

harmony celebrate age

DECEMBER 2015 ₹ 40

The magazine for silver citizens

PROACTIVE

Aurangabad's
angels of mercy
show the way

ENCOUNTER

TENNIS ACE
S P MISRA'S
GAME POINT



- MAGICAL MYSORE
DASARA
- RECORD-KEEPER
VIJAYA GHOSE
- BERLIN'S LITERARY
CONNECT

Anita Ratnam
DANCING HER WAY

RELIANCE

Life Insurance

“I’m retired. Not tired.”



Is your best still ahead of you?

Become a Reliance Life Advisor and make a difference!

- Start with no investment, earn attractive commissions and rewards
- Get access to world-class training and skill development programs
- Progress to become Club Members and participate in national/international conventions
- Be your own boss, decide your own working hours

To become an Advisor, sms LIFE to 55454, visit the Careers page at www.reliancelife.com or walk into the nearest Reliance Life branch.

Reliance Life Insurance Company Ltd. IRDAI Registration No:121. Registered Office: H Block, 1st Floor, Dhirubhai Ambani Knowledge City, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra 400 710. Corporate Office: 9th and 10th Floor, R-Tech Park, Nirlon Compound, Goregaon (E), Mumbai, Maharashtra 400 063. Insurance is the subject matter of the solicitation. For more information or any grievance, 1. Call us on our 24 X 7 Call Centre number - 3033 8181 (Local call charges apply) or our Toll Free Number 1800 300 08181 or 2. Visit us at www.reliancelife.com or 3. Email us at: rlife.customerservice@relianceada.com. Trade logo displayed above belongs to Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Ventures Private Limited and used by Reliance Life Insurance under license. Terms & conditions apply.

CIN: U66010MH2001PLC167089

Mktg/Advisor Recruitment/Version 1/October 2015

Tomorrow's PROMISE

As we stand on the cusp of another year, it is time to reflect on both past and future.

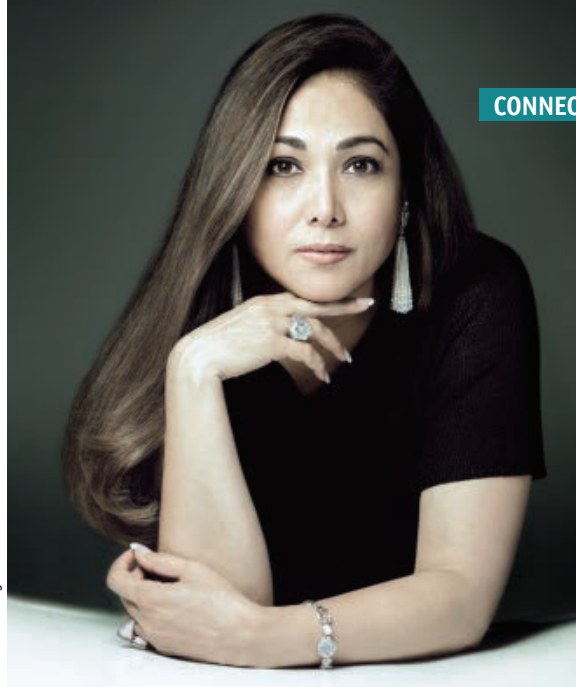
For the world, 2015 was a mixed bag. It's a paradox that while one segment of the global populace pushed the envelope of science and research and evolved new ways to extend lives, another chose to walk the gruesome path of terror to end them. And so we enter 2016 worried and wary, the promise of a new day underlined by a more pragmatic worldview.

For silvers too, the year gone by brought the good, the bad and the ugly—depending on geography and access. While many silvers reaped the benefit of advancements in healthcare, social infrastructure and technology, many more continued to be marginalised, impoverished, even abused by both family and the system. Will the year ahead bridge the gap? Again, any optimism needs to be tempered by an understanding that hard and committed choices will have to be made by governments and societies to enable inclusion and do right by silvers.

In a recent article titled "How Demographics Rule the Global Economy", the *Wall Street Journal* addresses the issue of 'demographic destiny', how the world's advanced economies will reach a critical milestone in 2016. "For the first time since 1950, their combined working-age population will decline... and by 2050 it will shrink 5 per cent," the article tells us. "At the same time the share of these countries' population over 65 will skyrocket.... This reflects two long-established trends: lengthening lifespans and declining fertility."

According to the article, the most "promising" way to cope with an ageing population is to encourage today's

Suresh Natarajan



workers to work longer. It's already happening in Japan, where 22 per cent of people over 65 work, and in Germany, where companies like BMW are taking concrete steps to tweak workplace infrastructure to make it silver-friendly. And it's showing results, with elders equalling and sometimes even overtaking younger colleagues in terms of productivity. As Jens Weidmann, president of the Deutsche Bundesbank tells the *Journal*, "The young can run faster, but the old know the shortcuts."

True that. It's also a valuable lesson while contemplating the future: in every adversity lies an opportunity, in every challenge a solution. The trick lies in opening the mind to new possibilities, having the courage to explore new answers to old problems, and venturing into the future with positivity and purpose. Destiny is never a done deal unless you say so—resolve to reshape yours. Season's greetings!

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

Harmony Celebrate Age—December 2015 Volume 12 Issue 7

Publisher **Dharmendra Bhandari** Editor **Tina Ambani** Deputy Editor **Arati Rajan Menon** Assistant Editor **Sai Prabha Kamath**

Special Correspondent **SrIREkha Pillai** Sub-Editor **Natasha Rego** Correspondent (Mumbai) **Aakanksha Bajpai** Design Consultant **Jit Ray**

Studio Manager **Haresh Patel** Graphic Designer **Dattaguru Redekar** Production Manager **Rohidas Adavkar** Website Coordinator **Ajit Nair**

Additional Vice-President, Business Development **Shrenik Mehta** Manager, Business Development **Vikaran Chauhan** Marketing Coordinator **Johnsi Nadar**

Editorial & Marketing Offices: Reliance Centre, 1st floor, 19, Walchand Hirachand Marg, Ballard Estate, Mumbai-400001. Tel: 91-22-30327115 (Editorial), 30327102 (Marketing). Email: contact.mag@harmonyindia.org **Printed and published** by Dharmendra Bhandari on behalf of the owners, Harmony for Silvers Foundation

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

Harmony does not take responsibility for returning unsolicited publication material. www.harmonyindia.org

index

features

34 . Proactive: Selfless silvers assist patients and doctors at an Aurangabad hospital

40 . Encounter: Veteran tennis player S P Misra on his days on court

52 . Journey: Literature and history mingle on a trip to Berlin and Leipzig

62 . Festival: Mysore glitters during the annual Dasara celebrations

44 cover feature

**Anita Ratnam on life and dance,
growing and learning**

Cover photograph: **Nitin Bharath**

every issue

7 . ORBIT: News, views, people, research, trends and tips from around the world

20 . YOUR SPACE: Reach out to fellow silvers with your inspiring stories

58 . ETCETERA: Culture, leisure, lifestyle, books, buzz and miscellany

82 . SPEAK: Armed with knitting needles, Sasmeeta Srivastava keeps the destitute and ailing warm



columns

24 . FOOD FACTS: Wellness expert Namita Jain recommends sugar-free treats for the festive table

28 . YOGA RX: Shameem Akthar recommends fun and fulfilling poses for high-energy Sagittarians

WEB EXCLUSIVE www.harmonyindia.org



KIDS' STUFF

Harapriya Barukial Bargohain, the 'Best Teacher' in Assam, lights up the lives of children with her literary gift

FOR SUBSCRIPTION ASSISTANCE CONTACT: HarmonyCare, Living Media India Ltd, A-61, Sector 57, Noida (Uttar Pradesh) - 201301.

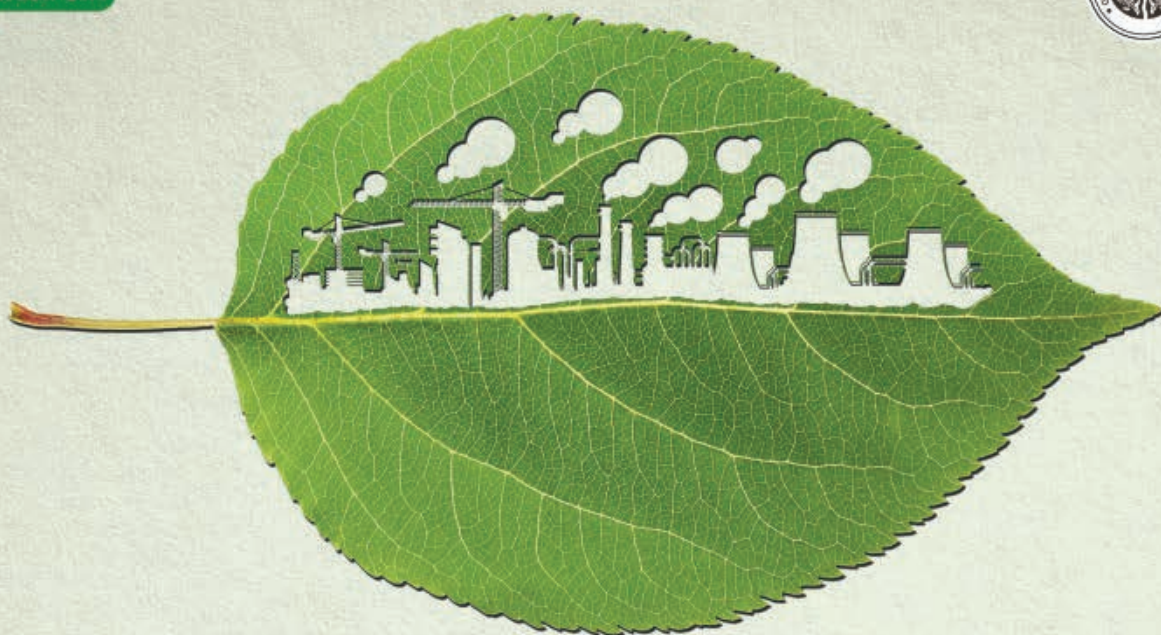
Toll-free: 1800 1800 100 Phones: New Delhi: (0120) 2479900 from Delhi and Faridabad; (0120) 2479900 from Rest of India

Fax: (0120) 4078080; **Kolkata:** 033-22827695 Fax: 22828949; **Bengaluru:** 080-2212448, 22213037, Fax: 2218335;

Mumbai: 022-66063355 Fax: 24444358; **Chennai:** 044-28478525 Fax: 24361942; Email: harmony@intoday.com

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

Clean U.P.
Green U.P.



Every leaf absorbs Carbon Dioxide

Lakhs of trees planted to safeguard the environment.
Uttar Pradesh, now proud to be a Green state.

Distribution and plantation of 10 lakh saplings under
the inspirational and dynamic leadership of

Shri Akhilesh Yadav

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

Forest Department & Irrigation Department, Uttar Pradesh

बन रहा है आज, सँवर रहा है कल



twitter.com/cmofficeup



facebook.com/cmoultarpradesh



youtube.com/user/upgovtofficial



upnews360.in

Information & Public Relations Department, U.P.

<http://information.up.nic.in>

column one

Confession: This issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* initially had us worried. The hectic schedule of cover protagonist Anita Ratnam, followed by rain-fuelled connectivity issues in her hometown Chennai, and unexpected knee surgery for assistant editor Sai Prabha Kamath, who was tasked with interviewing the multifaceted dancer, threatened to derail our deadlines. Ultimately, professionalism saved the day. Prompt, responsive and incredibly eloquent, Ratnam helped us get into the groove and Kamath worked through the pain with her customary grit to put together a cover feature that is both visually and verbally sumptuous. "My geography is my history," proclaims Ratnam, and shares both with us, offering us insight into a life that is "a work in progress", where learning is a continuous process.

Equally inspiring are the 'Sevavratis', a group of proactive silver volunteers who help patients negotiate the procedures at Aurangabad's Dr Hedgewar Hospital, offering help and hope. They serve as proof that while serving as a pathfinder to others, you pave your own road with purpose.

Elsewhere this month, we have an exclusive encounter with tennis ace S P Misra, who was recently recognised for his lifetime contribution to the sport; an interview with author Kiran Kohli Narain who reminisces about life in the Valley; a literary trail through breathtaking Berlin and Leipzig with writer Manjiri Prabhu; and the pomp and splendour of the Dasara festival in Mysore. And what would the festive season be without food? Columnist Namita Jain serves up some delicious treats high on taste and low on guilt. So, dig in as we toast the end of another year.

—Arati Rajan Menon

It was a joy to read the 'Destination' feature "Apple County" in the November edition of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. However, I would like you to include some information on medical centres for silvers at the travel destinations as part of your features. I suggest you cover travel health and getaway spots just for senior citizens. A page devoted to health tourism will also be a unique feature, where silvers can travel to spots where they can avail the required treatment from specified and specialised medical centres. You could also feature facilities and destinations that will contribute to improving health and places with the best climate to live in for silvers with different ailments.

Maresh Kumar
New Delhi

I am very impressed by your magazine and its contents. I got to know about it after reading about one of my former colleagues, Shankar Rao, in the 'Second Careers' column of your October 2014 issue. He forwarded me a copy. I was delighted to discover a magazine dedicated to silvers.

Manoj Kabre
Bengaluru



Silvers comprise 8 per cent of the population and only 28.9 per cent are taken care of by their pension. This shows that over half the silvers are living on the interest from their bank deposits. Worse, bank rates are declining and so is income. Inflation is skyrocketing and so are expenses. It is time for the government to formulate comprehensive, inclusive and realistic policies for silver welfare. After all, it is we who looked after the country in our heydays and expect the same enlightenment and vision from the present rulers.

K D Bhatia
New Delhi

CONTRIBUTOR



Our columnist this month in 'At Large', **N Meera Raghavendra Rao** is a prolific writer with over 2,000 published articles in different genres in newspapers and magazines, including *Femina*, *Eve's Weekly* and *Caravan*. She also reviews books for *The Hindu* and *The Deccan Herald*. Widely travelled, Rao has published a coffee table

book, *3 E's Of Travel*, comprising 35 travel articles and over 100 photographs, and authored several books, including *Madras Mosaic*, *Feature Writing*, *Slice of Life*, *Journalism: Think Out of the Box* and *Chennai Collage*. She maintains an e-journal, *justlies.wordpress.com*, which has crossed over 70,000 hits. A postgraduate in English literature with a diploma in journalism and a certificate in public relations, Rao is also a trainer in communication skills. Her husband, Dr N Raghavendra Rao, is an author-editor and visiting faculty to business schools in the country.



ANALYSE THIS

Legwork pays

Look to the legs before the heart to assess brain health. That's the conclusion of a team from London's King College, who claim **fit legs are an indicator of a healthy brain for women**. As the BBC reports, the researchers examined the 'leg power' of 150 pairs of twin sisters aged between 43 and 73 years over a decade, looking at both speed and power of extension. Simultaneously, they measured the subjects' brain power in terms of memory and mental processing skills. They found that the twins with more leg power at the start of the study showed better cognition and fewer age-related brain changes after a decade. "When it came to cognitive ageing, leg strength was the strongest factor that had an impact in our study," affirms lead researcher Dr Claire Steves. "Other factors such as heart health were also important, but the link with leg strength remained even after we accounted for these." Another powerful affirmation of the body-mind link.



Back to front

Ageing is not as rough on the brain as we imagined. That's the conclusion of Beijing-based Chinese Academy of Sciences following the largest brain scan analysis of the effects of ageing ever carried out. As the *South China Morning Post's* website www.scmp.com reports, the study of 2,035 subjects over 60 years old and 1,845 subjects between the ages of 18 and 35 confirms that the centre of activity in our brains shifts from the back to the front as we age. **"Ageing has a negative impact on the brain, but it is not as bad as we thought,"** study leader Li Huijie tells the newspaper. "Just as some blind people can develop exceptionally strong hearing, older brains compensate for the loss of perception in the back of the organ with increased activity at the front. We found strong evidence that the key to solving problems associated with brain ageing lie in the forehead. This may shed light on the development of new therapies and medications to slow down decline." The study is published in journal *Neuroscience and Biobehavioural Reviews*.

iStock

Double whammies

DRUGS
repurposed

Sometimes the world of science yields some happy coincidences, with **existing or new drugs developed for one condition being 'repurposed' to treat another.** Here are two recent examples:

♦ Alzheimer's and anti-ageing.

Scientists from the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, California, who tested an experimental drug named J147 to combat Alzheimer's, found a host of unexpected physiological effects on their laboratory mice—

other than better cognition and healthier blood vessels in the brain, the mice also 'looked' younger. "We did not predict we would see this sort of anti-ageing effect, but J147 made old mice look like they were young, based upon a number of physiological parameters," writes lead author Antonio Currais in journal *Aging*.

♦ **Asthma and dementia:** A study by Paracelsus Medical University in Salzburg, Austria, has found that montelukast, an inexpensive drug

used to prevent asthma attacks, can battle dementia by reducing brain inflammation and encouraging neurogenesis (neuron growth). In their study of rats, a six-week course of the drug improved memory and learning in older rodents, with cognitive performance nearly matching much younger animals. "The important thing is that while we saw effects on neurogenesis, we also saw effects on other systems in the brain," team leader Ludwig Aigner tells London newspaper *The Guardian*.

Reason to smile



iStock

Here's a simple idea to bring our neighbourhoods closer—and make them safer. A team of **policemen from New Delhi's South District, labelled 'Senior Citizen Welfare Officers', have begun taking selfies with silvers** on their beat to get closer to them and encourage them to share their problems. As *The Times of India* reports, under this initiative, planned by SHO Somnath Paruthi under the guidance

of assistant commissioner of police K P Kukreti, the team covers 25-30 silvers a day. "Every time we take a selfie, it creates a bond between us," one officer told the newspaper. "The bond is so strong that they treat me like their substitute son. It's as if I'm filling in for their children who live away. Some have an ongoing property dispute and seek legal advice while, for others, their monthly chores require attention."



iStock

Building support

While Nepal continues to rebuild itself physically following the fury of nature, it is also shoring up its social infrastructure. According to media reports, authorities have announced their **intention to make Kathmandu an 'elder-friendly metropolitan city'**. This will include establishing help desks around the city to enable access to rights, facilities and allowances; healthcare and mobility assistance; improved sanitation; and senior citizens' clubs to promote interaction between peers and build a sense of community.




iStock



Odisha gets smarter:

The Odisha government has launched an Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS) to facilitate pensioners in getting digital life certificates through the Jeevan Pramaan initiative. With this initiative, pensioners no longer need to be physically present before the pension disbursing officer. Go to www.odishatreasury.gov.in/PensionPortal/PensionHome.html for details.

STAND AT EASE Innovations don't have to be hi-tech to be effective. Here's a nifty little device perfect for women confronted with filthy public toilets, and for silver or arthritic women who find it hard to squat: PeeBuddy, India's first female urination device. Portable and disposable (it's made of cardboard), it enables women to stand and urinate with ease and comes in packs of five, 10 and 20. Currently available at stores in Delhi, you can order it online.  Go to www.peebuddy.in for more details.



RESPONSIVE ROBOTICS



Robotics is clearly the new frontier in silver care. The University of California–San Diego recently launched its Contextual Robotics Institute, which will work to develop robotic technology with artificial intelligence that will help the elderly population age in place. In essence, the goal of the institute is to create **robots that can listen, speak and**

react to human needs.

"All robotics in the past have been with machines that have stiff joints, things that are mechanically strong," Rajesh Gupta, professor and chair of the computer science and engineering department, tells media. "When it comes to interaction with humans, most machines are too stiff. This new institute will bring together

experts in the fields of engineering, computer and social sciences to develop machines that will be able to recognise their environment, understand the context of a situation and synthesise the information to take appropriate action. To be useful in a home setting, the robot has to be able to sense things, not necessarily be told to do everything."

Hello, kitty

Aiming to strike gold with products for silvers, toy company Hasbro recently unveiled its Joy for All line, tagged for all ages from "5 to 105". First in the company's range of **'companion pets' aimed to bring comfort to elders** is a line of robotic cats. Available in three varieties— Orange Tabby Cat, Silver Cat with White Mitts, and Creamy White Cat—these battery-run 'companion pets' are

stunningly realistic. Soft and cuddly, they respond to touch with purrs, thanks to vibration technology. That's not all. They can move towards you, nuzzle you, roll over for a belly rub, fall asleep when left alone and wake up when you pat their back, all with the help of motion sensors. The cost: \$ 99.99 (about ₹ 6,600). A gimmicky substitute for a real pet or an adorable no-maintenance alternative?  Go to joyforall.hasbro.com/en-us and decide for yourself.

A
SUBSTITUTE
FOR A REAL PET
@ ₹ 6,600

Courtesy: Hasbro



PILLOW TALK

Sleeping beauty just took on a whole new meaning with a skin rejuvenating pillowcase from American firm Illuminage. Made with a hi-tech fabric using threads embedded with tiny copper oxide fibres said to boost collagen and elastin and stimulate the production of hyaluronic acid, which has a plumping effect, the manufacturer promises the reduction of wrinkles and fine lines after a month of nightly use.

The cost: \$ 60 (about ₹ 4,000). There's even an eye mask for \$ 35 (about ₹ 2,300).

