

harmony

JULY 2014 ₹ 40

# celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

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## NOSTALGIA

ACE CINEMATOGRAPHER  
RAMANANDA SENGUPTA  
RELIVES HIS REEL LIFE

## ENCOUNTER

TOONING IN WITH  
ANIMATOR RAM MOHAN

ALYQUE PADAMSEE'S




**LUST**  
FOR  
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• RIP AMBY • JOURNEY OF FAITH TO VAISHNO DEVI

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# Universal CHANGE

Scale has nothing to do with significance.

The term 'universal design,' or inclusive design, may evoke visions of accessible architecture but it applies to the most minute of products, which sometimes are the most vital to the business of living.

Take the currency note, for instance. This month, in 'Orbit,' we report how the Japanese are proposing to modify the yen to make it more accessible, by changing texture and shape, inspired by the Euro—a most timely move considering the rapidly silvering population of the country.

It was in the 1990s, in fact, that the European Central Bank worked with the European Blind Union to design the first series of Euro banknotes. Their maxim was simple: A good design for the blind and partially sighted is a good design for everybody. Working together they developed a set of currency with different sized banknotes with clearly contrasting, striking colours; large denominations on the notes; and raised print and tactile marks. Many countries have followed suit with some form of embossing, Braille or tactile features—Brazil, Thailand, Malawi, Bahrain, China, Hong Kong.

Suresh Natarajan



Happily enough, India scores high on the currency count. It came as a surprising revelation to me that in 1996, the Reserve Bank issued the Mahatma Gandhi Series of banknotes with raised numerals and intaglio shapes on all denominations except the ₹ 10. So the ₹ 20 has a vertical rectangle; ₹ 50, a square; ₹ 100, a triangle; ₹ 500, a circle; and ₹ 1,000, a diamond. Hard to believe that India has actually stolen a march on Japan and many other developed nations on a silver-friendly feature—but there it is.

Unfortunately, such successes are too few and far between. Despite the achievements of our scientists and technologists in the country and overseas, there have been few home-grown product innovations to enable inclusion; our homes are still very unsafe for silvers; our public spaces overwhelmingly exclusionary. It doesn't take rocket science, just more focused application of our considerable skills and expertise, and a 'universal' bent of mind. It's time to design a change—for the better.

*Tina Ambani*

## A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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Cover photo: Fotocorp

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

# Lawrence & Mayo gives Senior Citizens a reason to Smile



*For over a century, Lawrence & Mayo has played the role of a pioneer, earning its reputation as India's leading optician from its nascent years. Lawrence & Mayo has consistently helped shape and advance the optical industry by introducing fresh new concepts and initiatives aimed at providing customers with quality eye care and world-class services.*



## **Introducing Doorstep Eye Care from Lawrence & Mayo**

Lawrence & Mayo, with its towering legacy of over 137 years of excellence and experience, has inaugurated its latest silver friendly initiative to assist a vast community of senior citizens. On board this novel initiative is Lawrence & Mayo's team of top ophthalmologists and optometrists, all set to address age-related eye issues and provide quality at-home eye care solutions and services to senior citizens, all within the comfort and privacy of their homes. Just call on **+919820288817 / +9930461877** and a team of top optometrists and ophthalmologists (if required) will personally address all your eye related issues.

Lawrence & Mayo has an extensive collection of frames ranging from ₹400/- to ₹4,000/- to suit every budget. Its services extend far beyond salesmanship as Lawrence and Mayo pays attention to their customer's specific needs and lifestyle requirements. It's a no-questions-asked home and office delivery service, aimed at providing maximum convenience to customers. These impeccably prompt services have earned Lawrence & Mayo many generations of loyal customers.

## **A Century at a Glance**

Ever since the inauguration of its first showroom in Kolkata (1877), Lawrence & Mayo has been the undisputed leader of eye care in India, providing customers the highest standards in precision eye care solutions, delivered through the latest technology in eye care testing. Lawrence & Mayo has also consistently served its customers with the trendiest eye-wear of the highest quality.

A testimony to this is the impressive list of high profile customers, Lawrence and Mayo has accrued during the course of its journey. Right from Queen

Victoria, various princes, viceroys and high ranking barons of the past to today's leading industrialists, professionals and people of repute – Lawrence & Mayo has always been the optician of choice for the rich and the famous.

