

harmony

AUGUST 2013 ₹ 30

celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

FREEDOM

AMIT DAHIYABADSHAH'S
CLARION CALL FOR CHANGE

DESTINATION

DISCOVER THE
ARCHITECTURAL
SPLENDOUR OF ORCHHA



■ TOASTING FOREVER
FRIENDSHIPS

■ AN INDIAN FAMILY'S
ESCAPE FROM BURMA
DURING WORLD WAR II

BEING
INDIAN
Shashi Tharoor

The security of your home.
And your mortgage taken care of.



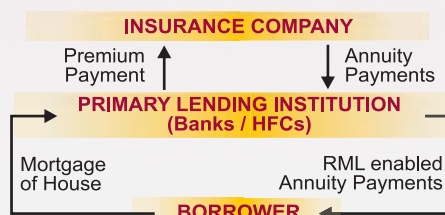
REVERSE MORTGAGE LOAN enabled ANNUITY

Through Reverse Mortgage Loan enabled Annuity, India's house owning senior citizens can find security in their old age, realizing funds from their house property while residing in it. Senior citizens can mortgage their house to a lender, who then sources annuity from a life insurance company to make periodic payments to the seniors throughout their lifetime. The spouse can be made joint borrower to be covered under the scheme. The senior citizen borrowers need not repay the principal and interest to the lenders during their life time, as long they are alive and in occupation of the property. Loan can become due and payable only on borrower's demise or moving out of the house permanently.

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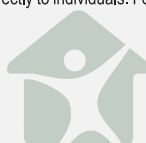


Indicative RMLeA Payments

Age	Property Value	LTV	Net Monthly RMLeA*
			Range
60	1000000	60%	Rs. 2191 to Rs. 3459
65	1000000	60%	Rs. 2267 to Rs. 3987
70	1000000	60%	Rs. 2419 to Rs. 4816
75	1000000	70%	Rs. 3311 to Rs. 7166

* Net of Servicing Charges subject to detailed terms.

The above estimates are indicative and the actuals may vary depending upon the age of borrower, annuity options and other terms of the Primary Lending Institutions..



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Find your VOICE

Some bad news just doesn't go away.

Just as it did last year, HelpAge India marked World Elder Abuse Awareness Day by releasing a nationwide survey. And rather than heralding a change for the better, this year's poll reiterated the familiar litany of woe.

Of close to 7,000 silvers across 24 Indian cities, 72 per cent express the belief that elder abuse is prevalent in society with 23 per cent (more than a fifth) on average admitting they face abuse, sometimes on a daily basis. Hyderabad clocks the highest rate of elder abuse in the metros with 38 per cent, followed by Kolkata (28 per cent), Delhi (20 per cent), Mumbai (11 per cent) and Chennai (9 per cent). The most common form of abuse is disrespect (79 per cent), followed by verbal abuse (76 per cent), neglect (69 per cent), and actual physical abuse (40 per cent). According to the survey, 83 per cent of those abused live with family members, 11 per cent with a spouse and only 6 per cent alone. In fact, 38 per cent report being abused by their own son, and 39 per cent by their daughter-in-law. Most shocking, only 32 per cent report the abuse.

The situation is simply unacceptable. And the worst part is that silvers themselves are choosing to stay silent. While we can rail on (quite justifiably) against the government for the lack of institutional measures to improve the quality of life of silvers, we must accept and take our

Suresh Natarajan



share of blame. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, criminalises elder abuse and makes children liable for the care of their parents—but few invoke it. The Reverse Mortgage scheme offers silvers economic empowerment by leveraging their property as an asset—but few tap into its potential. The police and NGOs offer helplines and counselling services—but few make the call.

Why? The answers are not far to seek: reluctance to air the family's dirty laundry in public, fear of social stigma, concern about exacerbating the rift with their children. While these worries are legitimate, they are not compelling enough to put our own mental and physical well-being at ransom. It's time to rally against injustice, against abuse, against oppression, no matter who the perpetrator. It's time to seek help, join cause and forge bonds with those who can help, and those who need help. It's time to find your voice and stop this conspiracy of silence—forever.

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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Cover photograph by Vivek R Nair

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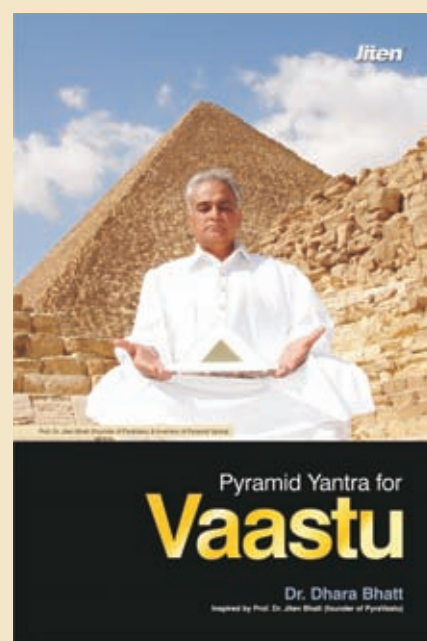
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column one

You don't need 140 characters on Twitter to describe Dr Shashi Tharoor; the term International Indian does just fine. Witty, eloquent and elegant, with charm to burn, this writer-thinker has made the transition from the corridors of the UN to the halls of Parliament holding his vision for India—and his sense of humour—intact despite a fair share of controversy. “In a democracy, you get the leaders you deserve,” he tells us in an exclusive interview. “If the educated middle class abandons the political space to people they despise, they will be ruled by them.”

This call for change is echoed, most powerfully, by poet Amit Dahiyabadshah. His “Nation: Past Present Future” is both a lament to what has happened to us as a people and an ode to his faith in our renewal. A message worth heeding on the eve of our 66th Independence Day. Indeed, freedom is a privilege, not to be taken lightly, worth fighting—and fleeing—towards. Sundari Ganesh's booklet, *From Burma to India*, which documents her journey home in the wake of the Japanese attack on Burma during World War II, attests to this. We present an excerpt that brings alive the panic and clamour of a Japanese air raid on Rangoon.

You can dial back the adrenaline rush with a laid-back look at Orchha, the erstwhile capital of Bundelkhand, where architectural marvels nestle next to a small, pretty village. And don't leave us this month without meeting our BFFs, women and men who have forged bonds of friendship that have endured over decades, despite life's every twist and turn. It may just inspire you to reach for your own childhood album—or the phone.

—Arati Rajan Menon

Congratulations on your ninth anniversary. Accolades for all the pains you have taken to empower and motivate the silver citizen community. I myself am attached to *Harmony-Celebrate Age* right from its inception and have not missed even a single issue. It seems like yesterday that this association and friendship started! When I look back, I realise the many positive changes that the magazine brought in me; I would love to share with you what I have gained as a reader.

I came to know about reverse mortgage through the magazine. Now I get a monthly instalment deposited in my bank account because of reverse mortgage of my house, which has made me financially independent. In terms of overall personality, the magazine advises us to develop a hobby to remain engaged. I started reading books on human psychology and spirituality, and got myself a project management diploma. I became a visiting faculty member for a management institute and part-time consultant to various industries. This improved my confidence and outlook towards life. Each issue discusses different health-related topics like yoga and food, creating awareness and imparting knowledge that prevention is better than cure. The informative write-up by Tina Ambani is always an attraction for me. It educates, encourages and motivates us. I read it many times over. May God bless her and her team for espousing such a noble cause.

J S Bakshi Ahmedabad

The rare in-depth interview of Shakuntala Devi (‘Numero Uno’, June 2013) was a big bonus for us. It is sad that her ideas to simplify math were not used in schools; she strove hard to simplify math for students. Her last wish was to encourage research in Vedic mathematics. May her soul rest in peace.

Rajesh V Gaur
Mumbai

I read with keen interest your article about Lt Col Kartar Singh, “Fauji First” (‘Diary 100’, May 2013). The article brought back fond memories for my father B R Bangotra, 90, who worked under Singh's command in the 1950s. He thinks of him as a caring senior and talks very highly of him. Our best wishes to him.

Parveen K Bangotra
Punjab

CONTRIBUTOR



Amit Dahiyabadshah was born into a family of farmers, soldiers, freedom fighters and Gandhians. His early writing was inspired largely by the environment. A Poet Laureate with the Senior Environment Corps-Centre in the Park, Philadelphia, since 2004, his interests lie in communication planning, organic farming and integrated development.

Dahiyabadshah loves horses, camping and trekking in the wilderness, angling and rock climbing. His poetry is remarkable for its ability to explore complex human situations and emotions with the greatest of simplicity and clarity. He is the founder of Delhi Poetree, a movement to promote poetry in Delhi. In 2013-14, Delhi Poetree plans to host the biggest poetry event ever, The Thousand Poets Reading, comprising 52 readings at 52 venues over 52 weeks to an audience estimated at over 100,000. You can contact Amit Dahiyabadshah at delhipoetree@gmail.com; facebook group: Delhi Poetree; or call (0)9313120050, 9958323256.

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Experience

A second childhood

Wouldn't it be great to have a second childhood? To start life afresh? Because at Harmony, a magazine for people above fifty five, we believe that age is in the mind. Which is why, you should live young.

Visit us at : www.harmonyindia.org

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▶ MEDIA WATCH

CRAFTING a passion

Here's a man for whom hand, body and mind continue to operate in perfect synch. Widely regarded as **Britain's greatest living sculptor**, 89 year-old Sir Anthony Caro unveiled his latest exhibition, *The Park Avenue Series*, in London in July. The show comprises 10 abstract sculptures of similar sizes made of steel pipes, beams, disks and agricultural tools. An assistant to acclaimed sculptor Henry Moore early in his career, Caro came into his own in the 1960s with a series of steel abstract sculptures. "Sculpture did have some assumptions and rules and I broke those rules," he says with candour to London newspaper *The Times*. "That opened things up not just for me but other artists as well." And he is nowhere close to his swan song. "Without making art I would be bored," he adds. "I hope to carry on for another 10 or 12 years if I'm lucky. It's what I like doing. Old age is a shock, but I still enjoy making the works. It's something to get up in the morning for."

Making amends



Every scar cannot be erased but a salve can help heal old wounds. According to news agency Reuters, the **German government will pay Euro 800 million (\$ 1.03 billion) over a four-year period for homecare for the ageing survivors of the Holocaust.** The announcement was made by The Jewish Claims Conference, which represents Jewish victims and their descendants in negotiations on compensation for atrocities committed by the Nazis. The organisation worked with the German finance ministry to arrive at the numbers. "We are seeing

Germany's continued commitment to fulfil its historic obligation to Nazi victims," says special negotiator Stuart Eizenstat. "This ensures that Holocaust survivors, now in their final years, can be confident that we are endeavouring to help them live in dignity, after their early life was filled with indescribable tragedy and trauma. This is all the more impressive as it comes at a time of budget austerity in Germany." In 1952, West Germany acknowledged the murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazi regime and began to pay compensation to victims, which has amounted to Euro 1.5 billion over the years.

YOUR ACT: THE BIHAR HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION HAS DIRECTED THE STATE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT TO MAKE THE STATE COUNCIL AND DISTRICT COMMITTEES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS OPERATIONAL FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAINTENANCE AND WELFARE OF PARENTS AND SENIOR CITIZEN ACT 2007.

At your service



Silvers will now be treated in style at Noida's Apollo Hospital.

According to a media release by the medical institution, it aims to offer them an exclusive OPD service, complimentary pick-up and drop facility within a 5-km radius, and discounted consultation and diagnostic fees. "We recognise the growing need for specialised healthcare for senior citizens," the release goes. "This new initiative will ensure that they are minimally dependent on others in accessing prompt and quality medical attention. It is a culmination of the hospital's concerted efforts towards improving the overall health and well-being of senior citizens."

CLUB 65: In April, the Indian Muslims Association of Greater Houston launched Club 65, an activity centre for Indian silvers settled in Houston, Texas. It will offer a variety of programmes, from lectures on health, finance and food to picnics and other excursions, a range of indoor and outdoor games, and intergenerational activities with volunteers.

Chemical warfare



They are much maligned for reducing immunity. But **drugs like antibiotics could have an untold benefit: extending longevity.**

Scientists at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) in Switzerland have used antibiotics to modify the genetic codes of organisms and extend their lifespan by an astonishing 60 per cent. The

team analysed mice genomes related to longevity and found that reducing the expression of a group of three genes increased life significantly. They reproduced the proteins found on their genetic code in roundworms

and reduced their production—this significantly increased the activity levels and lifespan of the roundworms. “This research gives us hope not only for increasing longevity but lengthening the period of adult vitality,” writes study author Joan Auwerx in journal *Nature*. “And what’s remarkable is that it can be done with such simple drugs.”

The stronger sex

Still think of women as the ‘weaker sex’? A new Japanese study has established that **women actually have stronger immune systems than men over time, which is why they live longer.** Research-

ers at Tokyo Medical & Dental University Open Laboratory examined the blood of 356 healthy volunteers ranging in age between 20 and 90 years and found that T-cell and B-cell lymphocytes, both of which help fight bacterial infections, declined slower in women than in men; and CD4+ T cells and NK cells, which attack viruses and tumours, actually increased with age, with a higher rate of increase among women and men. Further, men



showed a decline in two types of cytokines that control the immune system and prevent inflammation as well as an age-dependent decrease in red blood cells, which wasn’t the case for women. The researchers attribute this to female sex

hormones such as oestrogen, which can boost the immune system’s response to infections. “The process of ageing is different for men and women for many reasons,” study leader Katsiuko Hirokawa writes in journal *Immunity & Ageing*. “Women have more oestrogen than men that seems to protect them from cardiovascular disease until menopause. Sex hormones also affect the immune system, especially certain types of lymphocytes.”

Now, Frotox

Botox beware. In London, trendsetting cosmetic surgery and skin rejuvenation clinic 111 Harley Street has launched 'cryotherapy'—or **Frotox**—a "toxin-free alternative" to Botox to zap wrinkles. A media release from the clinic tells us that it involves the injection of liquid nitrogen into the muscle nerves in your forehead, a 15-minute procedure. The nerves then, quite literally, go into 'hibernation' for four months, removing wrinkles. The difference from Botox: the effects are immediate; your face doesn't become frozen and expressionless; and there's no toxin injected into your skin (Botox, after all, is purified botulinum toxin).



"The liquid nitrogen freezes the targeted nerves on the forehead and between the brows," says Dr Yannis Alexandride, who operates the clinic.

"Nitrogen occurs naturally in the body so you aren't putting a foreign substance into your system." To learn more, check out 111harleystreet.com

Bizarre beauty

Japan has always been at the forefront of technology, from gizmos and gadgets to robots. But now, its anti-ageing product market appears to be taking a rather bizarre turn. Take the case of the **Japan Trend Shop**, a company whose products are flying off the shelf so fast in the country that it has decided to start selling overseas. London newspaper *The Daily Mail* fills us in on some of its offerings:



- **Facewaver Exercise Mask:** This lurid pink 'face stretcher' promises tighter, more youthful skin if you wear it for just five minutes a day and contort your face in different (and strange) expressions. It claims to increase blood circulation and smooth out wrinkles, lines and sags. Cost: £ 40 (about ₹ 3,500).



- **Eye Slack Haruka:** You 'clip' this odd-looking contraption around your face; its battery-powered vibrating pads claim to tighten sagging skin

around your eyes. It has two modes: while 'soft' vibrates and gently massages the area around your eyes, 'hard' sends small jolts of electricity into your eyes (yikes!). Cost: £ 80 (about ₹ 7,000).

- **Beauty Lift High Nose:** It looks more like an instrument of torture than a beauty aid. But this gizmo claims to give you the perfect, perky nose by applying gentle electric vibrations from the bottom, side and front to help push the nose higher and make it firmer. Cost: £ 70 (about ₹ 6,100).

- **Facial Lift At Once Toner:** This oversized cylindrical plastic gadget is gripped between your lips—much like a lollipop—and it buzzes at a high frequency. It claims to eliminate sag and tighten and tone the facial area. Cost: \$ 65 (about ₹ 5,700).

Go to www.japantrendshop.com

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Leptin is a protein hormone that regulates our feeding behavior and hunger. It governs our daily Calorie intake and energy expenditure. Its role is important in the signaling of appetite and metabolism. Excess Body Fat is associated with an increase in leptin levels, which is unusual for the standard mechanism of action in leptin. It is correctly termed as 'master hormone'. The reason associated to this is that the individuals with Excess Body Fat believed to be resistant to the effects of leptin. Leptin resistance stimulates Excess Body Fat. Therefore Leptin resistant people find it difficult to lose weight.

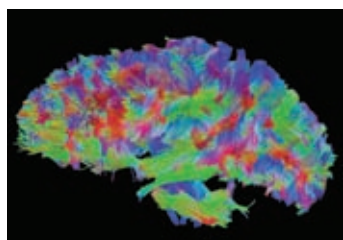


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Style meets substance

Silvers are getting spoilt for choice when it comes to smartphones. This summer, Japanese company Fujitsu combined with Orange Telecom in Europe to launch the **4-inch, 800 x 480 touch-screen Stylistic S01**, which packs a host of functions to maximise ease of use. The specs are impressive: a 1.4-GHz Qualcomm MSM8255 processor, an 8.1-megapixel camera, a 0.3-megapixel front-facing camera and 4GB of internal storage. Even more impressive are the elder-friendly features: a unique screen technology that gives you the tactile sensation of pushing a button, and improving input accuracy; extra-large icons and a simplified layout for straightforward navigation; a loud personal security alarm; optimised audio frequency ranges based on the user's age, making it easier to hear through the handset; and the option to slow down the speech of callers who speak rapidly without lowering the pitch of their voice or changing the length of the conversation. Nice.

WATCH OUT



Telling time doesn't even begin to describe it. Developed by a Sydney-based company, **the elegant and lightweight Edisse watch is a fall-detection and tracking system**, all in one. It comes with a service that collects and analyses data to give families and caregivers detailed information about their loved ones, including risk of falls and locations of

highest falls. It eliminates the need to press a panic button by automatically detecting falls and alerting families and caregivers in real-time. This allows faster response time and is activated even if the wearer is incapacitated. It also allows people to track their loved ones from anywhere in the world using an in-built GPS. To learn more, go to www.edisse.com

PIY: Publish It Yourself. Have a book inside you waiting to escape? Self-publishing could be an easier option than you imagined, especially if you explore the e-book option. If you're willing to share your work for a nominal rate, websites like *Amazon.com* are more than willing to put them up on their site for download. A recent American study reveals that the number of print and e-books self-published annually has tripled since 2006. More significantly, 40 per cent of these authors—many of them first-timers—are silvers.



Then: Broken umbrella Now: Tote bag



With the monsoon season in full swing, you're bound to have a broken umbrella or two—turn it into a funky tote bag. To begin with, remove the cloth from the umbrella's skeletal frame and fold into a semi-circle. If the cloth is too stained, use a few daubs of paint to cover the damage and brighten it up. Depending on how wide or narrow you want your bag to be, mark borders on the cloth in such a way that there are

two flaps on the side. Make sure you also add an inch for the seams. Cut those flaps away and sew the sides; your bag is ready.

Next, cut vertically along the flaps until you have the desired length for handles, and sew them up to the top of the bag. If you want to take it to the next level, you can even sew a zipper on the bag. It's time to go shopping!



FACTS

- » Nylon, the fabric used for umbrella canopies, is made from coal-based methods and requires high amounts of energy and water. Its production releases tons of nitrous oxide, the gas more prone to add to global warming than carbon dioxide.
- » Used in various kinds of textiles, nylon, rayon and polyester are known to take 30 to 40 years to decompose, posing a serious threat to the environment. Even recycling nylon is a difficult process that requires the synthetic concoction to be slowly broken down by fire fumes.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. IF THE HANDLE OF THE BROKEN UMBRELLA IS A CURVED HOOK, GET YOUR LOCAL CARPENTER TO MAKE A FANCY DOOR HANDLE OUT OF IT.
2. USE A BROKEN UMBRELLA IN YOUR GARDEN TO PROTECT YOUR SEEDLINGS FROM EXTREME SUN EXPOSURE.

