

harmony

DECEMBER 2014 ₹ 40

celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

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HER EXCELLENCY

Goa Governor Mridula Sinha



▪ Products to simplify life ▪ Thanjavur's Brihadeesvara Temple ▪ Consumer caution

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GET FUTURE-READY

Trend-spotting is not just fun but a window onto a changing world with all its possibilities. It's also a constant source of surprise.

I was very interested to read that Twitter's fastest growing demographic between 2012 and 2013 was the 55-64 year age bracket, growing at a phenomenal 79 per cent. On Facebook too, silvers have been the fastest growing demographic for some time now.

That's not all. A recent global consumer trend report on website *Trendwatching.com* threw up some trivia that was even more astonishing. Could you guess, for instance, that women now account for the majority of video game players in the UK—and that there are more gamers over the age of 44 than under the age of 18? Or even more fascinating: If you look at the list of the 1,000 favourite music artists for 60 year-olds and the 1,000 favourite artists for 13 year-olds, there is a 40 per cent overlap.

On the surface, these are mere numbers. But they are more reflective of a social shift, a recalibration of the balance between generations. Crossing the digital divide, as so many silvers have already proved, is a vital step to finding your way in tomorrow's world. You already know some of the advantages, primarily social networking, access to information, especially health resources (see 'App Alert'), and ease of living owing to the increasing use of

Suresh Natarajan



e-governance—something the new Government at the Centre is wholeheartedly committed to. There could be no better example than Jeevan Praman (see 'Orbit'), the recently launched Aadhaar-based digital life certificate. But that's only the tip of the iceberg. Being plugged into the world can help you study and conduct research (learn more; follow hobbies, ideas, dreams); enjoy an array of entertainment (e-books, blogs, videos, TV shows, movies); start an existing business or grow a new one by extending your reach and penetration; find work, often from the comfort of your home; and be part of the e-tail revolution, with hassle-free access to products and services from across the world at competitive prices (see 'Wishlist').

Indeed, for silvers, nothing is as it was anymore, as it was 'prescribed' to be—the world, literally, is what you make of it. On the cusp of a new year, embrace technology and make your world future-ready.

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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and prolific writer Mridula Sinha**

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

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column one

Since inception, *Harmony-Celebrate Age* has been consistently talking about the intellectual and experiential heft silvers can bring to society. A fine example is recently appointed Goa Governor Mridula Sinha. Educated, erudite yet rooted in tradition, her vision for India is an inclusive one that honours the past while heralding the future. It was indeed a privilege and pleasure to meet this remarkable lady, also a prolific writer, who welcomed us into Raj Bhavan with such warmth. “As a country, even when we lose our way sometimes, we find ourselves again, find the solutions,” she told me. “That’s the great thing about India.”

Indeed. Another woman who has led life on her terms is journalist, author and social activist Kamla Mankekar, who entered the world of Indian journalism when it was the preserve of men. Her new memoir chronicles her fascinating life. Interestingly, as she tells us, she has worked with Governor Sinha during her time at the Delhi State Commission for Women.

Another activist dedicated to consumer rights is Jehangir Gai. And as we mark National Consumers Right Day on 24 December, he warns us about the pitfalls that can befall silvers while claiming pension, PF and mediclaim, and urges us to be alert, aware and active in fighting for our rights.

It’s a valuable lesson to learn as we close another year. And with Christmas upon us, we round up this issue with a wishlist of interesting and innovative products to live life better. Our version of ‘life hacks’, this feature is just a sampler of what’s out there for you. Explore and enjoy—season’s greetings.

—Arati Rajan Menon

With reference to “Gulzar: His Way With Words” (October 2014), the legendary writer-poet rightly got the prestigious Dada Saheb Phalke Award. Songs today have a life of a few weeks or months unlike the evergreen songs of yesteryears; these days we hear more *tuk-bandi* than *shayari*. Gulzar is one of Hindi cinema’s influential lyricists who has kept the *shayari* tradition alive through his poems and lyrics. His songs resonate equally with the younger generation as they do with his contemporaries.

Mahesh Kumar
Mumbai

I congratulate you and highly appreciate your coverage of renowned scientists of India in “Stars of Science” (September 2014). It was wonderful to read about some great scientists, including Dr C N R Rao, who have touched the lives of millions in our country, although they remained obscure. By bringing them to the limelight, you have inspired many young minds.

S L Hoti
Officer-in-Charge, Regional Medical
Research Centre (ICMR),
Belgaum, Karnataka

A village is made up of several families; a city is built together by families. A country is a conglomeration of cities and villages



that families have brought together. But nobody seems to need family any more. This upsets me a lot and I am worried about the generations to come. Everybody wants to be independent and is asking for ‘space’. An old woman I met in the park mentioned that her granddaughter asked her, “When are you going back, grandma! My mother needs some space!” She was crestfallen. Where is the ‘family’ feeling? For older women, I have only one suggestion: Unite and walk away from home. To quote American novelist Pearl S Buck, “To achieve simplicity was the ultimate of sophistication. The fully matured mind reaches simplicity as its final development.”

Hemavaty Krishnan
Bengaluru

CONTRIBUTOR



Jehangir Gai, who addresses silver rights in ‘Advocacy’, is a Mumbai-based senior activist who has been associated with various consumer organisations since 1984, even prior to the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act. In recognition of his contribution to the consumer movement in India, the Union Government presented him the National Youth Award for Consumer Protection. Gai regularly writes about consumer rights in newspapers and magazines and has participated in various seminars and workshops. Contact him at jehangir.gai.articles@hotmail.com

▶ NEWSWORTHY

Great

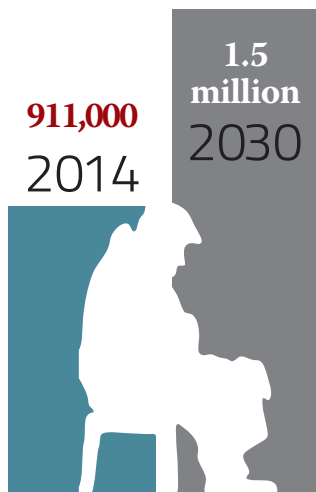
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Tackling ageism in the workforce is imperative to garner the potential of silvers. As part of the *Age Audit*, published by the International Longevity Centre-UK (ILC-UK), a leading think tank on longevity and demographic change, here's an **eight-point action plan to support companies "who want to respond to the challenges and opportunities of ageing"**, as London newspaper *The Guardian* tells us.

- 
1. THINK STRATEGICALLY ABOUT AGEING
 2. DELIVER FLEXIBLE WORKING
 3. BECOME AGE NEUTRAL
 4. SUPPORT THOSE WITH DISABILITIES AS WELL AS THE WIDER HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF THE WORKFORCE
 5. EMBRACE CONTINUOUS LEARNING
 6. SUPPORT INTERGENERATIONAL FAIRNESS
 7. HELP PEOPLE AFFORD A GOOD RETIREMENT
 8. TAP INTO THE 'GREY POUND'

COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN

The number of older men living alone in England will increase by 65 per cent by 2030, according to data from the English Longitudinal Study on Ageing. This means 1.5 million older men will be living alone by 2030—up from 911,000 today.



MEALS ON WHEELS

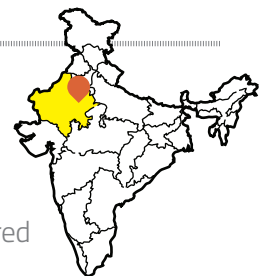
Delicious news! In October, entrepreneur Vijayalakshmi Ulaganathan launched **Chennai Geriatric Catering Service**, geared towards silvers in the city's Anna Nagar area. "The service is the brainchild of senior geriatrician Dr V S Natarajan [*Harmony-Celebrate Age* columnist]," the 50 year-old tells us. "There are so many elders living alone and even skipping meals owing to their inability to move around. Most have health issues like diabetes and hypertension and require timely food with little or no oil and spices." The service, which home-delivers meals at a nominal cost, has already received a tremendous response. For details, call (0) 9444422890 or 9444983296.

LIFE, SIMPLIFIED: The Indian Government has launched **Jeevan Praman**, an Aadhaar-based digital life certificate to make the process of pension payments simpler. Currently, pensioners need to submit a physical Life Certificate issued by authorities and specified by the Central Pension Accounting Office every November to keep receiving pension, or be personally present at the Pension Disbursing Agency. According to a media release, the new system will consist of a software application to record the pensioner's Aadhaar number and biometric details from a mobile device or computer with a biometric device. Key details about the pensioner can then be uploaded to a central database, enabling the Pension Disbursing Agency to directly access a Digital Life Certificate. This will certify that the pensioner is alive at the time of authentication, without actual physical presence.



JOY IN JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje has cleared the Pensioners' Health Concession Scheme 2014, which will provide medical and diagnostic services to state pensioners at concessional rates in government-run hospitals and approved private hospitals.





श्री अखिलेश यादव, माननीय मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश



उत्तर प्रदेश को पोलियो मुक्त राज्य बनाने के लिए

माननीय मुख्यमंत्री, श्री अखिलेश यादव तथा प्रदेश के चिकित्सक
विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन (WHO) द्वारा सम्मानित

गर्व की बात है कि उत्तर प्रदेश की कार्यविधायक को न सिर्फ पहचाना गया है, बल्कि सम्मानित भी किया गया है। आज, उत्तर प्रदेश पोलियो मुक्त राज्य बन चुका है और इसमें माननीय मुख्यमंत्री श्री अखिलेश यादव ने अपना बहुमूल्य योगदान दिया है। उनके इस गानदार सहयोग के लिए उन्हें विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन (WHO) द्वारा सम्मानित किया गया है।



राइजिंग उत्तर प्रदेश
असीमित संभावनाओं का प्रदेश
सोनों के जीवन में सुधार के प्रति प्रतिबद्ध



उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार उपरोक्त अभियान में सहयोग के लिए विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन, यूनिसेफ, बिल एंड मिलिंडा गेट्स फाउंडेशन, रोटरी इंटरनेशनल तथा प्रदेश के विभिन्न धर्म गुरुओं, समाजसेवी संस्थाओं, गैर सरकारी संगठनों तथा प्रदेश के सरकारी एवं गैर सरकारी चिकित्सकों का धन्यवाद करती है।



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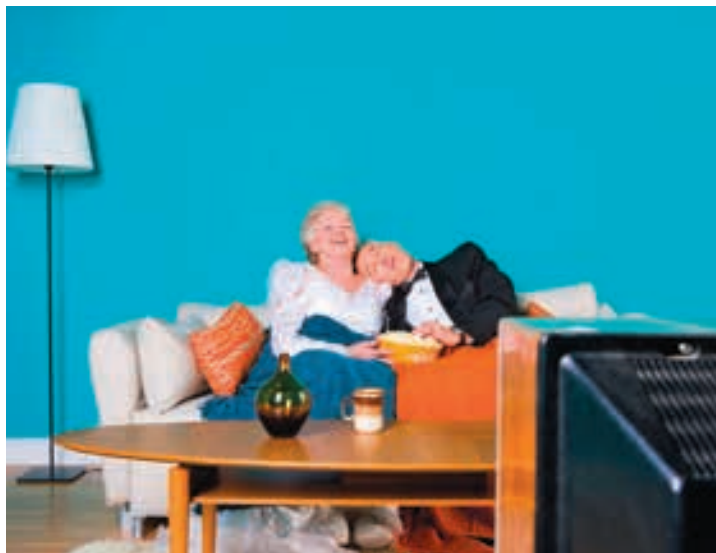
SHIFT WORK
CHRONICALLY IMPAIRS
COGNITION, WITH
POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT
SAFETY CONSEQUENCES NOT
ONLY FOR THE INDIVIDUALS
CONCERNED, BUT
FOR SOCIETY

Cognitive shift?

HERE'S A WARNING for the millions around the world who work in shifts. An international team of researchers contend that **a decade or more of working rotating shifts is associated with a loss of brain function equivalent to six-and-a-half years of age-related cognitive decline.** They attribute this to disruption of the body clock, which can impair brain functioning. And though gradual recovery of mental function is possible after going back to a regular work routine, it takes much longer—at least five years. “Shift work chronically impairs cognition, with potentially important safety consequences not only for the individuals concerned, but for society,” writes team leader Dr Jean-Claude Marquie of the University of Toulouse in France in journal *Occupational & Environmental Medicine*. “Measures should be considered that mitigate the impact that prolonged exposure to shift work has on cognitive abilities, including switching to normal day work.”

86 SHADES OF GREY: AMERICAN OCTOGENARIAN GEORGIA GORRINGE RECENTLY TURNED FIRST-TIME AUTHOR WITH *NO GOODBYE*. THE 176-PAGE ROMANCE, ABOUT A DESPERATE HOUSEWIFE WHO GETS TURNED ON BY A VOICE ON TALK RADIO, SIZZLES WITH MUCH INNUENDO AND SOME SERIOUS SEX SCENES. WRITTEN UNDER HER PEN NAME, GEORGE MARIE, THE BOOK IS AVAILABLE ON AMAZON.COM.

MIND IT



Never underestimate the power of mind over matter. Researchers from the Yale School of Public Health in the US were able to use **subliminal messages containing positive stereotypes about ageing to improve physical functioning** for a period of time. In their experiment, published in online journal *Psychological Science*, 100 silvers with the average age of 81 were made to watch an entertainment show on their computer screen; during this, some of their screens

SILVERS EXPOSED TO POSITIVE MESSAGING BEGAN TO EXHIBIT A RANGE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

flashed positive words such as ‘spry’ and ‘creative’ at speeds too fast to allow for conscious awareness. The team found that silvers exposed to this positive messaging began to exhibit a range of psychological and physical improvements compared to the others. In fact, they enjoyed improved physical balance for up to three weeks after the end of the experiment. “The challenge was to enable the participants to overcome

the negative age stereotypes they acquire from society, as in everyday conversations and television comedies,” says lead researcher Becca Levy. “The study’s successful outcome suggests the potential of directing subliminal processes toward the enhancement of physical function.”



That 70s show



All bets were off after the age of 70, with one in four displaying personality changes at odds with their earlier self—while some became calmer, others became more impulsive; the under-controlled and over-controlled often swapping profiles!

This may be a bit of a shocker if you believe that people get set in their ways over time. An intriguing study by psychologists at Berlin's Free University has discovered that **many people's personality exhibits a distinct change around the age of 70**. As news agency AFP reports, they evaluated data from two massive, long-term population studies in Germany and Australia, encompassing over 23,000 women and men between the ages of 16 and 82 and analysed their personalities based on the 'Big Five' parameters: emotional stability; openness to new experience; easygoingness with others; conscientiousness; and the degree of intro or extraversion that indicates whether a person tends to be withdrawn or outgoing. They then classified them into three personality types: 'under-controlled', 'resilient' and 'over-controlled'. Their study led them to establish that about half the respondents displayed a tendency to shift from being under-controlled in youth to resilient by the

30-year mark, while the over-controlled category tended to remain that way even through middle age. What surprised them more was that all bets were off after the age of 70, with one in four displaying personality changes at odds with their earlier self—while some became calmer, others became more impulsive; the under-controlled and over-controlled often swapping profiles! "We are yet to pinpoint what causes it," says team leader Jule Specht. "While retirement, health problems and bereavement do play a role, they are not the primary reasons for this. We need far more study to evaluate this phenomenon."

PROMOTION

REINVENT YOUR LEISURE YEARS!

Silverglades presents **Melia First Citizen**

Located at the foothills of the picturesque Aravallis, First Citizen is Delhi NCR's first premium senior living community. The project is part of The Melia which is spread over 17.5 lush green acres. Strategically located at Sector 35, Gurgaon Extension, Sohna, First Citizen is quiet, safe and easily accessible from all parts of Gurgaon. The project is just a 10-minute drive from the high profile location of Golf Course Extension Road and is right next to the GD Goenka World School and KR Mangalam University. An enviable blend of sheer luxury and suburban lifestyle, First Citizen marks the next step in concept of retirement homes, offering convenient range of units in one and two bedroom configurations.

The project is developed by Silverglades, one of India's leading boutique developers, specializing in residential housing, commercial, township projects and golf-based leisure developments, and Age Ventures India (AVI), a non-profit organization that seeks to persuade developers to include a retirement wing in their residential developments.

Websites : <http://silverglades.com>

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CANINE COMFORT

After Tokyo's luxury canine retirement resort, it's the UK's turn. With boxes of toys, cushy couches and a huge garden, **Oakfield Oldies is a sanctuary for elder dogs**, as London newspaper *Daily Mail* tells us. Run by the Dogs' Trust in Shrewsbury, West Midlands, it is intended for dogs over the age of seven who have been abandoned by their owners. While some residents are eventually adopted, the others continue to live here, in an atmosphere as homely and comfy as the dogs are accustomed to. "We've made Oakfield Oldies as close to a home environment as possible and we cater to every requirement and every ailment," says Lee Pogson, supporter relations officer for the Dogs' Trust. "For instance, we have one dog here that needs medication and is very choosy with his food. He only eats fish pie—so we go out and get him fish pie and mix up his medication in there. We spoil them to the best of our ability. If they find themselves here we want them to enjoy themselves as much as possible."