To shop online, go to www.iluminage-beauty.com/products/textiles.html

Desert ROSE

Refreshing to see a beauty discovery that hasn't originated in the hi-tech cosmetic labs of Paris, London or New York—Kenyan production technologist Arhendt Mutsanzi from the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) has developed and patented an **anti-ageing skincare range made of camel milk**. As PR firm Standard Media tells us, the range—a lotion, cream and soap—works to smoothen, brighten and soften skin; heal minor skin disturbances like sunburns and acne; and renew cell growth. Camel milk is rich in nutrients, such as vitamins A, C and E. Mutsanzi's range, which is yet to be given a brand name, will soon be marketed in Kenya before an expected international rollout in mid-2016.



iStock

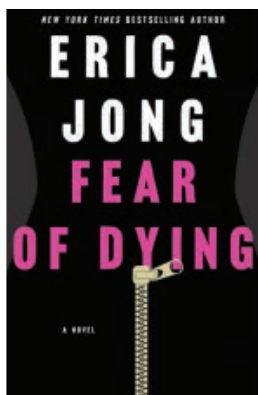


White magic

This brand makes no apologies for silver hair—instead, it urges you to wear it with pride and panache! **Designed specifically for grey or white hair, White Hot Hair is a collection of six products marketed with beautiful silver-haired models**—two shampoos, a conditioner, styling crème, oil and an intense-care mask round off the line. Prices begin at £ 12 (about ₹ 1,200). Check out the range at www.whitehothair.co.uk

FEARLESS AGAIN

With a new book that is a natural segue from her path-breaking 1973 release, *Fear of Flying*, feminist, author and sometimes poet **Erica Jong** is embracing her own altered realities. *Fear of Dying* (St Martin's Press), her first novel in over a decade, revolves around a sixty-something friend of Isadora (her original, hedonistic protagonist) who is searching for intimacy while grappling with an ailing husband, pregnant daughter and the death of her parents. "It's a stage of life that is very intense and very emotional," Jong tells *The Belfast Telegraph*. "I remember how



my first editor said, 'You know, there's never been a bestseller about a woman over 40.' The first thing I said was, 'Then I should write it.' It's been in my head a long time. We're not hearing about these further stages of women's lives, which are so interesting." With this book, Jong seeks to talk about two subjects long considered taboo among silvers: sex and death. "I would like to go on writing about older women and older men, because it's so fascinating," adds the 73 year-old. "I have many books in my head and I hope I have the power to write them." The hardcover edition of the book is available on www.amazon.in



Coming of age

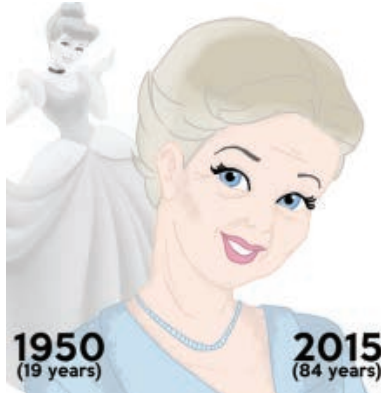
A great script, two acting powerhouses and a most creative director promise to deliver a winner. Watch out this holiday season for **Youth**, a film by Italian director Paolo Sorrentino, starring 82 year-old Michael Caine as retired music composer Fred, and Harvey Keitel, 76, as still-at-work scriptwriter Mick. When the two long-term buddies go to a Swiss retreat on vacation, they encounter a cast of characters that leads them to examine their lives, their friendship and their connections to the world at large. Bittersweet and funny, sensitive and nuanced, *Youth*, ironically, is all about what it means to age. And do it with humour and grace, elevating oneself above the mundane. The film will release worldwide on 4 December.

MUST WATCH



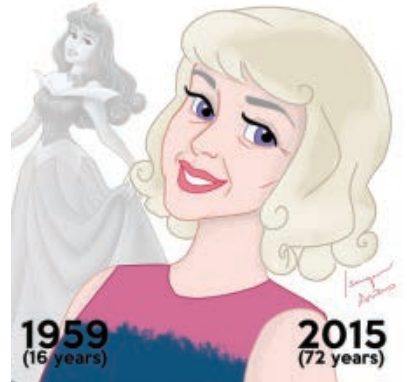
1937
(14 years) 2015
(92 years)

SNOW WHITE



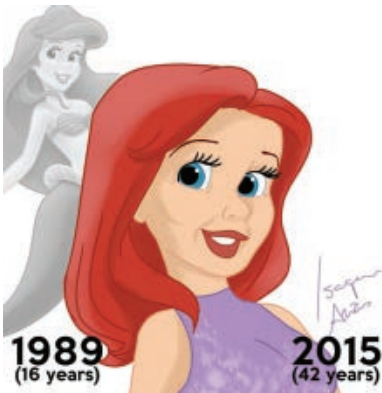
1950
(19 years) 2015
(84 years)

CINDERELLA



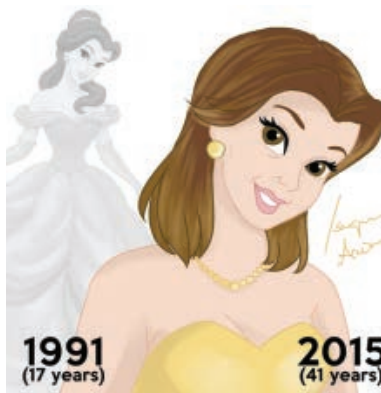
1959
(16 years) 2015
(72 years)

AURORA



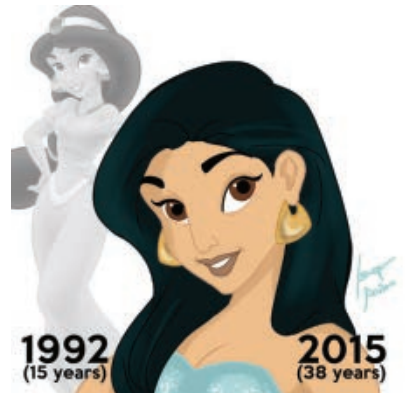
1989
(16 years) 2015
(42 years)

ARIEL



1991
(17 years) 2015
(41 years)

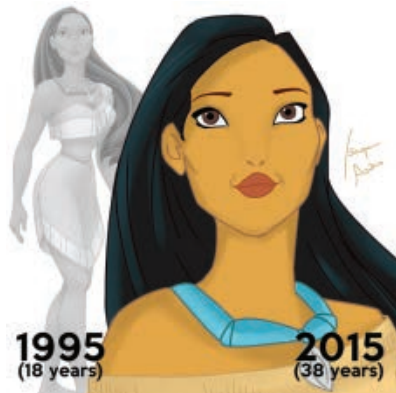
BELLE



1992
(15 years) 2015
(38 years)

JASMINE

A ROYAL RELOOK



1995
(18 years) 2015
(38 years)

POCAHONTAS



1998
(16 years) 2015
(33 years)

MULAN

Illustrations by Isaque Arêas

Last month, we told you about a reimagining of classic Looney Tunes and Disney characters in a silver avatar. Now, it's the turn of Brazilian artist Isaque Arêas for a do-over of the iconic Disney princesses—on his Facebook page, he shows us what they would look like today based on the age of their character and when they first appeared on screen. “I began with the viewpoint that if the Disney princesses were movie actors, they would certainly have changed considerably by now,” he tells British website *www.mirror.co.uk*. “My first objective was to show people that even if you are getting old, you can be a princess outside and inside.” The oldest of the bunch, of course, is Snow White, who appeared onscreen as a 14 year-old in 1937; Arêas portrays her as 92 years old. Following her is Cinderella, now 84. At the other end of the spectrum is Mulan, who appeared as a 16 year-old in 1998; in his portfolio, she is 33. 📌 Check out his work at www.facebook.com/lifearttimes/timeline



Big bazaar!

It's not often you find silvers letting their hair down and grooving to Latin numbers, that too in full public view. But that's exactly what Zumba instructor Jennifer Pinto managed to achieve with silvers matching high-energy steps with youngsters, spicing things up at the second edition of **Anandam, a fundraiser bazaar to help silvers suffering from neuro-degenerative diseases**. Organised by Silver Talkies in association with Suchetadhama, a not-for-profit medical trust in Bengaluru recently, the bazaar saw an eclectic mix of entrepreneurs, some of them silvers, displaying their talents and ware. Among them was a couple practicing Zentangle, an abstract drawing with repetitive patterns; a practitioner of Alexander Technique, a gentle non-invasive way of releasing stress and improving balance and strength; a glass fusing artist, a bonsai artist, jewellery designers; and bakers. Activities such as a live band playing music ranging from retro Hindi and English music to rock, an origami workshop, pottery and kids' corner were planned with an eye on getting the whole family to spend a fun evening together.



Photographs by Flashbulbz Photography



Harmony-Celebrate Age GOES DIGITAL

Harmony-Celebrate Age

www.magzter.com

India's premier magazine for senior citizens, *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, is now available on international digital newsstand Magzter



The magazine can now be downloaded and read on a variety of digital platforms such as iPad, iPhone, Android, Windows 8 and Tablets.

Download the free Magzter app or log on to www.magzter.com today to read the latest issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* free*.

* Limited period offer



Red alert

We knew it could play havoc with your cholesterol levels. And now we learn that **consumption of red and processed meat increases risk of colorectal cancer**, the third most common cancer in the world. It has also been linked to pancreatic and prostate cancer. In fact, the WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has

recently listed processed meat (bacon, ham, sausages, salami) on its list of 116 items possessing carcinogenic properties, alongside usual suspects such as tobacco and asbestos. It is believed that the way processed meat is cooked (on high temperatures for a long period of time) and the preservatives added, such as nitrates, are responsible for the cancer risk. Time, clearly, to switch to lean meats or hit the salad bar.



These items on the IARC cancer risk list may surprise you:

- Oral contraceptives
- Boot and shoe manufacture and repair
- Furniture and cabinet making
- Magenta dye manufacturing
- Chinese-style salted fish
- Wood dust

To learn more, go to www.iarc.fr

TO THE RESCUE: Cholesterol-lowering medications that protect blood vessels from plaque formation can slow the development of aortic aneurysm and reduce risk of mortality during open surgery or endovascular repair, according to researchers from the University of Missouri School of Medicine in Columbia. An aortic aneurysm is an enlarged area in the lower part of the aorta, the main blood vessel that supplies oxygenated blood to the circulatory system; if it ruptures, it can be life-threatening.



THE NUMBER CRUNCH:
ANOTHER REMINDER TO
KEEP YOUR BP IN CHECK.
ACCORDING TO THE
SYSTOLIC BLOOD PRESSURE
INTERVENTION TRIAL
(SPRINT) PUBLISHED ONLINE
IN THE NEW ENGLAND
JOURNAL OF MEDICINE,
PEOPLE OVER THE AGE OF
50 WHO CAN LOWER THEIR
SYSTOLIC BLOOD PRESSURE
TO BELOW 120 MMHG CAN
REDUCE THEIR RISK OF HEART
ATTACK OR STROKE BY 24 PER
CENT AND RISK OF DEATH BY
27 PER CENT.

Silent scars

While we feel the scars of emotional heartbreak all too clearly, we are less aware when our hearts go through actual physical attack. Researchers from the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering in Bethesda, Maryland, say that **a considerable proportion of myocardial infarctions (heart attacks) are clinically unrecognised.** In their study of multi-ethnic people with an average age of 68, 8 per cent of participants had suffered a heart attack without even knowing it and an astonishing 80 per cent of myocardial scars were not recognised in clinical evaluation. Myocardial scarring occurs when fibrous tissue replaces normal tissues destroyed during an injury or disease. They also observed that men had a higher prevalence of myocardial scars than women. Their study is published in the November issue of *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*.



One for two

Here's another example (see "Double Whammies" in 'Orbit') of a drug that may have an added benefit. According to a study by researchers from Vanderbilt University Medical Centre in Nashville, Tennessee, **Viagra could possibly lower risk of diabetes.** Their studies show that sildenafil, a chemical used in Viagra, improves sensitivity to insulin and uptake of glucose from the bloodstream by muscles, which can lower the level of circulating glucose and reduce the risk of diabetes. However, further research is needed to determine whether long-term treatment with sildenafil can prevent the onset of diabetes in high-risk patients.





On the road

It took an accident for a retired special sub-inspector to answer his life's calling—that of a road safety crusader. In 2005, a cycling mishap rendered **N Sivaji**, a resident of Karur district in Tamil Nadu, 84 per cent deaf. "I was participating in a district-level cycling competition without a helmet when I had an accident; it took me months to recover. That's when I swore to use my bike to address road safety issues,"

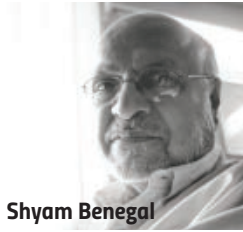
he says resolutely. Sivaji has since covered long distances spreading road safety awareness messages such as 'don't drink and drive', 'wear quality helmet' and 'don't use cell phone'. This year, armed with a 100-cc bike fitted with metallic green mirrors and a matching helmet, the 61 year-old went on a 50-day journey across 31 districts in Tamil Nadu to complete 7,600 km on 4 October. Next up for Sivaji: Karur to Kashmir on a helmet awareness drive.



Driving his self-made electric-solar hybrid car, 63 year-old **Syed Sajjad Ahmed** will arrive in Delhi this December to attend the International India Science Festival. He has travelled over 2,000 km, all the way from Bengaluru, to spread awareness on the benefits of renewable energy. This Class XII dropout from Kolar district in Karnataka moved to Bengaluru 15 years ago and found work as a fruit vendor. Later, he opened an electronics repair shop where he also built prototypes of two and three-wheelers powered by electricity and solar energy. He caught the attention of scientific institutes and auto-part corporations such as Raman Research Institute and Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Ltd among others, who provided Ahmed the technical and financial support he needed to design his dream: a four-wheeler hybrid. "This trip is a tribute to my hero Dr A P J Abdul Kalam," says Ahmed. "I have been stopping at schools and colleges on the way to 'ignite' the idea of a pollution-free country in young citizens, especially rural youth." We wish him the very best!



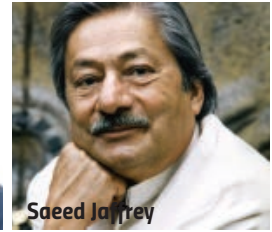
Dilip Kumar



Shyam Benegal



Brijmohan Lall Munjal



Saeed Jaffrey

BIRTHDAYS

President of Indian National Congress **Sonia Gandhi** turns 60 on 9 December.

Indian President **Pranab Mukherjee** turns 80 on 11 December.

Bollywood actor **Dilip Kumar** turns 93 on 11 December.

Tamil actor **Rajinikanth** turns 65 on 12 December.

Director **Shyam Benegal** turns 81 on 14 December.

Chairperson of UB group **Vijay Mallya** turns 60 on 18 December.

IN PASSING

Chairperson of Hero Motocorp **Brijmohan Lall Munjal** passed away on 1 November after a brief illness. He was 92.

Telugu film comedian **Kondavalasa Lakshman Rao**, 69, died on 2 November owing to age-related ailments.

England cricketer **Tom Graveney** died on 3 November after a long battle with Parkinson's disease. He was 88.

Former Israeli president **Yitzhak Novan**, 94, passed away on 6 November after a long illness.

Indian-born British actor **Saeed Jaffrey** passed away on 15 November from a brain haemorrhage. He was 86.

MILESTONES

- Founder of Sulabh International **Bindeshwar Pathak**, 72, was selected for the New York Global Leader Dialogue Humanitarian Award for his contribution to the field of sanitation and improving the quality of life of many people.
- Santoor maestro **Pandit Shiv Kumar Shankar**, 77, was honoured with the Aditya Vikram Birla Kalashikar Puraskar for his lifetime achievement in Hindustani classical music.
- Tennis player turned filmmaker **Ashok Amritraj**, 59, was awarded an honorary doctorate in the arts by the University of East London for promoting budding filmmakers across the globe.

OVERHEARD

"Menopause is a natural thing; it is not a sickness. The body at the beginning will get a bit mad. But after a few months, or one year, it's going to be okay. This is a natural process of life. I am not nervous about it at all. There's a certain beauty with youth, but there's another one that comes with age. Your soul grows, and that's sexy. I've had old people in my life that I really loved—especially women—so I'm not scared about getting old. It's what's inside that makes us beautiful on the outside."

*—Italian actor **Monica Bellucci**, 51, who plays the oldest ever 'Bond Girl' in *Spectre*, to media*



Dinodia Photo Library

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

THE NATURAL PATH

We have strayed so far from our roots that we have come to trust only that which is synthetic, unnatural and expensive as remedies for what ails us. Alas, how wrong we are!

My life took an abrupt turn when I went to Junagadh in Gujarat to attend a wedding just after I graduated from college. I wanted to get away from the wedding brouhaha and strolled into the Gir forest for some fresh air. It was here that I met the man who would become my guru, Mukherjee Babu; he was meditating in the forest and his aura attracted me to him.

When he sensed something was troubling me, he enquired about it. I told him my grandmother was suffering from gangrene and doctors had advised that we amputate her right leg. He recommended some leaves to give her and asked me to rub crushed onion on the infected area six times a day. To everyone's surprise, the advice worked wonders and my grandmother's gangrene was almost cured. Better still, she began to walk again after a few months.

Merchant grows medicinal plants at his home garden in Mumbai



Haresh Patel

This was a life-altering experience and it brought to my attention the power of natural plants. I decided I wanted to use this power to heal. So I pursued a career in naturopathy, first securing a diploma from the Indian Institute of Naturopathy and then beginning my practice in 1978.

I live in Malad (East) in Mumbai, and operate clinics across the city. To spread awareness about this beautiful science, I conduct camps and seminars because I believe it is important that people realise just how powerful it is. You see, naturopathy has changed my life completely and is my very reason to live. As I have treated many celebrities and politicians, I attracted the attention of the media in the 1990s and I used the exposure to spread awareness about this natural healing system.

Life is full of stress today and this has made people sick. Lifestyle diseases like diabetes, thyroid problems, migraine and hypertension are a result of imbalanced lifestyles, which bend the body and its metabolism out of shape. Ironically, the remedies for these diseases are actually very simple and I am happy to offer advice to people for free.

Unfortunately, we place a premium on things that carry a price tag; the more expensive the treatment or doctor's fees, the more we value these treatments. Imagine the money and trouble you could save—apart from the positive effects on your health—if you took a few home remedies instead. Relatives too resort to conventional medicine when necessary. But when drugs don't work, they try my naturopathic remedies, which work miracles, almost every single time.

At 72, I have an irrepressible desire to spread awareness of naturopathy and pass on this gift. Hence, I am proud to say that I introduced it to all three daughters of mine, with one of them practising it full time in the US.

—Raj Merchant, Mumbai

MARATHON MAN

I am 56 and I started running very late in life. But thanks to my idol Bruce Lee, I was always into fitness, whether swimming in the local pool or working out in the gym with my brother. It was this grounding that has helped me run 100 marathons in 201 days. Although not an official record, I am sure it is an informal one. Either way, it means the world to me owing to the sheer grit and perseverance I put in to achieve it.

My interest in running was piqued in 2004 when I watched the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon on television. The race was won by a Kenyan runner, and I thought there was no reason I couldn't win it. But when I started running, I was out of breath at the end of the first kilometre or so and returned to walking!

Four years later, in 2008, I decided to give it a shot again. I started running small distances at first, which gradually went up to 80 km a week. When I was planning this run, I figured if I could run 32 km every alternate day, I would attempt a personal record. I began to run a whole bunch of races including 10-km races, 21-km half marathons, 42-km full marathons and even longer distances.

Finally, earlier this year, I decided to take a stab at *Guinness World Records* by attempting to break the record of 239 marathons in a year, held by an American. But when I wrote to them, they told me I would have to run organised races. As there aren't sufficient marathons in India, it meant spending ₹ 10,000 on each race and sorting it out on my own. Instead, I decided to run 100 marathons as a personal challenge.

I began running in right earnest on 1 April. I usually ran around Ahmedabad at night as the weather is cooler and there is no traffic on the streets. It was also the most economical way to do it. I ran for six hours and 30 minutes each time, carrying a bottle of water and a cell phone that helped me track my progress during each run. I would return home by sunrise and, after a quick nap, attend work. I am an electrical contractor by profession and am out working all day. I caught up on sleep in the evening and resumed running after midnight.

Seven of my 100 marathons were in cities such as Daman, Pune, Mumbai, Indore and Surat, where it was a welcome change to run alongside other runners. The feedback I received on social media forums was very encouraging, and I wanted to inspire more people to take up running.

It is a great form of meditation and it really doesn't matter what distance you run. It builds tremendous energy and is the kind of activity that builds momentum. So the more you run, the further you want to go. I think the toughest



Shah ran 100 marathons in 201 days

part is getting started. Once you overcome that, the rest of is easy. In my case, making pilgrimages to various temples such as Dakor (100 km), Ambaji (200 km) and Sreenathji (350 km) helped me.

