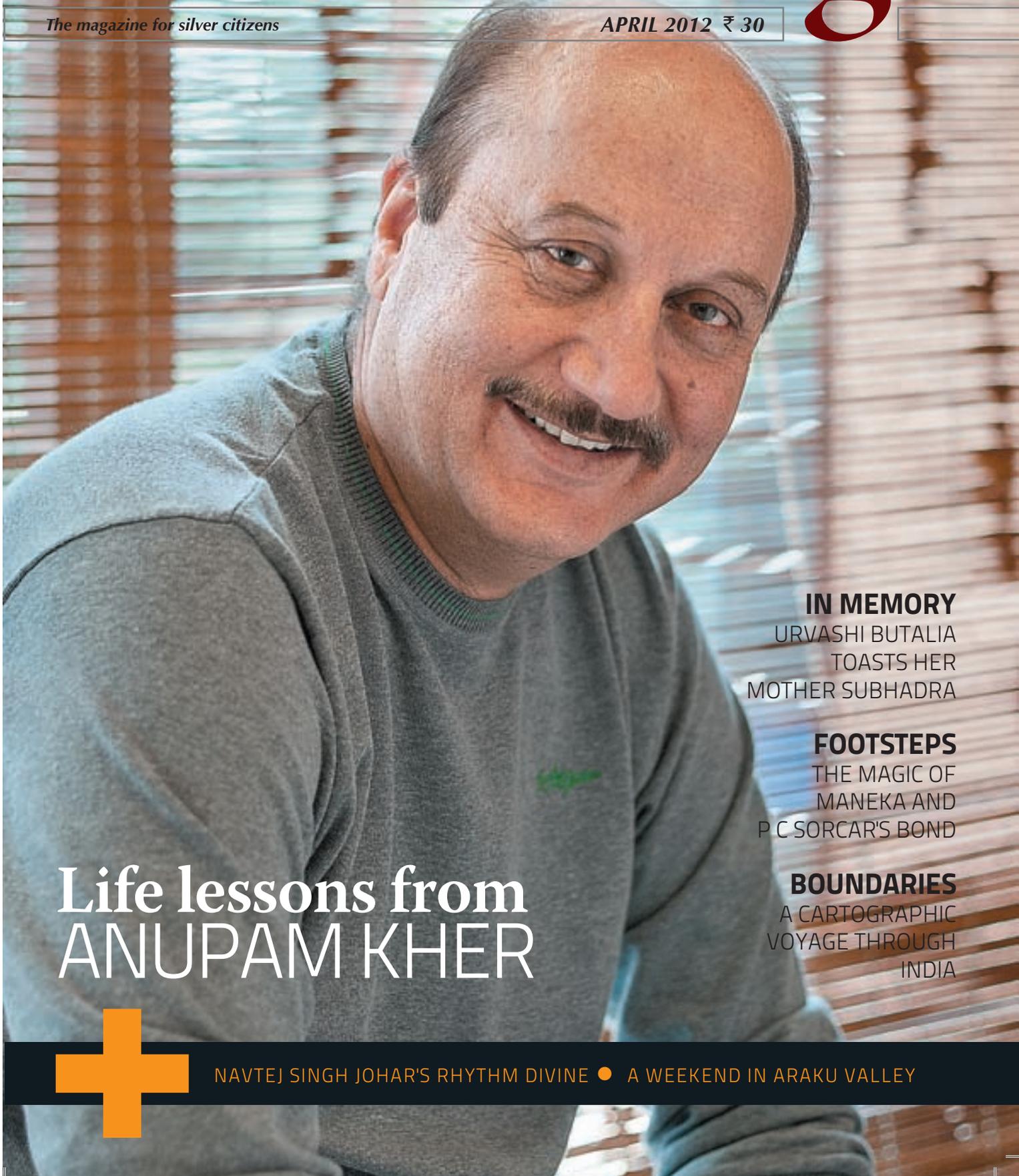


# harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

APRIL 2012 ₹ 30



Life lessons from  
**ANUPAM KHER**

## **IN MEMORY**

URVASHI BUTALIA  
TOASTS HER  
MOTHER SUBHADRA

## **FOOTSTEPS**

THE MAGIC OF  
MANEKA AND  
P C SORCAR'S BOND

## **BOUNDARIES**

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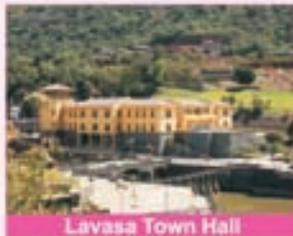
  
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# Starlight

True stardom is not about the trappings of fame but the bright light of talent that shines from within.

Proof of this is the incomparable Meryl Streep, whom I had the privilege of meeting at a pre-Oscar party held before this year's Academy Awards in Los Angeles. The 62 year-old won her third Oscar (of an astonishing 17 nominations); the most times any performer has been nominated), cementing her reputation as the finest actor in English cinema of our generation. For me, what was even more impressive was how down to earth she was. There was nothing of the diva about this woman, whose brilliance envelops her like a mantle; just a deep sense of engagement with whomever she met, a genuine curiosity, an eagerness to listen as much as speak.

Perhaps these are the qualities that lend such nuances, so many layers to her diverse and vastly challenging performances. Challenges that are only amplified when you are playing figures who have already stamped their personalities on the public imagination, like former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher. Watching Streep become Thatcher in *The Iron Lady* is a master class, not just in acting but in the understanding of the human psyche, its frailties and strengths.

Indeed, the film holds particular resonance for readers of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. Virtually confined to her home, dealing with the loss of her husband Dennis amid a heightening sense of powerlessness (political and temporal) and monitored by her cloying staff and concerned daughter, an elderly Thatcher looks back on her



Suresh Natarajan

life, the crests and ebbs. As she clears out her husband's clothes, memories jump up unbidden, reminding her of victories won, decisions made and, quite often, the price paid for them. Dennis too pops up incessantly, no sinister figure but the friendly if sometimes exasperating ghost of a beloved husband who was her rock of support on her road to power, a road on which he was quite often left standing by the wayside. Until, she sorts out the clutter in the room—and in her head—and bids her husband a final farewell.

The act of laying the ghost to rest, so to speak, is so familiar to us all; making peace with the past and looking ahead to a tomorrow that, while different, may hold the same promise and opportunity as a bygone yesterday. Understanding this is the first step towards seizing it, and making it count. Whatever your journey, just remember you're not travelling alone—that's Harmony's promise.

*Tina Ambani*

## A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

*Harmony Celebrate Age*—April 2012 Volume 8 Issue 11

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*Madhusudan Vaidya keeps an annual date with the majestic mountains*

**MASTER OF THE MIND**  
*Psychiatry pioneer Dr Narendra Wig blends Bollywood and mental health*



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**Anupam Kher is a winner—he says you can be one too!**

Cover photograph by Vilas Kalgutker

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# column one

Making small beginnings and then larger inroads calls for qualities that go beyond experience or age. It all starts from single-minded focus. Add to it perseverance and the result is hard-fought and much-preserved success. Anupam Kher wasn't a star son and didn't have the looks that would bag him cream roles in Hindi cinema. At a young age, he embarked on a dream path playing the role of an elderly gentleman who would have sunk deep in sorrow with his son's untimely death abroad if it wasn't for his strength of character that kept his head up while fighting for his son's remains so he could perform the last rites. On the cover this month ("Kher Sera Sera") for a new avatar—of author—he even shows that role playing is subject to reinvention. His book, *The Best Thing about You is You*, takes a leaf from his own life and experiences and inspires readers to have faith and confidence in themselves.

We should indeed look at life as a lesson learnt. What's your learning? Maneka Sorcar, living legend P C Sorcar's daughter ("Diamond in the Sky"), says she can't even dream of stepping into her father's shoes; "I either grow into them or conjure myself a new pair," she tells us. Bharatanatyam exponent Navtej Singh Johar ("Sage or Artist?") came back to India because he didn't want to perform for those who didn't understand the ethos of his art. And Sarpanch Bhat-eri Devi from Sonapat ("Speak") never differentiated between her daughters, and therefore decided to work towards giving every girl child born in her village an equal chance to life and prosperity. It takes just that much to do what you want to. Look back at your experiences and give others the benefit they would have never had.

—Meeta Bhatti

Most of the older generation is afraid of two things: loneliness and death. They think ageing means walking towards death. We all know that one day or the other, everyone has to face this situation; then why not face it bravely and gracefully?

Dearth of knowledge leads to trauma; death is not an exception. Death is a natural course of life. Though it is the end of your episode in this world, your life does not end here. It continues in one or another form till your soul reaches its destiny. When our duties are over, the creator takes us back. Just as we leave the office after work, we leave university after obtaining a degree and we go to bed after our daily chores, we leave this world to continue our life thereafter. Death does not destroy the soul, only the body.

So let us greet death gracefully. First, we must prepare for it. When we look back on life's journey, we may realise that we have left behind many things undone; that we have done some unpleasant things we may regret, mistakes we wish to rectify, errors for which we wish to seek forgiveness. It is never too late to attend to all this unfinished business. When we have fulfilled our duties with love and sincerity, when we had lived a life with humanity, truth and justice, we don't need to worry when death knocks at the door.

Padma Mhatre *Via email*

I went through the February 2012 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* and was impressed by Tina Ambani's editorial on Oprah Winfrey ("O, Yes", 'Connect') and the letter by Tejasvi Suresh Bala ('Response') about his active grandfather Y Balasubramanian, who wears the many hats of homeopath, teacher, administrator and translator. So many senior citizens possess such skills but lack the chance or opportunity to use them. Many feel unworthy or too timid and afraid to come forward; we doubt our own capabilities. When the magazine publishes such inspirational stories, we feel inspired and confident. With the support of Harmony, we can all empower ourselves for a better future. As a first step, I drew up a model to re-evaluate myself; I call it an 'empowerment and self audit'. Essentially, one's own skills (communications, coordination, teaching and mentoring, technical, auditing) can be enhanced by a continuous process of personality development that includes grooming, etiquette, fitness, spirituality and hobbies like languages, music and dance, and the adoption of new skills, such

as Internet and other technology upgrades, to make ourselves more competitive in today's world. An organisation like Harmony can help us by enabling tie-ups with reputed firms at concessional rates (such as VLCC), offering guidance and tie-ups for new ventures and start-ups, short-term courses, and any other advice or recommendations.

J S Bakshi *Ahmedabad*

I appreciate the fact that every article in *Harmony-Celebrate Age* is focused on active living in later years. I wish there was such a magazine in Hindi as well. It would be nice to see your magazine reach the Hindi-speaking population of our nation. In my knowledge, scores of older people in urban slums, rural areas and small towns and cities are doing remarkable work. If *Harmony-Celebrate Age* wants to feature such people, I would probably be able to help your editorial team. [Translated from a letter in Hindi]

R K Paliwal *Mumbai*

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# GOOD NIGHTS

**I**t has always been regarded as a casualty of age—but no longer. Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine have proven that **sleep improves with age**. After studying the sleep patterns and lifestyle details (health, income, education) of over 150,000 Americans, they discovered that while middle age did bring sleep disturbances, older adults reported the fewest problems. Specifically, people over the age of 80 had

the fewest complaints with sleep. Also, the study—published in journal *Sleep*—found that women reported more fatigue and sleep problems; and that health problems and depression were more detrimental to sleep than simply age. “This flies in the face of popular belief,” writes lead author Michael Grandner. “These results make us rethink what we know about sleep in seniors. Once you factor out illness and depression, they should be reporting better sleep.”

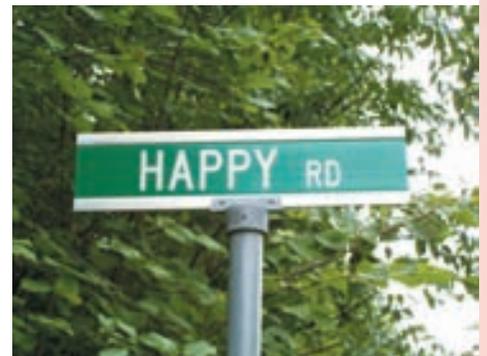
# When less IS MORE

Sometimes giving a little can get you a lot. Researchers at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Centre have established in trials (with mice) that **deleting a gene called Nf1 improves neurogenesis, the process by which brain cells are generated.** Other than the obvious benefits, enhancing neurogenesis also makes anti-depressants more effective in lower doses. "The significant implication of this work is that enhancing neurogenesis enhances cognitive skills and has anti-depressive and anti-anxiety effects that continue over time," senior study author Luis Parada writes in *The Journal of Neuroscience*. "Just as in people, mice produce new neurons throughout adulthood, although the rate declines with age and stress. Studies have shown that learning, exercise, shock therapy and some anti-depressants can increase neurogenesis. The steps in the process are known but the cellular mechanisms behind those steps are not. With this discovery, we hope to learn more."



## Happy, and you know it

If you thought ageing and obesity were downers, you may be far off the mark. When researchers from the University of Warwick Medical School studied the lifestyle and physical and mental health patterns of over 10,000 people in the UK and the US, they discovered that **people reported better mental quality of life and happiness as they aged,** the pains and problems of growing old notwithstanding. Interestingly, this finding held true in both Britain and the US, despite both countries having different welfare and healthcare systems. "It's obvious that people's physical quality of life deteriorates as they age, but what is interesting is that



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their mental well-being does not deteriorate; in fact, it increases," study leader Saverio Stranges writes in the *European Journal of Epidemiology*. "Also, being overweight or obese did not have a significant impact on mental well-being. In fact, people with a body mass index of more than 30, which is overweight, showed similar mental quality of life as people considered to be of a healthy weight."

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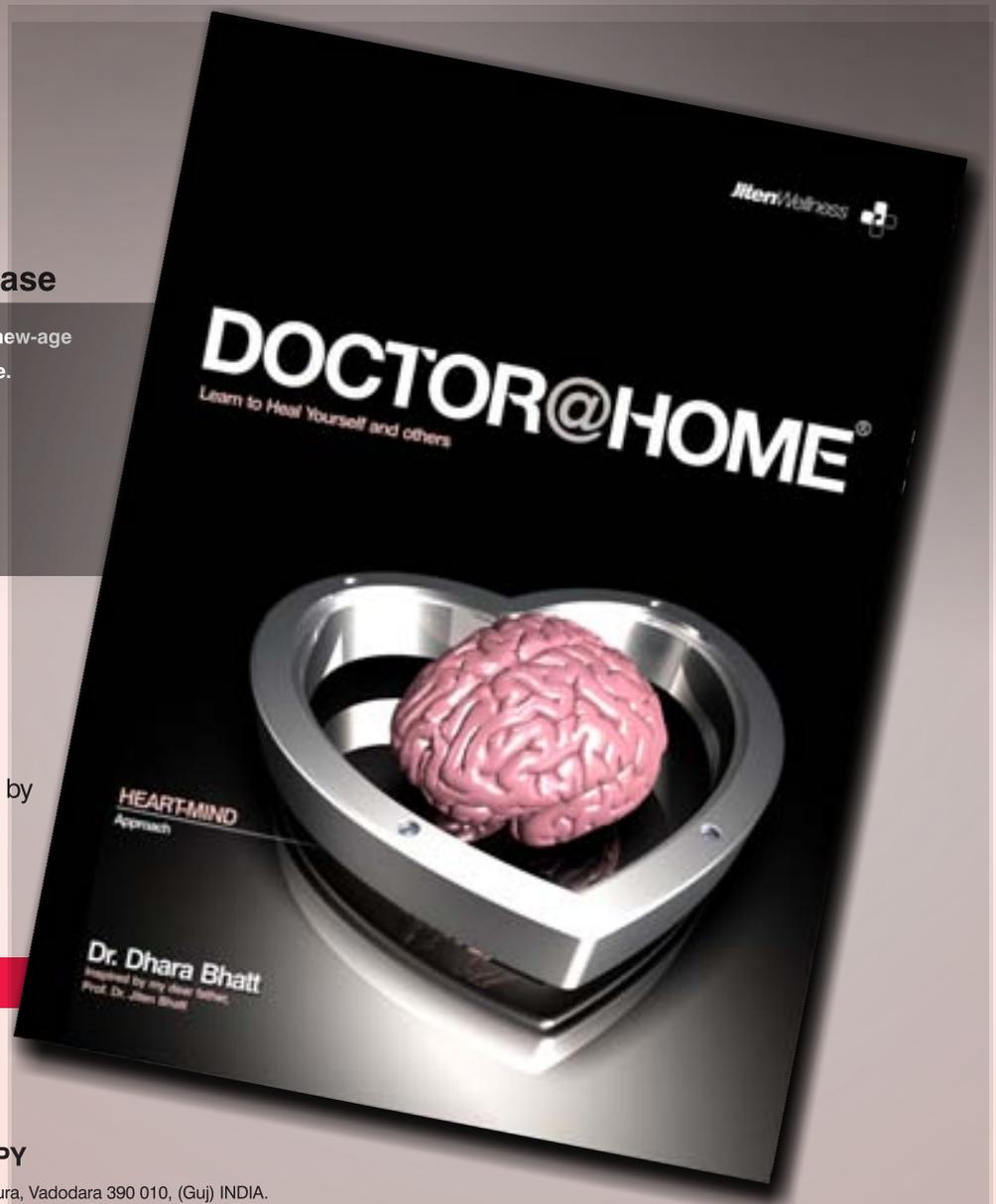
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# Swiss account

Better known for its ancient abbey that dates back to the 9th century, the north-eastern Swiss town of St Gallen has found a brand new reason to get on the global map. It will soon implement a **novel banking scheme where 'care hours' form currency**. As news website *swissinfo.ch* reports, silver volunteers provide care and support services for their less healthy peers; the hours they spend are 'deposited' in the bank and can be cashed in for their own care when required. The initiative aims to reduce social service costs while fostering a sense of solidarity in the community. "We need to bring the village mentality to the city and return to the days when people took more care of family, friends or neighbours," says Katja Meierhans, leader



of the pilot project. "The biggest need of the elderly is help with day-to-day things like shopping, administrative tasks and cleaning. We hope at least 300 people will sign up to provide two to three hours of care per week

over a 42-week period, adding up to a total of 25,000 hours of work. The maximum amount of time that can be deposited by each volunteer is 750 hours." About 12,000 people over the age of 65 live in St Gallen.

## MIND YOUR LANGUAGE



**AGEISTS, MIND IT.** In a new report, the British Commission on Improving Dignity in Care has come down hard on **patronising language against older people by hospital staff and care workers**. According to London newspaper *The Daily Mail*, the commission's report underlines that people who fail to show the requisite respect and compassion should not be allowed to work with silvers. This includes using expressions such as 'bed blockers' that imply older people are a burden or a nuisance; referring to them by illness, which reduces them to a clinical condition rather than recognising them as a person; and patronising language, such as 'how are we today dear?', which belittles them. "If somebody says 'Oh, there's an old dear in bed four', that's patronising," Professor Trish Morris-Thompson of the National Health Service, which contributed to the report, tells the newspaper. "Some universities and training organisations already include compassion among the entry requirements, but the report suggests this should be applied everywhere. Under its proposals, nurses would be held accountable and be expected to take action if they felt patients were not receiving dignified care."

# AN OPEN DOOR

This is a first for America—and quite possibly the world. The mayor of New York City recently opened the doors to the SAGE Centre, the **first senior citizens' centre dedicated exclusively to homosexuals**. Located in Manhattan's Chelsea neighbourhood, the centre will be run for the city by SAGE, an NGO that provides services for gay silvers, and will offer programmes related to art



and culture, food and nutrition, and health and welfare, reports *The New York Times*. "We consider it the first full-time, full-service senior centre for LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual] seniors in the US," says Christopher Miller, a spokesman for the New York City Department of Ageing. "The centre seeks to ensure that LGBT older adults can age in good health and financial security with broad community support." New York has the largest urban population of gays, lesbians or bisexuals in the US.



## Ride easy

Your train rides may just get a little smoother. The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has announced that it will set up **executive lounges at major railway stations across India to assist passengers**. These lounges promise to be particularly beneficial for silvers and women. Upon the payment of a fee, 'rail volunteers', who will manage the service, will receive passengers at stations, arrange porters for luggage, serve food and beverages inside the lounge and cater to all requirements. Operating 24/7, the lounges will feature a range of amenities, from wheelchairs and Wi-Fi facilities to a travel desk that will help passengers with their onward journey and taxi and hotel bookings. The best part: the lounges will be available to passengers travelling by all classes, just so long as they pay the required fee. That amount is yet to be determined—we'll keep you posted.

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# Face the future

A decade off your face—that's the promise of many of the latest, **hi-tech non-invasive treatments** on the market. Don't forget, though, that each one comes with a cost (literally and otherwise). British newspaper *The Independent* has the skinny on the treatments that everyone's talking about:

● **Intense pulsed light (IPL):** An intense, pulsed low-density light, it penetrates deep into the skin to stimulate fibroblast cells and produce fresh collagen, which in turn softens fine lines, reduces wrinkles, smoothes skin and



removes pigmentation. Needs three to four sessions to work; the end result is expected to last for four to five years. The cost: £ 400 (about ₹ 31,000) for one session.

● **Fraxel laser:** Tiny laser columns penetrate deep into the skin and create tiny wounds that trigger your body's natural response system to



heal. The result is plump, smooth and revitalised skin and erasure of sun damage. You have two choices: the

lighter Fraxel Re:store non-ablative laser (two to four treatments), or the heavy-duty Fraxel Re:pair carbon dioxide laser (a single treatment). The result lasts two to three years. Can cause temporary redness, swelling and even pinpoint bleeding. The cost: £ 700 (about ₹ 55,000) for Fraxel Re:store and £ 2,000 (about ₹ 157,000) for Fraxel Re:pair.

● **Thermage:** In this 'knife-less' facelift, a small device delivers radio-frequency technology to heat the dermis and subcutaneous tissue, where it



tightens and stimulates new collagen. One treatment lasts for many years. The cost: £ 2,000 (about ₹ 157,000).

● **Fractora:** This quick eye lift (done in a couple of minutes) involves the transmission of radio-frequency energy through a series of small bipolar needles; this results in minuscule



pinpricks, which the body then heals. Expect some initial bruising and swelling. One treatment can last for up to two years. The cost: £ 800 (about ₹ 63,000).