The stroke of the hour

Ischemic stroke might be the most fatal kind of stroke, with 10 per cent chance of death within 30 days and 52 per cent chance of death within five years of the stroke. Further, it leads to intracranial haemorrhage that increases mortal-



ity, and accounts for 50-85 per cent of deaths worldwide. According to a new study conducted by researchers at the David Geffen School of Medicine at University of California - Los Angeles, **early treatment after an ischemic stroke is imperative to prevent deaths.** Echoing the advice of the American Heart Association and other major health organisations, the study suggests that treating blood clots in the brain immediately after an acute ischemic stroke leads to a better chance of reducing after-effects and the patient's safe return home. Jeffrey Saver and his team studied nearly 60,000 acute ischemic stroke patients with the average age of 72 and found that for every patient treated by the thrombolytic treatment (and 15 minutes earlier), there were fewer chances of mortality and more chances of being able to walk independently. For those treated within 90 minutes of the stroke, there was a 26 per cent less chance of mortality, 21 per cent less intracranial haemorrhage and 33 per cent more chance of early discharge, compared to those treated between 180 and 270 minutes after the stroke.



Ticking away

Known to affect over 15 million people in India each year, osteoarthritis is the leading cause of disability among the elderly. While there seems to be no absolute way around it, a strict schedule of exercise, fixed meal timings and medicines can help relieve the symptoms. In fact, a new study establishes **a link between osteoarthritis and the body clock of the cartilage cells**, explaining why silvers are prone to this bone and joint disease. A research by scientists at the University of Manchester, led by Dr Qing-Jun Meng, who studied cartilage tissue in older mice, reveals that the older mice's cartilage tissue body clock is about 40 per cent weaker than that found in younger mice. This is found to be linked with the increasing risk of developing osteoarthritis in older mice. What's more, this very body clock switches on and off the genes that control the tissue's function, perhaps explaining why patients experience severe symptoms only at certain times of the day. The researchers found that imposing an artificial rhythm that resembles daily changes of body temperature boosted the internal rhythm of the cartilage, thereby re-setting the clock. Thus, it is suggested that osteoarthritis patients follow a scheduled exercise routine and take drug treatment according to the cartilage clock to increase their effectiveness and reduce side-effects.

HELPING OTHERS WILL MAKE YOU A HAPPIER PERSON. A RESEARCH TEAM AT CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY INTERVIEWED OVER A THOUSAND ADULTS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 51 AND 91 AND FOUND THAT PARTICIPATING IN VOLUNTEER WORK FOR AT LEAST 200 HOURS A YEAR SLASHED RISK OF HYPERTENSION BY ALMOST 40 PER CENT. WHILE RETIREMENT, BEREAVEMENT OR DEPARTURE OF CHILDREN LED TO MORE CHANCES OF DEPRESSION, HYPERTENSION AND FEELINGS OF LONELINESS, COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER WORK HELPED FORGE SOCIAL BONDS AND ENGENDERED A SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT.



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Listen with me

India's first zoomusicologist A J Mithra tells **Jayanthi Somasundaram** we need to stop and listen to the birds; they carry an important message about our planet's ecological status



Chennai Pix

When not teaching music at MCC Matriculation School in Tambaram, Chennai, A J Mithra records bird sounds. Now a zoomusicologist, Mithra initiated his current vocation as a school project for sixth graders. "Like most urban people, birds to me meant crows and mynahs; it was during a search for an interesting ringtone for my phone that I found a peculiar bird call ringtone," he recalls.

One day while driving to work he thought his phone rang, but it didn't. "It wasn't the call of the crow or mynah or my ringtone, and that sparked the idea for the school project." He asked his students to collect different bird calls from different regions. It was only during this project that he realised there were so many different kinds of birds, even within the urban setup.

Five years on, a self-taught Mithra was acknowledged by the *Limca Book of World Records* as the first zoomusicologist in India. Recording bird calls as part of his daily routine, he believes the school campus is his laboratory. "It's a 350-acre forest expanse and one can find over 120 bird species here. This setup is sufficient for me; I enjoy listening to and recording bird calls," says Mithra, who then mixes these with percussion instruments and even folk vocals to create unique music.

Mithra began to realise the importance of his work when he began interacting with zoomusicologists from around the world. "There are only about 30 zoomusicologists in the world and through my interaction with a few of them I have understood how important these bird calls are for humans," he says. He further explains that for any song you need a pitch and birds also have a pitch. "If the noise pollution level is high, they sing in a higher pitch, and when it is low, they sing in a lower pitch," he says. "You don't need to listen to the weatherman to know if it will rain today, just observe when the birds migrate. Like the Asian parrot, if it comes in early, we have early rains; if it comes in a week late, we have rains one week later."

In his view, this is simple logic we have forgotten as a people. "If only we had the habit of hearing the sounds, we would not have lost the sparrows or roosters," he observes. "We will soon be losing frogs." From birds, Mithra has now branched out to making music using the calls of other animals, like frogs, tigers and even crickets. Through a video he made for Dr Rohini Balakrishnan, a cricket specialist based in Bengaluru, he met her student who was studying the racket tail drongo in Karnataka. "This girl had recorded bird calls and the vocals of the tribals who sang about the birds in that region," he shares. "Out of curios-

ity, I compared and analysed the beats and rhythms of the tribal song and bird calls and found they were similar." The student was equally amazed and now both of them wonder if the tribes copied the beats of the birds, or vice versa!

When he began, it would take Mithra a day to make music with bird calls; now it takes just a few hours. "Most of the birds sing in 120 beats per minute, in perfect pitch and rhythm. Most musicians use software called 'Neundo' for recording and the default tempo that they set is 120 beats per minute. Though some birds sing in 80 beats per minute, they gradually build up to 120. And here's another interesting fact, our blood pressure is also meant to be 120 by 80. Is that a coincidence?"

So, what's his next project? He smiles and says, "I'm just a school music teacher, and I live in a rented house. I need basic supplies and support to take this forward. Unfortunately, neither do I have a doctorate nor am I a qualified scientist; so my observation and theories cannot be published or taken seriously. But I am taking steps to spread awareness among children. Now, children in my school come directly to me and ask so many questions; they have become aware of the various bird species and they are listening to them." That, he insists, is his biggest award.

BIRTHDAYS

● American actor **Dustin Hoffman**, who gained fame after playing the title role in *The Graduate*, turns 76 on 8 August.

● Former actor, politician and dancer **Vyjayantimala** (right) turns 77 on 13 August.



● Forever relevant Italian-American actor **Robert de Niro** turns 70 on 17 August.

● Poet-lyricist-filmmaker **Sampooran Singh Kalra**, popularly known as **Gulzar** (left), turns 79 on 18 August.

● **Bill Clinton** (right), who became the 42nd US President at the age of 46, turns 67 on 19 August.

● **Saira Banu**, Bollywood's most successful and sought-after actress in the 1960s, turns 69 on 23 August.



MILESTONES



● Renowned Western classical music conductor **Zubin Mehta** (left), 77, received the Tagore Award 2013 for Cultural Harmony on 10 July. The award, given by the Government of India, was conceived last year during the commemoration of Rabindranath Tagore's 150th birthday.

● Indian-born British sculptor **Anish Kapoor**, 59, has been bestowed with a knighthood by Queen Elizabeth II in recognition of his services to visual arts.

● Kerala Chief Minister **Oommen Chandy**, 66, was conferred the United Nations Public Service Award on 28 June in Bahrain by United Nations Undersecretary General Wu Hongbo. The award was given in recognition of his mass contact programme where the people are able to communicate with the chief minister directly.

IN PASSING

● **Jiroemon Kimura**, believed to be the world's oldest living man, passed away of natural causes at the grand old age of 116 on 12 June.

● Tamil actor and director **Manivannan** (right) died of a heart attack on 15 June. He was 58.



● The man behind the world's first revolutionary mouse, **Douglas Engelbart**, died of acute kidney failure, aged 88, on 4 July.

● Artist **Mahasundari Devi** (left), renowned for her Madhubani paintings, passed away on 4 July. She was 82.

● Eminent food scientist and former director of the Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) **Dr H A B Parpia** (right) passed away at the age of 91 on 9 July.



● Dadasaheb Phalke award-winning actor **Pran Kishan Sikand** (left) passed away on 12 July following prolonged illness and organ failure. He was 93.

● Sound engineer and founder of the famous Bose Corporation **Dr Amar Gopal Bose** died on 12 July at the age of 83.

OVERHEARD

"You just have to be okay with who you are and nothing can faze you. The key to looking good is embracing yourself and not relying on the surgeon's knife. I don't want a frozen face! I want my full head to be able to move and I want to have lines around my eyes. You just have to eat healthy and keep working out."

—American actor **Mary-Louise Parker**, 48, in *The Telegraph*, when asked how she felt about turning 50 very soon



HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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SIMPLY SPECIAL

When I joined the Bachelor of Arts course at Wilson College in Mumbai, I was just another happy-go-lucky youngster enjoying college and making the most of what life had to offer. Then I met a cousin who had done a course in social work a year earlier at the College of Social Work at Nirmala Niketan in Mumbai.

I was always keen on doing something that would help people and improve the quality of their lives. So I signed up for the postgraduate diploma in social work and underwent two years of rigorous field work. That was the beginning of a deeply satisfying journey in welfare work, which started at a child guidance clinic in Mumbai, where I worked with children with emotional and behavioural problems.

Then I got married and moved to Kolkata, where I worked with Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity. Here, I helped pack bandages and pills for the residents of the homes. Stuffed toys were made and linen embroidered for fund-raising. I enjoyed being a co-worker but my keen desire to work directly with people made me look for other openings.

I finally found my calling in 1975, when I signed up with The Centre for Special Education run by the West Bengal Spastics Society (WBSS). In the beginning, I was supposed to work three times a week but before the month was over, I was going every day! Ever since, I have been working as a professional social worker with the families of children afflicted with cerebral palsy. If it has been interesting and satisfying at times, it has also been very challenging. I have always been comfortable working with children with disabilities and I was sure this was where I belonged.

My desire to get deeper into the field prompted me to do an MPhil in social work from Manchester University in 2002. It helped me hone my existing skills and learn something new. Along with other staff members, I work on offering emotional support to fami-



Shyamola Khanna

For Parikh, working with special children is a spiritual experience

lies of special children, strengthening interpersonal relationships within the family, and helping them appreciate the abilities and understand the limitations of their children.

I am also engaged in creating awareness and raising funds for our work in the community, in schools, neighbourhoods. The WBSS is now the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (IICP) and my work involves a lot of innovation and creativity. I train staff and teach undergraduate and postgraduate courses run by the institute. I also travel a lot, within the country and overseas, to attend and present papers at seminars, workshops and conferences.

My work makes me deeply happy and it fully justifies my commitment to the families and their happiness—this has always been of prime importance to me. I believe that helping special children and their families to improve the quality of their lives is no less than worshipping God. To me, God is not in any temple but in the smile of a child. In fact, when I am at work, I forget all else including my own problems.

By God's grace, I have two lovely children, a son and a daughter, and they have given me four beautiful grandchildren who are all healthy.

Even though God has blessed me in this way, I am grateful that He has also given me the sensitivity to understand the vulnerability, frustration and anxiety of families and the special children I work with.

—Sujata Parikh, Kolkata

FAITH, THE BEST HEALER

The 'C' word had always terrified me so much that I used to pray that it should not strike even my worst enemy. But fate had other plans—more than a year ago, my husband Nelson was diagnosed with advanced multiple myeloma (cancer of the bone marrow).

My son, daughter and I were devastated. How would Nelson cope with this belligerent and formidable adversary? The answer to that lies in the excellent care from our doctors, the strength and support we are receiving from friends and relatives and, most of all, the grace of Almighty. But, as my daughter Minal puts it, "I think the biggest cheers go to Dad." I agreed heartily, for when the individual is determined to fight this dreaded disease, the battle is half won.

Fernandes family is rediscovering the simple pleasures of life



Gautam Ruparel

There were many factors that helped Nelson battle this dangerous foe. One, he is an amazingly positive person. And on the rare occasions when his spirits dip, he refuses to wallow in self-pity and instead diverts his mind. Looking back and thinking "If only..." is an exercise in futility.

I believe that faith in the Almighty is a powerful tool in recovery from a life-threatening sickness. Without faith, we are filled with fear and are a rudderless boat in a tempest. Faith connects us with the Life Force. Though Nelson is not very religious, he believes that prayer can move mountains.

Nelson has always been physically fit and used to exercise regularly. This has stood him in good stead. Why, people with a creatinine level of four have had to be admitted to the ICU whereas here he was, with a creatinine level of 13.5, walking into hospital! Keeping oneself fit is a savings bank account one can depend on at times like these.

My dear husband has always enjoyed his work. Managing his business has kept his grey cells ticking. Despite the ravages of his disease, he kept on working. During his first hospitalisation, he would ask me to read out messages to him and dictate replies to me. Working is truly a boon as it gives one a sense of self-worth.

Self-control is another factor that contributes to recovery. Nelson continues to strictly follow the straight and narrow dietary path as advised by doctors. He has always enjoyed good food and drinks on social occasions, so maintaining a renal diet is not easy.

Cancer is the type of disease that gnaws at one's body and one's savings. Thankfully, while living fairly comfortably, we did not fritter away our hard-earned money on unnecessary expenses.

Last, but not the least, this difficult journey has taught our entire family some valuable lessons. It has taught us to value every single day. It has also forced Nelson to engage in a few things, like reading a book while tethered to a dialysis machine or while taking an intravenous drip during chemotherapy, that he did not have the time for.

We have found that humour and jokes drive away the blues. We have also learnt to empathise with others who are grappling with life's challenges. We have all learnt to count our blessings as life and good health cannot be taken for granted.

—Monica Fernandes, Mumbai



Cash cow

**A R AVANEENDRANATHAN, 51
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

I have enjoyed an interesting working life so far. I've played many roles in my professional life—from being a drillmaster to working in a trade school. I have always been interested in learning about a multitude of things; perhaps that's why I also enjoyed working in so many different areas. I have worked as a physical education teacher, as an apprentice in Kerala Automobiles, taken up contract work for organisations such as BSNL, and set up small-scale businesses like copra processing, raising hens, goats, cows and other animals. Of all the vocations, dairy farming has given me great satisfaction. I started a dairy farm as a part-time venture even while I was working. After retirement, I took it up full time.

I am an animal lover and I really enjoy caring for them. Cows are gentle creatures and it gives me immense satisfaction to raise them. Right now, I raise about 40 cows, 25 buffaloes, 100 goats and hens at my farm, Nathan's Dairy Farm, in a small town called Balaramapuram. Dairy farming is emotionally rewarding but it is not always profitable. I usually spend a lot of time researching on how to overcome the problems I may face.

The Dairy Development Corporation in Thiruvananthapuram takes keen interest in my work. In fact, it has granted Nathan's Dairy the status of a farm school. I get many visitors at the farm from all over Kerala. Veterinary students visit the farm as

part of their coursework, and many farmers also come to learn more about the techniques I use. I have had the opportunity to contribute to the farming community through a radio programme called *Vayalum Veedum*, and a TV show called *Krishidarshan*. The Dairy Development Corporation often conducts seminars and Q&A sessions, where dairy farmers come together, discuss their problems and figure out the most feasible solutions. Along with the Dairy Development Corporation, I am also a regular visitor at the Ksheera Bhavan, Milma and Animal Husbandry Office.

Dairy farming comes with its unique set of problems. In Kerala, not many people venture into agriculture these



Vivek R Nair

I overcome some of the challenges I face through an integrated farming approach. I cultivate banana and tapioca across four acres of land. Coconut leaves, banana peel and stem, and tapioca can be used as cattle feed. The problem of low demand for cow dung is also solved to an extent because I use it as manure in my own farm.

A typical day for me starts at 1 am. The first thing I do is feed the cattle. By that time my employees also arrive. Together, we remove the cow dung from the shed and clean the cows. In the stillness of early morning, at around 3:30, we start milking the cows. Milking machines allow two cows to be milked at the same time. There is also a second round of milking that happens in the evening, around 3 pm.

I keep telling all the officials that the only way to promote dairy farming is to provide good subsidy for cattle feed. The government should also support farmers by adding some amount to the price of the milk. We once had several native breeds of cows in our state that were easy to care for and were resistant to diseases. But when exotic cows with more milk-producing capacity came in, native breeds slowly began to vanish. I do my bit to conserve some of the native breeds of cows like Kapila and Vechur.

I consider protecting and popularising native breeds of animals my life's mission. I am doing my bit for future generations as well. In the event that small farmers and those in nuclear families want to venture into small-time dairy farming, they would be better off raising disease-resistant, highly adaptable native breeds than fancy, exotic cows. My wife is also into poultry farming. Caring for these beautiful animals brings us a lot of joy and peace. I cannot imagine doing anything else for the rest of my life. God willing, I would like to expand my farm further and raise more animals.

—As told to Nisha Salim

days. Consequently, straw and grass are not easily available and cattle feed is expensive. At the same time, the price of milk has not increased relatively. There is no demand for cow manure because of the decline in farming. The cows also suffer from several diseases such as mastitis and calcium deficiency, which must be addressed immediately to prevent further deterioration.

If you want to expand your farm, you need to employ more people but labour charges are very high. Of course, the government offers help, but it is not consistent. Government schemes come up once in a while but dairy farmers would ideally like a lot more support.

FLOWER POWER

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

I maintain a rich garden and have had experience in flower decoration. Now that I'm retired, I'd like to earn from this. Is it possible to specialise in providing only flowers for wedding decorations? Should I start by selling flowers to a local franchise or should I set up a store in my front yard? What's the minimum capital I'd need?

There's no doubt that the wedding decoration industry continues to bloom in India, but wedding decoration and floral retail are interdependent of each other. Starting a floral business depends on the type of flowers you grow. In India, there is a demand for roses, gladioli, carnations, orchids, lilies and bird of paradise. Entering the wedding décor business would be advisable only if you are creatively inclined. These days, people opt for themed wedding decorations, so setting up a theme greatly increases your initial investment. Your initial investment in this case would be around ₹ 2 to 2.5 million, including theme setup.

I believe starting with a retail shop would be better idea. It would be easy for the client to approach you for wedding decorations through your flower retail shop. Posh localities are good for business. As the market is competitive, you would have to spend quite a lot for advertisements. Also, you should have creative caretakers and bouquet designers. The initial investment would vary from ₹ 200,000 to ₹ 500,000. If you want to reduce your initial investment further, you can sell flowers to local florists.

—Taranpreet Singh is the CEO of FloristsInIndia.com



Conscious eating: Eat slowly to avoid obesity and indigestion

I am 62 years old. These days, I feel tired all day long. I suffer from acidity and bloating. I eat while watching television and often catch up with my family during mealtime. I also tend to eat quickly. What should I do get rid of these uncomfortable symptoms and increase my energy levels?

Almost 70 per cent of those who approach me for advice suffer from acidity and heartburn. Acidity, to put it simply, is a typical symptom of poor digestion. Symptoms of acidity include indigestion, gas or bloating, heartburn, nausea and discomfort in the chest.

The way you eat makes a world of difference to your digestive health. If your digestion is in order, your health is in order. To begin with, you have already recognised where the problem lies. Indeed, mealtime should be relaxed and you should leave all your problems aside while eating. If eating fast is a habit, you need to make a conscious effort to slow down. The environment in which you dine, your emotional state of mind and the conversations you have at mealtime also play a part. The more you eat with awareness, the better you digest your food.

Eating with awareness

I suggest an experiment to help you get started. Arrange three different kinds of food in separate plates; say apple slices, a few nuts and a glass of milk. Sit at the table and close your eyes. Breathe in and out and relax. Open your eyes and choose from one of the plates; use your senses to fully appreciate the colour, texture and aroma before closing your eyes once more and taking a bite. Now use the tongue to roll the food in your mouth and taste and feel it. How do you feel? Does it trigger any memories? Savour each bite, chewing slowly and thoroughly before swallowing. Can you feel the food moving down the oesophagus into your stomach? Once you are finished with the bite, pause for a few moments and reflect on what you've noticed. My experience is that the flavours

and textures will appear more vibrant to you. Repeat the process with another type of food. Note the differences and similarities in tastes, aromas and memories evoked by each.