## **A Legacy of Pioneering Initiatives**

Lawrence & Mayo was the first Indian optician to introduce the contact lens in 1975 and also spearheaded the Computer Eye-Testing technique, which is now widely used to test eyesight across the board. Be it the now commonly used contact lens or the latest hi-tech eye testing gear, Lawrence and Mayo has always lead the way forward by introducing and establishing the latest techniques, services and products in the eye care industry.

## **The PAN – India Optician**

Its sheer commitment to achieve excellence has earned Lawrence & Mayo a stellar reputation, for the prompt and standardized service it offers across the nation. Lawrence & Mayo has a vast network of over 95 showrooms covering 36 major cities and towns across India. Over the years, the company has evolved with changing times and so have its product styles, designs and techniques. The only constant that remains is Lawrence & Mayo's unwavering commitment and dedication to its customers.

## **Recent Milestones**

It was Lawrence and Mayo's greatest honour to become India's 1st Optical Retail Chain to get almost all its optometrists registered under the Optical Council of India (OCI). This accreditation sets up new standards and benchmarks in providing quality and cost-effective eye care to its customers across the country.

# column one

"Retirement is death! The sooner you retire, the sooner you die, and I truly believe this." Alyque Padamsee, on our cover, sure doesn't mince his words. Forget active ageing, he is a poster boy for relentless living; at 83, he's reading for a revival of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, his twist on the Andrew Lloyd Webber's classic. "I have no fear of death, or afterlife, really, because I don't believe in it," he insists. What the advertising and theatre icon believes in is the magic of the stage—its power over his own life and its ability to keep him thinking, breathing, living young.

We feature two other extraordinary veterans whose passion for their metier runs equally deep. Ram Mohan followed his dream, moving from molecular spectroscopy to animation with spectacular success—he was recently awarded a Padma Shri. And cinematographer Ramananda Sengupta wielded his camera like a paintbrush; his masterly skills imbuing over 70 films with mood and beauty. Their accounts will leave you spellbound.

Elsewhere, in this issue, we take you to an even higher plane—literally and spiritually—on the 12-km trek to the holy abode of Vaishno Devi. And then bring you back to terra firma with a no-nonsense advisory of asset allocation to rein in your financial risks while upping your returns. Finally, we say goodbye to a beloved friend: the Ambassador. While Hindustan Motors has decided to stop production on the once ubiquitous vehicle, it will live on in our memories. My memories—rather privileged, I must confess—of the Amby revolve around my father, of being driven to school in his 'office car', on special days only. What are yours? Write in and let us know.

—Arati Rajan Menon

Caring for the elderly is not easy—especially when you are a senior citizen yourself. The elderly are often cantankerous and unreasonable. This is partly because of the infirmities they suffer. In jest, this attitude is called second childhood. My mother-in-law has been under our care for the past 16 years. Though it is quite a demanding task, I have found solace in my hobbies. I must also admit that there are times when my mother-in-law kisses our hands in gratitude; she gives us a broad smile and gives a handshake every time we enter her room. Such moments are priceless and rewarding. But many other elderly are lonely. Like Mother Teresa said, being unwanted, unloved, uncared, forgotten by everybody is a much greater hunger and much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat. How much does it cost us to show them a little love?

**Monica Fernandes**  
Mumbai

The May 2014 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* was informative and nicely presented—the way I have known it to be. I enjoyed reading about Mrs Henrietta Colaco ('The Great Granny Diaries'); the mother-daughter dancer team, Dr Maya Rao and Madhu Nataraj ('Footsteps'); spirited silvers like R Elango in Tamil Nadu's Kuthambakkam ('Proactive'); and traffic manager P S Subramanian in Mumbai—all the stories have been translated into meaningful information.

**T K Srinivas Chari**  
Chennai

I read with great interest your exhaustive cover feature "Eyes Wide Open" in the May 2014 issue. Here, I would like to share a strange personal experience. Recently I underwent my first cataract surgery and recovered fully and steadily



with perfect vision. But just after a month, I suddenly developed an internal infection and completely lost vision in the eye overnight! The ophthalmologist himself was baffled and could not detect the reason for this; he termed it a very rare case. Fortunately, after more than a month's treatment, I have regained my eyesight. Like your story mentioned, change in vision is an inevitable part of ageing and seeking timely, professional care is important in safeguarding sight.

