the price of the ticket depending on the number of passengers. If there are more than five passengers, the ticket costs \$ 39 per person, and if there are fewer than five people, you end up spending \$ 195. I, travelling with my nephew Sunil, was lucky to have a full boat.

Though close to India, Maldives has always been considered an expensive destination, which is only partly true. If you wish to visit a private uninhabited resort island, it would cost more. However, the government has now opened up islands that are inhabited with a variety of accommodation, making it affordable and viable for tourists. Maafushi, where we stayed, is one such beautiful island.

The sea was calm and the speedboat ride amazing with the boat zipping through to the island in about 30 minutes. We disembarked at the scenic bay dotted with boats and coconut trees. Complementing the blue shades of the sea, the sky was a blazing azure. Fortunately, Maldives is never overcrowded, giving tourists a chance to indulge in the much cherished 'me time'. We had made bookings at Picnic Inn. While planning the trip I realised that people in Maldives are not usually prompt with emails; Picnic Inn was an exception. Maafushi is such a small island that one can walk from end to end in 25 minutes flat even at a leisurely pace. During my stay, I couldn't spot a single car, though there are plenty of scooties on the island.



A swing on
Fihalhohi beach

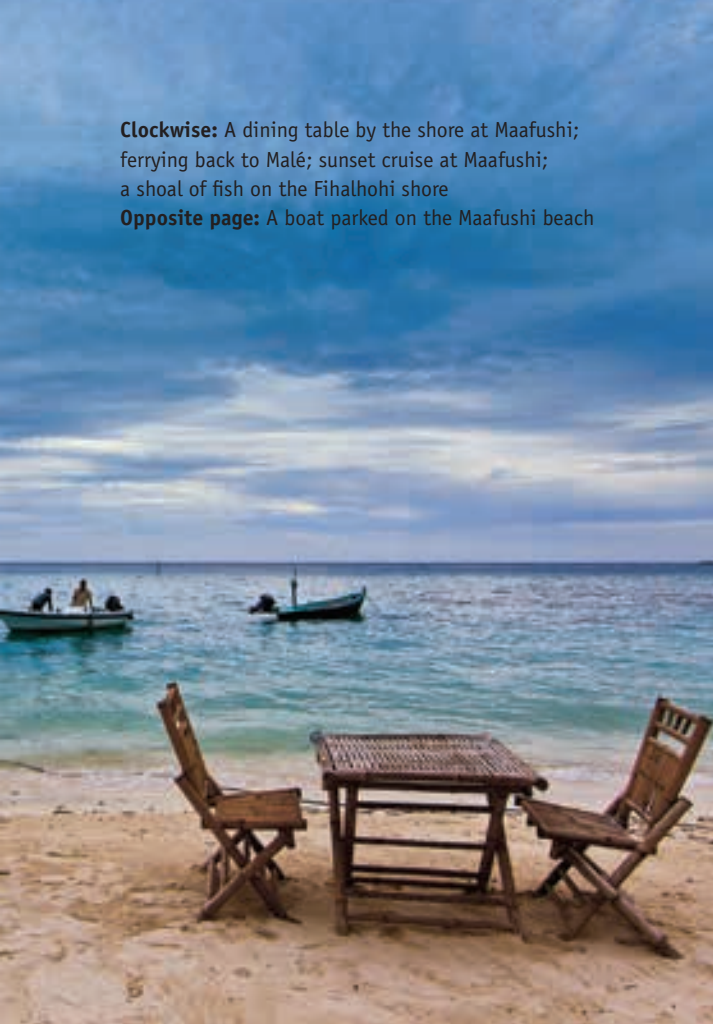
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With the guesthouse giving us twin beds, Sunil was free to mess up his side as much as he wanted. After checking in and depositing our bags, we walked to the beach. Both of us were very tired, having taken an early morning flight from Delhi to Kochi and then travelling to Malé. We strolled around clueless for a while. As the sun started its journey westward, restaurants by the beach began to put up tables and chairs with candlelight by the shore. The thought of food was appealing and we sat down on one of the tables even though it was still early evening. It was magical the way the sun was busy painting the sky with delicate colours. The dinner took some time arriving, and as we finished tucking into it, it turned

quite dark. Faraway, the familiar wall art of the guest house beckoned us; we stumbled in and crashed thankfully on the bed.

The next morning, stormy weather added some drama to the beautiful sky, making it dark and brooding. The sea, too, turned many shades, from the faintest blue to a dark tinge almost bordering on black. Sunil was still in bed while I decided to go exploring. I parked myself at the 'tourist beach', a favourite tourist hangout as against the 'local beach'. The crowd was eclectic here: couples, a father-son duo, families and groups of youngsters. A loner like me made for a rare sight!

Clockwise: A dining table by the shore at Maafushi;
ferrying back to Malé; sunset cruise at Maafushi;
a shoal of fish on the Fihalhohi shore
Opposite page: A boat parked on the Maafushi beach





Maldives being an Islamic nation, I was confused about the beachwear and hence had come unprepared. At Maafushi, one can wear a bikini only at the tourist beach; no one dares to walk the streets in one. I bought a swimsuit from the local shop and ran into the water, which was just the right temperature to stay and float in. However, the clouds threatened to pour, making me rush to a nearby restaurant. While I savoured a hot cup of tea, the storm passed over with little more than a whimper. Later in the evening I walked around the entire island. On the local beach, I saw a lovely couple dressed formally in a red gown and dark suit clicking pictures and running back to check them on the camera mounted on the tripod. I noticed that tourists did venture out on to the local beach with books but the dress code was modest compared to the tourist beach.

Most tourists to Maldives indulge in island hopping. We too followed suit, visiting the nearby Fihalhohi Island. Day visitors here are expected to pay a fee to the local resort on the island. The hotels here make arrangements for a sunset cruise and visit to other islands. Fihalhohi has crystal clear waters and is popular for snorkelling. While sitting by the beach in the shallow waters, I was entertained by a shoal of fish that swam by. Fihalhohi Island Resort has premium water huts as well, with stairs descending straight into the water from the rooms. Lunch was a sumptuous buffet with plenty of options for vegetarians. Hotels in Maldives follow their own daylight saving time schedule, with different islands having different times. Fihalhohi is one hour behind Maafushi.