Mouse nap: Researchers at the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna believe that 'power naps' can help garden dormice born late in the season to catch up with their earlier-born peers and get ready for hibernation. Mice decrease their metabolic rate and lower their blood temperature during hibernation, allowing them to accumulate greater fat reserves and stave off the ageing process. Their study was published in journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*.

PET PURSUIT



PET DOGS ARE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE A MORE REALISTIC TEST THAN LAB MICE OF HOW THE DRUG WOULD WORK IN HUMANS

Would you offer up your pet for research? That's what molecular biologists Matthew Kaeberlein and Daniel Promislow at the University of Washington in Seattle are proposing in their **bid to determine whether low doses of the drug rapamycin can extend longevity**. As reported in journal *Nature*, rapamycin has already been proven to extend the lives of mice by 13 per cent in females and 9 per cent in males. However, human trials are pending because of the costs and time involved. "We hope to test rapamycin in large dogs that typically live for eight

to 10 years," Kaeberlein tells website www.nature.com. "A pilot trial would involve about 30 dogs, half of which would receive the drug, and would allow the researchers to dose the dogs for a short time and observe effects on heart function and other health measures. The trial could be completed in three years, but we will know in months, perhaps, whether rapamycin improves cardiac function or other aspects of health." Pet dogs are expected to provide a more realistic test than lab mice of how the drug would work in humans as they experience some of the same environmental influences as their masters.

NATURE'S BOUNTY



If you dare (and can afford it), go to www.esteelauder.com

They have long been the object of gourmet rhapsodies and aphrodisiac longings. Now, perhaps fittingly, **truffles are the stuff of luxe anti-ageing skincare.**

Harnessing the bounty of the Black Diamond Truffle, cosmetic giant Estée Lauder has launched the Re-Nutriv Ultimate Diamond Sculpting/Refinishing Dual Infusion. In a media release, the company claims the patented extract helps to stimulate and increase the skin's natural energy and vitality, in turn, helping to renew the skin's age-fighting abilities. If the truffle wasn't a rare enough ingredient, the infusion also includes "24-carat gold to calm and sooth the skin, as well as South Sea pearls for radiance."



Beauty QUEEN

The incomparable Helen Mirren is the new face of L'Oréal Paris. In a media release, the 69 year-old Oscar winner was as self-effacing as ever, saying, "I have always looked ordinary and plan to stay the same way. But I have always loved the brand and hope to inspire other women towards greater confidence by making the most of their natural good looks." She will represent the company's Age Perfect line of products.

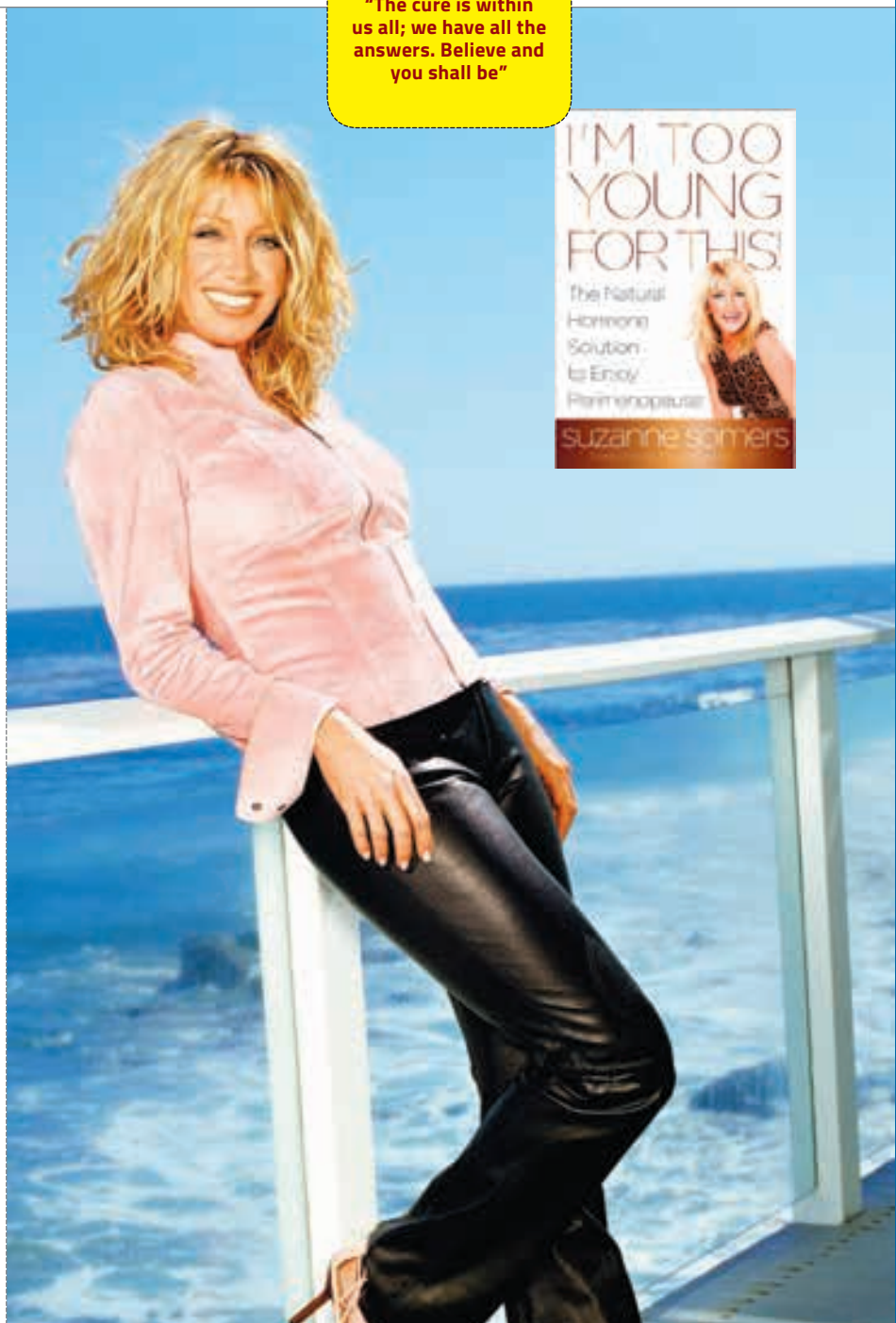
Old is gold: British TV historian and Cambridge University professor Mary Beard has announced that she is reclaiming the word 'old' to imbue it with a positive connotation. "I want to create an old movement and encourage people to take pride in growing older," the 59 year-old proclaimed at the Cheltenham Literature Festival. "By the time I die, I want old to be something we say with pride." Her pet peeve: older people being stereotyped as grandparents rather than individuals in their own right.

THE INDIA ANGLE



She may be just 48. But British journalist **India Knight's** *In Your Prime* is a most knowing—and honest—chronicle of the passage of time. It's also one of the most amusing. As London newspaper *The Guardian* reports, Knight writes entertainingly, even flamboyantly, about dealing with the passage of time: menopause, sexual dysfunction, marital failures, parental burdens, and just the unbearable heaviness of age. Delightfully politically incorrect and unfailingly pragmatic, Knight not just hears us, but reminds us that a sense of good humour can go far in making the silver years eminently liveable.

"The cure is within us all; we have all the answers. Believe and you shall be"



SILVER SOMER

Actor, model and breast-cancer survivor, she's made it her mission to help women live, healthy, smart and sexy. Promoting her book, *I'm Too Young For This! The Natural Hormone Solution To Enjoy Perimenopause*, **Suzanne Somers looks fabulous at 68**, as she shares her lessons. Diagnosed with stage two breast cancer in 2001, she writes, "I thought I had taken care of myself; I never thought this would happen to me. The irony is that I was in great shape at the time. Physically, I was in top form." Now cancer-free for the past decade, she insists, "The cure is within us all; we have all the answers. Believe and you shall be."

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Vice-captain **PR Sreejesh** and Champion player **Rupinder Pal Singh**



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marathon
23 november 2014

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thanks

**all those who supported the Senior Citizens' Run
at the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon 2014!**

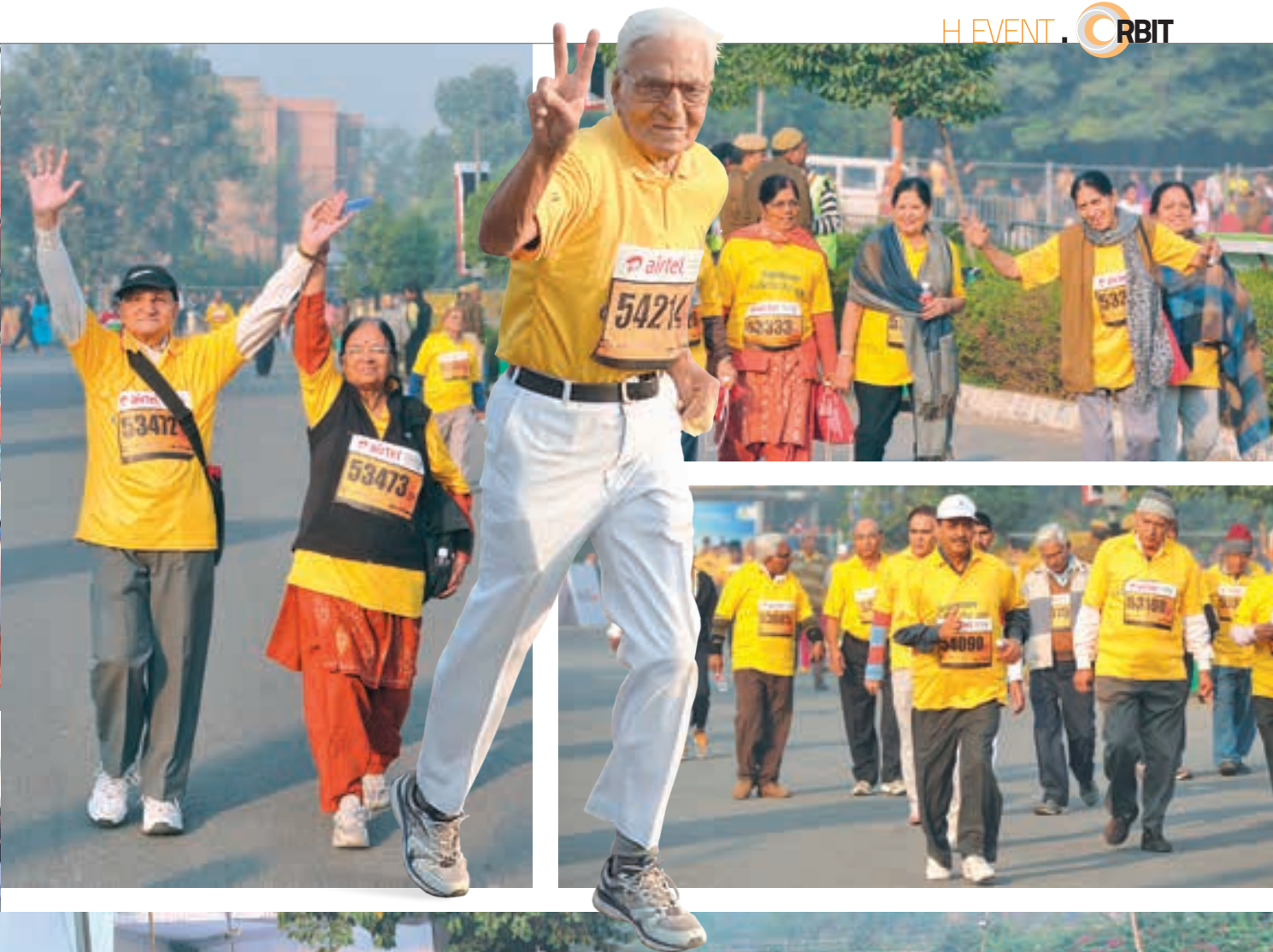
Visit us at www.harmonyindia.org



RUN FOR IT!

The marathon season has begun! On 23 November, Delhi woke up to the buzz as about 1,700 silvers donned their yellow t-shirts and sneakers and headed to Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. Part of the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon 2014, the Senior Citizens' Run was flagged off at 8 am. In the crowd to cheer them on and later hand out felicitations were Indian hockey team members captain Sardara Singh, vice-captain PR Sreejesh and champion player Rupinder Pal Singh, and actor Rahul Singh. Next up, the Mumbai marathon. See you there!







Billiards, anyone? Games like billiards and snooker provide silvers the perfect exercise owing to the periods of rest between activity, according to Danish anthropologist Aske Lassen. Following his research in two activity centres in Copenhagen, where up to one in 15 men between the ages of 70 and 95 meet to play billiards four times a week, he says, "Playing billiards often comes with a certain lifestyle, drinking beer for instance, and I am quite sure this was not what the WHO and EU meant when they formulated their active ageing policies. But billiards does constitute active ageing. It is, first of all, an activity these men thoroughly enjoy and it enhances their quality of life while immersing them in their local community and keeping them socially active. Second, it is very suitable exercise for old people because the game varies naturally between periods of activity and passivity and this means the men can keep playing for hours, allowing them to spread their physical activity out through the day."

Then: Old leather suitcase Now: Vanity shelf/cabinet

Vintage leather suitcases are definitely hard to throw away, not just for sentimental reasons but also considering the environmental concerns of discarding leather. Repurpose your suitcases to make that corner of your house look classier with these stylish vanity suitcase shelves. You'll need a measuring tape, blade, nails and screws, hooks, acrylic paint, and a bit of hard work. To begin with, dust the old suitcase and get rid of all the dirt deposited on it. Measure the height and width of the suitcase. Divide the height into three portions; this is where you will attach the dividers for the shelves. Cut two hardboard sheets with the blade and fix them into the suitcase with a nail or hooks, dividing the entire structure into three portions. Once the entire cabinet structure is ready, carefully paint the suitcase with acrylic paint in a single shade and let it dry. Meanwhile, take any old or used fabric and paste it on the inside walls of the cabinet to give it a finished look. As an addition, screw in a magnetic closure on the side. Use sturdy hooks to hang the upcycled suitcase wherever you desire.



RECYCLING FACTS

- Indians discard an estimated 16 pounds of leather a year, of which about 99 per cent is recyclable.
- Suitcases made of hard leather can be recycled and used to make or re-cover chairs, tables, rugs. Strips of leather can be braided into belts, bracelets and hair accessories.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. MAKE A COFFEE TABLE OUT OF A CLOSED OLD SUITCASE JUST BY ADDING FOUR TAPERED TABLE LEGS.
2. CONVERT AN OLD SUITCASE INTO A COMFY PET BED BY SIMPLY ADDING WASHABLE, REMOVABLE CUSHIONS INSIDE.



BIG LAUNCHER

Available for: Android 2.1 and up

What it does: This is a fast and simple Android interface to provide maximum readability and easy use for silvers and people with vision problems. The app gives you the luxury of stress-free smartphone usage, so you don't need to squint at the screen or fret over pressing the wrong buttons. BIG Launcher overrides the user interface of the Android smartphone with a home screen that includes large, high contrast icons, and provides quick access to commonly used features such as date, time, phone, email, camera, photos, and a programmable emergency contact referred to as SOS.

After installation: Once you're on the Start page, you get options to select from three text sizes: Default, Bigger and Biggest. There are options to select the background colour, language, colour themes and customise settings according to your requirements. During the installation process, you also have the option of disabling deletion of items such as call history, messages, and contacts.

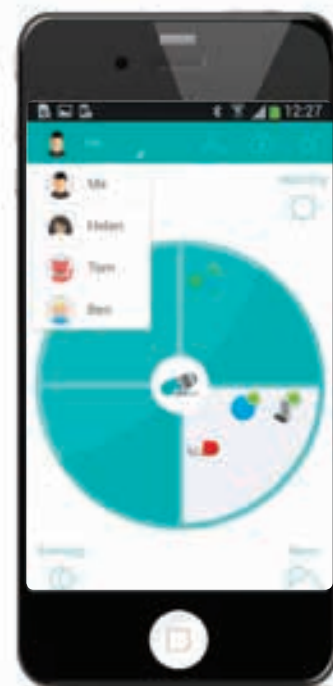
Over the years, a bundle of health apps have sprung up to answer the medical problems of silvers—all at the touch of a phone screen button. Fans of WebMD's mobile app can testify to this; the self-diagnose on-the-go feature, the first aid and treatment tabs have been its most useful features. Then there's the Mayo Clinic Health Manager app, where you can store your health information so you can provide doctors with accurate, up-to-date facts when needed. Thinking beyond the traditional use of a phone, developers at AliveCor have recently released an app, iPhonECG, that turns an iPhone into an ECG (Electrocardiogram) monitor. By attaching a slim, low-power case (bought separately) to the phone and placing the device on your chest, it will record your heart rate and transmit the results to a healthcare provider. It can also be used for biofeedback, aiding users in lowering their heart rates in stressful situations. But, of course, no matter how smart your phone, an iPhone, Blackberry or tablet is no substitute for advice from a medical professional.

