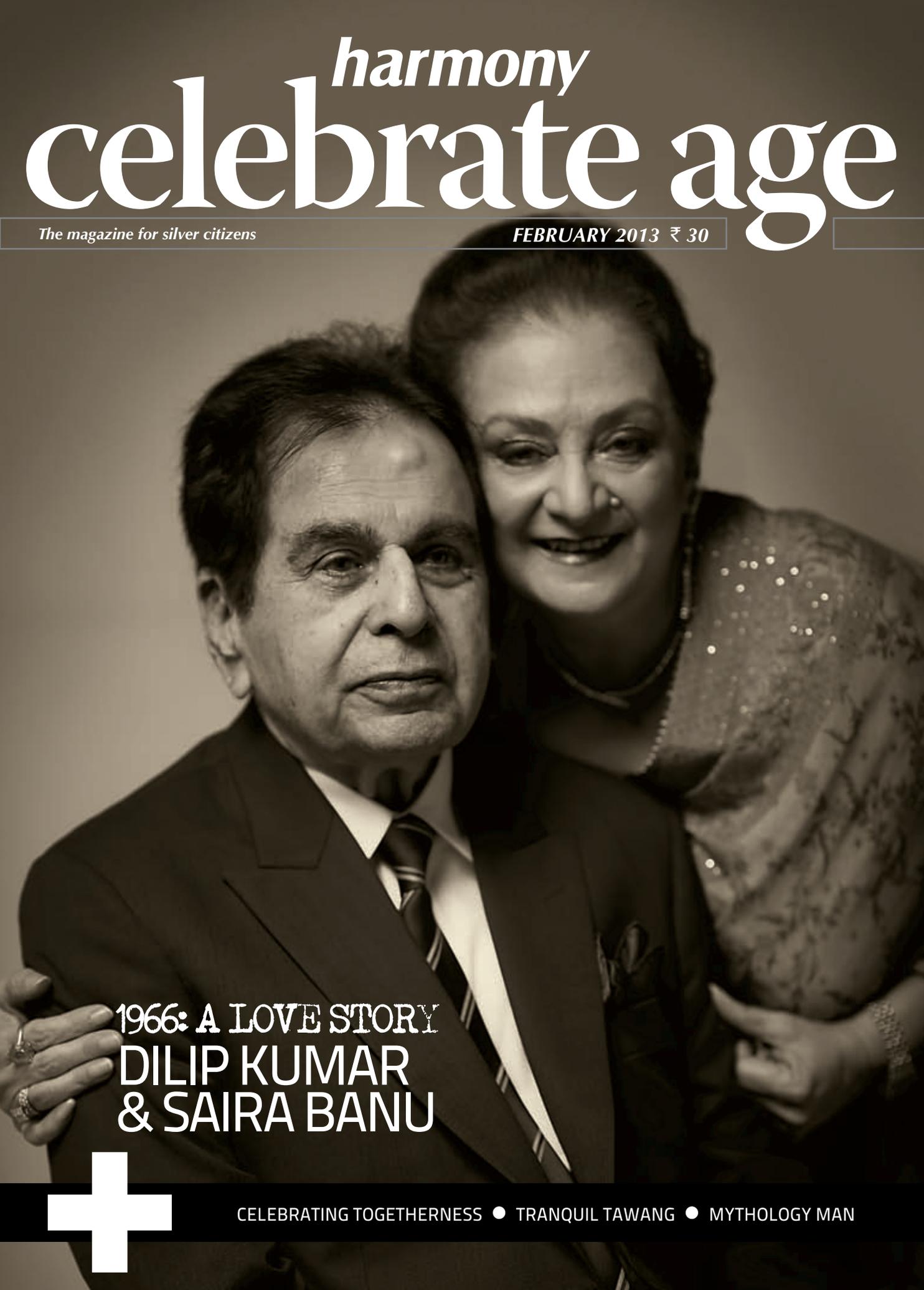


harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

FEBRUARY 2013 ₹ 30



1966: A LOVE STORY
DILIP KUMAR
& SAIRA BANU

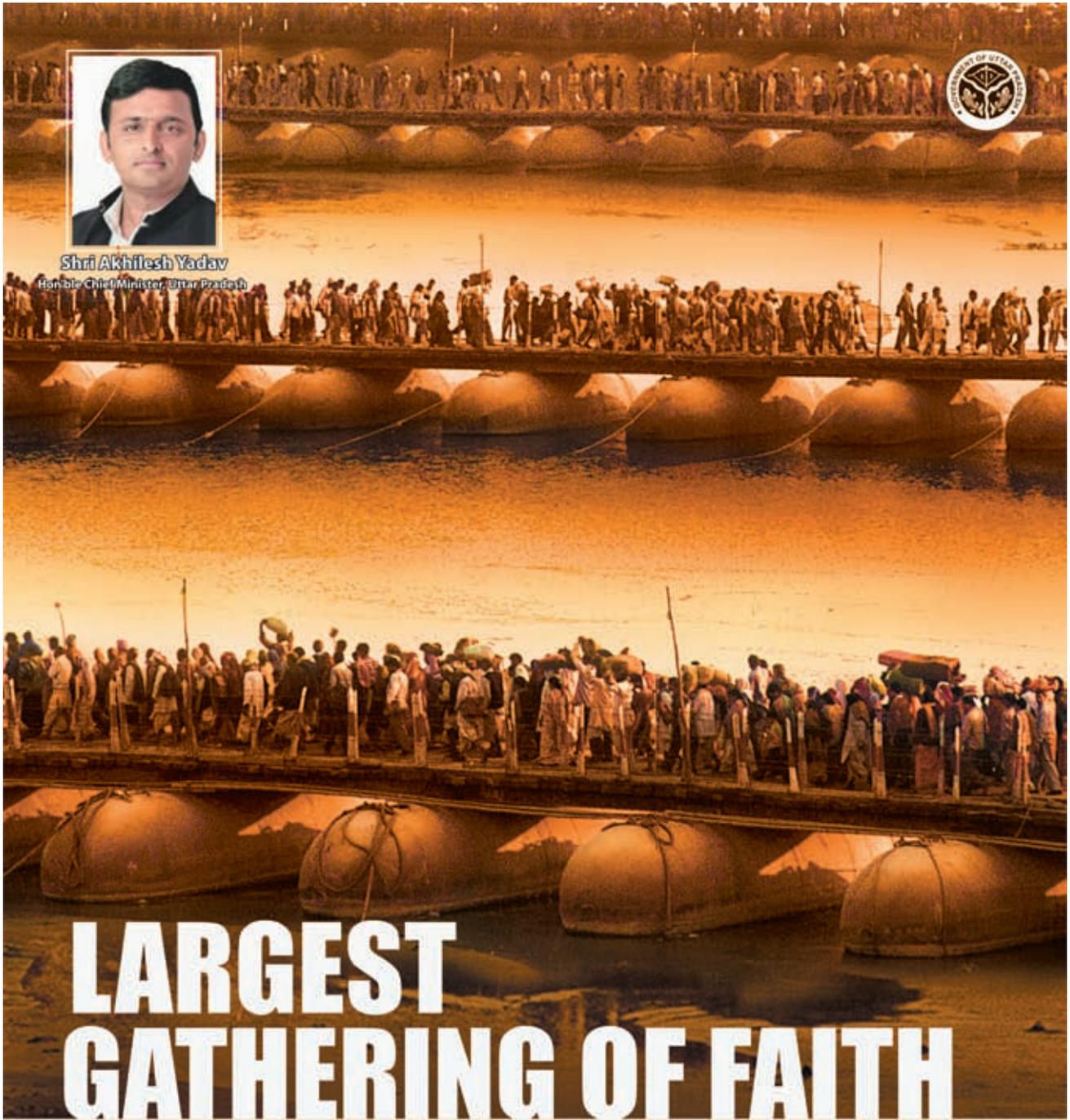


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TRIUMPH OF THE SPIRIT

Suresh Natarajan



Life can be viewed through a lens of despair—or a prism of hope. The choice is always yours.

Time has taught me a valuable lesson: instead of mourning the loss of someone beloved, we must celebrate a life well lived. Like Shantaben, my sister Bhavna's mother-in-law. She left us at the end of 2012 at the wonderfully ripe age of 96. She had a zest for life that only grew stronger with the years, a song on her lips that only grew more resonant with time, a love for people that only grew more intense as she embraced more of us in her heart. Today, she may not walk, laugh, sing among us but her light remains, a shimmering candle; and its gentle glow illuminates our lives, while her strength of spirit continues to inspire us.

Indeed, spirit is indestructible, indefatigable. It is an intangible entity, yet its presence is utterly tangible. There's no better example than the Harmony Senior Citizens' Run at the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon, where the silver spirit is palpable enough to envelop you with its power and intensity. This year—the Marathon's tenth, our ninth—was no exception: over 1,500 silvers,

radiant, proud, empowered and, yes, incredibly spirited. They were cheered on by Vivek Oberoi, Sakshi Tanwar, Sharman Joshi and Gulshan Grover, a long-time friend of Harmony—a warm thanks to all these talented actors for their time. I also extend my gratitude to Reliance Infrastructure Ltd, Reliance Communications Ltd, BIG 92.7 FM, Procama International Ltd, BIG Cinemas, Nobel Hygiene, Widex India, Jivraj Tea and Domino's Pizza for their generous support and the Harmony team for working overtime to ensure that the event ran like clockwork.

It was a wonderfully energising start to the year. And a keen reminder that life is what you make of it. Imbue yours with vigour and verve, run on the path of your choosing, and you will blaze a trail.

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

Harmony Celebrate Age—February 2013 Volume 9 Issue 9

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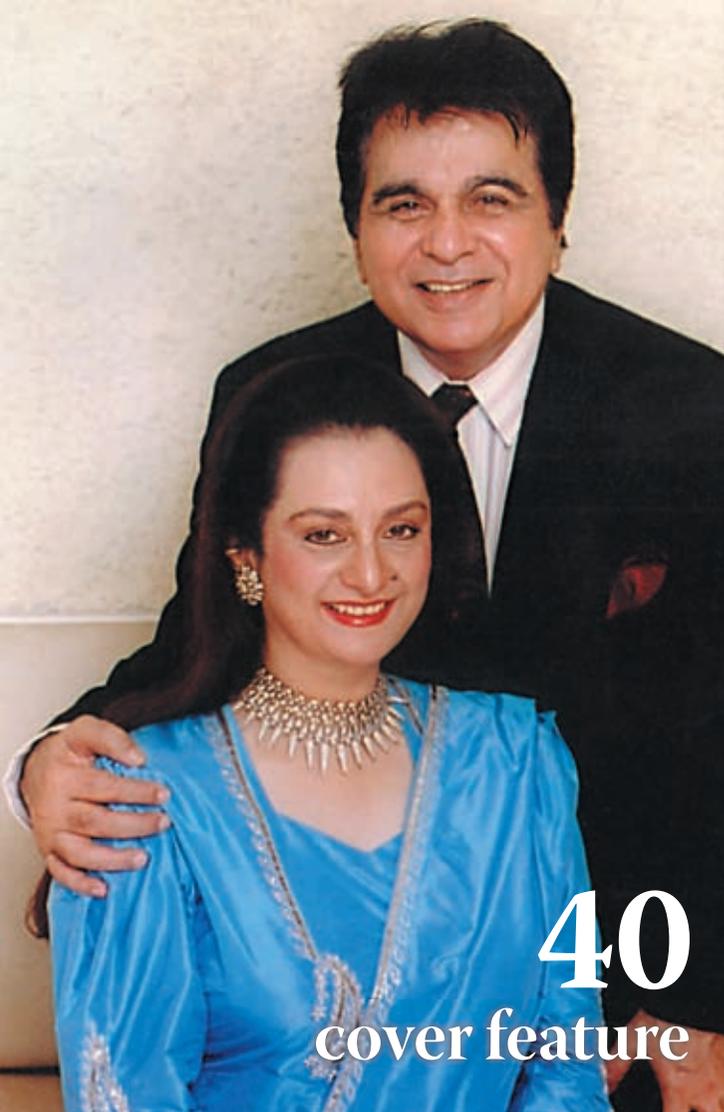
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Cover photograph courtesy - YRF Studios; Photograph by Abhay Singh

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A peep into ancient Chettiar homes of Puducherry that are now turning into plush hotels

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column one

Love is in the air this month. Our cover feature “1966: A Love Story” celebrates the romance of Indian film icons Saira Banu and Dilip Kumar. “I was and still am head over heels in love,” Saira Banu tells veteran film journalist Udaya Tara Nayar as she shares some rare moments with us. Like the time her superstar husband whisked her off to a surprise tea with the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

It doesn't take celebrity life to create—and sustain—chemistry though; just love, actually! The photographs of our couples in “Two-gether” are proof enough. These women and men find extraordinary joy in the ordinary minutiae of life, as long as they are together.

Indeed, intimacy between a couple only intensifies with time. And, as V S Natarajan reiterates in this month's ‘Silver Lining’, sex can remain a satisfying part of the equation, taking on a broader definition as we age, encompassing emotional and sensory pleasure, despite a conservative mindset to the contrary.

Ashok Banker too challenges traditional mindsets—especially patriarchal ones—in his books, and life. The “Mythology Man” who also writes thrillers with equal aplomb shares his worldview in an exclusive interview that is as absorbing as it is hard-hitting.

Elsewhere in the magazine, economist Priya Desai urges NRIs to protect their elders back home (“Parents First”) with a regular fund flow. And Carol Lobo returns entranced after a trip to Tawang near the Indo-China border, Arunachal Pradesh. You'll love it too!

—Arati Rajan Menon

I would like to thank Dr V S Natarajan (‘Silver Lining’; January 2013) for the informative details on the benefits of five kinds of vaccination for silvers. While I cannot agree more about the need for taking such vaccines, I must frankly say that in our country, one must be doubly careful, as drug adulteration and sale of fake medicines are on the rise. For this, we must go to reliable hospitals to get effective vaccination. I live in Chennai and would like to know where I can go for safe vaccination.

T K Damodaran

Jt Secretary of OFs & AEs Pensioners Welfare Association, Chennai

I live in the US. On a recent visit to Mumbai, I came across *Harmony-Celebrate Age* and found it very informative, not only for silvers but for the younger generation as well. Keep up the good work.

Puja Verma

Via email

In the December issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, I read with great interest Shameem Akthar's ‘Yogic Moves’ where *marichayasana* was being performed on a stool. The use of props is an innovation of legendary yogacharya BKS Iyengar whose 94th birthday we celebrated in Pune on 14 December 2012. He is the epitome of life and, even at this age, continues practicing and teaching millions of yoga followers across the world.

Dr Rajvi H Mehta

Editor, Yoga Rahasya

I have been reading *Harmony-Celebrate Age* since its inception and find it very relevant for all ages. The cost of medical care is shooting through the roof; it is imperative for silvers to have good medical in-

urance to take care of their needs. May I request you to bring out a comprehensive analysis of the medical insurance schemes available in India? This would help us decide a policy according to our specific needs. Please also introduce a column for ailments related to silvers.

Renu Singh

Via email

Thank you for writing to us. We promise to bring out a comprehensive analysis of medical insurance schemes for silvers. For ailments, problems and issues related to silvers, please read Dr V S Natarajan's regular column, ‘Silver Lining’.

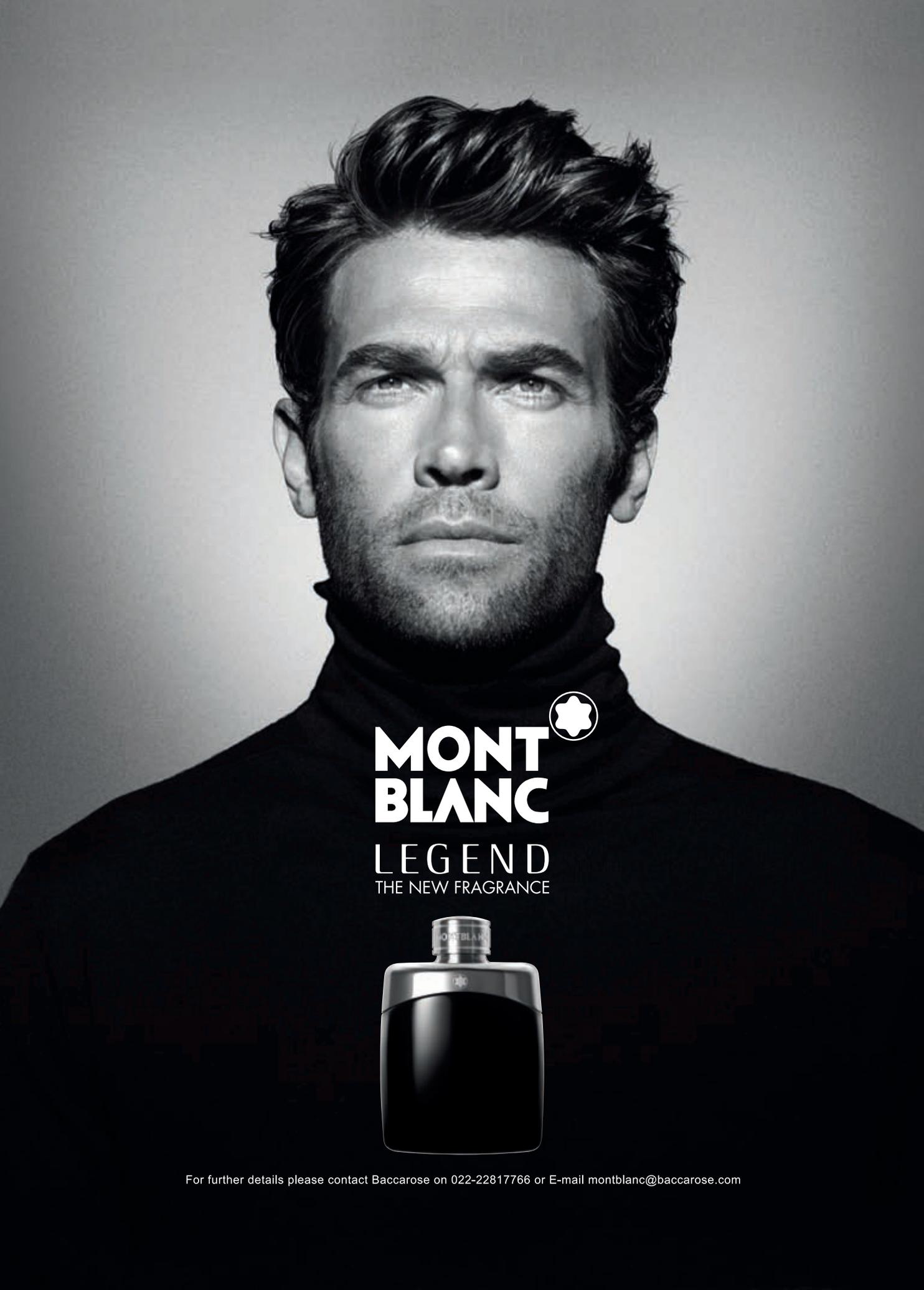
—Editors

AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY

We are looking for contributions from our readers. Write to us if...

- You had an experience related to money
 - You faced a serious health problem and conquered it
 - You know of someone who has done something exceptional after the age of 55
 - You have a hobby or an interesting travel experience to share
 - You have a funny or insightful anecdote about your grandchildren
- ...and we'll print it in the column ‘Your Space’

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P30: Sex in the 60s

P32: Get armed!

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► MEDIA WATCH

In harmony

Four friends looking for a little harmony. That's the tagline of *Quartet*, a remarkable ensemble film that manages to be silver fest, template for future care homes and an ode to music, all at the same time. It also marks the directorial debut of screen legend Dustin Hoffman, 75. The setting is Beecham House, a retirement home for opera musicians, which is holding a gala to fund its very survival. Three residents of the home, and members of a once-famed quartet, try to convince their fourth performer to sing for the show. Complicating matters is the fact that the diva, played imperiously by the indomitable Maggie Smith, was also married to one of them. Never patronising, always entertaining, *Quartet* is a must-see symphony of life and love. And, yes, the music, most of it by Verdi, is pretty fabulous too.





Forever BLUE

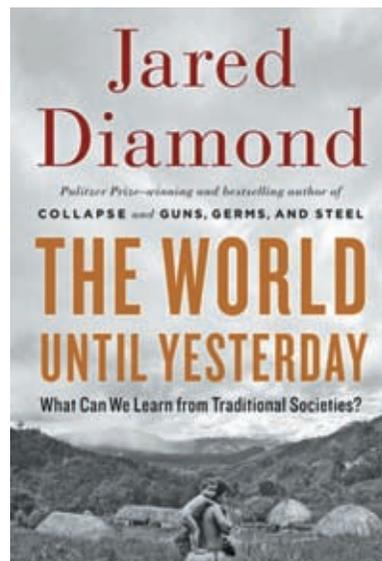
The term may evoke an image of illicit activity but the truth is anything but that! A ‘Blue Zone’ is a longevity hotspot as defined by author Dan Buettner, a place on earth where residents enjoy extended lifespan and improved quality of life. His book *The Blue Zones*, supported by *National Geographic* magazine, has delved deeper into some of these destinations, from Okinawa in Japan and Sardinia in Italy to Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica, and Loma Linda in California. Now in its second edition, it identifies another blue zone: Ikaria, a small Greek island where inhabitants live an average 10 years longer than the rest of Western Europe.

Like many of the other blue zones, a hardy, sometimes arduous life, a healthy Mediterranean diet, moderate consumption of wine, a very so-

cial, family-oriented life and plenty of exercise are all major enablers. Ikaria also has a magic potion, though. “Many older people make a daily brew of mountain tea from dried herbs such as sage, thyme, mint, and chamomile, and sweeten it with honey from local bees,” writes Buettner. “It cures everything! Seriously, the locals believe it can even cure cancer. And they offer you enough case studies to actually make you wonder.” One thing Buettner’s sure about is that hard work is directly proportionate to longevity. “We live in a culture that relentlessly pursues comfort. Ease is related to disease. We shouldn’t always be fleeing hardship. Hardship also brings people together. We should welcome it. You rarely get satisfaction sitting in an easy chair. If you work in a garden on the other hand and it yields beautiful tomatoes; that’s good.”

History lesson

The past can inform the future in incalculable ways. That’s the primary takeaway from **Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jared Diamond’s *The World Until Yesterday: What Can We Learn from Traditional Societies?*** It is less a book and more an impassioned plea to explore the potential of our elders and learn from their wisdom, the product of the 75 year-old geographer-ornithologist-ecologist-environmental historian’s extensive research among the Amazonian Indians, Kalahari San people, the Pacific Islanders, and other ‘tribal’ societies. “I do not recommend that modern societies return to hunting and gathering,” he explains in an interview to



news agency Reuters. “But just as the elderly in tribal communities do not stop babysitting their grandchildren, making tools, or picking food because they have reached a certain age, the elderly in modern societies should continue to offer their insight in work environments and at home. Older people are better at synthesising information and experience, providing insight that cannot be found in books or on Google. Also, most of our current voters or leaders have no personal experiences of living through events such as World War II and the Great Depression but millions of older Americans do. Old people are the keepers of information that might prove useful one day.”