Though both of us—my nephew and I—are not into water sports in a major way, we went snorkelling at Maafushi. It helped that we were provided free gear by the resort. We also indulged in scuba diving in its basic form, called the ‘bubblemaker’, as my nephew is not comfortable swimming. Though we didn’t delve deep, the world

factfile

WHEN TO GO

With pleasant weather and clear blue skies, the best time to visit the island nation is between October and February.

VISA AND CURRENCY REQUIREMENT

Visa is on arrival and free of cost. The visa is valid for 30 days. Requirements include a valid passport, return ticket, hotel reservation and proof of funding.

GETTING THERE

Malé is just a one-hour flight from Kochi. Many airlines connect Malé with other major cities in India but taking a flight from Kochi works out much cheaper.

ACCOMMODATION

At Maafushi, accommodations closer to the beach are expensive. If you are comfortable with accommodation inland, the prices are more affordable. We stayed at Picnic Inn (Tel: +960 793-8336), which is on the inland. At Fihalhohi, the Fihalhohi Island Resort (Tel: +960 664-2903) is the only resort.

TIPS

- US dollars are accepted everywhere in the island nation.
- Alcohol is served only on resort islands.
- There are enough options for vegetarians.
- Do figure out your speedboat/ferry/seaplane transfer to the island you are going to visit. Speedboats and sea planes are expensive; sometimes as expensive as travelling by air!
- If you are visiting an island where locals live, figure out the beachwear as Maldives is an Islamic nation and some islands may not allow a bikini or swimsuit.
- Local SIM cards are easily available. You can buy them even at the airport.

beneath was truly a revelation. It was a riot of colour; we spotted fishes and corals of every imaginable colour. As there are only a few diving schools at Maafushi, if you are keen on water sports, it’s advisable to book your spot a day in advance. Indeed, whether it’s high-adrenaline water sports or just lying back and watching the waves lap by or the wind playing on the coconut trees, a holiday in the Maldives can be truly therapeutic. ✨

Experience

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harmony
celebrate age

photography

Bandwagon

They add colour, sparkle and, of course, sound to the big fat Indian wedding. The unsung lives of the men who make up the wedding band have been portrayed in *Bajaatey Raho*, a photographic exhibition held under the aegis of Neel Dongre Awards/Grants for Excellence in Photography by India Photo Archive Foundation in New Delhi recently. Curated by archivist and photo historian Aditya Arya, the exhibition was an endeavour to encourage young photographers. Different interpretations of *bandwallah* were presented by six photographers—Nirvair Singh Rai, Raj Lalwani, Richa Bhavanam, Sujata Khanna, Sujatro Ghosh and Vinit Gupta—through distinctive artistic and documentary styles. "While many of these images are from their public performances, a larger and more interesting body of work has emerged from their personal and private spaces," says Arya. "These photographers have not only encapsulated a very intimate relationship shared by these musicians but the ironies and lonely existence."



A stitch in time

Geeta Khandelwal has rediscovered the art of making quilts, reports **Natasha Rego**

For 40 years, Geeta Khandelwal has been a successful quilt-maker, manufacturing and supplying handmade comforters around the world. Six years ago, the 70 year-old decided to venture into uncharted territory in search of the story behind the Maharashtrian *godhari* (quilts) to get it the recognition it deserves. Armed with a right-hand woman, a car and a driver, the Mumbai resident went on an expedition around rural Maharashtra to emerge with a rich document, *Godharis of Maharashtra*.

Unlike the decorative kantha quilts of West Bengal, which have long accrued fame and fortune, the *godhari* have remained elusive to popular culture. “These home crafts are an unappreciated labour of love,” says Khandelwal. “In fact, many were surprised to learn that we found quilts in Maharashtra.” In 2009, accompanied by Charu Gupte, a photographer, translator and an advertising professional who had served Air India for 35 years, she began a journey without a route map or plan. “Though we chose Lonavala as our starting point, we had no idea of where we were headed and what we were going to discover,” reminisces Khandelwal.

As they went along seeking information about *godhari* makers, they reached remote villages around Wai, Pune, Baramati, Konkan, Nagpur and the border towns of Karnataka and Maharashtra. “There were times we didn’t find anything at all or were just taken for a ride,” says Gupte with a chuckle. For four years, they braved the sweltering heat of summers, in-exhaustible monsoons and suspicious nature of natives, going back and



Photographs courtesy Geeta Khandelwal

forth as many times as the project demanded. They spent days interviewing families, especially women, and assimilating information on the changing patterns of the *godhari* and its role in their lives. In turn, Khandelwal and Gupte communicated to the rural women their own fascination with the creations.

The *godhari* is the simplest among its Indian counterparts—the kantha quilts of West Bengal and the tanka work of Gujarat and Rajasthan; it has no embellishments, no figures and no stories. The fabrics are plain and organic but the colours spectacular. The production process and patterns vary with the community. “Among the Siddhis, a little-known African-

Indian community around Murud, the *godhari* patterns are similar to Western quilts,” observes Gupte. “They comprise measured triangles and squares; the planned designs and colours are telling of the people’s ancestry.”

While the Maharashtrian quilts have no artistic or commercial value among the people who make them, Khandelwal’s objective was to convert the *godhari* from a product of utility to one of art. “They are household goods made by the women as part of their duties,” she says. “But for us, the patterns, the colours, were art and I wanted to give it the dignity and appreciation it deserves. When we asked the people to part with their creations, though, they didn’t



seem to understand why we would want something so ordinary made out of old clothes. Surprisingly, some women refused to sell their *godhari* even for generous sums!”

Khandelwal collected *godhari* from people willing to part with them. The rest were photographed. The documentation was brought out as a book, *Godharis of Maharashtra*, which was launched at a three-day exhibition in Mumbai recently where the quilts were mounted vertically on walls. “When you shift the focus of the *godhari* from horizontal to vertical, you’re changing its context. You then see it quite differently,” Gupte points out.