MY PILLBOX

Available for: Android 2.2 and up; iOS 2.7 or later

What it does: This free app is a must have to help silvers track their regular dose of medication and receive alerts if the dosage is missed. It can track medication schedules for multiple people, so it's a useful family app. It also lets family members, caregivers and doctors monitor medication adherence through an analytics dashboard and is specially designed for those who take pills at regular intervals.

After installation: Once the app is installed, you can set time intervals, the type and colour of meds to be taken, and add notes, doctor's suggestions and reminders. You can also add multiple profiles so more than one person can access the app. Set the medicine schedule to daily, weekly, monthly, certain number of days, certain number of hours or even as a one-time event, and set the notification time. After consuming the pill, you can even record the result such as feeling 'better' or 'worse'. The app keeps a record of all the meds consumed and this is easily accessible in the history list.





ALZHEIMER'S WATCH

Dinodia Photo Library



A 40-year study by the Swedish Uppsala University reveals that elderly men who self-reported sleep disturbances were at a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Studying about 1,000 men from their 50s, the researchers concluded that men who self-reported poor sleep had a 1.5-time higher risk of Alzheimer's compared to those with good sleeping habits. The case was stronger and the risk higher in those whose sleep disturbances occurred later in life.

WHITE CELLS MATTER

A series of unnoticed, silent, small strokes could combine to deteriorate white matter cells in the brain, leading to memory impairment and dementia. Previously, this damage of white matter cells was considered a natural part of ageing, something serious only if it happened on a large scale. **The higher the presence of white matter disease, more likely the symptoms of dementia**—such as changes in behaviour or cognitive impairment. Recently, scientists at the Krembil Neuroscience Centre, Canada, studied this phenomenon to determine what exactly caused white matter disease, as a first step to stop it. Their intensive observation of five patients with white matter disease who underwent weekly detailed MRI scans of their brains for 16 weeks revealed tiny spots springing up in the brain characteristic of small strokes, without any symptoms, which soon developed into the kind of white matter disease that caused dementia. They concluded that these tiny silent strokes occurred at a higher rate than a physician can estimate, and caused white matter disease that led to dementia. They also ended their findings on a positive note: it is possible to treat white matter disease, unlike other degenerative kinds of symptoms of dementia. As this is a vascular-based disease, affecting blood vessels, it might be preventable. While this aspect is under study, the researchers suggest silvers who are at risk should manage stroke risk factors aggressively to prevent small, silent strokes in the brain.

1.8 million

in India and South Asia over the age of 60 suffer from dementia. There are 400,000 new cases every year

SMALL STEPS TO PREVENT DEMENTIA

- Maintain your blood pressure, check for diabetes and lower your cholesterol levels
- Keep your brain and body healthy with regular mental and physical activity
- Consume a Mediterranean diet with whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and foods rich in antioxidants
- Keep busy; engage in outdoor and social activities
- Reduce stress, sleep well and practice meditation

Dinodia Photo Library





HEART BEET

Beet juice in your daily diet can keep hypertension at bay and the heart healthy.

While beet juice is known to improve athletic performance—research backed and practised by football teams—it is also known to improve the lives of patients who have undergone heart failure. A study at Kansas State University in the US showed that increasing oxygen delivery by 10 per cent can make a huge difference in such

patients: instead of being wheel-chair-bound, they can be healthy much sooner. This oxygen delivery is vital, and the increase comes from the blood that flows into the heart. Beet juice improves blood flow by 38 per cent, because it produces nitric oxide in the blood, which expands blood vessels and

allows blood to move easily. Similarly, in a smaller British study at The Barts and The London Medical School, a decrease in blood pressure by 10 mm Hg was found in people diagnosed with hypertension who consumed about 8 ounce (235 ml) of beet juice daily.

JUST BEET IT!

Consuming beet juice

- Prevents dementia and diabetes
- Eases bowel movement
- Improves exercise and athletic performance

SOONER THAN LATER

While it is widely believed that physical activity can improve memory and cognitive health in silvers, a new study casts doubt on whether the daily exercise prescribed for good health is really meant for those past a certain age.

A German study that examined the benefits of exercise in silvers found that it stopped being very effective for men and women after the age of 70. In the study sample, participants between the ages of 60 and 70 showed improvement in blood flow to the brain and visual memory when they regularly used the treadmill. But for those over 70, there was no visible change. The test consisted of 40 people between the ages of 60 and 77 years, who were healthy but led sedentary lives; half of them were put on a treadmill routine. At the end of the study, those below the age of 70 had improved their fitness, showed increased blood flow to the hippocampus—the part of the brain involved in memory function—and found that memorising abstract images was easier than before the test. However, none of these improvements were seen in those above 70 years of age or those who were not on the exercise routine. The scientists conclude that while physical exercise improves brain function, with ageing, older brains tend to lose the ability to benefit from the increased perfusion to the brain.



Dinodia Photo Library

VACCINE BENEFITS



Here's an important reason to get those annual flu shots—a study by Institute Vinca, Belgrade, says a flu shot will reduce your risk of heart attack by 50 per cent. The researchers contend that a flu vaccine not only helps in production of antibodies but triggers the production of certain molecules in cells that protect the heart. In fact, this study has prompted the scientists to work on a vaccine to prevent heart attacks.



BIRTHDAYS

- American filmmaker-actor **Woody Allen** turned 79 on 1 December.
- Indian President **Pranab Mukherjee** (left) turns 79 on 11 December.

● South Indian superstar **Rajinikanth** turns 64 on 12 December.

● Veteran filmmaker **Shyam Benegal** (right) turns 80 on 14 December.



● Hollywood director and producer **Steven Spielberg** (left) turns 68 on 18 December.

● Indian actor and producer **Anil Kapoor** turns 58 on 24 December.

OVERHEARD



"If I can be the poster girl for the 60 year-old woman looking and feeling good, then great. All I try to do is be authentic. I refused the extreme airbrushing offered to me for my album cover. But I allowed the bare minimum as nobody wants an ugly picture of themselves. If I want to do plastic surgery and Botox, believe me, I will do it. But right now I'm happy within my skin. We're all going to die, and I don't want to fight to be a young person. I go to places in America and all I see are women with the shock-mask look. I have no objections to women having plastic surgery if they look better, but if they look like a frozen mask with lips and like they've been punched in the face, I don't think that's women at their best. I would rather have age."

—**Iconic British pop singer Annie Lennox, 60, on the release of her new solo album, Nostalgia**



IN PASSING

● **Ravi Chopra** (left), known for his direction of TV show *Mahabharata*, succumbed to lung cancer on 12 November, at the age of 68.

● **Chandrasekhar P Sant**, a veteran sports journalist, died on 13 November following a heart attack. He was 61.

● Veteran Indian film actor **Sadashiv Amrapurkar** (right) passed away on 3 November, at the age of 64.



● Freedom fighter and social worker **Jagdish Sharan Pande** died after a prolonged illness on 23 October, at the age of 95.

● Telugu writer and radio broadcaster **Turaga Janaki Rani** (left) passed away on 15 October. She was 80.

MILESTONES

● Renowned classical vocalist **Pandit Jasraj** (right), 84, was awarded the Sumitra Charat Ram Award 2014 for lifetime achievement on 17 November.



● Tamil poet based in Singapore, 74 year-old **K T M Iqbal** (above) was selected for Singapore's highest cultural award, The Cultural Medallion, on 15 October.

The first day at school

The first time you rode the bicycle.

The first crush you had at thirteen

The first drama you got a part in

The first day at college

The first date you went on

The first kiss

The first time you proposed

The first job interview

The first board meeting you addressed

The first day after retirement

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BEING A SPORT

I come from a sporting family—my father was a footballer, my mother was an athlete, and my brother and my sister regularly play golf in Kolkata! I had a penchant for badminton, basketball and tennis and indulged in these sports during my husband's service in the Indian Air Force. My husband is also a sportsperson and has always encouraged me to play whenever there was an opportunity.

However, my dream was to learn to play golf. We have lived in Hyderabad for 12 years and whenever we used to pass the golf course, I would go into raptures at the greenery and vast open spaces. I just loved the idea of being able to play this game in these surroundings. But life seemed to be passing me by.

Then, one day, I mentioned this to a neighbour and friend, (Retd) Cdr Harsh Bhargava of the Indian Navy. Now, Harsh is a 'doer' and he marched me off to the Golf Club, helped me fill out forms and before I knew it, I was an enrolled member!

Next was getting some golf gear. I began hunting for a golf set for ladies. So I called up my sister in Kolkata and asked her to find out if there was a set available within my budget. Then my other golf buddy and inspiration Priya Chennappa told me where I could get a pair of trousers.

Very soon, I had my golf clubs in my hand, trousers and shirts, a golf cap and shoes. And, finally, my first day at the driving range rolled around. I had a coach who was to give me eight lessons and then I was on my own. For the first month, I just kept hitting the ball, not knowing where it was going! It took me three months to hold the club properly and hit the ball fairly straight. Priya has been encouraging me and she refused to let me drop out. It's been a year now and I love being on the golf course. The greenery is to die for! I play for the joy of it and don't fancy taking part in competitions.



Courtesy Cdr Harsh Bhargava

Golfing is one of Banerji's newly discovered pleasures

In the beginning, I used to play seven days a week. But then I developed a problem with my ankle and I had to stop for two months. On the doctor's advice, I have had to curtail myself to playing just twice a week so my ankle does not bother me again. Luckily, I have had no problems with my shoulders and joints, which plague most beginners. I guess my body has not forgotten the long hours I put in playing tennis!

Learning something new and different, especially a sport, has always been a great challenge for me. I was over 40 when I learnt to play tennis and played in competitions thereafter. But golf is a sheer pleasure. That I have progressed enough to satisfy my craving to learn the sport is enough for me. I manage to play nine holes every day and still manage to deal with all my commitments at home.

Here's a little secret, though: golf is not my passion, cooking is. I used to cater for parties and have cooked fancy

stuff for people who asked for it. I have stopped doing that now, although I do still like to cook Bengali delicacies and the occasional continental dish. And I await orders from my old 'uncles and aunts'.

I am happy for the encouragement from family and friends who keep egging me on to do these things. Some day, I hope to be able to play golf well enough to beat Priya in a fair game!

—Jaya Banerji, Hyderabad

TURNING MY LIFE AROUND

As horrific as this may sound, I killed my first tiger when I was in Class VIII. In subsequent years, I have to admit that I killed as many as 23 tigers, a bear and many deer. Those were times when the tiger was considered a menace and I executed all these killings on the request of the authorities, till killing tigers was banned in 1972. I am not proud of hunting these beautiful animals but I am proud of the U-turn my life took after that.

I was born in Lakhimpur district in Assam and was the son of a *mauzadar* (collector of land revenue). While my eldest brother took over the *mauza* from our father, I ventured into the timber business in the forests of NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) and became familiar with the flora and fauna in the jungle. I was also instrumental in clearing the forest to build roads in the 1950s and 1960s. I am proud to say that I stopped exploiting the forests and set up a rice mill instead. My mill has a capacity to husk 1 tonne of paddy per hour.

As simple as this outline of my life may seem, my real journey lies in the details, in how I learnt to appreciate the simple yet rich life of the hill people. While in erstwhile NEFA, I formed strong bonds with them, including Gegong Apang, who later became chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh. Lummer Dai, who later became a director of the Information & Public Relations Department in Arunachal Pradesh, was a noted Assamese novelist and short-story writer. I was so close to the hill tribes that I even learnt to speak their language. A few years ago, I donated five *bigha* of land to the Asam Sahitya Sabha to set up the 'Lummer Dai Institute of Distant Learning and Tribal Research' in Bihpuria, where I was born. I have also donated liberally to schools, temples, *naam ghar* and other institutions.

I have a phenomenal memory and love to file away details typical to Assamese culture. I can name over 100 species of fish found in Assam, over 100 bird species, 90 types of tools, implements and parts of the traditional loom, Assamese ornaments and garments, kings of different dynasties since the *Mahabharata*, and so on. I have never watched a single Assamese film but I can chronologically name all the Assamese films since the first one released in 1935.



Tapati Baruah Kashyap

Hazarika's exceptional memory helps him focus on finer details

I also have a fairly rich collection of Assamese ornaments and hope to set up a museum in my house to display them so that the young generation can appreciate their culture.

I do not have a particularly religious bent of mind but, owing to my philanthropy, the people of my village have honoured me with a *Raj-medhi* (public relations officer for the principal disciple) in the traditional village *naam ghar*. I have also been bestowed the honour of carrying the *Bhagawat*, our holy scripture, on my head during the annual religious procession in Bihpuria.

My wife Jogamaya is very supportive of what I do. She looks after the household along with my two daughters-in-law. I spend about 10 hours a day in my rice mill. And although my employees keep a record of payments and receipts, I file away these details in my backup memory. Life is beautiful, indeed!

—Golok Hazarika, Guwahati



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

Stand proud: Yoga can rectify your postural slump

Rectifying a postural slump is not just about looking good. A strong and correct posture indicates and prevents let-downs such as lack of confidence, a weak or shaky voice, respiratory problems, loose pelvic muscles and chronic back problems, to name just a few.

Research has established that there is a tremendous connection between your posture, your health and your feelings. In yoga, of course, the spine (and, therefore, the posture) is very important. Initially, when you try to make your *sadhana* (practice) work for you, you may require a wall for support. Sitting on a cushion also tends to provide relief from the stress suffered by the spine, and is particularly prescribed in lower back issues. Pressing against the wall after seating oneself on a cushion will help the posture get slowly acclimatised to the corrections you are initialising.

To introduce postural corrections, you need a sequence that includes all aspects—forward bends, backbends,

side twists and full twists, and standing poses, including balancers, are crucial to get your muscles used to the immense stress of correction. At first, there is likely to be a lot of resistance to any corrections, and even some pain. Where postural corrections are desired, you really need a daily practice; keep using variations for the right challenge to the spine and be prepared for a long-time investment.

Backbends have a tremendous impact on the spine and are particularly useful sets that must be done daily. Balancers help wake up the nervous coordination needed for the whole body as it slowly gets used to the corrections and change in your posture. Some super poses for postural corrections include the palm tree pose (*tadasana*), dancing Shiva pose (*Natrajasana*), pelvic tilt/shoulder pose (*kandharasana*), and all backbends. You will find that once your practice is focused on maintaining or correcting posture, your breathing becomes effortless, your stamina goes up, your mind feels more grounded and stabilised, your voice will become stronger and you feel more confident.

YOGIC MOVES

Cow-face pose (*gomukhasana*)

Sit with your legs crossed over each other, with the right leg over the left, as shown. The knees should be so adjusted as to be on top of each other. This may be a bit difficult initially

until the body becomes flexible. Now, pass your right arm over the shoulder. Simultaneously, pass the left behind your back, trying to reach your hand towards the other till the fingers are

interlocked behind the back. Again, this may happen only if you are flexible. But daily practice usually manages that. Look ahead, chin up. Continue normal breathing throughout the duration you hold the pose. Repeat for the other side. **Benefits:** This pose improves the posture and rectifies defects. It opens the shoulders and chest, improving breathing, and opens the hips. It is both soothing and stimulating to the mind.

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



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

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MKTG/Online-Print/Eng/V1/June 2014



Festive feast: Make this Christmas and New Year extra-special. Treat your family to a healthy, lip-smacking and sumptuous five-course meal, without adding up calories

Starters

MUSHROOM ORIENTAL

Preparation time: 5 min

Cooking time: 20 min

Ingredients

- Mushrooms: 5 cups
- Green onion: 2 tbsp; thinly sliced
- Garlic: 1 tbsp; chopped
- Soy sauce: 2 tbsp
- Extra virgin olive oil: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup
- White vinegar: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup

Method

Combine oil, vinegar, soy sauce, garlic and mushrooms in a saucepan. Bring to a boil; then, reduce heat and simmer 15 min or until liquid is mostly absorbed, stirring occasionally. Cool, strain, add green onions and serve with toothpicks.

Nutritional value

- Energy: 77.1 kcal
- Protein: 1.99 g
- Carbohydrate: 2.5 g
- Fat: 6.9 g
- Fibre: 0.5 g



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Soup

ROASTED CAPSICUM SOUP

Preparation time: 10 min

Cooking time: 20 min

Ingredients

- Red capsicum: 2
- Tomatoes: 4; medium-sized
- Low-fat milk: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
- Corn flour: 2 tbsp
- Bay leaves (*tej patta*): 2
- Garlic: 1 clove

- Fresh coriander: 2 tbsp; chopped
- Salt to taste

Method

Roast the capsicums on the fire till they turn black. Cool; wash and remove their skin, stem and seeds. Keep aside. Cut tomatoes into quarters and add about 3 cups of water, bay leaves and garlic; boil till tomatoes are soft. Puree the capsicum and tomatoes together to a smooth paste. Mix the corn flour and milk and add to the paste. Add salt and simmer the soup till it thickens. Serve hot garnished with chopped coriander.