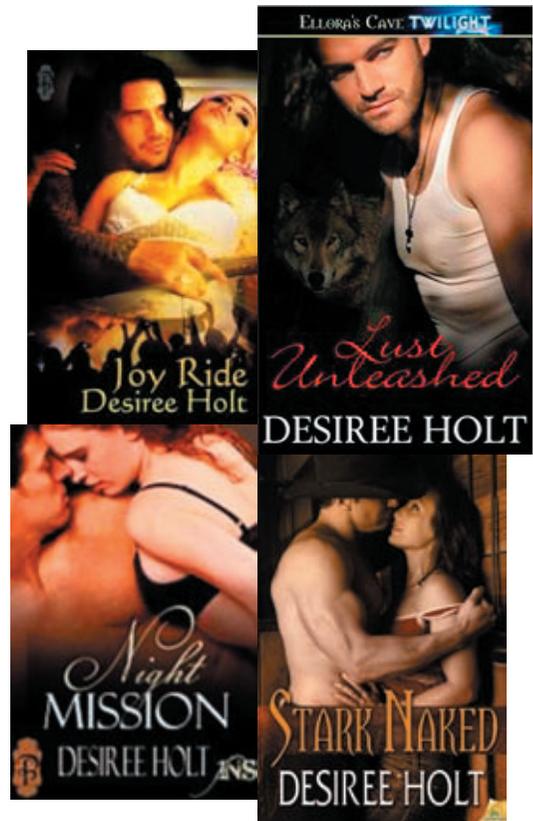


ACROSS GENERATIONS: AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHT AMY HERZOG CREATED A PLAY THAT IS WINNING AWARDS AND RAVE REVIEWS ACROSS THE US. NOW PLAYING IN SAN FRANCISCO AFTER A SUCCESSFUL NEW YORK RUN, *4,000 MILES* IS THE STORY OF VERA, A FEISTY NONAGENARIAN WITH SHORT-TERM MEMORY BUT A COLOURFUL PAST, WHO FORGES A NEW CONNECTION WITH HER 21-YEAR-OLD GRANDSON LEO, A NEO-HIPPIE. THE PLAY WAS INSPIRED BY HERZOG'S OWN GRANDMOTHER.

HOT READS



While women across the world are raving about *Fifty Shades of Grey*, British author E L James's S&M-bondage romp, here's a **woman who has been there and done the genre of erotic romance** for some years now. Meet **Desiree Holt**, a 76 year-old from Sisterdale, Texas, who has written a total of 137 steamy books (novels and novellas) since 2006 and tells us how her publishers—El-lora's Cave, among others—simply can't get enough of her intensely graphic stuff. "It seemed like the more I wrote, the more I thought about plots and things to write," she tells *The Washington Post*. "And the more I sent them, the



more they wanted." So how hot do her books get? "There is absolutely no limit on how much sex you can put in an erotic story," Holt responds. "When you get into erotic romance, it's no-holds-barred. You can get everything in there, as long as it's well-written. But it's not pornography, because that's just graphic sex with nothing else." Holt is now working on a synopsis for a three-book series that will feature women in their 50s and men in their early 60s. "I envision a day when our culture can begin to celebrate deeply sensual and intimate stories about senior citizens like me and my beloved late husband, who was among my biggest fans. The body performs differently so you learn to accommodate it. But your emotions are still the same and the relationships you have are still the same; you just adjust them."

The final frontier

It takes the fittest among us to make the grade to astronaut. But once in space, travellers face the same woes as silvers: soft bones, a risk of fainting, and hardened arteries owing to weightlessness. Thus, as website *Space.com* tells us, **the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) will examine the medical issues associated with spaceflight in connection with the health concerns of silvers on the**

ground. "There's increasing interest in the whole process of ageing and we have this great resource in space that can complement terrestrial research," says Nicole Buckley, chief scientist for life sciences at the CSA. In the next couple of years, the Canadian teams will host an international working group to bring in research from NASA, the Japanese Space Agency and other government space stakeholders and share their findings. Earthlings, wait for it.

Life after death

IT MAY SOUND MACABRE but this is actually good news, a renewal of life. Researchers from the University of Miami, Florida, have discovered that **corpses can yield viable stem cells—which can be used to heal the living—five days after death.** These mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) mined from the bone marrow of finger bones can form different kinds of cells depending on where they are transplanted, such as heart tissue, and battle chronic ailments. Significantly, the team was able to extract more MSCs from a cadaver than a living donor. "From one dead donor, you could take the whole spine, for example," writes team leader Gianluca D'Ippolito in journal *New Scientist*. "You are going to end up with billions of cells, which could be used to help countless people." The next test is to ensure that the DNA of the cells remains unaffected by the dead and decaying surrounding tissue; the team is working on it.





CHINESE DIKTAT: UNDER AN AMENDMENT PASSED TO THE COUNTRY'S LAW ON THE ELDERLY, THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE IT MANDATORY FOR ADULTS TO VISIT THEIR ELDERLY PARENTS. AND IF THEY DON'T VISIT OFTEN ENOUGH, NEGLECTED PARENTS WILL HAVE THE OPTION OF TAKING THEM TO COURT.

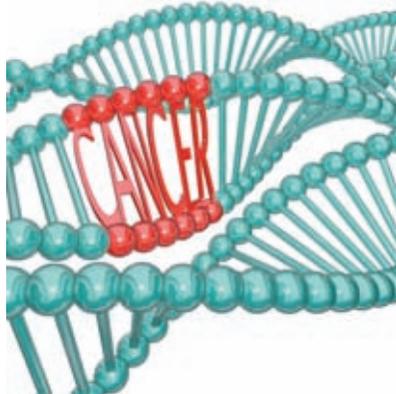
Kerala cares

On the heels of a series of crimes targeted at silvers, **Kochi Police has announced a senior citizens' protection scheme** in the city. It is in the process of identifying and registering all silvers living alone; once the system is in place, they will be visited by a policeman once a week, who will log the details of his visit in a notebook issued to each senior citizen. "We will implement this across the city in a phased manner," Kochi range IG K Padmakumar tells media. "The log book system will ensure that policeman actually visit the homes of senior citizens. We will also conduct a security audit at the homes of senior citizens and suggest measures to strengthen their security."



Cancer crisis

A new report released by the British Department of Health in conjunction with advocacy groups Macmillan Cancer Support and Age UK has admitted that **ageism can prevent silvers from receiving appropriate cancer treatment** in the country. As the BBC reports, 46 per cent of the 155 clinicians—55 general practitioners, 50 oncologists and 50 cancer clinical nurse specialists—surveyed for the report said they had dealt with cancer patients who had been refused treatment on the grounds they were too old. And 67 per cent said they



had heard health professionals speak to older cancer patients in a conde-

scending or dismissive way. "These concerns about the prevalence of age discrimination mustn't be ignored," says Ciarán Devane, chief executive at Macmillan. "Unless staff are given the time and training to carry out a proper assessment of a patient's overall physical and mental wellbeing, some patients will be unfairly written off as too old for treatment." The UK has some of the worst cancer survival rates in Europe for people over 65 and the number of older people living with cancer is expected to rise from 1.3 million to 4.1 million in the next 20 years.



59

WE DO like to believe otherwise, but apparently, at least in the UK, **age is really just a number: 59 years, two months and two weeks**, to be precise. According to a government survey, that's when Britons on average start to consider themselves old; meanwhile, middle age begins at 40 years, eight months and two weeks. Averages apart, there is a gender differential at play here—women pegged old age at



60, while men said 58. The perception of age also changes with, well, age: while people under the age of 50 quoted the rather shocking number of 46, people over 50 went for the far more reassuring number of 62. Similarly, while people between 16 and 24 pegged middle age at 32, octogenarians insisted middle age began only at 52. "The disparity in perceptions of ageing allows the potential for age stereotypes to be applied in very inconsistent ways," goes a press release by the Department for Work and Pensions, which commissioned the survey. "Evidently, the older you get, the later you think old age begins. There is also significant age discrimination and outdated attitudes among younger people; that's worrying."

Auf wiedersehen

With the cost of long-term healthcare escalating at a rapid clip, **many Germans are adopting a novel route to deal with their elders: export.** As London newspaper *The Guardian* reports, social welfare activists are denouncing the fact that older Germans are being 'shipped out' to old-age homes overseas. While the favoured destination is Eastern Europe (7,146 in Hungary, over 3,000 in the Czech Republic, and over 600 in Slovakia), others are going to more distant shores like Spain, Greece, the Ukraine, and even Thailand and the Philippines.

The financial rationale is simple: costs in all these countries are about two-thirds lower. But the emotional costs may be harder to handle. "This inhumane deportation is an alarm signal

and calls for political intervention," socio-political advisory Sozialverband Deutschland says in a statement. "We simply cannot let those people who built Germany up to be what it is, who put their backbones into it all their lives, be deported."

Not everyone agrees though. "These seniors are not being deported or expelled," Artur Frank, the owner of Senior Palace, which finds care homes for Germans in Slovakia, tells *The Guardian*. "Many move of their own free will and these are the results of sensible decisions by their families who know they will be better off." According to Germany's federal bureau of statistics, over 400,000 seniors are unable to afford a German retirement home, a figure growing by about 5 per cent a year.

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Blind turn ahead!



It happens to so many of us—a resistance to physical and psychological change over time; a blind belief that we will always be what we have always been. Scientists at Harvard University have a name for it: **‘the-end-of-history illusion,’ an inability to see ourselves differently in the future.** They surveyed over 19,000 people between the ages of 18 and 68 on their lives, values, personalities, likes and dislikes. While some respondents were asked to reflect over the past 10 years, others were asked to predict how they would change in the coming decade. To their surprise, they discovered that across the board, everyone underestimated how different they would be in the future. “This study explains why a teenager who gets a tattoo never thinks they will regret it, even if they do so later!” lead researcher Daniel Gilbert tells *The New York Times*. “At every age we think we’re having the last laugh, and at every age we’re wrong. Life is a process of growing and changing, and what our results suggest is that growth and change really never stop, despite the fact that at every age from 18 to 68, we think it’s pretty much come to a close.” The study is published in the February issue of journal *Science*.

Bilingual BONUS

Two tongues are definitely better than one. According to a new study at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, in the US, **being bilingual from an early age may keep the brain healthier as we get older.** The researchers scanned the brains of bilingual and monolingual seniors from the ages of 60 to 68 as they completed three tasks. The first required them to identify the shape of an object; the second the colour; and the third, or ‘switch task’, was a combination of the two, asking them to alternate between colour and shape. While everyone took longer to complete the switch task, the bilingual seniors displayed quicker reaction time. What’s more, the frontal areas of their brains demonstrated less activity while completing the switch task. “This suggests that bilingual seniors use their brains more efficiently than monolingual seniors,” researcher



Brian Gold writes in the January issue of the *Journal of Neuroscience*. “Previous research suggests that regions of the brain involved in switching from one language to another overlap with regions involved in switching from one task to another. So the act of regularly

shifting from one language to a second language may strengthen the efficiency of regions involved in changing tasks. Now, more research is needed to determine whether people who learn a second language later in life experience similar benefits.”

Star secret

Here's a beauty secret that's out of this world, literally. Spanish company Anesi Beaute recently unveiled **Celestial Secret**, a new anti-ageing range that contains powdered meteorite. (The meteorites are picked up by nomadic tribes in the Sahara desert and sent to Spain for powdering and processing!) Apparently, meteorite



ANESI Beauté

dust is chockfull of goodies like calcium, iron and magnesium; this is combined with extracts from semi-precious stones (haematite, rodochrosite, olivine, smithsonite) and botanical extracts to create the range. "The meteorite extract is very hydrating and has anti-ageing results, proven by outside independent test companies who scientifically test active ingredients," says the company's media release. "You start to see a difference after just four days and it just gets better and better." If you're convinced, check it out at www.anesibeaute.com/en/productos/35-celestial-secret. Be warned, though, a 50-ml jar of moisturiser will set you back £ 240 (about ₹ 20,500). Now, that's far out.



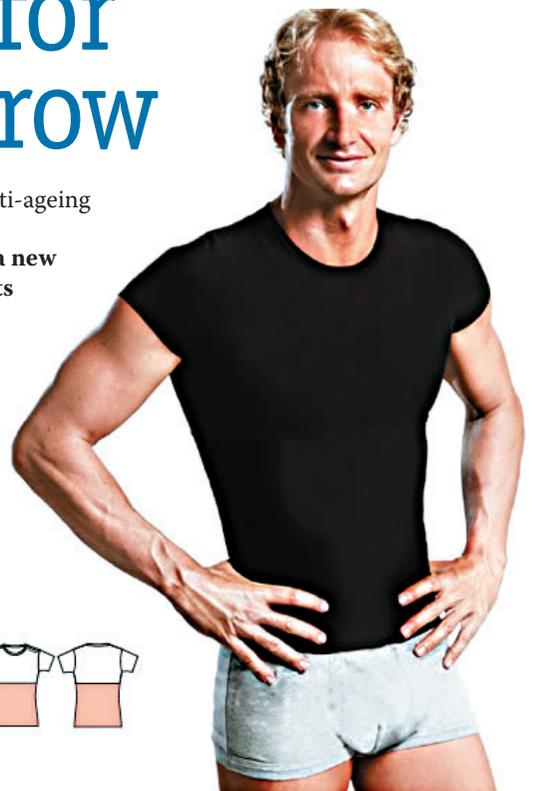
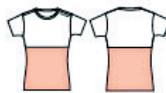
Pop the PILL

LOOK AT THE POSTER GIRLS for this vitamin pill—Naomi Campbell, Jessica Biel—and you know these one-a-days are terribly trendy. **Packed with lycopene, Vitamin C, zinc and a host of antioxidants, Imedeen's Time-Perfection pills** claim to slow down the ageing process by as much as 48 per cent. A Brazilian study conducted at the

Pontifical Catholic University of Campinas, Sao Paolo, followed a group of women taking the pill over 12 months; the results revealed a minimum 30 per cent reduction in fine lines and a similar decrease in wrinkles. The pills are available online; they cost \$ 170 (about ₹ 9,000) for 180 tablets. Interested? Go to www.imedeen.us

Dress for tomorrow

TRY THIS on for size: anti-ageing clothes. **Italian company Yamamay has launched a new range of AntiAge T-shirts** made of soft nylon fibres that 'contain' microencapsulated aloe vera and Vitamin E. In a media release, the company claims these active ingredients result in a body-hugging fabric, as soft as a cream, that actually 'de-ages' and hydrates your skin as you wear it. No word yet where you can buy the T-shirts, or costs—they won't come cheap, that's for sure.





OUR RUN

It's now a wonderfully familiar sight—our marquee in Azad Maidan resplendent with silvers in their bright yellow T-shirts, ready to take part in the Senior Citizens' Run at the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon supported by Harmony. On 20 January, about 1,500 silvers, flagged off by Harmony for Silvers Foundation chairperson Tina Ambani and actors Vivek Oberoi, Sakshi Tanwar, Sharman Joshi and Gulshan Grover, took to the streets, with spectators cheering and the music blasting. "It was an amazing experience," says first-timer Rupa Zhaveri, 51, her colourful '2013' goggles glinting in the light. "I completed the run and my registration number won a prize [in the lucky dip]. So I believe 2013 will be lucky for me!" For Bakula, 65, and Bipin Shah, 68, training for the event was an opportunity to spend some time together. "It was our first marathon but we loved it," they say, almost in unison. Regular participants know only too well how infectious the fun can be. "I like how the participation increases each year," says Dattatray Upadhyay, 63, who has been here for the past seven years. He'll be back next year—and so will we!

Photographs by **Haresh Patel** and **Dattaguru Redekar**





Turn up the volume. Music can heal the brain as well as the soul. Indeed, music therapy has been proven to be effective in treating memory disorders and dementia, a fact that the staff at The Blakeford, an assisted living facility in Green Hills, near Nashville, Tennessee, have put to good use. Their resident music therapist Drew Laney plays old classics to residents on her guitar, with astonishing results: it unlocks the doors of their memory, prompting them to remember people and incidents from their past. “The songs that were put in their brain’s library when they were young are still there, and they are associated with so many significant life events,” says Laney. “And when they hear the music, it all comes flooding back. Seeing that sparkle come up, that’s just exhilarating!” To learn more about the results they’ve seen at the facility, check out www.blakeford.com



Then: Old Picture Now: Glass Memorabilia

Toast your Valentine this month—there’s no better time to convert that old romantic picture, fraying at the edges, into memorabilia. Choose a simple glass or coffee mug. Now, take a black-and-white photocopy of your photograph; trim keeping in mind the size of the glass or mug. Cut a cling wrap transparent sheet according to the size of the picture. Apply glue on one side and let it dry for 10 seconds. Place the printed side of the photocopy on the wrap and rub on the blank side. Soak the cling wrap covered photocopy in warm water for seven minutes. Then, under running water roll your fingers on the paper and slowly let all the paper fall off. Don’t rub too hard or the ink will fall off too. After all the paper is removed, let the transparent sheet dry. Stick to your glass or mug.



FACTS

- » Recycling 1 tonne of plastic saves 7.4 cubic yards of landfill space.
- » Using old paper to make new paper uses 30-50 per cent less energy than making paper from trees.



Haresh Patel

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. MAKE A COLLAGE OF PICTURES ON TRANSPARENT SHEETS.
2. INSTEAD OF STICKING THE PICTURE ON A GLASS OR MUG, STICK IT ON A GLASS CANDLE HOLDER AND SEE THE PICTURE LIGHT UP WHEN YOU BURN A CANDLE IN IT.

IN HIGH SPIRITS

While thousands of silvers hit the road on a wintery Sunday morning to participate in the Harmony Silvers Run on 20 January 2013, in the limelight were a few silvers with knee-replacement who were determined to conquer the Marathon Walk-a-thon. They had fought against arthritis and wanted to show the world that, indeed, there was life beyond arthritis. Having gone in for joint replacement surgery in time, they are now able to breeze through all day-to-day activities without any pain or help.

An eminent orthopaedic surgeon from Dahisar, in Mumbai, Dr Vividh Makwana, who has been consistently trying to spread awareness on arthritis, says, "For me it was a great reward to see my patients putting up a spirited performance at the Marathon."

One of the participants, Leela Joshi, 63, who has had her knee-replaced, shared her experience, "I joined the event to prove to myself and my family that I was back to my pain-free life." Joshi was pleasantly surprised when she effortlessly crossed the half track. Next time, she is determined to walk that extra mile to touch the finishing line.



On 15 January 2013, an arthritis awareness programme was held at the Harmony Interactive Centre in Mumbai, where Dr Makwana interacted with more than 175 participants on the causes and treatments available today. He went on to explain how to

protect oneself from arthritis and the precautions needed while participating in the Marathon.

For more information, you can email walkarthritis@gmail.com



Depression DILEMMA

At the age of 67, Dattatray Kesarkar from Mumbai lost his only daughter to an accident. What followed was chronic depression and dementia. His family appointed a caregiver and he is now under constant observation. A recent study conducted at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, proves that depression in older adults increases the risk of cognitive decline and dementia. In addition, the estimates released by the National Institute of Mental Health report that 1-5 per cent of elderly residing in community centres usually undergo major depression, with 13.5 per cent requiring healthcare and 11.5 per cent hospitalisation. To reach these estimates, published in the *Journal by American Medical Association (JAMA) Neurology*, experts researched the lifestyles and age-related problems of 2,160 medical care elderly recipients dwelling in senior communities. The authors of the Netherlands study, led by Edo Richard, add, "We found that depression was related to the higher risk of prevalent mild cognitive impairment and dementia, incident dementia, and progression from prevalent mild cognitive impairment to dementia, but not to incident mild cognitive impairment." The study helps, as further research will be conducted based on this discovery.



G P THAKUR, PRESIDENT OF PUDUCHERRY-BASED INDIAN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY ASSOCIATION, ANNOUNCED AT THE 100TH INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS IN DELHI THAT A FEW LIFESTYLE CHANGES LIKE CREATING PERSONAL SPACE, TAKING OUT TIME FOR RELAXATION AND GETTING AMPLE AMOUNT OF SLEEP CAN DIMINISH THE STRESS RELATED TO LATER YEARS.

CARB-FREE

THE NEXT TIME you are hungry and in the mood to binge, stop and remember this new American study: **Consuming food full of carbohydrates and rich in sugar may lead to higher risk of Alzheimer's in people above the age of 70.** On the other hand, those who consume lots of proteins and enough amounts of fat have lower risk of cognitive impairment. In other words, it's important to have a well-rounded diet in later years. For the study, 1,230 people aged 70-89 provided accurate information about their diet for the whole year. Their condition was analysed and checked by a panel of experts ranging from physicians and nurses to neuropsychologists. Of all participants, about 940 showed no signs of cognitive decline. These people were later called for another



round of check-ups after four years. About 200 showed slight cognitive impairment showcasing problems such as language and memory. The ones consuming the highest amount of carbohydrates at the beginning of the study showed higher changes than those consuming fewer carbohydrates. The same changes were seen in people

who consumed the highest amount of sugar. While those with a balanced diet were 42 per cent less likely to suffer from any cognitive impairment, participants with the highest protein intake had a risk of only 21 per cent. The findings were recently published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*.

“Paaye lagu”

Besides touching our elders' feet, at Nobel Hygiene, our love and respect for them go a step further with **Friends Adult Diapers** and the newly launched **Friends Protective Underwear**.



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To give is happiness

In his small 10×8 ft office in Adyar, Chennai, he sits surrounded by piles of books and magazines, but mostly letters; letters from people either seeking help or those offering it. Anbu Palam, the organisation 72 year-old **P Kalyanasundaram** runs, connects these two categories of people. “If someone asks for a home to house 20 orphans, I will be able

to find it for them; and if someone is seeking advice on applying for a passport or needs a particular blood type, my organisation Anbu Palam is willing to help,” says Kalyanasundaram.

To enable easier give and take of information, Anbu Palam will soon launch an online information portal in Tamil. “I prefer to call it a library,”

says Kalyanasundaram, who, during the elections, realised that many households were given free laptops. He thought of going a step ahead and decided to give them information they could access from home. “Our portal will give people the prices of vegetables in the wholesale market, stock-market news, passport application information, and advice for students, among other ready-to-use news,” says Kalyanasundaram. The USP of Anbu Palam’s portal is its language, as many people are still not comfortable with English. “It’s my way of keeping Tamil alive,” he says. Budgeted at ₹ 1 billion, Kalyanasundaram is working on the project for the past seven years. He is delighted to finally have all the government approvals and plans to launch it within a year.