THE WARMTH OF THE GODHARI

Making a *godhari* is a traditional household craft practised with love and an innate sense of creativity by rural women. Stacking old cloth upon old cloth, the layers—sometimes as many as six—are bound by a fine running stitch using a thick white thread. Anything from old shirts, trousers, saris and blouses to large seed bags and political banners are reused to create these givers of warmth that are used as blankets, carpets, cradles, and even presented as dowry and wedding gifts.

The future of the *godhari*, like that of many other rural handicrafts, is bleak as its traditional custodians are among the most impoverished people in the state. “The younger generation no longer has the time to stitch a humble *godhari* inch by

inch,” rues Khandelwal. Against this backdrop, *Godharis of Maharashtra* is an important document, its story heart-warming and its intent urgent.

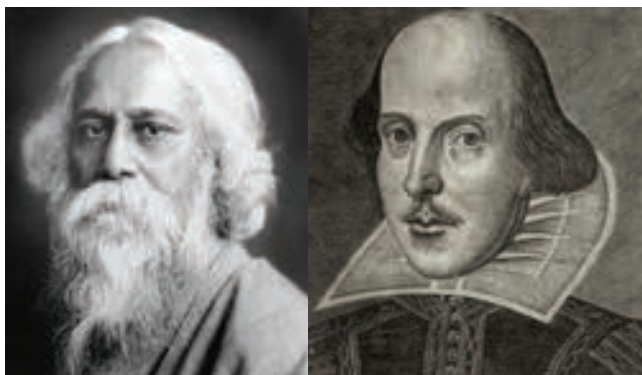
You can contact Khandelwal at quilts.geeta@gmail.com

Star-struck

The intriguing life of Hindi cinema’s greatest tragedy queen Meena Kumari was painstakingly researched and portrayed by late journalist Vinod Mehta in his book *Meena Kumari: The Classic Biography* in 1972; a riveting revised edition was released last year. Now, the grapevine has it that the book will be adapted by Paan Singh Tomar director Tigmanshu Dhulia into a film. Just like the book, the making of the movie is seen as an attempt to introduce the iconic star to a new generation.

"I have been thinking how I am not getting the kind of work I want to do. I will not do these small, insignificant roles in movies and I don't want to take up TV shows as they are very demanding.... Because I come from a theatre background, I also missed acting on stage. Just like you can't forget driving, it's the same with acting. At my age, it is very difficult to get good roles. Because in our society, an old woman is a useless woman!"

Actor Neena Gupta on her comeback to theatre after a decade in the play Mera Woh Matlab Nahi Tha, speaking to The Times of India



POETIC JUSTICE

Bard of Avon William Shakespeare classified life into seven stages and believed in its grim end. Three centuries later, Bard of Bengal Rabindranath Tagore, too, described the seven stages of life, but depicted it as a philosophical journey after which the soul lives on. Renowned percussionist Abhijit Banerjee's upcoming project, *Tagorespeare*, juxtaposes the works of these two legendary poets. Banerjee will bring out a CD and then dramatise the compositions on stage along with an ensemble of eminent artists such as veteran actor Victor Banerjee and Rabindra Sangeet exponent Srikanto Acharya. Through this work, he will establish the way Shakespeare and Tagore were worlds apart in their views of life and death.

Firing the imagination

With her interest in constructing irregular forms with narrative quality, artist Leena Batra has turned to ceramic sculpture in the past few years. Her latest creations made of wood-fired ceramics and porcelain were on display in New Delhi recently at an exhibition, *Perfectly Imperfect*, where every form was unique and possessed its own personality. "An inner urge to explore finds expression in something tangible," she says. "And when it does, there is a brief moment of fulfilment. Brief, because I am caught in the vortex again and again."

Harry

Vim and vigour

The pulsating beats of the dholak synthesised with the powerful rhythms of senior lavani dancers Mohanabai Mahalangrekar and Shakuntalabai Nagarkar (*right*) at Sangeet Bari, a programme dedicated to the Maharashtrian folk song and dance form in Mumbai recently. They demonstrated myriad old and forgotten types of lavanis and nuances of the art through *baithakichi* lavani (where the artist sits down, sings and communicates through expressions). While Nagarkar, who mentors young girls in the traditional dance form, says, "I love the energy of lavani and try to experiment," Mahalangrekar says, "The show has given me more respect now than in my youth." The programme was organised by Bhushan Korgaonkar and Savitri Medhatul, who had earlier made a film *Natale Tumchyasaathi - Behind the Adorned Veil* on the little-known lives of lavani dancers.

Vidyuth Singh



Courtesy NCPA

Old is gold

The soulful renditions of legendary Carnatic vocalist M S Subbulakshmi along with her daughter Radha Viswanathan—who accompanied her mother for over 60 years during concerts and recordings—were released as an album recently in Bengaluru. "It is a historic occasion for our family," Viswanathan, who was also honoured at the event, told media. The exclusive rare gems of the 1970s are from the archives of NCPA Mumbai, and the album—a CD containing 16 songs—has been brought out by Sony Music as part of its 'Masterworks' series.

Literally yours

Jnanpith winner Prof Bhalchandra Nemade's works are widely known for changing the dimensions of Marathi literature. His novel *Bidhar* (1967) will soon be rendered in Gujarati by Dr Urvashi Pandya, former head of the Gujarati department of the University of Mumbai. In fact, Pandya had earlier translated Nemade's first Marathi novel *Kosala* (1963) with a mission to introduce the septuagenarian writer to a larger audience. Pandya will also be translating Nemade's romantic poem collection, *Dekhani*, to be published by Ahmedabad-based Parshwa Publication. "I always felt *Kosala* and *Bidhar* belong to a pan-Indian milieu," she told newspaper *Mid-Day*. "These are stories of Indians who have a village firmly rooted in their mind space."

Of wit and will

We toast the month of humour with an excerpt from the satirical *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams, which debuted as a BBC radio comedy in 1978

Mr L Prosser was, as they say, only human. In other words he was a carbon-based life form descended from an ape. More specifically he was forty, fat and shabby and worked for the local council. Curiously enough, though he didn't know it, he was also a direct male-line descendant of Genghis Khan, though intervening generations and racial mixing had so juggled his genes that he had no discernible Mongoloid characteristics, and the only vestiges left in Mr L Prosser of his mighty ancestry were a pronounced stoutness about the tum and a predilection for little fur hats.