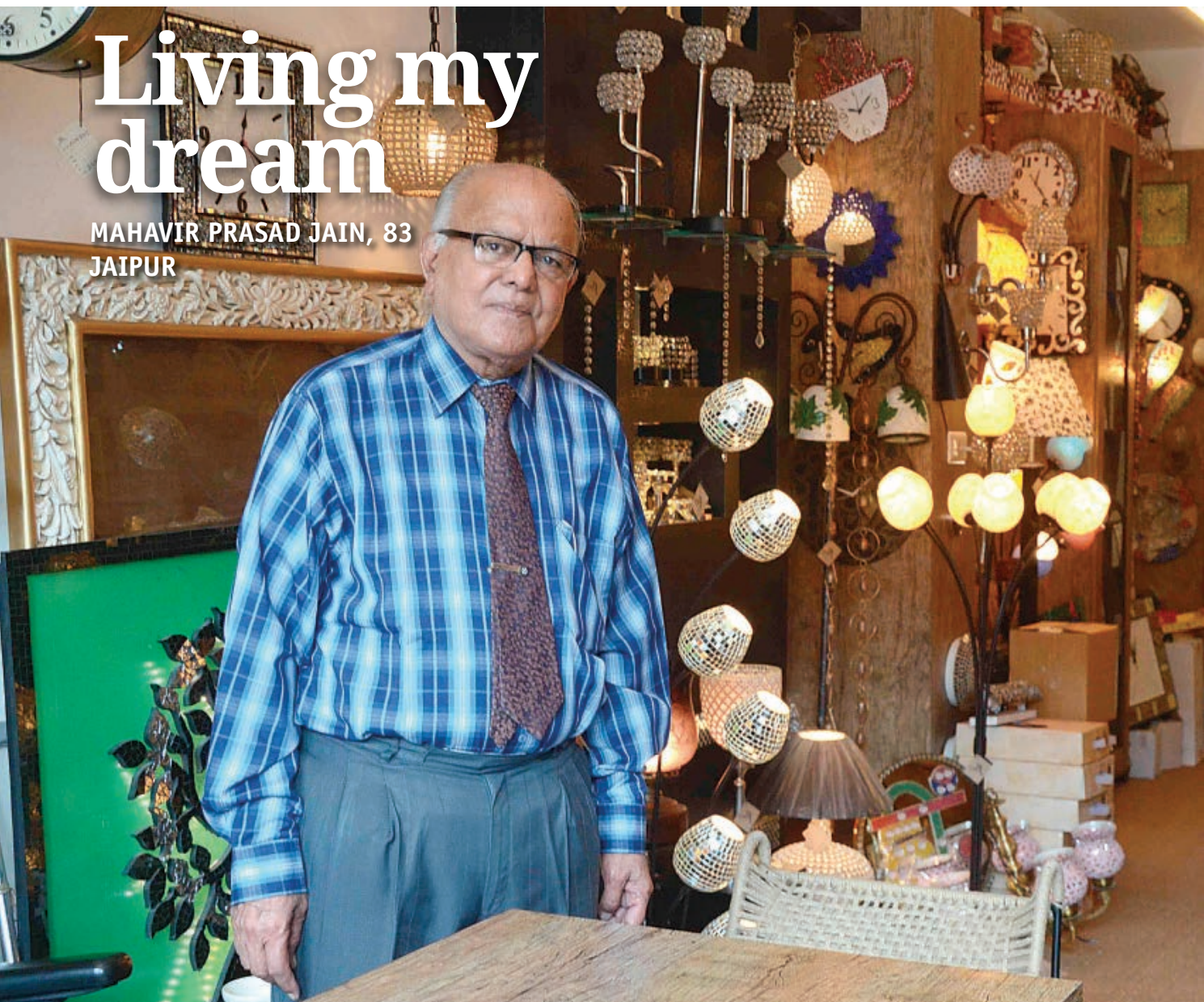
After I reached the 99-marathon mark, a run was organised for me in Daman on 18 October. When a fellow running enthusiast heard about my challenge, he insisted I run my 100th marathon in Daman, which he organised. Runners from various cities came to run with me and celebrate the moment.

It was hard to believe what I had achieved once I crossed the finish line; but once it sank in, it was a proud moment. I decided to take a photo with my wife Kalyani at the finish line because she deserves as much credit for this achievement as I do. I had never dreamt I would manage to run 100 marathons, that too in just 201 days, and I thank God for giving me strength to achieve my goal.

—Piyush Shah, Ahmedabad

Living my dream

**MAHAVIR PRASAD JAIN, 83
JAIPUR**



Not many seniors, even at the age of 83, can say with certainty that they have realised their life's dream. I am one of those fortunate few. Born in Badhal, a small and unremarkable village 85 km from Jaipur, I was the very first graduate in my village. Owing to my brilliant academic career, I was selected to serve in the Office of the Accountant General, Jaipur.

After 31 years of service, I retired in 1990, and started working on my dream: promoting handicrafts. I have always been fascinated by the handicrafts industry as my wife ran a small retail shop. So, after I retired, I transformed my love for art into a second career. It may have taken more than 10 years but I finally expanded my wife's shop and re-launched the business as Artisana, a handicrafts retailer and exporter.

My crowning moment came in 2003, when Artisana opened an outlet at the Tourist Palace, Amber, in Jaipur.

My initial setup dealt in small wooden and wrought iron items. As my business grew, I received a boost from large export orders I had received from an Israeli client. The practice in the market then was to use low-cost, low-quality packaging material with zero client appeal.

PAPER AFFAIR

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

I am a practising cardiologist who will retire in a year. I want to set up an institute to teach origami. How do I go about it?

First, you need to set up a workshop of sorts that can accommodate your students. You can use a spare room in your home if it is big enough, or rent space in a suitable area. Origami is the art of sculpting figures by folding paper, of which you will need an endless supply. Strike a deal with suppliers for your paper and required tools so you never run out. If you use your own home to run the classes, your initial investment will be just the material cost and basic interior setup.

Determine how many batches to take per week and the number of students per batch. Also make elementary, intermediate and advanced modules for students to graduate to as they make progress. Fees can vary according to the complexity of the module. Next, you need a marketing strategy to spread word about your classes. An activity like origami can be taken up by anyone of any age, so make sure your strategy is all inclusive, unless you want to target a particular age group.

Once the classes have been established, you can organise exhibitions to showcase your students' talent. You can also undertake decoration contracts with party halls, schools, hospitals, temples, etc, and engage your students in fulfilling the order. That way they can earn some pocket money and be motivated to take the art to new levels.

—Aparna Kurien runs an arts and crafts workshop-cum-retail store in Bengaluru



Surendra Jain Paras

with the full support and involvement of my family, Artisana is now a reputed name, dealing in items such as wall clocks, jute items, lamp shades and chandeliers with seep (a powder made of crushed sea shells) and glass mosaic work. Imagine my pride when Artisana won the first prize at the Forex Expo for 2013-14, held in Jaipur!

I would not have been able to realise my dream had it not been for my family. I have two sons, one in charge of the retail arm of our business, and the other who looks after exports. One of my daughters-in-law is responsible for our trademark seep and glass-based mosaic enamelling patterns, which are applied to handicraft items such as lampshades, mirrors, wall clocks and chandeliers. Some of my grandchildren too are part of the business now.

As my sons look after the day-to-day functions of the business, I devote a lot of my time to spiritual work and social service. I love reading Premchand and writing, and was co-editor of a book presented to Justice (retd) B P Beri (former chief justice of Rajasthan High Court) on his 85th birthday. I have edited many other books as well. Further, I was president of Rotary Jaipur in 2001-02 and am currently a member of many clubs like Rotary Rajasthan, Jain Sahitya Parishad and Yoga Parishad. The main motive for my work with Rotary was to join the mission to eradicate polio. During my tenure, we conducted a camp where a record number of 108 polio operations were performed. With all that I have achieved, I also try to give back to my village. Among other things, I have organised a few eye camps in Badhal, which has been long ignored by the mainstream.

I have always believed it is important to be well-rounded and these activities keep me productively engaged, as does Artisana, of course!

—As told to Anubha Agarwal

So we took a risk and used quality materials even though it was expensive. It helped make an impression on our Israeli client, whose confidence in us grew. This was a turning point and we never looked back. So I bought a farmhouse near Jaipur and used it as a warehouse, which is now the focal point of all our operations.

Over the years, I began to use modern, inventive techniques and,



Sweet nothings: To end the year on a festive note, try out these sugar-free desserts that are nutritious and low in calories

NACHNI HALWA

Serves 5

Ingredients

- Red millet flour (*nachni*): ½ cup
- Ghee: 1 tbsp
- Sugar substitute: 1 tsp
- Cardamom powder: ¼ tsp

Method

Sauté the *nachni* flour with ghee in a broad pan on a medium flame for about 5 minutes. Add 1½ cups of hot water to it. Mix well by stirring continuously and cook on a medium flame to avoid lumps; use a whisk

to stir. Add sugar substitute and cardamom powder and mix well. Serve hot.

Nutritional composition

- Calories: 65 kcal
- Protein: 0.9 g



CHEESE KHEER

Serves 5

Ingredients

- Low-fat skimmed milk: 3 cups
- Low-fat cottage cheese: 1 cup; grated
- Sugar substitute: ½ tsp
- Cardamom powder: ¼ tsp

Method

Heat the milk in a broad non-stick pan and cook on a medium flame till it starts boiling. Keep it aside to cool completely. Once cooled, add sugar substitute and cardamom powder and mix well. Add grated cheese and mix well. Keep it in the refrigerator for one hour and serve chilled.

Nutritional composition

- Calories: 82.5 kcal
- Protein: 7.7 g

OATS LADDOO

Serves 5

Ingredients

- Rolled oats: 100 gm
- Fresh coconut: 100 gm; grated
- Sugar substitute: 1½ tsp
- Green cardamom powder: ¼ tsp
- Ghee: 1 tsp
- Dessicated coconut: to sprinkle

Method

Heat a pan and dry-roast oats till it smells good. Cool and powder coarsely in a blender. Add ghee in the pan followed by grated coconut and stir well. Add cardamom powder, sugar substitute and powdered oats and mix well. Once the temperature comes down, roll into small balls

with greased palms. In addition, you can sprinkle dessicated coconut over the balls and garnish with a raisin; but be warned of the increased calorie count.

Nutritional composition

- Calories: 62 kcal
- Protein: 5.6 g





KHAJOOR BARFI

Makes 10 pieces

Ingredients

- Deseeded dates (*khajoor*): 1½ cups
- Almonds: 10
- Cashew nuts: 5
- Pistachios: 5
- Ghee: 1 tsp

Method

Chop seedless dates and microwave on high temperature for 1 minute. Make a purée using a little water. Roast almonds, cashew nuts and pistachios and then chop all the nuts in small pieces. Heat ghee in a pan and add date purée; sauté well and cook on medium heat, stirring continuously for 5 minutes or till

mixture leaves the side of the pan. Add almonds, cashew nuts and pistachios. Mix well for two minutes, stirring continuously. Spread evenly on the greased tray. When cool, cut into pieces and serve.

Nutritional composition

- Calories: 97 kcal
- Protein: 4.2 g

APPLE SORBET

Serves 5

Ingredients

- Apples: 2 cups; chopped
- Ginger juice: 1 tsp
- Lemon juice: 2 tsp
- Sugar substitute: 1 tsp

Method

Combine all the ingredients along with 1 cup of water in a mixer and blend till smooth. Transfer the mixture into a shallow container. Cover with a lid and freeze for 8 hours. Just before serving, scrape out using

a fork. Pour equal quantities of the sorbet into 5 individual glasses. Serve immediately.

Nutritional composition

- Calories: 42 kcal
- Protein: 0.2 g

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



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

Often, what is interpreted as lower back pain could mean trouble in the urogenital system. Though even medical experts can be thrown off track by the confusing signals, it is not difficult to track the connection. The spine at the lower back services nerves that work in the urogenital system. With women, when there is inflammation, swelling, or infection in the urogenital system, it can create lower back pain. In men, the nerves at the lower back control penile erection.

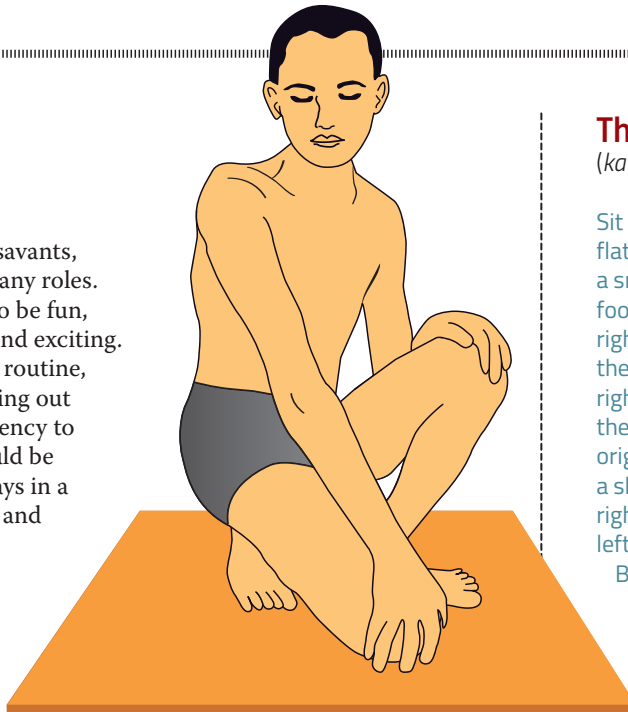
SAGITTARIUS

22 November to 21 December

Adventurers, archers, artists, savants, saviours, Sagittarians don many roles. So, their yoga *sadhana* has to be fun, fulfilling, extreme, variable and exciting. They normally tend to avoid routine, which can send their high energy spinning out of control. Therefore, despite their tendency to get bored with a set sequence, they would be advised to stick to it for at least a few days in a week to ensure that they stay grounded and not go careening out of control.

Their ability to shift attention also means they can lose focus fast, so they need practices that pin their mind strongly. This may involve special practices such as yogic eye exercises (*trataka*) and more focus on grounding and balancing breathing practices (*pranayama*) like victory breath (*ujjayi*), alternate nostril breathing (*anulom vilom*) and humming bee (*brahmari*). Thus, even though they think variety is spice, they can turn their need to try new poses or practices by ensuring they extend their stamina and duration in each. This will perk up their practice but still keep them grounded and on course.

Their weak areas are the thighs and abdomen and propensity towards accidents. It is advised that they include practices that strengthen their legs so they can go about their adventures without any disadvantage. These include standing balancers like the palm tree (*tadasana*), one-legged prayer pose (*ekapada pranamasana*), the squat series (*utkatasana*) and dancing Shiva series (*Natarajasana*), to name a few. Dynamic stamina builders like the crow walk (*kawachalasana*), seated Kali pose (*Kaliasana*) and side planks like Sage Vashistha's pose (*Vashisthasana*) are adventurous, yet grounding. Calming and soothing inversions like the headstand (*sirsasana*) and shoulder stand (*sarvangasana*) spice up the practice, but remove the high stress of being an adventure-seeker.



The crow walk (*kawachalasana*)

Sit on your heels, palms flat on your thighs. Take a small step with the left foot, while pressing the right thigh/knee towards the ground with your right palm. Now release the thighs back to the original position, taking a short step with your right foot, pressing your left thigh/knee down.

Breathe normally throughout. Walk the entire length of the mat like this. Rest. Increase stamina, so you can do more rounds

over the mat after a few weeks. Avoid if you have knee problems. If you have problems initially, you can place your palms on the ground to guide you ahead.

Benefits: This is a powerful workout for the ankles and the entire legs, including hips. It helps weight loss and builds mental and physical stamina. This pose is used to prepare the body for advanced meditative postures like the lotus (*padmasana*).

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)

Experience

A second childhood

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

Visit us at : www.harmonyindia.org

harmony
celebrate age



HIS LADLE LOVE BY PRATIBHA JAIN

Mix and match

SANJAY JAIN • HYDERABAD

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

His aunt and cookbook author Indu Bokaria says, “Whatever he does, he does it perfectly. He makes the best of sesame *laddu* and cabbage samosas. He is one of the most creative as well as caring persons I have ever known.” His cousin Pradeep says, “Sanjay is an expert cook and can churn out culinary masterpieces in a jiffy.” Much loved by family and friends, Sanjay Jain, 50, is a Rajasthani Jain residing in Hyderabad. He enjoys cooking, pays attention to detail, takes care of his readymade garment store, helps the children with their projects and sits with them to make a mini houseboat and, above all, maintains heartwarming relationships. During the interview, he speaks about all of this and shares some creative recipes in great detail.

How did your interest in cooking begin?

Right from my childhood, I was interested in the kitchen. I was a keen observer and used to watch how my mother cooked. I lived with my mother and grandmother in Rajasthan while my father was working in Kolkata. My mother often had to visit nearby areas for weddings and other social functions and that led me to spending more and more time in the kitchen.

Were you the only child at home?

At home, yes! I have an elder sister but she was studying in a hostel at that time. Later, she got married, so I was the only child at home.

What is your first cooking memory?

I think I was 11 years old when I made *trikon* [triangular] *parantha*. It's an easy procedure because you have to roll thick rotis, apply ghee and fold into triangles and then roll them out. A very common item in most North Indian homes. I remember making them with a flourish [laughs].

“I think one must truly enjoy eating to be a good cook. While cooking, you have to be constantly inspired... if you are not fond of eating, it is tough to be a good cook”

What is your most instant dish?

Dahi ki chutney. It's so quick—just add *masala* to curds and it is ready.

Do you mean a *raita*?

No, *raita* is not as thick. This is made with thick curd and has the consistency of a chutney. I like to add chilli powder, salt, coriander powder to curds and then top it with a simple tempering of *jeera* [cumin]. As an

option, you can add mint powder or garlic powder. You can also add sugar to give a sweetish taste. A perfect accompaniment with *parantha* or leftover bajra rotis.

Fabulous. Tell me, did you do your schooling in Rajasthan?

I was born in Kolkata and my family moved to Rajasthan when I was five years old. We lived in Chhappar which is a small town near Sujangadh and well known for the Tal Chhappar Sanctuary. I did my schooling as well as higher studies here.

Was there a college in your town?

Yes, Sujala College. It was the only college around that area. It gets its name from the first two letters of three nearby towns: Sujangarh, Jaswantgarh and Ladnun. There was no other college for 30-40 km.

What did you do after graduation?

I moved to Mumbai to work with the Barmecha group who were diamond dealers. In 1986, I moved to Hyderabad where I worked in the field of readymade garments. I now have my own shop of readymade garments known as Little Smile.

And in the middle of all this, how did you meet your wife Raja?

I would love to hear this love story.

After some years of living in Mumbai, I met Raja and we fell in love. She was a Parsi and I wanted to marry her.

What did your family say?

There was some initial resistance but they all came around. They just wanted me to stand on my own feet first. The Mumbai humidity was affecting my health, so I shifted to Hyderabad. I told my parents that I was neither



Does your wife like cooking as much as you do?

[Laughs] She did not know how to cook at all. When she met my mother, she said, 'I can make tea.' My mother was really concerned and said, 'The two of you are so different; how will you manage?' I told my mother she could teach her cooking and that I would also help her cook. At that time, Raja was also working; she was doing her own business and keeping busy. So we would cook together. Also, as we were careful about budgets, it made sense to cook whatever you desired at home rather than eating out.

So does she enjoy cooking now?

She cooks very well and makes some lovely Gujarati dishes. I have to tell you that her mother was a Gujarati Brahmin and a strict vegetarian. So even though Raja's father ate non-vegetarian food, she herself has always been a strict vegetarian. I think it was destined that she would marry into a Jain family.

Give me an instance of what happens when you cook together?

She makes a delicious mixed vegetable learnt from her mother. It's a very rich dish. You require 100 gm each of potatoes, peas, carrots, cauliflower, capsicum and onions. Chop everything into 1-inch bits. All these have to be deep-fried separately. Next, you have to make a rich gravy with tomatoes, grated bottle gourd and spices. Once the gravy is cooked, add un-fried *paneer* cubes and all the fried vegetables. To add my twist to this vegetable, I add Rajasthani *vadi* after boiling it separately. I also add 2 roasted *papad* bits to this *sabzi*. We call this Veg Jaipuri [smiles].

Sounds delicious and a perfect coming together of cultures. Thanks for sharing this. I also heard about the recent dish you cooked at a family wedding.

going to enforce my decision on them nor run away with her. So they agreed to meet her. When they met her, they really took a liking to her.

I think that was a very nice way of dealing with the situation.

After we were married, my parents refused to shift in with us. They felt

there would be adjustment issues as she was from another community. But I told them that any adjustment is possible only during the initial days. So they agreed to come and stay with us. I am happy to say it has all worked out so well. We are blessed with two children: our son Sourabh is doing his MS in the US and daughter Surabhi is married.

Photographs by Anand Kumar Soma



Yes, at my nephew's wedding. My aunt Indu and I joined the wedding chefs and prepared *aloo ki sabzi* for over 150 guests. It was delicious and was the first dish to get over. I simply need a reason to cook.

I am grateful to the Bokarias for introducing you...

The Bokaria family is really like my own family. We have always shared a great relationship. Indu Bokaria is my *bua*. Her husband Prakashji has always been supportive. They are very caring and friendly people and I simply love cooking for my aunt. Last time she came to Hyderabad, I made my special lady's finger [okra/

bhindi] for her. That's the recipe I am going to share with you today.

That would be lovely. I have one last question: what is the secret of good cooking?

I think that one must truly enjoy eating to be a good cook. While



cooking, you have to be constantly inspired and if you love eating, then ideas flow. You will want to experiment when you enjoy it. I think that if you are not fond of eating, it is tough to be a good cook. Simply put, if you don't enjoy the taste of *dahi papdi*, you will not improvise on the spot.

Kurmuri dahiwalī bhindi

(Fried okra/*bhindi* with yoghurt)

A delicious dish made with fried okra/*bhindi*, it is layered with great finesse and served as individual servings. A

favourite with Sanjay's family and friends, it serves four.

Ingredients

- Tender okra: 1.5 kg
- Green chillies: 10-13; chopped fine
- Onions: 2-3; chopped fine
- *Chat masala*: 1 tsp
- Chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Salt to taste
- Oil for deep frying

For the gravy

- Yoghurt: 4 cups
- Mustard powder: 2 tsp
- Mustard: 1 tsp
- Turmeric powder: a pinch
- Asafoetida powder: a pinch

Method

Chop the okra into thin round slices. Deep-fry in steaming oil until they turn crisp and golden brown. Set aside on absorbent paper. Drop the chopped chillies in the hot oil for a minute. Drain and set aside. Sprinkle *chat masala*, chilli powder and salt on the fried okra. Set aside. For the gravy, beat the yoghurt with very little water. Add salt and mustard powder and set aside. Heat 1 tsp oil in a small wok. Pop the mustard and add the asafoetida and turmeric powder. Immediately, switch off the flame and add this tempering into the yogurt mixture.

In individual serving bowls, add a layer of fried okra. Add fried chillies on top. Next, add a layer of chopped onions. Top with enough yogurt mixture to cover the dish. Serve with hot rotis.