● **Combined dermaroller:** A small handheld tool rolled over the skin produces thousands of tiny needle columns in the skin that stimulate the



generation of new skin cells. Simultaneously, hyaluronic acids, minerals and vitamins are infused to plump the skin. The pain quotient is high; the effect lasts a couple of years. The cost: £ 980 (about ₹ 77,000).



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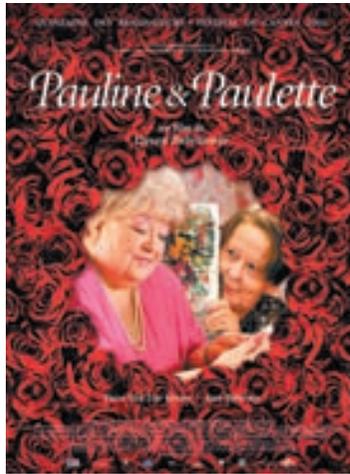
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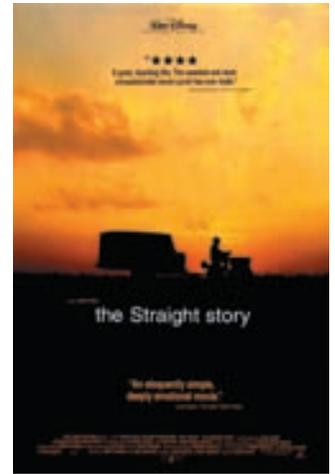
It claims to be the first-ever sustained discussion of old age in cinema. In *The Silvering Screen* (University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division; 240 pages), Canadian academic Sally Chivers argues that the culture of youth leaves little room for positive images of silvers in contemporary cinema, which generally tends to link ageing with disability, depression and dependence. This, despite the increase in roles for elder actors and more elder 'friendly' themes. "Most movies reflect an ongoing pathologisation of changes associated with age," she writes



in the book. "In other words, they treat ageing as if it were a disease. In the movies, senior characters have to look youthful and be active. The idea that an old person has value that exceeds the value attached to young appearance is not what we see on the silvering screen." Still,



there are some exceptions, as Chivers points out. Her recommendations: *Pauline and Paulette* (Belgium, 2001), where the mentally handicapped lead had an indomitable spirit and was actually missed by her ageing caregiver-sister when she was not around; *Away from Her* (Canada, 2006),



where the protagonist with Alzheimer's was in a position of power and fell for a man at her care facility, forcing her husband to win her back; and *The Straight Story* (US, 1999), where an old man who had lost his driver's licence travelled across the US riding a lawn mower to visit his brother!



## Bloom on

While silver actors continue to rake in the awards for biopics—like Meryl Streep who channelled Margaret Thatcher to perfection in her Oscar-winning turn in *The Iron Lady*—it is considerably more rare to find a late-life romantic comedy on screen. That's what makes *Late Bloomers*, a film by director Julie Gavras, so refreshing. It stars 59 year-old Isabella Rossellini and William Hurt, 61, as a long-married couple who find themselves on the cusp of silvering and embark on radically different routes of dealing with what they perceive as a crisis. While this naturally pulls them apart, they eventually find a way to reconcile their differences, attitudes and realities to find their way back to each other. "I really wanted to tell a love story saying more about a couple than just that they're very different, they get together, they manage to get together," Gavras says in an interview with news agency AFP. "And just looking around, the age issue seemed what was interesting to talk about. So while the film has all the elements of the classical rom-com, it's the subject that does that."

## THE OTHER SIDE



After making actors dance to his tune in his critically acclaimed films, director **Woody Allen will face the camera as an ageing male escort in the film *Fading Gigolo***. Written and directed by John Turturro, who also acts in the film alongside Allen and sexy sirens Sharon Stone and Sofia Vergara, the film tells the story of two buddies who decide to go into the escort business to make a little money, a vocation that their Hasidic Jewish community finds hard to stomach. As *Variety* magazine reports, Allen hasn't been seen in a film since *Scoop* in 2006. But with this film and his next directorial venture *Nero Fiddled*, which will release in summer 2012 (where he stars alongside Ellen Page and Penelope Cruz), viewers will get to see much more of the acclaimed director. No word yet on when *Fading Gigolo* will be out, but production is set to begin in New York City in April.

## Loss and gain

Some dilemmas cut across cultures and borders. Proof of this is *Granny's Moving In*, a sensitive documentary showcased on British channel BBC Two that **turns the spotlight on dementia**. The protagonist is 83 year-old Peggy, whose dementia is intensifying even as her daughter Sue and son-in-law Phil try to find ways to care for her while allowing her to preserve her free spirited ways, which includes frequent ribald nights on the town.

Bringing her home seems to be the only logical conclusion—despite the demands on their own time and privacy—but over time, stress levels intensify all around. Finally, though, they hit upon a novel idea: they convert their garage into a home for Peggy, allowing her to preserve more than a modicum of her dignity and independence while remaining close at hand. You can view clips from the documentary at [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01dbg2z](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01dbg2z)

### Neil Simon's

# The Sunshine Boys

## Sunshine again

Playwright Neil Simon's award-winning 1972 comedy *The Sunshine Boys*, about an ageing comedic duo forced to overcome their differences to make a lucrative movie comeback, has already been adapted for film and television. But now it makes its Broadway comeback with a new director—Thea Sharrock—and a brand-new (and beloved) cast: noted actors Danny DeVito and Richard Griffiths. The show opens on 27 April at New York's Savoy Theatre and will run until 28 July 2012.

# CANDID CAMERA

Traumatized by her mother's decline owing to Alzheimer's, yet transfixed by the need to depict the unpredictability of the ageing process, Philadelphia-based fine-art photographer Isa Leshko devised upon a unique subject: **the ageing animal**. The result is a fascinating series of images of a variety of species, from monkeys, wolves, horses, pigs and geese to sheep, roosters and even turkeys. Her search for animals ageing in a natural habitat has led her to sanctuaries and forests across the US; it takes the 40 year-old multiple visits to acclimatise herself with her subject (and its habitat) before she actually begins to shoot. "Animals are actually very challenging to photograph in a meaningful way," she tells website *msnbc.com*. "It's really easy to create images that are cute or anthropomorphic and I'm definitely aware of that risk. My goal is to create images that are nuanced and honest, not sentimental. Taking care of my mother solidified my fear of ageing. I'm photographing elderly animals as a means of confronting my fear and I'm immersing myself in that fear in order to dilute its power over me." You can check out the entire project—and buy prints—at [isaleshko.com/elderly-animals/](http://isaleshko.com/elderly-animals/)



## The celibacy principle

It may not be too much fun, but celibacy may be the key to longevity, at least if you're an insect. Scientists at the University of Nottingham in the UK have discovered that **an asexual species of flatworm has the potential to become immortal**. Known as planarian worms, this species can continuously maintain the length of their telomeres—the ends of the chromosomes that protect DNA—during regeneration. Planarian worms, which can reproduce sexually or asexually, can split lengthwise or crosswise to regenerate into two separate living worms. However, while

There are **20,000** species of flatworm, found in marine and fresh water.

A flatworm has no skeleton. It moves with the help of tiny bristles called cilia and two layers of muscles under its skin.

A flatworm takes in food and ejects wastes through the same opening.

both varieties grow new muscles, skin, guts and brains, only the asexual ones renew their stocks of a key enzyme; this enzyme enables stem cells to maintain their telomeres as they divide to replace missing tissues. "Our data satisfies one of the predictions about what it would take for an animal to be potentially immortal," study leader Aziz Aboobaker writes in journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. "The next goals are to understand the mechanisms in more detail and to understand more about how you evolve an immortal animal."



**Make friends!** It's the best health tonic you can give yourself. A recent American study of 309,000 people discovered that solitude could be as bad for your health as a lifelong smoking habit; it's actually worse for you than obesity. So the answer to your health problems—other than a healthy lifestyle, balanced diet and regular exercise—may just be friends. Lots and lots of them!

## Then: Photo Frame **Now: Artistic Key Stand**

Take a frame with an interesting border or bright colour. If you don't have anything that interests you, just paint an old frame in bright colours. Remove the photo and glass. Screw in hooks that you can buy at any hardware store. Ensure they are large enough to hold a couple of key chains. Hang your keys on these hooks. If hooks don't interest you, you can shove in a thick folded piece of colourful cloth in the photo slot of the frame and pin in nails; nails with lovely designs on them are available on the market. Remember, the cloth should be thick enough to hold the weight of the keys. Decide the size of the frame depending on the amount of key chains you want to hang.



Haresh Patel



### FACTS

- » Steel and aluminium, two metals that photo frames are mostly made of, are the only two metals that can be reused an infinite amount of times.
- » A 2,000 sq-ft steel frame of a two-storey house is equivalent to the material of about six recycled cars. A wooden frame of the same size would take over 40 trees to produce.

### MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. HANG YOUR JEWELLERY ON THE HOOKS TO TURN YOUR PHOTO FRAME INTO A JEWELLERY BOARD.
2. TO CHARM YOUR GUESTS WITH A PICTORIAL KEY STAND, TAKE A BIGGER FRAME AND SAVE HALF OF IT FOR A FAMILY PHOTO AND HALF TO HANG YOUR KEYS. YOU CAN ALSO MAKE A COLLAGE OF PHOTOS AROUND THE HANGING KEYS.



# Add up the NUMBERS

**W**ith the dread of the rise of Alzheimer's disease hovering over our heads, researchers in France have tabled a study that presents hope to patients and their caregivers. Study authors associated with the Alzheimer's Association have based their research on a mathematical model of deducing behavioural patterns from the figures. According to them, **factors such as lack of exercise, illiteracy, heavy smoking, depression, hypertension, obesity and diabetes are major contributors to Alzheimer's.** On analysis, they discovered that if people would only address these risks and alter their behaviour about 34 million cases worldwide could be curbed. However, this Parisian study stressed that

though no scientific proof of any of these factors causing Alzheimer's has been confirmed, these findings find echo among many researchers from across the world. Study author Dr Kristine Yaffe also excluded factors like improper nutrition and lack of brain exercises as causal factors of the disease because not enough studies have been conducted to prove any link with the disease. The only disadvantage of the mathematical model is that the estimates of figures differ from country to country. For France, the percentage summing up the illiteracy factor would be much lower compared to India. This study, however, still forms a strong base to other studies researching the exact cause of Alzheimer's.



**DESPITE THE STRONG WARNING ON CIGARETTE PACKS, INDIAN TOBACCO COMPANIES CONTINUE TO MAKE HEAVY PROFITS. OWING TO THE ADDICTIVE NATURE OF TOBACCO (BECAUSE OF ITS NICOTINE CONTENT) AND ITS SEVERELY DETRIMENTAL EFFECTS, WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION'S INTERNATIONAL AGENCY FOR RESEARCH ON CANCER HAS CATEGORISED IT AS CATEGORY I CARCINOGEN (CONFIRMED HUMAN CARCINOGEN), WHICH HAS BEEN PREDICTED TO RESULT IN 13 PER CENT OF ALL DEATHS IN INDIA BY 2025.**

## ‘C’ your diet

**P**oor dietary habits and consumption of food cooked using biomass fuels deplete Vitamin C in Indians older than 60. Other causes that contribute to the deficiency are smoking and tobacco intake. The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine collaborated with two Indian institutes—Aravind Eye Hospital of Puducherry and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi—to coordinate a recent survey that checked the levels of **Vitamin C in Indian silvers**. One of the largest population-based surveys, it screened 5,000 people aged above 60 years and focused largely on people from rural villages and small towns, interviewing them about their diet. The research also included blood sampling and malnutrition analysis. Dr Ravindran, chief author of the study, says, “Not much attention is paid to poor nutrition in the growing older population of India. Measures to improve diet in poor communities need to be looked at.” From among the people screened, 74 per cent in the northern cities and 46 per cent in southern cities were found extremely deficient in Vitamin C. There were few who met the prescribed levels. It was also noted that the vitamin level fluctuated with seasons—it was found to be least during monsoons owing to the shortage of fresh fruits and vegetables. Vitamin C is known to be an essential nutrient as it plays a significant role in maintaining the body and repair of damaged tissues. It also plays a role of an antioxidant.



**A RECENT STUDY CONDUCTED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS PROVES THAT MORE THAN FACTORS LIKE CHOLESTEROL, HEART DISEASE AND INACTIVE LIFESTYLE, AGEING EYES ARE TO BE BLAMED FOR OUR HEALTH PROBLEMS IN LATER YEARS. WITH THE EYE LENS GRADUALLY BECOMING YELLOW AND THE PUPIL NARROWING, THE BODY'S CIRCADIAN RHYTHM (INTERNAL CLOCK) IS DISTURBED. THE CYCLICAL PHYSIOLOGICAL AND HORMONAL PROCESSES THAT TAKE US THROUGH THE DAY RELY ON NATURAL LIGHT, WHICH WHEN DENIED PROPER ENTRY THROUGH THE EYES DENIES US THE LIGHT OF LIFE.**

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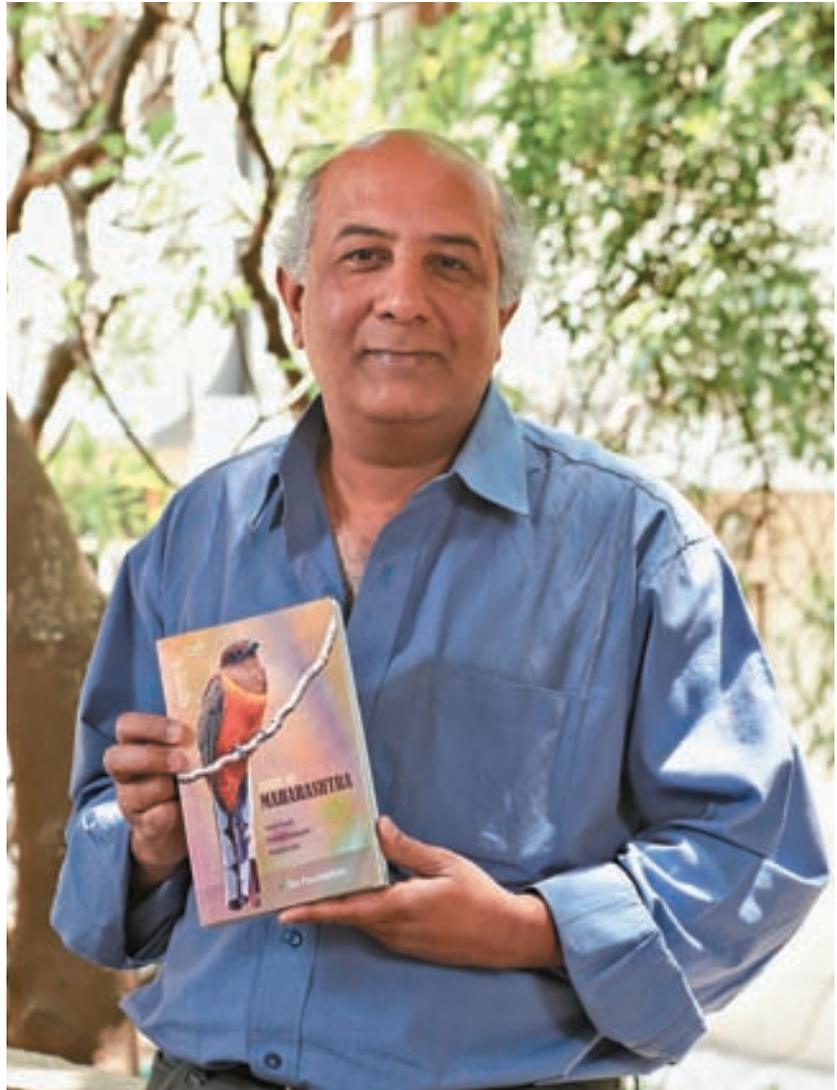
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# Flying HIGH

With his many degrees and consultancies, **Dr Satish Pande** may seem like an unlikely bird enthusiast. After all, a vocation in need of leisurely bones and eyes might not be able to root a full-time doctor. However, Dr Pande, who is an MD, DNB and fellow of the Maharashtra Academy of Sciences, is not only an enthusiast but someone devoted to nature education, training and conservation. The 50 year-old associate professor and consultant for interventional radiology and ultrasonology at KEM Hospital in Pune is also the founder director of Ela Foundation that recently released a bilingual book titled *Birds of Maharashtra; Maharashtrache Pakshi*. The book is the first of its kind for an insight into the avifauna of the state. All colour and printed on art paper, this 400-page book has been warmly welcomed by nature lovers.

Interested in birds and ecology since his school days in Satara, Dr Pande was encouraged to follow his interest by his parents. The result of a lifelong passion is this book, written by Dr Pande with Pramod Deshpande and Niranjan Sant, which features over 2,000 high quality photographs of 568 bird species in their natural habitat, with information on habits, habitat, nests, and unique identification features of each species. Fifteen years in the making, it draws attention to conservation measures that need to be urgently taken to save threatened and endemic species. There are two interesting chapters on 'Studying Bird Sounds' and 'Ethno-Ornithology' in the Indian perspective. Vocalisation of birds, a neglected area, has also been dealt with in this book that guides readers on how to record bird



Hemant Patil

sounds and understand them in a simple manner.

"As nature is an integral, though neglected, component of our democratic setup, I hope the book rekindles human love for these wonderful flying beings. Unless we love nature, we cannot conserve and protect it," says Dr Pande, whose Ela Foundation publishes research-based papers in international and national peer-reviewed journals to augment conservation through science. Along with MES Abasaheb Garware College, Ela Foundation conducts the only interactive ornithology course in India, the 'Certificate Course in Basic

Ornithology', which has been taken by over 700 participants so far. Dr Pande is now working on his next books, *Falconry in Ancient India—The Land of the Blackbuck and Amphibians and Reptiles of Northern Western Ghats*. In fact, Ela Foundation has been chosen to conduct the 8<sup>th</sup> International Raptor Conference of the Asian Raptor Research Conservation Network (ARRCN), which has 34 member nations, for the first time in India in 2014. In addition, Dr Pande is also working on a unique book of comics devoted to the secret life of the enigmatic owls and the importance of conserving them.

—Khursheed Dinshaw

**BIRTHDAYS**

● Veteran actors **A K Hangal, Jeetendra** and **Jaya Bachchan** celebrate their birthdays on 2, 7 and 19 April respectively.

● Actor **Alec Baldwin** (*right*), one of the famous Baldwin brothers, turns 53 on 3 April.



● Comedy superstar **Eddie Murphy** turns 50 on 3 April as well.

● African-American poet **Maya Angelou**, who read at Bill Clinton's inauguration, turns 83 on 4 April.



● **Colin Powell**, US secretary of state under George Bush, turns 74 on 5 April.

● *The Godfather* director **Francis Ford Coppola** turns 72 on 7 April.

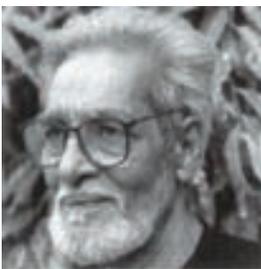
● Theatre and cinema legend **Zohra Sehgal** (*left*), our cover girl in August 2004, turns 100 on 27 April.

**IN PASSING**

● West Bengal-based Olympian and captain of the 1951 Asian Games football team **Sailendra Nath (Sailen) Manna** (*right*) passed away on 27 February. He was 88.



● Hindi cinema's romantic hero of the 1960s **Joy Mukherjee**, who set India's heart aflutter with *Love in Simla* and *Love in Tokyo*, passed away on 9 March. He was 73.



● One of the earliest practitioners of contemporary art **Bijan Chowdhury** (*left*) passed away on 16 March. He was 81.

● Legendary Italian light heavyweight boxing champion **Rocco Mazzola** died on 20 March. He was 79.



**OVERHEARD**

"Everybody looks like clones and the only people you notice are my age. Old age pensioners are more fashionable than younger women who have never looked so ugly. Older women are better at choosing quality clothes to suit their own individual style, whereas younger people focus on quantity over quality."

—**British fashion designer Vivienne Westwood, 70**, speaking at the launch of her latest **Red Label** collection at **London Fashion Week**

**MILESTONES**

● St Mary's Basilica in Kochi celebrated the accordance of the status of Cardinal to Syro-Malabar Church Major Archbishop **Mar George Alencherry** (*below*) on 10 March. The occasion was attended by all the bishops of the Syro-Malabar Church.



● Karnataka Sanskrit University's Sanskrit Book Awards, which aim to honour the best works of Sanskrit literature, felicitated the masters in March. **Professor N Ranganatha Sharma**, author of 80 Sanskrit books, won an award for *Kavyodhyanam*, and **Dr H V Nagaraj Rao** received the award for *Katha Lahari*. The scholars were felicitated by Karnataka Governor Hans Raj Bhardwaj.

# A life to write about

B F KHILNANI, 90, PUNE

*“A new chapter of my life began when I started writing poems and short stories”*



Hemant Patil

I am 90 and a big fan of white—my shirt, trousers, shoes and hair. I started a school called Jai Hind High School in a shed at Pimpri and served there for over 25 years. I also won the State Award for best teacher in 1979. By the time I retired in 1980, it became one of the largest schools in Pimpri. Today, the campus includes the MU College of Commerce, which was established over 15 years ago. Till I was with the school, my life was dedicated to it. It was as if I were wedded to it. But the day I retired, I never looked back.

A new chapter of my life began when I started writing poems and short stories in English and Sindhi. My first book of poems, *Bubbles of Life*, was released in 2002. My English novel was called *Sing O' My Love*, and my Sindhi novel was titled *Neth*, meaning 'at last'. I have also translated the same book in English, titled *At Last*. Further, I have compiled two books on witty and interesting quotes. My book *Artist and the Moon* is a collection and compilation of 52 aspects of life.

I started learning Urdu at the age of 70. This was followed by a book of Urdu *ghazal* called *Dabi Chingariyan*, which was released by thespian Dilip Kumar. A Sai Baba devotee, I never miss my morning routine of going from Pune station where I reside to Shivajinagar by auto rickshaw to pay my respects at the famous Sai Baba temple. Come rain or shine I never falter in my temple visits. I then have my daily cup of Iranian *chai* and walk down Main Street in Pune camp before heading back home. This is my daily routine from 10 am to 1 pm.

After lunch and a nap, I write. I am currently working on a book of *ghazal*. I am a bachelor, previously wedded to my school and now my writing. But I have always been admired, supported and encouraged by my sister Shaku and nephew Roop Karnani. My favourite international author is William Somerset Maugham. Among Indian authors I admire Munshi Premchand and Sarat Chandra Chatterjee.