Kalyanasundaram grew up in pre-independent India, in a small panchayat ward in the town of Thirunelveli, where there were no more than 35 houses. This particular village had no electricity, roads or transportation; people couldn’t even buy matchboxes to keep the night lamp burning. Being the landlord’s son, he could afford to go to school, which was a 10-km walk. Wanting to walk with his village friends, he paid their school fees from his pocket money. After finishing his education, he worked as a librarian in Tuticorin, moonlighting as a waiter at a hotel so he could save enough for charity. “I remember, once I told my mother that it is not every day that you meet people in need whom you can help,” he says. “She said all I needed to do to help others was to go and give company to that elderly man down our road, or pet the calf, or simply water the plants. She said, to help someone you need not be young or old, you need not be rich, you just need to make that effort. Ever since, I make sure that I do my share.”

—Jayanthi Somasundaram



Chennai Pix

BIRTHDAYS

● **Jackie Shroff** (right), who shot to fame as Jaggu Dada, turned 52 on 1 February.

● Indian politician and member of the Indian National Congress **Beni Prasad Verma** turns 71 on 11 February.



● **Buddhadeb Dasgupta**, poet and Bengali filmmaker, turns 68 on 11 February.

● The most celebrated villain of Hindi cinema, **Pran** (left) turns 92 on 12 February.



● Actor-singer-TV host **Annu Kapoor** (right) turns 56 on 20 February.

● Former Indian cricketer **Karsan Devjibhai Ghavri** turns 61 on 28 February.



OVERHEARD



“My parents were born old. So why, at 67, do I still not feel grown-up? It startles me that when my father was the age I am now he was long retired. One thing I remember is that I never saw my father running. This odd fact came to me one day recently when I was sprinting for a train. He must have run, of course, sometimes but I have no memory of it. His life was limited on all sides by the circumstances of his time, his class and his age. Indeed, thinking back on the lives of one's parents and making comparisons with one's own life can be a dizzying exercise. I suspect that

in my conception of myself I stopped ageing at around 37. Certainly that seems to be my true age, no matter how many years I accumulate. When, I wonder, will this illusion shatter? W H Auden used to say that no matter what the age of the people around him, he always felt he was the youngest person in the room. I, too, feel that, despite my hoary locks. Will I ever fully grow up?”

—Booker prize-winning novelist **John Banville** in British newspaper The Daily Mail

IN PASSING



● Carnatic music violinist **M S Gopalakrishnan** (left) breathed his last on 3 January. He was 81.

● Former East Zone fast bowler **Sekhar Sinha** succumbed to cancer on 4 January. He was 60.

● Former diplomat, writer, artist, philanthropist and UNESCO goodwill ambassador since 2000, **Madanjeet Singh** (right) passed away in Southern France on 6 January after suffering a stroke. He was 88.



● *Bombay to Goa* director **S Ramanathan** passed away in Chennai on 9 January owing to cardiac failure. He was 83.

● Former cricketer **Rusi Surti** (left), 76, passed away in Mumbai on 14 January after suffering a major heart attack.

MILESTONES

● **Amitabh Bachchan** received the SIES Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati National Eminence Award for community leadership and social service in Mumbai on 25 December.

● Classical vocalist Padma Vibhushan **Pandit Jasraj** was awarded the 5th Glory Awards 2013 on 19 January. The award was conceptualised by famous *bhajan* singer Anup Jalota four years ago to recognise the talent of Indian classical singers and artists.



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.

LOVING HANDS

I have four granddaughters, two daughters and two daughters-in-law, and I love them equally. I express my love best through embroidery and it's safe to say that their cupboards are stacked with my creations.

I love the craft so much that, even at the age of 88, I cannot sit still with my hands unoccupied. I feel compelled to pick up a needle and get to work on a new project or continue a work in progress. Thankfully, there are enough women in my family who happily wear what I design and create. I don't know what I would do without them!

Reddy: Art is long, life is short



Shyamola Khanna

As a child, I stayed in a Catholic Convent hostel, where we were taught to embroider and crochet. I have had a problem with my vision from a very young age and as my father felt crocheting would wreck my eyes, he would throw my stuff away. So I stopped and picked it up again six months ago! But nothing could keep me away from my first love: embroidery. I branched out into various aspects of the craft and enjoyed the creative rush it gave me. I loved to create borders of *kalamkari* on a regular handloom sari. I painted saris, *kurti*, curtains and whatever needed a fresh look! I also create borders out of colourful ribbons. Once the border is done, I go hunting for matching saris with Saraswati, my daughter-in-law.

Saraswati laughs and says *amma* has to just see something new and she will sit down to recreate it. She loves the bead border I am making with gold flute beads and little pearl beads. Naturally, it's already hers.

When I travelled to the US to meet my daughter, I discovered the fascinating art of making borders out of ribbons; I have now made it my own. From Hyderabad and its rich heritage of craft work, I have learnt *zardozi* and *phool patti ka kaam*, and how to embellish *kalamkari* prints.

A young doctor friend was surprised that I continue to work the way I do despite the swollen joints on my hands. I told him nothing can keep me away from embroidery. I truly believe that one must do something creative because that is the way to live—it keeps my mind healthy and my body active. I used to walk long distances earlier but for the past year I have stopped because my husband worries that something may happen to me while I am out walking. So now I walk around the periphery of our large plot for at least half an hour every day. Plus, I do the cooking every day!

—Anusuya Reddy, Hyderabad

NEVER SAY DIE

Having been a doctor in government service for more than 20 years, I have met a legion of elderly citizens with a litany of complaints, both real and imaginary. I feel they have just too much time on their hands!



Joshi: No pain, no gain

I say this from experience because not a day goes by when I am not in pain—I was diagnosed with spondylitis and hypothyroidism many years ago but I didn't let that hold me back. Life is all about being positive. It's not about waiting for the day when you are perfectly fit, but overcoming disabilities and managing your health.

In fact, two decades of government service gave me nothing financially, yet the experience was unmatched. I owe my success as a popular gynaecologist in Bhubaneswar to what I learnt during this time. In the twilight years, when people spend their lives watching television serials, the inspiration to forge ahead got to me when I was 60. I took a long, hard look at my life and decided to plan my future. I realised that my strength lay in my professional success so I decided to pursue it further, to keep me busy and productively occupied.

Initially, I tried to engage myself in some hobbies and consulted with patients a few days a week. But I grew bored. I was then invited by Apollo Hospitals and now work with them as a full-time consultant, not for the money but for the sheer joy the work offers. It also makes my daily routine no less hectic than that of a 30 year-old doctor. Even at the age of 66, I revel in hard work and my family respects my commitment.

Being a wife, daughter and mother brings special challenges, and my personal and professional lives often intersect. I had to take time away from work when one of my children grew sick and passed away. Now, I have to set aside time for my husband, who is also a retired doctor, as well as my grandchildren. But, to me, it's about spending quality time with the people you love, not necessarily the number of hours you log with them.

—Dr Sarojini Joshi, Bhubaneswar

MAKE OR BREAK

At the age of 51, little did I know that my life would take a huge turn. What was supposed to be a casual visit to the gynaecologist turned out to be a historic day in my life. I couldn't quite understand the nervousness on the doctor's face after I complained of heaviness while walking. The doctor finally broke the news to me—I was suffering from second-stage endometrial cancer, a cancer that starts in the lining of the uterus.

Over the years, I have taken all sorts of unpleasant surprises in my stride but this one was a bolt from the blue. I sank into depression immediately after the diagnosis, and when my daughter would return from work every evening, I would look at her and start weeping, as though the end was near. I am a mother of three and I was already battling diabetes after a gall bladder removal. I also have hypertension. Now, my world had come crashing down.

But when I used to visit the Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Hospital for chemotherapy, I used to see other patients who were worse off. I understood that life is very, very precious. It wasn't the time to cry; it was the time to wake up and do everything possible to lead a better life.

After I was out of danger with timely surgery and chemotherapy, I found myself back in hospital, this time to get both my kneecaps replaced as my joints used to ache and I couldn't walk or sleep. But let me tell you, this time, the bilateral knee replacement surgery did not shake my spirit one bit.

My little grandson Abhiyudaya tells guests who visit us, "Nani is very strong. Can you imagine she did not use a walker for a single day when she returned home after knee surgery?" When you see your loved ones so attached to you, it makes you want to live.

I have come a long way in the 12 years since that day. Now, I spend most of my time following a strict regimen comprising a stipulated diet, medication, walking and cycling, besides managing the house.

As the wife of a retired banker, we have been provided a cottage and I developed an interest in gardening, a hobby that brings so much positivity into my life. I often sit in my roof garden and de-stress by spending time with friends and family over *chai* and *pakora* in the evening.

Today, all my children are married and settled, and I am more fit than ever. The lessons I learnt from my trials and traumas have given me a special gift, a new way to look at life. I feel very positive, very stable, happier and stronger than ever.

—Nirmal Singh, New Delhi

The journey continues

SANAT KR GHOSH, 92, KOLKATA

My life is like a river, which has taken various twists and turns. I remember those days when I reached Calcutta and joined M/s Gillanders, a giant conglomerate, as a stenographer. Life went on like a stream, reflecting the changing city. I learnt to like my job. There were no particular working hours; rather, time followed me. I soon got into the management's good books. Not only did I take dictations from high officials, I soon had access to different work, which I enjoyed.

One afternoon, while having lunch with one of my friends, I found people lined up in front of an office building on Central Avenue. I discovered they had queued up for recruitment with the American Military Services in various positions. I applied as a stenographer and waited for my turn. Fortunately, I was selected in the first chance. Though I had no plan to join them, I liked to go through such tests, believing that such practices would improve my skills. Those days, efficient stenographers were in great demand. The Europeans, mainly the British, looked for two qualities in their prospective employees, particularly for secretarial jobs—first, the candidate should be strong in English; and they should be able to follow their accents so that the official correspondence would carry no mistakes. Such candidates were very few in Calcutta during 1940s.

Considering whatever little I had learnt, it was never difficult for me to find a job. I would leave one and take up another. During those days when an electronic typewriter or dictaphone or computer were mere dreams, I never failed to complete my job on time. In 1942, I landed a better chance with Volkart Bros, which was later renamed Voltas. After of-



rice hours, I freelanced for many legal practitioners to earn a little more. Later after retirement, I procured an order for Voltas, for wooden pedestals for refrigerators. A man with pencil and writing pad, I stretched my arm to another field of work—I turned into a smith with saw and chisel at a carpentry unit in a suburb. Orders poured in regularly and my new business grew by the day.

However, I didn't want to leave my skill as a stenographer behind. I came up with the idea of coaching young boys and girls interested in stenography and took over the post of the honorary principal of Uttarpara Stenographer's Corner, established in the 1940s by my maternal uncle Provas Ghosh. I soon found my classes full of young people. Though it earned me more money and reputation, I was happy to play the role of helping people build their careers.

I felt that stenography was incomplete without strong English. So I started another school where I taught the language—especially grammar. Teaching grammar is very difficult unless one can make it interesting for students. I still start my day with English tuition as early as 7 am and continue till 9.30 pm. I believe a man must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.

—As told to Partha Mukherjee & Priyanka Mukherjee

I am a 73 year-old active woman who can't be idle for too long. After retiring as a communication expert, I took up a job as a public relations manager with a small company. Now I am looking for an option that will not require hectic working hours.

You could give social media a chance. It is an upcoming field and is fast becoming popular. More and more companies are logging on to websites such as Twitter, Facebook and other social networks to work on their customer-client relationships. Though there are companies who look out for full-time consultants, many will let you work according to your availability and convenience. You have a strong background and



enough experience to launch campaigns for these companies all by yourself. There are many corporate workshops that can give you extra information on the profile of a social media strategist. Though remuneration for this kind of job varies with the number of hours you can put in, you can also work as a freelancer. Other than social media, you can continue to stick with public relations as a freelancer.

—Raoji Shinde is a Mangalore-based career counsellor

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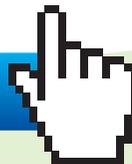
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Lower your risk: Manage triglycerides with diet and exercise

I am a 55 year-old working man. I am slightly on the heavier side and get a medical check-up every two to three years. When I checked last, my triglyceride level was higher than normal. How can I lower triglycerides with my diet?

Triglycerides are a type of fat found in blood. They are also stored in fat cells. Sources of triglycerides are from the food you eat; your body also makes some of them. High levels of triglycerides can lead to hardening and narrowing of arteries, which can further contribute to the risk of stroke or heart attack (both in men and women).

Causes of triglycerides

Some health conditions can lead to high triglycerides, including obesity, poorly controlled Type II diabetes, kidney failure, high alcohol consumption and hypothyroidism. Sometimes, high levels of triglycerides are because of certain medications like diuretics, beta blockers, steroids, birth control pills and tamoxifen. Triglycerides increase with age, but levels become too high owing to lifestyle factors like being overweight or obese, not exercising enough, drinking too much alcohol and genetics.

A blood test can measure your triglyceride level and you can see if it's in the healthy 'range'.

- Normal range is less than 150 mg/dl
- Borderline is 150 to 199 mg/dl

- High level range is from 200 to 499 mg/dl
- Very high levels of triglycerides are 500 mg/dl or higher

A proper, balanced diet with some kind of physical activity will help you lower triglycerides and thus lower your risk of developing heart disease. One must make certain lifestyle changes to lower triglycerides, as follows:

- Maintain a healthy body weight. As you mention that you are overweight, try to lose weight by avoiding high calorie foods and beverages; instead, opt for low calorie foods packed with nutrients. Even if you reduce 10 per cent of your body weight, your triglyceride levels will go down substantially.
- Indulge in some kind of physical activity like walking. Try to exercise regularly for at least 30 minutes every day and five times in a week. You can also engage in aerobic activities like jogging or cycling.
- Don't consume extra calories as these are converted into fat. Consult a dietician to plan your diet; the expert

A proper, balanced diet with some kind of physical activity will help you lower triglycerides and thus lower your risk of developing heart disease. Also make some lifestyle changes





READERS ASK

What is the difference between 'folate' and 'folic acid'? Which one is better for an ageing body?

Folic acid is the synthetic form of the vitamin folate, which is mostly used in dietary supplements. Both folate and folic acid are often used interchangeably. They come under the category of water-soluble vitamins known as Vitamin B9. Folate helps in complete development of RBCs (red blood cells) that deliver oxygen to the body tissues and is, therefore, important in the functioning of the nervous system. Folic acid is effective for preventing and treating folic acid deficiency. In case you have low folate levels, you may have elevated homocysteine, which is an independent risk for heart disease. You may also get mouth ulcers, low haemoglobin and low immunity in case you have folic acid deficiency. In later years, folic acid may be used for hearing loss, dementia and treating age-related macular degeneration. Older adults are more prone to deficiency of folate because of inadequate food intake (mainly low intake of fruits and leafy vegetables); some medical conditions also cause this deficiency. Sources of dietary folate include spinach, lettuce, broccoli, parsley, asparagus, peas, beans and lentils and whole grains.

will tell you exactly how many calories are needed by your body and how much of it you are consuming.

- If you are a smoker, quit.
- If you have diabetes, control your blood sugar levels.
- Limit your alcohol intake, as drinking alcohol can work up the triglycerides.
- Limit your intake of sugar and fats.

Along with the above lifestyle modifications, you must also:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables, whole grains and legumes; choose high fibre foods.
- Reduce your intake of refined carbohydrates and simple sugars. Choose whole-wheat bread, millets like *jowar*, *bajra*, whole-wheat pasta and brown rice. Avoid any syrups, sweets, soft drinks, fruit juices.
- Reduce intake of margarine, vegetable shortening, commercially baked foods, etc.
- Avoid food that contains a high amount of sugar like candies, jellies, cakes, chocolates, any sweets and ice-cream.
- Avoid food that contains saturated fats like red meat, coconut, butter, animal fats and cheese.
- Avoid foods that contain cholesterol like egg yolks, processed meat, shrimps, etc.
- Add fish like salmon, mackerel and tuna to your diet twice a week—they are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are proven to help reduce triglycerides. Taking supplements for omega-3 (like fish oil supplements) can also help if you don't eat fish. Flaxseeds also contain a good amount of omega-3 and can be consumed daily.

- Along with diet and lifestyle changes, you may also need certain medicines. Consult your doctor after receiving your reports.

Here's a sample food plan for you:

- Morning: 1-2 tbsp *alsi* (flaxseed) powder.
- Breakfast: oats porridge/wholegrain breads (sandwich).
- Lunch/dinner: *Jowar/bajri* chapatti with green leafy vegetables and fatty fish like salmon or mackerel/low-fat yoghurt/any whole *dal*.
- Evening: A handful of nuts (almonds, walnuts, raisins).

Use oils like canola or olive oil or rice bran oil for cooking. Eat at least 2-3 servings of fresh fruits daily.

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



Sex in the 60s: Key to a healthy personal and social life

Notwithstanding age, sex should be a satisfying part of a marriage. However, our conservative society continues to debate its relevance in later years and makes it out to be a taboo. Science, on the other hand, encourages a healthy link between age and sex. Sex takes on a broader definition as we age. Sex can mean many things and closeness with a partner can be expressed in many ways; it is not just about intercourse. It can also be about emotional pleasure, sensory pleasure and relationship pleasure. Intercourse is only one way to have fulfilling sex. Touching, kissing and other intimate sexual contact can be just as rewarding to both partners.

Social attitudes

While sex is a sensitive topic owing to its private nature, the subject of sex between older people is often treated with extra care. It is generally thought that the need for older people to have sex diminishes once its primary reason is no longer present.

Psychological benefits

Sex serves many purposes not related to reproduction. Sex is a way to express love and provides a feeling of security and reconfirms the feelings shared between people regardless of age. Sex has been shown to calm people in stressful times. It has a symbolic value that is independent of age.

Health benefits

Recently, Russian experts conducted an experiment with rats, which were divided into two groups: A and B. The rats from group A were segregated and forced to live without opportunities to mate. The rats in group B were freely allowed to mingle and mate. After a certain period of time, it was observed that group B remained healthy and lived longer compared to rats in the other group. It is, therefore, evident that an active sex life positively enables longevity.

Sexually active people tend to be healthier, and healthier people tend to be sexually active. It could be that sexual fulfillment gives one a healthy boost or that being fit makes sex better; more likely, it is a little of both! Research published in the UK in 2004 strongly suggested that men who had regular orgasms were less likely to develop prostate trouble. Though this strong suggestion is yet to be accepted as an established fact, the positive aspect of active sex in old age is worthy of attention.



However, it is a known fact that both male and female libidos tend to decline with increasing age, with men losing their libido faster than women; this is not to say that the desire for sex is lost completely.

Reasons for sexual decline

- Lack of partner; for instance, premature death of spouse.
- Physiological changes owing to ageing.
- Decreased vaginal lubrication in women after menopause, resulting in painful intercourse.
- Hormonal changes make the mucous membrane thinner and more sensitive to pain and it gets damaged more easily.
- Shrinkage of sexual organs for both partners and sagging of breasts for women are common factors affecting sexual desire.

- Medical disorders like heart attack, heart failure, hypertension, diabetes, stroke, hypothyroidism, prostatitis, Parkinson's disease, osteoarthritis, kidney failure and asthma.
- Drugs: Hormones, psychiatric drugs, anti-hypertensives and antidepressants.
- Consumption of alcohol.
- Psychological factors: Low self-esteem, depression.
- Lack of privacy.

Older women attach more importance to their outward appearance than keeping themselves fit for sexual pleasure. The family environment, health and age also play major roles in how sexually active partners are.

Sexually active people tend to be healthier, and healthier people tend to be sexually active. It could be that sexual fulfillment gives one a healthy boost or that being fit makes sex better; more likely, it is a little of both! The positive aspect of active sex in old age is worthy of attention

Managing sexual dysfunction

- Whenever possible, stop taking drugs known to suppress sexual desire; of course with the advice of your physician.
- Undergo treatment for any underlying disease, including anxiety/depression.
- Erectile dysfunction, vaginal dryness, etc, are not insurmountable problems today.
- Elderly people suffering from heart diseases, hypertension, stroke, thyroid problem, arthritis and asthma can also have safe sex, as all these problems can be effectively addressed with proper medical advice.
- Men and women who rate their health as being poor are less likely to be sexually active.
- Avoiding alcohol consumption may be helpful in overcoming sexual dysfunction.
- Sildenafil (popularly referred as Viagra) causes smooth muscle relaxation and increases blood flow; it is effective,

safe and easy to use. The tablet should be taken one hour before intercourse. However, it is safer to take these tablets on your doctor's advice to guard against the side-effects of the drug; especially for those who are taking drugs for heart diseases.

As you age, it is normal for you and your partner to have different sexual abilities and needs. Find new ways to enjoy sexual contact and intimacy. You may have intercourse less often than you used to, but the closeness and love you feel will remain or even increase.

Purpose of sex in later years

- **Improves mental and physical health:** Senior sex can burn fat, cause the brain to release endorphins and drastically reduce anxiety.
- **Increases lifespan:** Through its health benefits, good sex can add years to your life.
- **Solidifies relationship:** Senior sex is a chance to express intimacy in your deepest relationship.
- **Gives refuge:** Sex gives you a chance to escape from the harsh realities of the world.

Love in old age

Love has no age barrier. Love between older couples is the most sacred. Physical contact has no significance in their relationship. Through eye to eye contact and body language, older adults exchange their emotions in silence, which is not perceptible to the outside world. Nothing stands between them.

After a happy family life of 30 to 40 years, accommodating each other with a spirit of give and take, it is none other than the spouse who stands by you till the last breath. If any one of the two partners falls ill, it adversely affects the other. In the case of the demise of an intimate life partner, the survivor passes away in a matter of years, unable to withstand the tragic separation, as we normally observe.

Sex in old age promotes emotional and relationship pleasures, besides sensory pleasures through minimal physical contact. One can continue to enjoy a physically and emotionally fulfilling sex life—it is not a question of age but desire.

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



Right to bare arms: We continue to show you how yoga can toughen these problem areas

Last month, we discussed that toned arms don't just up your aesthetic quotient—they also lead to better health. Toughened arms mean prevention of future health mishaps at the wrists, shoulder joints, upper back and the neck. And strong arms mean a stronger heart, as chest muscles get toned when you work your arms. The movement initiated in arm strengthening practices also places a lot of demand on your lungs and the heart; the aerobic challenge consequently posted to both keeps them young and healthy. Further, when someone complains of a pull or sprain in the upper back or shoulder, it always means that the muscles have been suddenly strained without having been prepared for such eventuality. Even lifting a bag can crack a weak wrist. The lesson here: get to work on those arms.