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

PROACTIVE

२४ तास सेवा

घरपोच सेवा
संपर्क क्र-8308785600



Service with a smile

SILVER ANGELS OF MERCY AT AN AURANGABAD HOSPITAL PROVIDE SUCCOUR TO PATIENTS. IN RETURN, THEY FIND INNER PEACE, REPORTS
AAKANKSHA BAJPAI



The Dr Hedgewar Hospital in Aurangabad is like any other large hospital in a metro—a fount of hope and succour to an endless stream of patients who converge here from the city and surrounding villages, every single day. Raju Nihale, a patient who has arrived here with his family from rural Aurangabad, is worried about how they will manage in ‘the big city’. They are also daunted at the prospect of navigating this massive medical institution.

All their troubles vanish soon after they step inside the hospital, where they are greeted by a silver wearing a yellow overcoat with a name tag on it. The volunteer, who immediately calms their fears, walks Nihale through the admission process and tells him to approach any of the volunteers in overcoats stationed across the hospital, if he needs any further help.

Calling themselves ‘Sevavratīs’ (‘one who does selfless service’), these volunteers got together in 2000, with the sole intention of assisting patients at the trust-run Dr Hedgewar Hospital—with a registration fee of just ₹ 100, the hospital offers discounted rates and is consequently always teeming with people. Numbering 56 today, these Sevavratīs are no ordinary social workers. While engaging in meaningful work, their mission goes beyond merely keeping silvers busy after retirement. They say this is an opportunity to achieve inner peace through

selfless service, something not many of us experience in daily life.

“I have been helping out at this hospital for eight years,” says Ashwin Kumar Panse, 68, who volunteers at the hospital’s reception desk. “I believe in what the *Gita* teaches us, to work without expectation. Working here gives me a feeling of satisfaction. While I was bored with my monotonous job as deputy engineer in the Water Resources Department, government of Maharashtra, here I find my peace.”

So what exactly do these angels of mercy do? “Our volunteers help by bringing medicines from the pharmacy to the patients’ bedside, organising relatives in the hospital wards, and talking to relatives who need a shoulder to lean on, among other things. We aim to relieve the stress of patients and their relatives while helping the hospital administration keep the wheels turning seamlessly,” explains Prahlad Panse, 74, one of the founders who coordinates between the Sevavratīs and the hospital management.

It all started when Prahlad Panse, along with late Baalchandra Kulkarni and Prajakta Pathak, approached the hospital and asked the doctors if they needed any help. “Initially, both the doctors and patients were very sceptical about our intentions. While the patients were a little suspicious of us, the doctors were worried about how we



The Sevavratris have cultivated not only trust but fostered an atmosphere of kindness and love. They are no ordinary social workers. Their mission goes beyond merely keeping silvers busy after retirement. They say this is an opportunity to achieve inner peace through selfless service, something not many of us experience in daily life

would interact with the patients. But slowly, we built the trust of both," reveals Panse.

The Sevavratris have come a long way since then and have cultivated not only trust but fostered an atmosphere of kindness and love. Prabhakar Devkar, who came to the hospital to have kidney stones removed, vouches for that. "I was in a critical condition when I was admitted here. Apart from the doctors, who gave me good treatment, it was the help and love of the Sevavratris that kept me going. They treat us like their own family and take care of us."

Dr Anant Pandhare, medical director of Dr Hedgewar Hospital, underscores that the Sevavratris' mission goes well beyond lending a helping hand—it's all about compas-

sion and letting patients know they are not alone. "Generally, people come here not only with illness; they come with a fear of the big city," he elaborates. "They worry about things like whether they would be charged more or what would happen about their food? In times like this, silvers can help a lot. In return, they get a sense of purpose, a feeling of being wanted by society. The Sevavratris also give us feedback, as patients and their relatives open up to them. In the beginning, we were a little cautious about these volunteers as we did not want them to advise patients about medicines and home remedies. But, gradually, we realised we could completely trust them."

The Sevavratris' work begins the moment a patient steps into the hospital. Here, a volunteer guides patients into



Clockwise from top left: Baburao Sadavrati prepares time stickers for the medicines prescribed to a patient; Dr Shobha Madhukar Tande greets an old patient; Ashwin Kumar Panse checks a patient's file at the reception counter; Sevavratits distribute food to patients' relatives; opposite page: Prakash Rajesh Kulkarni counsels a patient

one of two queues: old and new registrations. They also help patients figure out their prescriptions. Baburao Sadavrati, 85, says, "As soon as a patient walks in, I ask them whether they have understood when they have to take their medicines. If they appear even a little nervous, I take the prescription and the medicines and put a sticker on it. This sticker clearly shows when the medicine has to be taken, whether in the morning, afternoon or evening."

Every volunteer has their own story, as does Prajakta Pathak, one of the Sevavratits' founders. Pathak, who works in the Stores Department, says the anguish she experienced when her mother-in-law was sick with cancer in Pune inspired her. The 57 year-old recalls that she was frantically looking for moral and emotional support back then, someone who could take care of her mother-in-law while she did her household chores and ran errands. She couldn't find any help and ended up juggling both.

"I started volunteering with the maternity ward and then the outpatients' department. I remember one incident when the relatives of a patient wanted to take the patient

home as they could not afford the treatment prescribed. The patient was critical and this decision could have cost her life. I helped them understand how important it was for her to get the treatment and they changed their mind," says Pathak, adding that there can be nothing more satisfying than helping people in times of crisis.

Avinash D Deshpande, 66, who has been volunteering at the hospital for nine years, adds, "I get my happiness here and all I need to give in return is my time. I remember there was a child suffering from HIV. All he did was cry and he refused to eat. When I asked him why he was not eating, he said the food hurt his throat. So I got the kitchen staff to mash his food and that worked. This forged a mutual bond of love. Sadly, the boy died in a few months but the only thing that gives me peace is that I was there when he took his last breath."

The love and goodwill of the Sevavratits have spread well beyond the hospital's premises. Sunita Tagare is a social worker who works in child welfare and is currently working with the Jankidevi Bajaj Gramvikas Sanstha, a



ALL ABOUT SEVAVRATIS

- The 56 Sevavratīs volunteering at Dr Hedgewar Hospital spend two to three hours a day giving their services to patients and their relatives. In total, the Sevavratīs spend about 50,000 hours a year working at the hospital.
- To become a Sevavratī, one needs to fill a form that is available at the hospital, with details such as age, name, address and contact number, and how many hours one can spare. Once the form is filled, the candidate must interact with Prahlad Panse, the coordinator of the Sevavratīs who is mediator between the Sevavratīs and the hospital management. Once the coordinator is sure about prospective candidates, he gives them a tour of the hospital and asks for their work preference. However, in the initial days, the new Sevavratīs are expected to work in almost all the wards to gain experience and get used to the patients and the problems they face.
- The Sevavratīs do not belong to any organisation and have been working without any monetary assistance from the hospital. To ensure smooth coordination, they hold regular meetings to discuss problems and suggest potential solutions.
- Here's proof that the Sevavratīs work without an ulterior motive—when the hospital management proposed to give these silvers a discount in hospital services in the time of need, they rejected the proposal entirely.

Leaders of the Sevavratīs, Prajakta Pathak and Prahlad Panse

developmental non-profit that works in Aurangabad. “The Dr Hedgewar Hospital was a great help when we needed medical care for the babies in our care,” she says. “The Sevavratīs are enthusiastic, energetic and very humane. I have witnessed the softness with which they talk to patients and their relatives. It also minimises the pressure on the doctors as the patients are sure they will receive good treatment here.”

Speaking of empathy, the Annapurna programme run by the Sevavratīs is a roaring success. Run with the help of donations, it is a food service aimed at providing healthy meals to patients. The brainchild of Rajkumar Khinvasara, 70, the service was started two years ago, when his wife was admitted to the hospital and he realised the need for nutritious food for patients.

Mangilal Chandaliya, who works with Khinvasara, says, “Our Annapurna service has especially helped patients who come from the villages as it not only gives them something to depend on but the assurance that someone cares about what they eat.”

While service is its own reward, the love and respect the Sevavratīs have won from society is very touching. Prahlad Panse remarks, “I do not know how to ride a scooter, so I have to walk to and from the hospital. But, very often, someone or the other drives up to me and says, ‘Kaka, hospital ja rahe ho?’ [Uncle, are you going to the hospital?], and I end up getting a lift!” 🌸

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

BUTTERFLIES *never retire*

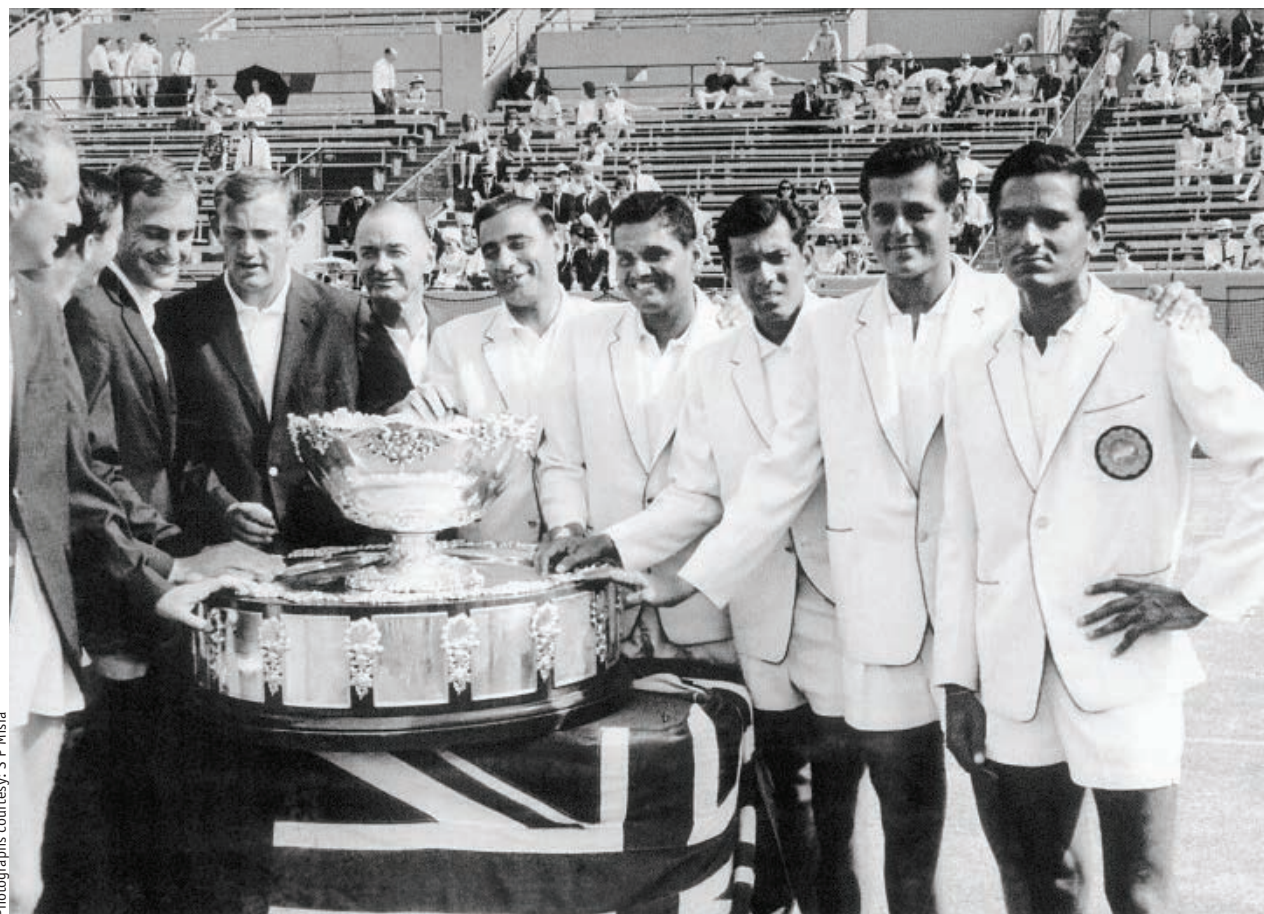
The first click of the mouse.

www.harmonyindia.org

harmony
celebrate age

On the ball

Recognised for his lifetime contribution to tennis, S P Misra looks back at the game that was and recollects some cherished moments in conversation with **Shyamola Khanna**



Photographs courtesy: S P Misra

Shiv Prakash Misra may be a pillar of Indian tennis but he recently had to relinquish one of his titles... which he happily did. After more than six decades in the game, he dropped the 'unsung hero' tag in exchange for the Dhyan Chand Award for lifetime achievement in tennis, conferred by the Government of India.

Misra has lived and breathed tennis for as long as he can remember and was India's Davis Cup captain till as recently as 2013. His achievements are especially sweet

for he received no formal training in the sport, yet he qualified for Wimbledon on his very first attempt (1964), played the longest match of his career—and won it—at the US National Championships (pre-US Open era) the same year, and was a part of the first-ever Indian team to reach the final of the Davis Cup (1966).

Unlike now, when a player's every move on the court is carefully calibrated and muscle power has replaced grace and finesse, Misra courted the game when sportsmanship and the privilege of wearing your country's colours were as important as winning titles. At the age of 73, this



Talking tennis with Somdev Devvarman during the 2011 Davis Cup in Serbia; with Sania Mirza at the National Sports Awards function this year; opposite page: Misra (extreme right) with his 1966 Davis Cup team that reached the finals

tennis ace still revels in the game, plays a daily round at Secunderabad Club, and is chairperson of the All India Tennis Association's Selection Committee. On winning the Dhyan Chand Award, he remarks, "For 65 years, I have held the racket in my hand and I am proud that my contribution to the game has finally been recognised."

Vintage lineage

Hailing originally from Uttar Pradesh, Misra's grandfather was a building contractor who settled in Hyderabad and constructed some of the most beautiful Nizami architecture that dots the city's skyline—the Osmania General Hospital and the High Court buildings.

Unlike him, his son, Jai Narayan Misra, was very fond of tennis, and although he carried on his father's business as a developer, he clearly passed on his love for tennis to his own son. "My father would ride a bicycle to the public courts before visiting his construction sites. And when he could afford it, he bought land in the well-planned Marredpally. Here, he built our home and a tennis court, where some of India's greatest players, including M V Bobji, Y R Savur and Ghouse Mohommad, played. Father would take my brother and me to watch matches in the city, where players from other states would come and beat the local players. That was when I vowed I would, one day, beat those players on their own turf!"

With a faraway look, Misra adds, "My sister Rekha went on to play national-level tennis, and when she was old enough, she started joining us on court. I had to team up with my father as he always wanted to win. He would ask Rekha to be his partner when he knew the opposition was weak. Her contemporaries were Nirupama Vasant and Kiran Bedi."



Memorable moments

When he was 14 years old, Misra was selected to participate in an all-India junior training camp in Thiruvananthapuram, where M L Jaisimha, then a budding cricketer who equally loved tennis, was participating. The lad knew nothing about anyone else's game—the Internet and global connectivity were still a gleam in someone's eye—so he just went with his gut and ended up winning all his matches. That was when he beat Jaideep Mukherji, one of the top-ranking players at the time, not once but twice in a row—once in the team event and once in the main event.

And in 1960, when he was 18, Misra, Gopal Banerji, Vinay Dhawan and Vinay Kumar (who later retired as defence secretary) were the first team of juniors sent to the UK by the Ministry of Sports to train under Tony Mortram. For most of them, it was the first time out of the country. "Those three months were truly great," says Misra. "We learnt a lot about the game and living away from home!"

His next memorable match was when Misra teamed up with Naresh Kumar to play against the Japanese pair of Watanabe and Ishiguro in 1964. "After we lost the first two



“For 65 years, I have held the racket in my hand and I am proud that my contribution to the game has finally been recognised”

sets, we went on to win the next three straight. That same year, I also won the mixed doubles with my sister Rekha Misra at the Nationals, the only brother-sister team to have ever played and won the game!”

When he was selected to represent India at the Wimbledon qualifying challenge, Misra was dispatched to London in a hurry, thanks to bureaucratic hassles. “My kit had my wooden Symonds’ racket, Bata shoes and socks, local T-shirt and tailor-made shorts and my mother’s hand-knitted sweater. After I won my qualifying rounds, the great Fred Perry himself came to the green room to give me a kit, racket and shoes from his sports line. I was thrilled to shake hands with the legend and accept his gift!” Misra, then ranked No. 4 in India, was knocked out in the qualifying round by India’s No. 1, Jaideep Mukherji. He was leading 4-1 in the fifth set but he let his concentration slip and lost the match. “That was when inexperience showed up and I lost my concentration,” he admits. “It was the worst loss of my career.”

But there was little time to moan over the loss for, soon, Misra and Premjit Lal headed for the US to play the American circuit. They played for nearly 8-10 weeks and the last matches of the series were to be played at Forest Hills. Here, Misra met Chile’s No. 1, Ernesto Aguirre, in the second round and played the most gruelling match of his life—he won 14-12 in the fifth set after 80 games and five-and-a-half hours on court. It was one of the longest games ever witnessed in Forest Hills. Sadly, his blistered hand kept him from playing the next rounds.

No mentor

Misra points out that he had no mentor or coach. “It was very tough to play at the all-India level with no guidance and no coach, a far cry from today when the players do

not move without their coaches and trainers! For me, it was enough inspiration that I was getting to rub shoulders with the country’s greatest players, among them Ramanaathan Krishnan, Jaideep Mukherji and Premjit Lal. Through these close encounters, I learnt some valuable lessons. Also, there was so much warmth and camaraderie. Now players have no time to talk to each other.”

New ballgame

Misra grew up playing on clay and ‘cow-dung’ courts, common in southern India. These courts provided the perfect bounce and were easy on the legs. At the time, northern India had only grass courts and his contemporaries were happy playing and practising on them whenever they were in town. “Today, we have synthetic courts that require zero maintenance. They are good courts to play on but they are hard on the legs and knees, which is why we have so many injuries. We played with wooden rackets and we had just two or three brands to choose from. It’s gone from wood to metal to graphite and fibreglass rackets that give a lot of power to the game.”

He says the other big change in the game is the amount of money spent. “When I went to the UK the first time, I was given £ 8 from the Government of India as travel allowance. At Wimbledon, for the 15 days of stay and play, I got a one-time payment of £ 100. On winning my match against New Zealand’s No. 1, Brian Fairlie, I was paid £ 5. Today, players get hundreds of Euros to stay, train and play, plus very large sums in prize money.”

However, Misra says his family was well off and his father supported him throughout his playing days. “I also worked part-time in movie theatres. When we had to play in other cities, we stayed with family and friends, and never in hotels.”



Greeting then president Dr Rajendra Prasad during an all-India junior training camp in 1958; receiving the Dhyana Chand Award from President Pranab Mukherjee this year; opposite page: when India beat Brazil during the 2010 Davis Cup in Chennai

Young players

Today, there are many new tennis academies all over the country. "Many smart youngsters are coming out from all tennis schools. Unfortunately, they win their first rounds in the \$ 10,000 tournament and then the Challengers [which have recently started in India] and they begin to think that they have arrived!" Misra says these youngsters need to feel a constant hunger for more and a fire in their bellies to reach the top. "They become complacent and lose it all. If satisfaction sets in, then improvement stops. You have to be hungry all the time and aim very high!"

Life after retirement

Our veteran retired from the game in 1981, after 25 years of being at the top. He was 40. He got involved in his father's business although he did not altogether quit tennis, and played in the local veterans' tournaments at the age of 45. Always a dog lover, Misra was president of the local kennel club, and promoted dog shows in the city. When not pursuing these interests, he was playing club cricket with M L Jaisimha and his team.

Misra went through a personally challenging time when both his parents took ill in the late 1990s. "My father did not want me out of his sight, so I had to be with him throughout. Both my wife Satya and I spent almost all our time with my parents," he says. His father passed away in 2001 and his mother two years later.

His love affair with tennis was far from over though. Misra was chosen to lead the Davis Cup teams from 2008 to 2013 and, under his captaincy, the Indian teams did fairly well. He is also chairperson of the Selection Committee of the All India Tennis Association since 2014 as well as a member of the Executive Committee.

Alas, neither of his two daughters nor his son will carry on Misra's legacy in the game. His elder daughter Rashmi was women's No. 1 in Hyderabad in the '90s but gave it all up for a corporate career and, later, marriage. As for protégés, he says: "I mentor youngsters who approach me. I've found that free advice has no value and volunteering is

not my idea of service. But if someone asks, I am always there to help."

While he can't seem to get enough of the game, Misra does believe that there is life beyond tennis. "I have always been fond of going on long drives. Luckily, Satya too enjoys it and is a great companion," he says of his wife. "Last year, we drove to Rameshwaram on Shivratni. We got the *prasadam*, stayed a night and then drove to Munnar, where we stayed put for another week before driving back." Now there's time to smell the roses. ✨

:: cover feature ::

A photograph of dancer Anita Ratnam in a traditional Indian dance costume. She is wearing a blue and gold sari with a gold border and a gold blouse. She is holding a long, colorful garland (mala) in her right hand, which is raised above her head. She is looking upwards with a serene expression. The background is dark with some vertical elements.

“I AM STILL A WORK IN PROGRESS. LIKE MY DANCE”

On the eve of premiering her new production this December season, iconic contemporary dancer Anita Ratnam tells **Sai Prabha Kamath** what keeps her going

Power. Piety. Purity. Veteran dancer Dr Anita Ratnam's *Neelam...Drowning in Bliss*, a solo psalm in the spirit of surrender, had it all. Inspired by the serene stillness of the southern Indian Vaishnava ritual tradition, the poetry in motion presented recently in Mumbai was indeed a visual treat; innovative choreography with an irresistible mix of dance, theatre, music and lighting made the presentation an immersive experience. Through her unique movement vocabulary called Neo Bharatam—a signature style that breaks away from traditional dance formats and infuses modern aesthetics that are experimental in nature—Ratnam held the audience in raptures. Draped in creative, unconventional costumes, and with a graceful demeanour, she explored the various spaces on stage with softly rounded movements, brilliant expressions and interesting props. “Using all the elements of my physical vocabulary—Bharatanatyam, Mohiniattam, Kathakali, yoga and Tai Chi [a silent meditative movement]—into a choreography is very, very challenging. Each performance is like going back to the drawing board,” she expressed on the sidelines of the performance.