—As told to Khurshed Dinshaw

**My working years were dedicated to the field of management. Now, I want to start teaching the subject in management institutes. What skills should I brush up on to pursue a career as a teacher?**

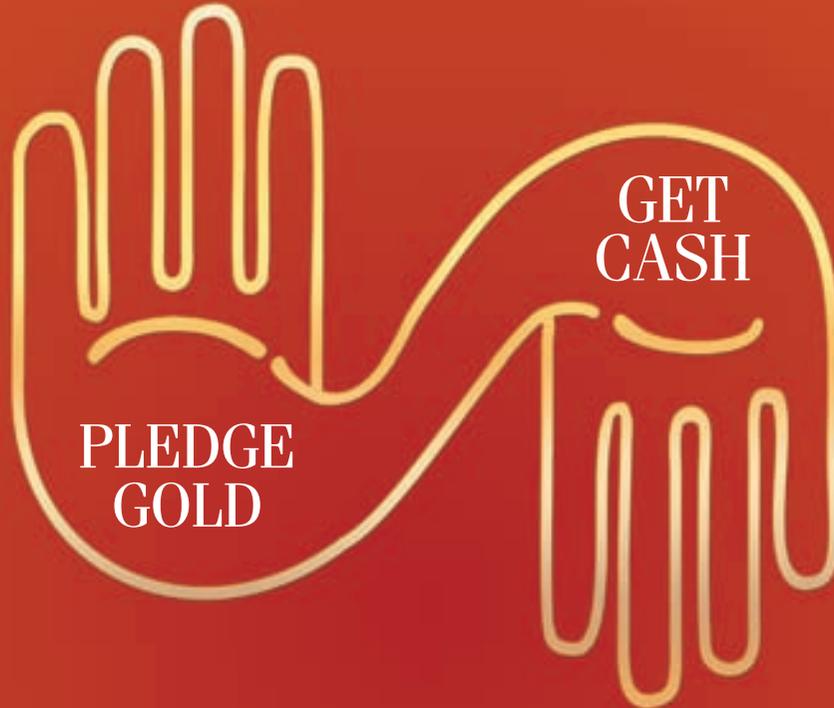
You have a great advantage if you want to pursue your second career as a teacher. As you have immense working knowledge and experience in the field of management, this should be the easiest career option for you.

First, you need inherent excitement and enthusiasm for teaching. The kind of attitude you carry to your class every-day will rub off on students and, in turn, motivate them to go deeper into the subject. You need to be insightful and patient when it comes to communicating your thoughts. Enjoy the process of imparting knowledge. Interact with students as much as you possibly can. Keep talking about incidents and anecdotes that explain the case in point better. Students appreciate it when their teacher has a worldview. It inspires and engages them. Maintain a stern but friendly approach and encourage questions.

Doing a short course or a diploma will give you a better perspective with regard to teaching, although it is not necessary. Considering your background, it won't be difficult. Wish you the best!

—V Iyengar is a retired management professor from Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai

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### RECIPE FOR LIFE

As I examine my life and my career in catering, a journey that began more than 40 years ago, I look back at a life of simplicity and one that places a premium on sincerity.

I was born in Chennai and have lived here ever since. Being part of a large family that struggled through life, I began working at the age of 16. I started as a water boy, serving water to guests and cleaning up at wedding feasts. In those days, we served water in glass tumblers as the ubiquitous plastic 'mineral' water bottle was non-existent.

By working hard and learning from my seniors, I worked my way to being an assistant cook and then chief cook.

I travelled across southern India and, while doing so, I learnt a lot. I was determined to rise above my circumstances and today I am a high-profile and much sought-after catering contractor.

Even though I have a large team that works for me, I believe in a hands-on approach. So I still carry vegetable sacks on my back, chop vegetables when necessary and cook some of the dishes myself. I come into my own in the kitchen, and spend around 200 days a year in *kalyana mandapam* (wedding halls).

I have catered for high-profile weddings and corporate functions. But I am a simple and traditional man. I wear a shirt and *veshti*. I do not have a mobile phone. And till early this year, I rode my old and trusted Bajaj scooter. I bought a car only after my family insisted I get one.

Most of my business comes from repeat orders and my loyal clients fondly refer to me as Chellappa. I recently catered to a client in Bengaluru. He has only one daughter and wanted the food at her wedding to be unforgettable. So I sent my team to Bengaluru to source cooks that could make an authentic and delicious dish called *bisi bele bhaath*. On occasion, I hire cooks from local towns and villages to make authentic local cuisines.

My motto is very simple: I want every wedding guest to return home satisfied with what they ate. I always cook more than required so that I can serve the excess food at orphanages. I feel very content when people enjoy my food to the fullest, regardless of whether they are rich or poor.

I also make some charitable donations to temples and sponsor the education of children. I encourage my son to be knowledgeable yet simple in his lifestyle, as I firmly believe that knowledge is important for survival.

—S Subramaniam, Chennai



Chennai Pix

Subramaniam's life is defined by simplicity, sincerity and soul food



Haresh Patel

## TAKING THE PLUNGE!

I had never realised the passion of having a hobby till I started swimming at the age of 65. It's been 23 years since and it has opened up a whole new world for me.

All through my working life, I sold products like cosmetics, stationery and what have you. When I wasn't working, I spent time with my family. Days and months went by and I kept plodding on, leading a monotonous life. Then my kids got married and they, in turn, had kids. After I retired, I spent a lot of time with my grandchildren. Then, one fine day, I decided to teach my four year-old granddaughter how to swim, and instantly memories of learning to swim as a child flooded in. I remembered how much I loved swimming and wondered why I had ever quit. After that, there was no looking back.

Today, at the age of 88, I am a regular swimmer at a pool in Mumbai. In fact, I have been a regular since the pool was inaugurated in 1989; I swim daily from 8 am to 9 am. I simply enjoy the feel of water all around me. It's become a habit and I can't do without my daily dose. What a wonderful change!

People at the pool encourage me to pursue my passion. It is very refreshing to have strangers support and encourage me. It isn't every day that you have someone you don't know come up to you, especially in a metro city, and show interest in your opinions. Also, young swimmers look to me for guidance and I am more than happy to share everything I can with them.

Swimming has brought Marathe awards—and rewards—aplenty

One thing led to another and I started teaching young children to swim at the pool. Their happy faces give me sheer pleasure and I could ask for nothing else in return. I have also collected so many precious memories along the way. For instance, there was a six year-old mentally and physically challenged boy who was learning to swim. I had to be very careful while guiding him. And when he took to swimming regularly, there were noticeable changes in him. It was a warm feeling just to have the child smile back at me.

Swimming has not only done wonders for me mentally and physically, it has also earned me some great friends. I had always assumed that one makes friends when one is young. But swimming has defied many beliefs. When I began swimming, I met Prakash Arurkar and now we're swimming buddies. We became good friends over the years and he takes a detour to pick me up and drop me home in his car. He even drives me around for my tournaments.

Yes, I have won quite a few laurels for swimming. I have participated in national events for senior citizens; won tournaments in Nagpur and Amravati; I have been felicitated at the MIG Club in Mumbai as a senior citizen swimmer; and participated regularly at district-level events too. Perhaps my greatest achievement is having inspired my 58 year-old son to take up swimming. One day, I hope to go swimming with my entire family!

—Dattatray Marathe, Mumbai



## Fibre force: Change how you eat for better gut health

I have heard that there are different types of fibre in foods and that they have different effects on the body. Is it true? Also, how much fibre should I eat as a 65 year-old?

Unlike food components like fat, protein or carbohydrates that our body can break down and absorb, dietary fibre, also known as roughage or bulk, can't be digested or absorbed. These long, thread-like structures present in fruits, vegetables and grains pass relatively intact through the stomach, small intestine and colon. Though indigestible, fibre has been proved to be extremely useful in maintaining bowel regularity and preventing constipation. Other benefits include lower cholesterol, reduced risk of heart disease and managing chronic diarrhoea.

### Types of fibre

There are basically two types of fibre: soluble and insoluble fibre.

**Soluble fibre:** Soluble fibre effectively dissolves in water. It mainly comprises pectins, gums and mucilages; these reduce the level of cholesterol in the blood and therefore the risk of heart and artery disease and atherosclerosis. Apart from this, fibre helps in weight control by reducing the risk of developing obesity. It stabilises blood sugar and lowers blood sugar levels. Some of the foods rich in water-soluble fibre are oat bran, legumes, psyllium, nuts, beans, apples, oranges, carrots, strawberries, citrus fruits, soybeans, apricots, dates, raisins, flax seed and beets.

### Benefits of soluble fibre

- One of the most substantial benefits of soluble fibre is that it slows down digestion in the stomach and small intestine, thus helping stabilise blood glucose levels. Slow digestion also helps in increas-

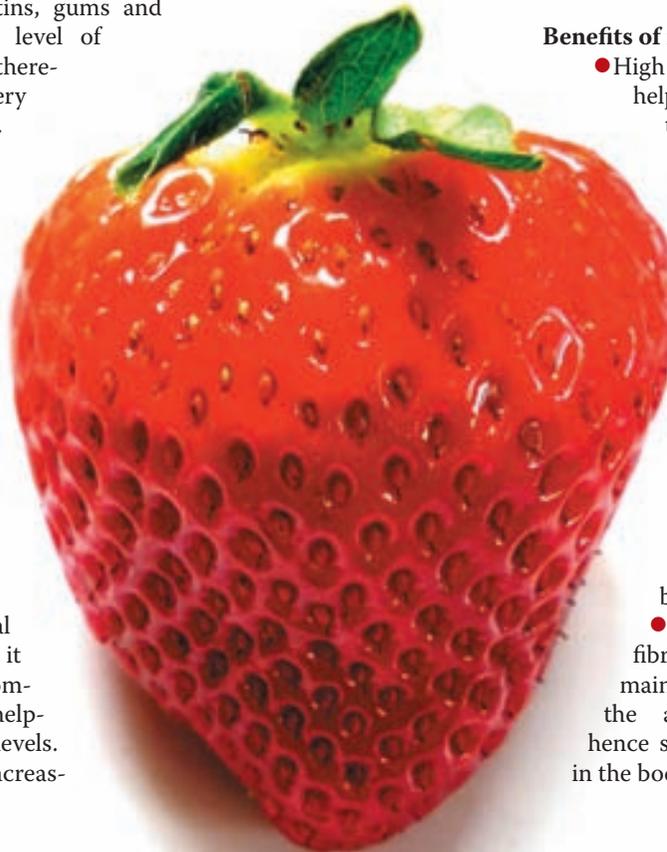
ing the uptake of minerals and other nutrients as the food persists in the digestive tract for a longer duration.

- Soluble fibre comes in contact with water present in the digestive tract and forms a thick gel. The result is swelling owing to the slow digestive process. Such a state induces a feeling of fullness but with no addition of calories.
- Soluble fibre unites with bile acids and cholesterol in the digestive tract, thereby preventing their absorption by the body. This helps reduce blood cholesterol levels.
- Intake of large quantities of soluble fibre helps prevent diabetes by slowing the absorption of glucose from the small intestine.

**Insoluble fibre:** Insoluble fibre cannot dissolve in water. Its most significant function is to collect water that increases stool bulk in the large intestine. Apart from preventing constipation and haemorrhoids, it also reduces the risk of colon cancer by speeding the passage of food through the digestive tract. Rich sources of insoluble fibre are vegetables such as green beans and dark green leafy vegetables, fruit skins and root vegetable skins, grains including whole wheat and its products, oat, corn, wheat bran, barley, legumes and seeds and nuts.

### Benefits of insoluble fibre

- High intake of insoluble fibre helps cure problems related to constipation, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and diverticulitis. It helps increase stool volume and stimulates normal bowel contractions, reducing the transit time through the colon.
- Consumption of insoluble fibre helps reduce absorption of salt and toxins. It is also useful in reducing the risk of high blood pressure.
- Much like soluble fibre, insoluble fibre helps maintain sugar levels. It slows the absorption of glucose, hence stabilising the sugar level in the body.



## READERS ASK

Rich sources of insoluble fibre are vegetables such as green beans and dark green leafy vegetables, fruit skins and root vegetable skins, grains including whole wheat and its products, oat, corn, wheat bran, barley, legumes and seeds and nuts

**Functional fibre:** This is a relatively new term used for non-digestible carbohydrates. This fibre is either synthetic or extracted from plant sources and added to processed foods. It can be incorporated into a large group of low-fibre foods and beverages like orange juice, yogurt, granola bars, desserts, and certain cereals, and helps people enjoy them with similar health benefits as traditional fibre.

**Common functional fibre in processed foods:** Chicory root extract, inulin, polydextrose, maltodextrin, resistant starch, hemicellulose, cellulose, methylcellulose, fructooligosaccharides, soluble wheat dextrin, hydrolysed guar gum, tapioca starch, and psyllium.

For a person of your age, the dietary requirement of fibre per day is 30 gm. For many people, meeting this requirement may require changes in eating habits. The best fibre choices include:

- Grains and wholegrain products
- Fruits
- Vegetables, beans, peas and other legumes
- Nuts and seeds

### Simple suggestions to increase your daily fibre intake

- Pick wholegrain foods over refined carbohydrates.
- Eat breakfast cereals that contain barley, wheat or oats.
- Switch to whole wheat or multigrain flour and bread and brown rice.
- Add an extra vegetable to your meals.
- Snack on fruit, dried fruit, nuts or vegetable juices.

High-fibre foods are good for health, but adding too much of them too quickly can cause intestinal gas, abdominal bloating and cramping. Increase fibre in your diet gradually. This allows the natural bacteria in your digestive system to adjust to the change. Ensure you drink plenty of water. Fibre pulls water into the intestines. Without adequate hydration, it can aggravate rather than relieve constipation. So try to drink at least eight glasses of water a day. With a little creativity and prior planning, you can easily meet your dietary requirements and maintain good health.

I have gastrointestinal problems that often cause indigestion. What would be an ideal diet for me? I am 75 and lead a semi-active life.



Normal digestion slows down with age and inhibits the body's ability to process vital nutrients that make us vulnerable to malnutrition and disease. The majority of **gastrointestinal problems can be prevented** by making a few changes in your eating habits. Here are a few suggestions:

- Avoid eating large meals as they cause heaviness and are difficult to digest. Eat small meals (4-5 meals a day) every three hours.
- A high-fibre diet prevents digestion problems. Include soft fibre by eating cooked or baked vegetables, fresh fruits, legumes and grains like barley. Drink raw carrot, cabbage, spinach and beetroot juices as they are easy to digest and a good source of fibre as well.
- Avoid milk and milk products and see if your gastrointestinal problems reduce. As we grow older, the body does not produce lactase (the enzymes required to digest milk). Hence we experience increased gastritis.
- Avoid fried food as much as possible. The digestive system is unable to process the saturated oils and fats in fried foods and, as a result, acid reflux and severe gastric issues can occur, along with constipation.
- It's important to drink lots of fluids. Light soups and stews provide the necessary fluids and are easier to swallow and digest.
- Take 2 tbsp of raw papaya juice mixed with 2 tbsp of ginger juice. Add 1 tsp of honey to this mixture. Take 2 tbsp of this mixture after your lunch and dinner. This will improve your digestion.
- Reduce fat intake. Replace red meat with lean meats like chicken, poultry and fish.
- Go for a walk regularly and also try to walk after your main meals for 10-15 minutes. This will help you digest your food better. Exercise regularly as it helps stimulate bowel activity.

*Dr Anjali Mukerjee is a nutritionist and founder of Health Total, which has 15 centres in Mumbai to treat obesity and other health related disorders. Visit [www.health-total.com](http://www.health-total.com). If you have a question for Dr Mukerjee write to [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)*



## WEIGHT WATCH BY MADHUKAR TALWALKAR

# Boost your body: Simple exercises to improve stamina

I am 62 years old and want to take up either swimming or dancing. However, owing to an inactive life thus far, I don't feel physically fit. How can I build my stamina? I am slightly overweight as well.

Stamina is the resilient power of the body to sustain composure against abrasion from the physical world—work, sports or some other physical activity. Generally speaking, stamina varies from person to person. It also depends on the state of the body, i.e. age, gender and conditions like injuries. However, the fact remains that it can be increased by constant and deliberate efforts.

Lack of stamina causes problems like fatigue and lethargy owing to which we feel boredom, our efficiency decreases and we become prone to diseases. We can safely conclude that the very essence of a vital and prolonged life is the improved level of stamina. Believe it or not, there are exercises that can help you increase stamina; below, you will find a few that you can do every day.

### Interval training

Interval training involves short bursts of high-intensity activity, followed by short cool-down periods of low-intensity training. For example, a minute of high knees would be followed by 30 seconds of step touch. Or running at 8 mph for three minutes would be followed by a minute of jogging at 4 mph, for a short period of time. Quick bursts of energy followed by short breaks to catch your breath are a great way to improve your stamina.

### Bicycling



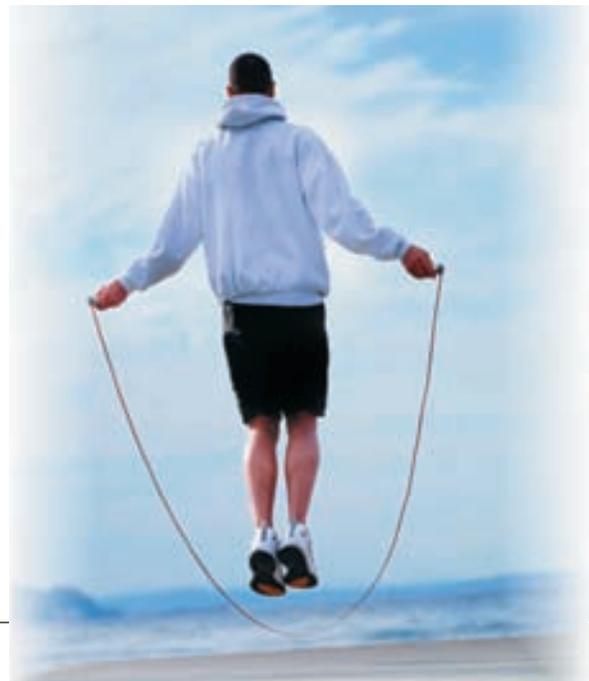
If you have access to a stationary bicycle or even a 'real' fitness bike, put it to better use by increasing your mileage, not the intensity. To build stamina you want to ride for distance first, and then for intensity.

### Swimming



Swimming is great as you have to learn to incorporate your breath into every stroke. It also places no pressure on the joints, so you can use it to increase your cardio endurance without worrying about having bad knees in the long run.

### Skipping



Start small. Skip for a few minutes daily, as long as you feel comfortable. Each week, try to increase the duration a little. This can have a good effect on increasing your stamina.

### Running on the spot

Run on the spot for a set period of time, like two minutes to start with. Later, as days pass by, you can increase it to maybe five minutes.

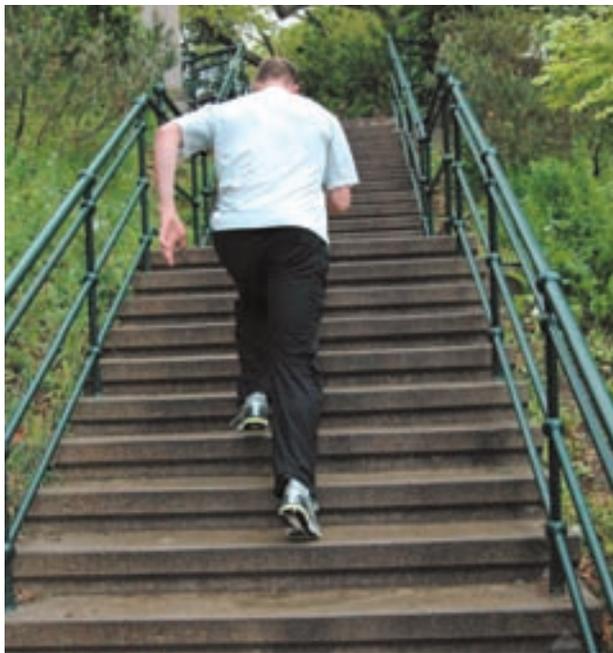
### Running briskly

This is another common method used to improve stamina. You can jog in the morning for a short distance every day; after a few days, increase your speed to cover the same distance; and after a few more days, you can further increase the speed as well as the distance. This improves stamina.

### Racquetball

Racquetball is fast paced and fun! If you're diving and slamming a ball against a wall, time simply flies by. And that's great, because you won't notice yourself working up a sweat that will eventually help increase your stamina.

### Step climbing



Whether you are at work, in your apartment complex, or training in a football stadium, climbing steps is a sure way to beef up your stamina. Just a few steps will get your heart pumping and eventually you will be able to measure your progress by your ability to conquer a flight of steps without gasping for air.

### Team sports

Whether playing soccer or tossing around a Frisbee, you will improve your stamina; fun activities with friends help you do this without noticing how much you worked out and for how long.

### Yoga

This may seem counterintuitive as a stamina improver, but yoga teaches you to regulate your breathing. When it comes to exercising, knowing how to breathe in and out correctly is the key. In turn, breathing correctly directly corresponds to your performance, which is directly tied to your stamina.

### Lifting weights

Most people think of aerobic exercise when they are trying to increase stamina. However, the truth is that real fitness magic happens only when you simultaneously improve your muscular and cardiovascular systems. If you want to drastically increase your stamina, use weight machines, free weights, fitness bands and your own body weight (my favourite).

Exercise three times a week; this should help you lose weight. Don't forget to get a good night's sleep. This is nearly as important as working out when it comes to staying fit and losing weight.

### What you eat and how many times

Eating fruits and leafy green vegetables can help you lose weight. Eat lean meat and fish. Eat small portions six times a day (and not the conventional three) to generate more metabolic action.

### Tips

Be aware of what you put in your mouth. Don't eat while you are watching television. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk instead of driving. Buy yourself some small hand weights and 'pump iron' while you are watching television. Stop eating when you are full. Deprivation (starvation) is not going to work, so don't do it. Avoid the foods that you know make you feel bloated, fat and uncomfortable. Walk your dog. Roll around on the floor with your grandchild and have some fun.