For most of us, mealtimes are busy, noisy affairs spent catching up on the day's events with family, reading or watching television—forget appreciating the sight and smell of food, we don't even realise when our stomach indicates that it's full and we continue to eat. Eating is a delightful experience and deserves full attention. Eat in silence and with awareness—at least once every week—and you will notice how each bite nourishes your body, mind and soul.

Top tips

- If you are overweight, lose weight.
- Eat your meals peacefully. Avoid eating when you are upset.
- Eat slowly. Chew well. Stay conscious of the process.
- Avoid heavy, greasy and spicy foods.
- Honour your appetite. Eat when you feel hungry and stop when you are satiated.
- Leave one-fourth of your stomach empty.
- Sit quietly for a few minutes after finishing your meals.
- Stay upright after eating.
- Avoid gas-producing foods: heavy fried foods, excessive spices and chillies, *papad*, milk products (if lactose intolerant).
- Chew well. It is important to chew every bite 20 times.
- Switch to decaf or restrict your intake of caffeine by limiting tea/coffee consumption to a couple of cups every day.





READERS ASK

I am 67 years old and in good health.

I check my health profile every alternate year. Though I do not suffer from osteoarthritis or knee problems, this year I underwent a special blood test for Vitamin B12 and D3 as a routine to monitor my profile in totality. The results show that Vitamin B12 is 180 (borderline; with the normal range being 211-911) and Vitamin D3 is 10.75 (insufficient; with the normal range being 20-30). What supplement should I take to fill the gap?

Vitamin D3 deficiency is most common these days and mostly goes unnoticed if specific tests are not done. People who don't get enough sun, stay indoors more, cover themselves up when outside or use sun-screen consistently are at risk. Individuals over the age of 65 are also at high risk as they are less likely to spend time in the sun, have fewer 'receptors' in their skin that convert sunlight to Vitamin D, may not get Vitamin D in their diet, may have trouble absorbing Vitamin D even if they do get it in their diet, and may have more trouble converting dietary Vitamin D to a useful form owing to ageing kidneys. Most Vitamin D—80-90 per cent of what the body gets—is obtained through exposure to sunlight. Exposure of the hands, face, arms and legs to sunlight two to three times a week for about one-fourth of the time it takes to develop mild sunburn will cause the skin to produce enough Vitamin D. Necessary exposure time varies with age, skin type, season, time of day, etc. Some dietary sources of Vitamin D3 are fatty fish, red meat, liver, oysters, mushroom and egg yolk. Other dietary supplements include fortified cereals, cod liver oil, fortified soy products like tofu and soymilk, milk products and dairy alternatives. Check labels on fortified milks and cereals and select items that will provide sufficient D3. Medical supplements have to be taken under the prescription of the doctor.

Eating is a delightful experience and deserves full attention. Eat in silence and with awareness—at least once every week—and you will notice how each bite nourishes your body, mind and soul

- Cut back on consumption of red meat. Lean meat such as chicken breast or fish can take the place of acid-forming red meat.

- Consult a physician for medication (antacid) if acidity persists for a long time.

Sample diet plan for acidity

- Start your day with barley water. Soak a teaspoon of barley overnight and boil the next morning. Strain and cool the water and have it with five to six soaked almonds. You can also drink aloe vera juice in the morning.

- Breakfast could be a bowl of vegetable *poha* and a cup of milk.

- Have a glass of mint water half an hour after breakfast.

- Your mid-morning snack could be any fruit, preferably apple or papaya.

- For lunch, have two chapattis with *mung dal*, a cup of vegetable and a bowl of fresh green salad. Include four to five basil leaves in your salad.

- Drink coconut water half an hour after lunch.

- Your evening snack could be raw cabbage juice with a couple of fibre biscuits.

- Dinner could be two chapattis with any vegetable in gravy and vegetable *raita* or mint *lassi*.

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



SILVER LINING BY V S NATARAJAN

Test of time: Dealing with prostate enlargement

Enlargement of the prostate gland is a common condition in older men. A simple, benign, non-cancerous enlargement, it causes urinary problems. It is also called benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) or prostatic hypertrophy.

The prostate gland is located just under the urinary bladder and surrounds the tube (urethra) that carries urine from the bladder. This gland secretes fluid that nourishes the sperm. As men age, the prostate, which is usually the size of a walnut, enlarges, usually because of BPH. The longer a man lives, more likely the chances of BPH. While its precise cause is unknown, changes stimulated by hormones, especially testosterone, are suspected to be a probable cause.

BPH as such is very unlikely to affect longevity. However, as it progresses, the urethra can get squeezed (compressed) and partially blocked. The enlarged prostate may prevent the bladder from emptying urine completely and interfere with its flow. Thus, BPH may cause bothersome symptoms and ultimately damage the bladder and kidneys. The size of the prostate does not always predict the severity of the symptoms, and BPH can be effectively treated through drugs and surgery.

Symptoms

During the early stages of development of BPH, it may be difficult to urinate. After urination, the bladder may not be emptied completely. Shortly thereafter, the affected person may feel the need to urinate again. One may need to urinate more frequently, often at night (a symptom called nocturia). Frequent trips to the toilet interfere with a good night's sleep, sometimes causing irritability and difficulty in concentrating during the day. Also, the need to urinate becomes more urgent. The amount and force of the urine flow may decrease noticeably, and urine may continue to dribble even after.

If the bladder is not completely emptied, urine can stagnate in it, causing bladder stones and urinary tract infections. The urine that remains in the bladder can stretch the bladder beyond its ability. Eventually, it leads to uncontrollable leakage of small amounts of urine (called overflow urinary incontinence). The bladder can become overactive, leading to an uncontrollable urge to urinate followed by loss of urine (urge incontinence). The power to control is gradually lost; if urine flow is blocked for a long time, it flows back into the ureters and the kidneys, which may be damaged, in due course of time.



The size of the prostate does not always predict the severity of the symptoms; benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) can be effectively treated through drugs and surgery

Symptoms owing to BPH can worsen if certain drugs are used. If men with BPH take certain over-the-counter drugs, they may not be able to urinate at all for a short duration of time (a condition called urinary retention). These drugs include anti-histamines used as sleeping pills, cold or allergy remedies and nasal decongestants.

Diagnosis

Urinary tract symptoms are common among silvers and hence accurate assessment of the causative disease is essential. Careful evaluation of symptoms also known as the 'bother factor' is imperative.

During a rectal examination, a doctor feels (palpates) the prostate gland to determine whether it is enlarged. The doctor inserts a gloved, lubricated finger into the rectum. The prostate gland can be felt just in front of the rectum. A prostate gland affected by BPH feels enlarged and smooth.

For men over 50, the doctor may recommend a blood test to measure the level of prostate-specific antigen (PSA). The purpose is to screen for prostate cancer. An increase

READERS ASK

in the PSA level may result from prostate cancer, BPH or inflammation of the prostate (prostatitis). Nevertheless, PSA measurements may help distinguish between these three disorders. The higher and faster the rise in PSA level, the higher the chances of cancer being the underlying cause.

Imaging

Ultra sonogram helps assess the extent of prostate enlargement and volume of residual urine. Trans-rectal ultrasound (imaging of a prostate through the rectal route) is now accepted as the principal method by which accurate details of the gland may be obtained.

If the doctor suspects that the bladder is not emptying completely, a small flexible tube (catheter) may be passed through the urethra and into the bladder. This procedure (called urinary catheterisation) is done after a person urinates as completely as possible. The catheter is used to drain residual urine and the amount measured is compared with the normal range.

The doctor may also take a blood sample, which can be used to assess kidney function. Levels of creatinine and blood urea nitrogen (BUN), both waste products, are measured. The levels are high when the kidneys cannot remove waste products from the blood. Thus, high levels indicate kidney damage, as a result of BPH.

Treatment

There are several effective treatment options for prostate gland enlargement. In deciding the best option for seniors, the patient and the doctor will have to discuss specific symptoms, the size of prostate and other associated health problems. Treatment is not necessary unless BPH causes bothersome symptoms or blood test results suggest kidney damage.

Alpha-blockers (such as alfuzosin, terazosin, doxazosin or tamsulosin) relax the urinary sphincter (the band of muscle around the opening between the bladder and the urethra) and the urethra. Thus, urine flows more easily. 5-Alpha reductase blockers (such as finasteride and dutasteride) block male hormones from stimulating the prostate gland to grow. The enlarged prostate gradually becomes smaller, thus delaying the need for surgery or other treatment. However, one may need to take finasteride or dutasteride for three months or even longer for symptoms to be relieved.

Operative treatment

Trans-urethral resection of prostate (TURP) remains the best treatment for benign prostatic obstruction. It has

My father is 82. He has experienced a gradual loss of weight for which I took him to a senior consultant. Investigation revealed that everything was normal. The doctor said it is because of ageing. Please explain and advice us.

As people age, the amount of muscle tissue (muscle mass) and muscle strength tend to decrease. This process is called sarcopenia. Loss of muscle mass begins around the age of 30 and continues throughout life. This change may occur owing to a decline in the level of growth hormone and testosterone, which stimulate muscle development. Most older people retain enough muscle mass and strength to perform all the necessary tasks. However, even the fittest may notice some decline as they age.

Currently, there are no agents approved for treatment of sarcopenia. Possible therapeutic strategies include use of testosterone, the male hormone, or anabolic steroids, though long-term use of these agents is controversial for men owing to concerns of prostate symptoms, and essentially contraindicated in women. A healthy diet and regular exercise can save elders from excessive loss of muscle mass owing to ageing.

been shown to be effective in both short-term and long-term conditions, although up to 25 per cent of patients fail to improve symptomatically. Some patients develop a recurrence of their symptoms years later and the chances of re-treatment within five years are 10 per cent. Though mortality rates are less than 1 per cent, the complications are dangerous, including urinary tract infection, haematuria with clot retention (blood in urine), incontinence and impotence.

Laser ablation provides effective ablation of tissue without the concomitant risk of bleeding, hyponatremia and altered mental status (TUR-syndrome) that is potentially associated with TURP. For inoperable cases, continuous catheterisation (LTC: long-term catheterisation) or intermittent self catheterisation (ITC) can be considered better options.

While TURP remains the best stay treatment available for BPH, a conservative approach with drugs and watchful waiting is recommended, particularly in patients with mild to moderate complaints.

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



Cut some slack: Repair the sag at your eyelids with yoga

Some parts of the face slacken faster than others. The eyelids belong to this unfortunate group of body parts that suffer the impact of gravity. The area around the eyes gets less moisture and blood circulation even normally; this level falls even more as early as our 20s.

Even though we may eat a balanced diet that includes all nutrients and antioxidants needed for tissue repair, these do not reach certain parts fast enough. When this happens, supportive tissues, already strained by gravity, begin to sag, as it happens with the eyelids. Also, owing to the limited range of movements of the eyelids, blood circulation is not as effective as in other parts where it may be cranked up with exercise. However, yoga has several practices that gently combat this change.

Most backbends, such as the cobra (*bhujangasana*), bow (*dhanurasana*), wheel (*chakrasana*), snake (*sarpasana*) and cat (*marjariasana*) with all its variations, initiate an upward focus of the eyes. This drags the entire section of the eyes, including the soft tissue surrounding them as well as the eyelids, in the opposite direction of gravity. As we progress on the mat, we tend to hold poses longer; thus, this creates a powerful, exclusive exercise for the eye region, explaining why yoga keeps its practitioners young looking far longer.

Similarly, but working in the opposite direction, forward bends such as the seated forward bend (*paschimottasana*) and all its variations and downward facing dog (*adhomukhasvanasana*) flush the face with a lot of blood that helps rectify the damage caused by the weakening transport system of the body. As these poses are forceful, new blood pathways are created to replace those that were getting clogged or shutting down. Equally effectively, inversions like the headstand (*sirsasana*); shoulder stand (*sarvangasana*) and inverted psychic union pose (*viparita karani mudra*) reverse the dragging effect of gravity, especially at the face and head.

If you already have a practice including all these poses, but wish exclusively to reverse the sagging at the eyes, focus on the backbends, increasing duration in them with every week. Also, never lose sight of the *drishti* (focus of the eyes) for these poses as they are the most important aspect of the anti-sagging effect.

Remember, in the backbends, the pose will slacken at the jaw line. Becoming aware of this and stopping that through regular practice will activate the anti-ageing acupressure points along the entire jaw line and move the muscular workout further up and above, to have a more powerful impact on the eyes.

YOGIC MOVES

Lion roaring pose (*vyaghrasana*)

Kneel on your fours, resting on your knees with palms under the shoulders. Inhale, lifting the bent right leg at the knee, as high as you can. Get your balance, to reach the left hand to the right ankle. Hold for a few seconds, lifting the chin up, to look up. Ensure arms are straight. Breathe normally throughout. Exhale, dropping the knee back and releasing the left hand. Repeat for the opposite side.

Caution: This involves a lot of balance. In case you have difficulty, just lift the knee up without reaching

for the ankle at all. After regular practice, advance to reaching the right hand to the right ankle, before proceeding to this advanced version.



Benefits: This pose works out the whole body. It tones the face and jaw line. Like all backbends, it works on sagging facial tissue. It also improves coordination and balance, stimulates the mind and boosts mood.

Model: Dattatraya B Upadhye, Harmony Interactive Centre

Photographer: Haresh Patel

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

TOTAL KNEE REPLACEMENT

Everything you need to know

The knee joint has three compartments; the medial, lateral and the patella-femoral (also known as the knee cap). There are several ligaments inside & outside the knee joint, which connect and hold the three bones together, namely, Femur, Tibia & Patella.

The ends of these bones are covered with a smooth articular surface which provides pain free movement and function to the knee joint. Arthritis is a state wherein this articular surface is worn out with age or is destroyed due to injury or disease. Often all the three compartments suffer from wear and tear, making it extremely painful and making walking and climbing difficult. Total Knee Replacement (TKR) in such a situation has been a successful procedure, providing relief to thousands of patients.

What are the common problems affecting the knee joint?

There are two distinct patterns of knee problems. In the younger age group, it is usually common to have meniscus (cushion) tear, ligament tear, or problems of the kneecap. Whereas in the elderly, it's the smooth (articular) surface which is worn out due to ageing or disease.

What are the available treatment options for arthritis?

In the early stages, non-surgical treatment can be effective. This includes weight reduction with exercises and certain do's & don'ts, along with pain killers. In some cases of osteoarthritis with mechanical symptoms due to cushion (meniscus) tear or a loose body (free-floating piece of bone, cartilage, or a foreign object in a joint), arthroscopic surgery can be beneficial. However, in advanced cases, knee replacement may be the only effective option.

What is knee replacement surgery?

It's a procedure, wherein the smooth covering on the end of the bones (which is worn out), is replaced with an artificial surface along with a plastic cushion in between the new metal surfaces.

When is knee replacement surgery necessary?

In cases of arthritis, where pain and the resultant disability is disabling and unbearable, knee replacement surgery can give a new lease of quality life.

What is computer navigation knee replacement technique?

The computer aids the bone cuts that are prepared in order to implant the new surface. This makes the procedure precise and reproducible with consistency.

What are the benefits of computer navigation knee replacement surgery over conventional surgery?

Computer navigation reduces the chances of error. However, formal training is required for proper use of the technique.

What are the prerequisites before going in for a knee replacement surgery?

Knee replacement surgery is usually performed in the elderly age group. Hence, heart, lung, kidney function and the overall general condition is ascertained before undertaking surgery.

How long is the hospital stay?

Four or five days after surgery are usually adequate to become reasonably mobile and go home.

What are the after-care requirements?

Regular exercises are a must for a few months post the surgery. Also, it's important to avoid sitting on the floor or squatting.

How much time does it take to recover?

Most patients are mobile and fit to travel in a few weeks time.

What are the risk factors and potential complications?

Infection is an uncommon but a dreaded complication. Hence a good setup with clean operation theatre is desirable. Deep vein thrombosis is another complication with a potential for embolism, which is relatively rare.

Why has there been a sudden upsurge in the understanding and treatment of joint problems?

Knee replacement surgery has become a common and acceptable procedure because of excellent and predictable results across the globe. Besides, the elderly today are desirous of leading an active lifestyle.

How far is India from the more developed countries as far as knee replacement surgery is concerned?

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THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN SMT JAIKUWAR BAI LODHA, AHMEDNAGAR

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

Two days with an 89 year-old great-grandmother, without a word of complaint about aches or pains, or any sound of disapproval about the activities of youngsters, truly piqued my curiosity. Smt Jaikuwar Bai, wife of late Shri Motilalji Lodha, is a Rajasthani residing in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra.

She is a mother of nine children, grandmother to 23, great-grandmother to 22, and now a great-great-grandmother as well. Healthy and lovely in body, mind and spirit, she begins her morning with yoga. Among family and friends, she is famous for her *pagfera*, meaning the good luck she bestows upon others.

It is for this reason that she is often invited for business inaugurations and housewarming ceremonies. Her love and generosity of spirit allows her to harmonise her traditional values with the dynamic world of the youngsters in the family. She enjoyed the interview, unfazed by my endless questions, answering them patiently in Hindi, her accent rich in Maharashtrian influence.

Pratibha Jain: Tell me about your childhood years.

Smt Lodha: I was born in Shirampur district in Ahmednagar. As a child, I remember observing my mother and aunt work at home. I think I learnt to cook and do housework just by being a keen observer. I was married when I turned 14.

How did you manage in a new household at such a young age?

One learns, sometimes easily, sometimes the tough way. I remember when I was once asked to prepare *haveji*, a Rajasthani side dish using Bengal gram. I was not able to estimate the quantity and ended up preparing in excess. My mother-in-law was about to reprimand me, but my father-in-law intervened and said that there were enough domestic staff and cows at home to feed and therefore excess was not a problem.

Was it a joint family?

Of course; earlier there were only joint families. The nuclear family is a modern-day choice and convenience. All in all, there were 27 members at home and all the housework was done by hand.



Pratibha Jain

Was it tough to manage?

Not at all; it was just the way life was. Everyone lived with the realisation that life is about adjusting with one another. There was no notion of me and mine. We grew up believing in the values of nurturing and caring—*seva bhavana* was not something one had to learn; it was part of life.

Yet your children say that you have always allowed them freedom of thought and decision.

One has to live life according to the context and circumstances. I like the values I grew up with, but I also welcome changing times. Once my eldest son told me about how the role of women was changing in cities. I immediately decided that my daughters-in-law can work if they want to, and drive a scooter if they choose to. Some friends and well-wishers objected, but I remained firm.

What makes you welcome change so easily?

As my Guru Shri Anand Rishiji taught me, it is all about the value system. If you can impart the right values to your children at a young age, there is nothing to fear. They will easily adapt to change without compromising their values.

Umesh Khinvasara (grandson): She always tells us that we must aspire and reach somewhere. 'Prove yourself,' she says. None of us can ever forget how she took care of her children after her husband's demise. She gathered courage and helped them in the setting up of their business. From their hereditary business of fruits and vegetables with 10 employees, they have now diversified to many other businesses such as cold storage, aluminium sections manufacturing, real estate, plywood, etc.

Smt Lodha: Both my husband and I believed in education. In fact, when my eldest son completed his high

“One has to live life according to the context and circumstances. I like the values I grew up with, but I also welcome changing times and the changing role of women. I decided that my daughters-in-law can work if they want to, and drive a scooter if they choose to. Some friends and well-wishers objected, but I remained firm”

school and was thinking of joining my husband in the family business, both of us impressed upon him that he must pursue higher education. Eventually, he chose to do both which was a good decision.

Sangeeta Chordia (granddaughter): Their family is an ideal example for all of us. They harmoniously lived as a joint family for 26 years.

How does your inner discipline translate into your relationships?

Manisha (daughter-in-law): She is a rare combination of discipline and affection. If her discipline has taught us efficiency, her affection has allowed us to nurture our individual skills.