While in *Neelam*, the dance icon showcased versatility through her portrayal of myriad characters—Nambi, Kothai, Padmavathy, Krishna, Rama, Sita—in real life, too, Ratnam straddles multiple roles with consummate ease. Apart from being a performer-choreographer, she is an arts entrepreneur, culture mentor, writer, speaker. An “intersectionist”, her work weaves the many disciplines of dance, theatre, spoken word, ritual, archaeology, dramaturgy and women’s issues. Over the past four decades, her distinguished career has witnessed over 1,300 performances across 37 countries.



Photographs courtesy: Anita Ratnam



Her acclaimed choreographies include *Gajaanana*, *Daughters of the Ocean*, *Seven Graces*, *Ma3ka*, *A Million Sitas* and *Neelam*.

A visiting professor in international universities in the US such as the University of California-Irvine and Riverside, Ratnam is also vice-president of ABHAI, a Chennai-based arts organisation that represents the Bharatanatyam dancers of India. As a fellow of the World Academy of Arts and Sciences and voting member of the Dance Critics Association in the US, she furthers the profile of Indian dance internationally, and mentors actors and dancers through a pioneering national project called Padme. The Chennai resident is also on the advisory board of Adishakti, a theatre laboratory in Puducherry. Ratnam is the founder of www.narthaki.com, the world's largest web portal on Indian dance. In her ancestral village temple of Tirukurugudi, Tamil Nadu, she has restored the 15th century theatre ritual performance of Kaisika Natakam. And for over two decades, she has conceived, produced and curated numerous conferences, theatre seminars and dance festivals, the most notable being The Other Festival, India's first annual contemporary dance festival in Chennai.

Interestingly, the artist hails from the reputed TVS Group business family (she is the great granddaughter of group founder T V Sundaram Iyengar). But she is quick to tell us, "The myth of the TVS family is just that—a myth. We were a very simple family." In an exclusive interview with *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, Ratnam talks about her life, art, inspiration and upcoming projects.

IN HER OWN WORDS

In flashback, it seems like a fairytale. I was the firstborn—a true Alpha Female. My father being the eldest of his generation, I was spoilt by all my uncles and aunts. My mother wanted her firstborn to be a boy and there I was! So my aunt and my father decided on my name. Thank God that I was not named Lolita—my mother was horrified at the thought! In the mid-50s, a Tamil Brahmin girl named Anita was highly unusual. My middle name was Raajyalaxmi—named after the paternal grandmother we never knew.

I was the apple of everyone's eye. I loved the spotlight, being the centre of attention. I never remember being shy or withdrawn. Always ready to dance, prance and sing when there were guests. Quite a show-off! Childhood was simple but filled with activity, studies, sports, languages, tuition, reading, drama at school... there seemed to be no time to dream or just be. In hindsight, this was the best way to bring me up... restless and very curious. Far better to have kept me busy and, at the end of the day, exhausted, rather than give me time to get into trouble.

The early days were extremely simple. Remember if you can, a time before television and the handheld social media revolution. Reading, long walks on the beach, hiking in the mountains for summer vacations—those were the times we spent as siblings and a large band of cousins. I remember being so thrilled when my father would return home from office with a Kit Kat chocolate bar as a



"Imaging women on stage is my focus and performance is my tool. I cannot say that dance completes me but I can admit that when I dance, the world seems brighter and takes on more intense meaning"

treat—those were the days before Kit Kat and all imported products were banned and difficult to procure. Learning to ride a cycle, memorising full pages of text for theatre class, practicing for the basketball matches where I was star shoot, marching practice, singing classes, Carnatic and Western... the days were filled and I was filling up with all the software needed for life.

My mother always told me, 'Be the first one on the moon, nobody remembers the second.' It was after the first moon landing that she turned around and shared that line. My father was the soft one, loving and supportive. My mother drove us hard—traditional values at home and international citizens in the making outside. Horse-riding, French classes, wearing western clothes, modelling stints, playing the guitar, we were exposed to it all, and I loved it the most. My brother disliked the arts and my sister was more intent coming first in class. I was the curious global nomad in the making. At home, we studied Sanskrit and written Tamil. In school, we learned Hindi and French. As a family, we were the most modern in the entire TVS Group. Many of my cousins and friends would envy our freedom. Our home was a shelter for many of them when they fought with their parents or wanted to rebel in one way or another.

Today, I live in this family home which is 50 years old. It's not old by Indian standards, but by my family's rule of thumb, it is an old home. It was built by my mother Leela who was a civil engineer. She was also an amazing artist, building four homes in her lifetime, organising fashion shows, playing competitive tennis and golf while offering her energy and time to many social causes around town. She was impatient with laziness and sloth. 'Sweat it out,' she would urge us. 'Depression and mind games are for the spoilt and arrogant.' Another one of her wise sayings was, 'You are not sugar or salt to melt in the storm. So go out and face it. But choose your battles.' Playing sports was very important for our family. We learned how to win and lose gracefully on the court and in life. And believe me, I have faced so many losing moments.

Money was not freely flowing in the early days. My father brought home about ₹ 2,000 a month. That was all. We had very little money as everything was poured back into the company and its future. Today, my cousins enjoy a very different lifestyle owing to the hard work, vision and sacrifice of the previous generations. I remember the times of my mother paying for our traditional jewellery instalments.

I am the first professional artist in my family. Neither side has artists. I am surrounded by ancestors who were decorated lawyers, IAS and IFS officers, bankers, accountants, doctors and now business entrepreneurs. An artist? Nobody stepped into that world. And it was the only world that suited me. I am not employable. I cannot work 9 to 5, answering someone else's call and developing another brand. I am it. I am the factory, the think tank and the manufacturing core. Think about it. The dancer uses her body as the machine and the temple, creating and destroying. When I stop dancing, the dance ends. Not having much to discuss by way of ROI [return on investment], balance sheets and turnover, other than ideas and passion, I am still ignored by many in my family as a dreamer or too much of an individualist. But my status in my family is devalued only if I allow it to happen. I refuse to believe that economics is the only horizon for success. I cannot negate all my years of work and art to submit to that monolithic way of thinking. I have been able to walk into the homes and offices of great men and women. Kings, prime ministers, presidents have all welcomed me, not because of my bank balance but because of what I represent.

I was an excellent student of my dance gurus. First, Rajee Narayan and later Adyar K Lakshman. I excelled in all they taught me and later was introduced to Kathakali and Mohiniattam to lend more flexibility and torso movement for theatrical representation. This was in the early 1970s. So you can say that I was unconsciously moving towards creating my own style: Neo Bharatam.

Neo Bharatam was named after I returned from the US and returned to dance. From 1976 to 1990, I studied theatre, film, television and anchored the first television show for the Indian community in the US. I was a star in the community of mostly North Indian merchants and businessmen. I became fluent in Hindi and some Gujarati to get closer to the advertisers and their families. I worked 20-hour days in New York City and realised the truth of the saying, 'If you can make it there, you can make it anywhere.' What a life and what a city! It has shaped my professional ethic and worldview to a large extent.

Nibbling at television topics day in and day out for 10 years with constant deadlines took its toll. I became too successful for my marriage. Perhaps that is a graceful way of putting it. Why does a marriage that is also a successful business partnership fall apart? The old story of ego, rage, greed, anger... all these were swords to hack our relationship into pieces. I was a young, 30 year-old mother with a two year-old daughter and a newborn son. India and my home were the safest place for them to grow up. And so India it was. Not a professional choice but a decision made as a mother. I returned to my mother's home, but I was not the daughter who left home over a decade ago.

"Every year, my hometown Madras hosts the world's largest privately funded dance and music festival. For 75 years, the best of classical music and dance have been featured in 30 days, 2,000 performances starting from 7 am daily. This is an amazing time for artists and *rasika*. For many Tamils, the lunar month of *Margazhi* (mid-December to mid-January) is sacred. Marriages and moving house are not done and people are usually spending time with families and relatives. It is also a time for me to premiere or share some new concept, idea or production that has been in development through the year. My new production for this December season is *Aandal—A Broken Mirror* that explores the poetry of 8th century Tamil mystic saint Aandal and her life of desperate loneliness and intense longing for Vishnu. *Margazhi* is the period when Aandal's great works *Thiruppavai* and *Nachiar Tirumozhi* are recited by Vaishnava devotees, making the production extra special. While December also marks a time when I take stock of my own journey as a woman and creative spirit, I make a point to re-emphasise what I always say at the beginning of each year, 'Do not make resolutions.' They rarely last. Instead, make a daily promise and try to live out that day accordingly. Do not make five-year plans. Life is so unpredictable that one needs flexibility and ability to flow. Make short-term goals and try to achieve them."

The year 1990 was the cusp of huge change in India. I sensed it. I had to bring my media experience and my older knowledge of the arts into a synergetic whole. Dance was what I knew best. A foundation is what was needed to become the umbrella for my interests. So with some seed money from my family, Arangham Trust was created in 1993. The first venture was the now famous dance directory, *Narthaki*. It was a phonebook for dancers. Overnight, it became a smash hit. A second edition in 1997 and now its award-winning online avatar from 2000.

Critical response to my Neo Bharatam style was cautious and slow. As I developed a collaborative approach to my performances—costume design, lighting, set design, music composition—audiences loved it but critics thought I was devaluing the core of the art. My aim was to respond to the rapidly changing world. Visual stimulation was the first marker of a live performance. Using all the elements that catch the 'optic' also shapes the early opinion of the *rasika* [connoisseur]. I create from mythological and historical themes where female characters can be given voice and flesh. Imaging women on stage is my focus and performance is my tool. I cannot say that dance completes me but I can admit that when I dance, the world seems brighter and takes on more intense meaning.



Clockwise from above: Ratnam after college convocation; during dance initiation with guru Rajee Narayan (to her right) and mother Leela (second from her left) in Chennai, 1964; mentoring young dancers at her studio in Chennai

Critics and purists are still suspicious of what I do but there is no doubt in the minds of the audience and the young dancers who flock around me via emails and personal meetings. I have also broadened my interests—cinema, fashion, history, mythology, textiles, food, travel, music, modern dance, theatre, opera. I consume it all like a hungry sponge.

Life around me is what fuels my interest in dance. Dance is perhaps the best way to recognise me but dance does not complete me. I do not miss dancing if I don't have a performance for a month. Surprising? Perhaps, but true. I find walking on the beach in Madras one of the most therapeutic moments. There are many things that stimulate me... even a beautifully prepared meal.

Entrepreneurial instincts run in my family. But nothing has been or was created with the sole purpose of getting rich. How can I give back to the art that has given me so much? I refused to teach young students, seeing that Madras already had more than 500 dance schools. I also realised that I was not cut out to be a teacher in the traditional sense. Impatience and constant questioning hover

Growing older does not mean rolling over and playing dead.

The bubble of laughter should not subside
The glow of curiosity should not fade
The reach for excellence should not stop

There is so much I want to do
My mind is agile, my body is slowing down
How can I negotiate my ageing and my desires?
I am walking this tightrope every day.

—Anita Ratnam

over me. So my challenge was, how could my unique abilities of life in two continents be harnessed to create solo compelling works as well as mentor the next generation?

Growing older as an artist poses different challenges. A dancer's body ages, like we all do. But on stage, public perception wants the dancer to be fixed in a certain way. The face, the torso, the limbs, the waist, the smile... all demand a call to eternal youth. That is impossible to achieve and maintain. My own ideals at 20, 30 and 40 were changing, shifting to more realistic horizons. I could not conquer the world, change people's hearts, make them less angry, greedy, cruel and more just,



kind or wise. Art cannot do that, and dance is the hardest to carry social messages. What I can hope to convey through the performance is, perhaps, the value of beauty, the value of belief and determination, and the promise of something that goes beyond the horizon of the mundane. And if I can make the audience hold on to one memory the next morning after the performance, I have succeeded in making that connection.

Being a mature woman, turning 60 is a huge moment.

In many parts of the world, dancers retire at 40. In India, we are fortunate to have a life beyond that. But what is the kind of performer I want to be? What do I wish to say on stage and how do I hope to inspire the younger generation? These questions always shadow me. Maintaining my health and appearance are top priorities. Menopause and other transitions came and shook my disciplined lifestyle and I have had to change my diet and exercise patterns quite drastically. Dance does not automatically mean you will be slim and fit. There are so many Indian dancers who are out of shape. I cross-train, ride a bicycle, swim, run, do cardio, Pilates, yoga, *pranayama*... a variety of physical routines to always shake up the body and muscles.

Watching ageing dancers desperately cling on to centre-stage can be embarrassing. That is why I have

"Ideas and inspiration can come from anyone—young and old—at any time. I just have to be prepared like a blotting paper, to catch the essence. I fight for the legitimacy of myself, my art and my lifelong pursuit to be different, to question, to dare, to fall and to move on"

slowly shifted gear. I mentor dancers who want to make the transition from student to professional. Mentoring young dancers is an important part of my core mission. Motivating and encouraging young dancers to train and conduct themselves in a way that is thoroughly professional and not to lapse into the tired clichés of 'dance is sacred, divine and pure'. There are so many more skills a dancer needs: communication, flexibility in approach, adaptability to various audiences and choreographers. And, most of all, the fierce discipline to achieve excellence. I ask them to look around. Life is beautiful and full of opportunities.

Single parenting for 27 years has also not been easy. But with the flush of youth behind me, it is easier to focus on my kids and their future. Both of them are creative. My daughter Arya Saraswathi [28] is a novelist and my son Shriman Narayan [26] has a degree in filmmaking. They are very different and independent. Knowing the unpredictability of a creative life, I need to give them the life skills to deal with the uneven playing field that is life.

Archiving and documenting my work of 40 years is taking my time these days. I perform an average of once a month. That is enough for me to concentrate on other things. I am overseeing www.narthaki.com. It is now entering its 16th year.

My geography is my history. I acknowledge my presence: Tamil, female, Brahmin, Indian, mother, daughter, sister. I am a loner and prone to melancholia and anger. I use both moods as an advantage. Ideas and inspiration can come from anyone—young and old—at any time. I just have to be prepared like a sponge, a net, a blotting paper, to catch the essence.

Urban spaces in India are increasingly crowded and art is being pushed out of the national discourse except when there is a controversy. Dancers are rarely taken seriously and looked at more with curiosity. I fight for the legitimacy of myself, my art and my lifelong pursuit to be different, to question, to dare, to fall and to move on. I am still a work in progress. Like my dance. ✨

What is 60?

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

The number of movies you have to catch up on.

The number of bad jokes you cracked last month.

The number of times you told your grandson

to get away from the TV set and get a life.

The number of places you have to travel to.

What it's not, is your age.

At least not in your head.

Or in your heart.



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

harmony
celebrate age

Word's worth

On a literary trail in Berlin and Leipzig, **Manjiri Prabhu** is amazed at the connect that literature can create across boundaries and languages



The river Spree running through Berlin

Berlin is a city of mixed nationalities, disparate cultures, contrasting architecture and multicultural cuisine. This was my impression from the moment I landed; as a literary festival director I had been invited to visit Berlin and Leipzig along with 10 others from South Asia. This trip promised to be an interesting exchange of ideas and thoughts.

As other participants were still arriving, a friend and I decided to take a walk around town. During my brief sojourn in Hamburg in 2000, I had managed a weekend trip to Berlin. Now I was curious to see how the city had evolved in a decade and more.

My thick jacket was reassuring in the biting cold, as we stepped out of Hotel Ramada, where we were put up. I usually take a long time to decipher maps—which, by the way, is a real art—and prefer asking for directions if I am lost. But my colleague was well-versed in map reading, so I allowed him full freedom to lead the way. He religiously consulted the map as we headed towards the Parliament Quarter.

We strolled by the glittering river Spree, staring at tall stately buildings. Our first stop was the famous Reichstag, the seat of Parliament in Berlin of united Germany. If you have seen pictures of a fancy glass dome above a grand old building, this is it! Built in 1894, the Reichstag is a





Manjiri Prabhu

BERLIN MUSINGS

- My room in Berlin had three portraits of a man staring down at me from the wall. Under that stark stare, it was impossible to sleep!
- Never miss the opportunity to visit a local church. The silence, the reverence, the atmosphere of charged hope... they tell you a lot about the similarities between cultures.
- It was heartening to see cosy nooks in the Dussmann store occupied by youngsters engrossed in books.
- The book clubs/café in Leipzig are a treat. One was like a cave, lit up in luminous red light but packed with an expectant audience waiting for the author under a mysterious red and dark cover.
- Indian restaurants have a typical air of a bride in permanent finery—lavishly decorated and oozing with colours.

combination of baroque and modern architecture. While it looks more like a grand fortress, the dome is a spectacular vision of technological wonder. It has what is famously called a 'central glass cylinder' and all along the walls of the huge glass edifice runs a spiral pathway that offers a great view of the city. The positioning of the dome above the Parliament symbolises that people are above the government. Designed by architect Norman Foster, the dome has been conceptualised brilliantly. The cupola contains a skylight with a significant inverted cone of mirrors in the middle of the opening with reflected light that illuminates the chamber below. When I stood inside the dome, I was reminded once again of man's inherent need and capability to create almost anything beyond the wildest imagination!

Walking further ahead, we arrived at Brandenburg Gate or *Brandenburger Tor* as it is called in German. Brandenburg is a neoclassical 18th

century structure made of sandstone and is the most famous monument of Berlin. Earlier, it used to separate East and West Berlin but since the wall came down, it has become a symbol of unity. The gate has 12 huge columns, six on either side; on top of the gate is a chariot drawn by four horses, called Quadriga. The grandeur of the gate and its magnificence lends a heady mix of history and glory to the

experience. We joined the tourists in clicking as many photographs as we could.

Back at the hotel, we met the other directors of literary festivals and exchanged pleasantries. I was very curious as to where this trip would lead and the kind of experiences that awaited us. To celebrate our first evening in Berlin, our hosts Vincent



Manjiri Prabhu

An extravagant spread of German meats at Lindner restaurant; inside the Dussmann bookstore, the biggest in Berlin; opposite page: Reichstag, the seat of Parliament in Berlin, along the Spree

and Natalija took us to Amrit, an Indian restaurant. With beautiful saris stretched out to decorate the ceiling, coloured lights, hanging umbrellas and lantern, the décor was festive. The wall was plastered with *chatai* from end to end. It was like sitting in a huge tent made up of Indian collectables; muted music merged with the chatter of the guests. With good company and plenty of laughter, the food was polished off in no time.

The next day was a busy one. We took part in an introductory workshop, streamlining our thoughts and expectations from the trip. With the workshop getting over past lunchtime, we had to rush through our lunch before the next meeting. Our hosts took us to a fantastic Berliner restaurant called 3 Schwestern. Classy and warm, it had wooden panelling, a quaint bar, and even a coat-stand! The high ceiling with the arches painted in creamy yellow and white with strategic wall-mounted lights made the restaurant a perfect welcome nook for our eclectic group.

Our next meeting was at a literary society by a lovely lake, a little out of town. The house itself was grand, classic and suitably old to impress, with enchanting wide windows

overlooking a serene lake. The society houses writers and holds book readings. After a detailed discussion about networking over coffee and biscuits, we were impatient to have a photo session in the open, with the beautiful lake as a backdrop. It was a delightful afternoon in a lazy, country-like landscape.

The next stop was the office of the International Literature Festival, where we met the director of the festival and had a rather stimulating discussion on organising literary festivals. Though our questions were unending, he responded patiently. Later, he invited us for a wine-and-cheese party at his place. His house was packed with books from wall to wall. While the others chatted, I enjoyed cheese with bread and was content to let the conversation flow over my head.

Next morning, we headed to the Federal Commissioner for Cultural and Media Affairs Department. After an initial security check, we walked long corridors through the department, were introduced to the minister and his team and were given an overview of the promotion of literature in Germany. For our part, we shared information about our literary

festivals. It was all done neatly, with no fuss, no over-cautiousness, and no hypersensitivity.

Lunch again was a hasty affair, with all of us trotting into the Mall of Berlin for a quick bite at Lindner. The spread was amazing, with an assortment of mouth-watering delicacies including baked dishes, potatoes, fish, pastries and chocolates. It was like Disneyland for 11 hungry people; we were spoilt for choice. As I dug into baked potatoes in cheese at the bar table outside, I could see crowds pass through the mall. As I had not bought a single gift for folks back home, I knew this was the right place to begin with as I had some time before our next meeting at the famous Dussmann bookstore.

It was fun to stroll down the huge mall, peeking in at the merchandise in the window and venturing into some of the stores. The glitter, beautiful lighting and décor all served to drive my shopping instincts into top gear. I managed to buy a couple of shirts for my sisters and knickknacks for my nephew.

After waiting for some time at the bus stop, I noticed that Bus No. 100, which goes to the Dussmann



Manjiri Prabhu

As I introduced my novel, I sensed the positive and vibrant atmosphere in the room. Here were people whom I had never met, whom I may probably never meet again. Yet they sat across me, smiling in encouragement and seeming genuinely interested

store, didn't halt there. Realising the goof-up, I asked a young man for directions. As directed by him, I took another bus and got off at a stop close to the store. As I trudged along the street looking for the big red banner of the store, it started raining softly, dipping the temperature even further.

The Dussmann store is the biggest bookstore in Berlin. It's impressive not only because of its massive collection of books but the number of people who actually flock there regularly. The multiple-storied, colourful bookshop with cosy

corners and cushioned seats for readers to sample the books was in itself straight out of a novel! What was also fascinating was the vertical live garden art on one of the walls. We were informed that this was copyrighted and that none of the plants could be moved or cut.