*Madhukar Talwalkar is chairman of Talwalkar's, one of India's largest chain of fitness centres with 78 branches across major cities. Website: [www.talwalkars.net](http://www.talwalkars.net) If you have a question for him write to [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)*



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

## Hidden harmony: Restore your balance through yoga

The ability to swing back into a state of harmony after something discomfiting happens is a great skill. Often, this could be the only solution to sort out life's major problems. It is impossible to lead a stress-free life because that would make life boring! But it is possible to jump out of a stressful situation with our sense of proportion still intact. Thus, it is better to aim for the ability to survive a stressful situation rather than a life devoid of challenges. This ability is not just emotional one, but biological too—reversal to a state of balance and harmony is called homeostasis.

When we are stressed, our body gets into flight-or-fight mode, where stress hormones are released to prepare us for any emergency. Most of us, even after the stressor has passed, cannot return to our original state of physical control: our blood pressure may remain high; stress hormones continue to pump in the feelings of anger or anxiety making us hyperactive or reactive; we become lethargic as we try to escape the situation by sleeping; we display avoidance behaviour or even addiction as an escape. Our digestive system gets out of kilter because blood circulation does not return to normal. And our uro-genital system, sweating mechanism, skin temperature may all not revert back to normal, creating problems in the kidney or ruining the skin.

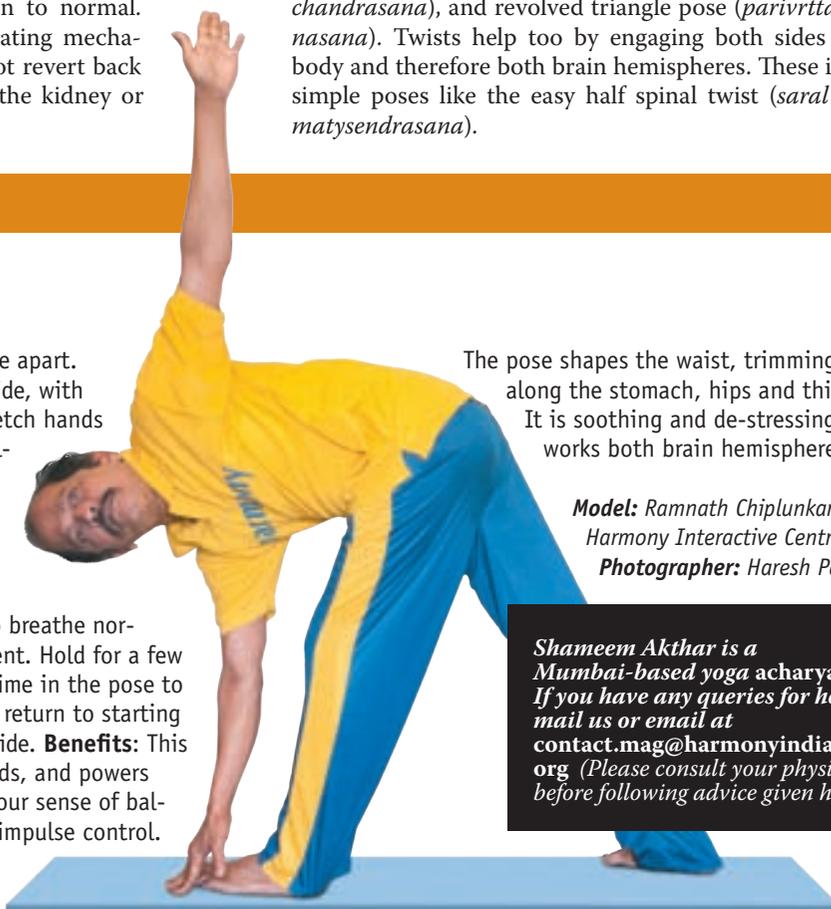
But yoga has a solution; its practices can help us return to a state of mental and physical homeostasis after stress. Poses that calm the brain and simultaneously relax contracted muscles include forward bends, such as the hare pose (*shashankasana*), lizard pose (*prishthasana*) and seated forward bend (*paschimottanasana*). They are the most restorative and can get the body to revert to a soothing state of supple health. Breathing practices like skull-cleansing breath (*kapalabhati*) help by mimicking our anxious state, making us hyperventilate and relieving us directly and immediately of stress. If this is followed by alterative nostril breathing (*anulom viloma*), you are guaranteed perfect harmony because this practice is the most treasured in yoga for that purpose. It brings a balance by involving both brain hemispheres of the brain and creates a state of *vairagya* or dispassion that helps us step back from the stressor with a state of control.

Other poses that can gently generate balance in us include soothing standing balances like the one-legged prayer pose (*ekapada pranamasana*), standing crescent (*ardha chandrasana*), and revolved triangle pose (*parivrtta trikonasana*). Twists help too by engaging both sides of the body and therefore both brain hemispheres. These include simple poses like the easy half spinal twist (*saral ardha matysendrasana*).

### YOGIC MOVES

#### Revolved triangle pose (*parivrtta trikonasana*)

Stand up straight, with feet a metre apart. Point your right foot to the right side, with the left slightly turned inward. Stretch hands out at shoulder level. Inhale. Exhaling, twist to the right side, placing your left palm over and above the right foot. If you are not flexible, you can place it in front of the foot. Stretch your left hand above. Look up at the hand, continuing to breathe normally. Ensure your knees are not bent. Hold for a few seconds, progressively increasing time in the pose to half or minute or more. Inhale and return to starting position. Repeat for the opposite side. **Benefits:** This pose tones the spine, legs and hands, and powers the digestive tract. It challenges your sense of balance, promoting mental focus and impulse control.



The pose shapes the waist, trimming fat along the stomach, hips and thighs. It is soothing and de-stressing, and works both brain hemispheres.

**Model:** Ramnath Chiplunkar, Harmony Interactive Centre  
**Photographer:** Haresh Patel

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

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**SOULFOOD AND SOULMATES** JIGYASA GIRI AND PRATIBHA JAIN MEET  
DR COL. UDAY SINGH RATHORE AND SUSHIL RATHORE, JODHPUR

## An exclusive series about life, love and food that unites hearts

Dressed in Rajasthani clothes, 58 year-old Col. Uday Singh Rathore and his wife Sushil, 52, redefine the notion of fashion. Intelligent, purposeful

and dynamic, they are Rajputs exuding rare pride and respect towards their family history that can be traced 43 generations with the records kept

at the Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur. Discipline, commitment, spirituality, the notion of Six Sigma, the wisdom of the *Gita*, and family values—the



conversation flows seamlessly as we move from one subject to the next...

**It is a rare delight to see people wearing their traditional costumes these days. Are these your everyday clothes?**

**Sushil Rathore:** When we got married, I was expected to wear this traditional costume. Over time, I became comfortable wearing it and have continued to do so. I wear it to parties as well.

**Col. Uday Singh Rathore:** As Rajputs, we have grown up learning to take pride in our culture, and our attire is part of it.

**When and how did you first meet?**

**She:** We met first in June 1978, when it was arranged for us to 'see' each other. He was looking for an educated girl and I was looking for a man who would not drink or smoke. We liked each other instantly. After marriage, I had to move to his village. I found it easy to adjust with his family and village life for which my mother-in-law has always remained appreciative.

**Did you lead a conservative lifestyle?**

**She:** There were restrictions and one had to work around them. For many years, we followed the *purdah* system. I did not have permission to work elsewhere, but I was allowed to stitch from home. I found that convenient as I could attend to my household responsibilities and the children. When my husband was posted to other places, I undertook needlework, tuitions and also taught women to sew. I now manage my own honey business.

**Tell us about your background.**

**She:** I am from Jhunjhunu and graduated from Sophia College in Ajmer. After our marriage, we stayed in Ladhakh for three months. He was first posted in Jodhpur from 1980-82 and

again from 2006. We have also lived in Delhi, Jabalpur, Guwahati, Shillong, Ambala, Tamil Nadu. We have two sons who are married.

**He:** I was born in the Chordia village of Rajasthan, but most of my childhood and youth was spent in Jodhpur. With a degree in history, I did my post-graduation in IT and have an MBA in human resource management.

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**“A marriage is not just a relationship between two people, but between their families. Even if one is initially drawn to wealth and status, what will sustain a marriage is a strong bond between the two families. Each one must accept and respect the other’s family. I am not impressed with wealth or cars or a dazzling lifestyle. Education is the real wealth”**

---

**How did you manage to make such clear choices?**

**He:** My mentor and guide was Major Sultan Singh (IPS), who was the DGP of Rajasthan Police. I lived in his house for 17 years, along with 25 other cousins and friends of my age. He was a role model for all of us and brought us up as we did not have the opportunity to get educated in our own village. It was from him that I derived my understanding of life that if one wanted to succeed, one must learn the art of people management.

**What was it that drew you to each other? Is there any change you would like to see in the other?**

**She:** The moment I saw him, I said to myself, 'He is the man for me.' There is nothing in him I would ever want to change; he is perfect. But yes, I used to tell him not to let others take him for granted. If you wish to help someone, you should offer support instead of allowing them to depend on you completely. Over time, I have seen him agree to this point. In fact, he always listens to what I have to say.

**He:** Each one of us has certain attributes and the interaction of these attributes makes things happen. I have come to realise that she has greater clarity and handles practical matters much better than I do! I also applaud her strength of character. For instance, in difficult times, she would say, "I can survive eating *roti* with salt, but not with bribery and corruption."

**Any advice on how one must choose one’s life partner?**

**He:** No one is perfect. We are a mixture of good and bad, strengths and weaknesses, ideals and challenges. What is important is sharing similar life values. When my younger son brought home the girl he wanted to marry, I asked her to write a page on the 18.43 verse of the *Gita* describing the qualities of a Kshatriya. And when she did, nothing else mattered.

**She:** When a marriage takes place, it is not just a relationship between two people, but between their families. Even if one is initially drawn to wealth and status, what will sustain is a strong bond between the two families. Each one must accept and respect the other’s family. I am not impressed with wealth or cars or a dazzling lifestyle. Education is the real wealth.

**What brings about the kind of inner discipline that you seem to display so effortlessly?**



**He:** A sense of purpose. I try to live a simple life according to the wisdom of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. This book is my guru as it came into my hands in a very mystical manner. In 2004, while I was ardently searching for a guru, at the temple of Ganesha in Pillayarpatti in Tamil Nadu a child gave me the *Gita* asking me to read it. Over the years, I have come to believe that in the *Mahabharata* going on inside me—with my weaknesses, my strengths, my attachments—the teachings of the *Gita* can bring about a harmonious synergy.

#### Is there a simple formula?

**He:** I plan for the next three days, the next three years, and the next three decades. I follow the notion of three and plan in advance.

#### Decades! That amounts to thinking of life as immortal rather than ephemeral, does it not?

**He:** Not really; I ask myself how I would like to be 30 years from now. The first answer is, healthy. So that creates an inner discipline. A spontaneous auto-suggestion to the body takes place.

#### Ah yes, now we can see where your notion of perfection stems from!

**He:** The idea of perfection is connected to the technique of Six Sigma. It is a management strategy to ensure that one makes minimum mistakes. As you may be aware, the performance of the Mumbai *dabbawalla* has been graded as one of Six Sigma. As an Army officer, I was always watching my qualitative performance very closely. It inspired me to give my best to each and every moment.

**She:** That's him—always working, always watchful of himself. Both of us always keep ourselves engaged. My mother taught me never to be idle. Our parents' sacrifices to give us the education of being mindful instilled that quality in us.

#### And what about food habits?

**She:** He has become a strict vegetarian and enjoys typical Rajasthani food like *gatta* and *ker-sangri*. I enjoy cooking other cuisines that I learnt while living in other states. I like cooking South Indian food also.

**He:** I believe vegetarian food is very healthy. I have watched people and communities and believe vegetarianism is good for the mind and memory. I believe in the concept of *satvik* foods as explained in the *Gita*.

#### You mean, 'we are what we eat'?

**He:** Oh yes, I believe we can understand a person in five ways: the kind of food he eats, *shraddha* (the kind of deity he prays to), *yajna* (his attitude in teamwork), *tapasya* (his physical energy), physical routine and capacity for work, and *daan* (giving without expecting anything in return).

#### A fabulous measure of human existence. What is the final goal?

**He:** To be like a gyroscope; to achieve that perfect state of equilibrium!

#### FROM SUSHIL RATHORE'S KITCHEN

### Gatte Ki Sabzi

A speciality from Rajasthan, this side-dish is very popular in Marwari cuisine. Each zone of Rajasthan has its own version—simple and rich.

#### Ingredients

##### For *gatta*

- Bengal gram flour (*besan*): 2 cups
- Red chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Turmeric powder: ¼ tsp
- Carom seeds (*ajwain*): ¼ tsp
- Salt to taste
- Oil: 2-3 tbsp

##### For the gravy

- Fresh yogurt: 1 cup, beaten
- Garlic paste: ½ tsp

- Red chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Coriander powder: 1 tbsp
- Turmeric powder: ¼ tsp
- Cumin seeds: 1 tsp
- Asafoetida powder: a pinch
- Salt to taste
- Coriander leaves: 2-3 tbsp, chopped fine
- Oil or ghee: 2 tbsp

#### Method

To prepare the *gatta*: Combine all the ingredients, allowing the oil to coat the mixture evenly. Now knead into stiff dough with as little warm water as possible. Divide the dough into 7-8 equal portions and make ½ inch diameter smooth rolls. Heat a pan with enough water to allow the rolls to boil. When the water starts boiling, add 1 tsp oil and the rolls. Cover with a lid, lower the flame and boil for 12-15 minutes, stirring occasionally and gently. Switch off the flame, strain the water and set aside. Chop the rolls into ½ inch pieces.

To prepare the gravy: Heat the oil or ghee in a pan, and add cumin and asafoetida. Lower the flame, add chilli powder and immediately add garlic paste and half the beaten yogurt. Stir continuously so the yogurt does not curdle. Add coriander powder, turmeric powder and salt and cook for 7-8 minutes until the spices separate from the oil. Now add the *gatta* and cook for a few minutes. Add ½ cup of water to the remaining yogurt and mix with the *gatta*. Stir gently and boil for 5-7 minutes on low flame. Switch off the flame and garnish with coriander leaves.

Serve as a side-dish in a meal with *phulka*. A tasty accompaniment to steamed rice as well.

*Jigyasa and Pratibha are authors and publishers of two award winning books Cooking at Home with Pedatha and Sukham Ayu. They specialise in documenting culinary traditions. Visit them at www.pritya.com*

# 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?

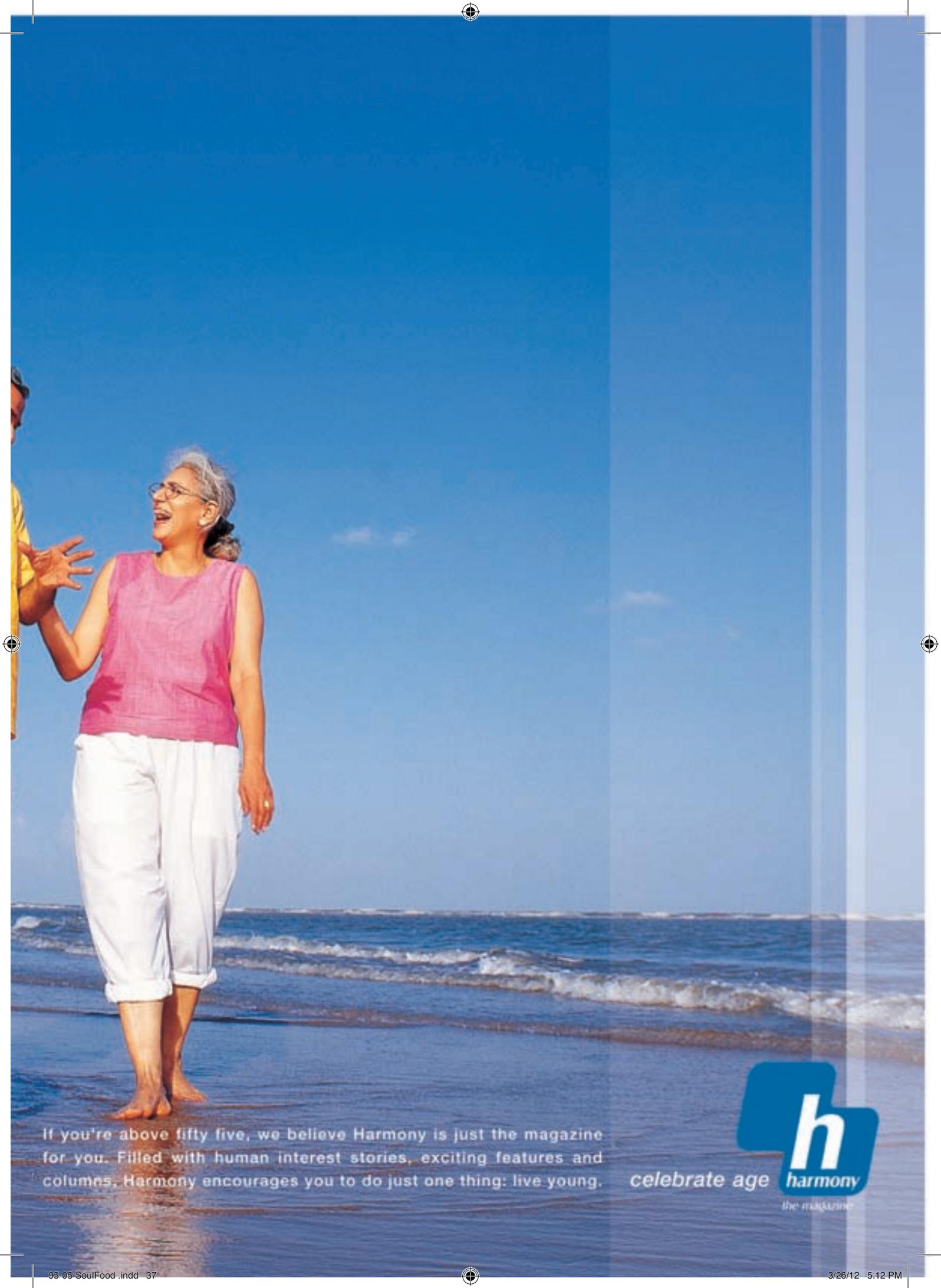
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# Diamond in the sky

Maneka Sorcar has stepped into her father's shoes but doesn't claim that she fits into them, discover Partha and Priyanka Mukherjee





Photographs by Shilbhadra Datta

**F**ebruary 23, 1999. A girl barely out of her teens, preparing for admission to college in Kolkata, climbs into a wooden box with nine dynamite sticks strapped to her body. The box is bolted with nails by her father along with the Sheriff of Kolkata. Dried hay is stuffed around the box and petrol is sprayed on before setting it ablaze. Boom! Within seconds, the box splits into bits; a cloud of tangled smoke covers the area and a mass of fire rolls from where the girl stood barely a minute before. A loud jangle of bells breaks the eerie silence. Gobsmacked onlookers, who had shrieked in fear at the explosion, rub their eyes in wonder. Maneka Sorcar—princess of Indian magic, the eldest child of P C Sorcar (Junior) and Joysri Sorcar, and the grandchild of the father of modern Indian magic, Jadu-Samrat P C Sorcar (Senior)—magically appears sitting atop a fire-brigade truck. She aptly titled the event that she will always cherish ‘The Big Bang’, as it was this illusion that convinced her illustrious father she was ready for the big league. Now, over a decade later, the sorceress skips lunch to speak about her love for her father and, of course, magic:

**My fondest memories are of my travels.** It was as if I were living a fairytale! I toured with our illusion show wherever it went with my parents. It was, and still is, like travelling with an empire on wheels! Tonnes of magical equipment, stage settings, tens of technicians, artists and even our pet lions and elephant moving from one place to another. And in the centre of it all was my Baba. I cannot think of being away from Baba. It has been an inseparable bond. It is not the physical presence that matters; I am always with him and he is always with me. I dwell in him. I still cherish those days when it was playtime all the time—neither study nor school. How I wish I could go back to those days, even if for a short while. That’s because my fairytale childhood was rather short-lived. I had to grow up real quick and be the eldest child.

**I have grown with magic and my magic has grown with me.** Magic and stagecraft have given me the perfect language to express my creative self. The better I get at forming my thoughts and actualising them on stage through my performances, the better I grow as a magician.

**I had no plans for a 9-to-5 job,** even though I studied Management in Ohio University, USA, after graduating in commerce from the University of Calcutta. I wanted to be a magician and give this male-dominated art a new dimension. My choice of education was to hone my business skills and get a better grip on our business dealings. After all, there is no business like show business. Baba had chosen to do his post-graduation and doctorate in applied psychology and it has helped him understand and research the art of magic. The books and articles he has penned have helped aficionados and performers around the world gain clarity and awareness about this mysterious form.

**Most people think that with two international brands like P C Sorcar (Sr.) and P C Sorcar (Jr.) backing my career, it must have been a cakewalk.** I never suffered from any such silly delusions. In fact, I have to work doubly hard to live up to everyone's lofty expectations. P C Sorcar, the brand, was not born in a day. I cannot afford to relax considering the mammoth responsibility that I shoulder.

**I follow our own traditional way of performance**—the Sorcar way of doing things. I cannot come out of it, nor do I want to; on the contrary, I would like to lift it higher and higher. There are bound to be several differences in our *adaakari*, but the basic philosophy behind our magic remains the same. Like the same gourmet dish cannot taste exactly the same when prepared by two different chefs, my performances compared to those of my father and grandfather manifest a unique flavour that is all my own.

**Birthing is always painful and stressful and it is no different when giving shape to a new illusion.** Transforming a fantasy or idea into reality and presenting it in a palatable way to people are laborious and tough. It takes several brainstorming sessions, hours at the workshop, missed meals and endless practice sessions to come up with the perfect illusion. And yes, my father and I frequently disagree on many things, and being the stubborn Leos that we are we quickly embark on giving each other the 'silent treatment' till my mother gets exasperated and intervenes. Nobody dare mess with my mother! [Maneka looks at her father and bursts into peals of laughter.]

**The biggest lesson I've learnt is that great fame comes with great responsibility.** All the glitz and glamour of show business is meant to entertain and relieve your mind from reality. As an entertainer, I take this responsibility very seriously. I am honoured that people have the faith in my ability as an artist to whisk them away to a land of fantasy and make-believe, an escape from harsh reality. When the curtains go up, the world I see and the world my audience finds are completely opposite to each other—our perspectives are completely different. Yet I have to retain both the perspectives intact; I have to see the world behind the curtain as well as the audience's point of view and how they envision the world of magic. Understanding the difference and acceptance of this have helped me grow more patient.