Savita (daughter-in-law): In fact, it is because of her training that we can confidently manage guests at any time, cook for a large number of people, and show them our hospitality.

Shraddha (granddaughter-in-law): She is always going to orphanages where she distributes fruits and sweets. It has a very positive impact on the children at home. She is a true philanthropist and selflessly helps many organisations and individuals.

Manisha: She is the epitome of punctuality and a healthy way of life.

Shraddha: Her style of working, indeed, has no comparison. She is as efficient as a professional in her cleanliness and diligence.

Thank you all for your beautiful inputs. What is a normal day like?

Smt Lodha: I wake up before sunrise every morning. The first thing I do is feed grains to the pigeons that come to our terrace. Then I do yoga for an hour. I eat twice a day and never snack between meals. I spend a good amount of time at our *sthanak* [Jain monastery]. If a monk or a nun is unwell, I attend to them.

And do you eat before sunset like many Jains do?

For at least 50 years now, I have adopted the vow of *Chauviyar*, which means eating before sundown. I don't even drink water until the next morning. I followed this practice even during my pregnancy. I don't eat root vegetables like other strict Jains.

What are your favourite pastimes?

I enjoy seeing new places and love travelling. I have visited many places within India and abroad.

Everyone speaks so warmly about your affection as well as resilience. Tell us what brings such serenity?

[Smiles.]

She smiled and said nothing. Her loving and unconditional gaze said it all. Indeed, spending time with her reiterated the truth that the exceptional trait of serenity resides where analysis and grammar play no role.



Photographs by Yamini Vasudevan

FROM SMT JAIKUWAR BAI LODHA'S KITCHEN

Aam ka kalakand

A favourite in Jaikuwar Bai's family, this delicious *mithai* is best prepared with the Alphonso or *pyari* varieties of mango. The pulp from these mangoes does not contain any threads and can be used in this recipe without straining. The mangoes must have a sweet-sour flavour as the sourness will allow the milk to curdle.

Ingredients:

- Mango pulp (without any threads): 200 ml or 2 cups
- Yoghurt: 2 tbsp (or more, depending on how the milk curdles)
- Milk: 1 litre
- Sugar: 1 cup (or more, depending on taste)
- Saffron: a pinch

- Cardamom powder: a pinch

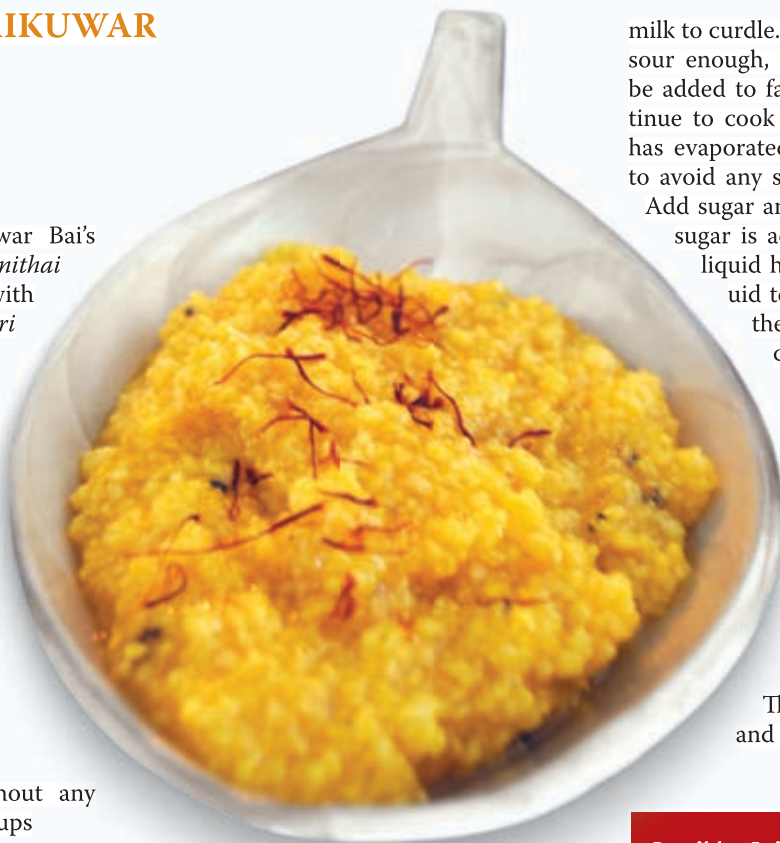
Method

In a thick bottomed pan, bring the milk to a boil. Now add the mango pulp and yoghurt, and continue to cook, stirring gently, allowing the

milk to curdle. If the mangoes are not sour enough, ½ cup of yoghurt can be added to facilitate curdling. Continue to cook until the entire liquid has evaporated, stirring occasionally to avoid any sticking to the bottom. Add sugar and continue to cook. If

sugar is added before the entire liquid has evaporated, the liquid tends to splutter. When the sugar has melted completely and the dish starts looking granular, add saffron and cardamom powder and switch off the flame. Cover for five minutes, allowing the spices to be absorbed well.

Chill and serve in small dessert bowls. This can be refrigerated and used for 3-4 days.



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

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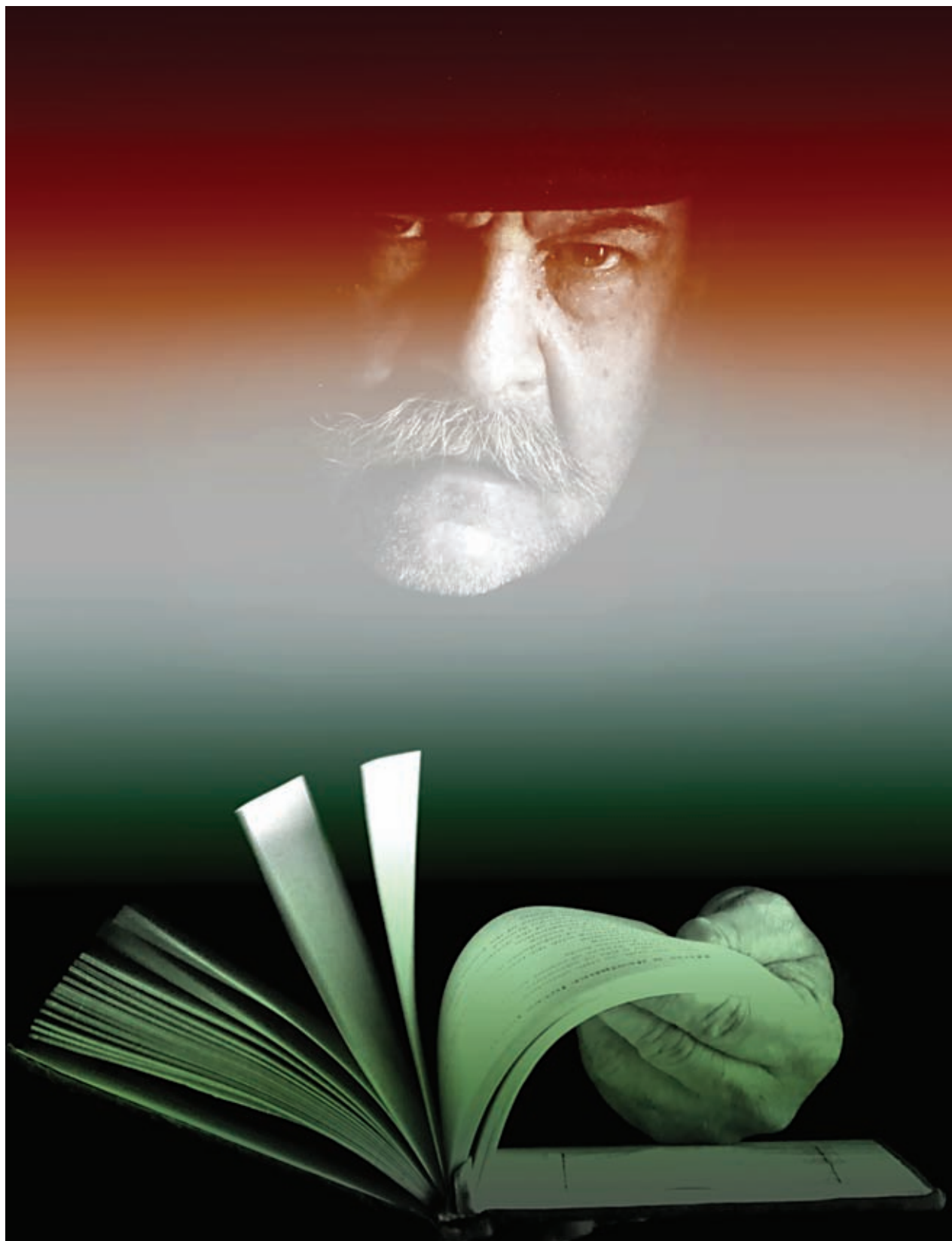
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Shikha Khanna

Nation: **Past Present Future**

On the eve of the 66th Independence Day, poet laureate **Amit Dahiyabadshah** sounds a clarion call for change

PAST: THE AWAKENING

When we rose the sun was rising
our direction came from morning light
It was no idle minds' uprising
We had braved the darkest night

And then we took that other road
of journeys great on unknown trails
refreshed beyond the spirits of history
and deeply drank from wisdom's grails

Turns and heights a long and lonely
Journey lay ahead of us
Into a dawn of new beginnings
and a new abiding trust
It glimmered well beyond the sunset
beyond every fear and manmade wall
We knew well there was a new dawn awaiting
the anthem of our clarion call
the morning notes of a new beginning
and an equal light for all

PRESENT: A BURNING QUESTION, WHOSE REPUBLIC?

The cat and the bat and the crow and the rat
are taking the city
Insomnia rules the night
and fear of the siren and the flasher rule the day
And that broad promised highway into the future
is taken up by the motorcades of the politician, the shaker
and mover,
the power broker, the wheeler dealer, the spin doctor, the
trouble shooter.
Leaving only a tiny lane for we the people
to navigate our way precariously ahead

In 66 years we the people have been broken
and tamed
The have-nots have been bought with false promises
The haves have been bought with false promises
The middle class is ritually slitting its own throat
Upon the sharp edge of the credit card
And the last of the freedom fighters are breathing bravely
on life support systems

And we the children of the Satyagrahis?
We are doubly damned and doubly doomed
For we have not learnt to look the other way
or turn the other cheek

So shoot me thrice when my time comes
to balance the pain of so much hunger and unequal living
Once in the heart for it was a fickle thing and
always too easily broken
And once in the head
For always thinking the impossible
and making it happen.

FUTURE: HERE AND NOW

Break the hourglass scatter sand
time spends upon the open empty waiting hand
In the vacant darkness fate looms
weaving endless dreams of broken past and unbuilt future

Between the frozen ether the unbroken dawn
your wings are bound in sleeping shroud
The sun an instrument of your vision
to lightly brush and gild the dawn

It shimmers sweet and waits upon
the opening of your eye
It's true that time has flown and still it flies
But look how vast the new Horizon lies

Wake now the future needs a footprint
upon the slow quicksand of too much stillness
Before the turning of times fickle tide
Take up the cadence of the heart
A new footprint a brave new stride
Take up the anthem waiting to be sung
In five senses not only one
amid the whispers and new battle cries
Beneath the fireworks of your burning fears
the drumming of your heart inside

Your time has come!

Now find the strength to wake somehow
Do something! Anything!
But Do It! Here! and Now!

Dahiyabadshah is the founder of Delhi Poetree

j est

Tharoor

With his charm, wit, eloquence and compelling presence on social media, he represents the new breed of Indian *neta*. Minister of State for Human Resource Development Shashi Tharoor reveals his literary and lighter side to **Srirekhya Pillai**

It's not always easy being Dr Shashi Tharoor when words can be both your best friend and nemesis. With undiluted humour and rapier-like wit that spares not even the 'holy cows' and a penchant for articulating his views openly, it's not surprising that Tharoor has hit the headlines more often than any other Union Minister in recent times. Whether it's the cattle-class comment or singing the national anthem hand crossed on the heart, the interlocutor remark or the IPL row, Tharoor has been in the eye of the storm often in his newfound political career.

Meanwhile, in his alternative life as satirist, storyteller and thinker-philosopher, Tharoor has enlightened and entertained us in equal measure. Whether you agree or disagree with Tharoor the writer, you certainly can't gloss over the patriotism in his writing, which lends colour even to his fiction. To quote him, "India shaped my mind, anchored my identity, influenced my beliefs and made me who I am. India matters immensely to me, and in all my writing, I would like to matter to India. Or, at least, to Indian readers."

With almost a three decade-long association with the United Nations in various capacities, Tharoor invariably became India's candidate for the post of Secretary General in 2006. But a veto by the US put paid to that dream. The only anchor in his vagabond life—from a peripatetic childhood and continent hopping as a UN troubleshooter to the tightrope walk between his commitments as a Union Minister and Parliamentarian—has been his abiding passion for the written word. Having cut his teeth on Enid Blyton's Noddy books at the age of three, Tharoor went on to devour translations and abridgements of Camus, Chekhov, Dostoyevsky, Herman Hesse, Tolstoy and Mark Twain by the time he turned 13. At six, inspired by Enid Blyton's Five Find-Outers, he wrote his first series of detective stories, *Six Solvers*. "They were Indian kids who were having the



“In a democracy, you get the leaders you deserve. If the educated middle class abandons the political space to people they despise, they will be ruled by them”

same kind of adventures that Enid Blyton's characters were having, except that, like me, they were travelling from a big city to a village in Kerala,” recalls Tharoor. That manuscript lies untraced. “I have no idea where those stories are ... who knows if they are stuck in some storage chest or tin trunk or the bottom of a cardboard box or have just rotted away.” Encouraged by father Chandran Tharoor, who typed and circulated his adolescent stories among friends, Tharoor continued his literary pursuit, publishing his first work in the Sunday edition of *The Free Press Journal* when he was just 10. This love for the written word runs in the family. While mother Lily Tharoor has published recipes in magazines, sister Shobha Tharoor is the author of children's books. Tharoor's twin sons from his first marriage to Tilottama Mukherjee, Kanishk and Ishaan, are journalists; Kanishk is also an award-winning short story writer.

For his part, Tharoor has gone beyond conventional media to become one of the most influential opinion makers in the virtual space—this new-age *neta's* Twitter account, @shashitharoor, has 1,837,560 followers and counting. Today, he is slowly finding a foothold in the shifty terrain of Indian polity. And as for the ‘outsider’ tag conferred upon him by critics, Tharoor has foregone his Savile Row suits for a Malayali *mundu* while his smattering of Malayalam has given way to a much more proficient use of the language.

Not one to shy away from wearing his heart on his sleeve, Tharoor tied the knot with Sunanda Pushkar in 2010, while the dust was still settling on the Kochi IPL row. Now, despite talks of trouble in the marriage, he maintains a studious silence on the subject. We meet him at his flat in his parliamentary constituency, Thiruvananthapuram, where he's wolfing down a quick breakfast of *idli* and chutney even as party workers and personal staff hover around. Hard pressed for time, he talks to us in his car en route to an event in a school on the outskirts of his constituency.

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:

You're a compulsive reader; once you set yourself a target of 365 titles a year. How did you manage that?

[Laughs] It was a child's act of hubris. I was about 12 then and very foolish to set myself a target of that sort. First of

all, if meeting a target is what you are reading for, it takes the joy out of reading. And second, when you read at that speed, the objective becomes to devour the book rather than savour it. Having done it to prove something to myself, I've never done it again and would never recommend it to anyone. Reading is simultaneously an act of discovery and self-discovery. If it is fiction, you want to see how the story unfolds; if it's non-fiction, you are looking for ideas that matter. Reading is also a process of self-discovery because you discover what matters to you while you react to what the writer has written. When you speed-read, you will have far too little of both experiences.

To quote your uncle Mukundan Unni, “When the whole family would take off for treks in the nearby hills, Shashi would climb up the hills to sit and read in solitude.”

I was a curiously book-dependent child. It started off with childhood asthma. Then, going out and playing is not an option available to you. At the same time, I grew up in an age before television, computers and Nintendos. My only escape was books. When you are fighting for your breath, you are awake anyway and your mind is churning. I needed books to still my mind and they became an extension of my personality. I would read during meals, while brushing my teeth and before sleeping. I was an obsessively compulsive reader. As a result, other things like the pleasures of nature and so on came to matter much less to me. My uncle is referring to this lovely hill called Mattan Kutti Para near my ancestral home with a fabulous view of the foothills of the Western Ghat. While other kids would frolic, play and swim in the nearby stream, I would read because it gave me more pleasure than anything else other than my obsession with cricket. When there was no cricket to watch, I would play book cricket [chuckles], where you open up the book and make up a score!

Thanks to your father the late Chandran Tharoor's association with the newspaper industry, you also settled into a staple of five to six newspapers along with a cup of tea at a rather young age.

I was very close to my father. Every morning I would sit side by side with him. It was a huge bonding experience. A



At home: Tharoor with his mother Lily

lot of my instincts have been conditioned by my closeness to him. He would be up early in the morning to practice *mridangam* and do his exercises. We were an early rising household anyway as it would be difficult to sleep while the *mridangam* was being played. Later, he and I would sit with our tea; there was never one cup of tea ... there were always two or three cups and all the newspapers depending on the city we were in. I did my high school in Calcutta, but this habit started in Bombay, where I did my middle school and where more newspapers were available. Newsprint and ink kept flowing through my veins at a very young age. My father had a gifted way with words though he was not on the editorial side; he was a manager with *The Statesman*. Once he absorbed the main stories and the headlines, his first task was to count the column inches of the advertising space his rivals had been able to sell! He was very good at his job. In fact, in his newspaper, the editorial was always complaining that the advertisements were taking away their space.

Indian newspapers had very few pages at that time. The longest was a 12-page newspaper. On most days, it would be eight pages as newsprint was expensive and scarce. My interest in world affairs goes back to my newspaper reading days in my childhood. I read almost everything, though my main interests were world news and the sports pages. The editorial pages and op-eds carried interesting political pieces. I think *The Statesman* used to have the best editori-

als in India. When I first went abroad, I thought the quality of *The New York Times* editorial or *The London Times* editorial was vastly inferior to *The Statesman* in terms of just the use of English language.

Tell us about your admiration for P G Wodehouse.

In school, we used to have dictation to test spellings and comprehension. One otherwise repellent teacher, for whom I had a dislike, which was kindly reciprocated, read out a passage from Wodehouse's *Indiscretions of Archie*. I was 11 years old and chortled throughout. I then went up to the library, got the book, and was hooked! A year later, when my father, then only 38, had a heart attack, the only thing that kept me sane amid all the hysteria and fear in the house was a Wodehouse book. By the time I was in my teens, I had read all his 95 books. I revived the Wodehouse Society in St Stephen's College, along with a few friends. It was the first Wodehouse society in the world. One of my biggest literary regrets is that I kept procrastinating writing a letter to Wodehouse to tell him about it. Unfortunately, by the time I had done a draft to my own satisfaction, he passed away on Valentine's Day in 1975. Subsequently, a Wodehouse Society was founded in the UK with chapters around the world. I am an honorary patron and was invited to address it at a dinner attended by some members of the Royal Family. I told them how an Indian college had beaten them to establishing a Wodehouse Society.

Take us through your college days.

My college life was hectic in a wonderful way. I got involved in theatre in the first term itself. I started debating while I was still a fresher. I even went on to represent the college, travelling outside Delhi. In the second year, I got actively involved in the presidential elections of a friend of mine and went on to become a member of his cabinet. I also founded the quiz club, which is still in existence. I was also active in the campus magazines. Short of sport, I got involved in every other extra-curricular activity.

We've read about you and acclaimed filmmaker Mira Nair playing the title roles in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Can you tell us more about your interest in theatre?