He was by no means a great warrior: in fact he was a nervous worried man. Today he was particularly nervous and worried because something had gone seriously wrong with his job—which was to see that Arthur Dent's house got cleared out of the way before the day was out.

"Come off it, Mr Dent," he said, "you can't win you know. You can't lie in front of the bulldozer indefinitely." He tried to make his eyes blaze fiercely but they just wouldn't do it.

Arthur lay in the mud and squelched at him. "I'm game," he said, "we'll see who rusts first."

"I'm afraid you're going to have to accept it," said Mr Prosser gripping his fur hat, "this bypass has got to be built and it's going to be built!"

"First I've heard of it," said Arthur, "why's it going to be built?"

Mr Prosser shook his finger at him for a bit, then stopped and put it away again.

"What do you mean, why's it got to be built?" he said. "It's a bypass. You've got to build bypasses."

Bypasses are devices which allow some people to drive from point A to point B very fast whilst other people dash from point B to point



A very fast. People living at point C, being a point directly in between, are often given to wonder what's so great about point A that so many people of point B are so keen to get there, and what's so great about point B that so many people of point A are so keen to get there....

Mr Prosser said: "You were quite entitled to make any suggestions or protests at the appropriate time you know."

"Appropriate time?" hooted Arthur. "Appropriate time? The first I knew

about it was when a workman arrived at my home yesterday."

"But Mr Dent, the plans have been available in the local planning office for the last nine months."

"Oh yes, well as soon as I heard I went straight round to see them, yesterday afternoon. You hadn't exactly gone out of your way to call attention to them had you?"

"But the plans were on display..."

"On display? I eventually had to go down to the cellar to find them."

"That's the display department."

"With a torch."

"Ah, well the lights had probably gone."

"So had the stairs."


"But look, you found the notice didn't you?"

"Yes," said Arthur, "yes I did. It was on display in the bottom of a locked filing cabinet stuck in a disused lavatory with a sign on the door saying Beware of the Leopard."

"Some factual information for you. Have you any idea how much damage that bulldozer would suffer if I just let it roll straight over you?"

"How much?" said Arthur.

"None at all," said Mr Prosser, and stormed nervously off wondering why his brain was filled with a thousand hairy horsemen all shouting at him.

A photograph of an elderly man with a grey beard and a young girl with dark hair, both smiling and splashing in a pond. The man is in the water, and the girl is sitting on a wooden dock. The water is dark blue, and the dock is made of wooden planks.

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Choose patients, not profits

Healing the Body, Touching the Heart: The Life and Times of Dr L M Sanghvi

By Nita Mukherjee

Mukherjee KnowledgeWare Association; 192 pages

Placed in the context of the metamorphosis of three dimensions of the medical profession—practice, research and training—this biographical narrative chronicles the life and work of Dr L M Sanghvi (1914-2005), an outstanding medical practitioner. Written by his daughter Dr Nita Mukherjee, a social historian, the book spans nine decades of his life—upbringing in a traditional Jain family, schooling, medical education in India, Britain and the US, his research, awards received and personal growth as cardiologist in Rajasthan, especially Jaipur—while sharing valuable lessons from his life spent in the service of humanity.

The book's eight chapters are meticulously planned to highlight the development and efforts of a talented patient-centric doctor to shape the institutions of learning with a focus on skills and durable ethical values. Here is a well-written story of a life dedicated first and foremost to the well-being of a patient in every respect: physical, financial and emotional. Little wonder then, that he was known as a '*do goliwaale*' doctor owing to his brief medical prescriptions based on spot-on diagnosis that eliminated a long list of costly tests, a hallmark of medical practitioners today.

Though Dr Sanghvi inhabited an era that witnessed far-reaching changes in the field of medical research, teaching and practice, he firmly believed, "Medicine is one profession through which you can serve people and ameliorate human suffering; it is not a career to make money." This statement stands in stark contrast to the current scenario of the medical profession, practices and industry representing a trajectory from patient to profit. Thus, while the book does not intend to be a critique of the medical profession as

it has evolved today, in the process of delving into a life where ethical standards remained the bedrock, the focus repeatedly comes back to the crying need to be patient-centric, not profit-centric.

The various anecdotes about the primacy of ethical standards followed by Dr Sanghvi clearly bring out the importance and benefit to patient and doctor. These standards enabled him to keep away from playing politics and being pressured by those who did. Over the decades of Independence, political interference has vitiated the atmosphere in every field, the medical profession no exception. Today, it is a rarity to find a doctor who

would ask his poor patients to pay the fees he is able to rather than quote large fees that often drive patients to a chemist shop to suggest drugs for their illness. And the per-day cost and revenue equation dictates hospital stay, an indication of

crass commercialisation that Dr Sanghvi could never ever comprehend. He was also firmly against cash envelope-driven referral practice, another bane of the present medical profession.



What distinguishes this book from regular biographies is the extensive research on the medical profession that is woven deftly into the narrative

What distinguishes this book from regular biographies is the extensive research on the medical profession that is woven deftly into the narrative. Indeed, this attractive, limited-edition book deserves to be on the table of every medical practitioner as a constant reminder to walk the path of highest ethical standards in medicine and patient care. As we read on page 58, "It is not enough for you to go through the book; the book should go through you. It is not enough to read;

you have to learn". Interestingly, the 25 February edition of *The Times of India* carried an item about the revamp of the medical syllabus with the introduction of four ethics modules drafted by UNESCO in the curriculum of all courses of the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences from June 2015. Dr Sanghvi would have been proud.

—Priya Desai

To purchase the book, contact nitamuk@gmail.com

Striking the write note

His unassuming demeanour transforms magically as he starts strumming the guitar. **Susmit Sen** has enthralled music lovers for over two decades with his signature mix of Hindustani classical, western jazz and rock. Founder and lead guitarist of India's longest running live music band Indian Ocean, Sen launched his own ensemble, Susmit Sen Chronicles, in 2013. Recently, he published his memoir *Ocean to Ocean* (HarperCollins; ₹ 699; 149 pages), along with an album of the same name.