**Kusum Gokarn**  
Pune

Harmony for Silvers Foundation's Senior Citizens' Run, held in Bengaluru on 18 May 2014, was excellently organised. It was a golden opportunity for laughter clubs like ours. For the 21 participants of our club, it was a dream run. By participating, we hoped to inspire other silvers to keep themselves mentally and physically fit. Your team of volunteers worked hard to make the event comfortable for silvers in every way. We are looking forward to many such events in future. Thank you for your valuable concern for silvers.

**Poonam P Shenoy**  
President, Sri Raghothaman  
Nageyoga Vyayama Koota  
Sanjay Nagar, Bengaluru

## ► FIRST RESORT



# Hola!

With its traditional Catholic society, it has lagged behind other European countries in accepting homosexuality. That's why the opening of **Spain's first home for gay and lesbian pensioners** in a converted hotel in Madrid is such a landmark event. As news agency Reuters reports, until 26 December 1978, homosexuals in the country were classified by law as 'dangerous' and faced prison or internment in 're-education centres.' "Despite the law being overturned, as far as society is concerned, elderly LGBTB [lesbians-gays-transgenders-bisexuals] don't exist in Spain," rues Federico Armenteros, president of the

26 December Foundation, a Spanish advocacy group for LGBT society that is building the new home. "We want to bring them in from the fringes." But the home will not be exclusively for gay people, he emphasises. "We're not going to ask you who you sleep with when you apply. Anyone can come, the only thing to bear in mind is that it specialises in elderly LGBTBs. As it is, there are homes for ex-servicemen, nuns or retired workers from specific companies and no one says they are being discriminatory." The home, which will have medical, recreational, sports and leisure facilities, will open its doors in 2015.

## COURSE FOR CARE



**I**n a bid to meet the rising demand for caregivers for silvers and generate employment opportunities, **Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Research and Training Institute (BARTI) in Pune** has

**started a certificate course: Senior Citizen Care (SCC).** Of the three-month course, two will be dedicated to classroom teaching, while the third month will comprise three weeks of practical training and a week of

internship with a Pune-based retirement community. “The idea behind SCC is to provide non-medical assistance and help in everyday tasks and activities for ageing people who are compelled to stay at their own home or prefer it that way to be able to remain independent,”

Rohan Joshi, project director, skill development, BARTI, tells media. “SCC can help with any service needed that is not medical-related. It could include medication reminders or trips to the doctor, but is usually meant for help with routine activities. On successful completion of the course, trainees will be awarded BARTI’s certificate in Senior Citizen Care. All successful trainees will get a chance to be interviewed for jobs at old-age homes, private homes or hospitals.” If successful, BARTI plans to start the course in Nashik and Mumbai. For more details, call (0) 9404999484.

## A YEN FOR CHANGE



**THIS** is the kind of news we like to hear. In a nod to its silvering population, **Japan has announced a series of amendments in Yen notes to make them more ‘accessible’ to the visually impaired.** For starters, the ¥ 5,000 note will be tweaked—while the current notes already have holograms on the left corner on the front face of the bill, the new ones will have a different texture for better feel and would be more square-shaped to differentiate them from the ¥ 10,000 notes, reports news agency Reuters. Going forward, it has been proposed that different notes would have different widths and lengths, like Euros.

## SILVER SPLIT

**S**ustaining a marriage has never been harder—and silvers are no exception. Sociologists from Bowling Green State University in Ohio in the US say **the number of people divorcing over the age of 50 in the US has doubled in the past 20 years.** In fact, their study, *The Gray Divorce Revolution: Rising Divorce among Middle-Aged and Older Adults, 1990-2010*, shows that every fourth divorce filed in the US involves individuals over the age of 50. “Lifelong marriages are increasingly difficult to sustain in an era of individualism and lengthening life expectancies,” writes study author Susan Brown in *The Journals of Gerontology*. “Older adults are more reluctant now to remain in empty shell marriages.”

## CENT PER CENT

Over 250,000 employees including pensioners will be benefitted with Chhattisgarh government's decision to raise dearness allowance (DA) to 100 per cent from the existing 90 per cent.



## Train of thought

In April, the Bombay High Court directed the Central and Western railways to consider providing a separate compartment for silvers travelling on local trains. The directive came in response to a letter written by a senior citizen, A B Thakkar, as far back in 2009 detailing the travails of elders entering jam-packed trains.