In the last column, we covered a few poses that will help you do just that. Here are some more: the classic bow pose (*dhanurasana*); the warrior pose (*virabhadhrasana*) in all its variations; the wheel; the advanced variation of the crocodile pose (*makarasana*); and all advanced arm balancers,

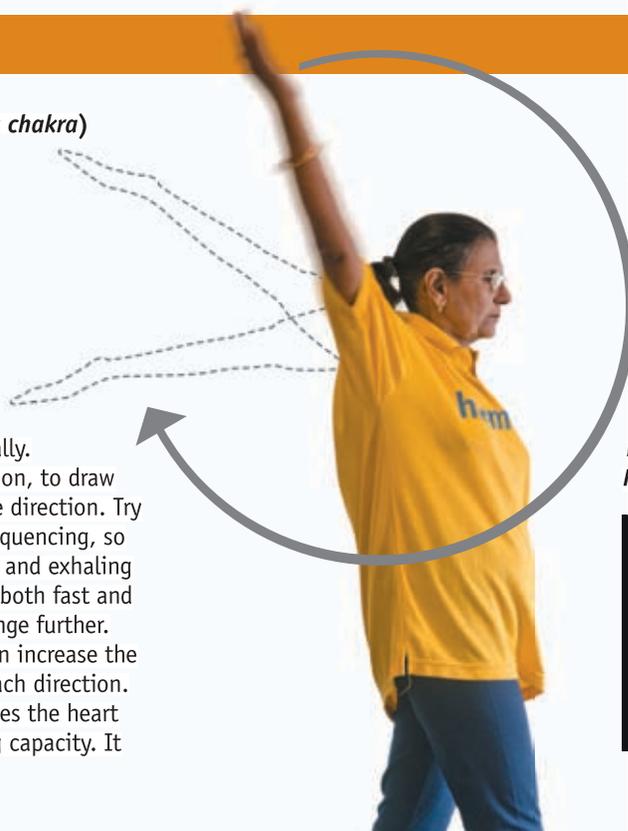
such as the crow (*kakasana*), peacock (*mayurasana*) and unsupported headstand variations (*nirlamba sirsasana*), to name just a few. The warrior sequence is a fantastic arm toner. However, even the seemingly simpler poses, such as shoulder rolls (*skanda chakra*), seated mountain pose (*parvatasana*) and the half spinal twist (*ardhamatysendrasana*), all engage the arms. Side twists like the swaying palm tree (*trikaya tadasana*) and the seated side twist angle pose (*parivritti konasana*) are also effective.

To really tone your arms, you need to keep an important point in mind. If using a dynamic version, you need to increase the repetitions. If using static poses, you need to increase the duration in the final pose. Both require you to practise daily and on a regular basis. You must also keep upping the ante in the practice by reaching for either advanced variations of these poses or increasing the duration in either. Also, timing may be crucial. Practising in the mornings is more challenging as more load and demands are placed on the muscles then. For that, however, the impact will be greater.

YOGIC MOVES

Shoulder rolls (*skanda chakra*)

This pose is ideally done standing. Keep arms out at shoulder level. Draw deep circles with the arms, moving them simultaneously, so the palms touch when they reach the front of your face. Do five times initially. Then, change the direction, to draw the arms in the opposite direction. Try to incorporate breath sequencing, so inhaling for half a circle and exhaling while completing it. Do both fast and slow to spike the challenge further. After a few days, you can increase the circles to 10 or 15, in each direction. **Benefits:** This pose makes the heart strong and expands lung capacity. It



improves upper back tone and slims the arms. It is a stimulating practice that provides a gentle mood hike that can be used to dispel depression. It can also be used as a warm-up before other, more intense *asana* practice or *pranayama*.

Model: Jayshree Gemani,
Harmony Interactive Centre
Photographer: Haresh Patel

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

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THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN
SMT SUBBULAKSHMI SUBRAHMANYAN, CHENNAI

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

We witness many firsts in the lives of those around us—first birthday, first job, first meeting and, now, ever since I have been writing this column about great grannies, I am witnessing the unusual excitement about the arrival of one's first great-grandchild. "It is indeed a very special feeling," says Smt Subbulakshmi Subrahmaniyan, 74, who became a great-grandmother just a month ago. If it is a paternal great-grandson, then a ritual known as *Kanakabhishekam* or 'showering with gold' is performed for the great-grandparents. This is also known as *Suvarna Seedhi Samaroh* or 'climbing the golden ladder' in some North Indian communities. It is believed that becoming a great-grandparent entitles one to the golden ladder of heaven.

Smt Subbulakshmi was born in April 1938 in Sengottai, a city in Tirunelveli district that belonged to the Kerala state of South India until 1956, when it was merged with Tamil Nadu. When I asked her whether she considers herself a Keralite or Tamilian, her eldest son Narayanan said that such distinctions did not exist earlier. She simply calls herself a South Indian Brahmin. Blessed with four children, seven grandchildren and a great-grandson, she is the epitome of cheerfulness and contentment. Attending to her husband, giving instructions to the maid and yet attentively answering my questions, she defies her age with her actions and attitude.

Where did you spend your growing years and what were your interests?

In Sengottai. I was always interested in extra-curricular activities and learnt the dance forms of Kolattam

and Kummi at a young age. I also loved making friends and stitching.

Who taught you housework?

My father was an agriculturist, and we had staff at home, so I hardly did any housework when I was young. I was married at the age of 15 and learnt cooking and household chores from

my mother-in-law and husband's grandmother. My husband is the only child, so we were a small family and responsibilities were fewer. My mother-in-law treated me like a friend.

Did you pursue dance?

Not really, but I attended a lot of music and dance concerts with my



Chennai Pix



Haresh Patel

“Even though all my daughters-in-law make the same *sambar* and *rasam*, each one lends her own unique flavour to the dishes. I enjoy and appreciate these subtle differences”

That seems ideal. But how does one inculcate a sense of responsibility in children?

I follow my mother-in-law’s example where my own daughters-in-law are concerned. Even though we may be liberal, the boundaries are clear. I am rather lucky that my children never went against us. My husband has been quite strict but never unfair. Of course, times are changing and children’s demands and needs have also changed.

How do you manage then?

By not interfering. As grandparents, our role is to nurture and love them. It is for the parents to decide how they want to bring them up. I am very clear that we must not impose our views on them. They manage their own homes and families as they know best. I am happy that they take care of us and treat us with respect. For instance, even though all my daughters-in-law make the same *sambar* and *rasam*, each one lends her own unique flavour to the dishes. I enjoy and appreciate these subtle differences.

In a nutshell, what are the traits needed to be happy?

Manodairyam—that means a strong mind. We must be clear in our views and boundaries. That makes it easy to handle life during difficulties. The other thing is to count one’s blessings and feel grateful—*anugriha*.

mother-in-law. I enjoyed that very much and continued to do that all my life. Now, my health does not permit me to venture outside, but I continue to enjoy many of these programmes on television.

This interest in attending concerts seems to be a lovely practice in many South Indian families, particularly in Chennai; isn’t it?

Yes, that’s true. My husband was the secretary of Ramana Fine Arts and we were invited to many shows, which was an added motivation. Even when my children were born, I took them

along, rather than missing any of the events.

It seems that you have had a rather liberal life.

My mother-in-law was really an exceptional person; she never imposed any restrictions on us. I could enjoy my outings and movies. Apart from that, my husband is an expert in astrology, so many friends and relatives consulted him for their horoscopes. We have also made friends from other cultures, including Muslims and Christians. I enjoyed mingling with all of them.

From Smt Subbulakshmi Subrahmaniyan's kitchen

Aviyal

A favourite in Smt Subbulakshmi's home, *aviyal* is a healthy, practical and tasty side-dish popular in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Simple to cook and festive in taste, it can be prepared whenever one has an assortment of vegetables. Her favourite combination is cucumber, drumsticks, carrots, pumpkin and chayote (chow-chow). Apart from these, yam, potato, raw mango, snake gourd and ash gourd are other preferences. Except mushy vegetables and tomatoes, most other vegetables can be used, depending on availability and taste.

I was a little surprised to see tamarind paste instead of yogurt in *aviyal*, but as Smt Subbulakshmi explained,

many traditional families add tamarind so that the dish stays fresh longer.

Ingredients

- Mixed vegetables: ¼ kg; chopped into 2-3 inch length pieces
- Turmeric powder: ¼ tsp
- Fresh coconut: 1 tbsp
- Tamarind paste: 1 tbsp
- Salt to taste

The paste

- Fresh coconut: 2 cups; grated
- Green chilli: 1
- Dried red chilli: 1
- Cumin seeds: 1 tsp
- Rice powder: 1 tsp

The tempering

- Coconut oil: 2 tbsp
- A few sprigs of fresh curry leaves

Method

Grind the ingredients for the paste into a thick puree. Wash and chop all the vegetables, drizzle 1 tsp oil, add turmeric powder and cook until

tender using very little water on medium heat. You can pressure-cook for up to 1 whistle. Add the tamarind paste and simmer for 5 minutes. Add 1-2 tbsp water, if required. Add coconut paste and simmer for a couple of minutes. In a small pan, heat the oil and add curry leaves. Pour it on the *aviyal*. Serve with steamed rice. It makes for a sumptuous combination with *dosai*, chapattis and *poori*. In Smt Subbulakshmi's house, the thick gravy is eaten with rice, while the vegetables are treated as the side-dish.

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

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Parents **first**

Priya Desai tells NRIs how to ensure a regular fund flow for their elders



I will be out of circulation for a few weeks as my NRI children are flying down to celebrate my 75th birthday,” said one of my friends recently. “So, NRI children celebrate seniors periodically at least?” quipped another friend, sarcastically.

Do NRIs really lack concern and compassion for ageing parents back home, as it is generally assumed? Have they forgotten their roots? We should not hold a biased view, but it would be pertinent to note that globalisation has manifested itself as opportunities and challenges for the younger generation around the world. Smart and sharp, they grab these opportunities, setting up homes in foreign countries, often leaving their parents behind.

While adapting to their new environment, which is far more competitive and culturally divergent, NRIs often go through an emotional upheaval. To add to that, the sight of self-reliant, agile and active seniors in foreign countries overwhelms them and they

begin to apply the same yardstick to their parents back home. That, along with priority for their own nuclear family, may create the impression of lack of loving care for their parents.

Slow motion syndrome

Silvers are initially enamoured by the success of their children abroad, their palatial homes and luxurious standard of living; they enjoy visiting them, often as babysitters. But slowly, the slow motion syndrome of life abroad, with nothing much to do and high-dependency quotient on their children, saps their spirit. Along with it, homesickness for their extended family, circle of friends, and familiar environment in India grows.

Not many of these NRI parents are financially self-sufficient to fend for themselves, especially in these times of inflation and growing medical-cum-caretaker expenses. Hence, they welcome regular and assured financial support from their children.

NRIs, many of them MBAs, financially plan for their own family, consisting of spouse and children, often keeping their silver parents, who have spent their savings on educating them, out of their ambit. Financial planning to ensure a regular fund flow for parents needs to be an integral part of the financial planning of NRIs. This is often forgotten, but is eminently feasible. Let us see how this can be made possible.

Financial instruments

Liberalisation of the Indian economy has expanded the basket of financial services offered by various banks and financial institutions in India. This has also coincided with massive growth in remittances, at present amounting to \$ 66 billion. Consequently, NRIs are now wooed with a variety of special services of international standard. Internet banking services, attractive interest rates, favourable tax laws and separate departments for NRI banking have all encouraged NRIs to lodge

their savings in India. NRIs can create a corpus for the financial requirements of their parents by diverting a small portion of their financial resources in various available schemes. Some of the building blocks of the structure of a financial plan include the following.

Fixed deposits

India offers an attractive interest rate regime for savings bank accounts, recurring and fixed deposit schemes and corporate fixed deposits compared to developed countries. The interest accruing on such deposits can be utilised for meeting the needs of parents on a regular basis while creating an asset base for oneself.

Stocks and mutual fund

Stock markets in emerging countries like India provide a favourable investment destination. An appropriate mix of stocks and mutual funds can offer capital appreciation as well as tax-free dividends and long-term capital gains. The resulting gains can often be substantial if one follows stock guru Warren Buffet's model of investing during recession—buying when others are afraid to buy, and selling when markets reach dizzying heights. Of course, this is not for the faint-hearted.

Annuity schemes

Aged parents are in a comfort zone when regular income flow is assured. NRIs can opt for regular guaranteed income plans like immediate annuity plans offered by a number of public and private insurance companies. The options of general and customised plans can address the concerns of long-term security and financial goals for oneself and dependents. Significantly, these plans also ensure that investors regain their investments after the death of the last surviving parent.

Real-estate investment

Retirement homes are growing in popularity in India and offer a very attractive investment avenue for NRIs, once the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act and Income Tax Act are followed. Investment in real estate is a gold mine for earnings in the long run and provides



NRIs can create a corpus for the financial requirements of their parents by diverting a small portion of their financial resources in various schemes

a hassle-free home for parents. Attractive rents are available for these homes when not in personal use. Reverse mortgage of one's home is also a good income-earning proposition if utilised judiciously. NRI children can assure parents about retrieval of the

property after their death by paying the dues.

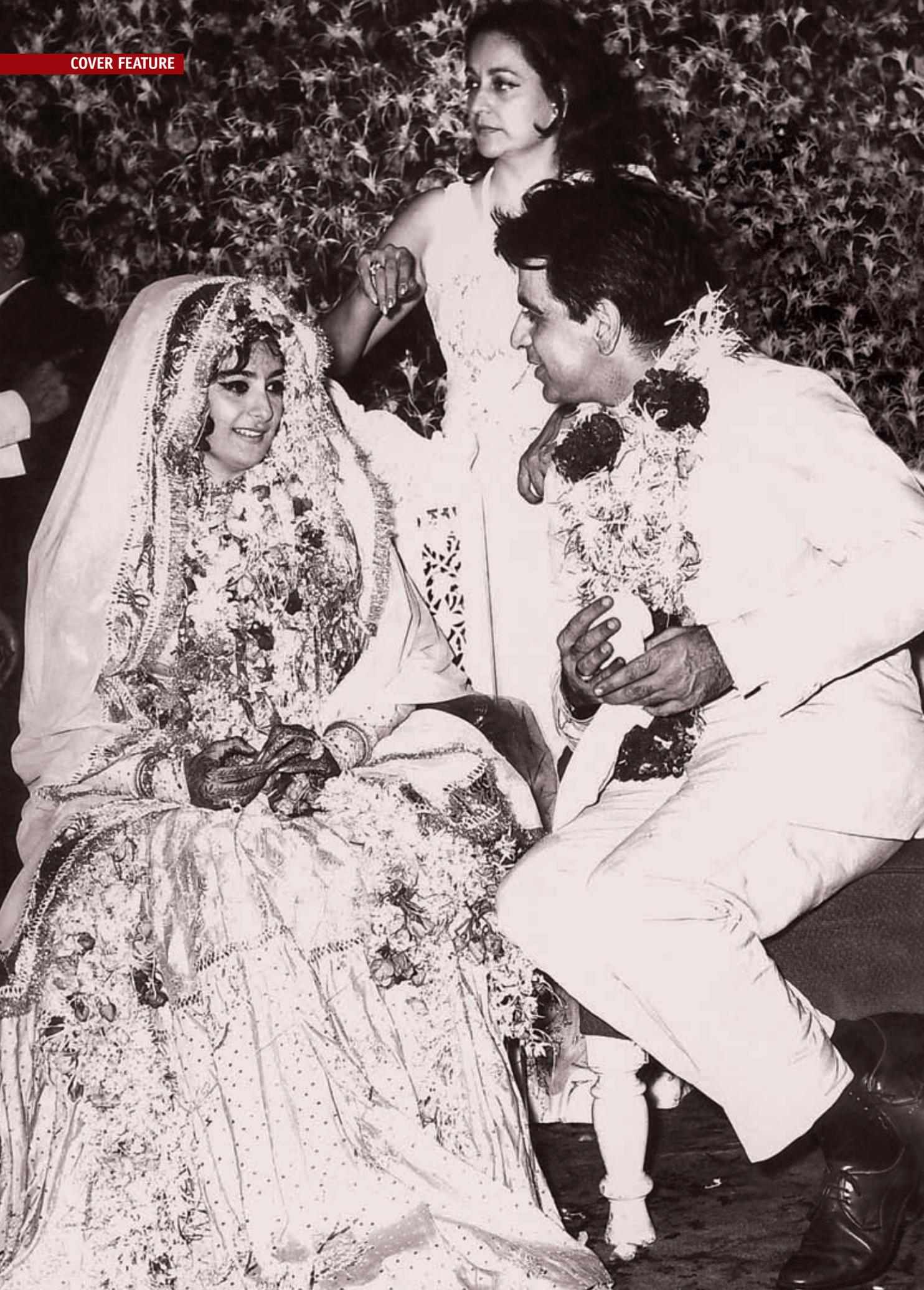
Healthcare service packages

NRI children are often concerned about the health of their parents. They can look at healthcare companies that offer services that attend to the everyday medical problems of silvers. Chennai seems to lead other cities as far as healthcare service packages are concerned. For instance, India Home Health Care (IHHC) offers health service packages for the elderly in Chennai and Bengaluru and has launched NRI services from January 2012 (www.indiahomehealthcare.com/services/nri-care-package). At an individual level, Dr R Hari Ramesh and his team from Chennai have evolved a comprehensive medical service scheme called Home Health Care. The scheme involves NRIs paying an annual amount for the medical care of their parents, thereby taking care of a preset list of medical check-ups that are carried out regularly; ensuring efficient medical service in case of emergencies. Regular updates are also mailed to NRIs about the health status of their parents. The success of these schemes has ensured their implementation in other cities too. NRIs can incorporate this annual medical expenditure in their financial planning for parents.

Wake up, NRIs!

Make hay while the sun shines, goes an old adage. India is undergoing resurgence and has spread out the red carpet for NRIs. Money invested today through calibrated financial planning for your silvering parents can yield bountiful harvests in times to come. If you make supporting your parents an integral part of financial planning, you will have less to regret and much to gain, emotionally and financially. Wake up, NRIs; seize the day.

Priya Desai is a Mumbai-based economist



1966 : a love story

Theirs is a fairy tale come true. Just back after performing *Umrah in Saudi Arabia*, Saira Banu speaks about her enduring love for her Kohinoor Dilip Kumar and the simple joys of their life together to Udaya Tara Nayar, her long-time friend and author of a forthcoming biography on the legendary actor

When they got married in 1966, he was 44; while she was merely 22. Yet the fairy tale life that followed has proved the naysayers wrong. In a world where fidelity is fickle and keeps changing with the latest film release, Hindi filmdom's first couple has stood beside each other like a rock; growing to love each other more than ever before. "There is no greater joy in life than growing young together," says Saira Banu, 68, for whom the term 'beauty queen' was used in Bollywood for the first time ever, when she made her debut with the first Eastman colour cinemascope film, *Jungle*.

They're still an enviably handsome couple when they step out together in public. "*Sahab* is very particular about his suits and shirts and trousers, which have to be pressed to perfection and readied for wearing," she shares. "He also has a taste for varied and exquisite cuisine. I have mastered both skills like a good wife and the appreciation I get from him is bigger than any award for me. He likes to entertain friends at home and the Pathan in him surfaces in the lavish

hospitality he ensures on such occasions. It is not easy even with the battery of cooks and domestic help I have, but it is a challenge I have met ungrudgingly over the years. When I am asked how I manage to be so sprightly, I reply that it is my being Mrs Yousuf Khan that makes me the lively person I am!"

Indeed, it is a challenge every day for the one-time highest-paid leading lady of Bollywood, who voluntarily retired from acting at the peak of her career to take care of the streams of visitors who drop in to meet the legend and exchange pleasantries with him. There are admirers who travel from other countries, along with their grandchildren and great grandchildren to meet Dilip Kumar, 90, and share their experiences of watching his classic films. Actors and directors, writers and technicians who have worked with him and take inspiration from his unrivalled body of work walk in every day with stars in their eyes to spend unforgettable moments with the legend. Naturally, Saira is on her toes every day playing the role she had dreamt of playing from the age of 12: Mrs Yousuf Khan.

Dilip Kumar and Saira Banu have mastered the art of growing old gracefully and youthfully. They revel in each other's company, from taking in the beauty of a gorgeous sunset from the terrace of their bungalow in Pali Hill in Mumbai, or sitting together on the laptop and dashing off emails to friends and relatives in far off lands. "People say you have to give up doing many things when you grow old," she says. "But I feel it is because you give up being lively, curious and wanting to understand and accept new things that you grow old."

EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW:

It is said that you fell in love with Dilip Sahab when you were just a 12 year-old schoolgirl.

I thank the Almighty every day in my prayers for blessing me with the man I dreamt of marrying from the age of 12, when the feminine instinct of attraction towards the opposite sex awakened in me, as it normally does in all girls. My mother and elder brother thought I would get over it. Dilip Kumar, as everybody knows, was India's biggest superstar and millions of girls were getting married to him in their fantasies. As I grew up,



my mother realised from the letters I wrote to her from London, where I was schooling, that I was not just another girl smitten by Dilip Kumar. For me, it was no castle in the air because I had given my dream the strong foundation of faith—faith in myself and faith in God who has never ever let me down to this day.

When did you realise he was the man you wanted to marry?

The first time I saw Yousuf *Sahab* at a social gathering, I remember he was casually attired in his hallmark white trousers and crisp long-sleeved white shirt. With his entry, everything changed in the room. He was regal in his bearing and appearance. He was completely unaware of the radiance and natural magnetism he possessed, being innately unassuming and unaffected by his stardom and his growing importance as an actor. I was with my mother, who graciously acknowledged his greetings and introduced me. When he smiled at me and remarked that I was a pretty girl, I could feel my whole being taking wing and flying rapturously. I knew somewhere deep within me that I was going to be his wife. I, and no one else, my instincts whispered, was going to be this divinely blessed man's wife. The dream took root then.