With over 1,000 concerts across five continents, it's not surprising that his reputation as a musician precedes him, though Sen is equally at ease delivering lectures and conducting workshops for corporate houses and schoolchildren. As part of Indian Ocean, the 52 year-old has also scored music for films such as *Peepli Live* and *Black Friday*. He is one of the very few guitarists to play a specially crafted home-grown guitar—the first of the SS series by master luthier David Murray of the Dehradun Guitar Company—named after him. In conversation with **Suparna-Saraswati Puri**, the man with the magical fingers talks about his musical and literary journeys.

What does music mean to you?

Music for me is an expression of meditation. It helps me to look within and takes me to an epiphany that is impossible to express through words. There is definitely a spiritual element to music.

When did you realise music was your calling?

I remember the immense success of my first performance as a duo with Asheem Chakravarti—with whom I cofounded Indian Ocean—at the University of Roorkie in 1986, coupled



Sushil Sharma

with my dissatisfaction with my marketing/sales job. I realised music was my prime passion. That is when my search for people to form a band started, which eventually resulted in the launch of Indian Ocean in 1990.

How was your memoir *Ocean to Ocean* born?

Writing a book was never on my mind till HarperCollins approached me for an autobiography when

I had announced my departure from Indian Ocean to the band members but had not yet gone public with it. I did tell them that I was never a writer and that I had already started work on my forthcoming album with

my new band. When they agreed to release the album as a part of the book and confirmed that the book would reflect on just some incidents from my past and not my life in its entirety, I consented. The fact that I could have a co-writer—Sehba Imam—helped me take the plunge.

Was there anything you wished to achieve through the book? Also, how did the title come about?

As a first-time author, I thought it would be best to keep it as conversational as possible. Imam helped me in this. One of the songs in the album *Ocean to Ocean* has been co-composed by Bernie Marsden of [British rock band] Whitesnake.

authorspeak

Bernie himself happened to name the number *Ocean to Ocean*. Everybody, including HarperCollins, thought it was a great title and hence the name of the book and album.

What kind of challenges did you experience while writing the book?

One major challenge was to manage time between my musical commitments and writing. I had to forego my personal life for a few months. But the biggest challenge was to talk only about myself and my life to Imam. How much can you continue talking about yourself? There were times I hated myself while engaged with the literary process. But we had to stick to a deadline and there was no running away from it. Also, I am a person who remembers feelings from an incident rather than the details, whereas Imam was keen on the nitty-gritty.

Now that the first book is out, what can be expected next from Susmit Sen the author?

It is too early to comment. Now that I have released a memoir and got some favourable comments and reviews, I do realise that I have missed some very beautiful incidents while writing the book. Of late, many incidents I experience take the form of an essay in my mind. I have even started imagining writing about things I am not involved with directly. Only the future will tell whether these thoughts will take the form of a book or not.

How has your experience at literary fests been?

The literary fests were a culture shock for me. I realised that there is a sea of difference between literary fests and music fests. To begin with, it was embarrassing to be unaware of most of the other authors and their works. Moreover, I did not know what to talk about, as in most of the groups they were discussing each other's

works and topics they had written about. So I found myself discussing the breakfast, the weather and the venue. During music fests, we just perform. The only people who had read my book were the panellists as they were there to discuss my attempt to write a memoir and had no other option!

Who are your musical influences?

Indian classical music has influenced me the most. I was fortunate to grow up at a time when some of the greatest artists were performing: Ali Akbar Khan, Nikhil Bannerjee, Mallikarjun Mansur, Bhimsen Joshi, to name

“The biggest challenge while writing the book was to talk only about myself and my life. There were times I hated myself while engaged with the literary process”

just a few. Much more than their technical prowess, what attracted me to their music was their poise, expression, humility and remarkable ability to transport the audience to a different world.

Do tell us about your ensemble.

The need to form a new band came from recording and releasing my album *Depths of the Ocean* in December 2011, as I wanted to go live with the same. While searching for musicians, I came across five young men who are not only extremely talented but bring in their energies and innovative ideas to render the compositions in an

exuberant manner. The line-up is as follows: Nikhil Vasudevan on drums, Sudheer Rikhari and Amit Sharma on vocals, Anirban Ghosh on bass and Varun Gupta on tabla and other percussion instruments.

How do categories or genres contribute towards understanding and enjoying music?

For me, there are only two kinds of music: music I like and music I don't like. Getting confined to a particular category limits oneself. I think these genres and categories are meant for people who sell music and the critics, as it helps them to embed a perspective in people's minds. It has always been a pleasure to see my music displayed in more than two to three categories or genres at music stores.

Was there any other profession you considered seriously?

Not really. In fact, it was a bit discomforting when music became my profession... the moment you turn an art form into an industry, you tend to kill it. I try my level best not to be a part of the industry and keep to my originality as much as possible. Having said that, I do have a couple of other passions that I delve in

when time permits: the wilderness and food. I love to cook and experiment with various kinds of dishes and love to spend time in the forests with my camera. I will probably be sharing some of my shots very soon.

Tell us about your family.

My wife Namita and my twins Tan [son] and Atiya [daughter] have been an integral part of my journey as a musician. Namita loves Hindustani classical, Tan plays the guitar and Atiya has learnt Indian classical dance from Raja and Radha Reddy. The fact that both my children are creatively enthused does make me feel blessed.

Spring-clean your soul

Our minds need to be cleaned up and reorganised from time to time, says **Daniel Tomasulo**

In a recent psychodrama workshop I asked participants to visualise cleaning out their personal closet. One woman opened her imaginary closet door and began rummaging through make-believe clutter. When I asked what she was looking for she told me her self-esteem was buried somewhere in the back.

Every time we avoid dealing with something we chip away at our self-esteem. We might feel relieved in the short run when we put something off, but our self-esteem takes a hit over time. This is because part of our psyche knows we are avoiding our responsibility, and that usually adds wear and tear to the soul.