# Britspeak

A survey by charity Age UK tells a tale of loneliness and worry among British silvers, both sentiments that appear to kick in at the age of 50 and escalate sharply. Here are some highlights culled from London newspaper *The Independent*:



Britons don't worry about old age until they're 50, then worry most about their memory and how children will cope if they die.



40 per cent worry about so much about ageing it keeps them awake at night.



95 per cent of people insist they do not want to go into a nursing home.



10 per cent of people over the age of 65 say they often or always feel lonely.



40 per cent consider their television set to be their main form of company.



About 15 per cent say they feel cut off from society and 30 per cent say they would like to go out more often.

"At Age UK, we know how devastating loneliness can be for older people and these figures are another reminder of the scale of this issue," says director Caroline Abrahams. "Loneliness not only makes life miserable for older people, it is also really bad for their health making them more vulnerable to illness and disease."

## Work hard, retire easy



**P**ush yourself now and reap the rewards later. That's the message emerging from a study by the University of Michigan, which posits that **mentally challenging jobs can keep silver minds active long after retirement**, ensuring better memory, quicker mental processing speeds and superior cognitive functioning. "Based on data spanning 18 years and encompassing over 4,000 participants, our study suggests that certain kinds of challenging jobs have the potential to enhance and protect workers' mental functioning," Gwenith Fisher, a member of the study team, says in a media release. "The stress that may accrue from a job that requires a variety of mental processes is more than compensated by the benefits in later life." The study is published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*.

## THE KLOTHO EFFECT

**K**lotho is the Fate from Greek mythology who spun the thread of life—a most appropriate name for a hormone believed to aid longevity. **Klotho is a product of a gene known for its anti-ageing effect; now, we know that it also benefits the brain,**

thanks to new research from the University of California – San Francisco. "Based on what was known about klotho, we expected it to affect the brain by changing the ageing process," writes study director Lennart Mucke in journal *Cell Reports*. "But we found that it positively affects cognition throughout life. To put it simply, higher levels of it makes people smarter!" Still, not enough is known about the mysterious klotho to channel these discoveries into actual treatments; much more research lies ahead. We'll keep you posted.



## TWO TONGUES



**TWO TONGUES** are better than one. A study from the University of Edinburgh insists that **bilingualism can improve cognition and delay dementia**, in addition to the obvious social benefits. The team studied 835 native speakers of English who were born and living in Edinburgh, Scotland; about 262 of these were able to communicate in at least one language other than English and had significantly better cognitive abilities, especially general intelligence and reading. What's more, the effects were present in those who acquired their second language early as well as late. "These findings are of considerable practical relevance," writes lead author Thomas Bak in journal *Annals of Neurology*. "Our study shows that bilingualism, even when acquired in adulthood, may benefit the ageing brain."

**CRISIS OF CARE: PROTECTING OUR PARENTS**, A MOVING NEW BBC SERIES, SHEDS LIGHT ON THE DIFFICULTIES IN CARING FOR SILVERS. IT GOES INTO HOMES AND ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES ACROSS BRITAIN AND DISCOVERS HOW FRAGMENTED SYSTEMS OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE REALLY ARE. TO LEARN MORE AND SEE CLIPS FROM THE SERIES, GO TO [WWW.BBC.CO.UK/PROGRAMMES/B041MQ9Q](http://WWW.BBC.CO.UK/PROGRAMMES/B041MQ9Q)

## SECRETS FROM SCANDINAVIA

THORBJÖRG, A 54 YEAR-OLD LIFESTYLE COACH AND TV PERSONALITY WHO'S BEEN DUBBED 'SCANDINAVIA'S ANTI-AGEING QUEEN', HAS HIT GLOBAL PAY DIRT WITH *10 YEARS YOUNGER IN 10 WEEKS*—THE BOOK ADVOCATES A NATURAL APPROACH TO HEALTH AND BEAUTY FOR WOMEN OF ALL AGES IN A LAIDBACK, CHATTY STYLE. FOR MORE INFO, GO TO