In the first year of my college life, I played a bureaucrat in a play called *The Disorderly Women*, which was a 20th century take on the Dionysus myth from Greek mythology, directed by Barry John. St Stephen's being an all-boys college, we used to borrow our girls from Miranda House, an all-girls college, and vice versa. I was invited by Miranda House and went on to act in Bertolt Brecht's *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* and a few one-act plays. In fact, one amusing footnote to this is that when I went recently to see a play in Delhi called *Murder*, produced and directed by Aamir Raza Husain, after the curtain call, Aamir surprised

me by announcing, “Shashi Tharoor, who is in the audience, was my first director.” I had adapted a chapter from Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22* as a one-act play and directed Aamir in it in my final year. Though I loved theatre very much, going West made it a bit difficult, because very frankly there was a lot of racial consciousness and the fact that I was brown made it difficult for me to get parts. I did one play though, *Barefoot in the Park*, when I began my UN career. But though many would have considered me for the romantic lead, I actually ended up playing the dirty old man, while somebody double my age, large and fat, played the Robert Redford character. I also realised that with my working life having started, I couldn’t dedicate much time for theatre. Moreover, I was newly married and was taking time away from my wife while doing the play.

Two plays I enjoyed doing were Pearl Padamsee’s adaptation of *Oliver Twist* while I was in school in Bombay and Agatha Christie’s *The Mouse Trap* in Calcutta. I have fond memories of playing The Artful Dodger in *Oliver Twist* in 1968 because Raj Kapoor came to watch it. Before I left for the States on my scholarship, I was back in Calcutta for summer, where I did the lead in *The Mouse Trap*. Later, on my way to America, I stopped in London and saw the long-running Western version of the play. I thought ours was much better because we played the melodramatic aspect to the hilt. Our adaptation was so successful that we had to schedule a couple of extra performances.

Oddly enough, it also had an effect on my future life. A senior UN official, Virendra Dayal, who was visiting his cousin in Calcutta, happened to read an article by me in the newspaper, which he thought was interesting. His host, who was acting with me in the play, offered to introduce him to me. Dayal, who was then a director in the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in New York, stayed on for the cast party, and spent a long time talking to me. He encouraged me to apply for my first job in the UN. But he refused to participate in the interview, saying, “Once I have recommended you, I can’t have any role in your selection.” Nonetheless, his recommendation made a huge difference.

What does writing mean to Dr Shashi Tharoor?

Oh, it’s fundamental. I often quote George Bernard Shaw’s great line, “I write for the same reason that a cow gives milk.” It’s inside you and it has to come out. If it doesn’t, rather like an un-milked cow, you’d suffer. For me, it’s not just about self-interrogation but sharing your vision of the world and reactions to the world with others. It’s also, of course, a form of art. For somebody like me, who enjoyed reading so much, it’s also a desire to impart some of those pleasures through the use of words. I would find it impossible to live without writing, except that nowadays, I’m writing more emails than creative fiction!

MAJOR WORKS

- *Reasons of State: Political Development and India’s Foreign Policy under Indira Gandhi* (1966-1977) – 1981
- *The Great Indian Novel* – 1989
- *The Five Dollar Smile And Other Stories* – 1990
- *Show Business* – 1992
- *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* – 1997
- *Riot: A Love Story* – 2001
- *Kerala: God’s Own Country* (with paintings by M F Husain) – 2002
- *Nehru: The Invention of India* – 2003
- *Bookless In Baghdad* – 2005
- *The Elephant, the Tiger and the Cell Phone: Reflections on India in the 21st Century* – 2007
- *Inde* (along with French photographer Ferrante Ferranti) – 2008
- *Shadows Across the Playing Field: 60 Years of India Pakistan Cricket* – 2009
- *Pax Indica: India and the World of the Twenty-First Century* – 2012

In *The Great Indian Novel*, where you’ve adapted *The Mahabharata* to modern times, political leaders from Gandhiji to Mohammed Ali Jinnah slide smoothly into their roles. How did the idea take birth?

It was a bit of an experiment. I was reading this excellent transcreation of *The Mahabharata* by Prof P Lal. While I was reading, it struck me what a lively story it would be if we imagined it in the 20th century. So, just for the heck of it, I started writing it, reimagining it with 20th century politicians, imagining Ganapathy as a secretary rather than a God. After typing out 32 pages, I put it aside and got busy with other work. I remember my brother-in-law finding those pages lying on the table and reading them. After turning the 32nd page, he asked, “Where’s the rest?” I told him, “There’s nothing more.” He said, “You got to be crazy ... it’s so wonderful, you got to keep writing it.” That I think was the motivation to pick up the threads again. I wrote about 100 pages and sent it to a couple of agents in London. They were excited about it. From then onwards, I just kept ploughing away for a year and a half, writing in the evenings, nights, weekends, on cars, on planes, whenever I could. I remember taking my wife to the supermarket, and hoping I wouldn’t find a parking slot so that I would be forced to sit behind the steering wheel of the car and could write a paragraph or two on a sheet of paper, pushed against the steering wheel!

When I was writing it, I didn’t have a scheme in mind. As the story evolved, I never thought I would be able to pull it off. While in the first part of the book you have a seamless adaptation of mythological characters, by the time of Independence we were getting into a different narrative. As it was set in the 20th century it was impossible to show

“The most significant aspect of my UN career was that I could put my head to the pillow at night, realising that the things that I had done had made a real difference to people’s lives”

a woman with five husbands. So, we have characters who become walking metaphors. Thus, Draupadi becomes the embodiment of Indian democracy; the sari disrobing scene represents the stripping of democracy by the Emergency and the five husbands are the five pillars of democracy.

As someone who is adept at fiction and non-fiction, how do you reconcile these extreme worlds?

Fiction is the more demanding taskmaster but also the more pleasurable experience. Non-fiction is what we do every day; you and I are talking non-fiction. With fiction, you need not just time but a space inside your head to create an alternative universe, populate it with characters, incidents and dialogues which are as real to you as those you encounter in daily life. That is an illusion you are building that can very easily be broken. You are creating this world and suddenly you are packed off for six weeks to Yugoslavia or you are working 18-19 hours a day in the middle of a crisis, then the spell is broken. Non-fiction is much more interruptible. You write something, put it down, pick it up six or eight weeks later, you can re-read it and get back into the flow. Four out of my five earlier books were all fiction. I’ve written eight later, and none of them is fiction. It’s a reflection of the circumstances of the composition of my work.

In fact, the irony is that after *Pax Indica*, my last substantial book, not counting *India: The Future is Now* that I just edited, I got a huge feedback from fans saying they were missing my novels. As a parliamentary backbencher, I thought I could carve out the time, at least an hour or two a day, so I began writing. In fact, I forced myself into the discipline by signing a contract with a publisher, and then they went on to make me a minister. So now my hours are almost non-existent. I have a very demanding working week in the ministry and parliament in Delhi, and during the weekends I come to Thiruvananthapuram, where I’m attending 17-18 functions a day. Monday mornings I’m back on a plane going back to Delhi. So when do I read; when do I write?

So will it be a while before we get to read another work of fiction by you?

I hope not. My publishers are already getting antsy. We have only one year left in the lifetime of this parliament; we

are already concentrating on the general elections. Whatever happens, I’m sure there should be a little more breathing space after that to give myself some personal time to revive the novel.

How has your long innings at the United Nations moulded your personality?

My UN career is such a long saga that I don’t know whether I can do justice to it in a few words. I joined the UN High Commissioner for Refugees; the most interesting experience of this was heading the Singapore office during the boat people crisis, where I discovered that after daily work, I could put my head to the pillow at night, realising that the things that I had done had made a real difference to people’s lives. The consciousness that one’s work had a larger purpose became particularly valuable when I would wonder what I was doing so far away from home. When I went to the UN, I thought I would get a bit of an experience, put some money in the bank and come back and make my future in India. But because the work had so much meaning, I stayed on, doing things that could not be done otherwise, speaking with the authority of a world organisation; dealing with governments and ambassadors. There were certain incidents where my personal intervention made a huge amount of difference. So, gradually, for me, it became an increasingly compelling profession.

After 11 years, I was invited to join the peacekeeping staff in the UN in New York. With the end of the Cold War, it was one of the most exciting things at the UN. When I joined, there were six civilians including me and three military personnel; by the time I left, there were over 800 people manning the office.

Then, my boss Kofi Annan became the Secretary General. Working in his office gave me a fabulous bird’s eye view of the world. After a few years, he promoted me as the head of the department. It was a challenge handling management issues, inspiring the staff to come up with creative initiatives, and cutting back on administrative expenses because of pressures from the Western world. This made me a credible contender for the post of the Secretary General. I decided to take the plunge when invited by India, because I was the only one with first-hand experience of all

the key areas of UN activities. I did my best, coming a close second, defeating a sitting president, deputy prime ministers, foreign ministers and a prince, who were all contenders, but lost to the eventual victor, Ban Ki-moon.

Politics is thought of as a dirty game. What made you take the plunge?

I grew up in a middle-class family and to this day, my mother is horrified I'm in politics. The general perception is that the ones who flunk the exams get into politics. This may not have been wrong at one time. But it's wrong now, when very bright, smart, educated people are entering politics. If the educated middle class abandons the political space to people they despise, they will be ruled by them.

Each and every meeting you attend is mentioned on Twitter. Do you see others following suit?

It's not each and every meeting, though it looks that way. It's barely 20 per cent of what I do. Initially, I was criticised for being on Twitter; I was sneered at. I remember the then BJP president Venkaiah Naidu saying, "Too much twitting will lead to quitting", which turned out to be true as well. [Chuckles.] But since then, everyone has seen how useful a tool it is; Narendra Modi has become a huge presence on Twitter, so has Sushma Swaraj. And from my own party, Digvijay Singh, Ajay Maken, Manish Tiwari and others are now taking the trouble to engage with social media.

How do you feel about the recent revelations that social media is being subjected to snooping?

We should assume that. Even at the UN, it's generally assumed that you are being eavesdropped upon. So we would develop our own code while speaking on the phone. I still remember one of the most amusing codes, as it were. General Satish Nambiar was the force commander in Yugoslavia and I was handling the operation in New York, and we needed to talk every day. He is a Malayali who grew up in Bombay; I'm a Malayali who grew up in Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi. We used to speak, as he says, in such bad Malayalam to each other that even if the intelligence agencies had found a Malayalam speaker to interpret what we were saying, they wouldn't have understood. Only we could have understood each other. [Guffaws.]

What is your vision and roadmap for India?

Gosh! I've written so many books on it that you can't expect me to give you a one-sentence answer. In short, I want India to fulfil its potential, an India that is able to take care of the needs of its vast population, an India that ensures that every citizen has three meals a day, a roof over his head protecting him from rain and sun, a decent job, the ability to educate his children, to give them ever ex-

panding possibilities, to give them a decent life ... an India, therefore, that becomes ready to take its rightful place in the world as one of the great civilisations on this planet. We are a long way from fulfilling that. But we have made some progress and it's worth persevering.

Your political career has been marked by its share of controversy, like the cattle class comment and the interlocutor row. Are you finally getting to understand how the Indian polity functions?

Well, I suppose so. None of those would have been controversies in other democracies. Cattle class as an expression has run for 30 years. It doesn't denigrate people, but denigrates airlines for treating people like cattle. Interlocutor was not only the right word—though the media went to town against it—but the Home Ministry has since used it for people it is sending to Kashmir to study the situation there. Our media is to be blamed for the general perception that an interlocutor is an intermediary. It wouldn't be wrong to say that our media is extraordinarily opportunistic in many ways; the breaking news headline is more important than contributing to society in a more informed manner for the most part. And there are people, who even though they know better, will exploit the media frenzy for short-term political advantage.

Do you have other interests beside reading and cricket?

Occasionally I enjoy a good film but, frankly, I haven't been able to pursue any other interests because from my early 20s, I've led a frantically busy professional life. But wherever I've travelled, I've tried to get a flavour of the local culture, whether it's Noh ballet in Japan, the Bolshoi in Russia or the Philharmonic in Vienna. I enjoy listening to Hindi film music of the 1960s and 70s; I grew up listening to Mohammad Rafi, Kishore Kumar, Asha Bhonsle and Lata Mangeshkar. And, of course, Yesudas, because I also grew up hearing Malayalam music and my mother, who was a pretty decent singer herself, would sing his songs. I think in many ways the 1960s were the golden age of film music, perhaps across all languages.

Apparently, Anjolie Ela Menon is your aunt. Do you have an eye for art as well?

She's my aunt by marriage. I collect art in a very modest way. A couple of divorces haven't helped [laughs] in making it easier to afford good art! But I do have a few intriguing and interesting canvases.

Tell us about the foundation set up in memory of your father.

The Chandran Tharoor Foundation is a small foundation I established soon after I came back from the UN,

“I would find it impossible to live without writing, except that nowadays, I’m writing more emails than creative fiction!”



essentially as my own charity. Had I not gone into politics, I would have made it into a bigger charitable trust. We have been able to put some kids in colleges, provide boats to tribals and help widows. Our biggest assistance so far has been providing electronic toilets to girls because many schools don’t have toilets, forcing girls to drop out.

As government policies go, do you think we need to do more for our senior citizens?

I don’t know enough about these policies but I am concerned about the low level of pensions. A lot of our pensions have not been inflation-indexed. Every day I have pensioners coming up to me and asking how they can live on ₹ 400 to ₹ 500 a month that, when promised to them, would have seemed like a decent amount of money. I’ve been appealing to the government to increase the pension for senior citizens.

Over the years, have you developed a strict diet and workout regime?

Unfortunately, it’s not what it should be anymore, though I do go on the treadmill everyday and do weights while I’m in Delhi. I tend to have very little control over my diet, partially because I’m always running around. My own favourites are not particularly healthy in the calorie count area. As a vegetarian, I’m excessively fond of carbs. I cannot start my day without *idli*. Even in New York, I used to make *idli* for myself. I prefer rice to *roti* by far. When it comes to non-Indian food, I love stuff like pizza, which is calorific. Though my quantity of consumption has not become excessive, one’s metabolism slows down with age. So, just sticking to my normal eating habits is making me visibly rounder. I admit I’m losing the battle of the bulge!

You’ve lived the so-called good life. Are there any regrets at all?

When you look back, examine your life and don’t find things you have done wrong, you are either extraordinarily complacent or foolish. Many of those regrets can be personal. I don’t need to talk about things I wished I had done differently. Then there are things you can’t do anything about, like the loss of my father at the relatively young age of 63. I was extremely close to him and I’ll always regret the fact that his grandchildren never really knew him. ✨

best friends forever

The following excerpt from A A Milne's famous children's series says it all: "We'll be friends forever, won't we, Pooh?" asked Piglet. "Even longer," Pooh replied.

Pithy but powerful words that express a sentiment that has inspired poets, fired the imagination of writers and even set the box office on fire. Yet, friendship is a simple thing. After all, who doesn't have buddies? But how many can cherish friendships that have endured decades, unshaken by distance and unchanged by time?

In the spirit of International Friendship Day, we bring you rare stories of women and men whose lives have been graced by this special bond. We return to sepia-tinted memories of a time when there were no props and friendship was pure and sweet. Then, we fast forward to meet the friends in their present-day avatars. Yes, it's the stuff clichés like BFFs or Best Friends Forever are made of!

Text by Neeti Vijaykumar, Abha Sharma and Jayanthi Somasundaran



Playful soulmates: Nandita Raje
(left) with Krishna Basu



NANDITA RAJE, 70, AND KRISHNA BASU, 70

"A single soul dwelling in two bodies," is how Aristotle described friendship. Nandita Rajе (right) and Krishna Basu from Kolkata are the personification of the philosopher's words. Friends since the tender age of four, these gals were inseparable, whether *pandal*-hopping in brand new clothes during Durga Puja or being dragged back home when playing after sundown. "We were either in the playground all day or rehearsing on our terraces for our skits," recalls Nandita. Krishna chimes in, "We had a lot of fun, dressing up in our mothers' saris and acting our parts along with other friends."

Our soul sisters were separated only after their respective marriages, but as fate would have it, they

were reunited by a chance meeting in the late 1980s. Krishna lived in Chennai then and while out shopping one day, she stopped dead in her tracks when she ran into Nandita, who was holidaying in the South. They exchanged numbers and picked up from where they had left off. Then, as fate would have it again, Krishna moved back to Kolkata. Subsequently, expensive phone calls were replaced by visits to movies and plays.

Both friends are artistically inclined, and this only added another rich dimension to their friendship. While Nandita runs a textile boutique in Kolkata, Krishna indulges in homely artistic ventures. "We don't meet every other day or every week but we keep in touch," says Nandita. Even when separated by distance, these BFFs are together in spirit. Soul sisters, remember?



Shilbhadra Datta



Chennai Pix

Best buddies: Vishwanathan
(left) with Vairavan

VAIRAVAN, 63, AND VISHWANATHAN, 56

This friendship was born in the quiet neighbourhood of Gopalapuram in Chennai 48 years ago. Vairavan (left), then just 15 years old, was delighted to see a large family with many kids move into the house opposite his own. "They had just moved in from Bombay and were a large family of nine!" he says. Vishwanathan aka Vichu, was one of the kids in this clan and Vairavan couldn't wait to meet him. In Vichu, he found a buddy he could count on

through thick and thin, spend hours with, and do all the things schoolboys do. "We have always shared the same wavelength, so much so that we often complete each other's sentences," laughs Vairavan.

Adds Vichu, "We can talk to each other about anything under the sun." Many an intellectually stimulating conversation has kept this bond going between a headstrong Vairavan and easygoing Vichu.

In the early 1980s, both friends found jobs in Mumbai. Five years later, Vichu moved to Bangalore and then to Kochi—but both buddies made it a point to meet in Chennai or Mumbai, whenever they could. You see, a friendship like this had no place for logistical challenges.

Decades later, nothing has changed between these fast friends—they still keep in touch, usually over the phone. As they live fairly close to each other now, they also meet almost every fortnight to nurture a friendship they will cherish for the rest of their lives.



CHANDRAKANT SHAH, 60, AND ARUN OJHA, 60

They met around 1960 at Shujalpur Mandi in Madhya Pradesh, where Marwari and Kutchi families from Rajasthan and Gujarat had migrated to explore business opportunities in the post-Independence era. Patriotic fervour was still fresh in the country and a strong literary atmosphere was the hallmark of their school, where Chandrakant Shah (left) and A K Ojha met for the first time in standard III.

They clicked with each other instantaneously. Life was one happy adventure back then and our desi Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer bonded over the simple pleasures of life: climbing trees, sailing boats and skipping class to explore the countryside, usually barefoot. "We both have the same idealistic and helping nature. There was no com-

petitiveness or ego clashes between us," says 'Chandu', who would help Arun with his homework.

After they graduated from school, Shah's family moved to Nagpur, where he later started an oil mill and business, and Ojha's family shifted back to his native Bikaner and later Jaipur, where he joined the Civil Service. But the glue that has kept this over 50-year friendship alive and kicking is a generosity that has always put the other first.

After Shah and Ojha got married and each one had children, their respective families grew close, and letters and trunk calls kept the flame of friendship alive. Communicating is much easier today, but it is the past they cherish the most - the patriotic feelings, *prabhat pheri*, *kavi sammelan*; both of them can never forget Shujalpur, the place that gave each one their best buddy.





Through thick and thin:
Chandrakant Shah (left) with Arun Ojha





Wedding belles: Vijaya Sitaraman (left) with Maya Krishnan

**MAYA KRISHNAN, 60, AND
VIJAYA SITARAMAN, 60**

"It was initially length but then it was wavelength," laughs a mischievous Vijaya Sitaraman (right), referring to how she and her soul mate Maya Krishnan were among the tallest girls in class and were assigned to the back row. The teacher who allotted them adjacent seats in the first grade didn't know it but she had sowed the seeds of a friendship that has lasted decades.

After they finished school, Mumbai girls Vijaya and Maya attended different colleges but as they didn't live far from each other, they kept in touch. Maya, the more serious-minded of the two, complemented Vijaya's playful nature. Maya's confidence while dealing with people in tough situations more than made up for Vijaya's diffidence. "We went together everywhere; movies, plays, functions, travelling," says Maya, while Vijaya adds, "We even dressed up in similar saris!" Why, the two of them even taught at the same school before they both took the Railways exams.