Nutritional value

- Energy: 49 kcal
- Fat: 0.5 g
- Protein: 2.6 g
- Carbohydrate: 8.8 g



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Salad

QUINOA AND SMOKED TOFU SALAD

Preparation time: 25 min

Ingredients

- Quinoa: 1 cup; rinsed well
- Smoked tofu: 1 cup; diced
- Yellow bell pepper: 1; small
- Tomatoes: 1 cup; grated
- Cucumber: 1 cup; diced
- Fresh mint: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup; chopped
- Water: 2 cups
- Salt: $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp
- Lemon juice: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup
- Extra virgin oil: 3 tsp
- Garlic cloves: 2; small; minced
- Pepper: $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp; freshly ground

Method

Bring water and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt to a boil in a medium saucepan. Add quinoa and return to the boil. Reduce to a simmer, cover and cook until the water has been absorbed (15-20 min).

Spread the quinoa on a baking sheet to cool for 10 min. Meanwhile, whisk lemon juice, oil, garlic, the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt and pepper in a large bowl. Add the cooled quinoa, tofu, bell pepper, tomatoes, cucumber and mint. Toss well to combine.

Nutritional value

- Energy: 228 kcal
- Fat: 10 g
- Cholesterol: 0 mg
- Carbohydrate: 26 g
- Fibre: 4 g



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Main course

QUICK CHICKEN CURRY

Preparation time: 15 min

Cooking time: 35 min

Ingredients

- Chicken: 400 g; cooked and cut in bite-sized pieces
- Zucchini (*turai*): 2; large; halved lengthways and sliced
- Tomatoes: 3; cut
- Frozen peas: 150 g
- Baby spinach leaves: 100 g
- Onion: 1; sliced
- Garlic: 1 tbsp; finely chopped
- Ginger: 1 tbsp; grated
- Green chillies: 2; deseeded and finely chopped
- Fresh coriander: 4 tbsp; chopped
- Turmeric powder: 1 tsp
- Garam masala: 1 tbsp
- Oil: 1 tbsp
- Brown basmati rice: 150 g; cooked

Method

Heat oil in a large, wide, non-stick saucepan. Add onion and cook covered over medium heat until softened but not browned (8-10 min). Stir in the garlic, ginger and chillies and cook for a further one minute. Add the zucchini and turmeric; pour in 4 tbsp water, then cover and cook over a gentle heat for 10-12 min until the zucchini has softened. Stir continuously. Add tomatoes and stir to combine. Cover and cook for 4-5 min until the tomatoes have softened. Stir in the peas, chicken, spinach, coriander and garam masala with another 4-6 tbsp water. Cook for about 5 min until the chicken is heated through and spinach has wilted. Serve with freshly cooked brown basmati rice.

Nutritional value

- Energy: 427 kcal
- Fat: 13 g
- Carbohydrates: 44 g
- Sodium: 0.13 g



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Dessert

OATS AND ORANGE RABDI

Preparation time: 15 min

Cooking time: 25 min

Ingredients

- Oats: 1½ tbsp
- Orange segments: ½ cup
- Low-fat milk: 2 cups
- Milk powder: 1 tbsp
- Corn flour: ¼ tsp mixed with 2 tbsp low-fat milk
- Sugar substitute: 4 tsp
- Orange flavoured drink: 2 tsp
- Ghee: ¼ tsp
- Orange segments (for garnishing): 1 tbsp

Method

Heat a small non-stick pan and add the orange segments; cook on a medium flame for 2-3 min. Remove from the flame and keep aside to cool. When cool; refrigerate to chill. Heat the ghee; add the oats and sauté on a medium flame for a few seconds. Add the milk, mix well and simmer over a low flame for 8-10 min. Add the milk powder and corn flour paste. Mix well and simmer for 5-7 min or till it thickens, stir continuously. Remove from the flame, add sugar substitute and mix well. Keep aside to cool; when cool, refrigerate to chill. Add the orange drink mix and cooked orange segments to the chilled rabdi and mix well. Serve immediately garnished with orange segments.

Nutritional value

- Energy: 72 kcal
- Fat: 0.8 g
- Protein: 5.1 g
- Carbohydrates: 10.8 g

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



Breathe easy: Stay on guard for chest infections

Respiratory tract infections are a leading cause of morbidity and mortality among silvers. Owing to altered immunity and multiple co-morbid conditions, silvers are prone to more frequent infections. And these infections are generally more severe and present themselves differently compared to younger adults. Pneumonia, influenza and tuberculosis, the long considered scourges of old age, are among the most common health problems that confront people in their later years.

Pneumonia

Pneumonia means infection of the small air sacs and surrounding tissues of the lung. It occurs mostly owing to *Streptococcus pneumonia* bacteria.

Causes

Certain characteristics and conditions make silvers more prone to pneumonia. First, the system of cleansing the airways is not as effective as in younger people. Weakness may make coughing less vigorous. And, with ageing, the immune system gets weakened.

Among silvers, those at greater risk of developing pneumonia are:

- Those whose lungs have been damaged by smoking or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Those whose lungs have been recently irritated by mild infections, such as cold or influenza
- Those who have poor cough reflex or are too weak to cough vigorously
- Those who are undernourished
- Those who are taking drugs, such as cortico-steroids
- Those who have diseases such as heart failure, diabetes or cancer in or near the airway.

Symptoms and diagnosis

The most common symptom is a cough with sputum production. Many minor viral infections cause cough, but the difference is that pneumonia causes thick sputum that is usually yellow or green. It may be blood-tinged or have a rusty colour. Fever and chills are common and chest pain

and shortness of breath may develop. Spectrum of pneumococcal disease can range from a mild self-limiting infection to a severe disease requiring hospitalisation. In most cases, the diagnosis is confirmed by a chest X-ray. Doctors usually obtain a sample of blood and mucus that has been coughed up.

Treatment

Silvers can get very sick, very fast from pneumonia and tend to respond poorly to oral antibiotics. Doctors usually give antibiotics immediately once they suspect pneumonia. Prompt treatment with antibiotics helps reduce the severity of pneumonia and the chances of developing complications, some of which are fatal.

Prevention

Pneumonia can often be prevented by vaccination. The pneumococcal vaccine is given to people over the age of 60. Even if the vaccine does not prevent pneumococcal pneumonia, it usually lessens the severity of infection. Quitting smoking is an essential part of prevention in smokers. For those who cannot cough vigorously, exercises that encourage deep breathing and therapy to clear mucus may help.

Influenza

Influenza (often called flu) is infection with one of the influenza viruses. The virus enters the airways and reaches the lungs when the person inhales tiny droplets (containing the virus) that have been coughed or sneezed out by an infected person. You are more prone to influenza during monsoon because the virus thrives best during the rainy season.

Symptoms

The symptoms usually begin within a day or two after the person becomes infected. At first, the symptoms mimic a cold but quickly become much more severe. The person may begin to feel very tired and weak and lose his appetite. Fever is common during the first few days. Muscle aches and body pain are common. Most symptoms begin to decrease after two or three days if the person does not

For those above 60, pneumonia can often be prevented by vaccination. Even if the vaccine does not prevent pneumococcal pneumonia, it usually lessens the severity of infection

develop complications. A doctor usually diagnoses influenza on the basis of the symptoms and signs.

Treatment

The mainstay treatment for influenza is adequate rest, plenty of fluids and avoiding exertion. Fever and aches are sometimes treated with painkillers or anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Other measures such as decongestants and steam inhalation may help relieve some symptoms. Most people with uncomplicated influenza recover fully and can continue their daily routine. Any silver with influenza with trouble breathing, high fever or experiencing confusion should seek emergency medical treatment.

Prevention

Flu spreads very quickly because an affected person remains contagious for seven days. You can catch the virus by sharing objects like handkerchiefs, cutlery or even cell phones and laptops with an affected person. Wash your hands with soap several times during the course of the day and definitely before eating. Vaccination is the best way to avoid influenza. It also significantly decreases the risk of pneumonia, hospitalisation and death. The traditional injectable form of influenza vaccine is very safe and is to be taken every year.

Tuberculosis

The prevalence of tuberculosis increases in silvers. This may be owing to malnutrition, intake of steroids and immuno-suppressants, increasing age, diabetes mellitus, kidney failure, gastrectomy (partial removal of stomach), alcoholism and smoking. The disease often does not present itself classically. Recognition of tuberculosis is delayed in silvers because of pre-existing respiratory symptoms owing to smoking, heart disease, or other causes. It is common to mistake the cough as smoker's cough and disregard the symptoms. In silvers, there is decreased incidence of fever, cough, haemoptysis (bloodstained sputum) and night sweats. So a high index of suspicion is required to make a diagnosis. Most cases represent reactivation of a previous infection. Thus, X-ray of the chest, sputum analysis, blood test and Mantoux test should be done routinely. The results of the investigations should be correlated with the clinical findings. Most silvers have negative Mantoux test owing to waning immunity. The diagnostic value of the Mantoux test decreases among silvers and around 10 per cent of all active tuberculosis patients have negative Mantoux tests after the age of 65.

Tuberculosis is a treatable and curable disease even in silvers. But the death rate is high in this age group. It may be owing to a failure of clinical response, not taking drugs properly or the side-effects of drugs. It can be success-



Dinodia Photo Library

fully treated by daily drug therapy for a period of nine to 12 months. The Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) recommends anti-tuberculosis drugs for a period of six months with a thrice-a-week dose.

Lung care

We don't often consider the important role our lungs play in keeping us strong and well. It's not until we experience breathing problems that we take heed. The truth is, like the rest of our body, our lungs need daily care and attention. We must keep our natural oxygen apparatus clean with regular physical exercise, *prayanama* (breathing exercises), by avoiding tobacco and getting vaccinated against pneumonia and influenza. Symptoms such as cough, sputum and fever are not normal—stay alert and get yourself checked by your physician. Remember, healthier lungs will ensure a healthier life.

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



HIS LADLE LOVE BY PRATIBHA JAIN

KARE giver!

DR PRAKASH KALMADI • PUNE

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

What happens when a practitioner of Western medicine gets magnetically drawn towards the mystic and mystifying world of Ayurveda and yoga? In Dr Prakash Kalmadi's case, it led to the evolution of KARE Foundation, a centre for complete holistic health that imbibes the spirituality and philosophy of Indian sciences and combines them with Western medicinal precepts.

Sprightly at 63, simple and suave with a subtle sense of humour, Dr. Kalmadi is a man who has reinvented his own life and now inspires people towards health and wellness. His belief in Ayurveda, yoga and healthy eating stems from the powerful impact these have had on his own life. His KARE Ayurveda and Yoga Retreat—a back-to-nature rejuvenation centre tucked away in the mystic Sahyadri range, overlooking the serene waters of Mulshi lake, near Pune—is built on four firm pillars of well-being: meditation, Ayurveda, yoga and the right diet. The aim is to restore balance in mind, body and soul to ensure holistic health.

Back in 2006, when I first met him, I was instantly impressed with his simple and straightforward approach to life. He had invited Jigyasa Giri and myself to visit KARE and create a cookbook with the simple and tasty recipes from their kitchen. Our visit entailed interesting and detailed conversations with Dr Kalmadi and his team, and *Sukham Ayu*, the Ayurvedic cookbook, was born in 2008. Thus, it was but natural for me to think of fea-

turing him in this column as someone who has made a significant breakthrough in popularising the notion of healthy food as tasty food. I hope his two daughters, Pratima and Poonam, will not only treasure, but imbibe and carry on Dr Kalmadi's rich legacy....

Dr Kalmadi, can we start with your childhood and family?

I was born in May 1951 in Pune. My parents are South Kanara Brahmins, also known as Udupi Brahmins, and my father was an allopathic doctor who ran his own dispensary. He was my inspiration and that is perhaps why I entered the medical field.

Before we move into your journey towards Ayurveda, tell us about your education and medical background.

I did my MBBS from KMC (Kasturba Medical College), Manipal. I did my internship in KEM Hospital, Pune, and joined my father's dispensary for my medical practice.

How many years did you practice as an allopathic doctor?

I was a general practitioner for almost 25 years.

What triggered the change?

Looking back, I think that there has to be some correlation to my father's passing away in 1996. Around 1997-98, I joined a few clubs, played lots of golf, but also started smoking and

drinking quite heavily. I became overweight and suffered from bronchitis. It was a downslide. I consulted other doctors as well, but my condition deteriorated by the day.

Ironically, one of my own patients saw my condition and recommended I meet Dr Nair, a famous Ayurvedic doctor from Palghat in Kerala.



Hemant Patil



How did you meet him?

Dr Nair was a consultant at an Ayurvedic hospital and visited Pune once a month. I met him and he immediately started me on Ayurvedic treatment and detoxification. Within the next 10 days, I felt much better. It just changed my entire point of view about medicine and healing.

Is that when you gave up smoking and drinking?

No, I had given both up when my health was steadily deteriorating. When you learn to sacrifice something, the transformation is bound to happen. When you become determined to help yourself, the path opens up. I believe that is how I hap-

pened to first meet Dr Nair and then my beloved guru, B K S Iyengar.

That is so inspiring to hear. So what did you learn from these two stalwarts?

I went to Dr Nair's CNS Chikitsalaya in Kerala to observe and understand the science of Ayurveda. By the way,



I had also dreamt of starting a health farm for a long time. For a while, I was torn between naturopathy and Ayurveda. When I returned from Kerala, my goals became crystal clear. When I met Iyengar Gururji, it was instant bonding with him, what I call a soul connection. I learnt yoga from him and practiced under his very gaze.

It is obvious that life's events were leading you towards this centre!

Absolutely right! In 1991, I bought a small farmhouse in Mulshi, near Pune. At that time, I used to dabble in real estate. But the place was magical and beckoned me. Slowly, I bought more and more land over there until finally I decided to establish an Ayurvedic rejuvenation centre. That is how KARE was born.

It is, indeed, an amazing place—the treatments, yoga sessions and how can I not mention the delicious food, the primary reason for this interview!

The main credit for that goes to my wife, Ragini and Jaswanti, one of the first dieticians at KARE. Ragini was extremely encouraging; she believed in my plans and took over the food aspect at KARE. She researched and painstakingly worked with the chefs to create new and balanced menus..

What about you? Have you always been interested in cooking?

Oh, I was never allowed into the kitchen, either by my mother or wife. But out of my own interest, I joined the Ayurvedic cooking course in Koregaon Park, Pune. I think it was 1998, a year before I started KARE. I firmly believe that without a proper diet, medicine is of no use—and with a proper diet one may not need medicine at all!

I think what makes the experience special for your guests and patients is the amazingly tasty food.

Whenever I visited any health centre, I realised that health is given so much emphasis but the taste of food is compromised. I met foreigners who told me that they were enjoying the treatments but stayed hungry. I was always of the view that health and taste can go hand in hand. How can you heal without eating the right foods happily? Eating food has to be a pleasurable, nurturing experience. It has to please all your senses. I think that is the core philosophy of the kitchen at KARE. Between Jaswanti, Ragini and myself, we worked on making Ayurvedic eating a pleasurable, satisfying experience.

“Health and taste can go hand in hand. How can you heal without eating the right foods happily? Eating food has to be a nurturing experience. It has to please all your senses. That is the core philosophy of the kitchen at KARE”

How does one balance between avoidance and over-indulgence?

The secret mantra is by simply understanding the Ayurvedic principle of moderation. Not too much or too little, neither bland nor spicy, and a blend of all the rasa in a meal—that is the magical formula. Our guests at KARE love the food and are always asking us for food demonstrations and recipes.

So is KARE an Ayurvedic retreat?

KARE is a unique blend of traditional Kerala therapies, Iyengar medical yoga and Ayurvedic diet. This is aided by a highly qualified team of doctors, therapists, nutritionists and paramedics to ensure the best treatments. It

is indeed a dream come true for me and propels me towards greater goals and excellence.

**LENTIL & SPINACH SOOPA
(serves 5-6)**

Ingredients

- Masoor dal: ¼ cup
- Spinach: 1 small bunch (about 1 cup)
- Turmeric powder: a pinch
- Ginger: 1-inch piece; crushed
- Coriander leaves: a fistful
- Juice of half lemon
- Salt (preferably powdered, rock salt) to taste

Tempering

- Ghee (preferably cow's ghee): 1 tsp
- Cumin seeds: ½ tsp
- Asafoetida powder: a pinch
- Curry leaves: 7-8

Method

Cook the masoor dal with turmeric powder to a soft consistency. Add spinach leaves, salt and 2½ cups of water and continue to cook for 5-7 minutes. Blend the dal and spinach mixture along with ginger and coriander leaves. Strain and place on the flame again. Bring to a boil. In a pan, heat ghee for tempering and add the cumin. As it splutters, reduce flame and add the asafoetida and curry leaves. Pour this tempering into the simmering soup. Switch off flame and flavour with lemon juice. Serve hot.

This is a soothing drink during cold winters and much recommended during convalescence.

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

After celebrating your 25th anniversary, celebrate your first.

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





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

harmony
celebrate age

Protect yourself

Activist **Jehangir B Gai** on the pitfalls to watch out for while claiming pension, provident fund and mediclaim

Our tradition places a premium on treating silvers with reverence and affection for the contribution they have made to society in their productive years. Unfortunately, in the present context, the opposite rings true. Though silvers are entitled to certain special privileges in view of their age, in reality, they are the most vulnerable, easily harassed and duped in their sunset years.