That evening, the organisers arranged for a book reading of one of my novels. This was to be my first book reading out of India; needless to say, I was nervous. More so because I was worried if anyone would be interested enough to bear the cold and turn up for the reading!

We were going to have our book readings at WerkStadt Kulturverein, a lovely place that doubled up as a pub and an art studio, encouraging all kinds of artistic activities. Despite my apprehensions, there was a crowd of over 30 people. As I introduced my novel and read out a couple of extracts, I sensed the positive and vibrant atmosphere in the room. Here were people whom I had never met, whom I may probably never meet again. Yet they sat across me, smiling in encouragement and seeming genuinely interested. They had braved the cold and distance, simply for the love of literature!

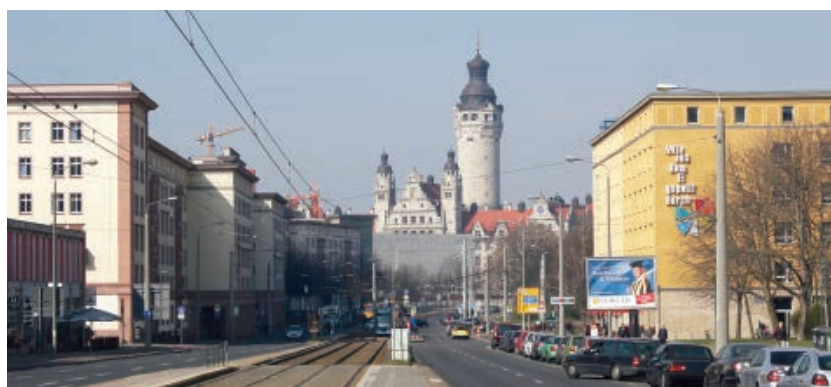


iStock

It was our last night in Berlin, a city of myriad and diverse statements. The next morning we travelled by train to Leipzig for the famous Book Fair. Once known as *Buch-Stadt* or book city, Leipzig is a quaint old town where you can walk with the trams. Though the town boasts a picturesque market street and square, what really stood out was a 600 year-old University, one of the oldest in Europe. Rather majestic in blue and sparkling stone, it appears stunning in sunlight and mysterious in the shade.

We attended an opera at the Leipzig Opera on Augustusplatz. It was my first experience, and the whole enactment of the drama—the lavish sets, full-throated singing, flamboyant dresses, theatrical landscape and near-explicit love scenes—was fascinating!

The Book Fair itself was in total contrast to the cosiness of the town. It was massive, grand and a literal



iStock

An aerial view of the quaint old town, Leipzig; a tramway track runs through the city as New Town Hall, the Leipzig city administration building, stands tall in the background; opposite page: Berlin's famous symbol of unity, the Brandenburg

magnet for book lovers, readers and writers across the world. The endless stalls, attractive displays, big areas captured by giant publishers, and readings inside buses, in market squares, beautiful cafés, pubs and the oddest of spots across town—it was certainly the place to be! I was glad to be there, soaking in the literary energy, observing how a town can

transform from quaint reticence to a methodical, literary craze.

The days had flown in a flash. But not before reinforcing the reassuring message that literature binds us all together. It is, indeed, the messenger of peace, the flag for friendship and the glue for communication—in any language, in any part of the world. ✨

etcetera

culture • leisure • lifestyle • books • miscellany

inside

p68: 'Aunty' amiable

p74: Kashmir kaleidoscope



Turning a new leaf

It's not all loneliness for empty-nesters—for Muktavaram Vasantha Kumari, it opened up a world of possibilities. In 1994, when her two children left for higher studies, Kumari decided to do a master's in Telugu literature from Hyderabad's Osmania University. With her dormant inner artist blossoming, Kumari started sketching flowers and bouquets in her free time. "I had always appreciated the aesthetics of nature and had amassed a substantial collection of pressed leaves," she says. She started using the leaves to colour her pictures by pasting them on the page; little did she know that she had stumbled onto the ancient art of Oshibana. "My husband [M Parthasarthy, a retired RBI officer] was impressed by a picture I called *Invitation to Spring*. He showed it to a friend and soon it was on the cover of Telugu weekly *Andhra Prabha*," she shares. In 2002, Kumari visited the US for the first time and discovered the fall season—a haven of leaves in a riot of colours and shapes. "I discovered vast international guilds for pressed flowers on the Internet and learnt new techniques of preserving the leaves." Now, Kumari has developed a meticulous system to press her leaves and retain their colour. She uses silica gel to extract the moisture content, then presses them between sheets of newspaper for 24 hours to a week, or even 10 days. This is preserved in silica gel till a matching idea is executed. "When I observe a leaf, an idea is already germinating in my head. But when the idea comes first, I have to start hunting for the right leaves to complete my picture," she says. "I don't cut my leaves because they come apart. So the shape is critical. It took two months to find the oak leaves that made the perfect pants for my picture of Charlie Chaplin's Tramp." Kumari had her second solo exhibition at Hyderabad's Ailamma Art Gallery this September.

—Shyamola Khanna

First person

It's never too late to write the story of one's life... in fact, the longer one lives and endures, the more inspiring the story tends to become. Drawing from decades of memories and experiences, two people have put pen to paper to release books containing the stories they want to be remembered by.



Ahuja (right) with renowned lawyer Ram Jethmalani at the launch of *Wings of Destiny*

Matter of the land

From losing his parents at the age of two, journeying to India as young man during Partition, settling in Nashik, Maharashtra, completing a bachelor's degree in his late 40s, to becoming a full-fledged lawyer at an age when most people are grappling with a midlife crisis or preparing for retirement, Jamnadas Ahuja's life story can fill a book. And that's precisely what he has done. Earlier this year, at 89 years, Ahuja brought out the second edition of his autobiography *Wings of Destiny*, which traces every memorable incident of his long and illustrious life. Inspired by his work at the Land Acquisition Office in Nashik, Ahuja knew his life had a greater calling. "Though I worked on behalf of the government, I ensured that landholders [primarily farmers] get maximum compensation. In that office, I learnt how to evaluate land/trees/structures on the higher side which could benefit landholders to the maximum extent," says Ahuja, who went on to specialise in land acquisition law for 25 years after retiring from government service. "My greatest accomplishment is that even after 50 years of age, I built a successful law practice and made hundreds of farmers unexpectedly prosperous, and also gained popularity in the state by making arguments that overturned judgements by the high and apex courts."

—Dhwani Mody

literature



A history of family

When on a quest to find oneself, the past often holds the key to understanding the present. Not many are fortunate, however, to have ancestors who've made note of their life and learnings in a way that would be helpful in this quest—but the descendents of 84 year-old Janaki Krishnan certainly are. This October, she released her first book *Seeds, Roots and Flowers of My Family Tree*. "This is a legacy I want to leave behind for my grandchildren and their grandchildren," says the effervescent Krishnan, an exponent of the Russian language and culture in Chennai and president of the Indo-Russian Woman's Association. *Seeds, Roots and Flowers of My Family Tree* took five years to compile and is filled with insights into the history of her and her husband's families going back four generations. It culminates with the birth of her great-granddaughter Zoya, who is now just a year old. "Although my children are not interested in knowing about their great-grandparents, some day their children or grandchildren may ask them where they come from. So I decided to compile what I had written in notebooks over the years, stories my late husband told me, and added photographs, postcards and letters from my grandchildren when they were little."

—Shivani Arora



Smitha E Thomas

Track record

Chief editor of the *Limca Book of Records* since inception, Vijaya Ghose helps chronicle the extraordinary feats of ordinary Indians, reports Swarnendu Biswas

For over 25 years, Vijaya Ghose has kept a keen eye on the record-makers and record-breakers of India, verifying extraordinary feats in the thousands and curating their entry into the *Limca Book of Records* (LBR). From the D'costa brothers' collection of model cars with mood-setting dioramas to Shridhar Chillal's ghastly fingernails uncut since 1952, very little surprises India's resident record-keeper anymore.

Born in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, she married Shankar Ghose at the age of 21. Despite her husband's transferable job, she found work at academic institutions wherever

she went, thanks to her master's in English literature. Her sweet voice and discerning outlook also helped her find work in radio. "I was on All India Radio broadcasting on women's issues for almost two years. I also wrote on various subjects," says Ghose, whose work was published in *The Indian Express*, *The Times of India* and *Hindustan Times*.

miscellany

Though academics was her first career choice, she found her place in journalism when they shifted base to Delhi. In 1980, she joined The India Today Group and worked as associate editor of children's monthly *Target*. During her decade-long tenure, she got to interview icons such as Satyajit Ray and Amitabh Bachchan.

In the late 1980s, Ramesh Chauhan, chairman of Parle Bisleri Pvt Ltd, was looking for someone to bring out the *Limca Book of Records*, an Indian equivalent of the *Guinness World Records*. Common friend and PR guru Dilip Cherian set up a meeting and she landed the job as chief editor of India's premier record book, only the second of its kind in the world!

"I had one year to sift through mounds of material," she recalls. "Over 2,000 entries had to be structured into chapters such as literature, sports, adventure, business, the human story and so on, which we fit into 200 pages. I got together a tight team of six people who have been with me for 15-20 years now."

**that's
amazing!**

A quick glance at the latest list reveals the diversity of record-holders, from the incredible to the bizarre. At 75, Baji Nath Raibhar became the oldest mountain biker after he bicycled 42 km from Banala (1,067 m) to Jalori Pass (3,155 m) in

Himachal Pradesh; B B Nayak's physical feats include 1,000 sit-ups in an hour, one-arm pull-ups and fingertip pull-ups; Gorigapudi Anand Babu from Guntur in Andhra Pradesh cracked his knuckles 270 times in a minute; and Shivanath 'Maximouth' Upadhyaya can stuff all sorts of items in his mouth, ranging from pencils to tomatoes to candles.

The first edition was released in 1990 and went out of stock in a matter of days.

In 1993, when Coca-Cola India bought over Chauhan's line of soft drinks, it acquired the rights for the book and has since taken over its publishing. With passing years, *LBR*'s popularity—and the number of entries—has grown by leaps and bounds. Entry is widely sought after despite the fact that record-makers receive only a modest certificate of acknowledgement. "Earlier, we used to repeat records for two to three years," shares Ghose. "But now, with the rush of entries, we don't repeat a record unless there is an update in the next edition."

Her star record-holder, she says, is Dr Ramesh Babu, an engineer from Bengaluru. "He has 51 records and hasn't skipped making an entry since 1992." These include fastest autographing of photos, cutting a cucumber into over 100,000 pieces and fastest skip-running. "I admire his professional presentation that simplifies our job," she adds, referring to the meticulous process to scan, short-list and verify records. Applicants send a signed letter declaring the authenticity of the claim along with photos and videos. When the six-member editorial team can't go personally to verify the records, they authorise dignitaries—gazetted officers, principals, or NGOs—to do so. No one's been able to fool their proofing system so far.

Ghose is a great admirer of the enduring human spirit. And her life is testament to it. Her son Sanjoy, a rural development worker, was abducted and killed by the ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) in 1997. Ten years later, a stroke left her speech impaired. Nevertheless, she continues to work almost 12 hours a day. "I considered quitting but realised my intellect and memory were intact and the speech impairment was a result of my mind. In two months I was back to work." Ghose's husband passed away last year and her daughter Ela, now 54, runs a marketing consultancy.

Besides work, her love for animals drives Ghose. She is up at 2.30 am every day, preparing food for her three dogs and 33 stray animals in her colony in Gurgaon. "I've been caring for squirrels, crows, pigeons, sparrows and other sundry creatures for decades now," she says.

This compassion, coupled with her impartiality, has enabled Ghose to provide validation for hundreds of ordinary Indians. In cases like Dukanji, the dancing moustache man, who achieved stardom after his name found mention in *LBR*, Ghose has unknowingly pulled powerful strings of fate. Currently, she's working on getting entries in the 'Human Beings' chapter of *LBR*. "I want to feature the tallest man and woman, biggest feet, widest chest, longest nose and more such interesting people. Can you help us in this regard?" she asks as we stare at her perplexed.



Courtesy: NCPA

JOHN'S BACK!

LEGENDARY FUSION GUITARIST JOHN MCLAUGHLIN WAS BACK IN INDIA THIS NOVEMBER WITH THE NEWEST ALBUM, *BLACK LIGHT*, BY HIS BAND 4TH DIMENSION. COMPRISING THE "GREATEST LINE-UP" OF MUSICIANS HE'S WORKED WITH—DRUMMER-PIANIST GARY HUSBAND, BASSIST ÉTIENNE M'BAPPÉ AND PRINCIPAL DRUMMER RANJIT BAROT FROM MUMBAI—4TH DIMENSION SPENT A MONTH TOURING AUSTRALIA AND ASIA, INCLUDING KOLKATA, MUMBAI AND BENGALURU. AT 73, WITH A CAREER SPANNING FOUR DECADES AND COLLABORATIONS WITH GREATS SUCH AS MILES DAVIS, JIMI HENDRIX, CARLOS SANTANA AND ZAKIR HUSSAIN, FOR MCLAUGHLIN *BLACK LIGHT* IS THE END RESULT OF EVERYTHING THAT HAS BEEN. "THE WORDS 'BLACK' AND 'LIGHT' OPPOSE EACH OTHER. WHILE EVERYTHING INSIDE MY HEAD IS BLACK, I STILL SEE IMAGES [WITH EYES CLOSED], AND HEAR SOUNDS I'VE NEVER HEARD BEFORE. I THINK THAT'S THE PLACE WHERE ALL MY MUSIC IS BORN. IT IS THE ONLY PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE WHERE BLACK AND LIGHT COEXIST," HE TOLD *HINDUSTAN TIMES*.

A city comes to life

Sumukh Bharadwaj captures the magic of this year's Mysore Dasara



Quietly resplendent and dense with the majestic remnants of a royal past, Mysore is a sleepy old city that comes alive once a year—for the grand Dasara festival.

In the days leading up to the 10-day festival, public buildings and circles, gardens and water bodies are festooned with lights of splendid colour and design; in the city centre, an august troupe of elephants can be seen marching in step, rehearsing for the grand Jumbo Savari parade on Vijayadashami day; folk artists from all corners of the subcontinent are rallied and given a platform to showcase their art; and with extra buses leading to Mysore at

discounted fares, the city welcomes visitors in the millions to witness the celebration of patron Goddess Chamundeswari's victory over Mahishasura, the mythical demon from whom it takes its name.

Dasara in its current avatar took shape in 1610, when Raja Wodeyar I ascended the throne at Srirangapatana as an independent ruler of *festival* Mysore State. He adopted several traditions of the erstwhile Vijayanagara Empire and decreed that Dasara be celebrated with great pomp. Over centuries, the festival has evolved from a grand royal affair to what it is now, the *nada habba* or state festival patronised by masses from the world over.



When Srikantadatta Narasimharaja Wodeyar—the last scion of the Wodeyar dynasty—died in December 2013 without an heir, Dasara passed sans a Maharaja to oversee the festivities for the first time in its history.

Accommodating the legendary curse of childlessness that has plagued alternate generations of Wodeyars, Maharani Pramoda Devi adopted Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wodeyar, a nephew of her late husband, according to tradition. And after his coronation in a grand symbolic ceremony in May, the young prince took his place on the golden throne during Dasara this year; thus assuring the people of Mysore that this tradition, archaic and symbolic as it may be, lives on.

However, it has hardly been a year of prosperity for Karnataka, with drought plaguing the land and hundreds of farmers taking their own lives. In a grand gesture of solidarity, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah slashed the budget for Dasara and invited progressive farmer Puttaiah from H D Kote taluk to inaugurate the festival on Chamundi Hills, a privilege that has till now been reserved for celebrities.

Still, a tight budget is no match for the spirit of the ancient city. In this celebration of the triumph of good over evil, Mysore comes alive—its heart pounds in tune with every step of the caparisoned elephant; through the faith of its people, it breathes life.



The idol of Goddess Chamundeshwari at a *bombe* (doll) exhibition. During Navarathri in southern India, women and girls erect a rack of wooden planks to display their collection of *bombe* for *Bombe Habba*, the festival of dolls. The *bombe* depict court life, the royal procession, a bride and groom, and everyday scenes, with goddesses on top to oversee the activities below. They visit each other's setup, exchange sweets and make merry

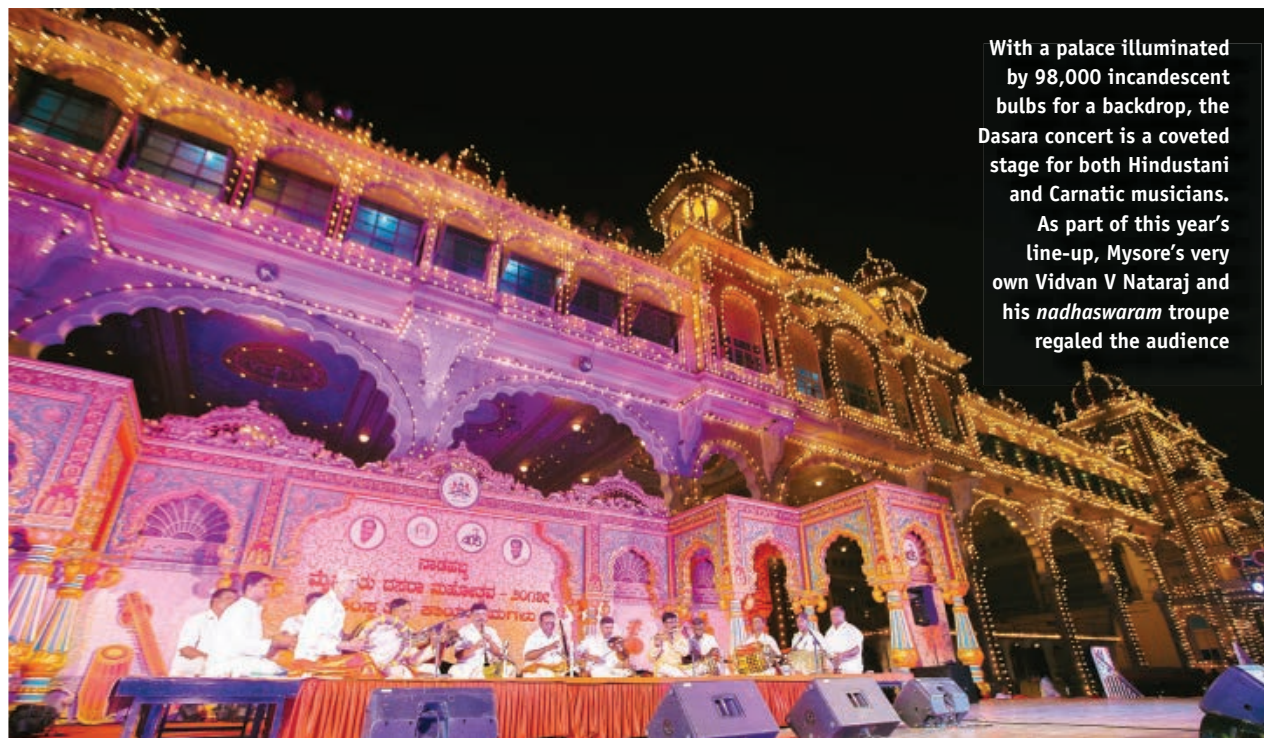


Floral sculptures of monuments, music instruments and even animals were erected during the annual flower show held adjacent to the palace grounds. And though members of the Kannada film fraternity could be spotted felicitating farmers while promoting upcoming films, a magnificent floral sculpture of the stone chariot at Hampi made out of 1.5 lakh roses stole the show



Clockwise from left: About 60 cultural troupes from far-spread corners of the subcontinent participated in the Dasara procession this year, including Yakshagana, Bangra, Dolkunitha and Kamsale; the Dasara Chitra Santhe, a one-day streetside art exhibition where over 100 artists of varying media showcased their work; the 27 participating tableaux were replete with environment-friendly motifs and threw light on progressive farming methods, water and power conservation, benefit schemes by the revenue department, availability of loans, and so on

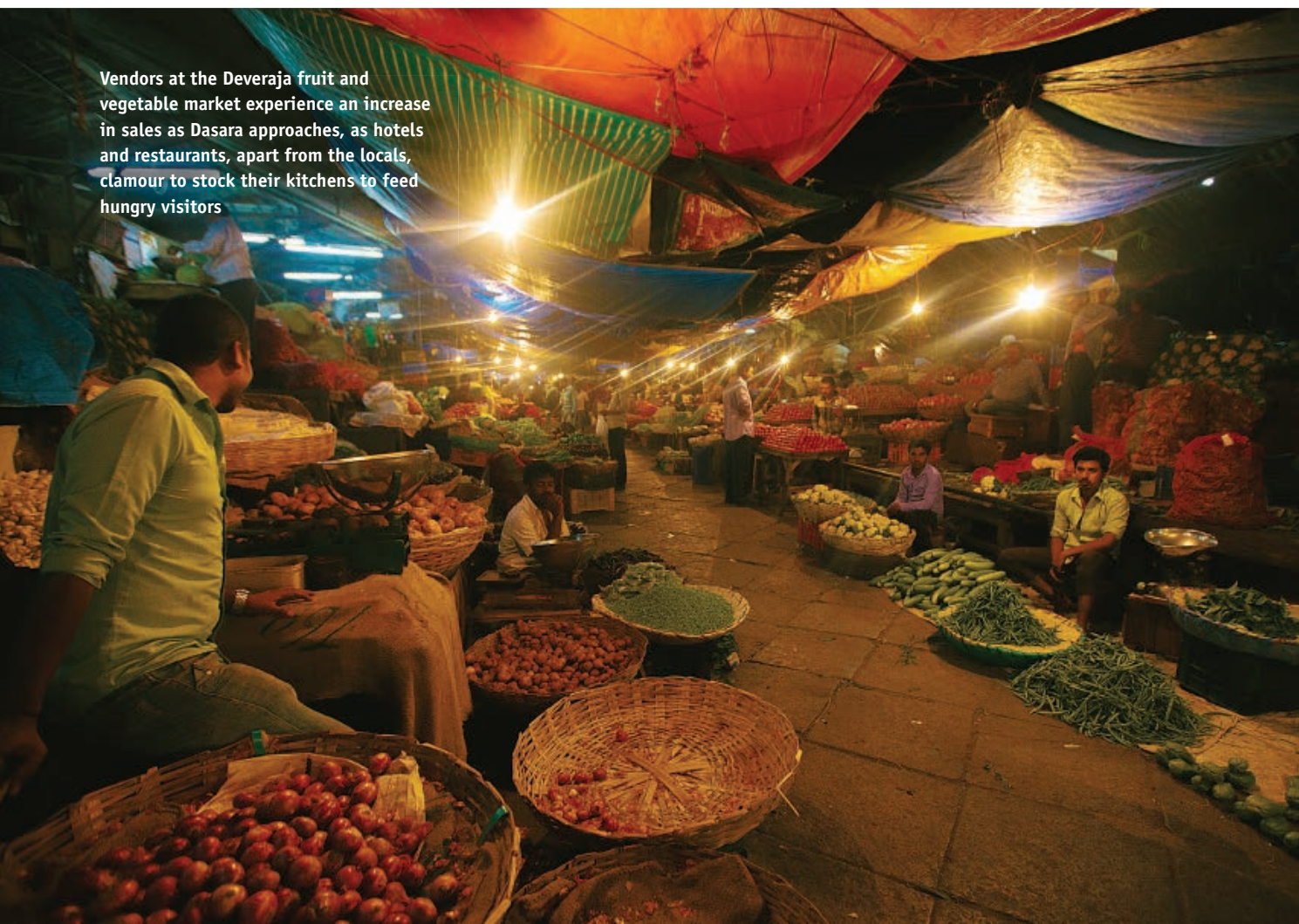




With a palace illuminated by 98,000 incandescent bulbs for a backdrop, the Dasara concert is a coveted stage for both Hindustani and Carnatic musicians.