"As Vijaya's bridesmaid, I was the one who garlanded her before she headed for the wedding altar, a traditional privilege given to the bride's best friend. It was a memorable moment," says Maya, who stayed back in Mumbai and took up a job with the Railways, while Vijaya moved to Jamshedpur. Despite the distance, their bond did not weaken, and the friends met every time Vijaya visited Mumbai. It was a red-letter day when Vijaya finally moved back to Mumbai in 2001. Now they drop in at each others' homes, and are a lively pair at family functions, even at the age of 60! Maya and Vijaya have stood by each other through the tough times. And, they say, they always will.



Gautam Ruparel

**LALIT SANGANEE, 63, AND
NAISHAD GANATRA, 61**

Lalit Sanganee (left) and Naishad Ganatra are the quintessential pair of buddies, blood brothers even. During late-night trips to street-side food stalls, watching English movies, hours of playing cricket and travelling together, they forged a friendship that kicked off when they were 12 and 10 year-olds.

But, oddly enough, this friendship is rooted more in separation than togetherness. How's that? Well, Lalit and Naishad attended different schools, different colleges, worked for different companies, and have even been living in different localities of Mumbai for most of their lives. But separation has only brought them closer.

"We used to live just two buildings apart and did almost everything together," says Lalit. "After we started working and Naishad moved away, he would come to meet me every morning and we spent some time over coffee before we went our separate ways to work."

Back in the day, when they were tired of city life, these buddies would pack off to hill stations—Nashik, Lonavala and Mahabaleshwar—and spent many an evening talk-

ing and laughing. After they got married, their friendship extended to their families. Naishad still laughs at the memory of both families, each one with two little children, squeezing into a Fiat car in the late 1980s, all set for a road trip.

Naishad is an outspoken and friendly chap while Lalit is reticent and serious. But their comfort level allows them to be blunt with each other about any niggling issue. That kind of trust, they say, is the touchstone of this touching friendship.





Through all walks of life:
Lalit Sanganee (left) with
Naishad Ganatra

**SWARN NAIR, 62, RUKMINI RAO, 62,
AND VASANT NAIR, 60**

Rukmini Rao (centre) is an unlikely candidate to play Cupid but she chose to do so. "As friends, we don't assign roles to each other; we accept each other as we are," smiles Rukmini, summing up her friendship of more than 40 years with Swarn and her husband Vasant Nair.

Rukmini, an avid activist, met Swarn, who was a teacher then, in Delhi in the 1970s, when they were both campaigning for women's rights. At the time, Vasant was involved in women's development projects, and his sense of humour clicked instantly with Rukmini's charm and Swarn's warmth. "When we meet, it is truly something special," says Vasant.

Vasant insists Rukmini was instrumental in bringing him and Swarn together, supporting them at a time when mar-

rying across cultural boundaries—Swarn was Punjabi and Vasant South Indian—was unheard of. "She's more than a friend to us; she's part of the family," says Vasant.

Back then, Swarn and Vasant would drop by at Rukmini's home in Delhi for '*parantha parties*', which often extended from 8 am to 3 pm. They also attended campaign activities together. "We've been there for each other through very trying times," Rukmini says, referring to the time they lived in the same neighbourhood during the 1984 riots.

Rukmini now lives in Hyderabad, where she runs an NGO, and the Nairs live in Bhiwadi, Rajasthan. But that's no reason to not meet. Whenever Rukmini travels to Delhi, she takes a day off to spend time with her best friends. And they make it a point to keep in touch over the phone. As Rukmini reasons, "Friendships don't just happen. You have to build them, maintain them, and work at them to allow them to grow."





Nurturing love: Rukmini Rao
(right) with Swarn Nair



Royal rendezvous

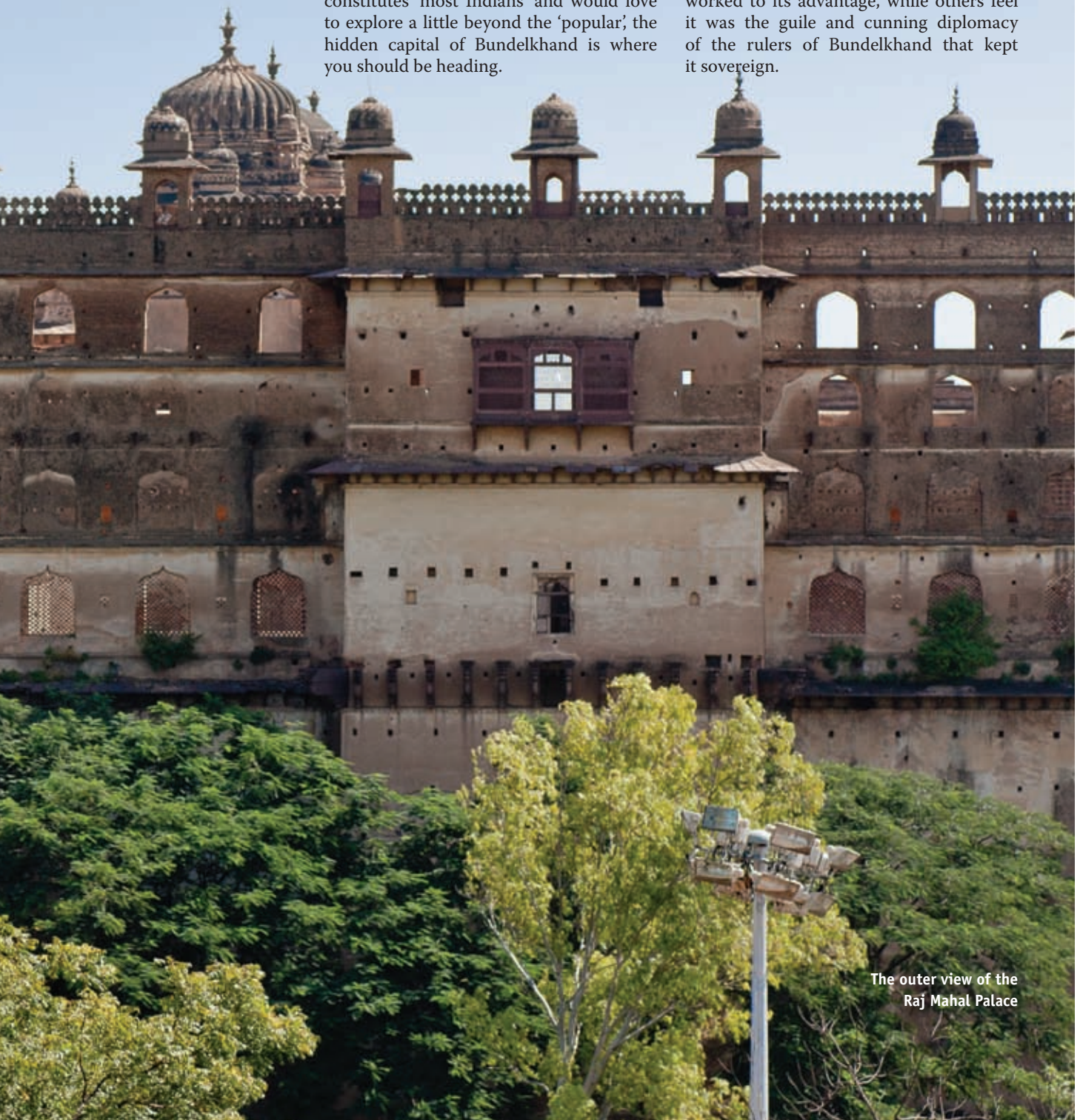
The inspiration for Edwin Lutyens' Delhi, Orchha is an architectural splendour with its imposing forts and palaces and awe-inspiring temples and *chattri*

❖ 📷 Sudipto Roy



Thoughts and images of medieval palaces, forts and temples set against the background of parched, crusty, ochre earth, interwoven with stories and legends of chivalrous kings, beautiful queens and paramours invariably evoke the name of Rajasthan in the mind of most Indians. But if you are not part of what constitutes 'most Indians' and would love to explore a little beyond the 'popular', the hidden capital of Bundelkhand is where you should be heading.

Welcome to Orchha, the erstwhile capital of Bundelkhand, established centuries before Babur captured Delhi and laid the groundwork for the Mughal Empire. Ironically enough, Bundelkhand rose to prominence and flourished during the height of Mughal rule but still could never quite be captured by the mighty emperors. Some say its unique geographical location worked to its advantage, while others feel it was the guile and cunning diplomacy of the rulers of Bundelkhand that kept it sovereign.



The outer view of the
Raj Mahal Palace

The walls and ceilings of the palaces in Orchha are decorated with exquisite and intricate murals depicting various scenes from Hindu mythologies and epics and vignettes from the kingdom of the Bundelas

Without trying to analyse or judge its history, what we do have in Orchha from a tourist's point of view today are imposing forts and palaces with awe-inspiring architecture, temples and *chhatris*, whose architectural splendour worked as an inspiration for famous British architect Edwin Lutyens. Many believe that while creating modern Delhi, Lutyens borrowed extensively from the architectural style of Bundelkhand, a perfect blend of the Indo-Islamic school.

The walls and ceilings of the palaces here are decorated with exquisite and intricate murals depicting various scenes from Hindu mythologies and epics and vignettes from the kingdom of the Bundelas. Though the ravages of time have wrought destruction on many of them, what remains is well worth documenting for posterity. All this manmade splendour is set against the backdrop of the swift-flowing river Betwa, whose blue waters against the greenery

beyond is a feast for tired city eyes. Adventure enthusiasts can enjoy river rafting, while the ornithologically inclined can take in the diversity of the huge bird population on the banks of the river. As an amateur birder I spent a fruitful morning watching and photographing many normal birds like the brown rock chat, spotted owl, rose-ringed parakeet, brahmminy starling or Indian roller. The most productive, however, was my walk around the *chhatris* where I discovered a large nesting colony of the critically endangered Indian vultures (also called the long-necked vultures).

Standing in the middle of the only road of the town with the temples on one side and palaces on the other, I realise that Orchha does not have a dirty town surrounding the historical monuments, the curse of most historical sites in India. Instead, you find a small, pretty village, less than 20 km from Jhansi. Orchha has quite a few high-end luxury hotels and other infrastructure that



(Clockwise from left) A *chhatra* built in honour of a dead Bundela king; a visiting sadhu at the Ram Raja Temple; a spotted owl sits pretty





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Inside view of Jahangir Mahal; murals on the walls and ceiling in a palace

make it easy for tourists, which for some strange reason are more foreign than domestic. In fact, Orchha attracts serious students of architecture from reputed colleges in India and abroad.

The Orchha skyline is dominated by two massive structures—the Chaturbhuj temple on one side and Raj Mahal Palace on the other—both built by Bir Singh Deo, the most towering personality in the Bundela dynasty, who ruled between 1605 and 1627. The palace complex also houses Jahangir Mahal (built by Bir Singh), Rai Praveen Mahal and Seesh Mahal.

Bir Singh also has the dubious distinction of having killed Emperor Akbar's trusted

advisor Abul Fazal in a treacherous manner, quite unlike a Rajput. This, legends say, he did to curry favour with the heir apparent Prince Salim (who later became Emperor Jehangir). Legend also has it that when Emperor Jehangir visited Orchha, Bir Singh gifted him Jahangir Mahal, an opulent palace right next to the Raj Mahal. Though Jehangir never stayed there for more than one night, touched by the generous hospitality, the Mughal emperor promised that he would never attack Orchha.

It is believed that Bir Singh was a deeply religious man. The king's chamber in the Raj Mahal palace is at exactly the same level as the sanctum of Chaturbhuj temple and offers a private view of the deity. The various

FACT FILE

HOW TO GET THERE

By air: Gwalior, the nearest airport, is 120 km away.

By train: The nearest railhead is Jhansi (20 km).

By road: Orchha lies off the Jhansi-Khajuraho road. Regular bus services connect Orchha with Jhansi.

WHERE TO STAY

Betwa Retreat;

Tel: 07680-252618;

Email: betwa@mptourism.com

Bundelkhand Riverside;

Tel: 07680-252612;

Email: info@bundelkhandriverside.com

Seesh Mahal;

Telefax: 07680-252624;

Email: smorchha@mptourism.com



The swift-flowing Betwa river is popular for river rafting

rooms in the palace have murals depicting scenes from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and Lord Krishna's life.

Having been built for the Mughal emperor, Jehangir Mahal is certainly more opulent than Raj Mahal and is one of the finest examples of Indo-Islamic architecture. Unlike Islamic domes, which have internal ribs, the dome here has external ribs. One can also see the Jain style of execution in the elaborate brackets that are decorated with bright ceramic tiles.


Besides the relatively new Seesh Mahal, which is now a heritage hotel run by the state government, the palace complex also houses Rai Praveen Mahal, built in honour of the beautiful paramour of King Indramani who ruled briefly towards the end of 17th century. The fame of Rai Praveen's beauty was such that Emperor Aurangzeb asked Indramani to send her to his harem in Delhi. It is said that on reaching Delhi, Rai Praveen wrote a poem for the emperor saying, "Leftover food is for dogs and crows." This earned her freedom; she went back to Orchha, her honour intact.

The temple complex of Orchha lies opposite the palaces. The imposing Chaturbhuj temple is an architectural mystery of sorts with obvious Islamic elements like a smooth mosque-like dome and an open courtyard. Here, I met a professor of architecture from a renowned north Indian college who explained to me that the most

striking Islamic feature of the temple is its unusually high ceiling. Like other scholars of architectural history, he ascribes these oddities to the Muslim masons who built the temple. The nearby Ram Raja temple has a unique myth associated with it. Built in the 16th century by Bir Singh's father Madhukar Shah, it was originally meant to be the palace of the queen. The queen, who had got a unique idol of Lord Ram from her visit to some distant land, had kept it in her palace temporarily before shifting it to Chaturbhuj temple. However, when the time came to move it, the idol would not budge. So the palace became the temple of Ram Raja (Ram, the Ruler). Here, he is seen wearing a ruler's turban while Sita wears the crown.

The temple has a constant flow of rural pilgrims and colourful *sadhu* from all over north India. Listening to their impromptu folk songs from a wooden bench, I discovered the best *puri-sabzi* in India is perhaps sold in this nameless shop outside the temple door. The owner told me with a lot of pride that he also prepares the *bhog* for the temple.

Meanwhile, the *chhatris* or cenotaphs built in memory of departed royalty still stand tall and proud on the bank of the Betwa at the end of the road in Orchha. The idyllic pace of Orchha is reflected in the quietude of the monuments and lingers on in your memory like a soothing lullaby on lazy afternoons. ✨

A photograph of an elderly man with grey hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue shirt, sitting in a black inflatable ring in a pond. He is smiling and gesturing with his hands towards a young girl with dark hair, wearing a white dress, who is sitting on a wooden dock. The girl is also smiling and looking at the man. The water is dark blue, and the dock is made of wooden planks.

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ART

Rural GRAFFITI

Photographs by Pooja Gupta

A band of artists leaves an indelible mark on Gunher, an ancient village steeped in *gaddi* culture, writes **Suparna-Saraswati Puri**

With snowcapped Dhauladhar forming a natural backdrop, embedded in the chartreuse of its wheat terraces, Gunher is a tiny hamlet in the Bir-Billing area of Himachal Pradesh that cannot be traced even on Google Maps. Though it was a busy trading hub on the trans-Himalayan caravan route in ancient times, it is now reduced to being a small settlement of over 1,200, comprising mainly the *gaddi* (nomadic herdsman) community, which colours

Gunher's social contours and contributes richly to its ethos.

With a group of conceptual artists descending on it and making it their home for a month, this sleepy village transformed into a bustling arts hub in April-May 2013. Gunher's first-ever cultural and contemporary arts gathering, called ShopArt/ArtShop, invited talented artists from across the world to create and display their work. Over a period of four weeks, empty shops

strewn across the village—owing to lack of opportunities—were occupied by 13 conceptual artists and were converted into fabulous art spaces. The artwork and installations will now be part of the rural landscape.

The creative initiative was organised by 4tables, a quaint indie café-cum-restaurant in Gunher, run by curator Frank Schlichtmann, responsible for making the village a cultural cauldron for ideas and interactions. "Not every

gallery can have this kind of footfall, displays and artists," he says. "I saw the empty spaces and the idea for ShopArt/ArtShop got going. This is a way to blend local people, their culture and ethos with a global perspective."

While the natives got an opportunity to get a peek into the outer world through the medium of art, for the artists it was a chance to explore the interiors of the village. Remarkably, the artists created their own independent and distinct style, simultaneously enabling the integration of modern arts with village life. Bengaluru-based installation artist Vivek Chockalingam used the space between two schools to raise the 25-ft high *Pahari Skyscraper* using local farming tools, tea plucking baskets (called *kirdha*) and junk items found in the vicinity. Schoolchildren would climb his installation while still in progress, in a sense owning his art with their innocent playful ways. Micro-budget filmmaker K M LO created *One Rupee Movie Theatre* that screened films made by the village kids after a 21-day sci-fi filmmaking workshop. Sound artist Sindhu Thirumalaisamy's make-shift radio station *Music Shop* was a "capsule in time", which enabled opening up of identities, tracing the roots of a lost folk melody while showcasing traditional musical instruments like the Pahari flute.

ShopArt/ArtShop also enhanced the village's harmonious setting, at the same time contributing towards it aesthetically and usefully. Through Kolkata-based papier-mâché artist Spriha Chokani's *Furniture Shop*, villagers were introduced to the concept of recycling. At the shop she was working in, shop owner Anil Kumar learnt the art of making stools with shoes! In fact, what was remarkable about the entire project was the degree of identification of the locals with the art and artists.

South Africa-born conceptual artist Tanja Wessels gave a new meaning



K M LO with village kids at his workshop; Elena Pereira gives finishing touches to her wildflower chandelier; (previous page) Tanja Wessels displays colourful local *kirdha*

to the local *kirdha* by painting and decorating them in fluorescent colours; and Netherlands native Elena Pereira made elegant chandeliers using wildflowers from the mountains. "As I worked at a shop situated in a dark lane, I chose to create lamps from these beautiful non-cultivated flowers that would light up the shop as well as beautify it," says Pereira. A local farmer Masto Devi, 58, says, "I never imagined these things could be used as decorative items! It's amazing to see these artists adapting to our environment and working at ease."

The workshop-cum-exhibition, in a sense, also aimed to attract travellers and tourists, thereby giving a fillip to its waning economy. Duni Chand Kapoor, *pradhyaan* of Gunher, says, "We are proud to host the workshop; it has resulted in 40-50 per cent increase in tourist inflow."

Indeed, 80 year-old Badridass and Sarvan Kumar, 70, members of Gunher's panchayat, agree that "it's a proud moment for our tiny little town". On that count, ShopArt/Artshop was, undoubtedly, a huge success.

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Mkt/Press Advt./Version 1.0 / June 2013

Silver virtues

A new royal museum in Udaipur displays the metal's glory, reports **Abha Sharma**

The resplendent and historical City Palace has forever been a major centre of attraction in the endearing city of Udaipur. Whether it is the magical Mor Chowk (court-yard of peacocks), the dazzling Dilkush Mahal (Palace of Joy) or the spectacular Sheesh Mahal

(Palace of Mirrors), this eye-catching edifice has never been short of admirers. This royal ambience now sparkles with an added attraction. The world's first silver museum—with family heirlooms dating back to 743 AD—has been unveiled by the 76th Custodian of the House of Mewar, Maharana Shriji Arvind Singh

HERITAGE

Mewar, who is also the chairman and managing trustee of the Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation (MMCF). The treasure offers a peek into the glorious past, presenting fine Mewari and Mughal craftsmanship (influenced by the historical relationship of the two establishments) and a flavour of contemporary religious, military and state culture.

Spread over 7,100 sq ft, a nostalgic trail unfolds as one walks through the seven-room museum housing silver exhibits under toughened glass cover for protection. From the majestic custom-designed 1939 buggy—a surprise wedding gift to the Maharana's late mother Rani Shilakumariji from her Bikaner royal parents—to silver chairs, *gulabposh* (rosewater sprinklers) and *surahi* (decanters), the collection showcases the long cultural affair of the family with the white metal. Along with the buggy, another special attraction is the grand silver *mandap* where the Maharana's daughter Padmaja was married to Dr Kush Singh Parmar of Santrampur in Gujarat in 2011, offering nuptial memories of both the grandmother and the granddaughter.