Pension policies

Silvers often fall for lucrative pension policies offered by agents who promise a lifetime pension on the payment of a onetime, lump-sum premium. But when the policy is issued, it is often found that the premium is not lump sum, but payable annually. A 70 year-old Mumbai-based gynaecologist was sold such a policy. The representative told her that a onetime premium of ₹ 3 lakh was all she needed to pay, but when the policy reached her she discovered that ₹ 3 lakh had to be paid annually for the next 20 years, after which the promised pension would reach her!

Even though IRDA Protection of Policyholders Regulations 2002 provides for a look-in period of 15 days, during which the insured has the right to return the policy if it does not conform to the representations made at the time of submitting the proposal, in practice most consumers do not realise the necessity of scrutinising the policy, and take the agent's words at face value. Also, the lookin period commences from the date of receipt of the policy document, but consumers often do not bother to retain the envelope, making it difficult to establish the date of receipt of the policy and determine the lookin period. The worst part is that you have to either continue paying the premium annually for at least three years in order to convert the policy to paidup to recover a part of your own money, or forego the entire amount as the premium is forfeited if three annual instalments are not paid. If you are going in for a policy, do so only after reading the fine print carefully.

Provident fund

The provident fund and pension scheme of the Government of India is another problematic area for senior citizens. The funds are often not released on time. There have been several such cases, when even repeated visits to the office of the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner proved futile. However, it is worth recounting how two retired schoolteachers tackled the problem. One of them was deprived of pension for nearly two years after retirement, despite umpteen visits to the office of the Provident Fund Commissioner. It was only when she filed a consumer complaint for deficiency in service that the officials concerned came forward and settled the matter by immediately starting her pension.

It is a sad truth that hospitals fix performance targets for doctors. As a result, doctors subject patients to all sorts of unnecessary tests. Silvers bear the brunt when burdened with unjustified diagnostic procedures

In yet another case, a teacher bombarded officials with repeated applications under the Right to Information Act. She demanded to know the status of her pension application, the reasons recorded for not starting it within the stipulated time frame, and copies of the relevant file notings. Officials ultimately buckled under pressure and released her pension. However, for lack

of guidance, many seniors simply bide their time waiting for their well-deserved dues, instead of resorting to the right measures.

Beware of conmen

Conmen come up with all sorts of gimmicks to dupe senior citizens. A retired person was approached by somebody posing as the representative of an electric supply company. The agent explained that senior citizens could apply for concessional tariff by making an application along with a crossed cheque of ₹ 10, payable to the company. While the cheque was being written, the agent requested water. While the silver citizen went to fetch water, the so-called agent stole one of the lower cheque leaves, which was forged to withdraw a huge sum of money from the bank. The fraud came to light much later.



Unnecessary medical tests

It is a sad truth that hospitals fix performance targets for doctors, measured in terms of the income they generate for the hospital concerned. As a result, to achieve their targets, doctors subject patients to all sorts of unnecessary tests. Here, too, silver citizens bear the brunt when burdened with unjustified diagnostic tests and procedures.

Mediclaim policies

With the spiralling cost of healthcare, more and more people are opting for medical insurance. Some hospitals even have two separate sets of tariffs: higher for those with insurance, and lower for those who are not insured. When a claim for reimbursement is made under a mediclaim policy, the insurance company either repudiates the claim or makes only partial payment under various pretexts. Items billed but considered unnecessary are not paid for, and sometimes the claim is rejected on frivolous grounds by linking the ailment to hypertension and diabetes, which are common these days owing to stressful lifestyles. Thus, despite a mediclaim policy, clients are often deprived of their legitimate claim. Today, nearly 80 per cent of cases in the consumer forums in Mumbai relate to insurance disputes.

Also, the moment a claim is lodged, some insurance companies tend to load the premium, though it is not legally permissible to do so under the policy terms and condi-

tions. They also try to get rid of policies that have become onerous. Kolkata-based Biman Krishna Bose obtained a verdict from the Supreme Court that renewal of a policy cannot be refused (except in case of fraud by the insured), and that the renewal is on the basis of the original terms and conditions.

A silver couple from Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh had a policy running for years. The company kept merrily collecting the premium till there was no claim. The lady was then detected with cancer. The insurance company had to settle the claim, but refused to renew the policy to avoid paying future claims. As it was a joint policy, the husband too lost insurance coverage. After an order from the consumer forum, the insurance company agreed to renew the policy, but loaded the premium by over 400 per cent, so much so that the premium exceeded the sum insured! The objective was to make the policy economically unviable so the insured would voluntarily opt out of the insurance coverage.

Owing to advancing age and deteriorating health, it becomes difficult for senior citizens to do the rounds of courts. Even though there is a directive to expedite cases of senior citizens, it is practically impossible to do so, at least in the district consumer forums. In terms of statistics, the maximum number of consumer complaints filed by senior citizens is against insurance companies, and pertain to denied mediclaim policies. As consumers, we should be aware of our rights and not let anybody take us for a ride.

Gai is a consumer rights activist and winner of the National Youth Award for Consumer Protection



HER Excellency

Articulate and informed, Goa Governor and prolific writer Mridula Sinha has an inclusive vision for India, discovers **Arati Rajan Menon**

Elegant and warm, Goa's new Governor Mridula Sinha is the picture of simplicity as she welcomes us into her office in Raj Bhavan in the picturesque Dona Paula area. As we start speaking, the many layers to her personality reveal themselves—this prolific writer and activist has a definite, inclusive vision for India, where tradition is not sacrificed at the altar of modernity; where three generations walk together in progress and women are celebrated for their uniqueness; and where social progress goes hand in glove with infrastructural advancement. “As a country, even when we lose our way sometimes, we find ourselves again, find the solutions,” she says. “That’s the great thing about India.”

Her idea of India has been forged through years of service. Born in 1942 in the village of Chhapra Dharampur Yadu in Bihar’s Muzaffarpur district, she was encouraged by her father to pursue her education, a rarity for the times. Her husband—lecturer Ram Kripal Sinha—broadened her

intellectual horizons further, encouraging her to complete her master’s in psychology; hone her writing skills, which became apparent at a very young age; and become an educationist. Intellectuals and social activists both, the couple engaged themselves in rural development in Bihar. While her husband entered politics and progressed from the district to the state and eventually national level—he served as a cabinet minister in the Bihar government and minister of state in the Union Government from 1977-79—she began to write extensively, with a focus on community-centred themes and village traditions.

She also intensified her commitment to the country, choosing to focus on social welfare than electoral politics. Indeed, she has served as member of the Delhi Women’s Commission (1996-98), chairperson of the Central Social Welfare Board (1998-2004) and *Prabhari* (in charge) of the BJP Mahila Morcha, before her appointment as Governor in August 2014. With 46 books to her credit, this mother of four (and member of the BJP’s national executive from 1981-2014) also found time to start a magazine

“The family is at the core of all my writings. I lay a lot of emphasis on keeping family bonds intact across the generations despite changed circumstances in a changing world”

With family at an event; former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee touching the feet of a woman while inaugurating 2001 as ‘Women Empowerment Year’ (Sinha seen on left)



Panchva Stambh (Fifth Pillar), which showcases the role and potential of the voluntary sector in the nation's progress—her daughter-in-law runs it today while she is still a regular contributor.

So where does she get the time? Her response: “The busiest person always has time, because he knows how to manage it efficiently.” We were privileged enough to share some of that time with the highly articulate governor; here are some excerpts from the conversation:

Your Excellency, you come from a village in Muzaffarpur, Bihar. However, your childhood was anything but typical.

Yes, I come from a small village and a simple family but my childhood was empowered. The credit goes to my father. He was a teacher and was known by everyone in the village as ‘Master.’ My mother was known as ‘*Masterni*’ because she was his wife. But she was illiterate. My father was insistent that I get an education. I was one of three siblings; my sister and brother were much older. Although my elder sister was somewhat educated, my father regretted that he couldn’t educate her more. He didn’t have the capacity. With me, he decided to do things differently.

He sent you to Balika Vidyapeeth, a residential school—what a progressive step for the times!

Everyone in the village gathered to see me go; they just didn’t understand what it was all about. It was an extremely rich environment. I studied the *Gita*, learnt dance and yoga. We did all the exercises Baba Ramdev teaches today, like *pranayama* and *surya namaskar*. We learnt many life skills as well; we were taught to cook, sweep and swab, clean our bathrooms, wash our own clothes.

Did marriage change things?

I was in the second year of college when I got married. I was fortunate that my husband, father-in-law and mother-in-law were equally supportive. I was actually pampered. Nobody expected me to confine myself to housework and cooking; my husband never asked me to cook for him. I was encouraged to study all the time. The entire family has truly had a hand in my success. Even after I became a mother, my mother-in-law, sister-in-law and mother all chipped in to look after the baby and let me study. I just had to feed the baby!

They seemed to have recognised your potential....



Everyone recognised that I was a *padhne wali bitiya*, a girl who would study. They saw something in me. I was very shy, quiet by temperament. I had no burning ambition. But I suppose there is always an inner voice that spurs you on. Even when I was very young, I would write verse, songs. Later, I wrote my first story in one of my exercise books. My husband, a lecturer and intellectual himself, recognised my talent.

Interestingly, when I graduated, my father wanted me to enrol for my MA. Despite being so liberal, my father-in-law was not very keen as my husband was an MA. He thought man and woman shouldn't be equal; that it may create problems. I was a little sad but then my husband struck upon the perfect solution. 'It's fine,' he told me. 'Go ahead and do your MA; I'll just get a double MA!' And then he went ahead and did his PhD and said, 'Now, how can you be equal to me?'

Your father must have been pleased!

It really was very important for my father that the villagers should know that this girl, one of their own, has finished an MA and become a lecturer. None of the girls in the village had studied so this was an important message to send, that it was indeed possible.

You went on from being a lecturer and educationist to author and activist. How did the transition occur?

Becoming a lecturer gave me great pleasure. But living in a separate city from my husband was difficult. After two to three years, we came back

to be together in Muzaffarpur. Nanaji Deshmukh, a great *neta* of the Jana Sangh, would visit our home. He recommended I start a school to help mould young minds. The result was the Bharatiya Shishu Mandir, which I ran for eight years. It gave me so much joy to shape young minds, teach them our culture and values. Then, my husband entered active politics, becoming an MP and then a minister. When he was a minister I stayed back but later, when he moved to Delhi, he wasn't keeping too well. It was difficult to leave the school behind but I decided to join him. That's when I started writing actively.

Your writing has been nothing short of prolific, with 46 books to your credit. Is it fair to say family and community have always been central to your work?

The family is definitely at the core of all my writings. I lay a lot of emphasis on keeping family bonds intact across the generations despite changed circumstances in a changing world.

That is intrinsic to the idea of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*.

It is very close to my heart too. I have written a lot about elders and their place in society. I say, *sangh chale jab teen peedhiyan, chadhe vikas ki sabhi seedhiyan*. [When three generations walk together, they can scale the stairs of progress.] In fact, I wrote a story called *Dattak Pita* [Adopted Father], which has been made into a film by NFDC [National Film Development Corporation of India]. I have urged people to 'adopt a father', 'adopt a mother'. In my view, elders don't

At a protest march; at a BJP executive meeting with senior leader L K Advani



At work as chairperson of the Central Social Welfare Board; holding *Panchva Stambh*, a magazine she founded



Aaron de Souza

belong in an old-age home, they belong at home. There's a question I've been asking for years now. When you look at all the flats being made for the middle class by agencies like the DDA or private developers, why are there only two bedrooms? If one is for the couple and one for the children, what about the elders? In one fell swoop, you have destroyed the idea of a joint family. Instead of focusing on old-age homes, the government and institutions should focus on educating people to take care of their elders. I endorse the idea of putting old-age homes and creches together.

How does one go about this?

It needs to be done on so many levels. From the beginning, children have to learn respect for their elders; it won't come from slogans and speeches. I once organised a painting competition for children on the theme of family—it was astonishing how few children included their grandparents as part of their family.

I've also been advocating the concept of premarital counselling to this end. By this I don't mean sex education but teaching young women and men how to adjust to a new family with their spouse, in-laws; tackling the many problems that will arise over the years. Both girls and boys don't really know what to expect from marriage; many think marriage is enjoyment. Actually, marriage is a duty. In looking for individual satisfaction, we often forget the larger family picture. What kind of life is it when you only live for yourself? When we were growing up, we never thought we would live apart from our parents. In fact, when we were deciding our son's marriage, I didn't choose my daughter-in-law based on her looks or qualifications. I was impressed because she lived

in a two-bedroom DDA flat with both her *dadi* and *nani* [paternal and maternal grandmothers]. I knew such a family's values would be different. We shouldn't lose our values in the name of modernity.

This brings us to another subject close to your heart: women. Today, while the Indian woman is more independent and has broken so many barriers in terms of employment, she is still the target of discrimination and violence. What is your view on this?

There is a definite contradiction in our society. We urgently need to change society's mindset about women, beginning with how we perceive the girl child. I've tried to do this through my writings and social programmes.

Also, let's look at the idea of equality; equality *ke naam pe humne akhara bana diya hai*. [We have created a battlefield in the name of equality.] Women are not equal; they are special. On the one hand, they are capable, politically aware citizens, on the other, God has empowered them to perform certain special duties. In my extensive interaction with women across India since 1980, I have always laid emphasis on celebrating the birth of the girl child as *Kanya Janmotsav*. Discrimination begins when children are born. People celebrate more when boys are born. They make different sweets. In Bihar, there is a special song sung when boys are born; we have undertaken many drives to see that the birth of a girl is feted in a similar way.

We need a lot of social programmes across India to effect this change in mindset and draw once again from our heritage, which teaches us to

“I believe a governor can do a lot. Most governors are over the age of 70; they have so much experience to share and a lot to contribute to society. Governors don’t need to command or demand, just participate in a process of change”

respect and protect our women. That’s what festivals like Raksha Bandhan are about. Folk songs speak so much about the relationship between brother and sister; when you learn to respect your sister, it should become part of your nature and extend to other women.

Why doesn’t this seem to be happening naturally?

From my perspective as a psychologist, I do feel that there is a lot of resentment among Indian men over the strides women have made. This manifests itself as aggression and violence. There is an inferiority complex among many men. Even husbands who encourage their wives professionally sometimes begin to feel jealous about their success. Have you seen the movie *Abhimaan*? That’s the subject of the film! It was on TV the other day and my husband and I were watching it.

Do you get much time to yourself? How has your routine changed since becoming governor? Please share a day in your life with us.

My mornings start the same way they always have. I wake up between 5 and 6 am; the only thing that’s different is someone gets hot water for me now! Then, I start writing—it’s my time, the *Brahma muhurta*, the time when creativity flows. After that, it’s time for my yoga practice and a morning walk, followed by reading the newspaper and discussing issues with my husband. Then, I get ready for the day and all my meetings. A quick nap after lunch is essential; it keeps me fresh till 10 pm. Afternoons are again packed with meetings and social engagements while evenings are relatively relaxed with some TV. I’m not too interested in serials anymore; we watch the news.

How do you perceive your role as a governor?

People say that it is an ornamental post but I believe a governor can do a lot. Most governors are over the age of 70; they have so much experience to share and a lot to contribute to society. While chief ministers are so busy with all the administrative responsibilities of running a state, governors can look at more societal aspects. They don’t need to command or demand, just interact with organisations and participate in a process of change.

Goa is such a culturally rich place with so many festivals, so much harmony. I have been here before as a visitor; now, it is my home and I want to dedicate myself to the people here, their needs and aspirations. We have received such a warm welcome and the people have great expectations from us. Further, as one of the nine original ambassadors of our Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Swachh Bharat Abhiyan [Campaign Clean India], I plan to organise a host of activities; we have set up a 12-member committee for the path forward. We will look at schools, beaches, colleges, hospitals—it’s not just about going somewhere and cleaning up. It’s about changing attitudes and habits.

Will you still find time to keep writing?

Oh yes! I have written a new novel on Mandodari, Ravana’s wife, and five more books will come in due course. Mandodari was a strong, remarkable woman. A chapter from the book, which is titled *Paritapt Lankeshwari* [Aggrieved Queen of Lanka], was published in a literary magazine and received tremendous response. People are very eager to read it. It will also be translated in English. Then there’s a book of poetry, articles and columns. I’ll never stop writing—for me, it’s like breathing. ✽

MarketSURF!

NEETI VIJAYKUMAR AND PRARTHANA UPPAL DISCOVER 25 STANDOUT PRODUCTS TO SIMPLIFY SILVER LIFE

From nail cutters with a magnifying lens to circulation boosters and door sensors that switch on the lights, here's a list of silver-care products destined to make everyday tasks much, much easier. Best of all, you don't need to leave the house to get them. All these products are available online—and we've picked the ones we thought were most innovative in their simplicity. There are a lot more out there. So draw the shades, get a mug of coffee, and start surfing!



Flipper Big Button Universal Remote Control | Flipper | ₹ 4,505

www.amazon.in

Finally, one simple remote control for all your television-viewing needs! This device is minimalistic and has large buttons to help you change the channel, adjust volume and power on or off. Swipe down to extend the remote control and view the number buttons, set up preferences and store up to 30 'favourite' channels. Best of all, it's a single remote for both the TV set and the set-top box.