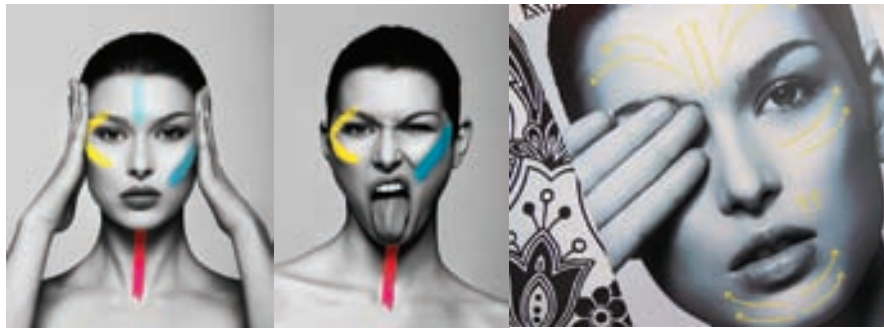
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## PAYING FOR POOP!

Some are calling it the most bird-brained anti-ageing idea yet while others are singing its virtues—the **£ 180 anti-wrinkle treatment at the Hilton Hotel Spa on London's Park Lane where nightingale droppings are smeared onto your skin.** So, why such a stupendous amount, close to ₹ 18,000, for bird poop? Apparently, these are no ordinary droppings. We are told by London newspaper *Daily Mail* that they are collected on the Japanese island of Kyushu and mixed with rice bran and water. This mask is applied on the skin for an hour; the enzymes it contains are believed to break down dead skin and restore complexions damaged by ageing and sun exposure. And yes, apparently Tom Cruise is a fan.

## FACE IT



**TAKING MORE THAN** just a cue from yoga, British writer Inge Theron has launched the **FaceGym**, “an anti-ageing concept that gives your skin a workout”. Including stages like ‘warm-up’, ‘cardio’, and ‘strength’ has put a modern spin on what is essentially a traditional and time-tested technique. “Facial muscles are crucial to the way we look and regular stimulation can lift, tone and tighten the skin, boost blood circulation and collagen production, giving a fresh youthful appearance to the skin,” she tells London newspaper *The Telegraph*. “There are over 650 muscles in the human body and roughly 50 in the face. But without proper stimulation, face muscles are prone to sagging.” Trained therapists offer FaceGym at London mega store Selfridges; a wider rollout across Britain is expected over the course of the year—each 30-minute session costs £ 35 (about ₹ 3,500). Want to try a similar experience at home, and for free? Check out the January 2011 issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* or find it online at [www.harmonyindia.org/hportal/VirtualPageView.jsp?page\\_id=14881](http://www.harmonyindia.org/hportal/VirtualPageView.jsp?page_id=14881)



## HEART-felt

**I**f it's good for your heart, it's great for your face. That's the premise of Avon's **Anew Clinical E-Defence deep recovery anti-ageing face cream—it contains thymosin, a protein often used to heal the damage caused by a heart attack** by regenerating tissue.

According to a media release, in tests, the lotion stopped a cut apple from turning brown and improved the appearance of wrinkles by 30 per cent in eight weeks of use, reduced fine lines on foreheads, cheeks and around the eyes, and halved blotchiness and sunspots. The best part, for interested users, is the cost: £ 20 (about ₹ 2,000), considerably lower than premium anti-ageing products. To learn more, go to [www.avon.uk.com](http://www.avon.uk.com)