When we deal directly with things, even the unpleasant items, we typically feel better. But more often than not we toss things in the back of our mind to avoid them, and tell ourselves we'll get to them later. Later never comes, and when too much builds up we become like the woman in the workshop, and our self-esteem gets lost.

Like a favourite closet, your mind needs to be cleaned up and reorganised every once in a while. Information you thought you could use or deal with, or that seemed important and helpful at one time has become disorganised clutter, keeping you from finding what you want and need. Over time ideas, memories, and concerns accumulate because they seem worthy of our attention.

As we accrue experiences the original value, importance, or interest often changes, and the closet of our mind gets a little overwhelming.

Sorting all this through is the first order of business. When we are serious about cleaning our personal closet we need to take everything out so we can toss what isn't useful, reorganise things based on how often

use that. The second part of step one is to arrange the list into categories. These might be labelled 'Work' or 'Things to do around the house' or 'Calls I have to make'. If there are items that don't fit neatly into the clusters you have made, create a spill-over group called 'Miscellaneous' or 'Etc' and list them there.

Assign an action word to each

task that describes what you are going to do. *Wash car, trim bushes, write application letter, clean bathroom, and buy stamps* aligns the right task with the right action.

Prioritise each section

with numbers 1, 2 and 3 so you know what needs to be done in which order in each category. Of course, as you get things done and add things to your list the order can change, but identifying the first three events to be tackled will

keep you focused.

Create a 'Virtual Vault' for your personal positive experiences. This is the safe place in your closet for all the good, wonderful, happy experiences that need to be preserved in case of a calamity. Write down three of the most positive experiences in your life with as much detail as you can. One of the best ways to combat feelings of depression is reflecting on real past positive experiences as a way of activating strong positive emotions. When the woes of life get to you, recalling the positive experiences will help buffer your feelings.



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we will have to access them, and store the precious stuff in a safe place. This is a four-step process, and step one is to take everything out of the closet. Yep, you read it right: everything.

Cleaning out the psyche means making a list of all the things you have been thinking about doing, wanting to do, or need to take care of. This is no place for cowards. Get all the things on your mind out of the closet so you can see what you are dealing with. Make the list in any fashion you like. If a computer is your thing, start a file called 'Closet Cleaning' and go to it. If you like the feel of a pen and paper,

Associate professor of Psychology at New Jersey City University, Tomasulo is the creator of Interactive-Behavioural Therapy and the Dare to be Happy experiential workshops

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Space opera

Almost five decades before Hollywood blockbuster *Gravity* made space adventures look cool and four years before American Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon, Russian cosmonaut Alexei Leonov became the first person ever to walk in outer space. This great leap for mankind in 1965 also marked yet another victory for the erstwhile Soviet Union in its game of one-upmanship in the Space Race with the United States, one of the offshoots of the Cold War.

However, Leonov's space walk lasting 12 minutes and nine seconds, attached to the craft by a 5.35 m tether—the 'umbilical cord' of the Voskhod 2 flight—wasn't without its anxious moments worthy of a Hollywood biggie. Minutes into the mission, Leonov's spacesuit got inflated like a balloon in the vacuum of space to the point where he could not re-enter the airlock. Recalling those tense moments in a recent interview to the BBC, the 80 year-old cosmonaut said, "My suit was becoming deformed, my hands had slipped out of the gloves; my feet came out of the boots." With just five minutes left for the spacecraft to be in the Earth's shadow, plunging him into total darkness, Leonov let the suit's pressure bleed off by opening a valve in the lining of the spacesuit, risking starving his body of oxygen. His troubles didn't end there. After he managed to squeeze into the capsule, an equipment failure forced Leonov and pilot Pavel Belyayev to fire the rockets manually for re-entry, a precision task usually entrusted to the computer. Leonov and his compatriot made it, only to crash land in the harsh cold of -30 C in the Siberian woods, populated by wolves and bears. They spent the night there before being



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rescued the next day with an emergency team arriving in a helicopter and landing almost 9 km away.

Leonov flew into space many more times, including the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, the first international human spaceflight in 1975, when he took colour pencils and papers, and sketched the Earth and portraits of the astronauts who flew with him. In 2006, he co-authored *Two Sides of the Moon: Our Story of the Cold War Space Race*, with American astronaut David Scott. Leonov, who almost became a space casualty, said much later, "Only out there can you feel the greatness—the huge size of all that surrounds us."

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: APRIL 1965

- On 5 April, at the 37th Academy Awards, *My Fair Lady* won eight awards, including Best Picture and Best Director.
- On 9 April, the 100th anniversary of the end of the American Civil War was observed.
- On 9 April, Charlie Brown and the entire Peanuts gang appeared on the cover of TIME magazine.
- On 15 April, West Germany paid Israel \$ 75 million as the first instalment of \$ 862 million in reparations as compensation for Holocaust crimes.

The afternoon
knows what the
morning never
suspected.

—American poet Robert Frost
(1874-1963)

Agrihood

n. A neighbourhood with green spaces designated for agricultural use so that residents can grow food and raise animals.

Example. Canberra had 3.65 hectare in community gardens and that could be expanded, especially on public transport routes, with access to water, electricity and toilets. Walls and roofs could also be used for food production, and areas could be set aside for **agrihoods**, or neighbourhood food production.

—Kirsten Lawson, “Greens Minister Shane Rattenbury pushes ideas to make Canberra more self-sufficient in food production”, *The Canberra Times*, 17 February 2015

VIRCH

n. Colloquial shortening of the phrase ‘virtual reality’

Example. Three weeks after he first experienced the results of the new virtual-reality production process, Shore paid a second visit to Menlo Park—this time with 61 names he had culled from his master list of 1,200. ...The first name was **Virch**, for ‘virtual reality’.

—Neal Gabler, “The weird science of naming new products”, *The New York Times*, 15 January 2015

Healthography

n. The study of the relationship between health and geography.

Example. Next year’s APHA Annual Meeting will be held November 15-19, 2014, in New Orleans, themed “**Healthography**: How where you live affects your health and wellbeing”.

—“American Public Health Association concludes its 141st Annual Meeting in Boston”, American Public Health Association, 6 November 2013

Solitudinousness

n. A state or condition characterised by solitude.