No-spill
basin for hair
and care



Inflatable Shampoo Basin | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 1,260

www.oldisgoldstore.com

A smart solution to keeping hair clean and the scalp healthy for the ailing and bedridden, this vinyl-based shampoo basin just needs to be placed under the patient's head and pumped full of air. It comes with its own pump for inflation, and a tube and bag for draining.

Multi-Grip for Opening Lids | EZ Life Co | ₹ 145

www.amazon.com

With this multi-gripper, you can open bottle caps and container lids with minimal effort. It is adjustable to the sizes of most lids; simply twist and turn to open any bottle or jar. It easily replaces dangerous hot-water dips and countertop banging. It's also easy to clean, dishwasher-safe and made from 'eco-friendly' silicone rubber.

An easy way
to open tight
bottle lids in one
quick motion



Multi-Reacher | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 1,260

www.seniorshelf.com

This unique tool is ideal for those who cannot reach out to pick up distant objects and want to avoid stretching and bending. With its magnetic tip, it can easily pick up objects as small as a pin. It can also help you pick up, pull or push objects away from you with minimal effort. The reacher itself is lightweight, easy-to-use and has an anti-slip grip.



Ideal
for people
with arthritis
or limited
mobility

**Compression Stocking Donner |
Truform, Jobst or Comprezon | ₹ 500**

www.oldisgoldstore.com

Pulling up compression or vascular stockings can be quite a time-consuming task, especially if you're doing it all by yourself. This tool, with its innovative design and sturdy and lightweight structure, offers a smooth, effortless way of putting on stockings on both arms and legs, keeping the compression at its maximum and saving time and effort.



**Circulation Booster |
Revitive | ₹ 12,500**

www.tradeindia.com

Here is a one-stop solution for poor circulation, aching joints, painful legs and swollen feet. A single 30-minute session every day can result in significant improvements in your blood circulation. The booster uses an electrical muscle-stimulation technique and improves blood supply, decreasing swelling. It also helps ease aching feet and tired legs.



Lightweight and comfortably fits into your vanity kit

Toe Nail Clipper | ₹ 350

www.oldisgoldstore.com

If you find yourself struggling with regular nail clippers against hardened, bent and overgrown toenails, this tiny contraption that looks like it's from a surgeon's kit is guaranteed to make things easier. With an easy-grip handle and sharp clipper blades, it operates like a pair of scissors, cleanly cutting stubborn toenails.



Pill Cutter | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 350

www.seniorshelf.com

This pocket-sized pill cutter and medicine organiser has an inclined taper hole that makes it easy to cut pills of varying shapes and sizes. A rear-fitted, retracted blade reduces the risk of accidental nicks and cuts. When closed, the super-sharp stainless steel blade cuts tablets exactly in half, for easier swallowing or dosage.



Easy to clean, clips on and off without effort

Foam Toilet Seat Riser | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 1,650

www.seniorshelf.com

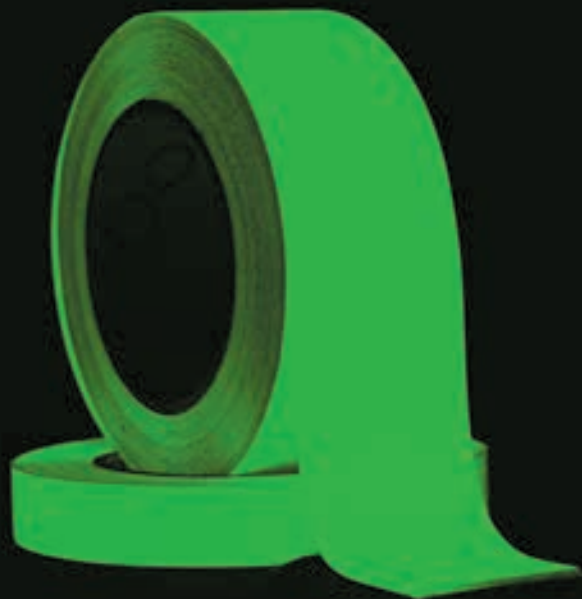
This toilet seat riser is soft and extremely useful, taking the pressure off your knees, back and tailbone while using and rising. The vinyl-based foam padding straps onto the toilet seat. Available in 5 cm and 10 cm options.

Bent Spoon and Fork | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 610www.seniorshelf.com

Silvers with arthritis no longer need to struggle with cutlery and face dining difficulties. The bent spoon and fork come with non-slip grip handles and an adjustable shaft that allows you to customise the angle of incline.

**Glow-in-the-Dark Tape | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 100**www.oldisgoldstore.com

This tape is very useful for senior citizens suffering from incontinence or compromised eyesight. The self-adhesive tapes glow in the dark and can be used around the house, on stairs, sharp edges, or on the way to the washroom, to create a highlighted path in low-light areas and at night.



The detachable magnifying lens makes it easy to carry around

**Magnifying Lens Stand with Nail-Cutter | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 394**www.ebay.in

This intelligent tool is designed for seniors with low vision who struggle to trim their nails. It comes with a detachable 2x power magnifying acrylic attached via magnet to the nail cutter. With a magnified view of the nail, you can evenly cut those overgrown edges effortlessly.



Plastic Writing Ring | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 299

www.seniorshelf.com

Get back to finishing crossword puzzles or writing journal entries with this innovative plastic ring, made especially for those with limited finger dexterity. One ring fits on the pencil or pen, while the other slips on to your thumb to give you a firm, immovable grip without straining your finger muscles too much. Available in different diameter sizes.



Telephone Handle | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 530

www.seniorshelf.com

Just slip your palm in the handle loop while talking and you don't need to fear dropping the phone any more. It's designed especially for arthritis patients for a stress-free chatting experience.



Bed Pull-Up Strap | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 410

www.seniorshelf.com

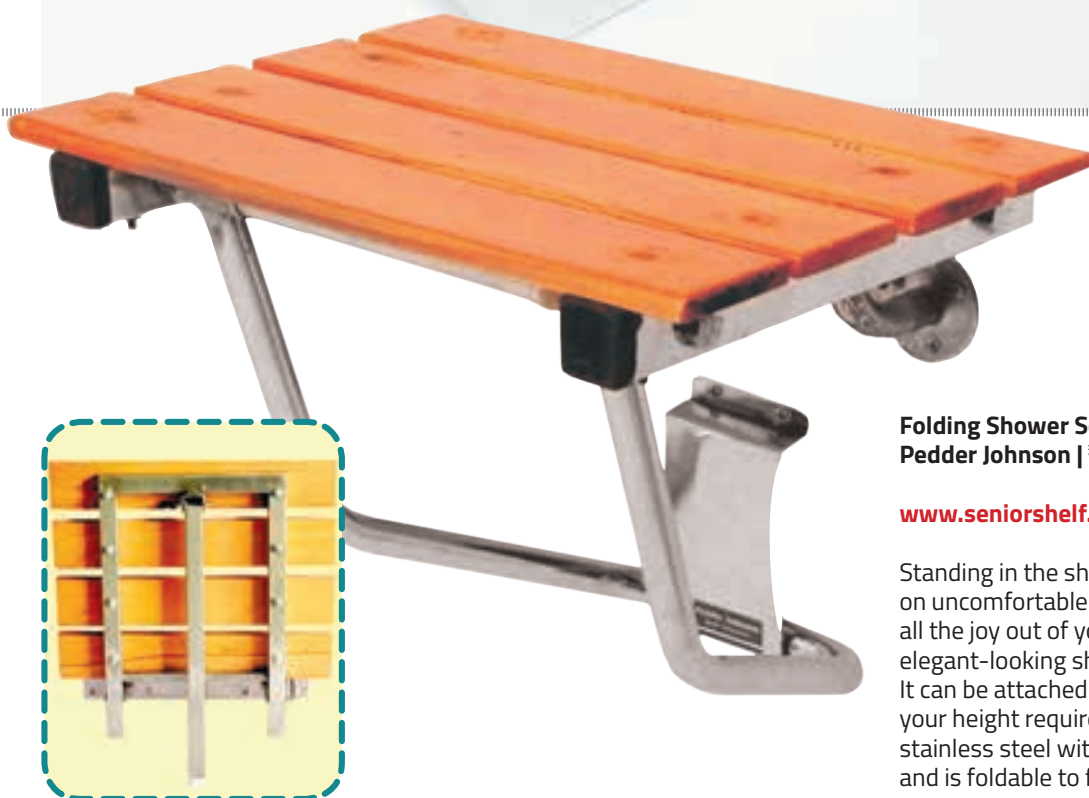
Getting in and out of bed is now much easier with this simple strap. Attached to the foot of your bed, you can use it to pull yourself out of bed unassisted. It's light and has a loop for easy grip.

Made of cotton webbing that is soft on hands

Arthwriter Hand Aid | Maddak Ableware | ₹ 660

www.amazon.com

Its large, ball-shaped body offers you a comfortable and firm grip on pens, pencils, spoons or even toothbrushes—all of which can fit in the hole in the middle. Fasten the object with the screw clamp on the side so that it doesn't move or slip.



Folding Shower Seat | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 4,700

www.seniorshelf.com

Standing in the shower or sitting on uncomfortable chairs can take all the joy out of your bath. Get this elegant-looking shower seat instead. It can be attached to the wall to suit your height requirements, is made of stainless steel with a wooden seat, and is foldable to free up space.



**FutureCall FC-1007 Phone |
Future Call | ₹ 2,230**

www.amazon.com

For silvers in the early and middle stages of Alzheimer's or dementia, this is like speed dial, with pictures. You can store a phone number and the picture of the person for each dialling button and reprogramme the emergency button (by default programmed to 911) to the number of a home nurse or carer, for instance. The data is backed up even if the phone is unplugged, and there's a lock button to prevent deleting data by accident. With an option to amplify sound by up to 40 decibels, it's also hearing-aid compatible.

One-touch
picture buttons
for simple dialing,
flashing red light for
incoming
calls and easily
wall-mountable

Adjustable Foot Stool | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 4,020

www.seniorshelf.com

The adjustable foot stool is the ultimate solution for achy leg muscles and beating fatigue. The device rises to three heights and gives your feet and legs options for total comfort, improving circulation, and resting and soothing sores. The frame is lightweight and folds flat when not in use.



Air Bed | EC | ₹ 2,750

www.oldisgoldstore.com

This is a must-have for the bedridden, helping prevent painful and infection-prone bed sores. Active air beds with pumps such as these can even be used on top of a regular mattress. The air bed contains air cavities that fill up alternately in five to six-minute cycles, ensuring no part of the body is constantly in touch with the mattress, and enabling better air circulation. The entire assembly consists of one thin mattress (washable), tubes and an air pump that works on electricity.



Derby Tap Turners | Gordon Ellis and Co | ₹ 1,590

www.amazon.com

We've all been through it: struggling to open tight taps, sometimes with oily or unclean hands. Fitting these tap turners could save you much of this energy and eliminate the exasperation. A pair comes colour-coded for hot and cold, fits on to both crosshead and crystal taps, has a rubber handle, and is made of lightweight plastic.



Attach your home, car or wardrobe keys to this holder; this way you won't lose them!

Key Holder | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 330

www.senionshelf.com

If you find yourself struggling to open doors with a regular key, this key holder is meant to make things easier for you. It's designed especially for people with limited hand strength or dexterity. With an easy-grip handle, the holder can take up to three keys and provides several grasping positions and excellent leverage for turning keys in a lock.



Home Easy Remote Control Transmitter – Door Sensor | Home Easy | ₹ 826

www.amazon.co.uk

This intelligent product is a must-have for those living alone or suffering from incontinence. It is ideal to create a lighted path to the bathroom or to light a room as soon as a door opens. One just needs to screw the magnetic switch to the door and it will automatically turn on a light when opened, reducing the risk of falls and increasing safety. The light stays on for a programmed interval between two and 10 minutes.

Switches off lights on its own when not in use



Button Hook and Zip Puller | ₹ 553

www.amazon.com

This cleverly designed device assists in button and zip-fastening and is of great use for seniors with minimum dexterity or arthritis patients. It comes with a cushioned handle with flexible ribbing that adapts to any grip. Using a loop hook, it simply passes through buttonholes and clips around the button, which can then be pulled through. The C-hook for zips slips into the tab of the zip and provides a comfortable grip to pull the zip up or down, as required. Ideal for seniors with limited mobility or the use of only one hand.

Indian Toilet Conversion | Pedder Johnson | ₹ 1,830

www.seniorshelf.com

If you find it painful and inconvenient to use the old Indian-style toilet at home, this is meant for you. Especially designed for those with knee or back problems, obesity and arthritis, this easily portable device can be placed over almost all pan commodes. The convertor can be adjusted to suit your height and enables you to sit comfortably without any strain on the joints.



Contacts

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The magnificent Brihadeesvara temple in Thanjavur

divine design

With its soaring temple tower, spectacular sculptures and exquisite engineering feats, Brihadeesvara temple in Thanjavur is the crowning glory of Chola architecture

✦ 📷 Susheela Nair



Strikingly impressive, the tower of Brihadeesvara temple dominates the skyline as we wind our way to Thanjavur. It is our first stop on a temple-hopping spree in the Cauvery Delta, the cultural heartland of Tamil Nadu, scattered with vestiges of the golden age of the Cholas. Built by Raja Raja I, the greatest of Chola monarchs in the 10th century, the breathtaking Brihadeesvara temple is the first in a series of three similar temples built by successive kings, the others being Gangaikondacholapuram temple and Airavateswara temple at Darasuram, all UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

We make our way to Tanjore Hi, a bright blue heritage boutique hotel, which was once a colonial bungalow. The historic background of the city has been interpreted in a contemporary way here, with an infusion of design elements that speak volumes of Thanjavur's traditions and culture. As we set out to explore the Periya Kovil (Big Temple) as it is popularly known, our guide Raja, a walking encyclopaedia on Cauvery Delta, enlightens us on the genesis of Thanjavur. "Thanjavur or Thanjan's *ur* is named after the demon Thanjan. According to a legend, he was slain by Lord Vishnu on the banks of the Cauvery. As he lay dying, Thanjan prayed to Lord Vishnu that a town of

great beauty emerge at the spot where he was killed, and that it be named after him. Thus, Thanjan's *ur* was born."

Two exquisitely sculpted entrance archways herald a welcome to the temple complex, surrounded by a dry moat. We observe that these two entrance towers are shorter and less ornate than the one over the sanctum. The outer façade of the inner gateway features two enormous *dwarapalakas* (doorkeepers) carved out of single stones. They lead to a vast courtyard in which the main temple stands. Separated by a corridor and facing the sanctum is a huge 25-tonne monolithic Nandi. It is rumoured that the sculpture of Nandi continued to grow until a nail was driven into its back to stem the growth.

Regardless of the unobtrusive sandstone-colour finish, the temple looks grand. Inside the sanctum stands the 4-m-tall Shiva *lingam*, whose circumference is all of 7 m. While circumambulating the corridors around the sanctum, we observe large mural paintings depicting Shiva's marriage to Parvati. The *vimana* (temple tower) over the sanctum is a pyramidal structure, soaring 216 ft with 14 storeys. The base supporting the tower is 96 sq ft, and is said to have survived six earthquakes. A beautifully carved octagonal cupola with a gilded *kalasa* (bowl) crowns the *vimana*. It's

A mural painting adorns the temple wall; (opposite page) an intricate carving of Goddess Lakshmi; the Rajaraja Museum and Art Gallery showcases rare antiques





The walls of the courtyard are lined with colonnaded passageways; the one on the northern wall is said to be the longest while on the west are 108 *linga* brought from Varanasi and panels from the Maratha period

said that the gigantic cupola, carved out of a single stone that weighed 80 tonne, had to be hauled across a 6-km-long ramp, in an engineering feat similar to that employed in the pyramids of Egypt. With such complexities of architecture, little wonder that the Big Temple is regarded as the crowning glory of Chola architecture.

Interestingly, at no time of the day does the *gopuram* cast a shadow. While we exulted over the exuberance of sculptures on the sides of the *vimana* and the numerous niches, small pillars and balcony windows framing many of the carvings, our guide pointed out a European figure carved on the *vimana*, probably an ominous sign, signalling the imminent arrival of the British. The profuse inscriptions at the base of the main shrine, depicting amazingly detailed information about the organisation of the temple, held us spellbound. What impressed us most was that the king had the names and addresses of all the court dancers, musicians and poets recorded into the temple wall—a testimony to his patronage of the arts. The temple has sculptures of Shiva, Vishnu and Durga on three sides of the massive plinth. Shiva appears in various forms: as a

dancer with 10 arms; seated with a sword and trident; and bearing a spear. In the first-ever recording of a classical dance form, one can see carvings of dancers in all the 81 Bharatanatyam poses on the outer wall. Outside, the walls of the courtyard are lined with colonnaded passageways; the one on the northern wall is said to be the longest while on the west, behind the temple, are 108 *linga* brought from Varanasi and panels from the Maratha period. We tarried awhile at the Archaeological Museum, which has interesting sculptures, and photographs illustrating the temple prior to restoration. Charts and maps detailing the history of the Chola Empire are also on display.