On my way to school in London, I would pass by a locality that had a sizeable Asian population. There would be hoardings of Indian films. I need not tell you how thrilled I was each time a hoarding of a Dilip Kumar starrer was put up. I used to fantasise that he was in London and

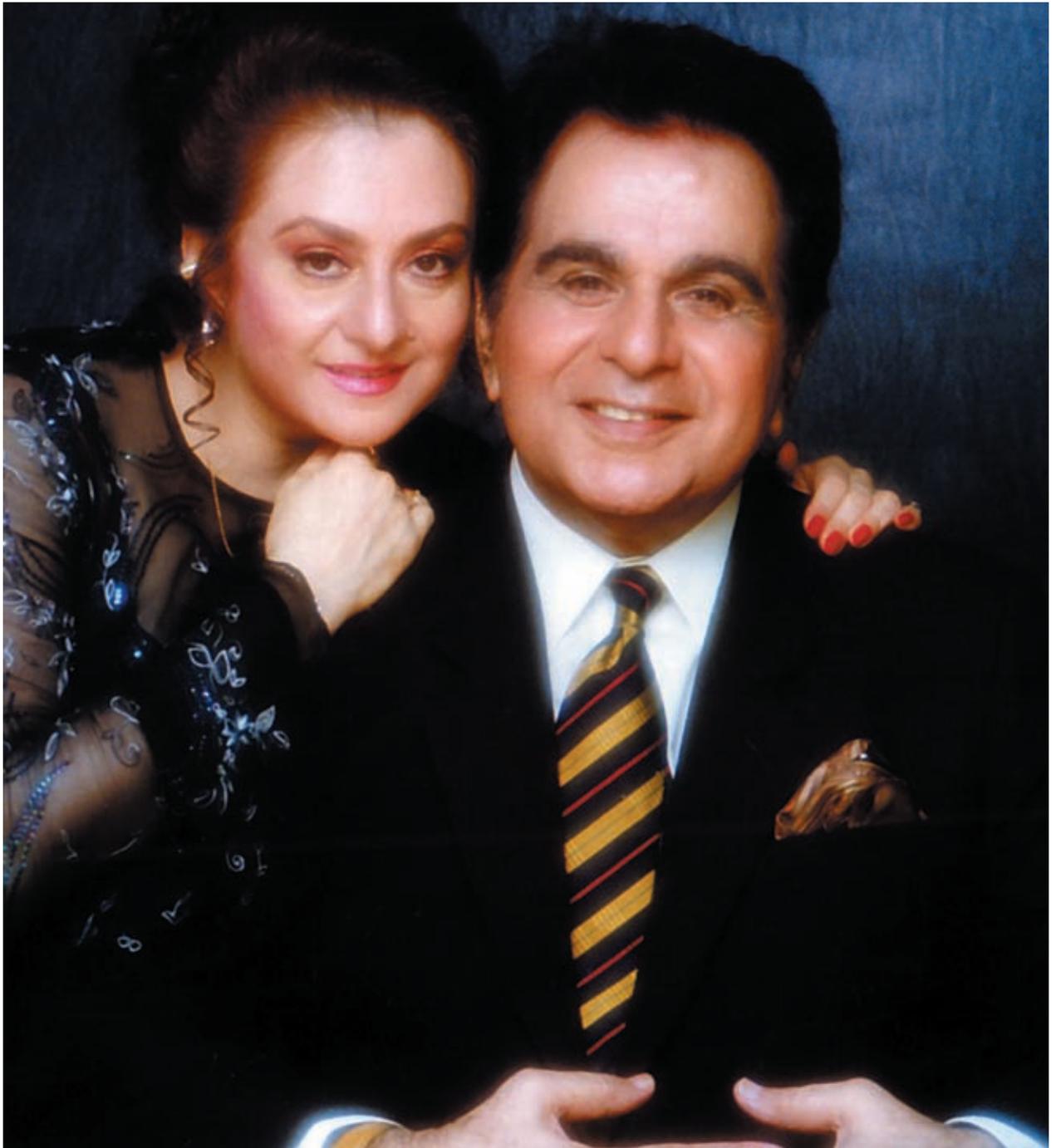
he was visiting our house to meet my grandmother and mother and ask for my hand in marriage. My room in the house used to be full of his photographs cut out of magazines and it used to amuse my grandmother, who would chuckle and tell me how much older he was and how countless girls in India had married him in their dreams. I listened and smiled secretly because I knew I was not one among them.

And, one day, the dream came true?

My dream came true when, as I had fantasised, our families met and he proposed marriage to me in 1966. Speculations were rife about who he would marry. There was equal curiosity about who I would marry since by then I had become a star. The announcement of our marriage created a sensation and waves of mixed emotions in his admirers. There were those who genuinely rejoiced and believed we were made for each other and there were those who worried about the age difference between us. If anybody had to worry about the age gap and compatibility, it had to be me and Yousuf *Sahab*, but we were least concerned. I knew, as much as he knew, that our respective ages would be the last thing to come into question in the stability or happiness of our marriage. We were wise and mature to know that there was no universal recipe for achieving success in any personal relationship. As in all relationships, there was a tough challenge for both partners when it came to attaining the goal of a happy and enduring marriage.

WHEN HE SMILED AT ME AND REMARKED THAT I WAS A PRETTY GIRL, I COULD FEEL MY WHOLE BEING TAKING WING AND FLYING RAPTUROUSLY. I KNEW SOMEWHERE DEEP WITHIN ME THAT I WAS GOING TO BE HIS WIFE

I KNEW, AS MUCH AS HE KNEW, THAT OUR RESPECTIVE AGES WOULD BE THE LAST THING TO COME INTO QUESTION IN THE STABILITY OR HAPPINESS OF OUR MARRIAGE. WE WERE WISE AND MATURE TO KNOW THAT THERE WAS NO UNIVERSAL RECIPE FOR ACHIEVING SUCCESS IN ANY PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP



OUR ROMANCE WAS NEVER OVERT OR EXHIBITIONISTIC. SAHAB HAS ALWAYS HESITATED EVEN TO HOLD MY HAND OR ADDRESS ME ENDEARINGLY IN PUBLIC. HE BELONGS TO A CONSERVATIVE FAMILY AND HAS BEEN VERY RESTRAINED AND DIGNIFIED IN PUBLIC IN MUCH THE SAME WAY HIS FATHER WAS

What is the secret of the success of your marriage?

Every kind of relationship, whether it is a couple, siblings, a parent and a child, or even friends for that matter, requires a good measure of nurturing and cherishing. I feel it takes much more to achieve stability in a mar-



riage than happiness, because it calls for deep understanding, love and respect for each other as individuals. If my marriage is stable and happy today, it's thanks to my mother Naseem Banuji, who has guided me into evolving into the woman I am today.

She taught me that it's important not just to be a loving and caring wife, but to respect my husband's abiding love for his family, and to give him the space he needs to nurture and cherish his relationship with his family and friends. She used to point to the logs of fire in the hearth at our house in London and say, "To keep the fire burning brightly you have to keep the logs near enough to keep warm but far enough apart for breathing room. For a family to stay happily together, the same rule applies."

How does it feel now, when he is 90 and you are 68?

I am still head over heels in love with my Kohinoor, Yousuf Sahab, the way I was when I first felt attracted to him as a 12 year-old. Ours has been as good and enduring a marriage as so many marriages that have survived the ups and downs for four decades. No marriage is perfect. How can it be, when as human beings we are not perfect? It is mutual love, respect and adoration that keep a marriage ticking.

Do you remember the romance of the early years of your marriage?

Our romance was never overt or exhibitionistic. Sahab has always hesitated even to hold my hand or address me endearingly in public. He belongs to a conservative family and is the fourth eldest in a large family. He has, therefore, been very restrained and dignified in public in much the same way his father was. He used to tell me that he never saw his

father and mother display their feelings for each other in front of their sons and daughters. Sahab, however, likes to surprise me often. I can recall an evening in London where we were holidaying a few months after our marriage. He walked into our room swiftly and asked me to get ready to go for a drive. I seized the chance, of course, and dressed up quickly. As the chauffeur drove us out of the hotel, I could sense he had a secret plan up his sleeve and I tried to get it out of him, but in vain. As the car sped, I recognised the road that was leading to Buckingham Palace and before I could ask him anything, we were entering the gates that were ceremoniously thrown open for us. It was a surprise he had saved for me, that the Queen had invited us to tea. It was such a beautiful evening!

On most occasions he gave me and still likes to give me gorgeous surprises. Holidays to unusual places were always his way of whisking me away from the mundane routine of everyday life, surprise visits to restaurants where he would have arranged for my favourite delicacies prepared specially by the chef, unexpected shopping sprees, when he would pick and choose saris by the dozen and carry the bags to the car himself amid protests from me and the shop managers.

People admire you for the way you look after Dilip Sahab and take care of his needs.

Frankly, I feel I am doing what every Indian wife does for her husband. And it is nothing compared to the



**ON A CLEAR SUMMER DAY, WE LIKE TO SIT
IN THE GARDEN AND HAVE OUR BREAKFAST.
SAHAB LOVES NATURE AND IT GIVES HIM
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AND PARROTS RESPOND WITH WHISTLES
FROM THEIR HIDEOUTS IN THE TREES**

care he gave me when I was very ill with colitis of the abdomen many years ago, when I was at the peak of my career. I had to be treated in London and *Sahab* was with me all through the weeks and months of treatment, sometimes not sleeping a wink, comforting me and softly singing me to sleep while I fought the pain. He prayed for me and gave me the strength to achieve complete recovery and return to pick up the threads of my career.

How do you spend your days together now?

We are happy and contented in each other's company. We welcome each day with delight. On a clear summer day, we like to sit in the garden and have our breakfast. *Sahab* loves nature and it gives him great joy to whistle and hear the mynahs and parrots respond with whistles from their hideouts in the trees. When he claps his hands, somehow the crows know he is calling out to them to partake of the breadcrumbs we strew for them on the lawns. You should see them swoop down! We have visitors dropping in every day—friends, fans, well wishers, relatives.... We enjoy the sur-

prise visits of his brothers and sisters who are in Mumbai. And, of course, the nephews, nieces, grandnephews and grandnieces. We try not to miss our walk every day at Joggers Park, Bandra. Sometimes we skip the walk for a drive through the quiet, interior lanes of Bandra that have somehow not changed a bit with time. So our days are interesting and often quite hectic till we wind up listening to classical music in the elegant room my nephew Raihan has made for us on the terrace.

How was your pilgrimage (Umrah)? You had been planning it for quite some time, we hear.

It was sheer bliss and peace, an experience hard to describe in words. I am more than grateful to Allah for making it possible for both of us and my brother Sultan, his son Raihan, daughter-in-law Musarat and their two lovely children. We have just come back blessed and humbled by the marvellous experience. ✨

TWO GETHER

Discover the varied hues of love with six couples who have kept the magic alive through the decades



CADENCES OF THE HEART

For more than half a century, H L Wadhwa and his wife Prem of New Delhi have had the perfect *jugalbandi* of a soulful marriage. While she has the voice of a nightingale, he used to sing along and tease the most melodious tunes out of the harmonium and piano. Wadhwa, who retired as Programme Director, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, suffered a partial stroke a decade ago and lost his voice but the 80 year-old still accompanies his lady love on the keyboards. “We often listen to a CD of children’s songs we recorded for our grandchildren,” says 73 year-old Prem, who retired as Deputy Director (Library), Lok Sabha. The

couple met in pre-Partition Pakistan. “Both our families were interested in music. Both of us sang and he would compose tunes on the harmonium. Our families liked each other and our friendship became a meaningful marriage,” she says, blushing. When their golden wedding anniversary rolled around, the couple hosted a big bash; the timeless classic they aptly chose as ‘their song’ for the event was *Aye meri zohra jabeen* from the film *Waqt*. As they say, if music be the food of love, play on.

Text: Ambica Gulati
Photo: Anshuman Akash Jha



 **SPICING IT UP**

The secret ingredient in this delish Hyderabadi *biryani* is something money can't buy. It's a shared passion for cooking—great bonding time!—and 35 years of unstinting love that makes everything JD and Shrelekha do really special. Col (ret'd) Jatinder Dev Khanna, 64, and his 55 year-old wife live on the outskirts of Secunderabad. This love for cooking comes from their large families where food has always been a focal point; their families always ate together. "Love means sharing, mutual respect and loads of open communication, and although we do lose our cool sometimes, we are always able to laugh it off afterwards. Over

the years, we have learnt to be more accepting of each other's weaknesses and more appreciative of each other's strengths," says Shrelekha, affectionately nicknamed 'Tinu.' JD, an adoring husband, drives his wife, who is a coordinator in a business school, to work every day. If JD has a steaming pot of mutton or chicken curry ready to serve, Shrelekha quickly does the chapattis and they're good to go. Eating out is another favourite pastime—when a new outlet opens, guess who's first in line?

*Text: Shyamola Khanna
Photo: Anand K Soma*



TOGETHER WE GLOW

Taking an evening stroll in his workshop in Kolkata, teeming with his illuminating and colourful creations, Sridhar and Sumitra Das could easily be a couple in a Hallmark card. “She lights up my life,” teases Sridhar, 70. He has an electrical business and does illumination work at events around the world. Their subtle courtship before they got married is the stuff romantic novels are made of. “I was charmed by her modest look whenever she passed by her father’s medicine shop, where I used to spend time,” reminisces

Sridhar. “I could feel I was being watched but didn’t know it was him,” Sumitra, 62, chuckles. The couple says their marriage is based on mutual respect and understanding. “She does not interfere in my business. Yet, before taking an important decision, I always consult her,” says Sridhar. Although victims of Cupid’s arrow, this silver couple has traded in the hype, hoopla and frills for a subtler, unshakeable love.

*Text: Partha Mukherjee
Photo: Shilbhadra Datta*



A THRILL CALLED **LOVE**

Seven years ago, Sarita and Shyam Nihalani decided their high-power corporate lifestyle was just not worth it. Tired of the rough and tumble of Mumbai, they chucked it all up and built a picture-perfect house on the Kundalika River in tranquil and romantic Kolad, 120 km from Mumbai. “We’ve got so much more than we asked for,” says Sarita, 55. But 17 years of marriage means more than barbecues by the river and the occasional paddle. The Nihalanis have converted their house into a home stay, Good Heavens, and organise camps for weary city folk desperate to recharge and rejuvenate. Apart from serving up fresh and sumptuous meals, they offer outdoor activities like kayaking, swimming, white-water rafting, jungle walks and rope walks. “The best part is that we’ve made this happen together,” says Shyam, 54. “When you have the chance to do something big together, you discover just how much you love each other.” Given the romantic setting and their love for nature, what has this starry-eyed couple planned for Valentine’s Day? They’re not telling!

*Text: Sai Prabha Kamath
Photo: Haresh Patel*



DIVINE LOVE

Suguna and CLP Prabhu feel there's no better way to start the day than with a prayer in their hearts. After 49 years together, they don't always need words. "We instinctively know what the other is thinking," says the 77 year-old Prabhu, beaming with pride. Retired life for them means long, leisurely walks and regular visits to temples and *sabha*. In fact, for them, temple visits are just a way of life; making friends, socialising and immersing themselves in *bhajan* and Carnatic music, their life revolves around temples. "We spend all our leisure time together," gushes Suguna, 70. But it wasn't always like this. Prabhu, who was with the Defence Accounts department, says his government job meant postings all over the country. So he and Suguna, who was with the Government Press, decided they would make up for lost time when they retired. "Now we don't do anything without each other," says Prabhu. "Life has never been more beautiful."

*Text: Jayanthi Somasundaram
Photo: Chennai Pix*



BOOKED FOR LIFE

For Anjana and Mukul Goswami from Guwahati in Assam, reading together is the best therapy after a long, hard day. Keeping the Goswamis on their toes is their NGO Ashadeep, which rehabilitates mentally challenged women. As the couple has been amply blessed, they felt the need to pay it forward and widen their circle of love. “Our love for each other remains the same; only its expression has changed over time,” explains 56 year-old Mukul. Cupid’s arrow struck early for the Goswamis, who got married when they both were just 21. “Ours was a love mar-

riage,” confesses Anjana, 53. Despite how busy they are, they make it a point to spend quality time together. When dusk falls, Anjana and Mukul bask in another shared pastime. “We have just put down *A Fraction of the Whole* by Steve Toltz. We also enjoy fiction and Chetan Bhagat. I prefer Assamese books but my husband reads only English books. But when we find something interesting, be it a hardback or e-book, we share it,” she smiles. How perfect!

Text: Tapati Baruah Kashyap

Photo: S Bhattacharjee

Eden and BEYOND

WITHIN TOUCHING DISTANCE OF THE INDO-CHINA BORDER AND 1962 WAR MEMORIALS, THE MONASTERY TOWN OF TAWANG IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH BREATHES PEACE AND SERENITY, DISCOVERS **CAROL LOBO**

Assam is a gentle land. Its sunny plains covered in golden sesame fields do not prepare you for the drama of the mountains to its north. Drive across the state border into Arunachal Pradesh, though, and you will soon forget the gold and green as you navigate winding roads with stunning views far below.

We're on our way from Guwahati in Assam to Tawang, high up in the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh. This is

Eden, a land of forbidden forests and untamed rivers, once barred from tourists but now gradually warming up to visitors. The state's tourism website recommends only a handful of routes, which roughly coincide with the roads built by the Border Roads Organisation. Traverse other routes at your own risk.

Our week-long road trip begins in the Assamese capital of Guwahati, peaks at the monastery town of Tawang and then doubles back, perfect for the body to acclimatise to the high altitudes.



BHALUKPONG

On the first leg of your journey, you will drive over the mighty Brahmaputra as you make your way across 230 km from Guwahati to Bhalukpong, a small hill town on the Assam-Arunachal border. The Bhalukpong tourist lodge here is usually recommended for the one-night stopover, and with good reason. Situated right on the banks of the emerald-green Kameng river, it offers cosy cottages surrounded by lush foothills. Wild elephants roam the forest on the other bank, and the friendly staff will remind you to keep an ear open for trumpet calls, and even offer to call you in case of a sighting.

Mornings in Bhalukpong are magical times with breakfasts overlooking the river. Lounging on a comfortable and shaded wooden *machan* while digging into piping hot *poha* or eggs is even more delightful as bird calls punctuate the early morning air.

Outside, small wooden shops line the narrow, teeming market lane and guards man the gateway to Bomdila and Tawang. Be careful not to point and shoot (your camera!) or you will earn a reprimand from a stern soldier!

DIRANG

As you start the 144-km drive to Dirang, the gentle slopes immediately begin to rise to dramatic angles, and the skies fill up with the immovable majesty of the Himalaya. It is here that you get your first taste of what lies ahead—the thrill of the winding road, the achingly beautiful vistas and the sudden realisation that you have climbed several hundred metres above sea level, until the rivers below are as miniature as tiny, blue swimming pools.

Dirang is a minor diversion en route and slightly off the beaten track. The alternative is Bomdila, an overnight stopover on the way back. Dirang, on the other hand, is a gem nestling in a valley and the beauty of this nook in the mountains is near spiritual. Be sure to book a valley-facing room at the Pemaling, if possible. This modestly priced, colonial, wood-panelled establishment is perched on a hillside with a stunning, postcard-perfect view of the village and river in the valley below. Meals are served in a plush yet homely dining room, or in an outdoor area. You are likely to see yaks—wild and domesticated—roaming the surrounding hill slopes. The cattle here are also heavily clad in fur, though, so be sure not to mix them up!

A towering Buddha statue dominates the sanctum of the country's largest monastery in Tawang



Morning and evening walks are a must in Dirang. In the mornings, as each mountain range is touched up by the sun, the hazy green fields and mist-covered homes become sheathed in gold, creating portraits of pastoral beauty. In the evenings, the mist settles into the valley and, as the sky turns from bright blue to magenta, azure and then ink—colours that are reflected in the river below—the lights twinkle on in the Dirang homes, leaving the valley studded with jewels in the dark.

You should stay at least two days in Dirang, to experience the contrasting worlds of hilltop and valley villages.

Drive down into the Dirang valley, and the mist seems never to leave. Tiny restaurants serve steaming hot set meals, and after lunch, you can sit by the river, watching it curve past small homes and fields, along the path it has taken for centuries. Drive to a hilltop village and you are hit by the sun (except in winter). The fields are full of bright red chillies and assorted spices. Lie back and soak in the warmth, because your next stop is the icy Sela Pass, arguably the second-highest navigable pass in the world.

As you drive towards Sela Pass, 150 km from Dirang to Tawang, you will notice drifts of snow by the side of the road. By the time you reach the top, the drifts will have turned to a white blanket as you enter a perennial winter wonderland, every branch and flower brushed with snow. Step out for a quick photograph, but as you turn a corner to meet a rocky mountain crag dusted in white, you suddenly realise you are now in the snow-capped mountains you were gazing at from cosy Dirang below!

Not far away is Jaswant Garh, a memorial to a brave soldier who died here in the 1962 war with China. From the Army-run café outside, soldiers will point out to you—three ranges away—the first Himalayan mountains in China.

BY THE TIME YOU REACH THE TOP, THE DRIFTS WILL HAVE TURNED TO A WHITE BLANKET AS YOU ENTER A PERENNIAL WINTER WONDERLAND, EVERY BRANCH AND FLOWER BRUSHED WITH SNOW



S Joshi



TAWANG

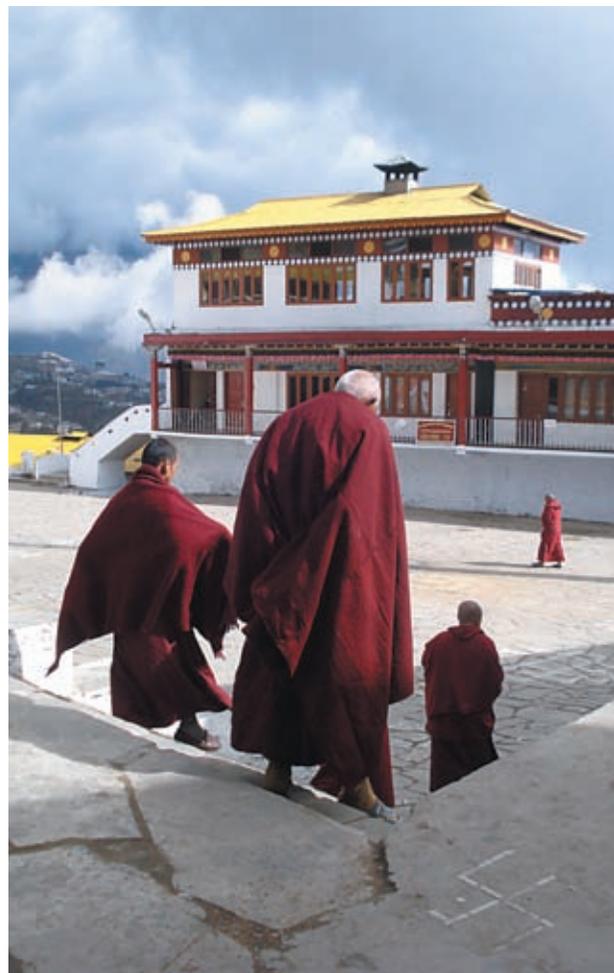
The monastery town of Tawang sits atop a hill embraced by towering peaks on all sides. The descent from Sela takes the edge of the icy chill and Tibetan prayer flags appear everywhere—draped over lampposts, wreathed on tiny, makeshift roadside temples, and tied between or around trees. Strung by villagers for good luck, these are just one of the Tibetan influences you will see in Tawang. A relatively large, bustling mountain settlement, the Monpa tribals indigenous to the region look Tibetan and are indistinguishable from the many Tibetan refugees who have made this their home.

The mountaintop monastery complex itself—the largest in India and one of the largest in the world—is so vast that it is clearly visible from many ranges away, its bright white walls and yellow-and-red roofs gleaming in the distance.

Inside, the scale is breathtaking. Giant carved doors open into cavernous prayer halls filled with the aroma of offerings of yak’s milk butter for the lamps. Intricately carved prayer rugs cover the floors in some halls, narrow wooden stairways disappear above roofs and rosy-cheeked monks of all ages emerge from antique living quarters, clad in sandals and woollen shawls. Wizened old men and women walk about muttering their prayers, beads in their hands. Others sit chatting or sipping buttery tea.