As part of this year's line-up, Mysore's very own Vidvan V Nataraj and his *nadhaswaram* troupe regaled the audience

Vendors at the Deveraja fruit and vegetable market experience an increase in sales as Dasara approaches, as hotels and restaurants, apart from the locals, clamour to stock their kitchens to feed hungry visitors





Clockwise from top left: The tenth and final day, Vijayadashami, begins with a procession called Jumbo Savari, a 200 year-old tradition, led by a herd of 12 elephants. Veteran elephant Arjuna (55) carried the 750-kg golden *howrah* and steered his fellow pachyderms along the 4.5 km-stretch from the Mysore palace to the Torchlight Parade Grounds at Bannimantap. Preparations for this walk begin 45 days earlier when the elephants leave various forest camps for Mysore in a journey called *Gaja Payana*, the march of the elephants; the revelry concludes with the *Panjina Kavayathu* or torch light parade where military personnel put on a show of perfectly timed acrobatic formations on bikes; a massive march with fire torches





‘Aunty’ amiable

In her birth centenary year, N Meera Raghavendra Rao remembers her mother-in-law, a doughty lady who transcended the daily grind to fill lives with sunshine

Born into an aristocratic family in 1915, my mother-in-law Ahalya Bai studied in a convent school until eighth grade. Being the only girl child, with two younger brothers, she had a pampered childhood. Yet, when at the young age of 15 she married Nandagiri Rama Rao, a chartered accountant, she settled well into her new role, and the large family. Despite having a handicapped firstborn, she was never one to bemoan her fate or make others feel miserable.

The day I entered my husband’s family as a young bride, my mother-in-law enveloped me into her fold more like a daughter—she used to plait my hair every single day—than a daughter-in-law. I chose to address her as aunty and my father-in-law as uncle, departing from the practice of addressing one’s in-laws as *atha* and *mava* in our language. Aunty was born into a family that speaks Telugu, uncle spoke Kannada. I come from Hyderabad and we speak Telugu in my parents’ home, but after marriage I learnt Kannada as Aunty insisted I too speak the language, like the rest. Having been brought up in Madras, with most of her friends being Tamilian, Aunty spoke Tamil even better than Telugu and Kannada, and was proud of it.

The first lesson Aunty taught me was that if I had any complaints or grouse against her, I should sort it out with her and not give any scope for gossip among our relatives. We truly shared an excellent rapport and people

would compliment us on our cordial relationship, which they thought was rare between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

A Good Samaritan at heart, she always placed others’ interests before her own and went out of her way to accommodate others. When we had get-togethers at our house, Aunty would enthusiastically become scorer for the games I organised, ready with a pencil and pad.

The first lesson Aunty taught me was that if I had any complaints or grouse against her, I should sort it out with her and not give any scope for gossip among our relatives. We truly shared an excellent rapport

Relatives addressed her as Ahalya *akka*, and friends called her Ahalya *maami*. She welcomed everyone with a warm smile and would never let them leave without accepting her hospitality. Above all, she had a soft corner for the less fortunate, and believed in parting with whatever she could to make their lives a little easier and bring a smile on their lips. During important festivals, she took pleasure in serving food herself to our maid’s large family consisting of her children and grandchildren.

Aunty’s day would begin at 4.30 am with a glass of hot coffee, which she would pour down her throat without the glass touching her lips, and then a quick cold water bath irrespective of the season, followed by prayer. Then she would engage herself in making at least two dozen *bathi* (cotton wicks) a day; she was adept at twisting the cotton into shape, making the *bathi* stand absolutely erect in the *diya*.

Once she stepped into her 80s, I took over cooking and she would cut vegetables for me. All of us continued to have ‘floor meals’ until a few years later when it became difficult for her to squat on the floor. We made a separate small collapsible dining table for her, so she could have her meal in comfort. She conformed to her own rules and didn’t appreciate us interfering in the way she preferred to live, especially after my father-in-law passed away. She chose to live an austere life, sacrificing a lot of things she was fond of. The huge glittering diamond studs she wore all her life were replaced with pearl ones and the diamond nose ring made it to the locker along with half-a-dozen gold bangles she wore.

Though we didn’t approve of her transformation, we could not persuade her to wear her jewellery or eat the many sweets and home-grown mangoes (which she would cut into small pieces for us) she chose to give up because my father-in-law liked them. We knew how difficult it must have been for her to give up something she loved and relished.

Rao with her
mother-in-law Ahalya Bai



When asked, she would say it was a very small sacrifice she was making as a tribute to my father-in-law, with whom she had shared her life for more than five decades.

She wore nine yards *sungadi* saris in the Maharashtrian style with a white *mulmul* blouse; her favourite shop was Rangachari Cloth Store, a landmark in Mylapore, Madras. Auntie was very good at sewing, especially smocking and Kutch work, besides embroidery. She would gift smocked frocks to newborns and hand-embroidered bedspreads and smocked nightwear to newlyweds. A number of ladies, half her age, would learn the art from her; her handwork was often displayed at various exhibitions. Auntie even motivated our silver neighbour to learn embroidery. The lady diligently practiced the art and within months turned out beautifully embroidered tablecloths and bedspreads; the excitement of the 'teacher' and the 'disciple' had to be seen!

I can never forget the last time we all travelled together from Madras by train to attend a function in Hyderabad. Auntie vehemently vetoed our suggestion to fly, saying she enjoyed train journeys as she could admire the sights on the way and the company of co-passengers. We had to give in and found ourselves boarding the train with the old lady in tow. Refusing to get into a wheelchair to reach the coach, she insisted on walking the whole distance. Once in the train, she settled herself with her paraphernalia—using her own sheets and pillows—refusing to touch the bed linen provided by the Railways with a barge pole. She was, however, disappointed that she couldn't open the shutter and enjoy the scenery and cool breeze as it was an air-conditioned coach.

Once we reached Secunderabad, we were in for a shock, as we had to climb the over-bridge to make our way out. A wheelchair was promptly summoned; my mother-in-law

reluctantly sat in it to be wheeled out of the station by the porter through a circuitous route. As I followed her, I noticed a train stationary on the tracks. As I reached the engine of the train, I found the driver and the guard smiling and waving at my mother-in-law in the wheelchair, who in turn was heartily laughing and waving at them, thanking them for allowing her to pass by.

Our relative was overjoyed to see my mother-in-law, as she had been inviting her for years to visit her new house, especially her *puja* room, which was like a miniature temple. "You must be tired after the journey, why don't you rest for a while?" entreated the lady, addressing my mother-in-law. "I have not come all the way from Madras to rest. Let's all get going with preparations for the function," was her reply. Auntie's enthusiasm, coupled with boundless energy at her age, was infectious. By the end of the day, all of us were exhausted. But my mother-in-law, fresh as a daisy, was making plans to visit an old friend (literally and figuratively, as the lady was nearing 90), who lived a few miles away. Left with little option, we accompanied her. The two old friends slowly walked towards each other with stars in their eyes and hugged each other tight. Together, they looked like teenagers, holding hands, sharing stories and jokes about their childhood, giggling away to glory. A tired me could not help but be stunned at their *joie de vivre*! On our way back, we only heard one voice, telling us how much meeting up with an old friend meant.

When Auntie took ill at the age of 88 in 2003, she taught embroidery to the two young nurses who attended on her, and gifted them embroidered pillow covers as a token of her love. When she passed away, she left a great void in my life. I felt I had suddenly aged several years overnight.

A prolific writer, Rao's latest book *Chennai Collage* is a social commentary on the disparate vignettes of the sunny city

It's Christmas time!



We toast the festive season with an excerpt from *The Father Christmas Letters* by **J R R Tolkien**, recounting the adventures of Father Christmas and his helpers. The letters, written between 1920 and 1942, were meant primarily for his children

Cliff House
Top of the World
Near the North Pole
Xmas 1925

My dear boys,

I am dreadfully busy this year—it makes my hand more shaky than ever when I think of it—and not very rich.

In fact, awful things have been happening, and some of the presents have got spoilt and I haven't got the North Polar Bear to help me and I have had to move house just before Christmas, so you can imagine what a state everything is in, and you will see why I have a new address, and why I can only write one letter between you both.


It all happened like this: one very windy day last November my hood blew off and went and stuck on the top of the North Pole. I told him not to, but the N P Bear climbed up to the thin top to get it down—and he did. The pole broke in the middle and fell on the roof of my house, and the N P Bear fell through the hole it made into the dining room with my hood over his nose, and all the snow fell off the roof into the house and melted and put out all the fires and ran down into the cellars where I was collecting this year's presents, and the N P Bear's leg got broken. He is well again now, but I was so cross with him that he says he won't try to help me again. I expect his temper is hurt, and will be mended by next Christmas.

I send you a picture of the accident, and of my new house on the cliffs above the N P (with beautiful cellars in the cliffs). If John can't read my old shaky writing (1925 years old) he must get his father to. When is Michael going to learn to read, and write his own letters to me?

Lots of love to you both and Christopher, whose name is rather like mine.

That's all. Goodbye.

Father Christmas

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.

**Most silver citizens
would give anything
to experience youth again.**

**Our yearly subscription
costs just Rs.432.**

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

Visit us at : www.harmonyindia.org

harmony
celebrate age



Subscribe to *Harmony - Celebrate Age* now and get

MOVIE DVDs



Subscription Card

(Please tick below for your choice of subscription)

☐ I would like to gift a subscription **OR**

☐ I want to subscribe to HARMONY

Subscription	You Pay	You Get
<input type="checkbox"/> 2 years (24 issues)	₹ 720	Movie DVDs hamper worth ₹ 250
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 year (12 issues)	₹ 432	Movie DVDs hamper worth ₹ 125

Please fill in **CAPITAL LETTERS** and mail the form below with your Cheque / DD to Harmony Care, Living Media India Limited, A-61, Sector, 57, Nodia (U.P.) - 201301. In case of Credit Card payment you may fax the form to : 0120-4078080.

Personal details: Mr/Mrs. _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Postal Code _____ Country _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

I wish to pay by: ☐ Cheque ☐ Demand Draft

I am enclosing Cheque / DD No. _____ dated _____ drawn on (specify bank) _____

made payable to **M/s LMIL-A/C Harmony** for ₹ _____

(Add ₹ 10/- for non-Delhi cheques) or please charge to my Credit Card.

☐ Amex

☐ Visa

☐ Master Card

☐ Diners

Card Number

Card Member's Name

Card Expiry Date _____ Month Year

Card Member's Signature _____

Date of Birth _____ Date Month Year

I want to gift the subscription to (Please do not fill if subscribing for yourself):

Mr/Mrs/Ms _____ First Name _____

Last Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Postal Code _____ Country _____

Phone (Off.) _____ (Res.) _____

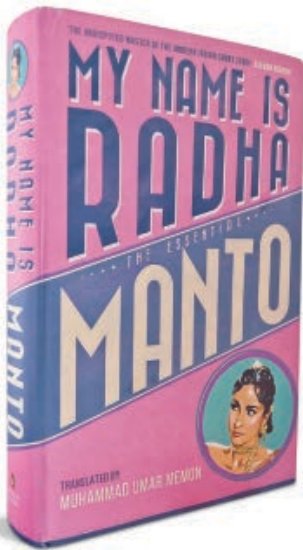
E-mail: _____

Website: www.harmonyindia.org For queries e-mail us at: harmonycare@intoday.com

harmony
celebrate age

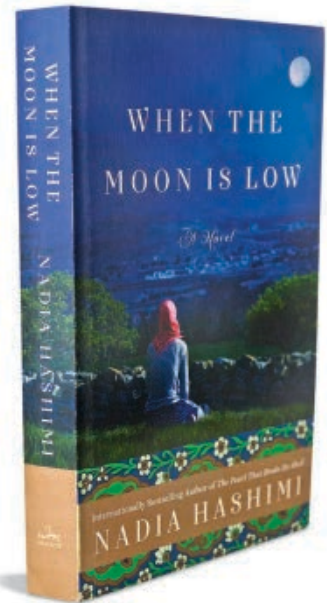
SUBSCRIPTION TERMS & CONDITIONS: Rates and offer valid in India only. Allow 3-4 weeks for processing of your subscription. Free subscription gift will reach you within 8-10 weeks of commencement of your subscription. It will not be possible to entertain any request for cancellation of your subscription once your free gift has been despatched. The free subscription gifts are covered by guarantee for manufacturing defect / quality / damage in transit as per standards laid down by the manufacturer. Add ₹ 10 for non-Delhi cheques. Please write your name and address on the reverse of the Cheque / DD. Do not send cash. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent courts and forums in Delhi / New Delhi only. The publisher reserves the right to terminate or extend this offer or any part thereof at any time, or to accept or reject any or all forms received at their absolute discretion without assigning any reason. Information regarding such cancellation / extension / discontinuance will however be published subsequently in the magazine. For further details, please contact our Customer Care Department: Write in to: **Harmony Care, Living Media India Limited, A-61, Sector-57, Noida (U.P.)- 201301**; Call: (95120) 2479900 from Delhi & Fbd; (0120) 2479900 from Rest of India, Fax: (0120) 4078080; E-mail: harmonycare@intoday.com

NOTE: Harmony collects and processes personal information for the purposes of customer analysis, market research and to provide you with any further details from our organisation. Steps have been taken to ensure that consistently high standards of data protection are in place.

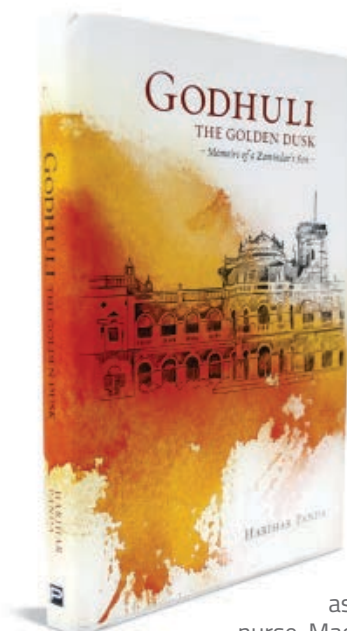


There is little nobler in the world of literature than a good translation that allows monolingual and bilingual readers to access an array of regional literature in its many shades. Fortunately, Urdu writer **Saadat Hassan Manto**'s works have enjoyed the attention of scholars for decades and have inspired the ablest of translations, the latest being Urdu literature and Arabic studies scholar **Muhammad Umar Memon**'s **MY NAME IS RADHA: THE ESSENTIAL MANTO** (Penguin, ₹ 599, 469 pages). A true Manto feast, diversity is the hallmark of this careful selection of short stories, a play and essays, which portrays Manto's obsession with poverty and prostitution, love, lust and desire. After quickly running through the popular works—"Toba Tek Singh", "The Black Shalwar", "Saheba" and others—Memon delves into a lesser-known but significant side of Manto. In the essay "Ismat-Faroshi" (Prostitution), Manto is in a rare mood to explain the mechanics of his obsession. The focus in this collection is on Manto the writer, which explains the inclusion of essays by critic Muhammed Hasan Askari and Memon. In brief, this is another ode to the brilliance of Manto.

WHEN THE MOON IS LOW (HarperCollins; ₹ 499; 384 pages) captures the life story of Feriba and her struggle to find love, acceptance and freedom. A remarkable portrait of familial love as a mother and her teenage son become separated on their escape from Kabul to London, this is **Nadia Hashimi**'s second book with Afghanistan as a backdrop; her first, *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, was a bestseller. Besides tracing the family's journey to London, the book also deals with the day-to-day struggles of a middle-class family living in Afghanistan. With strong characterisation that not only makes the story interesting but moves the plot forward, the author manages to give us a glimpse of a real slice of life. Interestingly, Hashimi, an Afghan-American paediatrician living in Washington, has never been to her motherland. The greatest strength of the book lies in the fact that it serves the reality of a turbulent Afghanistan in a fictional format, without taking sides or backing a political agenda



that can sometimes dangerously overtake a narrative. Written with elegance and empathy, this compelling story gives voice to all those who dream that, one day, they will not have to look over their shoulder in fear or "sleep on borrowed land".



GODHULI: THE GOLDEN DUSK—MEMOIRS OF A ZAMINDAR'S SON (Platinum Press; ₹ 399; 186 pages) is a throwback to an era when zamindars were the eyes and ears of the British Raj. Growing up in a zamindar family in Odisha, **Harihar Panda** was a witness to both the pomp and decline of the feudal system. A first-person narrative, *Godhuli* sketches the tumultuous times in Indian history as the slow transition from aristocracy to democracy was taking place. Panda succeeds in achieving an objective retelling of the times—embedded in suppression, casteism, nationalism and superstition—while refraining from passing judgement. The vignettes of village life are brought to life through unforgettable characters such

as the sly *gumasta*, Nira Maa the loyal wet nurse, Madhia the opportunist barber and Kinu Mian the benevolent cart driver. *Godhuli* serves not just as a memoir but a glimpse of a significant era in India's march towards Independence.

Kashmir kaleidoscope

I lacked the confidence one needs to write a book, but I grew into it," confesses **Kiran Kohli Narain**, author of *Kashmir: The Loss of Innocence* (Emnence Designs Pvt. Ltd; ₹ 590; 336 pages). Stories have a way of enwrapping our minds with veils of historical narratives that are born of personal experiences. Through her memoir, which also happens to be her first book, Narain acquaints readers with Kashmir of the past. The youngest of the six daughters of Prem Nath Kohli, forester and pioneering botanist of Kashmir, and manager of private estates to H R H Maharaja Hari Singh, Narain eloquently scripts the life and times of Jammu & Kashmir before and after Independence. She lucidly sketches a fascinating canvas spanning seven decades highlighting the state's political and historic eventualities through her familial voyage. And so, the scenic imagery of the changing landscape of Kashmir during the 1950s, 60s and 70s is interwoven with anecdotes about trends in fashion and hairstyles indulged in by her siblings. "Kashmir was unusually liberal about getting women educated. From the 1950s to the 80s, it was very safe. You could walk alone on the roads; there were only petty crimes, and people were respectful," recounts the author wistfully.

Narain's early years were spent in Baramulla until the Kabaili attack—invasion of the state by tribesmen from the North-West Frontier Province in 1947—following which the family moved to Srinagar. She taught English at the Women's College there before moving to Calcutta after her marriage in 1965 to an officer of the Indian Revenue Services. With her husband being posted in the state from 1970 to 1985, she returned to Kashmir. Narain has also been contributing to various newspapers and magazines, and until recently was a columnist for *The Tribune*. During the launch of her book at the Chandigarh Literary Society's annual conclave—Literati 2015—the 72 year-old, Delhi-based author spoke with **Suparna-Saraswati Puri** about her poignant autobiographical work.

When and why did you decide to write the book?

Having been born and brought up in Kashmir, I always had a strong bond with my homeland. My stories for my granddaughters, especially little Ambika, revolved around my experiences in the idyllic valley of my childhood and youth. One day Ambika asked me, "Nani, why don't you write a book about all this?" And that started it all!

What was the source material?

For minute details of militancy, I depended on my father's diary. I had access to inside-the-court accounts, as my father had the sole power of attorney to Maharaja Hari Singh's properties. Besides that, I have also relied on information passed on about politically relevant and historically significant events by my father to my brother-in-law.

Was the autobiographical account deliberate or did it develop as you went along with the narrative of Kashmir?

The work had to be autobiographical as my stories primarily revolved around my family. The changing façade of Kashmir from multicultural Sufism to a militancy ridden one is only the backdrop.

The book mirrors the love, loss and longing of my family for the Kashmir that once was. Having faced the loss of my maternal home twice in 43 years—first owing to the Kabaili raid and then the exodus of 1990—I wonder which part of the country we belong to?