Among the shrines of Varaha, Ganesha, Subramanya, and Chandikesvara, the beautiful Murugan (Subramanya) temple, built like a chariot, deserves special mention. A later addition, it was probably built by the Nayak kings of Madurai. This is a small and exquisite temple, full of sculptural ornamentation. It has a base finely decorated with sculptures of dancers and musicians. Also interesting is the shrine to Saint Karuvurar, which resembles a cave. One can spend endless hours gawking at the stunning





A traditional Tanjore painting made of glittering gold foil depicting Krishna and Radha

Opposite page (clockwise from top left): The Bell Tower; the unique head-nodding dolls; *veena*-making in progress; the colossal Nandi inside the Brihadeesvara temple

stonework and sculptural details at the temple. But there are other attractions to explore in Thanjavur as well, like the Rajaraja Museum and Art Gallery. The Royal Palace surrounded by massive fortifications is just a hop, skip, and jump away from the Brihadeesvara temple. Built by the Marathas and Nayaks, it is a fascinating building with huge corridors, tall observation towers and ornate stucco work, with fresco painting adorning the walls and ceilings and an underground tunnel. Located in the Palace Complex, the Royal Museum and Serfoji Memorial Hall showcases rare antiques belonging to the Maratha royal family, including manuscripts, weapons, royal robes, etc. The gallery has a superb collection of Chola bronze icons, and pieces of art, including unique representations of Shiva as Nataraja, dating back to the 9th and 12th centuries. Nearby is the spectacular Bell Tower. Set around the courtyard of the Nayak palace, this contains a large collection of bronze and stone carvings assembled from many sites in the Cauvery Delta. Also in the Palace is the

factfile

GETTING THERE

By air: Trichy, the nearest airport, is 54 km away.

By rail: Overnight trains from Chennai are the most convenient.

By road: Thanjavur is well connected with Trichy, Madurai, Chennai and Kanyakumari with inter-city buses, taxis and tourist buses plying frequently.

BEST TIME TO VISIT

Music connoisseurs congregate in Thiruvayaru, 13 km away, in January for the Thyagaraja Music Festival, which commemorates the birth anniversary of Thyagaraja, celebrated musician and composer. Thanjavur is a great place to be during the Tamil harvest festival Pongal, which is also celebrated in January. If you go in April-May, you can witness the 18 day-long Chitra Brahmotsavam festival.

ACCOMMODATION

Tanjore Hi: Tel - 91 93644 55440

Email: booking@duneecogroup.com

Hotel Tamil Nadu: Tel - 04362-231325

WHAT TO BUY

You can shop for bronze statues, Tanjore paintings and decorative Thanjavur copper plates with silver and brass relief work, wood carvings and bronze and brass casting at Poompuhar Handicrafts run by the Tamil Nadu government. You can also find an array of classical *veena* and colourful papier-mâché dolls, the Thanjavur *thalattibommai* (head-nodding or dancing dolls), which nod their heads like Bharatanatyam dancers.

Sangeetha Mahal, an acoustically perfect music hall. The Maratha Durbar Hall flaunts enormous pillars, fabulous stucco paintings and a fresco-painted ceiling.

Close by is Saraswati Mahal library with an eclectic collection of palm leaf and paper manuscripts in Indian and European languages. Rare books on arts and science, many of them on palm leaves, can be found here. A treatise on medicine and commentaries on works from the Sangham period, the earliest literature of the South, along with the *Ramayana* written on palm leaves, are some of the highlights of the museum, which left us with a rich sense of cultural pride. ✨

FESTIVE FERVOUR

NAGALAND is celebrating its unique Hornbill Festival from 1 to 10 December in all its grandeur. Named after the Greater Indian Hornbill, a much-revered bird in the state, the festival is an annual cultural extravaganza of

the warrior tribes of the region against the backdrop of an idyllic mountain range at Kisama. Known as the festival of festivals, it's the best time to appreciate beautiful traditional arts and savour delectable food.





DECEMBER FESTIVALS TO WATCH OUT FOR

Konark Festival

When: 1-5 December

Where: Konark Temple, Orissa

International Sand Art Festival

When: 1-5 December

Where: Konark, Orissa

Tansen Samaroh

When: 5-8 December

Where: Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh

Winter Festival

When: 29-31 December

Where: Mount Abu, Rajasthan

Madras Music Season

When: 15 December to 15 January (approx)

Where: Chennai, Tamil Nadu



Shilbhada Datta

Come Christmas, the narrow by-lanes of Bow Barracks—a small Anglo-Indian community of 130 families living off the Central Avenue in Kolkata—will come alive with a nativity scene, twinkling lights, holiday wreaths and silver bells. Christmas eve is extra special with residents indulging in a fun-filled jamboree by singing carols through the streets and distributing scrumptious, homemade plum and wine cakes. The merry-making continues till the beginning of the New Year. Built in 1911 by the Calcutta Corporation for housing its *babu* (middle-ranking)

workforce, Bow Barracks was converted into a garrisons' mess during World War I and II.

TRADITION

Today, along with the mainstay Anglo-Indians, the small hub with an old-world charm is home to generations of Gujarati Jains, Bohra Muslims, Bengali Hindus and Chinese Christians. Incidentally, the residents apparently resented the Victor Bannerjee and Moon Moon Sen starrer *Bow Barracks Forever* (2007) for showing the community in a bad light!

—Shilbhada Datta



The ancestral homes in Kodagu district of Karnataka, called *ainmane*, are architectural symbols that bear testimony to the strength and vitality of the Kodava people. An *ainmane* has a veranda with carved square wooden pillars tapering upwards and wooden seats between the pillars; ornately carved windows and door frames; and specific areas earmarked for rituals and festivities.

Bengaluru-based couple Boverianda Chinnappa, 80, and Nanjamma Chinnappa, 79, have documented the surviving ancestral homes of all the communities in Coorg in *Ainmanes of Kodagu*, published by Niyogi Books. "It was while translating our grandfather Nadikerianda Chinnappa's *Pattole Palame*, a collection of Kodava folk songs written in Kannada, into English that we came across these beautifully carved traditional



HERITAGE

houses," says Nanjamma. "We wanted to record them for posterity's sake."

Incidentally, *Pattole Palame*, published in 1924, is considered the earliest collection of folklore of any Indian community written in an Indian language by an Indian. According to the couple, only 40 per cent of traditional houses in Coorg are in liveable condition today, with most being as old as 150 to 250 years. Many have caretakers, with the clan staying somewhere nearby. The rest of

the *ainmane* have made way for modern concrete homes, while some lie dilapidated and in ruin.

Based on extensive research from 2003 to 2008, the book also looks at the unique customs, traditions, festivals and rituals associated with the Kodavas. Of the more than 1,000 *ainmane* they visited, only 700 are featured in their book.

Talking about the selection procedure, Chinnappa, who was working as an engineer in Canada before coming back to India and immersing himself in research, says, "Our criteria was simple—the *ainmane* needed to have traditional architectural features, besides being still functional with the clan meeting there at least once annually to partake in festivities and rituals." In turn, the community has responded warmly, flooding the couple's inbox with mails from around the world.

—Srirekha Pillai



Veteran classical vocalist Padma Shri Aruna Sairam on the Madras Music Season

“From a humble beginning in 1927, the Madras Music Season has become a force to reckon with in Carnatic music. The festival is culturally embedded in society; no artist worth their salt can afford to miss the *kutcheri* season. Music lovers from around the world make a pilgrimage to Chennai during the season. For connoisseurs, it is as important to see and hear as it is to be seen and heard. I’m astounded by the sheer magnitude—over 1,000 artists performing in more than 2,000 concerts in a span of around a month. For me, the festival is both pleasure and pursuit.”

—as told to Sai Prabha Kamath



10-string wonder

Last month, Mumbai had the rare opportunity to witness a live performance by legendary America-based Indian vocalist-violinist L Shankar. He displayed his versatility in playing diverse musical genres such as jazz, rock and Indian classical with his self-designed, unique, 10-string stereophonic double violin that covers the entire orchestral range such as double bass, cello, viola and violin. Renowned guitar virtuoso Mike Albert of Megadeth featured with him.



A LANDSCAPE OF MEMORIES

ARCHITECTURE IS A BACKDROP FOR CELEBRATING LIFE. WITH THIS THEME, *CELEBRATING HABITAT - THE REAL, THE VIRTUAL & THE IMAGINARY*, A RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION OF EMINENT ARCHITECT B V DOSHI TRACING SIX DECADES OF HIS OEUUVRE, WAS INAUGURATED LAST MONTH AT NGMA, DELHI. THE EXHIBITION, WHICH SHOWCASED AN EXHAUSTIVE SERIES OF DOSHI’S SPATIAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN DIVERSE MODES OF VISUAL EXPRESSIONS, WAS CURATED BY HIS GRANDDAUGHTER KHUSHNU PANTHAKI HOOF.



SHILLONG IS WIDELY REGARDED AS THE ROCK CAPITAL OF INDIA WITH BANDS SUCH AS SOULMATE, ABERRANT AND AN ALL-GIRL BAND AFFLATUS (*IN PIC*)

Rock on!



Shilbhadra Datta

He's the oldest rock star of Shillong and adoringly called the 'Bob Dylan of India'. In a region marred by political turmoil, veteran guitarist and singer Lou Majaw's renditions come as a breath of fresh air. Inspired by iconic singer-songwriter Dylan's poetry, Majaw has relentlessly focused on the impact of western music—especially Dylan's poetry and music—on the life of the common man. "Bob Dylan is


a man who changed people's way of looking at things, which took the form of storytelling from folk music and the blues," says Majaw.

MUSIC

Unconventional in attire and attitude, Majaw often makes heads turn with his long grey ponytail, goatee, miniscule hot pants, non-matching pair of socks and leather wristbands, strumming the guitar. He is also the brain behind the annual Bob Dylan Festival—a ritual

in Shillong every 24th of May since 1972—that draws Dylan devotees from all over the world. "Contemporary poetry and music are going from strength to strength; there's a little con-'fusion' about fusion though," he says with a smile. For Christmas and New Year, Majaw has concerts lined up in Delhi, Bengaluru and Mumbai to raise funds for flood victims and the rehabilitation of militant youths in the Northeast.

—Shilbhadra Datta

A photograph of an elderly man with a grey beard and a young girl with dark hair playing in a pond. The man is in the water, wearing a dark shirt, and the girl is sitting on a wooden dock, wearing a white dress. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The water is dark blue and the dock is made of wooden planks.

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'Twas the night before Christmas

Published in 1823, this poem by **Clement Clarke Moore** redefined our image of Santa Claus, associating him with sleigh, reindeers and even the portly frame!

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;

The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled down for a long winter's nap,

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,

With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;

"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my hand, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.

His eyes—how they twinkled! His dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;



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The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook, when he laughed like a bowlful of jelly.

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread;

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO ALL A GOOD-NIGHT!



AUTHORSPEAK

Trailblazer!

Journalist, author and social activist **Kamla Mankekar** entered the newspaper world in 1950 when it was an exclusively male turf. In the preface to her book *Breaking News: A Woman in a Man's World* (Rupa; ₹ 395; 366 pages), Mankekar writes, "No woman employee before me had entered the portals of that prestigious institution—not even as a secretary or telephone operator. I never let this fact constrain me—except when it came to the 'inconveniences' in the large building: there were no toilets for women!"

Mankekar worked with *The Times of India* in Delhi for 12 years and then moved to the *Indian Express* in Mumbai for the next five. Appointed the first chairperson of the Delhi State Commission for Women, she also played a central role in founding many organisations, including the Consumer Guidance Society (CGS) in Mumbai, and has been a long and active member of the All India Women's Conference (AIWC). Further, she has written and edited seven books, including *Decline and Fall of Indira Gandhi*, authored jointly with her late journalist-husband D R Mankekar. In her brutally honest memoir *Breaking News*, Mankekar recounts her struggle to establish herself in a man's world while recording pivotal cultural and social changes sweeping newly independent India.

Calling herself "quite ancient", the 86 year-old author, who is now based in California with her youngest daughter Purnima, son-in-law Akhil Gupta and granddaughter Deeya, shares some fascinating vignettes from her long and eventful career in an email interview with **Srirekha Pillai**.

Your book captures even the most minute details about your career and life. Did you keep a journal or is it plain good old memory?

I had some notes, clippings of articles I wrote over the years, and of course my good old memory to bank on. Often my young friends and colleagues would listen with rapt attention to my stories about my early years in journalism.

"Wow," they would say, "How fascinating! You must write your memoirs." My children, too, who had watched me working all hours of the day and night—on duty at editorial shifts and reporting assignments, interviewing celebrities—had wondered about my matter-of-fact attitude to my experiences, whether it was meeting Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara, conversing with Prithviraj Kapoor, talking to Svetoslav Roerich or interviewing Indira Gandhi. When I retired from active journalism, they joined my colleagues in exhorting me to write my memoirs.

You mention Ramnath Goenka's 'Narad' ways, Frank Moraes's fondness for women photojournalists, and cartoonist Shankar's trysts with young interns. Weren't you wary of upsetting their families?

The references I make to individual players, I believe, are not complimentary or derogatory and are based on my impressions and those of colleagues at that time and, to my mind, are not objectionable.

You've had the opportunity of interviewing many remarkable people. Which is that one interview that holds a special place in your heart?

There are many such interviews for various reasons. The interview that left me sad and shaken was with Gauri, an actor with Prabhat Studio, who had acted in many movies including *Tukaram*, which had earned a fortune for the company. When I went to meet her, she was living in a *kholi* in a Pune slum, and had taken up part-time domestic jobs to earn a living!

When I tried to set up an interview with Sulochana, a great beauty and front-ranking star of her time, she did not want to receive me at her residence but was willing to meet elsewhere. When I finally met her at her house, I could understand her reluctance—plaster was peeling off the walls, a piece of an old bed sheet had been cut into a table cover and old sari pieces were used to curtain the windows in her spotlessly clean house.

Yet another interview that left me disturbed was the one with Bal Gandharva, the brightest star of the Marathi stage in its golden era. It was believed that Gandharva, who played princesses of yore in mythological plays at a time when women did not act, set women's fashion in saris, jewellery and hairstyles. When I went to meet this legendary figure, he was bedridden with no close family to take care of him. Thumri singer Amir Bai, also old and with limited financial resources, had engaged a young man to help him with his daily requirements. Gandharva had been sanctioned a monthly pension of ₹ 300 by the Maharashtra government, which was not enough to take care of his daily needs. About a month after my interview mentioning his financial distress was published in *The Sunday Standard*, I received a call from Gandharva thanking me for the article as the government had decided to double his pension.

Similarly, interviews with theatre artist Keshavrao Date, ruggedly handsome Cuban freedom fighter Ernesto Che Guevara, leftist Cambridge graduate Renu Chakravarty, and Soviet painter Svetoslav Roerich among others stand out in my head.

You also mention receiving messages from your husband after he passed away, conveyed through neighbour Samuel in Delhi's Gulmohar Park. Did it leave you unnerved? Also, as the messages stopped coming abruptly, do you feel a lack of closure?

No, the messages did not unnerve me; in fact, for a long time after his death I felt his presence around me; and the messages did not stop abruptly. Remember, he had warned Samuel. "I am going away Samuel," he had said!

From writing memoirs to stretch-and-flex classes, you talk about various activities for the brain and brawn for seniors in the US. With nuclear families becoming the norm in India too, don't we need to upgrade our support system for silvers?

Yes, seniors need care, love and respect. But conditions and attitudes in our society have changed: we lack re-



sources and do not think this is an important issue; peace and dignity is what one desires as end approaches a life.

You've been at the forefront of social movements like the Consumer Guidance Society and the Delhi State Commission for Women. How gratifying was the experience, despite the handicaps mentioned in the book?

Yes, it was gratifying and frustrating at the same time; but it was something that was done as a matter of course. The main objectives of the CGS were to create awareness of the prevailing market and trade practices, and consumers' right to fair return for their money. We were aware how coloured sawdust was being added to chilli powder, dried papaya seeds to black pepper and poisonous colours to turmeric powder. Samples

were collected from areas where such practices were rife, enabling the food and drug control department to take action against the offending shops. It was gratifying to see the CGS entering the world arena and being recognised by the International Union of Consumer Organisations. Another gratifying development was the formation of the Fair Trade Practices Association (FTPA) by prominent industrialists of Bombay. I feel this was a reaction to CGS activities. It's good to know that the CGS, which a couple of us launched, is still going strong in Bombay.

As for being the first chairperson of the Delhi State Commission for Women, in no time I realised the impotency of a body created with grandiose promises and much fanfare, but without the means to initiate action. Though the act provided for five members, only one member, Mridula Sinha, the president of BJP's Mahila Morcha, was appointed. We did whatever was best under those trying circumstances.

What are your hobbies?

I love to listen to music, Indian semi-classical, old masters and *Gurbani*, which brings pleasure and peace.

Do you have plans for another book?

Yes, if my health permits.