The hotels in Tawang are basic but make up for their sparse furnishing with stunning views from every window. This is a town that shuts down relatively late, at about 9 pm, so be sure to walk about and buy souvenirs from local stores. Back at the hotel, climb to the terrace for a starry night like nothing you have ever seen before, and a breathtaking memory of being surrounded by towering mountains bathed in moonlight.

(Clockwise from below) Monks walk about the monastery premises; entry to Tawang; Tibetan prayer flags on the way; (facing page) Mountain view of Tawang





FACT FILE

BEST TIME TO VISIT

March to October

NEAREST AIRPORT

Tezpur, Assam

DOCUMENTS NEEDED

Passport, Inner Line Permit (Arunachal Pradesh is a Protected Area)

GETTING STARTED

Be sure to apply for and make several duplicate copies of your Inner Line Permit that you need to travel in the heavily guarded border state of Arunachal Pradesh. Don't let that intimidate you, though. The soldiers are helpful, friendly and chatty, eager to share tales of exploits in various postings, including trying to boil an egg in Kargil, Kashmir, at -40° Celsius!

WHERE TO STAY

Hotel Tawang Inn, Tawang;

Tel: 03792-224096

Bhalukpong Tourist Lodge, Bhalukpong;

Tel: 03782-234037

Hotel Pemaling Residency, Dirang;

Tel: 03595-258247

Bomdila Tourist Lodge, Bomdila;

Tel: 03782-222049

You should spend at least two days in Tawang, the second for the drive to the Pankang Teng Tso (PT Tso) Lake. This icy, mountaintop water body is usually frozen and is surrounded by hushed snow-laden cabins meant for Army officers. Venture near them at your own risk! They say the border with China is not far away. Along the road leading back to Tawang, look out for eerie burrows or fox holes built from piles of stones. Once you've spotted your first, you'll start to notice them all over. Some are covered in moss and grass; others are stark and still dank within. Your guide will grimly explain that this is where many Indian soldiers lived, and died, fighting the Chinese army in 1962.

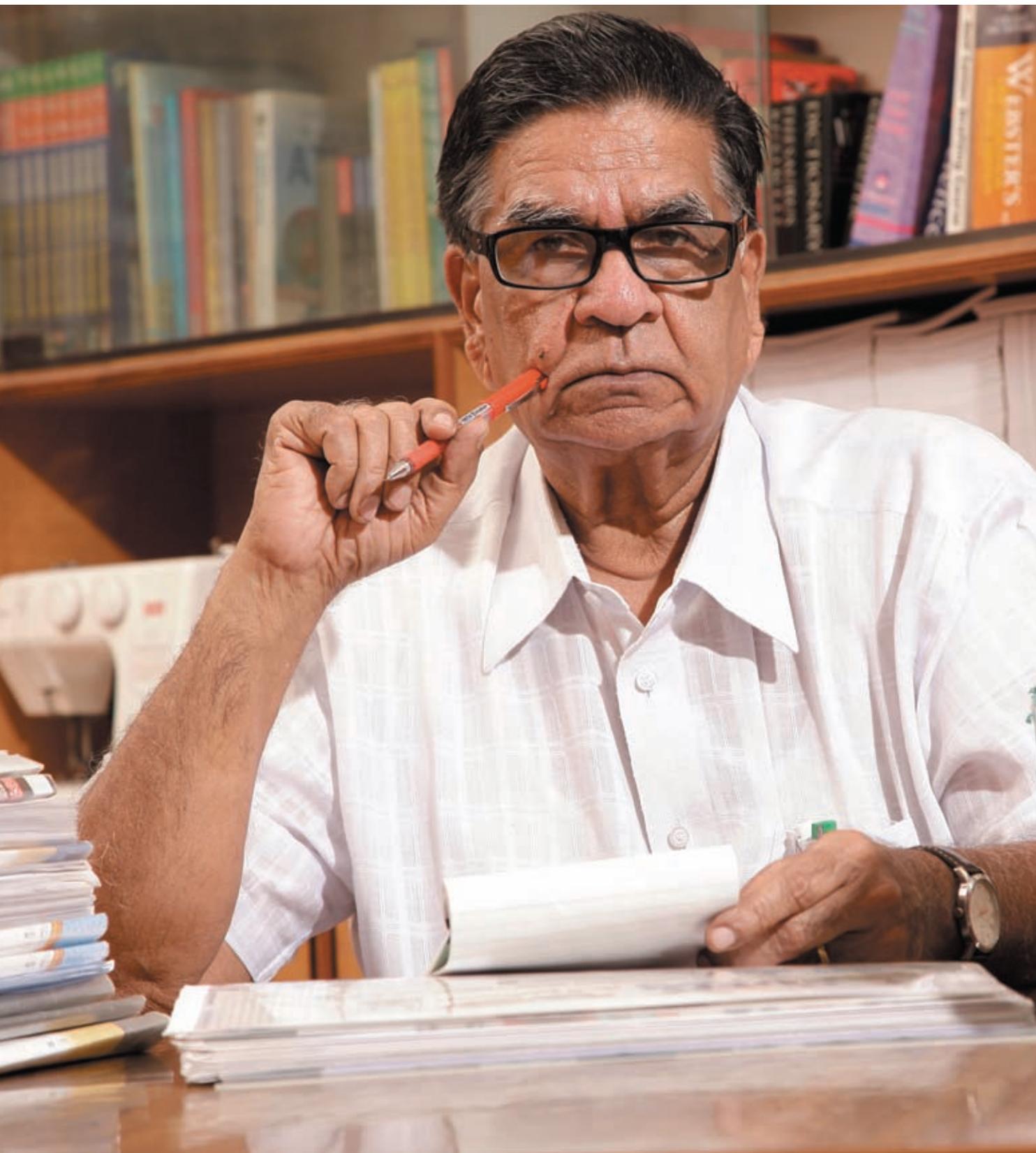
BOMDILA

As you drive the 181 km downhill (literally) from Tawang to Bomdila, the vegetation will start to change and, with the decreasing altitude, the icy blue-green leaves and autumn colours will give way to lush green, heavily clad trees.

Bomdila is, very clearly, a stopover town. Every roof is covered in tacky hotel signs and dish antennae; and random expansions have been tacked on to narrow buildings to make more room for tourists. It is not a pretty town but it is a good way to wean yourself from the beauty that you have become so accustomed to by now.

The mountains are still there, though they now keep their distance. The villages are closer together; the roads more heavily trafficked. You make better time as the road levels out, and before you know it, you're in Guwahati, wincing at the noise of the quaint, narrow streets.

Suddenly you realise something's missing. You look up and see just sky. The mountains are still there. But you aren't. ✨





Right turn

Vuppala Gopala Rao could teach RTI activists a thing or two. At 78, he's still getting laws amended and working to make a difference to the lives of Hyderabad's silvers, reports **Babli Yadav**

He has earned many nicknames over the decades but they mean nothing to him. This silver has his sights firmly focused on just one thing: good governance. And at 78, Vuppala Gopala Rao is still crusading. "My mission began before the Right to Information Act came into being but the Act has given me even more ammunition," smiles the feisty Hyderabad resident, who has taken up local causes, coaxed, cajoled and confronted the most powerful in the state government and has even marched all the way to the Supreme Court.

A resident of Kukatpally, Rao's quest to educate people about their rights began in 1976 with the Praja Aalochana Vedika, which has conducted over 300 seminars and awareness sessions to encourage people to stand up for their rights. But it was in 1997 that Rao's journey really began. "I started fighting against illegal occupation of public places like parks and community spaces. In Bhagyanagar colony, where I lived then, a portion reserved for a park had been illegally occupied. The municipal authorities did not entertain my queries and complaint, so I went to the director of municipal administration. He instructed the municipal commissioner to give me a copy of the layout. I finally got the information and took legal action. The Supreme Court too delivered a judgement in my favour and all the illegal structures were ordered to be demolished," Rao narrates, summing up a lengthy battle that set the tone for the rest of his work.

Anand K Soma

Since then, Rao has taken up the gamut of civic issues, from municipal and commercial taxes, electricity issues and road-building estimates to drainage works. He often works with other senior social activists on issues of transparency and accountability in civic and government bodies. After the implementation of the RTI Act, they have collaborated to conduct awareness programmes and meetings to train other activists and educate them about the new law.

The bigger the rigmarole, the greater the challenge and Rao loves nothing more than battling from the frontlines. Ever since all the municipalities in Hyderabad were merged as the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) in 2007, he has been keeping an eye on the way public money is being spent. "I believe that to focus on good governance, we need to implement the RTI in local governments first and then use it on the state and central government. As local citizens, we have to begin at home," says Rao, who was the only representative invited from Andhra Pradesh for the first-ever RTI meeting in Delhi in 2006.

There's a softer side to our crusader, who has the interest of senior citizens close at heart. He founded Aasra, a unique concept to support seniors in Hyderabad. In an attempt to secure special facilities and privileges for silvers, Rao approached the top rung of officers in the municipal corporation and got them to set up Aasra under the aegis of the GHMC in 2011.



The centre has already achieved many of its goals, including securing reduced bus fares, a day centre, a 'bedside service' for the care of the sick and elderly people, and priority service at police stations and government offices, according to Rao, who is the founder and member of no less than four senior citizens' organisations.

As if this were not enough, he is also convener of the Senior Audit Council on Information Rights (SACIR), which has demanded the appointment of women information officers in government offices in Andhra Pradesh. "We want two or three information commissioners and at least one-third as women so that local women can conveniently approach the authorities for RTI queries."

Aasra has already achieved many of its goals, including securing reduced bus fares, a 'bedside service' for the care of the sick and elderly, and priority service at police stations and government offices

In fine health despite advancing years, Rao calls social activism his "strength and medicine". And he emphasises that none of this would have been possible without the support of his family, especially his sons who are the financial backbone of his social activism. "My wife supports me morally and my sons support me financially," he says with pride. "I have three sons and a daughter. While my daughter is still in college, my sons

have respectable jobs in Hyderabad and overseas."

Does he seek out causes or do they have an uncanny knack of finding him? With a twinkle in his eye, Rao reveals, "The municipality is planning to raise taxes but I have found a lot of irregularities. We started working on this in October 2012 and I have an entire file of information to set things right." And he will! ✨



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INSIDE

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Etcetera

CULTURE ● LEISURE ● LIFESTYLE ● BOOKS ● MISCELLANY

MUSIC

Rhythm riders

Mumbai was graced with divine music from God's Own Country when an ensemble of percussionists enthralled the audience last month with a high-energy performance at the Keli Classical Rhythm Festival, Horniman Circle in south Mumbai. Senior *thayambaka* exponent Kallur Ramankutty Marar, 60, and his group displayed their finesse in exploring the

percussion instrument of *chenda*. Connoisseurs and new followers huddled around the percussionists on a three-hour transcendental journey to the temples of Kerala. The three-day festival also hosted outstanding performances by senior artists like Padmashree Peruvanam Kuttan Marar, 59, on *pandi melam* and *panchavadyam* maestro Annamanada Parameswara Marar, 60.



Pitch PERFECT

Jayanthi Somasundaram visits late violin legend Parur Sundaram Iyer's historic home for a glimpse into a glorious past and an eventful present



Through the busy by-lanes of Mylapore—Chennai's cultural hub—mellifluous music flows like a gentle breeze. Its source is a quaint house perched artistically amid modern structures. For over 100 years, Sangeetha Vilas has been home to the city's famous violin family, maestro Parur Sundaram Iyer's clan. M A Sundareswarar, Parur Sundaram Iyer's first grandson, reveals that legends

like Pandit Ravi Shankar and Lalgudi Jayaraman have been their guests. "I have clear memories of my mother preparing *bhaji* to be served on the terrace where musicians used to perform and engage in musical conversations over tea," he recalls. "Over 25 people lived here and we had many visitors every day."

Violin maestro Parur Sundaram Iyer (1891-1964) was a connoisseur and created his own music, which

is today called the 'Parur style'. M A Krishaswamy, the second Iyer grandson, extols the virtues of a legend. "My grandfather was the first person to introduce violin in classical Hindustani music in 1909."

The maestro's son M S Anantharaman, 90, sits comfortably on his bed in rapt attention. The nonagenarian learnt the nuances of the musical instrument from his father at the tender age of five. "Parur style, simply put, is

to play the violin in a single string. In olden times, the violin was played just like a harmonium. My father wanted to change that; he adopted western techniques and created his own style," he reminisces. "He was a very strict teacher; when it came to music, everything had to be perfect. In fact, every member of our family today aims for similar perfection."

"We have never questioned the 'Parur' style," says Sundareshwarar, adding with pride, "Shakespeare's 'the most unkindly' might sound grammatically wrong to many but nobody changes it. Similarly, this is the way our style was created and is meant to be." In fact the Iyer family is confident that their unique style will continue through generations.

"Parur style, simply put, is to play the violin in a single string. In olden times, the violin was played just like a harmonium. My father adopted western techniques and created his own style"

Great musicians are born, but some of the greater ones are made. Parur Sundaram Iyer dedicated his life to the violin and lit a flame of passion for music in his grandchildren. "We finished our academic studies but decided to pursue music," says Sundareshwarar, drawing strength, like his brother, from the meticulous practise sessions every day. Anantharaman practises for at least seven hours a day, and even more when a performance is lined up. With Anantharaman's younger brother M S Gopalakrishnan's son playing violin in the next room, conversation and music become one. "I've seen my grandfather, father and aunts practising for as long as 18 hours a day," says Krishnaswamy.

Speaking of his four sisters who were all violinists, Anantharaman

excitedly talks about India's first 'All Women Orchestra' in which his eldest sister Sitalakshmi played violin; she was the first woman violinist to have played in an orchestra that presented South Indian music. "In 1934, the orchestra was invited to Bombay to perform. As a 10 year-old, I too played violin as part of the troupe!" he chuckles, showing us a sepia-toned photograph.

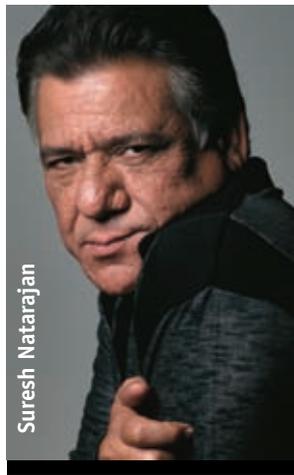
Continuing to share some glorious moments, Sundareshwarar's eyes gleam when he says, "One of my favourites is our performance at Tirupati [Andhra Pradesh]; seven violinists from our family shared the stage. It was an incredible experience and a sight to behold. Indeed, it is a blessing to be born in this family."

Both Sundareshwarar and Krishnaswamy have completed 25 years of performing with All India Radio. Despite several offers to work for films, they want to continue playing Carnatic music. "We are both very clear that violin and music are all that we live for. How our children take it forward is up to them, but seniors need to guide them," asserts Krishnaswamy. "Non-classical music must be reserved for musicians who specialise in that genre. Even my father has played for films; the famous Tamil song, *Kaatrinilae varum geetham*, sung by M S Subbulakshmi was one of his works."

For the family to look back and refresh its memories, Krishnaswamy has documented its rich history. "I hope the future generation too takes this legacy forward." We echo the sentiment.

FAMILIAR TERRITORY

On the cover of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* for our first anniversary, Om Puri has enjoyed his share of controversies in past years. But what is a man without his foibles? This latest is definitely no misstep though. After a gap of 25 years, Puri returns to theatre, the platform closest to an erudite audience. *Teri Amrita* is a Punjabi adaptation of American playwright A R Gurney's *Love Letters*. Its Hindi adaptation, *Tumhari Amrita*, has earned accolades world over with Farooq Sheikh and Shabana Azmi as the two protagonists. Now, Om Puri wants to take the play in his mother tongue to Indian and NRI Punjabi speakers. As he says, "I am a swimmer returning to the waters after 25 years."



MS RETOLD

A BIOPIC MAKES A LEGEND OF A MAN; A GRAPHIC BOOK MAKES HIM IMMORTAL. AMAR CHITRA KATHA HAS MADE MANY A MYTHOLOGICAL CHARACTER BELIEVABLE AND ETCHED MANY MORE LIVING LEGENDS IN OUR PSYCHE FOR POSTERITY. NOW THE PUBLISHING COMPANY WILL RETELL THE STORY OF CARNATIC MUSICIAN M S SUBBULAKSHMI, WHOSE MESMERISING RENDITION OF *SRI VENKATESA SUPRABHATAM* SIGNALS THE ADVENT OF A NEW DAY IN COUNTLESS HOUSEHOLDS. POPULARLY CALLED THE QUEEN OF CARNATIC MUSIC, SHE WAS THE FIRST MUSICIAN TO BE AWARDED THE BHARAT RATNA. THE 31-PAGE GRAPHIC BOOK WILL SUMMARISE THE EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY OF HER DEVOTION TO MUSIC AND HER COUNTRY.

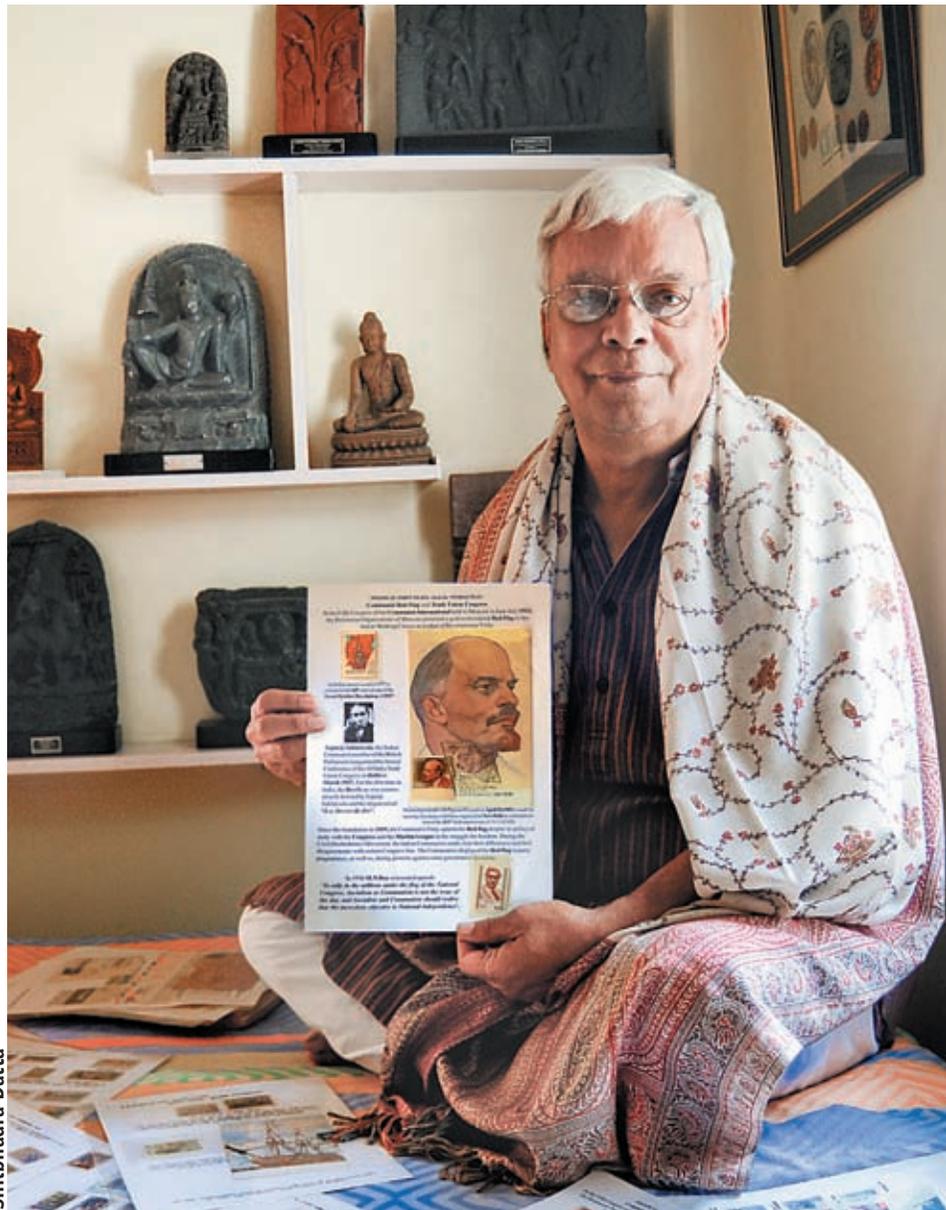
Unfurling history

VEXILLOLOGIST AND PHILATELIST SEKHAR CHAKRABARTI TELLS PARTHA MUKHERJEE & PRIYANKA MUKHERJEE THE TALE OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL FLAG'S EVOLUTION

It's not just a piece of fabric that flutters to mark victorious moments or remains half-mast to mark a tragic phase. It is a priceless document of a nation that grew brick by brick." Like any patriotic Indian, Sekhar Chakrabarti's voice brims with pride when he talks about the National Flag. An engineer by profession and a vexillologist and philatelist by passion, the 64 year-old discovered that there was no authentic book that could satiate the urge of common people interested in knowing about the evolution of the Indian flag. "I delved into the subject to trace the history of the development of the flag"

After two untiring decades of this search, he wrote *The Indian National Flag Unfurled through Philately*, which was released in December 2012. The book is the National Flag's visual narrative, stretching from the past to the present with colourful philatelic illustrations sourced from his lifelong collection of newspaper clippings and interviews with eminent personalities. It emphasises what the flag—spangled with symbol or symbols crafted by artists—means for a nation. "After reading the book, you will feel that the flag doesn't simply fly over your head; it enters into your mind and stirs emotions that you have never known before," he asserts.

Chakrabarti began collecting stamps in the early 1960s when thematic (topical) philately in India was still in its infancy. Over the years, he carved a niche for himself as an eminent philatelist of India, with a specialisation in flags. Also a renowned vexillologist, Chakrabarti added a new dimension to his hobby with stamps of flags of differ-



Shilbhadra Datta

ent nations, including a specialised collection on the Indian National Flag. His collection has not only brought laurels from several world stamp exhibitions, organised under the auspices

of the Federation Internationale de Philatelie (FIP), but also earned him a place in the *Limca Book of Records* for his collection of 'most stamps issued from abroad featuring the Indian National Flag'. "The subject of the flag



DID YOU KNOW?

- The Indian National Flag was hoisted for the first time on 16 August 1947 at the historic Red Fort, New Delhi, and not on 15 August 1947 as most people believe.
- The first post-Independence Indian stamp showing the tricolour was issued on 21 November 1947; apparently the postal authorities could not finalise an acceptable design by 15 August 1947.
- South Korea is the first foreign country to release a postage stamp, in 1951, showing the Indian National Flag.

Today, philately is no longer what it used to be. "Gone are the days when a discerning philatelist pursued the hobby without a big investment. Philatelists were then a happy lot collecting stamps they liked and preserving their prized collections carefully on albums with neat and interesting write-ups. Unfortunately, these days the hobby is valued by its market price, not rarity," rues Chakrabarti. After all, if a flag is the shorthand history of a land, a stamp is a tiny strip that tells many a tale that one would never know.

is always a challenge because no collection of flags is ever really complete. Here's an amazing fact: World over, there is a new national flag or a change in the existing one every month on an average."