**Baba had to shoulder an enormous responsibility.** After all, he is the continuation of the legend of P C Sorcar. My grandfather had passed away at the height of his career. After his demise, my Baba took forward the family tradition. Never did he falter in this daunting task. In fact, he took it to greater heights and spread the goodwill of Indian magic far and wide. As his eldest, I can never forget the great sacrifices my Baba and Ma had to make to uplift the art of *Indrajal-vidya*. Every night, before closing my eyes,



**“Like the same gourmet dish cannot taste exactly the same when prepared by two different chefs, my performances compared to those of my father and grandfather manifest a unique flavour that is all my own”**

I pray to Mahamaya Durga to give me the strength to be the daughter befitting my parents.

**A woman magician is not only rare but has traditionally been portrayed to be evil, whether it is in literature or society.** In a patriarchal society, the gift of power is bestowed only upon male members. In the Indian context, women are considered the weaker sex and not eligible to carry forward a family legacy. I had to give 100 per cent and fight tooth and nail to break this narrow mindset. My struggle is far from over, but the good news is that people around the world have accepted me and given me the opportunity to prove my mettle.

**The biggest lesson Baba has given me is that magic cannot be taught; it is to be learnt.** I am a magician by choice and not by force. [“She has been inducted into magic not merely because she is my first child; she had to prove that she deserved it,” affirms P C Sorcar.]

**If people think I am basking in ‘reflected glory’, so be it.** I compare my growth like a diamond on the rough. The more facets you add to a diamond, the more brilliantly it shines. Similarly, my experience and dedication will help hone my skills as a magician and take me to the pinnacle.

**I do not possess the audacity to claim that I have stepped into my father's shoes and they fit me perfectly.** I either grow into them or conjure myself a new pair. After all, I am a magician! ✨

# Experience

## A second childhood

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**celebrate age harmony**  
the magazine

# Kher sera sera

Anupam Kher's self-conviction has always been greater than all his roles on screen—and in life. The 56 year-old hauled himself out of a dismal spell in his career and wrote a successful play based on his personal failures; started a film academy for aspiring actors and a charity trust for less privileged children; delivered motivational lectures at institutions around the world; and recently bagged a role in a big-budget Hollywood film. In his latest avatar, Kher has turned author with his debut book *The Best Thing about You is You*. The never-say-die spirit in him tells **Rajashree Balam** why defeat is vital to triumph

**D**o you see the megalomaniac?" Anupam Kher asks us, pointing to the large black-and-white close-up of his face on a 6-ft flexboard, a promotional device for his debut book. The fierce pride in his eyes, however, is at odds with the wry self-deprecation in his voice. The pride is not misplaced, though—Kher is riding the crest of fame all over again; his book, *The Best Thing about You is You*, has made it to the best-selling league on popular online bookstore *flipkart.com*.

Part of the book's success is the directness of prose. Kher steers clear of pedantic prescriptions on surmounting life's challenges; instead, he inspires readers with confessions of his own failings and grit. And he sugar-coats nothing. "I think I am a very good actor," he tells us with unaffected nonchalance. One would have balked at the declaration had it come from a lesser artist; but you can't help but doff your hat at Kher when you size up his filmography, starting with his searing debut in *Saaransh* (1984) where he played an aggrieved 60 year-old father coming to terms with the loss of his son. Though he was only 29 then, his outburst of the visceral angst of an elderly parent was as real as it gets. Of course, premature balding too lent the required authenticity.

Kher's hairline—or the lack of it—has often tinted public opinion of him as an avuncular figure. Up close, though, he looks years lighter, and faintly patrician. When we meet him at his film academy, Actor Prepares, in suburban Mumbai, he appears fit and trim, dressed in elegant casual wear. In the adjacent room, a choreography coach guides aspiring actors through the paces of a pulsing Bollywood number. The thump of the music and the coach's staccato instructions filter into our meeting area. Yet Kher's voice holds its own over the mild cacophony. It's a soft voice that has honed its steel in a ruthless industry through the highs and lows of a consistently active career.

Thankfully, his years in tinsel-town have not dulled his childlike delight at life. He admits to being rooted to the spot when he met Robert De Niro a couple of months ago. (Kher recently finished shooting in Philadelphia for an upcoming film *The Silver Linings Playbook*, in which he plays a therapist to De Niro's son.) Equally palpable is the wonder in his voice when he shares experiences of his early days spent sleeping on railways platforms, and his bafflement when he couldn't think up enough ways to splurge his first salary cheque of ₹ 10,000. It's also obvious that he still derives great pleasure in signing his autograph. "An actor is a guy, who if you ain't talk-



Production \* **BREAKAWAY** \*

★ Starring ★

*Anupam Kher*

Date	Scene	Take
<i>April, 15, 2011</i>	<i>400 films</i>	

★ Director ★

★ Camera ★

Vilas Kalgutkar



Vilas Kalgutkar

THIS CITY AND THE FILM INDUSTRY MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE AN UNDERACHIEVER. I AM NOT HERE BECAUSE SOMEONE DID ME A FAVOUR. I DID IT ON MY OWN

ing about him, ain't listening," he quotes Marlon Brando as he scribbles an inscription for us on a copy of his book with practised flourish.

Kher is brave enough not to hide behind false modesty. The many gilded citations on his office wall are clearly there to reveal how far he has made it in life. But nestled between the certificates and medals is a sepia photo of his school days in small-town Shimla—perhaps reminding him, and us, of where he came from.

### In his own words

**I'm the luckiest man on earth because I could spend the first 18 years of my life with my grandfather.** All my life I have wanted to be like him. My father is a very ordinary man who was extraordinary in his ordinariness. But my grandfather was a scholar. He was my reference point for *Saaransh*. I grew up listening to the *Ramaya-*

(From left) Receiving the Padmashri from then President A P J Abdul Kalam in 2004; a poster for his play inspired by his own life; promoting and launching (opposite page) his latest book

*na* and the *Mahabharata* from him. That's something I miss in families today. The joint family is no more, which is a dangerous trend. The more nuclear we become the more loony we are going to be; like people in the West, we'll stop trusting people around us because we will be totally on our own.

**I have spent many nights sleeping on the platform at Bandra railway station.** I went through a lot of humiliation initially when I struggled to find some work. One day, in a fit of disillusionment, I wrote to my grandfather that I was planning to leave the city, that the city didn't deserve me. He wrote back to me and reminded me how my father had once sold his watch to send me some money. He said, you have already gone through so much...*bheega hua aadmi baarish se nahin darta* (A man soaked to the bone doesn't fear getting wet in the rain). The visual that these words painted in my mind was something that changed my life forever. That's when I decided that I would not leave this city till I had achieved my dream.

**I come from a lower middleclass family and today I meet people like Oprah Winfrey and presidents and billionaires.** When I had my first shot with Robert De Niro, I had tears in my eyes. He is someone I have always worshipped as an actor. And there I was, sharing the same per-



formance space with him. My grandfather used to say that if you are hardworking and truthful, you will always achieve what you want. Today, when I look back at my life I am amazed.

**Of course, when I became successful I went berserk.** And I am thankful that that happened. Because *jab tak dimag kharab nahin hota, dimag theek kaise hoga?* (If I hadn't lost my mind, I wouldn't have had a chance to come to my senses either.) I had never seen ₹ 10,000 in my whole life. So when I got that sum as my first salary for *Saaransh*, I didn't know what to do. My brother Raju, a friend of mine and I decided to blow the whole thing up and went to a five-star hotel for an extravagant meal and beer. We were secretly thrilled that at the end of the meal we would be nonchalantly paying a bill that had run into a few thousands. And guess what? We only had to pay ₹ 847 [laughs] and we were left wondering what to do with the rest of it! I have never been so thrilled with money the way I was that day.

**This city and the film industry always make you feel like an underachiever.** I am not here because someone did a favour for me. I did it on my own. I used to walk from Bandra to Charni Road when I had no work. I share these hardships with my students all the time because I believe these experiences taught me something that no book could.

**My book was not planned; it just happened.** I had staged a play on my life called *Kuch Bhi Ho Sakta Hai*. In it I spoke about my failures, and my disasters. The world tries to frighten you with

Excerpt from *The Best Thing About You is You*  
(Hay House; ₹ 399; 228 pages)

I have come across many people who are under the impression that merely attending self-coaching classes, or sitting at the feet of a *guruji*, a *baba* or a *matiji*, will make them self-realised individuals. Such an impression is far removed from the truth, just as if mere recitation of prayers will make us better human beings.

The main aspect is to realise, as I have explained before, that we have to be internally awake and conscious of every action and thought of ours. And the key word is 'internal', as without that internal will, no amount of external force can make us realise the power within us.

No one who has achieved any bit of success can deny that before the external obstacles were tackled, the journey to success had to begin by fighting the internal obstacles. These could be in the form of sloth, fears, low self-esteem, distractions, temptations, worries, past failures and so on.

As I write these words, I am reminded of my own internal conflicts, which I had to overcome on the road to achieving success. I had studied in a Hindi medium school and was not proficient in English. I was already balding at 23. Coming from a family of very modest means in Shimla, I was neither acquainted with the use of cutlery nor had been exposed to fine-dining experiences. One of my legs was marginally shorter than the other. I would think that such handicaps were quite a playful for me to surmount.

But I did it.

In life, I have discovered, through analysing my experiences, that it is always the inner that shapes the outer.

As someone asked me the other day, have you ever wondered over the preponderance of 'ins' in the language of self-realisation? Why is it w-in and not w-out, in-trospect and not out-respect, in-tuition and not out-tuition, in-sight and not out-sight, in-spiration and not out-spiration, in-stinct and not out-stinct? And the list goes on....

All great breakthroughs have always been from our thoughts which are internal: Whether it was that genius Greek mathematician, physicist and astronomer Archimedes of Syracuse discovering the principle of floatation, or the English astronomer Isaac Newton discovering gravity, or the Germany-born theoretical physicist Nobel laureate Albert Einstein enunciating his theory of relativity. The internals have ever been the subject of our sages who understood the importance thousands of years ago.

An immense amount of current research in advanced fields such as neurosciences has only proved the existence of the power within us, that even the best of us use barely 10 per cent of our mental capacity, and that the brain rewires itself continuously and is capable of learning new things at any age.

You cannot learn swimming by reading a book, you have to dive into the pool. So take a dive into the pool of life. You will not merely experience the change within; you will also unleash the power within.

TODAY, WE HAVE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ON FACEBOOK BUT HOW MANY OF US HAVE A TRUE FRIEND IN OUR REAL LIVES? IF WHAT I HAVE WRITTEN MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO EVEN ONE PERSON'S LIFE, I WOULD HAVE ACHIEVED WHAT I HAD SET OUT TO DO

your failures, your disasters, and your shortcomings. And here I was talking about how I had gone bankrupt; ended up with a disaster when I made my first play; got thrown out of my first film 10 days before the shoot started; and battled with facial palsy. And through all of it, I was laughing! People found that very inspirational. It was a liberating experience. After seeing the play, some corporate firms and universities invited me for lectures. So I found another profession where I was being paid to speak.

**I discovered that I was talking about how to cope with life and find strength within oneself.** Later, when I went to Kelloggs, Cambridge, Oxford, IIT and IIM for lectures, I was the least educated of my audience—I am a third-class BA. But the gist of my life struck a chord with the audience—that the best thing about you is you. The easiest thing and the most difficult thing in the world are to be oneself. Soon *Deccan Chronicle* approached me to write a column. When I started receiving encouraging mails from readers, I took portions of those articles, elaborated them further and put them down for a book. The whole process took over a year. When the first copy was given to me, it was almost like holding one's baby for the first time.

**I have never read a motivational book in my life.** The only book that ever inspired me was *Lust for Life*, artist Van Gogh's biography. You cannot find success or peace by reading a book, but you can certainly encounter the brave in you by knowing that the best is within you. My book is essentially centred on communication, because

every relationship is solely based on that. Today, we have millions of people on Facebook but how many of us have a true friend in our real lives? If what I have written makes a difference to even one person's life, I would have achieved what I had set out to do. I was thrilled when someone recently tweeted to me, 'You are a better writer than an actor.'

**We evolve the way we choose to, not by circumstance.** Words like ego, depression and boredom are false emotions we create to make ourselves feel important. Ego and pride are two different things. Ego gives you a sense of importance; pride, a sense of survival. I read a lot of quotations and fables. These things add to my evolution. If I do not evolve as a person, I am not letting myself evolve as an actor or writer.

**I am foolish if I pretend in front of you.** People who pretend are the ones who do not like themselves; they are so busy being someone else. I cannot suddenly change my demeanour or the way I speak because I wrote this book. I am who I am; I may be wrong in what I say, but I say it in all earnestness.

**I believe things change when we speak up.** I was asked to leave *Saaransh* 10 days before the shoot started as people at Rajashree Productions were keen to cast Sanjeev Kumar in the role. I was devastated. I packed my bags but then decided not to leave till I had given a piece of my mind to Mahesh Bhatt, the film's director. I simply went to his house and told him he was the greatest fraud on earth. I was crying then. Bhatt stared at me intently and immediately changed the decision. I continue to be as greedy about my work today as I was when I started out. I am definitely calmer but not content.

**People tell me that I do not depend on anyone so I must be a loner.** I like being with people and I tend to have a habit of studying them, analysing them and trying to gauge what makes them tick. I lose interest in people when they stop being real. I may still be polite, nice and conversational but I switch off in my head.

**Don't let other people decide how 'happening' you are.** You have to set your own benchmarks. There are so many people in remote villages who are doing wonderful work for children's development and women's empowerment. Their contributions or stature cannot be dwarfed simply because the newspapers do not write about them.



Vilas Kalgutker

DON'T LET OTHER PEOPLE DECIDE HOW 'HAPPENING' YOU ARE. SET YOUR OWN BENCHMARKS. THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE IN REMOTE VILLAGES DOING WONDERFUL WORK. THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS CANNOT BE DWARFED BECAUSE THE NEWSPAPERS DO NOT WRITE ABOUT THEM

**Going back to the place you grew up can sometimes be disturbing.** You realise that you have moved on, but the life there has not moved at all. The streets, the silence, the way people talk...everything remains unchanged. Nostalgia is pain after all. There is a beautiful line in my film *Daddy: Yaad karne par beeta hua sukh bhi dukh-hee deta hai*. [When you look back, even the happiness that you once enjoyed turns into a twinge of sadness.] But when I go to my school in Shimla and my old house which now stands demolished, I feel a sense of achievement. When I look at that house and then go to deliver a lecture at the Kel-

logg School of Management and see people looking up at me, it's a great high that I have made it on my own. ✨



Sanjay Kurt

# Way to go

Armed with good intent, confidence and determination, Ved Prakash pursues justice for his fellow villagers in Haryana, discovers **Suparna-Saraswati Puri**

Ved Prakash's unassuming demeanour may not jibe with the stereotypical image of an activist, but it is mainly this quality that has made him popular as an 'uncommon commoner'. "In the beginning, I didn't know anyone in government offices; today, they know me so much that they hide from me in their own corridors," says the 53 year-old resident of Sonapat, Haryana, whose journey as an activist began in 2006. "We do not hold personal animosity against the government or any of its representatives," emphasises Prakash. "Our quest is simple: to know the budgetary allocation for rural development in our villages and the list of development and empowerment projects under specified schemes. As citizens of a free country, is it inappropriate to enquire about our entitled amenities and facilities?"

Lamenting that rampant corruption is a thorn in our system, Prakash is confident that the Right to Information (RTI) Act alone can empower the ordinary villager. Prior to becoming an activist, Prakash worked at a doctor's clinic. In 2003, owing to domestic compulsions he quit his job. He set up an NGO called Suprabhat Seva Samiti only to close its doors for lack of funds. In 2006, through PRIA, the society for Participatory Research in Asia, an international centre for learning and promotion of participation and democratic governance, Prakash underwent training in RTI.

"After completion of training, I waited for work but as there was fear about asking questions from *sarkaar* [government], no work came," he recalls. "I thought of beginning on my own. I filed two applications, one from my village Fazilpur and the other from

village Dariyapur. I was merely asking the Block Development Officer (BDO) in Sonapat about the budget allocated for development in *gram panchayat*." He was rebuked by the clerk at the office and his application was refused. When he sent the application via post, it was accepted. With no response for over a month, Prakash sent his complaint to the Chief Information Commissioner, Haryana, who summoned the BDO and Prakash for a hearing in Chandigarh. "Despite harassment by the BDO, I continued my fight," says Prakash.

## From the appointment of the village *chowkidar* to the expenditure for a non-existent community centre, Prakash's fight for justice continues

In 2008, after 18 months of relentless pursuit, victory came for the community. "The then State Information Commissioner imposed a fine of ₹ 40,000 on three BDOs, to be deducted from their salary, for not complying with the RTI provisions," says Prakash, adding that success stems from awareness about RTI's potential.

With caste hierarchy being predominant in Haryana, community welfare issues unfortunately get embroiled in local politics. "In panchayat elections, people vote for a family that has a higher social status," he explains. "In fact, my second RTI application was from my own village Fazilpur where the *sarpanch* to be was Kamlesh Devi. Though she was a distant relative of

mine, I wanted to unravel the unethical activities of the upper caste during elections. For instance, the campaign posters did not carry Kamlesh Devi's picture or name; instead they went by her husband's name. Following her 'unanimous' election without the opposing candidates having taken back their candidature, I asked questions. They tried to bribe me with liquor but I stuck around. Eventually, the "unanimous" election of the *sarpanch* was cancelled and an enquiry sought."

Besides the 70 applications that Prakash has personally filed, between 50 and 100 cases have been filed by residents from Kumasapur, Badoli, Fazilpur and Dariyapur villages in district Sonapat. This has virtually opened Pandora's Box on rural development and empowerment. From matters ranging from the appointment of the village *chowkidar* to expenditure on the construction of a non-existent community centre, the fight for justice continues. "I have documents that show ₹ 800,000 spent on the construction of *pucca* lanes when the streets remain *kuchcha*. And the administration can't furnish explanation about this serious lapse."

For someone dealing with corruption and unwarranted high-handedness, Prakash's civility and sobriety are admirable. Living in a semi-slum colony on the obscure periphery of Sonapat, his dwelling is a known address for natives, but his wife doesn't know about his work. For her sake and to run the house, Prakash markets *aloe vera* medicinal products. "When we leave our home every morning, all we RTI activists can equip ourselves with are an ISI brand helmet and a bulletproof jacket," he says with a chuckle. ✨

# What is 60?

The number of push-ups you have to do this week.

The number of movies you have to catch up on.

The number of bad jokes you cracked last month.

The number of times you told your grandson  
to get away from the TV set and get a life.

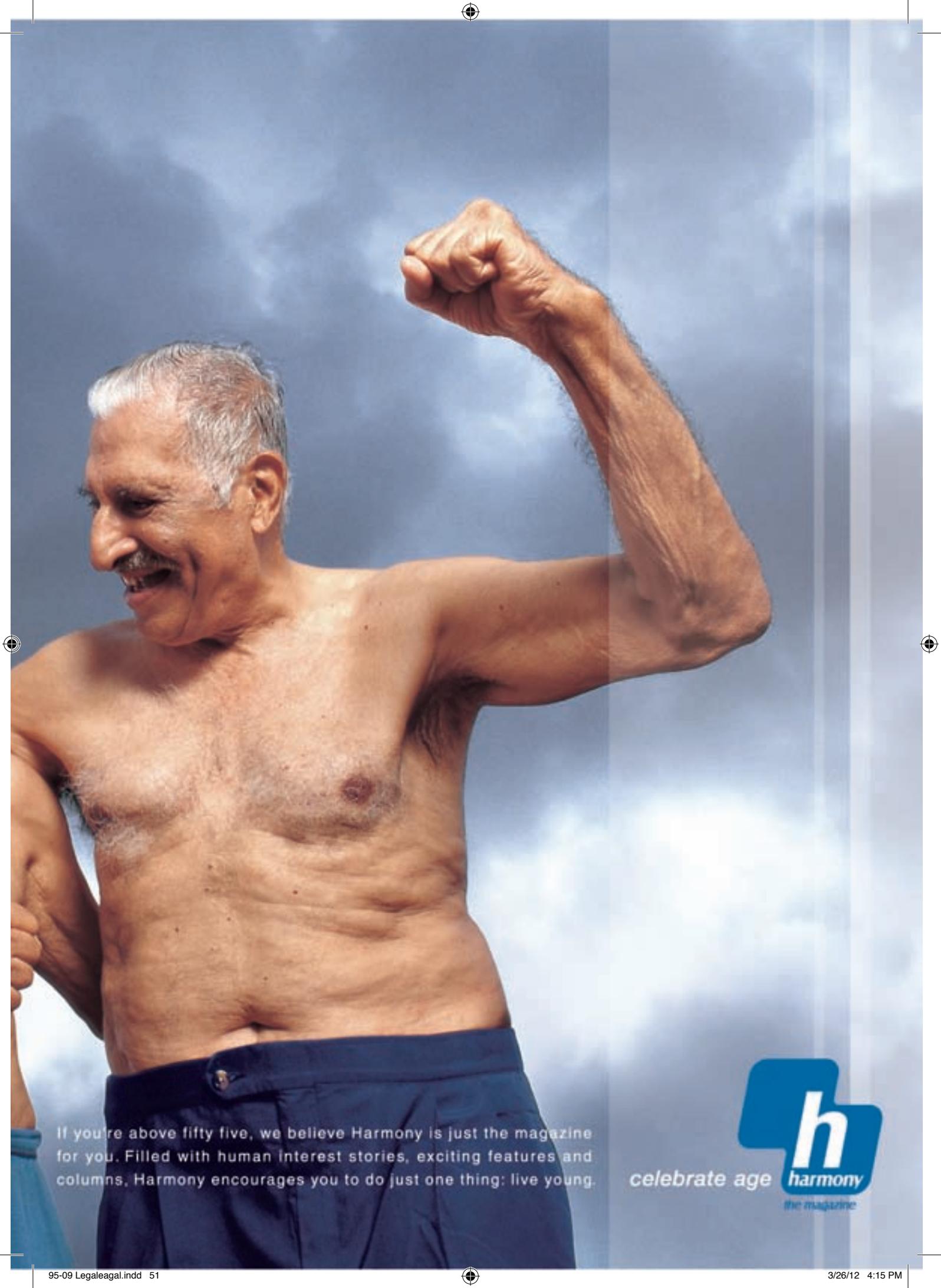
The number of places you have to travel to.