LEGENDARY LIFE

A musician's photograph while performing is like capturing a devotee in the middle of his prayer. It's a tactile experience for the listener—or viewer—as he becomes absorbed in that devotion. Photographer Alope Mitra's memorable shots of sitar maestro, the late Pandit Ravi Shankar, make this collective veneration public. These have now been compiled as a book, *Ravi: The Colours of the Sun*, with a preface from renowned American violinist and conductor Yehudi Menuhin. Pandit Ravi Shankar's characteristic moods and quirks, visual accounts of his intimate bond with the city of Benaras, his family, performing with *jugalbandi* partners Ali Akbar Khan, Zubin Mehta and George Harrison, and participating in many a literary *adda* alongside fellow maestros... Alope Mitra's photos chronicle the legend's life story, including how he made India's image incredible.



Courtesy: Eternal Mewar

The regal Rajputs preferred silver for its purity and quality and these sterling silver objects were used extensively in day-to-day affairs and religious ceremonies. Ram Rewari (a portable shrine) used on the occasion of Jal Jhoolni Ekadeshi to take the deity for the Jal Vihar procession is another unique piece illustrating the intricate craftsmanship of indigenous artisans. The shrine is particularly sacred to the Udaipur rulers who have always considered themselves not kings but humble custodians in the service of the presiding deity of Eklingji. Other rare attractions are the *tamjam* (an open palanquin) and *haudah* (a traditional royal transport accessory used in religious, state and military processions). Three rooms are dedicated to small items like articles used in religious ceremonies, plates, bowls, pen-ink holders, etc.

The regal Rajputs preferred silver for its purity and quality and these sterling silver objects were used in the day-to-day affairs and religious ceremonies

“The beauty of the place is that it’s a living museum,” says Bhupendra Singh Auwa, deputy secretary, MMCF Administration. “In fact, the objects displayed here are still in use. All over the world, there are museums with a few silver artefacts on display but nowhere would you find such a wide range. We thought Amar

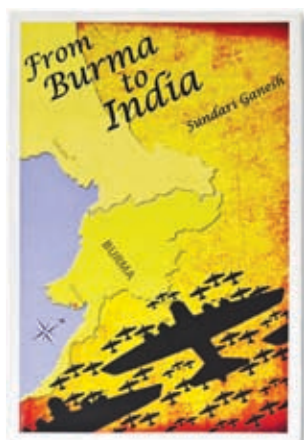
Mahal, built by late Amar Singh I in 1616-1620, located at the entrance of Zenana Mahal, was the ideal location for the museum.”

The new museum is already popular with visitors. Saagar Joshi, 65, a visitor from Mumbai, says, “The silver gallery is an extraordinary addition to the palace complex.” And G Campbell from Australia finds it “spectacular and well worth seeing”.

While the foundation was contemplating the establishment of the silver museum for the past five years, the project didn’t kick off partly owing to shortage of funds. Now with a financial grant from the Union Ministry of Culture, apart from the modernisation and renovation of Zenana Mahal, an exhibit for musical instruments is also on the cards.

THE ULTIMATE LURE

THE SILVER SCREEN HAS ALWAYS LURED TALENT FROM ALL GENRES OF ART. THE LATEST TO HARBOUR THE 70-MM DREAM IS AD GURU PRAHLAD KAKKAR. “IF YOU HAVE A CREATIVE BENT OF MIND AND A TENDENCY TO DREAM, CINEMA IS FOR YOU,” HE TELLS US. “I LOVE CHALLENGES AND IT WAS NATURAL FOR ME TO ENTER FILMS.” TITLED *HAPPY ANNIVERSARY*, THE FILM IS A COMEBACK FOR THE 63 YEAR-OLD’S LONG-TIME FRIEND GAURANG DOSHI, WHO IS PRODUCING FILMS AFTER A NINE-YEAR HIATUS. KAKKAR WILL DIRECT THE FILM FOR DOSHI, WHO PRODUCED AMITABH BACHCHAN, AKSHAY KUMAR AND ARJUN RAMPAL-STARRER *AANKHEN* IN 2002 AND FOLLOWED IT UP WITH *DEEWAR: LET’S BRING OUR HEROES HOME* IN 2004. THE FILM WILL GO ON THE FLOOR SOON. SO, WILL AD FILMS TAKE A BACKSEAT NOW? “NEVER; MAKING AD FILMS IS FUN AND WILL REMAIN MY FIRST LOVE,” PAT COMES THE REPLY.



Caught in the **CROSSFIRE**

We happened to stumble upon an exclusive family-circulated account of World War II and the Japanese attack on Burma. Here is an excerpt from **Sundari Ganesh's** booklet *From Burma to India*, which traces her arduous journey across the borders

In 1939, war broke out in Europe. Gandhiji and Jawahar Lal Nehru were willing to ask their countrymen to fight along with the British against Germany and Japan, only if India was declared free. The then Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, said that India's freedom had to wait until the war was over. This depressed and angered the Indian leaders and the proposals were rejected by the Congress and all the groups in India. There were freedom movements all over the country. Our great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, to mention a few, started agitating for the freedom of India. They were sent to jail by the British and the leaders suffered a lot at the hands of the British for the freedom of India.

In June 1941, the Japanese attacked Chungking, the Chinese Nationalists' wartime capital.

How much we have seen in World War II—the explosion of bombs and the murderous thunder of machine guns! Before 1941, we had seen and heard all this in films and on the radio, but we could not believe that this was happening in real life. The first air-raid on Rangoon was on 23 December 1941; it was in the middle of World War II, exactly 16 days after Pearl Harbour was bombed.

There were more than 20 Japanese planes which caused death and destruction in an unarmed and helpless city. I was told later that the air-raid sirens had sounded half an hour earlier, but many of us, including me, had not heard them.

As the bombardment was severe, I ran down with Jaima, who was just three years old and reached the bottom of the stairs (we were living on the second floor). I looked up at the sky and saw black puffs of smoke. I saw a Japanese plane disintegrate in the smoke. Our Anglo-Indian gunners of the Burma Auxiliary Force had brought down that plane. I was happy to see it being brought down, but was scared at the same time. This was when I saw a Japanese pilot ending his life by stabbing himself. The Japanese pi-

lots demonstrated their bravery and courage by stabbing themselves to avoid getting caught by their enemies.

I had just finished my cooking on that fateful December day. The time was 11 am and Gani was at work. There was no gas in those days. Our fuel was the railway coke, which they used for running railway engines. Once it was lit, the fire would burn for five to six hours, enabling us to heat the water for our baths also.

The British were not at all prepared for the air-raid on Rangoon. The Japanese chose our area, as the majority of the population there were Chinese. Our area was called 'China Town'. I heard people shouting, "They have attacked China Town, let's run", and saw everyone running in different directions in a confused manner. I was not in a condition to run, as I was eight months pregnant with my second child. I felt like running towards the General Hospital because that was where Gani was working.

As soon as I heard the droning sound of the Japanese aircraft, I went to the verandah where little Jaima was playing with the servant girl Paidamma. I grabbed her and called the servant girl to follow me down. The next minute we heard the bombing. My idea was to go away from the building with Jaima and the servant girl and to keep far from the buildings. Though China Town was raided, our building was safe. I stood there carrying Jaima in my arms. I watched the Japanese pilots dropping by parachutes in ones and twos in our compound and witnessed the horrible sight described earlier. The servant girl, who was about 12 years old, was specially kept in the house to look after Jaima. She started weeping as she was frightened. I had to comfort her by holding her hand. In my condition it was a traumatic situation, but thank God I did not lose courage. From a distance, I could see Gani getting out of the General Hospital gate and running towards our quarters. I was so happy to see him and he too was relieved that Jaima and I were safe. By this time, after nearly 45 minutes of destruction by the Japanese, the 'all clear' siren was given.

Paidamma's parents had also come, so we handed over the girl to them.

We went back home with Jaima, had our lunch, packed our essentials and left for Kemmendine, as the General Hospital authorities had asked all their employees to vacate their quarters mainly for their own safety, as the quarters were in the middle of China Town. The hospital was also closed and all the patients had to go home.

Hearing the drone of so many planes and the bomb explosions, I was very tired physically and mentally.

The Japanese mercilessly bombed and machine-gunned the Chinese and Anglo-Indian areas, as well as Rangoon Harbour. I saw that some of the huge trees in our General Hospital compound were ablaze. I almost wept to see the champak tree on fire, under which my little Jaima used to go every evening to gather champak flowers and bring them for me. Anyway, it was a great relief for me that the three of us were together once again. We started walking towards Kemmendine, which was nearly eight miles away. As we walked along the roads to Kemmendine, we saw corpses by the dozens lying on the roads. Gani told me that every human being, lying dead there on the road, had been machine-gunned. How cruel the Japanese were! We were met by scenes of horror and death. A *paan* shop owner had been machine-gunned and he had fallen forward on the counter in a semi upright position, in the act of rolling the *paan*. We passed all that with a heavy heart.

The death toll was estimated between 5,000 and 12,000, but no one really knew the right number. One of our close Anglo-Indian friends, Mr Miller, was killed and a couple of

other friends were seriously wounded. We were told that the number of dead were in thousands in the docks. Just a few minutes of the bombing of Rangoon by the Japanese had changed our lives forever.

Singapore had fallen and the fall of Rangoon and Burma became a certainty. Evacuation to India was the only thought of all Indians, Anglo-Indians, even Anglo-Burmese. Poor Gani had to carry Jaima most of the distance, though the poor child walked without a complaint. As she was too slow, he had to carry her in between, as we wanted to reach Kemmendine before dark. With great effort, we

reached Kemmendine at 5 pm. I was very exhausted and felt that I was going through that trauma for days together. I prayed to my god Ganesha that the baby within me should be safe, after all that had happened from 11 am to 5 pm on the day.

The air-raid warnings came at all hours after the 23rd, mostly after dusk. Night-raids used to be quite frightening; especially in my condition, getting down into the trench in the darkness was very difficult. We were not allowed to use any type of light. The blackouts were carried out from dusk to dawn.

Sometimes the Japanese planes flew so low that we could see their markings 'The Rising Sun of Japan' (if the air-raids were in the daytime). A few minutes later, we could hear the bombs being dropped on

all important points of Rangoon, like Rangoon Harbour, the Mingaladon airport, etc.

The Japanese ground forces had already crossed Thailand and captured Moulmein, which was part of Burma. Gani and his father decided that all of us should leave Rangoon at once.



The air-raid warnings came at all hours, mostly after dusk. Night-raids used to be quite frightening. We were not allowed to use any type of light. The blackouts were carried out from dusk to dawn

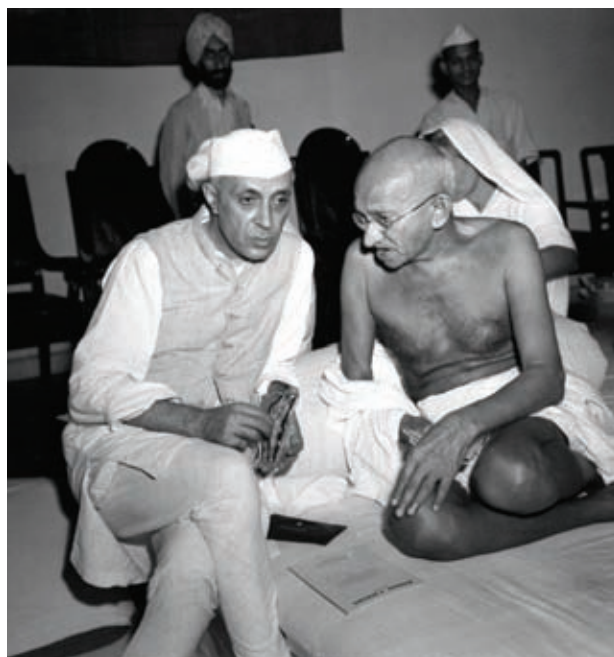
This compelling narration of Sundari Ganesh's personal experiences during World War II has been dedicated to her grandchildren. Ganesh wrote it with the aim of offering them an "intriguing peek backwards into a time and a world, which may be difficult to comprehend today".

Making of the Mahatma

We celebrate India's Independence Day with an extract from Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India* (1946). Considered a seminal treatise, it was written by Nehru during his imprisonment at Ahmednagar Jail from 1942 to 1946

And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition. Get off the backs of these peasants and workers, he told us, all you who live by their exploitation; get rid of the system that produces this poverty and misery. Political freedom took new shape then and acquired a new content. Much that he said we only partially accepted or sometimes we did not accept at all. But all this was secondary. The essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these, always keeping the welfare of the masses in view. The greatest gift for an individual or a nation, so we had been told in our ancient books, was *abhaya* (fearlessness), not merely bodily courage but the absence of fear from the mind. Janaka and Yajnavalka had said, at the dawn of our history, that it was the function of the leaders of a people to make them fearless. But the dominant impulse in India under British rule was that of fear; pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear; fear of the army, the police, the widespread secret service; fear of the official class; fear of laws meant to suppress and of prison; fear of the landlord's agent; fear of the moneylender; fear of unemployment and starvation, which were always on the threshold. It was against this all-pervading fear that Gandhi's quiet and determined voice was raised: But not afraid. Was it so simple as all that? Not quite. And yet fear builds its phantoms which are more fearsome than reality itself, and reality, when calmly analysed and its consequences willingly accepted, loses much of its terror.

So, suddenly, as it were, the black pall of fear was lifted from the people's shoulders, not wholly of course, but to an amazing degree. As fear is a close companion to falsehood, so truth follows fearlessness. The Indian people did not become much more truthful than they were, nor did they change their essential nature overnight; nevertheless a sea change was visible as the need for falsehood and furtive behaviour lessened. It was a psychological change, almost as if some expert in psychoanalytical methods had probed deep into the patient's past, found out the origins of his complexes, exposed them to his view, and thus rid him of that burden.

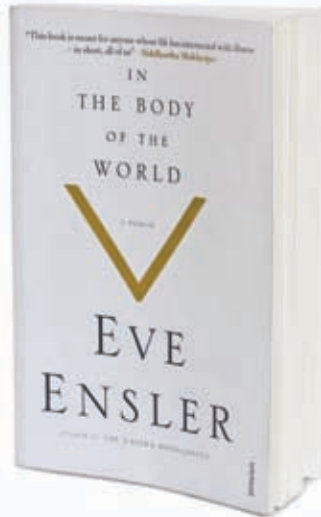


There was the psychological reaction also, a feeling of shame at our long submission to an alien rule that had degraded and humiliated us, and a desire to submit no longer whatever the consequences might be.

We did not grow much more truthful perhaps than we had been previously, but Gandhi was always there as a symbol of uncompromising truth to pull us up and shame us into truth. What is truth? I do not know for certain, and perhaps our truths are relative and absolute truth is beyond us. Different persons may and do take different views of truth, and each individual is powerfully influenced by his own background, training, and impulses. So also Gandhi. But truth is at least for an individual what he himself feels and knows to be true. According to this definition, I do not know of any person who holds to the truth as Gandhi does. That is a dangerous quality in a politician, for he speaks out his mind and even lets the public see its changing phases.

Gandhi influenced millions of people in India in varying degrees. Some changed the whole texture of their lives, others were only partly affected, or the effect wore off; and yet not quite, for some part of it could not be wholly shaken off.

She has long been a warrior for the female body and known to transform the personal into the political and global. Marked by a refreshing candour rarely seen in most memoirs, **Eve Ensler's *IN THE BODY OF THE WORLD* (Random House; ₹ 199; 220 pages)** explores not just the foray of cancer in her own body but the cancerous state of society with specific reference to the atrocities and brutalities committed on women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. So, while it deals with her battle to reconcile her psychological and physical existence in a world where relationships are fragile, it also explores wider global implications, with Ensler directing our attention



toward sexual violence in the Congo. Her cancer is a purgation of her personal demons—an incestuous dad, an indifferent mom and her own drunken promiscuity. Throughout the book, there are parallels between the female body and nature. She connects her illness to the devastation of the Earth; her life force to the resilience of humanity. Such is the honesty in her writing that it rattles your soul. Ensler becomes your window to the dark existence of women in Rwanda and elsewhere, to their illnesses, their battle against corruption and the savagery their bodies endure. It is a memoir of separation and connection—to the self and the world.

Shyam Selvadurai's third novel, ***THE HUNGRY GHOSTS* (Penguin; ₹ 599; 374 pages)**, has a heart-wrenching honesty to it. The tale of a young man's struggle to define himself amid the personal and political upheavals around him is lucidly told, holding nothing back. Set in Sri Lanka and Canada over a span of 20 years, it is the kind of book you cannot put down, except when you have to because it has grown too intense and you must step out of the claustrophobic world that he has so skillfully created. In the little victories of protagonist Shivan Rassiah's small family—a widowed mother and her two children—and amid ever-looming threats of eviction, persecution and, worst of all, lovelessness, Selvadurai creates a work as poignant as it is everyday. Amid the ebb and flow of the rancour between the generations, there are glimpses of seemingly ordinary lives, such as one might find behind any suburban front door. And it is here that Selvadurai truly takes his tale and makes it universal, building a stairway to those hidden cellars where each of us keep our stories of betrayal,

loss and sorrow. To underscore the ever-turning cycle that connects us, our pasts and our futures are Buddhist parables passed from one character to the next, always changing, sometimes ever so slightly, sometimes in ways that make them almost unrecognisable. It is also a book for every parent, or grandparent, of a homosexual person. Not because it holds forth justification but because it doesn't. Instead, it offers a peek behind the stereotypes and rainbow rallies, at the colliding worlds of two people who have fallen in love and just happen to be of the same gender.



Political writer **John Ralston Saul's** latest work of fiction, his first after a 15-year gap, is ripe with dark, tragic humour and acute, intelligent observations. The globe-trotting narrator of ***DARK DIVERSIONS – A TRAVELLER'S TALE* (Penguin; ₹ 299; 336 pages)** is a writer by profession who finds himself at affluent soirees in France and New York, or fishing with his doctor and lawyer friends, at casual lunch meetings with Moroccan colonels, helping a rich widow look for a new husband,

and stuck in nearly falling-apart helicopters in the middle of Haiti. The book's chapters, each a short story narrated in a deadpan tone, ranges from wryly shocking depictions of human hatred to brief encounters with aristocrats, former dictators, and the sole surviving assassin of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Halfway through the book, the narrator attempts to explain through a monologue why he is privy to deep dark secrets from the ugly belly of twisted human psyche. While at first the stories seem disconnected, the common thread that binds them all soon becomes apparent—the stories are about people and different cultures that seem normal at one glance, but are steeped in oddities. The turning point comes with clues to the narrator's oddly detached voyeurism, sealing the proof of Saul's genius as an essayist of sinister intentions and crimes of passion in the real world. It makes you wonder if the impersonal narrator is really just a silent spectator, as he claims, or someone with dark secrets of his own.

Bombay chronicles

Princeton University professor of history **Gyan Prakash** chanced upon an old typescript of a self-published book, *The Tower of Silence*, written in the 1920s by **Phiroshaw Jamsetjee Chevalier 'Chaiwala'**, a mysterious man whose family's whereabouts are still unknown. The heart-racing detective novel, now re-published (Harper; ₹ 299; 240 pages), centres on an actual incident in 1923 when a London weekly, *The Graphic*, published controversial photographs of the Parsi Tower of Silence. Packed with thrills, psychic rivalries, snake and mongoose fights, and spanning London, Bombay and Poona, it's not just a story about revenge and matching wits, but an account of the time and age when it was written. Gyan Prakash shares details of his own investigative quest that led him from libraries to schools and Parsi panchayats, and the relevance of the book, with **Neeti Vijaykumar**:

How and when did you discover the manuscript at the British Library?