As a beginner, Chakrabarti used to collect any stamp he could lay his hands on. In 1962, he visited a major exhibition in Kolkata where he met

many stamp collectors who wanted to raise awareness about philately among the youth. "I met Bibhas Gupta, editor of the now defunct *Stamp Digest*, and late S Chatterjee, chairman of Indo-American Society's (IAS) philatelic circle, who encouraged young collectors to collect stamps on topical subjects of their own choice instead of following the trend of traditional philately."

NEW CHAPTER

LEGENDARY OSCAR-WINNING COSTUME DESIGNER BHANU ATHAIYA HAS DECIDED TO RETURN THE AWARD TO THE ACADEMY FOR SAFEKEEPING. BEST KNOWN FOR HER AWARD-WINNING WORK IN RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH'S BIOPIC *GANDHI*, ATHAIYA, 86, HAS FOLLOWED THE EXAMPLE OF EIGHT-TIME OSCAR AWARD-WINNING COSTUME DESIGNER EDITH HEAD WHO RETURNED ALL HER TROPHIES TO THE ACADEMY. THE MOVE HAS BEEN PROMPTED BY HER FEAR OF SUCH TREASURES GOING MISSING FROM INDIA, LIKE THE LOSS OF SEVERAL FAMOUS PAINTINGS AND EVEN RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S NOBEL MEDAL. ATHAIYA IS ALSO IN THE PROCESS OF DONATING HER PAINTINGS AND ARTEFACTS TO MUSEUMS ACROSS THE WORLD. CURRENTLY, THE OCTOGENARIAN WANTS TO FOCUS ON A BOOK ON HER HOMETOWN KOLHAPUR, FROM WHERE SHE TRACES HER LINEAGE BACK TO THE NORTHERN HISTORICAL TOWN OF CHITTOR.



Epic love

Margaret Mitchell's Pulitzer prize-winning novel *Gone with the Wind* (1936) introduced the world to legendary lovers Rhett Butler and Scarlett O'Hara. We toast the season of love with an excerpt from the book, which was adapted into a successful motion picture in 1939

Again Scarlett was back in the windy orchard of Tara and there was the same look in Rhett's eyes that had been in Ashley's eyes that day. Ashley's words were as clear in her ears as though he and not Rhett were speaking. Fragments of words came back to her and she quoted parrot-like: "A glamour to it—a perfection, a symmetry like Grecian art."

Rhett said sharply: "Why did you say that? That's what I meant."

"It was something that...that Ashley said once, about the old days."

He shrugged and the light went out of his eyes.

"Always Ashley," he said and was silent for a moment.

"Scarlett, when you are forty-five, perhaps you will know what I'm talking about and then perhaps you, too, will be tired of imitation gentry and shoddy manners and cheap emotions. But I doubt it. I think you'll always be more attracted by glister than by gold. Anyway, I can't wait that long to see. And I have no desire to wait. It just doesn't interest me. I'm going to hunt in old towns and old countries where some of the old times must still linger. I'm that sentimental. Atlanta's too raw for me, too new."

"Stop," she said suddenly. She had hardly heard anything he had said. Certainly her mind had not taken it in. But she knew she could no longer endure with any fortitude the sound of his voice when there was no love in it.

He paused and looked at her quizzically.

"Well, you get my meaning, don't you?" he questioned, rising to his feet.

She threw out her hands to him, palms up, in the age-old gesture of appeal and her heart, again, was in her face.

"No," she cried. "All I know is that you do not love me and you are going away! Oh, my darling, if you go, what shall I do?"

For a moment he hesitated as if debating whether a kind lie were kinder in the long run than the truth. Then he shrugged.



"Scarlett, I was never one to patiently pick up broken fragments and glue them together and tell myself that the mended whole was as good as new. What is broken is broken—and I'd rather remember it as it was at its best than mend it and see the broken places as long as I lived. Perhaps, if I were younger....," he sighed. "But I'm too old to believe in such sentimentalities as clean slates and starting all over. I'm too old to shoulder the burden of constant lies that go with living in polite disillusionment. I couldn't live with you and lie to you and I certainly couldn't lie to myself. I can't even lie to you now. I wish I could care what you do or where you go, but I can't."

He drew a short breath and said lightly but softly: "My dear, I don't give a damn."

* * * * *

She silently watched him go up the stairs, feeling that she would strangle at the pain in her throat. With the sound of his feet dying away in the upper hall was dying the last thing in the world that mattered. She knew now that there was no appeal of emotion or reason which would turn that cool brain from its verdict. She knew now that he had meant every word he said, lightly though some of them had been spoken. She knew because she sensed in him something strong, unyielding, implacable—all the qualities she had looked for in Ashley and never found.

She had never understood either of the men she had loved and so she had lost them both. Now, she had a fumbling knowledge that, had she ever understood Ashley, she would never have loved him; had she ever understood Rhett, she would never have lost him. She wondered forlornly if she had ever really understood anyone in the world....

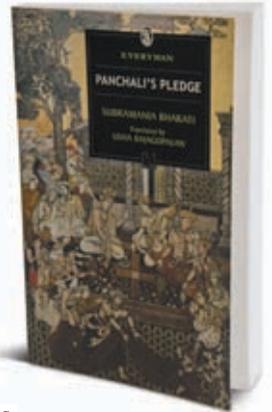
"I'll think of it all tomorrow, at Tara. I can stand it then. Tomorrow, I'll think of some way to get him back. After all, tomorrow is another day."

BETWEEN THE LINES

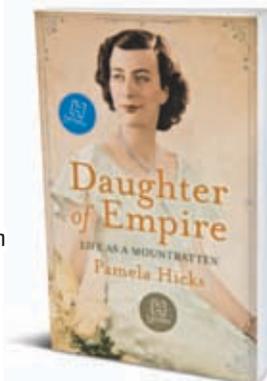
With **SETHJI** (Penguin; ₹ 250; 290 pages), **Shobhaa Dé** takes us into the grimy, sleazy game of politics where ruthlessness, ambition and power are the calling cards of every player. For the wily and cunning Sethji and several others of his ilk, all that matters is staying in the game by hook or crook. Shrewd and self-made, Sethji is the head of a crucial coalition partner in the government, not very different from our *neta* who enjoy playing king-maker. Strangely, the crude but pragmatic character, who involuntarily “scratches his groin” when he is thinking hard, manages to elicit our sympathy when the tables turn on him. His primal instinct and the sordid world he inhabits is driven home by the fact that, for him, sleeping with his pretty daughter-in-law is as normal as getting a haircut. Though repulsed by her father-in-law’s appearance—warts, moles, hair jutting out of his ears—Amrita uses her body to gain control over him, and the household. Though Dé openly admits being inspired by Sitaram Kesri, there are plenty of other references for those familiar with Indian polity. Whether it is Kavitaji, who wears a big *bindi* and is out to checkmate Sethji in the inner-party power struggle or the diminutive Bhau, who wears saffron and has his grip on the city of Mumbai, the inferences are loud and clear. With a generous helping of sex and fast-paced action, characteristic Shobhaa Dé style, this book zips along.



With an inherent simplicity in his verses and lyricism, **C Subramania Bharati** (1882-1921) heralded the renaissance in Tamil literature. **PANCHALI’S PLEDGE** (Hachette; ₹ 350; 272 pages) is an English translation of his Tamil classic *Panchali Sabatham*. **Usha Rajagopalan**, who has also translated his *Selected Poems*, tries to do justice to Bharati’s style by creating an epic using simple phrases, a simple style and a rhythm that is easy on the ears. Based on the *Mahabharata*, it is a lyrical rendition of the episodes leading up to disrobing of Panchali and her vow of revenge. The book begins with Duryodhana getting upset with Panchali for mocking him; plotting the game of dice with his wily uncle Sakuni; the helplessness of Dhritarashtra and Dharmaputra; and gradually moves towards the denouement. Though the subject of the epic poem is Panchali, she figures only towards the end of the book, with Duryodhana’s resentment of the Pandavas and Dhritarashtra’s futile attempts at mollifying him taking up more print space. Given the circumstances under which he wrote the poem—with Bharati residing in Pondicherry to escape British persecution—it’s not surprising that the characterisation has political undertones with Panchali being compared to Mother India and the Kauravas to the repressive British Empire.



To India, Louis Mountbatten will always be the strong-jawed man sent over to wrap up colonial rule and plan a peaceful handover on 15 August 1947. Thus, it is strange to read of his royal lineage, swashbuckling naval exploits and his romantic entanglements since early in his marriage in **DAUGHTER OF EMPIRE: LIFE AS A MOUNTBATTEN** (Orion Books; ₹ 699; 268 pages). It makes you see the man in a whole new light, in a whole new world. His daughter, **Pamela Hicks née Mountbatten**, navigates this world with effortless ease and as her introductions meld seamlessly into a narrative of titles, coronations and royal outings, she magically weaves her reader into her web. Then she drops you down a magic stairwell into the world beneath the glitter—a world of changing homes, uncertainty and fractured identities. Raised



largely by nannies, shuttling between continents, being forgotten for months in a small hotel in Hungary, Pamela and her sister had a most unusual childhood as their parents pursued their individual destinies. Beneath the surface, the book becomes a telling tale of a family that redefined itself to embrace much of the British empire, setting aside duties of the home to birth nations. Through it all, the global drama of war and political unrest weaves the family saga back together, peppered with delightful tales of adventures at home and abroad. To top it off, two sets of family photographs offer endearing snapshots of a time when almost-princesses roamed the Downs in knee-length dresses and spent summer days in shelters made of bramble. A throwback to another world, this is a fascinating account of a fascinating family.

Mythology man



He has lent his own inimitable take to Indian mythology, infusing it with imagination, romance, adventure and passion, making ancient tales relatable in a very modern world. In the process, Ashok Banker has struck gold. Interestingly, he was turned down by publishing giant David Davidar, who summarily relegated Banker's draft of *Ramayana* "to

the dustbin". It's another story that the eight-book series went on to become a success; published in 56 countries and translated into seven languages. With his dream project, Epic India Library, Banker now aims to retell all the major myths associated with the Indian subcontinent in an interlinked cycle of over 100 volumes. This prolific writer's oeuvre extends beyond mythology,

though, spanning the genres of fantasy, fiction and crime thrillers. He tells **SrIREKHA PILLAI** more about his work, and life, in an exclusive interview.

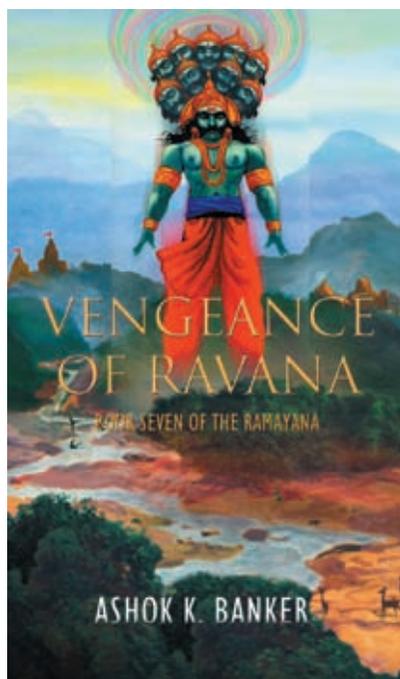
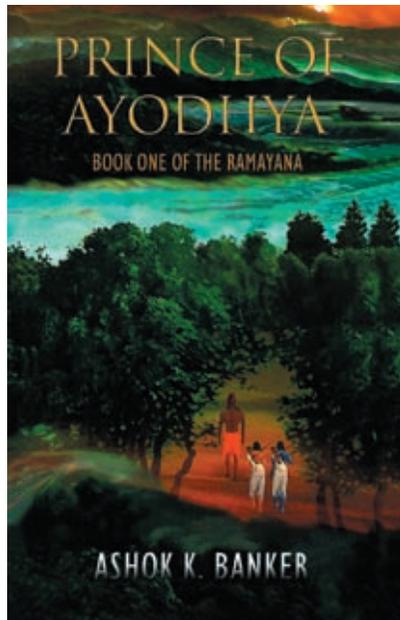
You have spawned a new genre of fictionalised mythology, which is popular with Indian writers in English. How do you feel about the resurgence of Indian mythology in publishing?

Frankly, I have mixed feelings. In a way, the larger boom in mythology publishing is still a perpetration of traditional Brahminical patriarchal retellings. Brahmin males are putting their own contemporary spin on their ancient epics. These kinds of retellings have always been around, the only difference is that they're now being written in English and are best-sellers. I keep waiting for a new voice that will attempt something boldly different, path-breaking, but it's all just more of the same dross. I wonder how many authors and publishers are simply manufacturing them to catch the trend. It's easy to jump on a bandwagon, but it's much more important to build a new road that leads to new destinations.

The Ramayana Series, Krishna Coriolis Series and Mahabharata Series all have powerfully etched characters. If you were to single out one character that has captured your imagination like no other, who would it be? And why?

Krishna, of course. She is often denied her own name and dismissed as Draupadi, daughter of Drupad. She is at the heart of the ocean of stories that is the *Mahabharata*. She is the only one who is true to herself, to dharma, to a value and belief system. She is the only moral character in a sea of immorality. She is a strong, independent, defiant woman, not afraid to speak out against injustice when even powerful men sit silent. She is the only unarmed one ready to confront the most brutal armed *yoddha* who can cut her down without hesitation. She is not afraid to embrace her sexuality and embody the Indian *sanskriti* of womanhood. She is the true epitome of Indian woman, able to handle five husbands—five, when even one Indian husband is a chore!—and manage them all beautifully without ever playing off one against the other, or permitting petty sexual jealousies or rivalries to erupt. Imagine her power and potency in the bedroom—in all five bedrooms! Even

the entire Kaurava army couldn't defeat the five Pandavas. Krishna Draupadi did it single-handed, and naked to boot! The other Krishna is God Incarnate, yet it is Krishna Draupadi who is truly the powerful one and the defender of dharma and justice. More than Bhishma Pitamaha or anyone else, it is she who represents dharma and Indian *sanskriti* in our epics. She



should be held up as the model for Indian womanhood, not Sita or Sati or anyone else.

Readers associate you with epic retelling. Was it a conscious decision to return to crime novels with the Kali Rising series?

I never went away from crime. *Kali Rising* began as a sequel story to *The Iron Bra*, which was hailed by the Indian media as “India’s first crime novel in English” over 20 years ago. The title referred to India’s notorious treatment of its women and the ironic query: Does a woman need to wear an iron bra to survive in an Indian male world? The protagonist of that story, Sheila Ray, returns in *Blood Red Sari*, which opens the Kali Rising series. I was also writing short crime stories that were published in print and online magazines abroad, and some of these were about a wheelchair-bound lawyer in Delhi High Court named Nachiketa Shroff and others about a lesbian PI from Varkala named Anita B. At some point, I thought, why not put all three together instead of writing separate books? The result of that confluence was *Blood Red Sari* and the Kali Rising series.

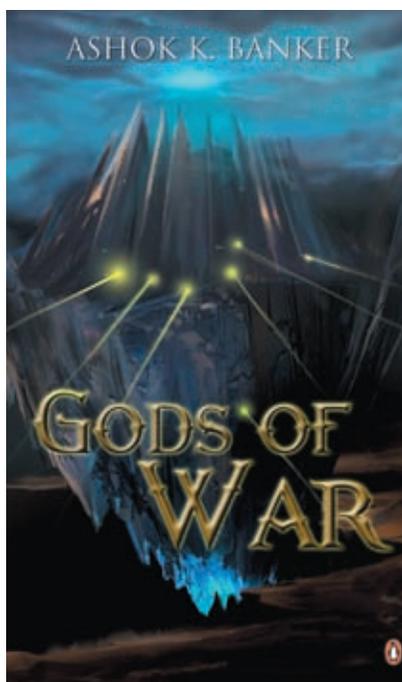
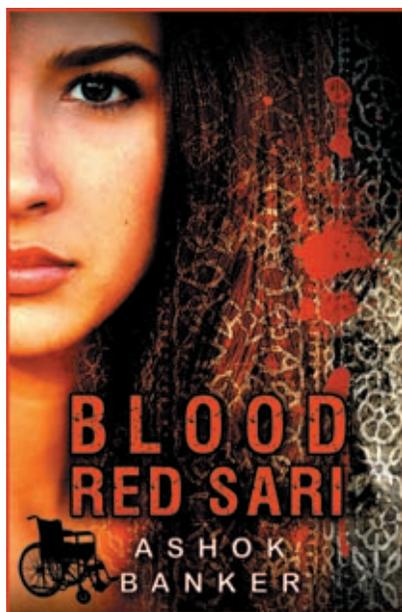
The *Blood Red Sari* reads like a feminist commentary on the state of affairs in India. How difficult is it to be a woman in today’s world?

You’re asking a man that question? Well, a man by design, although I think of myself as a woman who happens to have a penis! I was raised by women and, to this day, can’t understand or even condone Indian male behaviour and practices. Sadly, Indian society has probably the worst historical record for the abuse of women. Our *Purana* and epics and *shastra* are packed with tale after tale of abuse, maltreatment, neglect, torture and worse. You could go so far as to say that there are almost no examples of equality or fair treatment in our *itihasa* and mythologies. So naturally, with a culture based on the myths of male

superiority and predicated on female abuse and subjugation, it's far harder to be a woman in India today than in most places. In a war zone, you can say it's aberrant, insane behaviour but right now, here in this country, we're among the most violent and abusive nations in the world when it comes to women and girl children. One theory I have is that Indian men, unlike men of most cultures, find it easier to beat their women than go to war. So we are at war but the war is a domestic one, within the household!

It's believed that your grandmother was a great influence on you. Is that the reason behind the feminist streak in your writing?

My grandmother, my great-aunts, my mother, my aunt, they were all strong, powerful women. We have this term, 'empowerment'. It suggests that it's up to men to 'empower' women. That's bullshit. Women already have power. It's men who take it away, disempowering them, and then say, okay, if you behave, we might give some of it back with certain conditions. I was raised by women, who never let their power be taken away. None of them feared striking a man if necessary. My grandfather once slapped my grandmother and she slapped him right back. He never touched her again. My mother punched out a police inspector who was arrogant and chauvinistic to her. I'm not feminist, I'm a feminist. That simply means that I know all people are equal, and the only way to assert and affirm female equality is by challenging the power equation. One male editor at a publishing house got really upset at the part in the Kali Rising series where these women use guns to fight back against the men who are slaughtering and killing hundreds of women and children. He said, 'You can't let them use guns. It'll set a bad example. They're women; let them talk their way out.' But the men had been killing, raping, and shooting women and children dead without even a word of warning, and he didn't find that objectionable. It



took a powerful, self-willed woman editor and publisher, V K Karthika of HarperCollins, to understand the story and characters. Pacifism and sanity can't be associated with women alone: Gandhi, Martin Luther King, John Lennon, they were all pacifists but were assassinated because as men they were seen betraying the male aggression role model. Men must be

powerful; women must be victims or sex objects: this is what thousands of crime novels and thrillers keep repeating. The Kali Rising series is an attempt to show the reality: strong women can take on men and kick their hairy asses anytime!

You are one of the most prolific writers today. How do you manage to jump across genres, plots and emotions?

I love it! Ultimately, all good fiction is about people and the fun for me comes from writing about different kinds of people, in different eras, ages, social conditions. The rest is simply the result of decades of voracious reading. I am compulsively obsessed with reading, devouring over 500 books a year. The e-book revolution has made it possible for me to think of a book, click, and start reading it in minutes. I collect print copies as well of the books I love. But it's essential to read much, much more than you write. And also to live, observe, feel, keep yourself open to influences, styles, real-life shifts and social changes. I have great empathy, so much so that I have difficulty at times because I am closer to feeling everything another person is feeling at any given moment. I put it all into my writing, it's all spontaneous combustion. I just light up the computer screen and the inspiration flares. Hours later, the pages are onscreen, written, completed. I simply work the keys, the rest comes from within.

You've been one of the first Indian authors to fully capitalise on the digital revolution by launching e-book editions of your books. What spurred you on?

They say, necessity is the mother of invention. In 1995, I got the idea of posting a digital novel online that could be downloaded and read. That was my first e-book, *Bad Karma*. As time passed, I kept sharing all my works in progress online with readers. Thousands of readers read the Rama-

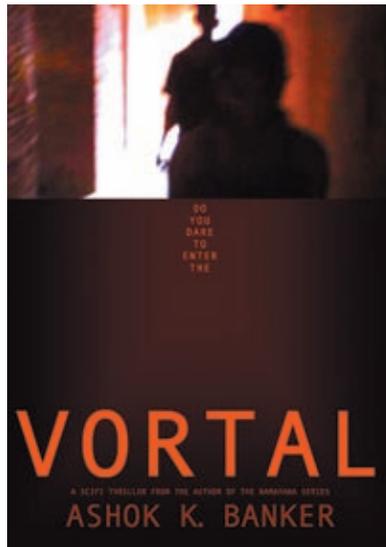
yana, Krishna and Mahabharata Series online in draft form as I was writing them. It was a thrilling experience, like writing live before an audience. It developed organically to the point where many of those readers said they would be willing to pay for e-book editions that collected the serial excerpts. So I began designing my own covers; learned to format the e-books myself; built the website on my own at first. Over time, I found some help. And now, AKB eBOOKS is one of the most successful e-bookstores! I don't market or promote it. Yet the readers keep coming. They're the only reason why I went into e-book editions and they're the reason I will continue.

How was the idea of the Epic India Library born? And what exactly does it entail?

It was a desire to see a library of books that retold all Indian myths, legends, *itihasa* and more, all in uniform hardcover leather-bound editions, stacked on bookshelves in a great reading room, like the collections I grew up reading my way through in libraries when I was a boy. I wanted to read those books so badly, I could practically see myself taking one down, setting it on the table, opening it, hearing the binding crackle, smell the leather and fine paper and ink, and lose myself in those great tales of a bygone era. Eventually, I realised nobody was even remotely interested in such books: Indian authors were too busy recording their drug addictions and onanistic memoirs or love stories to care about the great wealth of epic literature in our country. As a non-Hindu with mixed-race, mixed-cultural upbringing, I was probably the most unlikely candidate of all to attempt such a task. But how else was I going to get to read those books? So I began, a line at a time, a page at a time, a book at a time. Now it's up to over 50 books complete and about as many to go. At the present rate, I should be done with the entire EI Library by the time I'm 52.

You call yourself a non-Hindu. Isn't it strange that you are so drawn to Hindu mythology?