What it's not, is your age.

At least not in your head.

Or in your heart.





If you're above fifty five, we believe Harmony is just the magazine for you. Filled with human interest stories, exciting features and columns, Harmony encourages you to do just one thing: live young.

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# Hills and dales

A short trip to Araku Valley, near Visakhapatnam, can leave you awestruck

◆ ◆ Susheela Nair

Just getting to Araku Valley in the Eastern Ghats was half the fun of the entire trip. From Visakhapatnam Junction, we took the Kottavalasa-Kirandul Express, which chugged its way around the verdant slopes, plains and thick forest cover. Mind you, the road journey to Araku is equally interesting, meandering through the Anantagiri range covered with jungle on both sides. But we chose to avail the rail-road package offered by Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) from Visakhapatnam as each route has its own charm and offers a new experience.

The rail journey is unique; the train moves on a single traction, broad-gauge track, cutting across hills and valleys. As the train snaked its way through 52 dimly lit tunnels, schoolchildren screamed with glee. It lumbered past 84 bridges with the picturesque Araku Valley on one side and steep rocks on the other. Of these, the 1.2-km 36<sup>th</sup> tunnel

is believed to be the longest. The ascent was gradual and we had ample time to soak in the beauty of the hills.

During the four-hour journey, the train crawled through rural stations like Mallividu, Srungavarapukota, Boddavara, Shivalingapuram, Tyda, Chimidipalli, Borra Guhalu and Shimiliguda, all lying in the vast stretch of the Eastern Ghats. On the way to Araku is Shimiliguda, a station perched at 3,271 ft above sea level, which was the first highest broad-gauge railway station in the country till the construction of Qazigund in Jammu and Kashmir. As the train snakes past, we had a glimpse of a waterfall too. "Shimiliguda is said to be the point of convergence of three neighbouring states, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Chhattisgarh," Srinivas Rao, our guide from Visakhapatnam, told us. "Araku Valley is not far away." The train also passes above the Borra Caves—there's a 100-ft thick rock support over the caves above which the tracks are laid.



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(Clockwise from top) A tribal hamlet; the *shandy* or weekly market; the Tribal Museum; an eco-friendly cottage in Jungle Bells, Tyda

The engineering of the Kottavalasa-Kirandul line of the East Coast Railway is a marvel. This line was primarily built to connect Visakhapatnam to the mineral reserves of Chhattisgarh state. In fact, it was laid in association with Japan in the 1960s to transport iron ore from Kirandul to Visakhapatnam, from where the ore was shipped to Japan. Currently, this network is the lifeline of the tribes of this belt. As the train halted briefly at each station, we had a glimpse of villagers rushing in with their vegetables, fruits, groceries and other life-supporting goods, including firewood.

We checked into Jungle Bells Nature Camp at Tyda village, 75 km from Visakhapatnam en route to Araku. Perched on a hillock by the road it is far from the madding crowd and makes for a relaxing weekend getaway. Engulfed by lush foliage, the sprawling 5-acre camp run by APTDC has 18 cottages, including air-conditioned cottages (Igloo, Bridge and Wooden Cottages) apart from log huts, 'aero-

con' huts, and dormitories. The multi-cuisine restaurant is connected to the cottages by a narrow cobbled-stoned path. The cottages, huts and bridges are all made of wood and bamboo. Each cottage has a balcony overlooking the dense greenery and the valley. The resort is eco-friendly, sans TV, telephones and mobile connectivity. At the entrance, we saw a small board indicating the dos and don'ts. Plastic is banned, liquor is not served and tourists are warned not to play music but to listen to the sounds of nature. All the cottages are named after birds.

The Dhimsa dance here is a major draw. We joined the tribal women to the beat of drums and the fine rhythm of trumpets, played by the accompanying artists. With the dancers eager to share their sense of rhythm, more tourists joined in. They have a distinctive style of dressing—the women wear bright saris, with the ends held together by a knot resting on the left shoulder. They appear striking, with big orange, bright red, yellow and purple flowers dec-



NO JOURNEY TO ARAKU IS COMPLETE WITHOUT A TRIP TO THE BORRA CAVES. THIS SURREAL UNDERWORLD OF STALACTITE AND STALAGMITE FORMATIONS, MADE MORE EERIE BY THE SQUEALING OF BATS, WAS CREATED MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO BY THE FLOW OF THE GOSTHANI RIVER THROUGH THESE LIMESTONE HILLS

While a tribal lady cooks the evening meal, another feeds her child and a male tribal watches guard over his family, spear in hand.

Hunting tools, weapons, kitchen tools, garments and agricultural implements form a large part of this fascinating museum. The wooden bowls, toys and other woodcraft by the tribal artisans are awesome. And their chunky silver jewellery, ornate and elegant, is showcased in the main atrium of the museum. We picked up indigenous souvenirs like honey, organic soap, and other handicraft items from the museum gift shop.

We ended our day with a visit to Galikondalu viewpoint. Located at a height of about 3,800 ft above sea level, the highest point in the Anantagiri range offers a fascinating view of the entire valley. Thatiguda, Katiki and Chaaparai are some of the many cascading waterfalls in this region.

The next morning, we visited the weekly market called *shandy*, which plays a vital role in this tribal heartland. With all the hustle and bustle around, it assumes the air of a local *mela*. Villagers from surrounding hamlets congregate here to sell their wares and make purchases. They trooped in, dressed in their best, lugging a variety of nature's bounty: cereals, pulses, fruits, vegetables, roots, spices, poultry, cattle, shoots and minor forest produce such as *adda* leaves (which are sewn together to make plates) and bamboo. Interestingly, most of the traders are women. They buy mainly salt, kerosene, edible oils, rice and sugar.

For the 17 ethnic tribes who inhabit this area and live off the produce of the forests, nothing can substitute a traditional *shandy*. For them, it is, after all, a way of life. We noticed men and women socialising over a drink of *maddy kallu*, a brew of rice and herbs, and some women smoking tobacco. For the tribal people, the *shandy* goes beyond buying and selling; a major social gathering, it is a vital place for the exchange of information, gossip and matchmaking. Clothes are purchased and stitched within an hour by enterprising tailors. The youngsters often troop in dressed in their best as matchmaking takes place.



orating their braids; their noses, which are pierced at the centre and on the sides, hold rings of various sizes.

At the resort, there are myriad interesting outdoor activities like climbing, spider web climbing and rope walking that are organised with safety precautions by trained personnel. Some tourists tried their hand at archery. The resort arranges for trekking in the hills, passing through several tribal hamlets, as well as bird watching. We set out on a morning walk the next day with the mist hovering over the canopy in the nearby woods, listening to the chirping of the birds.

The Tribal Museum in the heart of the Araku Valley Township is worth a visit. Housed in a charming red-roofed bungalow built with clay and mud, the circular two-tier museum exudes a rustic charm. It offers a glimpse of the daily lives of the tribes inhabiting the belt of the Eastern Ghats and their rich folklore and heritage. As we moved from room to room, we were greeted by clay figurines of tribes going about their daily chores in their natural habi-



Tribals perform the Dhimsa dance

We culminated our trip with a visit to the Borra Caves. Escorted by Srinivas Rao, we were taken up and down difficult staircases to see these rock formations with the help of a torch. The squealing and fluttering of the bats on the ceiling all the way added to the eeriness of the caves. We marvelled at the surreal underworld of stalactite and stalagmite formations lit up by the warm glow of the sodium illumination. These formations were created over millions of years ago by the flow of the Gosthani River through these limestone hills. Legend has it that a cowherd discovered them when his cow fell 200 ft down into the hidden caves. Peering into the cavern, he was awestruck by the dark, deep connecting chambers and strange formations with grotesque shapes and sizes. Ever since, the tribals have held the Borra Caves in deep reverence.

Another version attributes the discovery of the caves to William King George of the Geological Survey of India when he conducted a survey here in 1807. Over time, the stalactite and stalagmite formations have led to an array of naturally hewn shapes like Shiva and Parvati, Radha-Krishna and a Nandi, a tree with overhanging roots, a lion making a kill, a mother and child, and Hanuman. One stalactite is called the Corn and a cluster on the roof has been named Chandelier. Then there's a whitish, crystalline structure that looks like a sage's beard or a bird's wings. Two eyes stare at you at the end of the cave, which Rama supposedly visited during his exile. Legend has it that Sita bathed with turmeric there, giving a yellowish tinge to the stream. Our guide tells us that it's actually just phosphorous.

The Shiva *lingam* is a major attraction as we are told that every drop of water that combined with the calcium

## FACT FILE

### WHEN TO GO

October to February is the best time to visit Araku Valley

### HOW TO GO

**By air:** Visakhapatnam is the nearest airport.

**By rail:** Araku Station is 136 km from Visakhapatnam.

**By road:** You can drive up from Visakhapatnam or take any of the buses plying to Araku; it is a 117-km journey.

### WHERE TO STAY

There are four hotels run by APTDC in the area:

- **Ananthagiri Hill Resort**, Anantagiri; (08936) 231888; tariff from ₹ 1,900 to ₹ 4,500\*
- **Haritha Mayuri Resort**, Araku Valley; Tel: (08936) 249204, (0) 9440793518; tariff from ₹ 750 to ₹ 3,500\*
- **Hill Resort – Araku (Yatri Nivas)**, Araku Valley; Tel: (08936) 249201/02/03, (0) 9440793556; tariff from ₹ 1,000 to ₹ 2,400\*
- **Jungle Bells**, Tyda Village; Tel: (0891) 2713135, 2746446; tariff from ₹ 900 to ₹ 2,000\*

*\*All tariffs are indicative*

carbonate present here helped form it. A rock that looks like a *lingam* has lamps, flowers and devotees bustling all around. Water trickles down a pillar formation glistening in white. The rock tapers at points, like mean claws. At the spot the guides call the Brain, water drips into a stone, cutting creases on its surface. We returned exhilarated and awestruck, much like the cowherd who uncovered nature's multi-layered secrets deep inside the earth's crust.

We were told the valley is at its most beautiful when covered with a carpet of yellow flowers. That sight was conspicuously missing this year. Just as well—it gives us a chance to come back. ✨

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INSIDE  
 p75: The heart of a mother  
 p76: Rich life with stone soup

# Etcetera

CULTURE ● LEISURE ● LIFESTYLE ● BOOKS ● MISCELLANY

## Teen deviyaan

Kathak exponent Shobha Koser strikes a unique pose with daughter Poorva and daughter-in-law Samira, in the presence of Suparna-Saraswati Puri

**LEGACY**

While striking a classical pose with her towering daughter Poorva and equally tall daughter in-law Samira, a slightly dwarfed but poised 65 year-old Shobha Koser subtly corrects the *mudra* of her *baterni* (an indulgent address for both her girls). It's a gesture indicating that a guru is a master first, mother or mother-in-law later. "It was perhaps my mother's unfulfilled desire that made her want me to learn Kathak from a very young age. She braved my father's resentment and the entire family's emphatic disapproval towards the art form and ensured that I received competent tutelage under the best masters available at the time," recalls Koser.

A Kathak exponent from the Jaipur *gharana*, Shobha Koser's training began at the tender age of five in Agra under the tutelage of Guru Kanhiya Lal, a worthy disciple of Nrityacharya Guru Narayan Prasad. Despite her *junoon* (obsession) for Kathak since her debut performance at 15, Koser consciously avoided any conflict with her familial and parental responsibilities, which also gave her a sense of rootedness, thus setting her apart from her contemporaries. "I never imagined I would travel so far and with such blessed success," she says. "Married at 16, I had happily envisaged a life of a conventional Indian girl—preoccupied with dolling up, household work, and family life. At the same time, I firmly believed the need to share the talent with my *beti* and *bahu*."

Responsible for introducing, popularising and promoting Kathak in Chandigarh, Koser co-founded Pracheen Kala Kendra

Sanjay Kurt



*Continued on page 60*



# RHYME AND REASON

JANE BHANDARI TELLS RADHIKA RAJE HOW LOQUATIONS, A POETRY READING AND DISCUSSION FORUM, GAVE NEW MEANING TO HER LIFE AFTER HER HUSBAND PASSED AWAY

Sitting pretty at her dining table, sipping tea after her first facial on her 68<sup>th</sup> birthday, Jane Bhandari natters on about her maid and *jhadu-pocha* like any other Indian woman. Only, this Indian wasn't born one; she gradually became one after living here for 45 years.

Bhandari met her husband in England where she lived with her eight siblings. "He was a student. I was only 21 and we both wanted to get married," she recalls. "Cross-cultural marriages weren't the norm then, so we tied the knot against our parents' will. In fact, his parents had already decided on a girl for him."

Another lifelong love for Bhandari has been the written word. Her adoration of books is evident; there's scarcely an inch of wall in her home in Mumbai's Cuffe Parade that's not covered by bookshelves. She first penned two collections of short stories for her own children, *The Round Square Chappati* and *The Long Thin Jungle*. But her writing took a turn after her husband's death. "I was 53 then. I didn't know how to be alone because I had never lived alone. It was very difficult." Bhandari found solace in writing and it was then that she created her best work, a volume of poetry called *Single Bed*.

Bhandari's love for poetry brought her to Loquations, a poetry reading and discussion forum founded by Adil Jussawalla. "I lived in Pune for 15 years before I moved to Mumbai after my husband's death. My move to this city helped me take over this forum." In June 2006, *Loquations* moved to her home as she was unable to commute owing to a back injury; it was renamed Re-Loquations.

The group meets every second Tuesday of the month, to revel in poetry on a wide variety of subjects and styles. Occasionally, poets from other cities are invited to read out their work but, usually, the presenters are

**Continued from page 59**

with her late husband Madan Lal Koser, a renowned artist of the classical arts in the 1950s. "Koser *sahib* used to say that Kathak must live and flourish beyond the two of us, hence Pracheen was born," she reveals. "If today my name is synonymous with Chandigarh's cultural ethos, it is because of his idea of the Kendra that has 3,500 affiliated centres globally, enabling 280,000 students to pursue a career in the performing arts."

Having survived partial paralysis, gangrene and cancer, ageing appears to have tried desperate attempts with Koser but failed miserably only because of her undying devotion to Kathak. "Though all classical dances are unique, Kathak, for me, mirrors daily life," she avers. It's a thought shared by daughter Poorva, also a Kathak dancer and teacher married and settled in Ludhiana. She runs Shobhanya, an academy for performing and visual arts named after her

mother. "When I perform, I add Punjabi *tadka* to my themes to communicate effectively and captivate my audience, otherwise I would be lost to them."

Another active carrier of Koser's legacy is her daughter-in-law Samira who studied psychology only to understand classical dance better. "Kathak is my addiction," she confesses. "When I do *riyaaz*, I realise that the real me surfaces better." Though both *beti* and *bahu* have been blessed with daughters, adopting the legacy is a choice, not an obligation. While they make up their mind, Koser begins her day by tuning in to devotional renditions followed by domestic chores. *Riyaaz* is only at night, as she simply cannot practise in the light—whatever the hour, though, her passion continues to burn bright.

**(Shobha Koser performed on the inaugural day of Pracheen Kala Kendra's 42<sup>nd</sup> Nritya and Sangeet Sammelan, March 15-18, at Tagore Theatre in Chandigarh)**



drawn from other groups itself. “We started with a very small number but, on average, we have 15 people in our group,” says Bhandari. “At any given meeting, we have six to 20 people every month.”

Members range from doctors and lawyers to practising poets, but to ensure the widest possible exposure to published poems and other writing styles, members never read out their own work. As this discouraged many upcoming poets, it was decided to reserve the fifth Tuesday of the month for members’ poems. “We also decided to read out our own work because many people thought their work should be evaluated by other expert poets.”

Apart from finding a new avenue of creativity and self-expression, she is grateful to Loquations for playing Cupid between her and her live-in partner. “One fine day, a retired colonel called, asking for the poetry club. I gave him the details and he started attending. We clicked.” And with that, she bids us goodbye—it’s time for yoga, which she practises three times a week. Loquations, clearly, is not her only vocation!



### CAST IN HOPE

**ARTIST RAMKINKAR BAIJ SPENT FIVE DECADES OF HIS LIFE IN SANTINIKETAN IN BENGAL, THE LAND THAT BREATHED LIFE INTO HIS OIL PAINTINGS, TERRACOTTA RELIEFS AND SCULPTURES—MUCH OF WHICH REMAINED IN SANTINIKETAN IN DISMAL CONDITION. MORE THAN THREE DECADES AFTER HIS DEMISE, ARTIST K S RADHAKRISHNAN WENT DOOR TO DOOR (FROM PRIVATE COLLECTORS TO VISWA BHARTI) SO HE COULD PUT TOGETHER A RETROSPECTIVE OF THE MASTER ARTIST. THE EXHIBITION ENDED ON 31 MARCH AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART IN DELHI, WITH PLANS TO TRAVEL TO OTHER CITIES. FROM BAIJ’S FAMOUS PORTRAIT OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE JUST**

**BEFORE HIS DEATH IN 1941 TO HIS OILS WITH HIS MUSE BINODINI, FROM THE PRINCELY FAMILY OF MANIPUR, THE EXHIBITION COMES JUST AFTER CULTURE MINISTER KUMARI SELJA ANNOUNCED THE GRANT OF FUNDS TO CAST BAIJ’S WORKS IN BRONZE.**

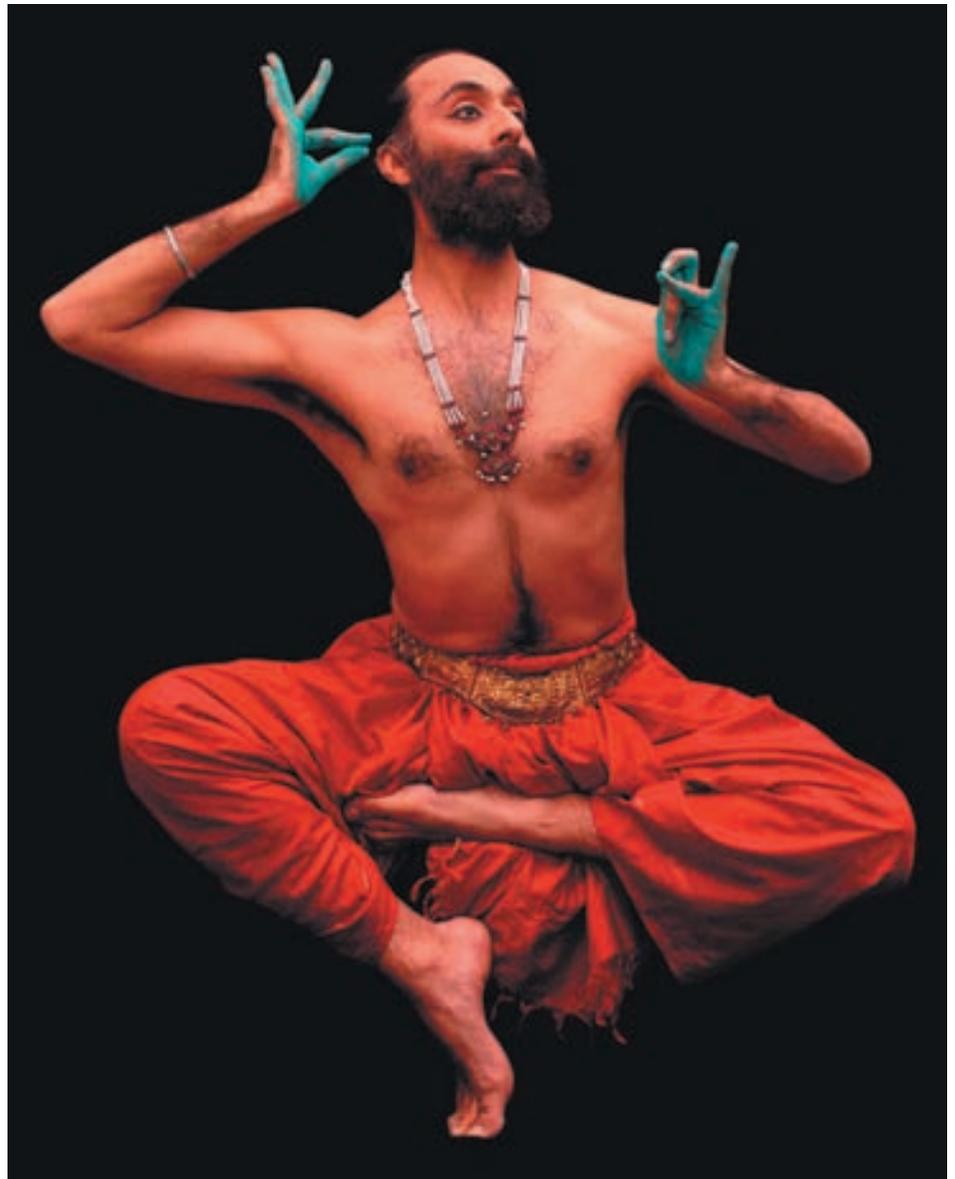
# Sage or ARTIST?

SUPARNA-SARASWATI PURI  
IN CONVERSATION WITH  
NAVTEJ SINGH JOHAR

**N**avtej Singh Johar began his artistic journey very early—his mother used to dance to Meera *bhajan* in the bathroom while she was expecting him. While he formally trained in Bharatanatyam, he went from being an ‘outsider’ in a female-dominated field to ‘owning’ this classical dance form. Johar’s technique oscillates between the avant-garde and the traditional and bridges the contemporary with the classical in a way that balances matter and spirit every time he performs on stage. In an exclusive interview, this internationally acclaimed dancer, choreographer and yoga practitioner discusses the confluence of dance and spirituality, and his dream to set up a dance conservatory in his home city, Chandigarh.

**You have been performing a classical dance form and practicing Patanjali Yoga for two decades. Has the passion for either diminished with age?**

Not at all. In fact, age only helps you understand these disciplines better and deeper. Age brings with it insight, confidence and wide experience that has really helped me in both dance and yoga. I feel I am a better practitioner, performer and teacher today, having been absorbed in them for years and constantly being led to uncover deeper layers of meaning and the intended connections of both these disciplines with real life. Also, with age, many anxieties and insecurities are put to rest and that again is liberating and helps you come into your own.