Example. van Vogt was the first Canadian SF writer of real importance, and it is arguable that a Canadian **solitudinousness** colours his work throughout.

—“van Vogt, A E,” *The Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction*, 14 October 2014

EAVESREAD

v. To surreptitiously read the text that another person is reading or writing.

Example. A less intimidating/eye-contact-y way of discovering your OTP than those 36 infamous questions. Eleanor and Park’s epic love story begins when Eleanor peeks over Park’s shoulder on the bus to school to **eavesread** his comics.

—Caroline Goldstein, “7 things only Rainbow Rowell fans know, like the aphrodisiacal powers of an endearing jawline”, *Bustle*, 17 February 2015

Ragequit

v. To stop, leave, or renounce something in a rage, particularly a video game.

Example. An often sleazy but interesting book. Lots of suspicious claims here I have never heard before, including that Elvis was never drafted into the army but was in fact secretly enlisted by the Colonel. ...Almost **ragequit** towards the end when the author lends credibility to the ludicrous idea that Elvis was “murdered”.

—“Colonel Tom Parker: The Curious Life of Elvis Presley’s Eccentric Manager”, *Goodreads*, 30 January 2015

Tailor-made travel

For silvers struck by wanderlust, here's a chance to indulge. Bengaluru-based Varisht Nagarik Tours and Travel Pvt Ltd organises tours for silvers across the country. According to its latest policy, the group size for tours will range from eight to 12 silvers for 12-15 days. It also facilitates ticketing and accommodation arrangements for people who travel for their medical needs to CMC Vellore, Chennai's Sankara Nethralaya, Narayana Hridayala in Bangalore, and other hospi-

tals in Hyderabad and Kolkata. What's more, the company arranges 'day-out' events and fun activities as well as training in basic photography and use of digital tablets for elders. Upcoming tours include trips to Kodiakanal and Murudeshwar as well as regular trips to Vaishnodevi, Puri and Rameshwaram. For more information, call Aparat at (0)9483544617 or Smita on (0)9422980600; or email info@varisht.com. You can also visit their website at www.varisht.com and www.seniorstourindia.com.

BUZZ

Gustasp and Jerroo Irani

GIG ECONOMY

n. The economic sector consisting of freelancers who take on a series of small jobs, particularly when those jobs are contracted online using a website or app.

Example. Welcome to the so-called **gig economy**. Freelance writers are probably the most familiar type of independent workers, yet, whether driven by choice or market forces, more and more people in occupations as varied as academia, accounting, and acupuncture, are striking out on their own. It's a constant hustle that can offer increased work-life flexibility but, as often, includes employers with take-it-or-leave-it attitudes and little income security. Is it really sustainable to have a wide swath of the modern American workforce making ends meet this way?

—Luke O'Neil, "Surviving the gig economy," *The Boston Globe*, 31 August 2014

“Ageing is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength.”

—American writer and feminist Betty Friedan (1921-2006)

Snackable

adj. Relating to media that can be consumed easily and quickly.

Example. Mr Carlson, the chief correspondent for *Business Insider*, a website that covers technology and finance, doesn't waste words lingering over details or musing on bigger themes—leadership, technology, the nature of innovation. He favours the short paragraph and the brief biographical sketch. “She was a pompom girl and a debater,” he writes in his précis of Ms Mayer's childhood. “She was on the precision dance team.” The result, to borrow the digital media cliché, is corporate history as **snackable** content.

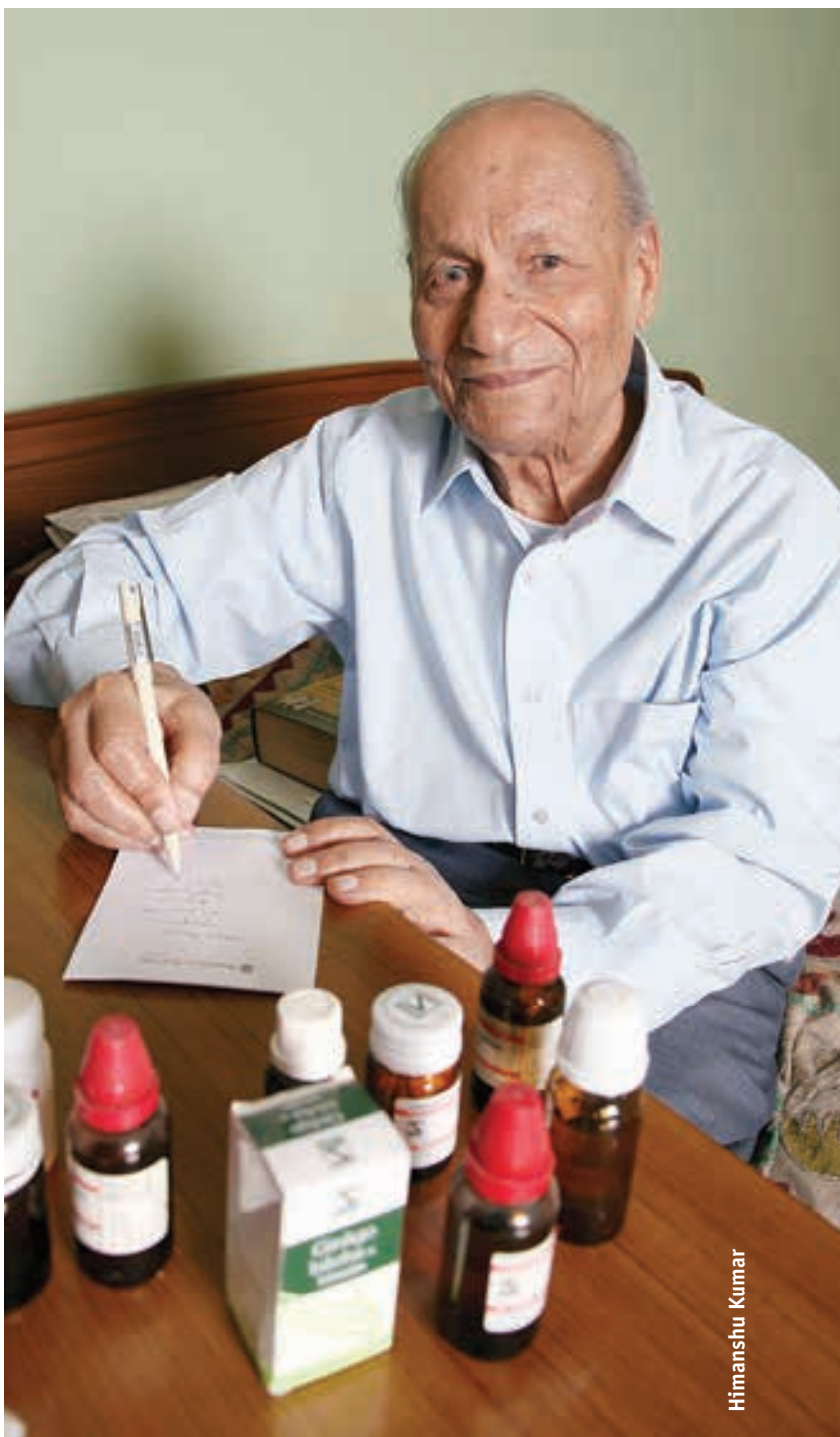
—Jonathan Mahler, “One pioneer's attempt to rescue another,” *The New York Times*, 26 January 2015