My family is British-Sri Lankan-Goan, with Dutch-Scots-Irish-Portuguese spicing up the mix. When she was 16, my mother met a sweet-talking Gujarati NRI back from the States; they had a whirlwind romance and were married for less than three months. She returned home, pregnant with me. That was the extent of my Hindu parentage: a single sperm! Can a sperm be Hindu? I was raised



by my grandmother and mother, both Christian, British and British-Goan (Smiths and D'Souzas) and raised in a totally western, equalitarian, bohemian atmosphere. I grew up not knowing the difference between Krishna and Rama, hating those mythological serials on TV—I was the only kid out playing on Sunday mornings—and Amar Chitra Katha comics. Hindus were the people who raped, killed and beat people like us because we were 'phoren' and different from them. But the question nagged me: Why did my biological father's family mistreat my mother so badly? Why does a culture that presents itself as worshipping women, respecting guests and all life on earth, even animals and insects, actually have the worst record for

abusing women, do terrible things to the so-called 'lower' castes and non-Hindus over the centuries, and think nothing of slaughtering human beings, even little children, like in Gujarat, just to establish Hindu Brahminical superiority? My Epic India Library was an attempt to understand this essential quandary and contradiction that is India. And yes, to understand my father's culture and prove that you didn't have to be a Hindu (or a Hindu sperm!) to love and respect all people and all life equally. You simply have to be human.

What do readers look forward to from you in the coming days?

The Epic India Library! Isn't that enough? *Blood Red Sari* will be followed by three sequels: *Burnt Saffron Sky*, *Rust Black Heart* and *Silver Acid Rain*, which are all complete, and with the publisher. The Kali Rising series is the best work I've done to date and I hope anyone who likes a good thriller, appreciates fine writing, and isn't afraid to question the male status quo, will pick it up.

What's a typical day in Ashok Banker's life like?

Very boring. Wake up early; attend to emails and browse the Internet; off to the gym; back and at the desk, writing for an hour, maybe even three. That's it for work. Then it's reading, some editing of the pages written earlier, website work on AKB eBOOKS, maybe going out for a bit with friends, or more often than not, just staying home and watching TV shows on DVD. I never watch Indian television or live television, not even the news, and never ever read a newspaper or a magazine. No social networking or any other form of networking; I avoid parties and party people. At nights, a glass of Chardonnay or Merlot with a turkey sandwich (my favourite meal) or Vietnamese chicken curry noodles and a movie or concert. In bed by 11 pm usually, though often as early as 9 pm.



Asana antics

S Raghunath writes about his tryst with yoga

With yoga being positioned in upscale markets as the panacea for all physical and spiritual ills, silvers are taking to it like ducks to water; yoga schools and ashrams are mushrooming and flourishing all over the country. As I'm almost there—in touching distance of the 'silver lining'—I wanted to leave no stone unturned. Here's how my brief brush with yoga went.

"Look at you! Your eyeballs are sunken and there are great rolls of fat down your bull neck like the sand dunes in a desert. Your cheeks are hollow and don't you dare to palm them off as cute and dainty dimples; about your bulging and grotesque tummy perched preciously on a pair of spindly and rickety legs, the less said the better. Pull yourself together man. It's about time that the benefits of yoga are tilled into your thick skull. I want you to present yourself for enrolment in my yoga school tomorrow and don't forget to bring with you the full course fee, ₹ 10,000. Understand?"

That trenchant and astringent critique and diktat was from a friend who has made it big in the yoga business. His comments on the state of my physique and glories of yoga might mislead you into thinking that he is a guru in the classic mould—flowing saffron robes, meditation beads, a luxuriant beard, sprawling air-conditioned ashram and a large fan following. But more often than not, he is dressed in corduroy dungarees, T-shirt, Reebok sneakers and Ray Ban sunglasses. And, yes, he is a middle-level manager in an MNC with a five-figure salary and handsome perks. A sterling chap in many respects, he has a dark side to his character—he is a diehard yoga

faddist. So much so that he is talking of merrily chucking his sinecure job and going full-time into peddling his exotic and designer yoga wares.

"So you've heeded my advice," said my friend as I walked, rather waddled in. "Look, your complexion is so wan and sallow. I wonder what courses thru' your veins; maybe 99 per cent proof Scotch whisky. Yoga should put you in fine fettle. Let's start off with a few simple poses or *asana*."

"Now, stand erect without giving way at your knock knees and pulling in your flabby abdominal muscles; raise your right leg and grasp it with your

I reverentially offered my guru my definition of *shirsasana*—being head over heels in love with yoga—but he ignored that

right arm. Now that's the bow pose which ought to help develop your puny chest and reduce your obese tummy. Now having assumed the bow pose what do you do?" I hazarded a wild guess. "Shoot an arrow?"

"No, stupid," corrected my guru. "You hold your breath, and tongue too, and please, let's have no more of your inane and picayune jokes."

"We now come to the scorpion pose that is beneficial in getting rid of asthma, bronchitis and gas in the stomach. Now tell me, can the scorpion pose help you in any other way?"

"To sting yoga faddists?" I enquired hopefully. But my guru coldly ignored my wisecrack and left it (and me) lying flat on my back and motionless for 15 minutes, almost like a corpse.

"Having assumed the *shavasana*, what should you do?" I thought I knew the right answer. "Ask your family to phone for the municipal corporation hearse?"

All my jokes were going wide off the mark, for my guru frigidly ignored that too. And left me looking foolish. So much for joyful Indian yoga gurus! As an enthusiastic tyro, I reverentially offered my guru my definition of *shirsasana*—being head over heels in love with yoga—but he ignored that as well.

"We now come to the most important *asana* in the whole of Patanjali's yoga," said my guru. "It is *pranayama*, which helps in the union of the 'I' or ego factor with the Supreme Being and opens your eyes to the fact that the entire cosmos is nothing but a divine *leela*. Now while doing *pranayama*, you hold your nose; I want you to tell me why."

I know I should not have answered flippantly like I did and apologise profusely for it. "Come on, come on," roared my guru. "I'm waiting for an answer and I don't have a whole day to waste. Why do you hold your nose while doing *pranayama*?"

"Because of the funny smell in the drains?" I speculated.

I was summarily expelled from the yoga school.

The author is a freelance writer and lives in Bengaluru. Humour is his forte

Experience

A second childhood

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The less the merrier

Wanting less is the key to happiness, says Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

The mind lives on 'more'. Misery starts with 'more and more', and misery makes you dense and gross. The Self is subtle. To go from gross to subtle, you must go through the finest level of the relative—the atom. To overcome aversion, hatred, jealousy, attraction or entanglements, you have to take yourself to the atom. Taking yourself to the atom means accepting a tiny bit of all of this. It may be difficult to accept something you do not like but you can definitely accept a tiny bit of it—an atom. The moment you accept that one atom, you will see change occur. But this must be done in a meditative state.

Suppose you love someone. You want more and more of them, yet there is no fulfilment. In *anuvrat*—the vow of an atom—you take just one atom of that person and that is enough to bring fulfilment to you.

Though the river is vast, a little sip quenches your thirst. Though the earth has so much food, just a small bite satisfies your hunger. All that you need are tiny bits. Accept a tiny bit of everything in life—that will bring you fulfilment.

Question: What about trouble?

There is so much trouble in the world, you can accept just a tiny part of it.

Tonight, go to bed feeling that you are satisfied, taking a tiny part of divinity with you. Satisfaction comes from the subtle and not from 'more and more'.

Question: What about giving?

You take a tiny part, and the rest you give away.

European Ashram, Bad Antogast, Germany

11 August 1999

.....

Each experience completes. Completion means being led to void or nothing. In the progression of life, you will leave behind every experience saying, "This is nothing." Anything that is completed loses its importance. It leads you to void—it is nothing.



Though the river is vast, a little sip quenches your thirst. Though the earth has so much food, just a small bite satisfies your hunger. All that you need are tiny bits. Accept a tiny bit of everything in life—that will bring you fulfilment

A sign of intelligence is how soon you arrive at this understanding. Examine everything in life and say, "This is nothing; and what remains is love, and that is everything." When "this is nothing" does not come out of knowledge, it will come out of misery. Either through knowledge or through misery, you come to the point of "this is nothing, this is nothing". The choice of how you come to that point is yours.

If you got this, it is really NOTHING. If you did not get this, never mind—this is nothing.

Bangalore Ashram, India

4 May 2000

Extract from Celebrating Silence (Sri Sri Publications Trust; ₹ 149; 202 pages), a compilation of the speeches of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the founder of the Art of Living Foundation

He had a dream

It was a speech that fired the imagination of the black community and civil rights supporters alike and sowed the seeds of a non-violent revolution, ending years of racial discrimination in America. Half a century later, African-American leader Martin Luther King Jr's *I have a dream* speech is still regarded as one of the finest examples of oratory ever. The 17-minute speech, delivered on 28 August 1963 to one of the largest gatherings of people of diverse ethnicities, became a defining moment in the American Civil Rights Movement. It helped facilitate the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, ending years of racial segregation in schools, at the workplace and public places, and giving equal voting rights to people, irrespective of their skin colour.

The impassioned speech talked of a day that the nation would "rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed". Some other gems: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character."

King's words have become a touchstone for understanding the social upheaval of the time. Bursting with Biblical language and imagery and with its choice of words and lucid rhythm, King's powerful and passionate plea



held a nation rapt. Even the venue of the speech was strategically chosen—the Lincoln Memorial, which was built in honour of the late Abraham Lincoln, the 16th US president and poster boy for the anti-slavery movement.

In recognition of his struggle for combating racial inequality through a non-violent civil disobedience move-

ment, King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Today, hundreds of streets in the US bearing his name are a testimony to his influence on a society that prides itself on being a free nation, a meritocracy. However, the most shining example of King's legacy is a black President in the White House in his second term, realising a dream that was elucidated almost 50 years ago.

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: FEBRUARY 1963

- On 9 February, Boeing 727 made its first flight, taking off from the company's airfield at Renton, Washington.
- On 11 February, noted American poet, novelist and short story writer Sylvia Plath committed suicide.
- On 19 February, the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* furthered the women's movement.
- On 22 February, Pebbles, the daughter of Fred and Wilma Flintstone, was introduced in the successful cartoon series, *The Flintstones*.

Copyfraud

n. A false or overly restrictive copyright notice, particularly one that claims ownership of public domain material.

Example. And yet, the White House is ignoring what that license says in claiming that the photograph “may not be manipulated in any way”. That’s clearly untrue under the law and a form of **copyfraud**, in that they are over claiming rights.

—Mike Masnick, “President Obama is not impressed with your right to modify his photos”, TechDirt, 20 November 2012

Success Theatre

n. Posting images and stories designed to make others believe you are more successful than you really are.

Example. We’ve become better at choreographing ourselves and showing our best sides to the screen, capturing the most flattering angle of our faces, our homes, and our evenings out, our loved ones and our trips. Its **success theatre** and we’ve mastered it.

—Jenna Wortham, “Facebook poke and the tedium of **success theatre**”, The New York Times, 28 December 2012

Sapiosexual

n. A person who is sexually attracted to intelligent people.

Example. Now relocated to Paris after years living in Co. Kildare, husky-voiced chanteuse Marianne Faithfull speaks enthusiastically of a little-known entry in the lexicon of love. The 65 year-old says: “There is this fantastic new term and I really hope it exists. It’s **sapiosexual**. It means being attracted sexually to people’s minds as well as their bodies. And there was a lot of it around in the Sixties, let me tell you.”

—Isaac Bickerstaffe, “Now relocated to Paris after...”, Irish Daily Mail, 24 April 2012

Self-interrupt

v. To interrupt one’s own work to check social media or perform some other non-work-related task.

Example. Julie Morgenstern, author of *Never Check Email in the Morning*, said: “It’s important to recognise how much is coming from outside and how much is self-interruption. I think we **self-interrupt** just as much as we’re interrupted by others.”

—Rex Hupke, “Calling time out on work interruptions, distractions”, Chicago Tribune, 29 April 2012

“I would rather have eyes that cannot see; ears that cannot hear; lips that cannot speak, than a heart that cannot love.”

—Inspirational writer Robert Tizon

Misophonia

n. An extreme intolerance or hatred for certain sounds.

Example. For people with a condition that some scientists call **misophonia**, mealtime can be torture. The sounds of other people eating—chewing, chomping, slurping, gurgling—can send them into an instantaneous, blood-boiling rage.

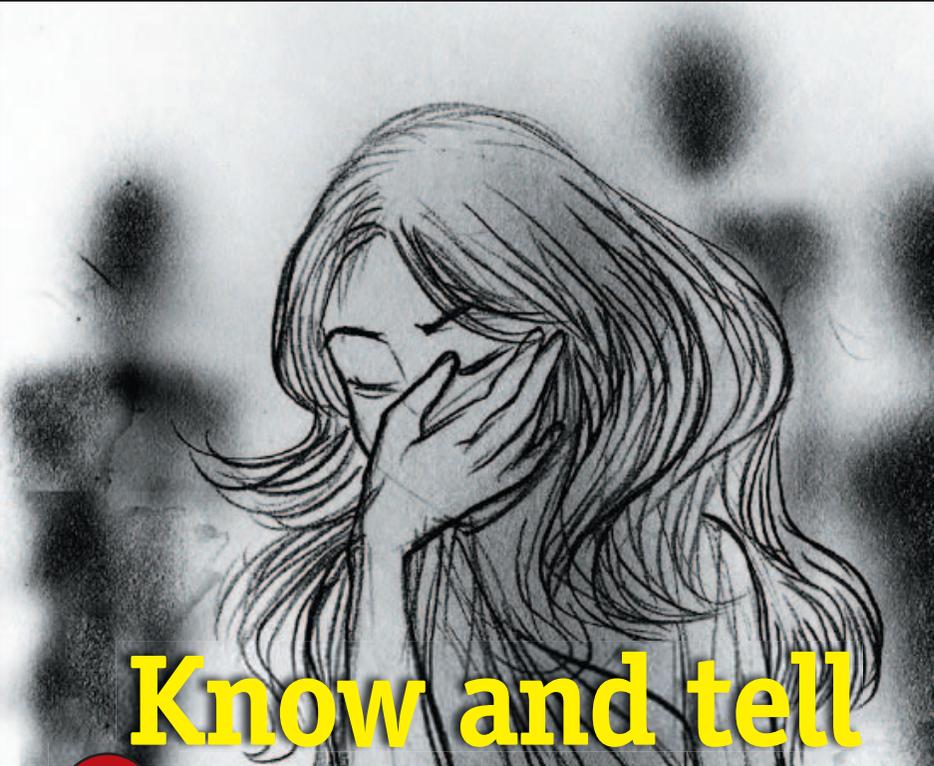
—Joyce Cohen, “When a chomp or a slurp is a trigger for outrage”, The New York Times, 5 September 2011

DOZENALIST

n. A person who believes society should switch to a base-12 counting system instead of the current base-10 system.

Example. **Dozenalists** aren’t cranks or crotchety anti-metric grouches. We just find the dozenal system easier, more efficient, and otherwise better than the decimal.

—Donald P Goodman quoted in Alex Bellos, “**Dozenalists** of the world unite! Rise up against the tyranny of ten!”, The Guardian, 12 December 2012



Know and tell

BUZZ

How safe do you feel when you step out of your home? It's a question women across the country are asking themselves in light of the recent horror, a question laced not just with fear but outrage. Now, here's a chance to convert that sentiment into a proactive force. **Safecity.in** is a social networking platform that aims to highlight unsafe zones across the country by encouraging women to register every single sexist act or threat they face as they go about their lives, whether it is a catcall, a sexual overture or someone taking your picture without permission. When you register each activity, you also tick the area in which it occurred. This is intended to serve as a warning for other women as well as a valuable aid to the police to pinpoint trouble-prone areas. Spare some time at the end of your day and log in—you could save a life.

“Love is the emblem of eternity; it confounds all notion of time; effaces all memory of a beginning, all fear of an end.”

—French-Swiss author Germaine De Stael

Powsurfing

pp. Riding a snowboard without bindings, particularly on powder snow

Example. Devotees of bindingless snowboarding, known as powsurfing, say it is a nostalgic return to the roots of the sport.

—Hayley Mick, “Snowboarders get back to their roots with powsurfing”, *The Globe and Mail*, 20 December 2012

AI-pocalypse

n. A disaster caused by an advanced artificial intelligence.

Example. The combination of these three views is thought to imply the **AI-pocalypse**: the state of affairs in which AI+ take over and do something very bad. This could range from enslaving the human population, to exterminating them, to destroying the world and many other imaginable horrors.

—John Danaher, “The singularity - overview and framework”, *Philosophical Disquisitions*, 24 December 2012

Craftivism

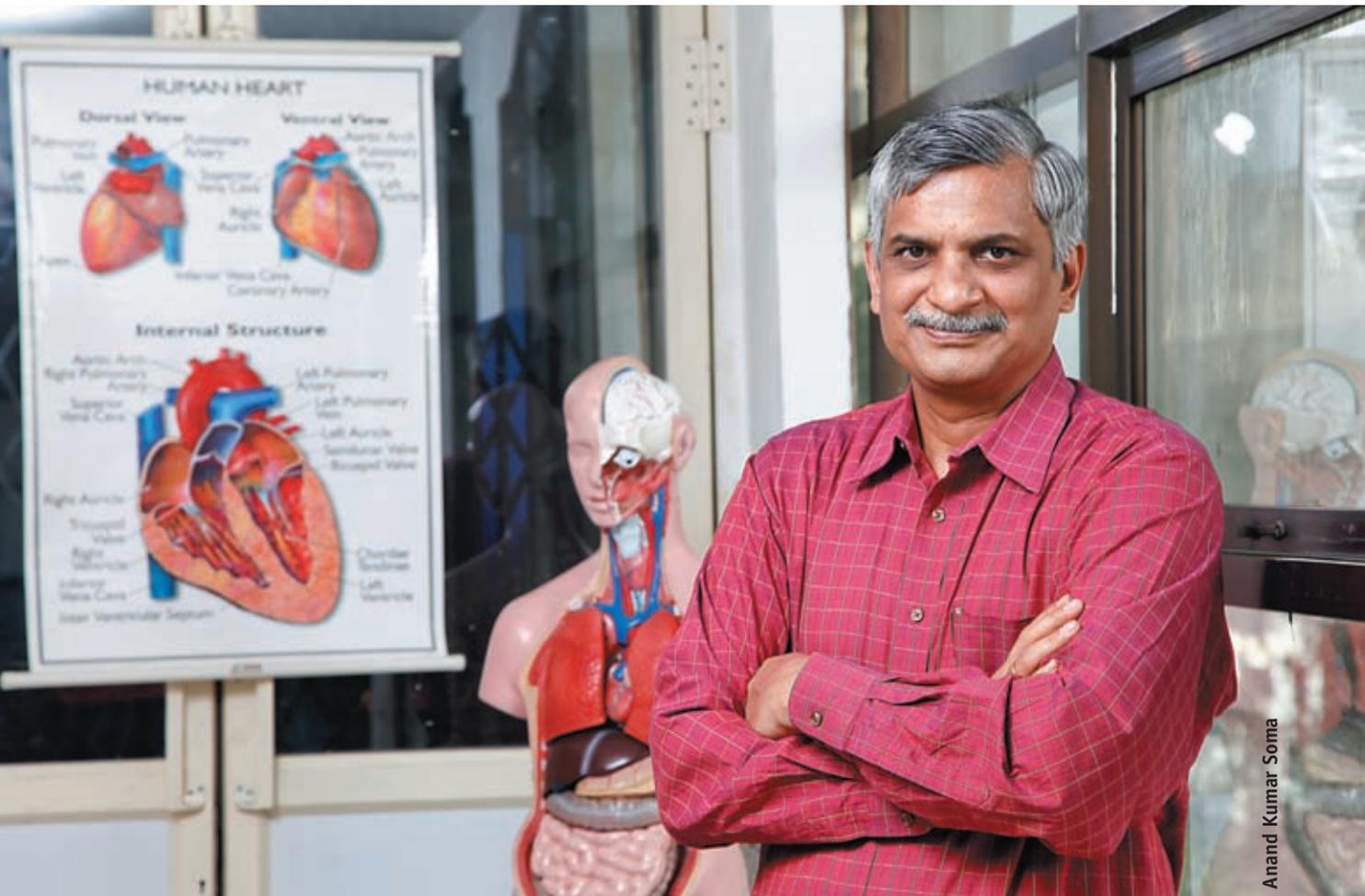
n. The use of crafts such as knitting to further political, social, or other activist causes.

Example. Is she a visionary muralist? A **craftivist**? An anarchic artist? Reichardt is not one for labels, though she does like the idea of being a craftivist—“marrying craft with activism”—and being part of a movement that is anti-sweatshop, against mass production and very much focused on sustainability and giving new life to old materials.

—“The art of **craftivism**”, *The Guardian*, 7 February 2010

“It’s painful to lose a loved one. But it’s also a great joy to donate an organ and see someone getting back to life”

K Raghuram, 54, Hyderabad, for advocating organ donation and transplant



Anand Kumar Soma

He has brought smiles to many homes through his relentless drive to spread awareness about organ donation, in the process facilitating over a hundred transplants. No wonder 54 year-old **K Raghuram**, CEO of Innova Hospitals, Hyderabad, likes to be known as someone who “helps life go on even after death strikes”. This is not just lip service. When Raghuram’s 19 year-old son was fatally injured in a road mishap in 2004, the distraught father was the head of the patients care department at a Pune hospital. Having seen the endless wait among patients for organ donors, he saw an opportunity to help others. Thus, his son’s liver, heart, heart valves, kidneys and corneas were gifted to seven patients. Raghuram points out that in India, 13 people are fatally injured in road accidents

every hour, leaving them brain dead. But the lack of awareness about donation stops their kith and kin from helping those suffering from organ failure. As the advisor to Mohan Foundation, a pioneer in organ transplant and organ harvest advocacy in India, Raghuram coordinates with the trauma wards of various hospitals, meeting the families of victims and convincing them to donate their loved one’s organs. He also trains social workers and paramedics on the basic procedure of transplantation and the challenging yet sensitive task of convincing the victim’s family. “An organ transplant is not all about charity,” emphasises Raghuram, a recipient of the CNN-IBN Real Heroes award in 2009. “It’s also about contributing to society.”

—Stella Paul

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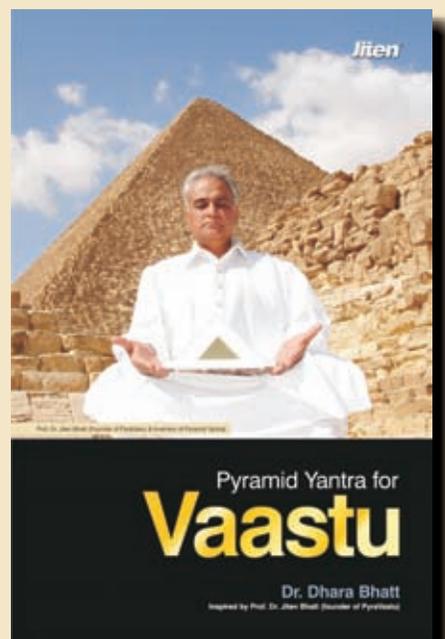
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