While researching for *Mumbai Fables* in 2001, I was going through manuscripts with references to Bombay. When I chanced upon *The Tower of Silence* by Chevalier, I requisitioned it. I started reading the novel, and for the next three days I read nothing but this. I think it was partly the story itself, which was gripping. When I thought about all the ways in which this author's imagination worked, I became more and more intrigued. And then of course, the library had only a part of the manuscript, so I went to look for the rest of it in other libraries such as the Asiatic Library, David Sassoon Library, the University Library, and so on. I was just moving from library to



Haresh Patel

library; wherever I went, people responded with their own ideas about that time and age. In the process, it became a part of something much larger. Meanwhile, I really wanted to find the rest of the manuscript. And it wasn't just me. My typist Latha, who was keying in the typescript, also emailed me, asking what happens in the end. I told her, "I'll let you know when I find out."

What did you find out about the writer, Chevalier?

When I found the rest of the 30 pages, I realised I didn't know much about him. So I tried finding more details. It was like a literary detective's quest. What I found in the end was that he was a Parsi who had come from Poona to Bombay with his entire family. He went to school in Mumbai; was active during his college days; and stood for elections in the BMC in 1929. I also discovered that he had a brother and two sisters, and that he lived in Tardeo. But that's where the search ended. There is no informa-

tion about him after 1933. So all we can do is speculate on what happened after that.

Has anyone contacted you from his family yet?

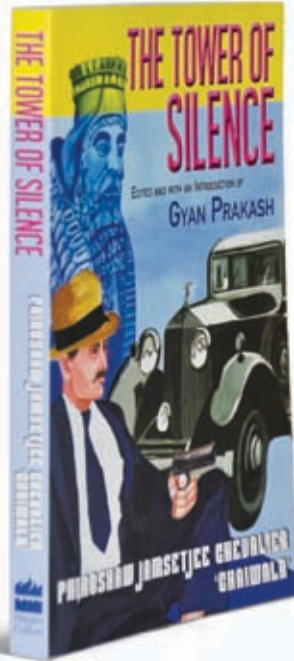
No, not yet. I put out an advertisement in the papers; especially the papers that cater to the Parsi community, such as *Parsiana* and *Jam-e-Jamshed*, hoping someone would turn up and say, "That's my grandfather." But, nothing as yet.

As a historian, what do you feel is the relevance of the novel today?

It takes us to the Bombay of the 1920s, the people that inhabited it, their thoughts and dreams. It gives a glimpse of the peaceful way in which different communities coexisted. In fact, Chevalier calls Bombay a "gay and cosmopolitan city". I also found the way in which he crosses territories between Bombay, Poona and London with ease really fascinating. He speaks about London with complete familiarity. In a broader context, it also shows us how the Empire brought together all these territories, which enabled people like Chevalier to know the city of London so well. To me, as a historian, these things are very relevant. Chevalier also brings alive the traditional detective form and adventure that you'd also find in the works of writers like Willkie Collins.

What is your opinion on the Tower of Silence controversy at the centre of this detective novel?

Well, the Parsis believe that by feeding the body to the vultures instead of cremating them, they become part of the food chain. And they still think that taking a photograph of it and publishing it is wrong. I do have a copy of the graphic that was published in *The Graphic*, but I did not want to publish it along with the novel, in case someone would come after me [laughs]. It is important to



"Parsis believe that by feeding the body to vultures instead of cremating them, they become part of the food chain. It is important to respect the sentiments of every community"

respect the sentiments of every community. And in fact, at the time of the controversy, the paper did apologise to Parsis.

Another interesting thing is that when this controversy happened, the writer expressed his anger through this book. Today, you find people resorting to violent means. Like Chevalier, we have to find non-violent ways to express our resentment.

You have written the screenplay for Anurag Kashyap's *Bombay Velvet*. Can you share some details?

I have finished writing the script for the film and the shooting will

start soon. It is set in the 1960s, and I've drawn certain things from the research for my book *Mumbai Fables*. It's a fictional story that I wrote first in 2005. It has taken eight years for it to develop into what it is today.

Your first book was *Mumbai Fables*, and your first film script is also about Mumbai. How did this fascination with Mumbai develop?

Growing up in Patna, Bombay was like a distant myth for us. We were exposed to Bollywood cinema, which was based mainly in Bombay at that time. There were always stories about someone who knew someone who went to Bombay and made it big.

The first time I came to Bombay, I was in the city for three months. I spent all my time walking the streets, taking it all in, observing the way people were, the way the city functioned and listening to people's stories. This captured my attention; I was curious as to what lay behind this city, what drove the people here and how the city had changed from what it was before. That's what prompted me to start writing the book *Mumbai Fables*, which is a sort of historical account of the city seen from the eyes of different kinds of people—artists, writers, lawyers, architects, trade unionists and more.

Do you intend to write more fiction or film scripts?

If somebody were to ask me to write a script for *The Tower of Silence*, it wouldn't be difficult as I know the story very well. If something like that happens, then well and good, but I'm not looking to change my day job as a history professor at Princeton.

Are you working on something new?

I'm working on a book on the Emergency. It will be non-fiction, written as a political thriller.



The twain have met

Letting your wife wear the pants could be just one way of finding harmony on the home front, writes **Raj Gopal Katju**

Her troubles got over on 8 December 1964. Mine started that day. Since then, she has been wearing the pants in the family—I make do with the shirts. She is an incorrigible optimist, vowing that she can correct the country in three months flat if given the power. I, being a pessimist, see no light at the end of the tunnel, what with formidable devils such as population, unemployment, poverty and corruption confronting the country.

She is an expert driver while sitting on the navigator's side of our car. Her job: finding technical faults with my driving and patting herself for correcting them. This, when she has never driven a car, ever, and doesn't think it important or necessary.

She views and reviews minutely the bride burning cases appearing in the media. "See how they tortured the poor thing, Katju *sahib*," she exclaims. "The husband and his mother should be boiled in kapasia oil." I flinch with a guilty look towards her feet, as if I have perpetrated the heinous crime. "If I were in her place, I would have cut down the brutes like this," she says, as her karate chops swish the air, missing me by inches. The couple of cases of groom burning and husband torturing are dismissed with a swivel of her pretty head. "Must be some mistake; printer's error, I believe" or "I am sure he deserved it". However, when I narrate the Akbar-Birbal tale of henpecked husbands, she acknowledges the female suzerainty graciously, though a bit condescendingly.

She thoroughly believes in the 'spare the rod and spoil the child' maxim but all the disciplining has to be car-

ried out by yours truly. Of course, she is ever monitoring the disciplining, pulling me up whenever it is overdone or underdone. Like an experienced manager, she manages me for the tasks at hand—like helping her with the housework and the children with their homework. An expert financial controller, she berates me for not managing the money well. "Katju *sahib*, bring me this or give me so much" are her effective commands, inducing me to bring in more and more of the moolah by fair means or foul.

Here we are, a Taurean and a Piscean, ever disagreeing on all minor matters and yours truly agreeing with her on all major ones

The other day, I discovered that she had become a sculptor—nay a sculptress. In her new role, she buys plain ceramic flower pots, glazes them, pencils designs on them, applies special clay followed by an assortment of varnishes and paints and, lo and behold, we have artistic masterpieces in our house! Naturally, we (the children and I) admire the creations wholeheartedly; we have to eat, don't we? The cook's emotions can't be trifled with! Next, the creations have to be housed in a dust-proof, air-cooled cupboard. So she says.

"It'll cost plenty," my voice shudders, thinking of the four-figure capital already expended in the project. "How

much are you prepared to spend; ₹ 8,000,10,000...?"

"Eight thousand," she clutches at the first figure, economics and mathematics not having been her favourite subjects.

"Where would you keep it?"

"I'll place it in my bedroom."

"But," I protest, "the bedroom is already cluttered with the double bed, four cupboards, besides an abundance of wooden racks, sewing machine table, cycling machine, and various other paraphernalia?" She eyes me angrily, muttering about the poor interior decoration skills of my female ancestors.

Naturally, I consider it futile—nay dangerous—to continue the debate. We head for the market. Her eyes light up on sighting a cupboard. She nudges me in the rib cage and whispers furiously, "Go on, ask the price." I obey meekly, addressing the man behind the desk, "How much does that one cost?"

"₹ 6,800."

Another nudge, "Shall I take out my chequebook?" she whispers excitedly. "Shh," I whisper back. Then turn to the man. "Is there any discount?"

"Er...5 per cent."

My mental computer goes into action. About ₹ 6,460. "How about ₹ 6,400?" I smile pleasantly, ignoring the furious jabbing. Obviously in Madame's overwrought imagination, the hubby

is letting slip a golden opportunity. “A nice round figure, eh?”

“Sir, the ₹ 60 is the profit margin for us,” he replies mournfully. Unconvinced, I shake my head, not agreeing to his logic. He takes it.

There is an audible sigh of relief at my side but I’m not through yet. “By the way, you’ll have to transport this to our place, 4 km away, at your cost.”

Madame sucks in her breath. Another nudge. The deal may yet be called off—another ₹ 100 is at stake and she looks petrified.

“Agreed.” Madame likes to have the last word, “Shall I give the cheque now?” I gasp, “No. We will do so when we receive the cupboard at home.” We

leave the shop and I turn to her, “See, I saved you ₹ 500.”

“Yes”, she smiles back. End of story.

Though frail of health, she is tough, having gone through two major operations besides three normal deliveries without any hysterics. Hence she advises me regularly on daily health matters—but refuses to take the early morning walks as prescribed by her doctor. I get the benefit of her knowledge and advice while she gets the experience first-hand, by being sick.

A particular day on returning from office I find her stretched out in bed because of a strained back. “How did it happen, dear?”

“I shifted the sofa, from northwest to northeast, carried two trunks to the

store and changed the direction of the dining room table.”

“But why didn’t you wait for me? I could have helped, you know.”

“Oh, forget it Katju *sahib*. Nobody in this house helps me. I have to do all the work myself.”

So there I was; left with all the cooking and washing, as usual.

So here we are—a Taurean and a Piscean—ever disagreeing on all minor matters and yours truly agreeing with her on all major ones.

Having stuck through thick and thin, we are all set to celebrate our golden jubilee next year. Such long-lasting partnerships could be possible only in India!

Raj Gopal Katju is a chemical engineer by profession and writer by choice. He lives in Vadodara

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The world beyond

Awaken to your true purpose in life, entreats Swami Prabhupada

In the beginning, Arjuna decided that he should not fight in the Battle of Kurukshetra. This was his own decision. Arjuna told the Lord that it was not possible for him to enjoy the kingdom after killing his own kinsmen. This decision was based on the body because he was thinking that the body was himself and that his bodily relations or expansions were his brothers, nephews, brothers-in-law, grandfathers and so on. Therefore he wanted to satisfy his bodily demands. *Bhagavad-gītā* was spoken by the Lord just to change this view, and at the end Arjuna decides to fight under the directions of the Lord when he says, *karisyē vacanam tava* [Bg. 18.73]: “I shall act according to Your word.”

In this world men are not meant for quarrelling like cats and dogs. Men must be intelligent to realise the importance of human life and refuse to act like ordinary animals. A human being should realise the aim of his life, and this direction is given in all Vedic literatures, and the essence is given in *Bhagavad-gītā*. Vedic literature is meant for human beings, not for animals. Animals can kill other living animals, and there is no question of sin on their part, but if a man kills an animal for the satisfaction of his uncontrolled taste, he must be responsible for breaking the laws of nature. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* it is clearly explained that there are three kinds of activities according to the different modes of nature: the activities of goodness, of passion and of ignorance. Similarly, there are three kinds of eatables also: eatables in goodness, passion and ignorance. All of this is clearly described, and if we properly utilise the instructions of *Bhagavad-gītā*, then our whole life will become purified, and ultimately we will be able to reach the destination which is beyond this material sky. [Bg. 15.6]

That destination is called the *sanātana* sky, the eternal, spiritual sky. In this material world we find that everything is temporary. It comes into being, stays for some time, produces some by-products, dwindles and then vanishes. That is the law of the material world, whether we use as an example this body, or a piece of fruit, or anything. But



beyond this temporary world there is another world of which we have information. That world consists of another nature, which is *sanātana*, eternal. *Jiva* is also described as *sanātana*, eternal, and the Lord is also described as *sanātana* in the Eleventh Chapter. We have an intimate relationship with the Lord, and because we are all qualitatively one—the *sanātana-dhāma*, or sky, the *sanātana* Supreme Personality and the *sanātana* living entities—the whole purpose of *Bhagavad-gītā* is to revive our *sanātana* occupation, or *sanātana-dharma*, which is the eternal occupation of the living entity. We are temporarily engaged in different activities, but all of these activities can be purified when we give up all these temporary activities and take up the activities which are prescribed by the Supreme Lord. That is called our pure life.

Lord Kṛṣṇa declares in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *sarva-yonishu... aham bija-pradah pitā*: “I am the father of all.” Of course there are all types of living entities according to their various karmas, but here the Lord claims that He is the father of all of them. Therefore the Lord descends to reclaim all of these fallen, conditioned souls, to call them back to the *sanātana* eternal sky so that the *sanātana* living entities may regain their eternal *sanātana* positions in eternal association with the Lord.

Excerpted from *Srimad Bhagavatam Tenth Canto Part One* by A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, courtesy The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International, www.krishna.com

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The first day at school
The first time you rode the bicycle.
The first crush you had at thirteen
The first drama you got a part in
The first day at college
The first date you went on
The first kiss
The first time you proposed
The first job interview
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It's the symbol of goodwill and good cheer; the ultimate wordless emoticon that can fill in for a thousand words. The ubiquitous Smiley invented by American graphic artist Harvey Ball in 1963 has adorned everything on Planet Earth, from pillows to poster art and text messages. Over the years, depending on the social and cultural mores of the time and place, it has assumed many an avatar, from being the motivating message of an insurance company to a symbol of psychedelic culture imprinted on ecstasy pills and a popular emoticon.

The birth of the Smiley can be traced to the attempts of the State Mutual Life Assurance Company of Massachusetts to raise the morale of its employees following a series of difficult mergers and acquisitions. The

company approached Ball, who created the design in 10 minutes flat. His rendition, with a bright yellow background, dark oval eyes and full smile and creases at the sides of the mouth soon became an icon of hope. The jaundiced grin made it to buttons, posters and signs of the insurance company, spreading cheer along the way.

Ironically, neither Ball nor the insurance company tried to patent the design. In the 1970s, Bernard and Murray Spain, owners of two Hallmark card shops in Philadelphia, noticing the popularity of the Smiley, simply appropriated it after adding the slogan 'Have a Happy Day'. After getting a copyright on it, they put it on countless buttons, coffee mugs, T-shirts and other products, raking in

a huge turnover in a country trying to come to terms with the ravages of the Vietnam War. Meanwhile, in Europe, French journalist Franklin Loufrani used the Smiley to highlight the rare instances of good news in his newspaper *France Soir*.

The Smiley has even had its brush with cinema—the most famous instance, perhaps, is in the 1994 Robert Zemeckis film *Forrest Gump*, where the title character played by Tom Hanks wipes his face on a bright yellow T-shirt given to him by a struggling salesman and gives it back to him saying, "Have a nice day". On the T-shirt is transferred the image of the happy face, which today is the same radiant emoticon that smiles at us from our computer or phone screen, bringing an instant shot of cheer.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: AUGUST 1963

- On 5 August, the US, the UK and the Soviet Union signed the first nuclear test ban treaty.
- On 8 August, the Great Train Robbery took place at Buckinghamshire in the UK between Glasgow and London. The haul was estimated at £ 2.6 million.
- On 18 August, James Meredith became the first African-American to graduate from the University of Mississippi in its 115 years of existence.
- On 31 August, Singapore declared its independence from the UK, with Yusof bin Ishak as the head of state.

FLIT AND FLY

BUZZ

There's nothing more idyllic than chasing butterflies in a lavish garden. And if you're in Delhi, there are a host of places to indulge your passion for butterfly spotting. For instance, over 90 species of butterflies visit the humidity-controlled Aravalli Biodiversity Park that spans the Delhi Ridge. The species include Mormon, Leopard, Caster and Cerulean, among others. Lodi Gardens also attract butterflies owing to the presence of plants such

as *Murraya Exotica* and *Lantana Camara* that have been specially brought from outside the city. The butterfly parks at Yamuna Biodiversity Park and Okhla Bird Park are also very popular, especially in spring. And then there's Sanjay Van Park in Vasant Kunj that plays host to the most colourful butterflies along with scores of migratory birds. Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary near Tughlaqabad also attracts more than 80 species of butterflies.

Glasseslike

adj. Resembling eyeglasses, particularly with respect to a wearable computing device.

Example. Google's wearable computer, the most anticipated piece of electronic wizardry since the iPad and iPhone, will not go on sale for many months.... The **glasseslike** device, which allows users to access the Internet, take photos and film short snippets, has been pre-emptively banned by a Seattle bar.

—David Streitfield, "Google Glass picks up early signal: Keep out", The New York Times, 6 May 2013

Zenware

n. Software designed to enhance focus by removing or blocking a computer's visual distractions.

Example. Their inventions so far include wearable sensors that deliver rewards (calm points) for breathing well while you work, developed by Stanford University's calming technology laboratory... and scores of pieces of **zenware** designed to block distractions, with names such as Isolator and StayFocusd and Shroud and Turn Off The Lights.

—Oliver Burkeman, "Conscious computing: How to take control of your life online", The Guardian, 10 May 2013

Smartphone face

n. A drooping jaw line and saggy jowls caused by neck muscles that have been shortened from constantly looking down at a smartphone or similar device.

Example. A new ailment, characterised by sagging jowls and a drooping jaw line, has been dubbed **smartphone face**. It comes from repeatedly bending forward to peer at a handheld device, doctors say.

—Amber Sutherland, "Phone face woe", The New York Post, 17 May 2012

SUPERDIVERSITY

n. Extreme diversity, particularly with respect to the ethnic and racial mix of a population. *Adj.* superdiverse.

Example. The UK's population is more complex than ever with one in eight people now living in England and Wales having been born overseas. Social scientist Dr Jenny Phillimore, from the University of Birmingham, said: "Diversity is being replaced by **superdiversity**."

—"An era of **superdiversity**: Now 1 in 8 was born overseas", Daily Express, 13 June 2013

“The battle against cancer involves battling the mind. I am using my experience to help as many people as possible”

Minoti Barthakur, 66, Guwahati, on infusing a positive attitude in cancer patients



Subhamoy Bhattacharjee

Here is a tale of grit and gumption. For 66 year-old **Minoti Barthakur**, who was diagnosed with advanced-stage cancer in 1994, it has been a painful journey to hell and back. Having looked the disease in the eye and dealt with it courageously, today Barthakur is a symbol of hope for cancer patients. She runs a free counselling and meditation centre in Guwahati, besides working in cancer hospitals to motivate patients. “For a healthy body, one needs to possess a sound mind,” she says. “Meditation brings about mental calmness, which contributes significantly to the recovery process.” A strong believer in cosmic energy, Barthakur derives her strength from meditation and *pranayama*. “I have invented my own way of meditation,” she shares. “When I meditate, I generate a lot of energy that is channelled to different parts of the body. This helps in healing.” While she has been regularly offering free counselling at the B Barooah Cancer Institute as well as North East Cancer Hospital, both in Guwahati, since 2000, she has also been travelling across the borders. Her lectures

cover physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Seeing the positive mental graph in patients with whom she interacts, Mahakali Cancer Hospital in Dhaka has included her in their regular list of invitees. Barthakur credits her voluntary work to God’s generosity and her late husband’s support, who stood by her like a rock through surgeries, radiotherapy and chemotherapy sessions. “The day I was detected with cancer, I asked God for 10 more years on earth with a promise that I would work for the welfare of cancer patients. God not only answered my prayer, but granted me several years more,” she adds with a tinge of gratitude in her voice. Her extraordinary story of triumph and recovery through positive energy and self-healing has been recounted in her memoir, *A Cancer Survivor: Struggle and Success*, a must-read for those fighting the debilitating disease. “I believe a cancer patient can survive if he or she can avoid the second attack,” insists Barthakur. “My energies are focused at spreading positive thinking.”

—Tapati Baruah Kashyap

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