**How do you view your journey from your first stage performance to your most recent one?**

I had my *arangetram* on 18 May 1985, at Mandala, Chandralekha’s lovely theatre and dance space at the Skills Centre in Chennai. My latest major performance was at the Khajuraho Dance Festival on 7 March. The journey has been ever enriching and very rewarding.

**DANCE**

I started as an outsider. In the beginning, Bharatanatyam seemed like a monolith that I could never fully decipher, nor could I question

its mythical proportions. I would only have to accept it. Over the years, I have owned this dance form, made it my own, experimented with it, taken liberties with it, interpreted it in my own manner, fallen in love with it over and over again, questioned, even resisted and re-envisioned it to suit my worldview.

Today, my understanding of it is quite different. It is not ‘precious’ as it seemed when I started. Today, I see it as a beautiful form that is tailor-made to lend voice to the human condition, and therein lies its spirituality.

But then, it also has a history. It has been touched and moulded by real people, ordinary people like you and me, and it is not pure and illustrious as it is made out to be but has an interesting, even chequered past.

I have arrived at a position where I can challenge some of the norms that surround its 'myth-making' as well as its methodologies of teaching and presentation that I find disagreeable. And I feel qualified to propose alternatives. At my studio in Delhi, I offer a very concentrated training of Bharatanatyam, applying methodologies I feel are more appropriate. I am doing this in partnership with Justin McCarthy, another dancer-choreographer whose work I respect very much.

**In a profession that entails immense levels of physical fitness, what sustains you apart from yoga? Do you think yoga has helped your mind, body and spirit transcend age as a process of slowing down?**

In my mind, I still feel young and kind of 'fit', and I attribute it to the fact that I have the *samskara* of working out in my body. Because I have devoted a lot of my life to dance and yoga, my body has the skill, knowhow and memory of physical engagement, which helps me readily do things with my body that are considered good for me. If your body is not used to physical effort when you are able and young, it becomes very difficult to draw from the body's inner resources when you are old. Apart from physical practices involving the body, which in my case range from yoga, *pranayama* and meditation to walking and even doing light-weight training at the gym, being connected to something I find inspiring and that triggers my thirst for a deeper understanding, keeps me searching, enquiring and therefore rejuvenated. I feel that enquiry is very rejuvenating! The other very important factor and something I feel grateful for and blessed is faith. I feel it is critical to have faith—faith in knowing I am not alone, faith in something more than the eye can see, faith that there is more to life and

living, something that is ineffable and mysterious. To be surrounded by the ambiguity of faith is a blessing and protection. Thus, the physical practice of some form or the other, enquiry and faith are the three things I feel are of critical importance. And these I have learnt through the teachings of Patanjali's Yoga *sutra*.

**How was a pioneering ballet like Fana'a: Ranjha Revisited conceived? How did it change you and influence your future body of work?**

*Fana'a: Ranjha Revisited* was my first work in Punjabi. After years of dancing to Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit

**If your body is not used to physical effort when you are able and young, it becomes very difficult to draw from the body's inner resources when you are old**

songs, I felt the need to make a work in Punjabi. Considering that my technique is Bharatanatyam, and that Bharatanatyam cannot be done to Punjabi music because the two would just not gel, I came up with *Fana'a*, where I juxtaposed two narratives, *Heer Ranjha* from Punjab and *Kutrala Kuravanji* from Tamil Nadu. This way, I could have the solidity of technique as well as the abandon of profoundly beautiful Punjabi Sufi poetry, which is sung and composed by Madan Gopal Singh. This work premiered in 2005 and we are still touring it both nationally and internationally. It has been one of my most successful works.

I have been experimenting since and making collaborative works that juxtapose two different kinds of narratives and forms or cultures. I am interested in examining the boundaries between any two categories. For instance, I made *Mango Cherry Mix* in collaboration with a Japanese dancer,

Hiroshi Miyamoto. It is a duet where two Eastern men observe the cultural 'self' of the other. And *Dravya Kaya*, one of my latest works, combines Bharatanatyam and yoga to reinterpret sections of the *Ramayana*.

**What decides the selection of a particular piece for a performance?**

In the case of Bharatanatyam solo *Meenakshi*, it was the music I had heard when I was still a student at Kalakshetra in the early 1980s, and which kept haunting me. *Fana'a: Ranjha Revisited* happened because I wanted to make a work combining the ethos, poetry and music of two cultures I loved and understood most deeply: Punjab and Tamil Nadu. It was also to puncture the bogus hierarchy between 'high' and 'low' culture. I am sick of these forced ideas that Tamil Nadu is on the higher and Punjab on the lower end of the cultural spectrum. *Fana'a* offers a deeply moving, seamless juxtaposition of the music and poetry of the two cultures and places them on equal footing.

*Mango Cherry Mix* was because I wished to examine the Indian 'self' but along with a familiar other. Therefore, another Easterner who is an 'other' but not too alien, thus familiar and sympathetic. *Dravya Kaya* is my attempt to reclaim the *Ramayana* from the clutches of Hindutva. The *Ramayana* was for the longest time a major source of inspiration for me. I just love the poetry of Valmiki. But I completely stopped doing any Rama-centric works after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. So in 2008, I re-approached the great epic, not through its characters but through the props or objects found in it.

*Grey is also a Colour* is about examining class and colour inequalities. This solo dance-theatre work is based on Doris Lessing's novel, *The Grass is Singing*. Thus my work is very diverse. I don't really follow a formula. Each work has its own inspiration and reason but all my works deal with issues pertaining to the body and with boundaries—of cultural, gender or class. But, most important, the



One of the reasons I came back to India after living in the US was because, beyond a point, I could not bear performing Bharatanatyam to an audience that did not understand its ethos

aesthetic possibility of sensuality/spirituality remains my core enquiry.

**Have you identified any village in Punjab for a cultural centre?**

I am still looking to set up a space in Punjab, a place amid green fields where I can set up a yoga ashram, a dance conservatory and a centre to work with the traditional performing arts of the Punjab. That is, both, our Punjab as well as the other half across the border, in Pakistan, which I am more familiar with because my family comes from there. My dream is to even revive the dialects we have left behind, especially Saraiki and Potohari, as my parents were from that region.

**When does a Navtej performance transcend the sanctity of pure form? Can you illustrate with a recent experiment?**

I believe that structure is meant to be surpassed at some point in any artistic endeavour but there is absolutely no telling if and how the magical moment happens on stage. There are many factors that contribute to it. One major factor is the audience, who plays a very pivotal role in it. Sometimes, within the first few seconds after getting on stage, I can tell whether it is going to be a dud performance or one where I can soar. Audience responsiveness is actually palpable to the performer in the same way temperature is, and the performer has to perform adjust to the audience

temperature. Finally, it is the chemistry between the two that makes the performance glow or fall flat.

If you can tell that the audience understands your nuances and is with you, the chance of 'transcendence' is higher. That is one of the reasons I came back to India after living in the US for a long time because, beyond a point, I could not bear performing Bharatanatyam to an audience that did not understand the ethos of this form. Dancing is like making and reciting poetry, your own poetry. You are investing a lot in it and if you know that there is someone out there who is travelling on the imagery you are creating, you allow yourself to go higher and further, and are able to drive home the finer points.

Your relationship with what you are performing also makes a lot of difference. The more familiar the material, the easier to become absorbed in it. For instance, I don't think I have ever not lost myself in Madan Gopal Singh's music. I just have to hear his voice and I grow wings. I totally tune into it. Similarly, when dancing to Dikshitar's *kriti*, I feel I am growing synonymous with *Meenakshi Me Mudam*. The minute I hear the *kriti*, I go into a state of surrender because of my deep appreciation and love for the music and the *devi*.

But, as I said, there is no telling. I have also noticed that if I am nervous before a performance, the chances of entering magic are far higher. Each

time we enter the stage, it is like the first time, it is a fresh start.

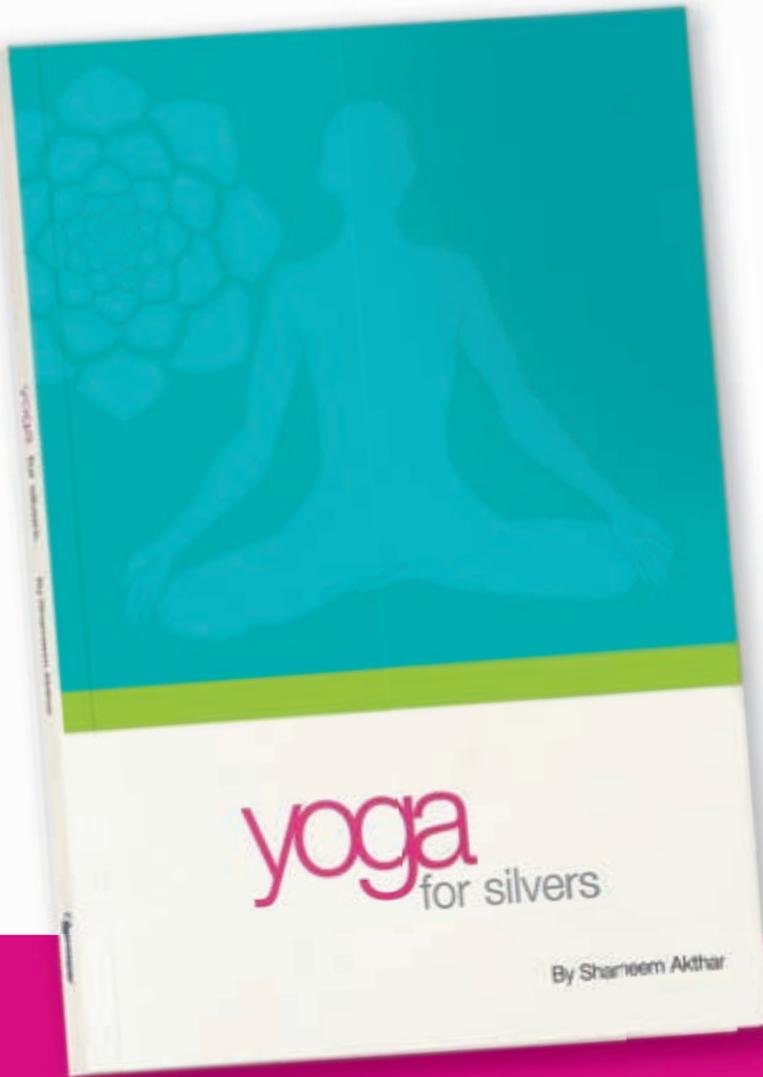
**How did your college years in Chandigarh contribute to the artist you are today?**

College was a time for me to experiment. I joined Gurcharn Singh Chani's Community Theatre Workshop in Chandigarh and started acting in street plays. I had time to think, dream and experiment. It was during this time that I got to work with Badal Sircar. It was the winter of 1978. Chandigarh winters used to be delightful then. It was an intense, week-long workshop that turned out to be a turning point for me in more ways than one. I realised my body had a potential that was special and that I had a need to express myself through it. I identified a lyricism in my body, a lyricism I deeply felt and appreciated. I simultaneously realised that theatre alone could not do justice to it as theatre tended to be too verbose or text/speech-oriented.

Badal *da* saw that and suggested I learn dance. In a way, he put the idea of dance into my head, but I never thought I would pursue it seriously or that it could ever in any way be viable. I was a bearded Sikh, and I presumed that it was mandatory to be clean-shaven to be a dancer. Moreover, the images of Indian male dancers I had seen did not attract me in the least. So I really could not sense any coherence between my reality and the world of dance.

Within the next year, my father passed on to me an invitation for *Krishnaya Tubhyam Namaha* by Padma Subrahmanyam. The possibility of emotion and expression I saw felt liberating.

The penny dropped and I had three instantaneous realisations. One, I wanted to do this; two, I knew I would be able to do it; and three, I would be able to do it well. In fact, it felt so right that it felt almost matter-of-fact. What I needed to take care of from then on was logistics: how I'd convince my parents, where and how I'd find a teacher, and how I would find the money to learn.



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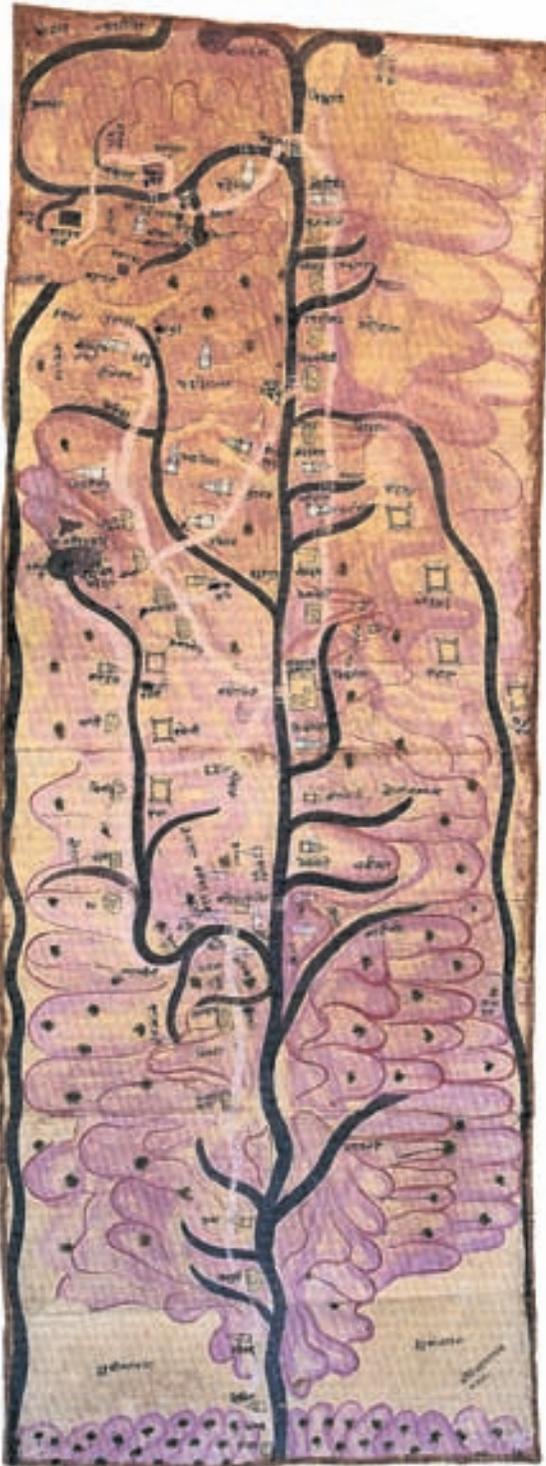
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# Boundaries

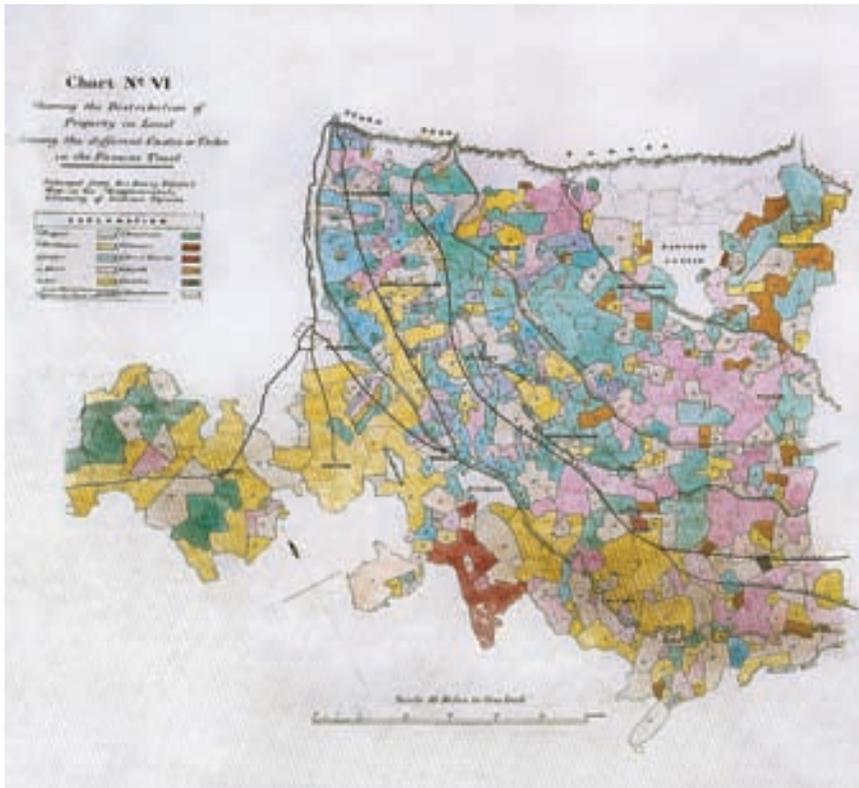
*Mapping India*, a large-format book by Manosi Lahiri (Niyogi Books; ₹ 4,500; 320 pages), pieces together India's evolution through old maps and sketches. *Harmony-Celebrate Age* presents an excerpt and some marvellous illustrations from the puzzle



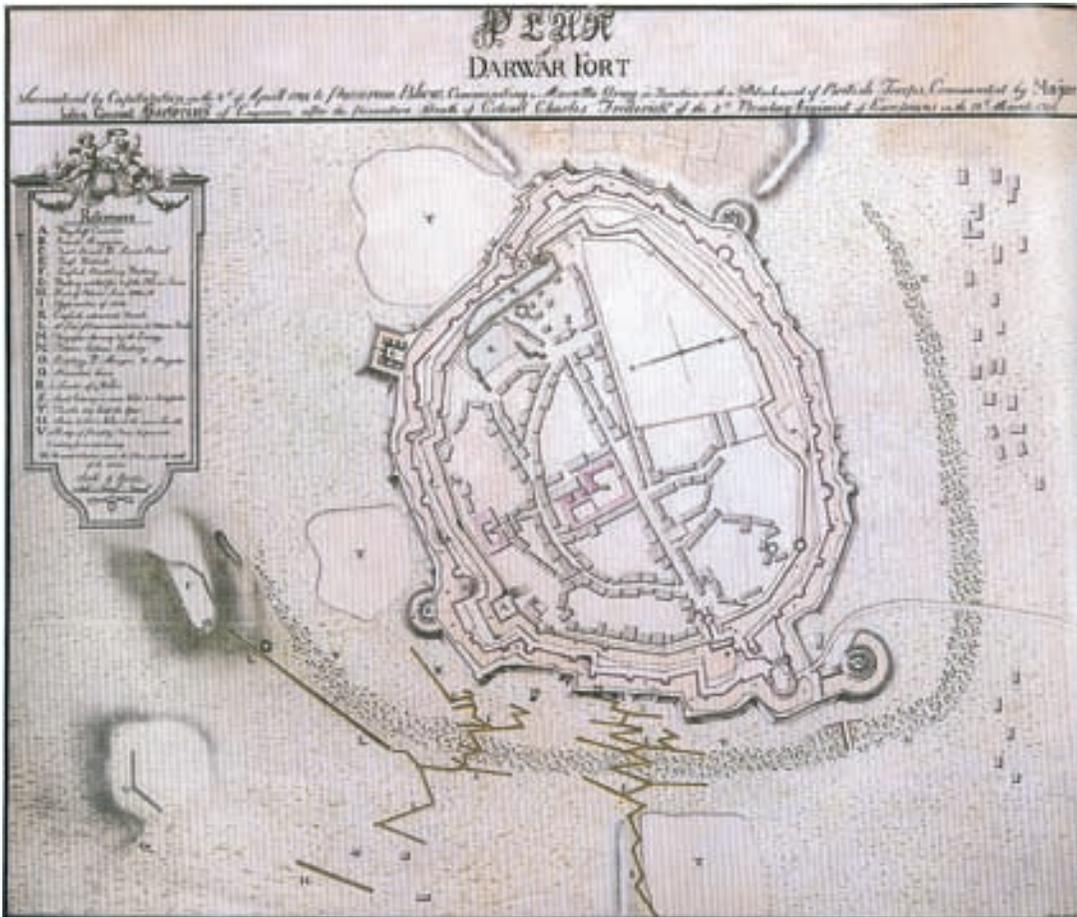
*Mapping India* includes historical maps available in the Indian archives, still unknown to voyeurs of old maps. The National Archives of India has some of the most interesting maps made from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. For several years, they were treated as classified documents and not made accessible to the public. It is, therefore, a pleasure to introduce them. These include several original manuscript plans and maps that record important events in the history of the country. They constitute the prime source for subsequently published maps of India. Large-scale maps were reduced and maps were prepared from them for the purpose of publishing them in smaller scale.



(Facing page) Index chart to the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India (Royal Geographical Society, London) is a result of one of the many Trigonometrical Surveys conducted between 1800 and 1870 to correctly measure the surface of India; (Above, left) Pilgrim map of Badrinath, probably 18th century, from the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, The City Palace, Jaipur, shows the beautifully sketched route map along the Ganges Valley and tributaries with places named in Devnagari script; (right) facsimile of the Bhotia map of the commercial route from Lhasa to Assam via Tawang and Nangu (from Messrs de Schlagintweit's India and High Asia, 1856)



For long, India was mapped in a conical projection and also divided into north and south. The northern Partie Superieure (above, from *Atlas Moderne* by Rigobert Bonne, 1771) showed the Maratha areas in central India, where they were dominant at the time when the Mughals were in decline. (Left) A chart showing the distribution of property in land among the different castes or tribes in the famine tract in the Northwest Provinces (one of the series of six maps, National Archives of India, Delhi). Plans and sketches contributed to local mapping details, such as the late 17th century map of Surat (top, facing page; from Sawai Man Singh II Museum), with forts, grounds, neighbourhoods, markets and hamlets across the river. (Facing page, below) the plan of Darwar Fort (National Archives of India) comes close in details of a fort. The fort was surrendered by capitulation on 4th April 1791, to Parasuram Bhow, commanding a Maratha Army in junction with a detachment of British troops







(Facing page) A plan of the Battle of Plassey, fought 23rd June 1757, shows notes such as horses in yellow and foot soldiers in red (printed for R Baldwin, 1760, *The London Magazine*); (above) Magni Mogolis Imperium shows an exotic image of the Mughal empire of India in the early 18th century (from Sanjeev Sanyal's private collection)

The physical condition of many of these manuscript plans and maps are poor: they are often discoloured and brittle. Several are torn along the folds and edges, sometimes heavily stained and now clearly disintegrating. The time has come to photograph and restore these maps before their original beauty is totally destroyed, and it is no longer possible to retrieve any information from them. It should be of concern to all of us that several old maps are in such poor condition that the fine text and symbols can't be deciphered.