Our history is replete with instances of quests. From Alexander the Great's quest for power to Gautam Buddha's quest for enlightenment and Mahatma Gandhi's quest for non-violence, each person has walked a different path. **Chris Guillebeau**, who travelled through 193 countries in the world before his 35th birthday, talks about ordinary people who have accomplished extraordinary feats in **THE HAPPINESS OF PURSUIT** (Pan Macmillan; ₹ 599; 292 pages). His collection of stories, however, is not woven together only to titillate our daydreams; Guillebeau offers practical advice on everything, from how to recognise a worthy quest to funding one. Along the way, he shares 50 remarkable stories of passion that are as diverse as



humanity itself. While some deal with exploration and travel, others are tales of pursuit of athletic and artistic excellence; yet others are about battling injustice and threats to the environment. Of the cast, those that stand out are an environmental activist who lived atop a tree for 400 days to protest unsustainable logging; a 54 year-old who ran 300 marathons in over 100 countries; a DJ who produced the world's largest symphony after 28 years and many failed attempts; a mom who set out to cook one dish from every country in the world for her daughter as she couldn't travel the world; and the 70 year-old Tokyo sushi chef who perfected his culinary skills over the years for what he calls his only passion in life—turning out that perfect meal. The message is clear: Just do it!

Set in 19th century Charleston, **THE INVENTION OF WINGS** (Tinder Press; ₹ 266; 373 pages) is a brilliant portrayal of two extraordinary women whose lives intersect in strange melancholic ways. It starts with Sarah Grimke's 11th birthday, when Hetty 'Handful', the slave, is presented as her personal handmaid. While their complex relationship has undercurrents of care and concern, it is burdened and marred with guilt and tension owing to their different worlds that run parallel for 35 years until they converge to a poetic finish.

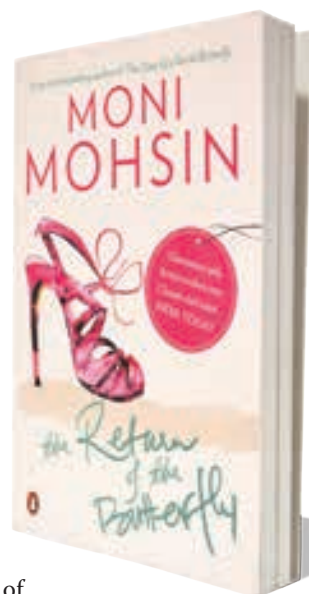
Mixing fact and fiction, **Sue Monk Kidd** takes us through this remarkable journey of two women who show tremendous grit and resiliency in appalling situations. The relationship between the duo is unusual in that it is not an outlandish friendship but a subtle leap of faith to turn to each other when needed. "My body might be a slave, but not my mind. For you, it's the other way round," says Handful to Sarah, and therein probably lies the contrast between the two powerfully engaging characters as well as the crux of the story.



In **THE RETURN OF THE BUTTERFLY** (Penguin Books; ₹ 299; 231 pages),

Moni Mohsin brings back the adorable, silly and spoilt socialite 'Butterfly' in the third instalment of the series. In this unconventional book, Mohsin invents a genre of her own with her seasoned writing style. While it could be read as a tongue-in-cheek take on political events in Pakistan, it also has all the ingredients of a chick-flick, to be enjoyed with a cuppa.

Mohsin's strength lies in her ability to create a credible yet crazy world with funky, yet real characters we meet every day. She also crafts her own refreshingly unique language of purposely messed-up English mixed with Hindi. It may take a bit to warm up to the Butterfly's world and language but, thereafter, the events have you hooked. The book could as well be treated as a reference material for any writer of satire. Mohsin's take on the political establishment works well; the dark humour seems effortless. Though the book reads like a disparate set of events put together at times, it is hard not to fly along with the lovable 'Butterfly'.



The divine within

Unlock inner compassion to evolve into your own prophet, urges **Satish Kumar**

Sometimes the words spirituality and religion are confused, but spirituality and religion are not the same thing. Politics should be free from the constraints of religion but should not be free of spiritual values. The word religion comes from the Latin root *re-ligio*, which means to bind together with the string of certain beliefs. A group of people come together, share a belief system, stick together and support each other. Thus religion binds you, whereas the root meaning of spirit is associated with breath, with air. We can all be free spirits and breathe freely. Spirituality transcends beliefs. The spirit moves, inspires, touches our hearts and refreshes our soul.

When a room has been left closed, doors and windows shut and curtains drawn, the air in the room becomes stale. When we enter the room after a few days we find it stuffy so we open the doors and windows to bring in fresh air. In the same way, when minds are closed for too long we need a radical avatar, a prophet, to open the windows so that our stuffy minds and stale thoughts are aired again. A Buddha, a Jesus, a Gandhi, a Mother Teresa, a Rumi, a Hildegard of Bingen appears and blows away the cobwebs of closed minds. Of course we don't need to wait for such prophets: we can be our own prophets, unlock our own hearts and minds and allow the fresh air of compassion, of generosity, of divinity, of sacredness to blow through our lives.

Religious groups and traditions have an important role to play. They initiate us into a discipline of thought

and practice; they provide us with a framework; they offer us a sense of community, of solidarity, of support. A tender seedling needs a pot and a stick to support it in the early stages of its development, or even the enclosure of a nursery to protect it from frost and cold winds. But when it is strong enough it needs to be planted out in the open so that it is able to develop its own roots and become a fully mature tree. Likewise religious orders act as nurseries for seeking souls. But in the end we each have to establish our own roots and find divinity in our own way.



There are many good religions, many good philosophies and many good traditions. We should accept all of them and accept that different religious traditions meet the need of different people at different times, in different places and in different contexts. This spirit of generosity, inclusivity and recognition is a spiritual quality. Whenever religious orders lose this quality, they become no

more than mere sects protecting their vested interests.

At present the institutionalised religions have fallen into this trap. For them the maintenance of institutions has become more important than helping their members to grow, to develop and to discover their own free spirit. When religious orders get caught in maintaining their properties and their reputation they lose their spirituality and then they, too, become like a business without spirit. As it is necessary to restore spirit in business and in politics we also need to restore spirit in religion. This may seem a strange proposition because the very *raison d'être* of every religion is to seek spirit and to establish universal love. The reality is otherwise. Religions have done much good but also they have done much harm, and we can see all around us that tensions between Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Jews are major causes of conflicts, wars and disharmony.

The rivalry among religions would cease if they realised that religious faiths are like rivers flowing into the same great ocean of spirituality. Even though the various rivers with their different names give nourishment to different regions and different peoples, they all provide the same quality of refreshment. There is no conflict among the rivers. Why then should there be conflict among the religions? Their theology or belief system may differ but the spirituality is the same. It is this spirituality which is paramount. Respect for a diversity of beliefs is a spiritual imperative.

A former monk, Satish Kumar, 78, is a peace and environment activist and editor of UK-based Resurgence magazine

A woman with curly hair, wearing a blue checkered shirt and white pants, is riding a blue duck-shaped water toy in a pool. She is smiling and has her arms outstretched. In the background, a man in a light green shirt and khaki shorts is also riding a similar water toy. The background is filled with lush green trees.

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The Fleming effect

When former journalist and naval intelligence officer Ian Fleming created James Bond with his blue eyes, black hair, weakness for women and “shaken, not stirred” Martini, he would not have imagined the larger-than-life impact this fictional British secret service agent would have on our cultural canvas. By the time Fleming died on 12 August 1964 at the age of 56, he had written 14 James Bond books and unleashed the phenomenon of the super sleuth and his world of sexy girls, fast cars and superior gadgets.

Though Fleming introduced Bond in 1953 with *Casino Royale*, it wasn't until *From Russia with Love* (1957) popped up on US President John F Kennedy's list of favourite reads that the secret agent with his debonair looks and a license to kill made it to bookshelves around the world. Much to the dismay of the intelligentsia, French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre also confessed to be an avid 007 fan. It's believed that Bond was a compound of the many secret agents that Fleming crossed paths with during World War II, including his own brother Peter; while the character of 'M', Bond's boss, was modelled after Admiral John Godfrey, director of naval intelligence, whom Fleming served in the Royal Navy. Meanwhile, it's said that Bond's love of golf, gambling and scrambled eggs mirrored Fleming's own tastes. Fleming helped consolidate public perception on the Cold War with *Live and Let Die* (1954), *Moonraker* (1955), *Diamonds Are Forever* (1956), *Goldfinger* (1959), *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1962), and *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1963). Though Fleming is mostly known for the Bond series, in 1964 he also wrote *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, the story of a magical car, to entertain his young son Casper.

During his lifetime, Fleming saw Bond brought to life on the big screen by Sean Connery in *Dr No* and *From Russia with Love*. Thereafter, the suave spy's blockbuster screen outings have continued with Roger Moore, Pierce Brosnan, Timothy Dalton and Daniel Craig playing him. In 2011, the Jamaican government honoured Fleming, who wrote



all his Bond novels from his home in Jamaica, by renaming the Jamaican airport the Ian Fleming International Airport. Such is the hold of this stylish sleuth on popular imagination that asteroid 9007 James Bond—discovered in 1983—owes its name to him. Fleming may be long gone, but the brand he created continues to bond with us through intriguing tales churned out by writers commissioned by Ian Fleming Publications.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: DECEMBER 1964

- On 6 December, stop-motion animated special *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, based on the popular Christmas song, was broadcast for the first time on the NBC television network.
- On 10 December, civil rights hero Dr Martin Luther King Jr was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway.
- On 11 December, Marxist revolutionary and leader of the Cuban revolution Che Guevara addressed the UN General Assembly.
- On 30 December, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was established as a permanent organ of the UN General Assembly.

fruitloopery

n. The improper or ignorant use of scientific or technical language to make a false or impossible claim seem more believable.

Example. In 2005 Mike Holderness, a freelance contributor to New Scientist, wrote of “professional dissidents” who are given the oxygen of publicity by those journalists who “divide all stories into precisely two sides that get equal space: too often the reality-based community Versus fruitloops and/or special interests”. Language needed a term like that, and Holderness’s choice was inspired. **Fruitloopery** became the New Scientist’s generic word for advertisers’ use of science either unverifiably or wildly out of context. Fruitloopery indicators in ads include the words quanta, tachyons, vibrational energies, or restructured water, especially in combination.

—Robert P Crease & Alfred Scharff Goldhaber, *The Quantum Moment*, W W Norton & Company, 13 October 2014

SUPER-GENTRIFICATION

n. The rebuilding and upgrading that occurs when exceptionally wealthy people move into an already well-off or middle-class area.

Example. Postcode 94027 is now undergoing something of a **super-gentrification**, where entirely new strata of super-rich are taking over already affluent areas.

—Julie Ensor, “The sleepy American suburb turned super-rich playground”, *The Telegraph* (London), 11 October 2014

“Youth disserves;
middle age conserves;
old age preserves.

—American physicist and author
Martin H Fischer (1879–1962)

renovacation

n. A renovation undertaken while on vacation.

Example. An overlooked home equity strategy which often pays off in big dividends is to use some of that built-up vacation time to spend a week or so getting home improvement and update projects done. The key is to work on projects that will take longer than a day but less than a week to complete. These are perfect for what I like to call a summer **renovacation**!

—William Curry, “Summer real estate ‘Renovacation’ season is here!”, *Access Real Estate*, 15 July 2014

FINTECH

n. The industry consisting of companies that create or sell financial technology.

Example. Scores of **fintech** enterprises in London and Silicon Valley are devising new ways to lend cash, transfer money abroad, settle international commercial transactions and score credit risk—all of which have been the domain of banks for centuries.

—Edward Robinson,
“In Britain, financial technology start-up
is leading the challenge of traditional
lending”, *The Washington Post*,
31 October 2014

dronestagram

n. A photo or video shot from a drone.

Example. Apropos of autonomous weapons, Cody highlighted some **dronestagrams** taken by the unmanned vehicles.

—Benjamin Bissell, “The week that was:
All of lawfare in one post”, *Lawfare*,
1 November 2014

orangefield

n. An urban or industrial site that is underused, but is not contaminated or otherwise unsuitable for development.

Example. Australian Unity’s real-estate arm is expanding its \$ 615 million healthcare property fund every way it can: by acquisitions, through brownfield projects, and through the latest trend toward **orangefield** developments. Orange is the new black in the industry. It is a term coined for projects that sit between a greenfield development and a brownfield addition to an existing building.

—Nick Lenaghan, “Orange the new black
in healthcare property sector”, *Australian
Financial Review*, 30 October 2014

“From 40 to 50, a man must move upward, or the natural falling off in the vigour of life will carry him rapidly downward.

—American jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1841–1935)

ALIEF

n. A feeling or attitude that occurs automatically or habitually and conflicts with one's explicit beliefs.

Example. Aliefs motivate us to take or withhold action. You might enjoy sweets, but would you eat a chocolate bar shaped like faeces? Dr Rozin and his colleagues showed that college students would not, though they knew it would not harm them. Our conscious beliefs tell us to shape up, use our wits and act rationally. But our subconscious aliefs set off deeply ingrained reactions that protect us from disease. The alief often wins.

—C Nathan DeWall, “Magic may lurk inside us all”, The New York Times, 27 October 2014



Booked and hooked

BUZZ

A new book smells great—an old one even better! India's first ‘crowd-sourced library’ is offering silvers the experience of borrowing and sharing books absolutely free. This is thanks to the efforts of Pushpendra Pandya, who has been reading and swapping books for a long time. He started this unique library in 2013 and personally reaches out to deliver or pick up books door to door every Sunday. The library offers a collection of around 2,000 books; one can borrow up to 52 books a year. While he charges a nominal membership fee, he has generously decided to waive the fee for silvers. Pandya is based in Mumbai, and his friends run the show in Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Chennai, with Goa next on the list. To become part of the experience, call or text (0) 9819181219 or email filly@gmail.com. You can also check out the library on Facebook (www.facebook.com/CrowdSourcedBookLibrary) and Twitter (@PeculiarBlend)

JOMO

n. The pleasure derived from no longer worrying about missing out on what other people are doing or saying.

Example. JOMO is a social detox, the equivalent for the mind of the nine-day juice cleanse. It's about not allowing the new, noisy world make you feel inadequate. It's deciding not to invest in this season's punk prints. It's not spending another minute thinking about the wider repercussions of Tinder. It's choosing not to watch ‘Love/Hate’. Instead you fully engage in your own life rather than constantly interrupting it to worry it's inadequate and eavesdrop on other people's.

—Lorraine Courtney, “Forget the social tyranny of FOMO—just switch off and embrace staying in”, Irish Independent, 3 January 2014

RAINBOW CEILING

n. Business practices and prejudices that create an unseen and unofficial barrier to personal advancement for gay employees.

Example. Chris writes: I am an out gay man in my late 20s. I was lucky to have liberal and accepting parents that pushed me to excel in school and attend university. I consider myself a successfully ‘launched’ millennial and I've made it my mission to break the rainbow ceiling wherever I work.

—Conor Friedersdorf, “28 distinct takes on gay marriage and stigma”, The Atlantic, 15 April 2014

“Animals are our companions; they have the right to a life of dignity”

Nita Seth, 62, Delhi, is a caregiver for animals

To say Nita Seth's heart beats for her furry friends would be stating the obvious. In fact, her unbridled love for animals has been the cause of squabbles with her neighbours in Defence Colony in Delhi, with the police being called in many times. This feisty 62 year-old, however, refuses to give in. Her two-storey house, in dire need of a fresh coat of paint, is home to five cats and 13 dogs at present; in its heydays it has housed a maximum of 55 cats and 28 dogs! With niggling health issues, Seth, who used to cook and clean after her brood singlehandedly, has employed a helper. “Ever since I can remember, I have been tuned in to the needs and wants of animals,” she says. As a schoolgirl in Shimla, Seth used to pick up ants and insects from puddles and bring stray puppies home, protests from parents notwithstanding. “Even today, I spend a lot of time in the kitchen trying to save ants that make a beeline for my sugar jar,” says Seth. She takes her activism to the neighbourhood also, where she asks ration shop owners to sprinkle turmeric around sugar sacks to get rid of ants and ensures that each and every stray that crosses her path gets at least one meal a day. Plants too are subjects of her vigilantism. “When I see wilting and withering plants on the roadside, I water them,” says Seth, adding, “I can't see any life form in distress.” With a life totally dedicated to the strays, it's little wonder that Seth's social life took a beating. “Who would like 50-plus cats and dogs in dowry?” she asks in a light-hearted vein. “Jokes apart, I was too busy looking after my brood to look around for love and companionship,” she adds wistfully. Staying with her furry friends in the upper storey, while her aged mother lives downstairs, Seth has been largely grounded at home since the 1980s. “Sometimes I feel like travelling and meeting friends, but I can't leave my brood unattended,” she says. When her savings—left by her late father who ran a lodging facility in Shimla—started drying up, donations from friends started pouring in as rice, meat and money. “Like humans, animals too have different temperaments,” she states. “Some of them are friendly and docile, while some, especially the tomcats, are jealous and edgy, breaking into frequent fights.” On a parting note, Seth adds, “I wish I was better off; I could have saved more animal lives!”

—Srirekha Pillai



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