Tell us something about the conceptualisation of the book.

The bittersweet memories of my life—from the loss of our parent's sprawling dream house within a prolific orchard and lovely garden, set against the backdrop of rolling hills, proud poplars and chinars, and fern-lined mountain

authorspeak



Courtesy: Chandigarh Literary Society

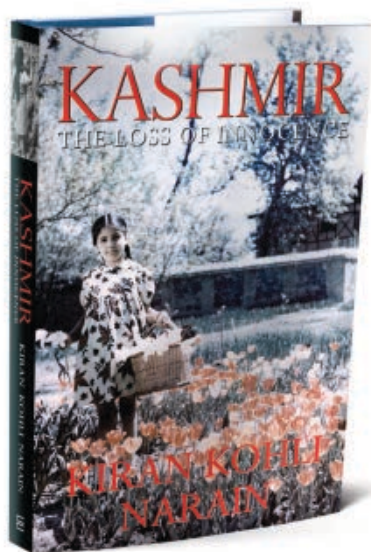
stream owing to the Kabaili raid, to leaving our parental home and flourishing business in Srinagar after my brother-in-law was killed—the story was always there in a sequence. Hence, conceptualising and marking different chapters was not difficult.

Which were the difficult parts, and the happy ones?

The happy chapters were the ones before Partition, when we as a family were the happiest. The difficult portions were the ones about the death of my brother-in-law and loss of our paternal properties—the exodus!

What has been your greatest satisfaction with this project?

On a personal level, it is very satisfying to pass on a slice of the family history to my children and grandchildren. While I was travelling to Chandigarh for Literati 2015, I was shocked to hear a young girl singing an English lullaby to her child. Is that the *virasat* [legacy] we are passing



on to our next generation? Will they have a sense of pride for their culture or a sense of belonging for their motherland?

How did your family react?

My daughters Abha and Vibha have been my sounding board, with Abha being a harsh critic, correcting the portions where I got carried away.

How do you like to spend your leisure time?

Family has always been my first priority. I resigned my government job as my husband was in a transferrable job. Yet I kept in touch with my subject through avid reading and my work as a freelance journalist. Till about a couple of years ago, I had a regular column on gardening in *The Tribune*. Most of my extended family lives in Delhi, so there are family commitments to attend to frequently.

What next?

It is too early to think about!

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

Mantra of life

Delving into the science behind sounds, **Gabriel Axel** says chants can trigger movement of energy and shape reality

Mantra is a Sanskrit word for ‘sound tool,’ and *Om* is one of myriad such mantras. Sanskrit and some other ancient languages such as Tibetan, prototypical Egyptian and ancient Hebrew evolved as complex systems of onomatopoeia, where the sounds evoke movements of energy. This evocation is qualitative and subjective and is linked with inner body sensations and emotional sense of self, both predominantly represented in the right hemisphere of the brain.

What is fascinating about mantras is that from a physics standpoint, the sounds themselves, before they are assigned meaning, will resonate in different parts of the body and mind, creating actual interactions or events.

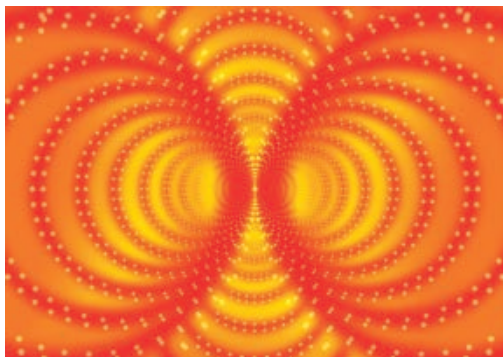
Mantras are information, in the literal sense of in-forming: the creation of form, or interactions. The Sanskrit language is an information sequencing system that mimics the process of nature’s repeating patterns. As Sanskrit scholar Dr Douglas Brooks has said, “Sanskrit tells us what Nature shows us. A limited number of rules gives an arbitrarily large number of outcomes. The way Nature goes about its business, Sanskrit goes about its language.” Much like the emotive quality of immersing oneself in music, mantra uses sound to evoke movement of physical and emotional energy through stimulation of the nervous system, from which emerges meaning and narrative.

In order to have insight into and validate a mantra for ourselves, it must be experienced and felt through introspection. Let’s take the mantra *Om*, or *Aum*, one of the most common in Sanskrit and Tibetan. If *Aum* is indeed onomatopoeic, then performing it can create an event inside the nervous system, which can then become an object of concentration and meditation, and thereby a focal point for expanding physical and emotional awareness.

Traditionally, *Aum* represents and has the capacity to progressively open up the practitioner to the ever-present formless and timeless reality, the background radiation of the cosmos that echoes the Big Bang. *Aum* is found in the form of Amen in Christianity, Judaism and ancient Egyptian, where it also codes for the immutable eternal aspect of consciousness.

The feelings and symbolic representations of the sounds will differ from person to person because the effects of the sounds depend on the user operating them and the object of use, namely the condition of the body and mind. The practitioner should first develop a state of relaxation through proper breathing. It is also important to take

interest in or to have a healthy curiosity for the practice so that the effect of actually enjoying the learning process may help the mantra get a foothold in the system. Mantras can be done vocally, sub-vocally (whispering) or silently. It is recommended to start aloud, and then proceed with the more silent variations. Silent repetition does have an effect; when the frequency of any sound is high enough, it extends beyond the human range of hearing and eventually achieves stillness, which is beyond sound itself.



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once said: “Architecture is frozen music.” The Sanskrit language is code for the patterns of nature, sonic representations of the way nature works. Mantras hold within them the latent forms of the universe. From supreme stillness and subtle ultrasonic vibrations, these latent forms cascade into being as audible sound, which then has the capacity to in-form, or shape reality. By practicing mantras, we can tap into the source of that power to manifest—we can drive our awareness deeper into the bones and muscles of the body to gain a greater sensitivity and understanding of our makeup and amplify the emotional energies within, much like the potential energy present in mountains that then becomes kinetic in the form of an avalanche when the earth quakes.

A certified yoga teacher, Axel is also a neuroscience and cognition specialist. He blogs at gabrielaxel.com

**WHERE ELSE
WOULD YOU FIND
SOMEONE ABOVE
55 YEARS
WHO'S PERFECTLY
IN TUNE WITH YOU?**

HARMONY, OBVIOUSLY.

Cooking. Reading. Fitness. Whatever your interests are, you're sure to find a silver citizen who shares your passion. Thanks to One-On-One, our personal classified section. You can post your messages in our columns absolutely free (for a limited period only). For more details, please refer to the form on the next page.

ONE
-on-
ONE

harmony
celebrate age

Name of Advertiser:

Address:

Age: E-Mail:

Tel: Signature:

Tick chosen category

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel | <input type="checkbox"/> Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Pet & Animals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hobbies & Interests | <input type="checkbox"/> Health & Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Jewellery & Watches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment & Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Computers | <input type="checkbox"/> Exchange |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Books & Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Antiques & Collections | <input type="checkbox"/> Others |

Please fill in the space provided below

Terms and conditions

- Advertisers are required to read and approve the text and other details of the advertisement before sending the form.
- The Publishers reserve the right to decline, change or reschedule any advertisement.
- Advertisements are accepted in good faith and the Publishers accept no responsibility whatsoever regarding the bonafides of the Advertisers or the contents of the advertisements. No interviews shall be granted or correspondence entered into regarding any advertisements published.
- Under no circumstances will we be liable for any loss to the Advertiser for any error or omission by us.
- The above conditions and any other conditions stipulated by us will govern the acceptance and publication of any advertisement.
- One-on-One is a free readers service only for bonafide readers of Harmony.
- Please fill up the enclosed form along with all the necessary details and mail it to: 'One-on-One', Harmony- The Magazine, Reliance Centre, 1st floor, 19, Walchand Hirachand Marg, Ballard Estate, Mumbai 400001.
- Harmony shall not be responsible for any loss/delays in transit of the forms.
- The offer is open for a limited period and is **on a first-come-first-serve basis**.
- No correspondence shall be entertained regarding non-publication of One-on-One.
- Harmony reserves the right to modify/change the One-on-One received at their end.
- Maximum number of words allowed per One-on-One is 30.
- All forms should be sent by ordinary post only. No registered post or courier shall be accepted.
- Only one entry per person shall be accepted.
- Each entry should be in the original form printed in Harmony. No photocopies shall be allowed.

For office use only

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advt. No. | <input type="checkbox"/> Heading | <input type="checkbox"/> No. of Words |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|

We go 50 years back in time to bring you products, people, events and fashion that have influenced the world

Beatlemania

On a muggy evening 50 years ago, 55,600 screaming fans, the largest crowd in entertainment business history, waited in frenzied anticipation for the mop-haired fantastic four. Launching their second sortie on American soil, The Beatles—John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr—made a spectacular entry by helicopter. The Shea Stadium concert (the first time a stadium was used for a rock concert) was the first stop in an 11-city tour of the US planned by the band in 1965, and helped cement The Beatles as the most influential rock ‘n’ roll band. The show, which was sold out seven months in advance, also created a new world record for a pop concert in terms of gross revenue. The Beatles’ share of the record \$ 304,000 box-office takings was also a record \$ 160,000!

It was a security and logistic nightmare for the 2,000 policemen in charge of the stadium. After a long series of warm-up acts by other groups, The Beatles played for 30 minutes, singing popular tracks such as *Twist and shout*, *She’s a woman*, *I feel fine*, *Dizzy Miss Lizzy*, *Ticket to ride*, *Everybody’s trying to be my baby*, *Can’t buy me love*, *Baby’s in black*, *I wanna be your man*, *Help!*, and *I’m down*. Though Vox had made special amplifiers for the tour, even those proved inadequate amid the high-decibel screaming of the fans. Nothing could be heard. Not that it really mattered; fans just wanted to see The Beatles, nothing more. The band also ended up not hearing what they played, and kept looking at each other to check whether they were synchronised. The crowds went crazy; girls were climbing fences; cops were chasing kids; medics were treating passed-out teens. Rather than complicate things further, the band jumped into a Rambler station wagon, which drove them to the dugout, then on to a waiting armoured van and helicopter.

The show was filmed by Sullivan Productions, along with the helicopter ride and backstage sequences, and released



as a documentary film, *The Beatles at Shea Stadium*. The less-than-perfect soundtrack was “sweetened” later amid secrecy by The Beatles at a studio in London. Writing about the concert in his memoir *John, Paul, George, Ringo and Me*, Beatles press agent Tony Barrow said, “This was the group’s brightly shining summer solstice, after which all The Beatles’ days would insidiously grow a little darker.”

The Shea stadium concert was historic and helped reshape the music business. It was the first time that a rock band had played at a major stadium; but it would hardly be the last. Even the King of Rock and Roll Elvis Presley, who the Liverpool guys idolised, had performed at smaller venues to audiences half that size. The concert was a game-changer in more ways than one. It was instrumental in turning a pop performance into a high-powered event. When The Beatles headed home to Britain on 1 September, they left behind a transformed America. Overnight, the youth became an influential demographic; while rock became a part of popular culture, seeping into everything from cereal advertisements to cartoons and TV shows.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: DECEMBER 1965

- On 1 December, the Border Security Force was established in India as a special force to guard the country’s borders.
- On 5 December, the ‘Glasnost Meeting’ became the first spontaneous political demonstration for civil rights in the Soviet Union.
- On 9 December, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, the first Peanuts television special, debuted on CBS. It went on to become an annual tradition.
- On 16 December, British playwright, novelist and short story writer W Somerset Maugham died at the age of 91.

Selfeet

n. A photo of one's shoes or one's bare feet.

Example. In April, the brand brought its online user-generated gallery into stores with a "Wall of Shoes" that encouraged consumers to take a **selfeet**, or a foot selfie.

—Forrest Cardamenis,
"Berluti shows what the boys like
in social video", *Luxury Daily*,
15 September 2015

Juice jacking

pp. Stealing data from a portable device that is plugged into a hacked public charging station.

Example. The gadget is described by Crowd Supply, who sells the product, as 'a protective barrier between your device and **juice-jacking** hackers'.

—Ellie Zolfaghari, *fard*,
"Undetectable' Peter Pan virus
hits thousands", *Daily Mail*,
9 September 2014

Laneway house

n. A house that opens onto a back or side lane, particularly on a lot that has an existing dwelling.

Example. Their two-bedroom, 1,050-square-foot **laneway house** is sleek and energy-efficient, and designed to meet their exact needs. And it was more affordable than they expected.

—Sandy Keenan, "At home in the
outback", *The New York Times*,
21 January 2015

Googleganger

n. A person who has the same name as you, and whose online references are mixed in with yours when you run a Google search on your name.

Example. The point is, when you Google yourself, it's a bit of a blow to your ego when you discover that: A) your name isn't unique, and B) other people have done more with it than you. These are your so-called **Googlegangers**, from the German 'doppelgänger'.

—Casey Phillips, "Reflections in an online mirror",
Chattanooga Times Free Press, 16 April 2010

Walking school bus

n. A group of children who walk to school together under the supervision of one or more adults.

Example. Districts in Hunterdon County are among thousands nationwide doing their part each year by creating **walking school buses** to raise awareness of the issue. An adult or group of adults begins walking along a designated route, making 'bus stops' along the way to pick up other children on their way to classes.... Last year, more than 700 county students took 'walking school bus' routes to school, accompanied by friends, parents and faculty members.

—"Leave the car (and bus) behind and walk to school",
NJ.com, 15 September 2015

Knowledge is knowing a tomato
is a fruit; wisdom is not putting
it in a fruit salad.

—British journalist Miles Kington (1941-2008)

AUTO-BUY

v. To automatically purchase the next version or edition of something because you have liked the previous items in the series.

Example. "I think the most fundamental issue is that we are way past the point in the evolution of computers where people **auto-buy** the next latest and greatest computer chip, with full confidence that it would be better than what they've got," Dr Colwell said.

—John Markoff, "Smaller, faster, cheaper, over: The future of computer chips",
The New York Times, 26 September 2015

Defeature

v. To return a product to its original or most basic purpose by removing features that do not contribute or apply to that purpose.

Example. Defeaturing: The most important of these principles, which we called the process of “ditching the junk DNA”.

—Phanish Puranam & Nirmalya Kumar,
“Elon Musk, frugal engineer”, Insead,
9 June 2015

Mindie

adj. Of a music artist: ostensibly independent, but secretly backed by a mainstream record label; independent, but with mainstream success and exposure.

Example. Ok, you got me, it’s true. The first thing I thought when I heard Vic had signed to the Roc wasn’t “Is the label a good fit for him?” or “I wonder how this will affect his music?” The first thing I wondered was, “Was he **mindie**, and if so, for how long?”

—Nathan Slavik, “How long has Vic Mensa been signed to Roc Nation?”, DJBooth, 23 April 2015



Back on the board

BUZZ

The tradition of the board game has been eclipsed by the tech era, taking away much of the magic from family Sundays and holiday sessions with friends. But you can recapture the good times at Kavade, a store in Bengaluru’s Seshadripuram area. Named after the Kannada word for cowrie-shells, the store gives you the chance to play on one-of-a-kind cloth and wooden chess sets and Kalamkari-printed boards of traditional games like *pagade/chaupad* made in collaboration with craftsmen. Indeed, games such as *chowkabara*, *adu huli aata*, *pittoo*, War of Lanka and *dahdi* are sure to bring the memories flooding back. The store also offers various games for kids, making it a perfect family destination. It’s open Monday to Saturday, 10.30 am-1.30 pm and 3.30 pm- 8.30 pm. The price to play starts at ₹ 20. For more information, contact Shreeranjani G S at (0)9980022820 or visit www.kavade.org



Photographs courtesy: Kavade

“The knitters keep fit in body, mind and soul, and the needy benefit from our efforts”

Sasmeeta Srivastava, 71, Pune, knits for silvers, the destitute and the ailing



Wg Cdr (retd) Anup Banerjee Mohan

It's a yarn of love she started spinning on her 70th birthday last year. For more than a year now, **Sasmeeta Srivastava** has been knitting caps, scarves and sweaters for the destitute. She gifts sweaters to kids at orphanages, woollen caps to the elderly in hospitals and old age homes, and scarves to strangers on the streets. It was the sight of her building watchman coughing furiously on a rainy day that set Srivastava thinking. Realising that his meagre income was just enough to provide for basic necessities, she rushed back home, dug out her old knitting needles and set working on the tiny balls of knitting yarn that lay forgotten in a cupboard. By evening, a colourful cap—warm and snug—was ready. With the overjoyed watchman sporting it at night, another request came her way; this time from the watchman of the neighbouring building. Realising there were many like them out there who didn't have the necessary resources to buy quality woollen wear, Srivastava set out on her knitting journey. Today, she has lost count of the many caps and sweaters she has crafted. “It could be

a hundred sweaters and more than 220 caps,” she guesses, needles clicking furiously as she strives to achieve her latest target: 40 caps for an old age home. Working for the poor has been a way of life for this intrepid lady. Earlier, she ran an NGO for tribals in Madhya Pradesh along with her husband. After his death, she got involved with causes close to her heart, such as women's development and literacy. In 2005, Srivastava relocated to Pune to look after her ailing mother. Now, she also manages ‘Knit for a Cause,’ a group comprising kindred silvers who knit. This group gifts woollen caps, scarves and sweaters to patients, silvers and domestic help. “It's a win-win situation,” beams Srivastava. “While the poor get relief from the cold, the knitters find a purpose in life.” Srivastava, who scouts the markets of Pune regularly, requests her friends and relatives from Delhi to get balls of yarn when they visit. “I've also told them that if they want to give me a gift on Diwali and birthdays, wool would be the best!”

—Mita Banerjee

नीम ऐक्टिव+™ अंदर,
मच्छर बाहर.



ADVANCED

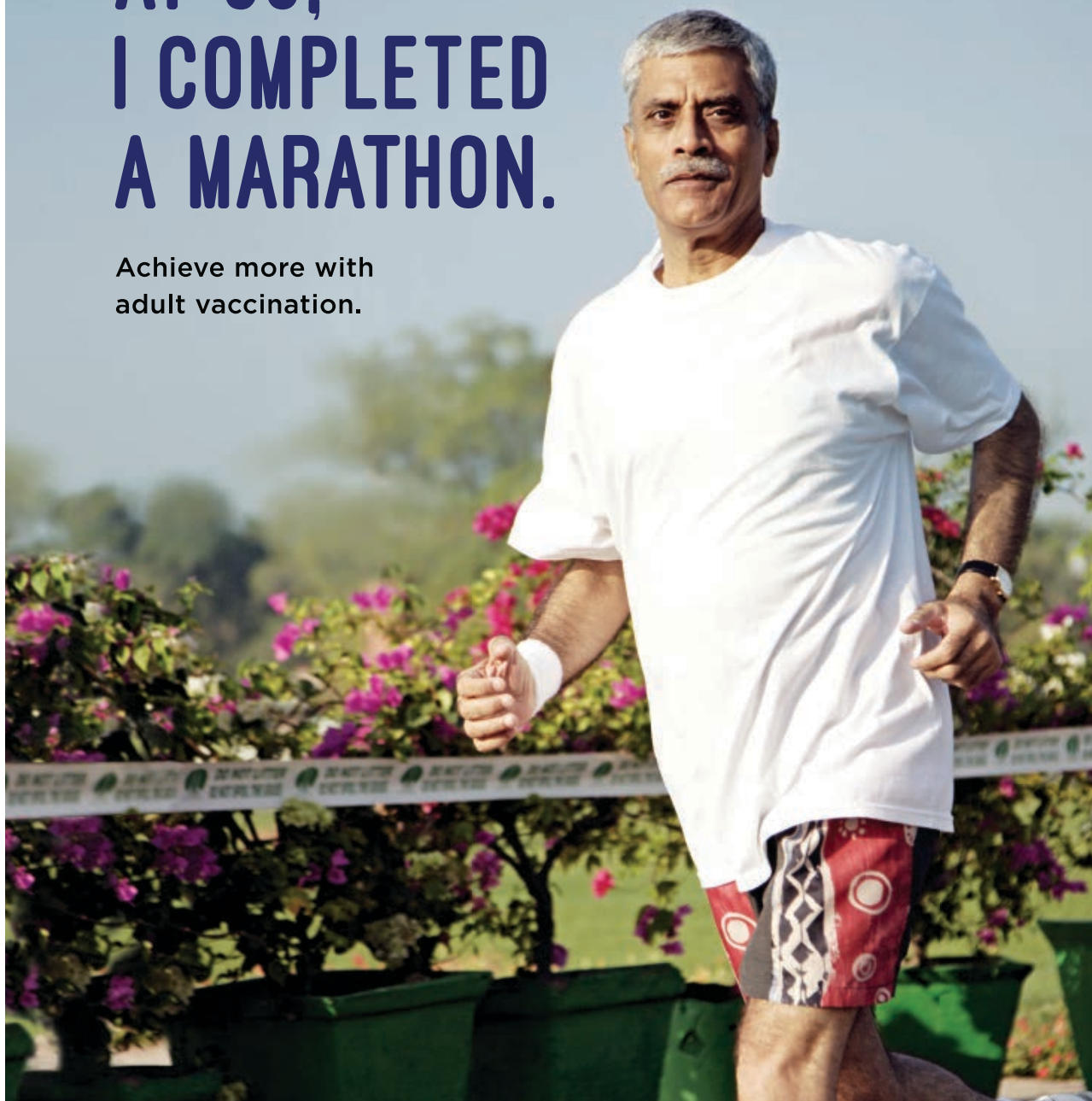
NEEM
ACTIV+™
LOW SMOKE COIL



No natural neem in this product. Trademark applied

AT 50, I COMPLETED A MARATHON.

Achieve more with
adult vaccination.



INDDTC3915004/ 13th August 2015



To know more, consult your doctor
and visit www.janitva.com

Issued in Public
interest by