For historical reasons, the Map Library at the British Library, St Pancras, London, and the Royal Geographical Society, London, house the most comprehensive collections of documents and maps relating to India. The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, Asiatic Society of Mumbai and Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum at the City Palace, Jaipur, are rich sources of historical maps. The Susan Gole Collection at the Alkazi

Foundation for the Arts, New Delhi, is a storehouse of published maps of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It has, perhaps, the largest collection of general maps of India, which were at one time widely used by administrators, travellers and laymen. Besides, I have been able to access beautiful maps from private collections and share them with the readers of this book.

Finally, *Mapping India* touches upon the recent dramatic changes in cartography and the prickly issue of public access to maps in India. Mapping technology is rapidly changing and the Internet as a medium of map delivery to a large number of users has proved useful. It is possible that we are witnessing the final days of map delivery on paper, primarily since people now regularly expect 'fresh' maps which can be delivered electronically with speed. Paper maps take long to publish and this may well be one of the reasons for their dwindling use in future.

# For love of a fool

In his classic essay, "All Fools' Day," taken from the collection *Essays of Elia* (1823), beloved English essayist Charles Lamb tells us why he would gladly suffer a fool! Excerpts....

The compliments of the season to my worthy masters, and a merry first of April to us all!

Many happy returns of this day to you—and you, and you, Sir; nay, never frown, man, nor put a long face upon the matter. Do not we know one another? What need of ceremony among friends? We have all a touch of that same—you understand me—a speck of the motley. Beshrew the man who on such a day as this, the general festival, should affect to stand aloof. I am none of those sneakers. I am free of the corporation, and care not who knows it. He that meets me in the forest today, shall meet with no wise-acre, I can tell him. *Stultus sum*. Translate me that, and take the meaning of it to yourself for your pains.... Fill us a cup of that sparkling gooseberry—we will drink no wise, melancholy, politic port on this day....

I will confess a truth to thee, reader. I love a Fool—as naturally, as if I were of kith and kin to him. When a child, with childlike apprehensions, that dived not below the surface of the matter, I read those Parables—not guessing at their involved wisdom—I had more yearnings towards that simple architect, that

built his house upon the sand, than I entertained for his more cautious neighbour; I grudged at the hard censure pronounced upon the quiet soul that kept his talent; and—prizing their simplicity beyond the more provident, and, to my apprehension, somewhat unfeminine wariness of their competitors—I felt a kindness, that almost amounted to a tendre, for those five thoughtless virgins.

I have never made an acquaintance since, that lasted; or a friendship, that answered; with any that had not some tincture of the absurd in their characters.

I venerate an honest obliquity of understanding. The more laughable blunders a man shall commit in your company, the more tests he giveth you, that he will not betray or overreach you.

I love the safety, which a palpable hallucination warrants; the security, which a word out of season ratifies. And take my word for this, reader, and say a fool told it you, if you please, that he who hath not a dram of folly in his mixture, hath pounds of much worse matter in his composition. It is observed, that "the foolisher the fowl or fish, the finer the flesh thereof"; and what are commonly the world's received fools, but such whereof the world is not worthy? And what have been some of the kindest patterns of our species, but so many darlings of absurdity, minions of the goddess....? Reader, if you wrest my words beyond their fair construction, it is you, and not I, that are the April Fool.



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# The heart of a mother

Author-publisher-women's activist Urvashi Butalia remembers her mother Subhadra and her undying spirit

Nearly nine months ago, my mother, Subhadra Butalia, died. She was a week short of 90, and for the last 10 years of her life, after my father passed away, I more or less lived with her and, when she needed it, looked after her (although much of the time, she was the one looking after me). A strong, feisty, energetic, independent and elegant woman, my mother had spent much of her life as a teacher in a college—as she often put it, ‘full of *goondas* and strongmen’—and, according to her, the constant contact with young people (*goondas* or not, she loved them and they her) kept her young and mentally agile.

But that wasn't all. Subhadra was a woman of many parts. She'd lived through the better part of the last century and had strong memories of being involved in the Independence movement. Later in life, she joined us in our militant women's groups, travelling all over Delhi and its neighbourhoods with our street play on dowry, *Om Swaha*, and then setting up a legal aid and counselling centre of her own (with a group of other women) called Karmika. As a young woman, she'd had a runaway marriage with my dad, and then had looked after her young family (more or less orphaned by Partition) and his siblings and mother, and run the home in which they all lived, and produced, in the space of six years, four children.

In the 10 years after my father died, I often watched my mother and wondered how she would deal with old age. It's a funny thing, she was eighty 80 when he died, not young by any standards, but I never thought of her as old—nor did I think of myself as middle-aged, for I was nearly 50 then—and for many years after she

continued to run her women's organisation, going to the office every day, climbing a set of stairs, and then taking off to play cards in the afternoons with friends, and spending time with her grandchildren in the evenings.

It was only in the last three or four years of her life that I began to think, yes, she's ageing. She had become forgetful, and somewhat frail. She found it difficult to walk long distances, but would resolutely refuse assistance, reject implements like walking sticks and wheelchairs, and despite the physical weakness that she must have felt, she remained fiercely independent. I watched her often, thinking of how wonderfully she was dealing with this thing called age, and wondering if I would be equal to dealing with it in the same way.

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Despite the physical weakness, she remained fiercely independent, refusing assistance and rejecting wheelchairs

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We talked about it many times. In an odd kind of way, although we held very different views, our involvement in the women's movement had brought us closer together, and we were often able to talk about the kinds of things mothers and daughters do not often talk about—or at least find difficult to talk about. I often asked her how she felt about age creeping up on her, and she would say that it wasn't ageing that worried her but the thought of the physical frailty that accompanied age, and she did not want to be dependent on other people. She

would sometimes say to me, ‘I feel really frustrated when a half-articulated thought runs away from me and I can't grasp it.’

We talked about death too. Like all parents, she was worried about what would happen to her children after she went—even though we are all well settled, and none of us is young. She said she did not fear death, and she often felt my father calling out to her, but she wanted it to be peaceful. And although she was being completely honest and truthful when she said that, I could often see—and she would tell me that she felt it too—a sort of haunted look in her eyes at the prospect of losing life. But more, of losing it alone. I cannot remember the number of times she said to me that the thing she worried about was that she would die when I was away travelling—which is something I do all the time. As it happened, beautifully and mercifully, when she went, I was holding her in my arms, and it took only a few minutes for her to drift away. At the time, three of her four children were with her.

So many things about my mother have stayed with me. But there is something particular about losing a parent when you are not young yourself. I was nearly 60 when she went, I could see my future staring me in the face, I could feel in me, and see happening to her, many of the things—memory loss, loss of control, loneliness, a need for company—that I know will happen to me. But more, I could see that age can be confronted with dignity and courage, and even with laughter and joy (she often sang and shook a leg to entertain us!), especially if one is willing to talk about it, and see it as a natural part of life. ✨

# Stone SOUP

In a pithy little poem, Robert Theobald expresses the need to build community—and enrich our own lives

A stranger comes to a starving town,  
Promising to make Stone Soup.

He finds some firewood,  
Uses his own pot,  
Puts water on to boil.

As the water heats,  
He wanders around,  
Selecting,  
Rejecting,  
Cleaning Stones.

He adds them to the pot,  
Carefully,  
With strange muttered recipes,

Intrigued,  
The villagers gather round,  
This is the best entertainment  
Their village has had since the famine began.

As they listen,  
They hear the stranger admit,  
That while stone soup is good,  
It does taste better with a taste of salt.

One of the crazier people  
(Or is she actually more caring?)  
Brings out some salt she has hoarded.

The stranger  
Gets bolder,  
Suggests carrots,  
And potatoes,  
And swedes,  
And dried tomatoes,  
And herbs.



As each one is added,  
Others remember their own stores,  
And bring them to the common stew.

We have all made something out of nothing,  
By remembering the old, old lesson,  
That together we can create opportunities,  
Which escape us when we hide,  
Our resources and skills from others.

It is time to build community again,  
To share what we have,  
And to experience miracles.

It is time to live,  
Expecting grace  
And finding it,  
Daily,  
Even hourly,  
In the midst,  
of our harried lives.

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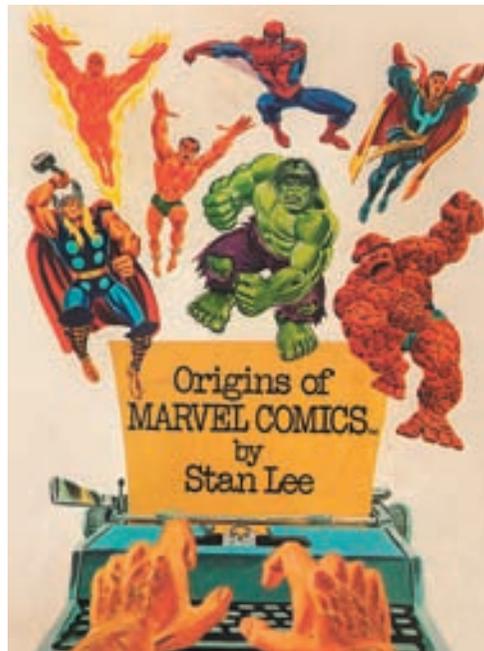
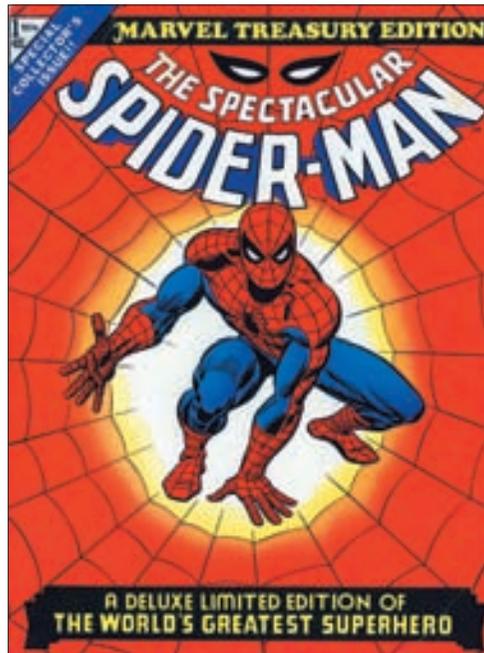
*Briton Robert Theobald (1929-1999) was an economist and futurist author who was on the leading edge of fundamental change issues—from business and labour to education, health, government and local communities. The poem is courtesy [www.spiritual-endeavors.org](http://www.spiritual-endeavors.org)*

THE WAY WE WERE

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# Webbed WONDER

Here's one spider that people across the world actually cheer for. One of the most successful superheroes ever to hit the comics (and subsequently movies), Spider-Man made his first appearance in Marvel Comics in 1962. The character was the brainchild of writer Stan Lee, who was looking to build on the success of his 'Fantastic Four' (Mr Fantastic, The Invisible Woman, The Human Torch and The Thing). After hours of brainstorming with artist Steve Ditko, a new hero was born, one who could cling to walls and climb them, and shoot webs through his wrists in place of traditional weapons. Spider-Man, first included as a strip in Marvel's *Amazing Fantasy* series, grew so popular that he was soon featured in his own exclusive series of adventures, titled *The Amazing Spider-Man*—it went on to become Marvel's top seller and 'Spidey' went on to star in books, TV shows and films as well as get emblazoned across a gamut of merchandise, from lunchboxes to bed-sheets. Incredibly, 50 years after his creation, this friendly neighbourhood hero remains as popular as ever—the latest film starring the webbed wonder, interestingly titled *The Amazing Spider-Man* like the original comic books, will hit theatres across the globe on 3 July 2012.



THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: APRIL 1962

- On 3 April, Jawaharlal Nehru was elected de facto prime minister of India.
- On 9 April, the Soviet Union established a holiday called Cosmonautics Day, a year after the first manned space flight took off. Today, it is designated as International Day of Human Space Flight.
- On 26 April, The first US rocket Ranger IV crash-landed on the moon as planned.

## Phantom Vibration

*n.* The perception of a cell phone's vibration in the absence of an incoming call or text message.

**Example:** It's not a trivial problem, according to his study of stress levels in 100 smart phone users, including university students, retail workers and public-sector employees. Some users in the study were so hooked that they reported feeling **phantom vibrations** from non-existent text messages.

—Adriana Barton, "Smartphone stress: Can you say irony?", *The Globe and Mail*, 22 January 2012

## Cyberflâneur

*n.* A person who surfs the web with no purpose beyond curiosity and inquisitiveness.

**Example:** Intrigued, I set out to discover what happened to the **cyberflâneur**. While I quickly found other contemporaneous commentators who believed that flânerie would flourish online, the sad state of today's Internet suggests that they couldn't have been more wrong. Cyberflâneurs are few and far between, while the very practice of cyberflânerie seems at odds with the world of social media.

—Evgeny Morozov, "The death of the cyberflâneur", *The New York Times*, 4 February 2012

“ A man who dares to waste one hour of time has not discovered the value of life.

—Charles Darwin

## Engaged Workaholic

*n.* A person who works compulsively because he or she loves their job.

**Example:** Though unhappy clock-watchers...may be tempted to call her a workaholic — endangering health, psyche and personal life by being too wedded to work— some researchers think there's nothing at all wrong with her. They think, instead, that she'd aptly be placed in a relatively new category that some call an **engaged workaholic**. Engaged workaholics may dodge some or all of those nasty repercussions for one simple reason: They love what they do.

—Kathleen Doheny, "Workaholism: Maybe not such a bad thing", *Los Angeles Times*, 13 February 2012

## Grexit

*n.* The exit of Greece from the eurozone.

**Example:** But the fact the damage would be lighter makes such a **Grexit** more likely. And with Greece currently struggling to secure reform pledges from its public sector and its wider population, the willingness of overseas creditors to help has diminished somewhat.

—"Greek impasse raises fears of Grexit", *The Guardian*, 7 February 2012

## Slacklining

*n.* A sport that involves walking or balancing on slack nylon webbing suspended between two points.

**Example:** If you saw the Super Bowl halftime show, you probably wondered, "Who's that guy in a toga bouncing crazily on a rope next to Madonna? And how's he doing it?" The guy was Andy Lewis, a **slacklining** champion from California, and he did it after many, many years of practice. Slacklining is different from tightrope walking. Instead of a taut line, it's performed on inch-thick nylon webbing that stretches and bounces.

—Marc Silver, "After the Super Bowl, everyone's curious about slacklining", *National Geographic News Watch*, 8 February 2012

## Eurogeddon

*n.* An extreme European economic, political, or military crisis.

**Example:** Nobody wants to speak too soon, but the horrors of the past 12 months seem far away. Nothing has changed, of course. All the old nasties are still there, including looming **Eurogeddon**, but we're told that every possible hazard has been 'priced in'.

—Jeremy Thomas, "US investors busy making other plans", *Business LIVE*, 21 January 2012

## Altmetrics

*n.* Tools used to assess the impact of scholarly articles based on alternative online measures such as bookmarks, links, blog posts, and tweets.

**Example:** Luckily, there is a growing movement within the scientific establishment to better measure and reward all the different ways that people contribute to the messy and complex process of scientific progress. This movement has begun to gather loosely around the banner of **altmetrics**, which was born out of a simple recognition: Many of the traditional measurements are too slow or simplistic to keep pace with today's internet-age science.

—Samuel Arbesman, "New ways to measure science," *Wired Science*, 9 January 2012

## HARDLINK

*n.* A tag, such as a barcode, assigned to an object that, when scanned with a smartphone or reader, displays online data about the object.

**Example:** The key difference between the two dimensional QR code and the single dimensional barcode is the amount of data they contain. Quick Response codes are also known as **hardlinks** or physical world hyperlinks. QR Codes store up to 4,296 alphanumeric characters of arbitrary text. This text can be anything, for example, a URL, contact information, a telephone number, even a blog post!

—Bob Leah, "Create a Quick Response Code (QR Code) image using Google Chart," *IBM developerWorks*, 14 March 2011

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“Do not say a little in many words but a great deal in few.”

—Pythagoras

## Phablet

*n.* A device that combines the features of a smartphone and a tablet computer.

**Example:** This phone-tablet hybrid (**phablet?**) is meant to cater to those who want a bit of functionality from both camps. On one hand, you can make phone calls and access email, yet its supersized screen means you don't need to squint to read e-books, watch video, play games or browse the Web.

—Marc Saltzman, "Samsung Galaxy Note: Half-smartphone, half-tablet, all awesome (watch out iPhone, BlackBerry)", *Toronto Star*, 3 February 2012

## Peak People

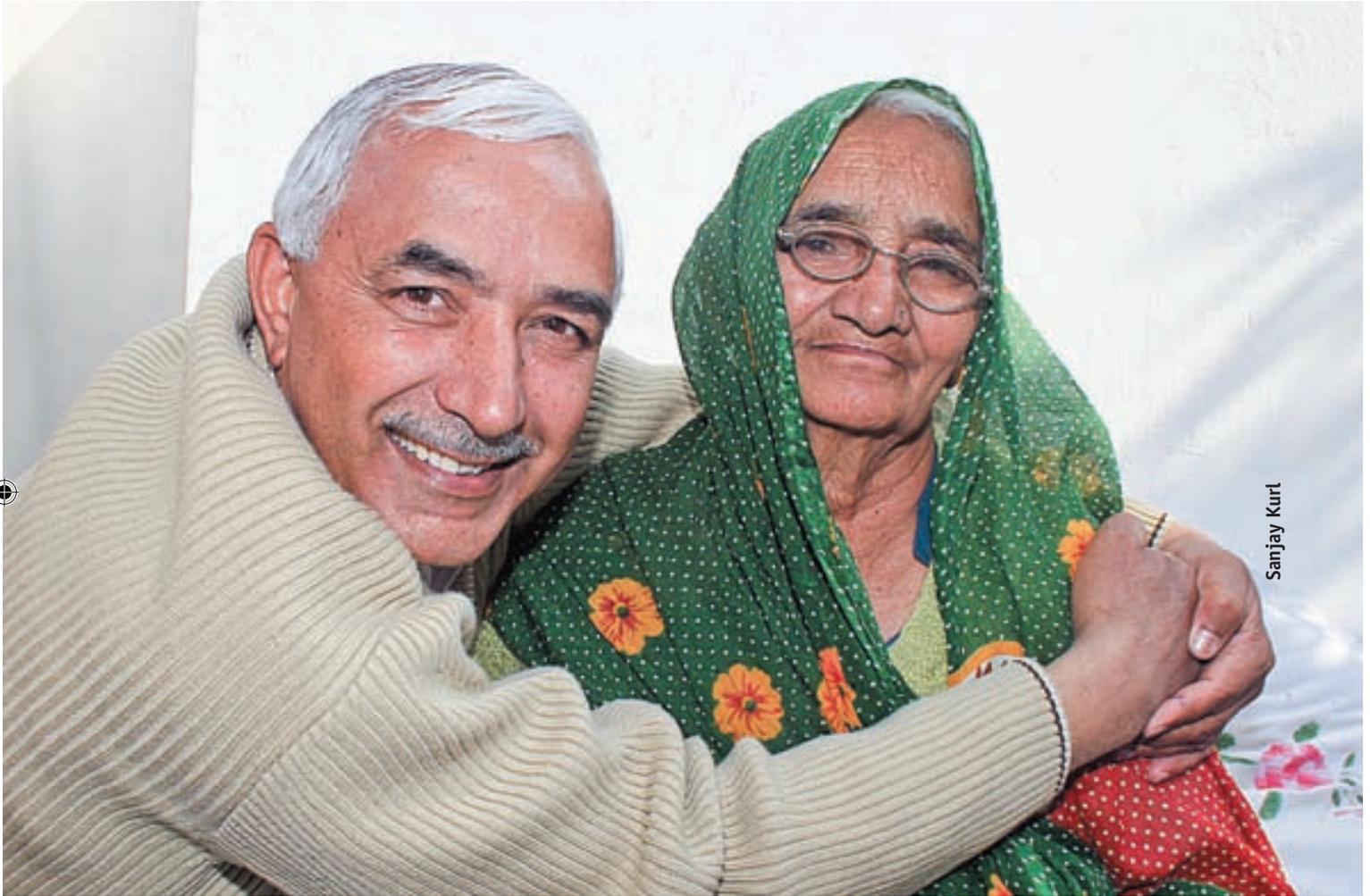
*n.* A time when the world's population reaches a maximum, after which it steadily declines due to reduced birth rates or global shortages of energy, food, and water.

**Example:** The world is on the threshold of what might be called **peak people**. The world's supply of working-age people will soon be shrinking, causing a shift from surplus to scarcity.

—Doug Sanders, "The world's losing its workers. How will we compete?", *The Globe and Mail*, 11 February 2012

## “Female infanticide must be dealt with severely from within civil society”

*Sarpanch Bhateri Devi, 80, Sonapat (Haryana), for paying through her own pocket to save the girl child*



Sanjay Kurt

Since 2010, when Bhateri Devi was elected sarpanch of Ridhau, a village 22 km from Sonapat, the birth of a girl child is no longer perceived as a cause for concern. About 70 poor families from the neighbouring villages of Farmana, Nizampur Majra, Mauj Nagar and Ridhau have received a fixed deposit of ₹ 51,000 (maturing at the age of 18) in the name of the newborn girl child. “The idea was a result of discussions on the shameful yet alarming problem of female infanticide in the country,” explains Bhateri Devi. “We thought that if a poor family got financial assistance in the form of an FD, killing of girl infants could be curbed.” One of her six sons, Raj Kumar Ridhau

(see photo), a businessman and political activist living in Sonapat, assists his mother in this noble endeavour. Meticulous research helps Raj Kumar ascertain the economic status of the identified families; he also provides transport facility to the mother and child for bank work. “As a parent I have never differentiated between my daughters and sons,” affirms Bhateri Devi, who never went to school herself. “I believe rampant female infanticide in the age of development and technology must be dealt with severely from within civil society. The fortunate ones need to come forward to help our own.”

—Suparna-Saraswati Puri

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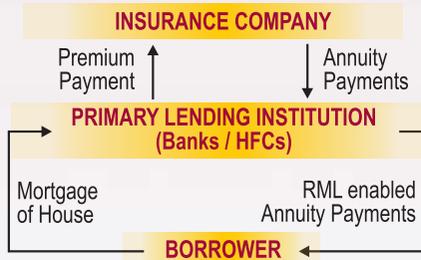
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