“It feels wonderful to be an instrument in alleviating others’ distress”

Col (retd) Man Mohan Bakshi, 92, Delhi, on healing people through homeopathy

It is not often that a combat soldier renounces arms to become a healer. **Col Man Mohan Bakshi**, who fought in World War II as part of the 16th Punjab Regiment and was awarded the Japanese sword of honour, is healing lives with homeopathy today free of cost. After retiring from the Army in 1973, Bakshi worked with Army Group Insurance till 1984, before choosing homeopathy as a way of life. “It started as a hobby,” says the Delhi-based colonel, who initially read books and prepared medicines for family and friends for common ailments such as cold, cough and fever. “I was amazed at the curative properties of homeopathy, sans any side effects.” Bakshi’s interest in homeopathy grew and he enrolled in a six-month diploma course in this alternative form of medicine. As a life member of the South Delhi Homeopathic Association, he started attending conferences and seminars, learning the latest treatments and cures. “As I learnt more, I was able to treat people with chronic diseases,” says Bakshi, who claims to have cured bone cancer, piles, kidney and gall bladder stones. Recalling how he treated a family member suffering from bone cancer, Bakshi says, “As she was over 70, doctors were wondering and debating whether they should opt for surgery or not. I put her on to homeopathy and just two months later, her X-ray revealed that the upper arm bone—which had a half-inch gap earlier—had fused completely. She was elated, and so was I!” Today, Bakshi, who has spent more years healing than fighting wars, doesn’t leave home without his medicine box. Knocked down by a truck in 2004, he underwent hip replacement surgery at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. But he soon recovered, for which he credits homeopathy. Bakshi, whose wife passed away in 2013, lives with his son Ranjan, a media consultant. While his daughter Ranju Baweja is married and based in Bengaluru, his second son Rakesh Mohan lives in Noida and works with Amazon. “If ever the treatment doesn’t show results, then either the medicine being administered is wrong or the doctor needs to be changed,” he says, signing off.

—Ambica Gulati



Himanshu Kumar

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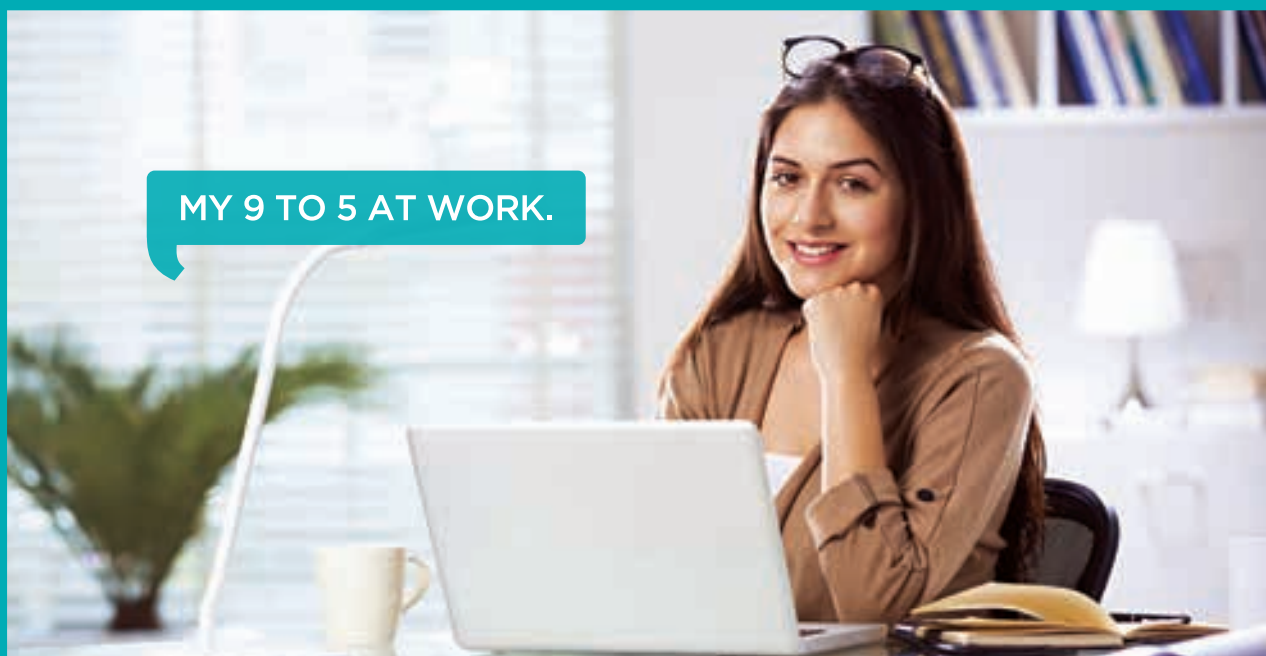


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Based on a true story. Name and identity changed to protect patient privacy.

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