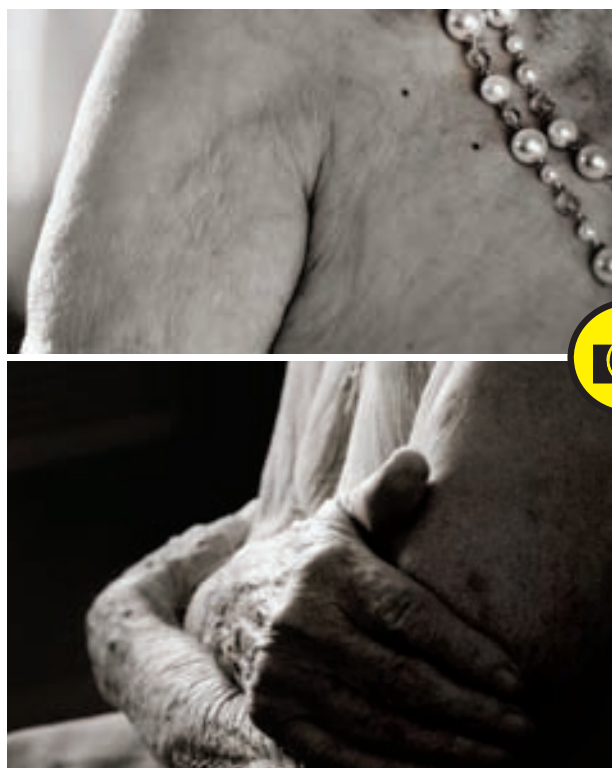


## Diva's dilemma

Women in the performing arts find themselves marginalised with the passage of time, world over. This is the dilemma at the centre of filmmaker **Olivier Assayas's** *Clouds of Sils Maria* starring French superstar **Juliette Binoche**. The plot is indeed intriguing, as news agency AFP reports. Maria Enders, played by Binoche, finds stardom with the role of an aggressive young woman, who seduces her middle-aged boss and destroys her. Twenty years on, Enders is asked to act in the remake of the film—as the older woman—and grapples with the irony of the entire situation. Binoche herself isn't complaining about the meaty role, though, or the questions it raises. "I think the more experience you have, the more you focus on the really important questions, you open up, you mature, you become more skilled, more honed," she says. "Imagine if for 40 years you played the part of a 20 year-old, you'd get very bored!" The film was screened at the Cannes Film Festival and is expected to make its way through the festival circuit before it hits cinemas worldwide.



**REALLY?** SMASH HIT EROTIC NOVEL *FIFTY SHADES OF GREY* BY BRITISH AUTHOR E L JAMES HAS NOW BEEN LINKED TO AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIS) AMONG SILVERS IN THE UK. MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS CLAIM THE NOVEL IS ENCOURAGING THEM TO BECOME "MORE EXPLORATIVE" IN THE BEDROOM. QUITE FRANKLY, WE'RE NOT CONVINCED ONE BOOK CAN HAVE SUCH AN IMPACT!



## PORTRAITS 100

As far as bodies of work go, it doesn't get more beautiful. American photographer **Anastasia Pottinger's** project *Centenarians* features nude women from different walks of life who have just one thing in common—they are all over 100. "This project was born

out of the opportunity I had to photograph a 101 year-old woman who volunteered, on her own accord, to model nude for me," she writes on her website. "It was merely an exercise in documenting her form in a beautiful way. My only instructions from her were to make sure she was not identifiable in the images.

When I later reviewed the images, I knew I was looking at something very special. The idea to continue the series was born. Aside from the images themselves, the intersection of meeting my models and both of us taking that leap from chatting to making images of their bodies is where the excitement lies. It's that moment and the mutual trust that comes from the experience that is evidenced in the intimacy of the images." Pottinger is on the lookout for more models to keep the series alive. To find out more or take a look at the stunning images in the series, go to [anastasiapottingerphotography.com/gallery/art/centenarians](http://anastasiapottingerphotography.com/gallery/art/centenarians)

# AUTO-PILOT



## Trust the guys at Google to invent a self-driving car!

The company's new prototype—in the making for the past four years—has no brake pedals or steering wheels; you just push a button and go. And not unsurprisingly, this vehicular wonder is firmly targeted at the silver market, as its promo video suggests. These automated cars use video cameras, radar sensors and a laser range finder to 'see' other traffic, as well as detailed maps to navigate the road ahead. "This is all made possible by Google's data centres, which can process the enormous amounts of information gathered by our cars when mapping their terrain," says Google in a media

release. "Our goal is to help prevent traffic accidents, free up people's time and reduce carbon emissions by fundamentally changing car use. We're confident self-driving cars will transform car sharing, significantly reducing car usage, as well as help create the new 'highway trains of tomorrow'. These trains should cut energy consumption while increasing the number of people that can be transported on our major roads."

g

Eventually, the company will build 100 of these for a pilot project on California roads. To read more about the project, go to [googleblog.blogspot.in/2014/05/just-press-go-designing-self-driving.html](http://googleblog.blogspot.in/2014/05/just-press-go-designing-self-driving.html)



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# A day of **learning**

**I**n a seminar packed with voices from various fields, Kolkata-based Institute of Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Development (ILEAD) celebrated World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15 June. Titled 'Emerging Opportunities for Senior Citizens', the event focused on the growing silver population and the need to protect their interests and make life enjoyable for them.

Highlights included talks by prominent medical professionals Dr Rana Mukherjee, director of Continuum Care, and Dr Ghosh Dastidar, a consultant physician with Calcutta Medical Research Institute (CMRI), who addressed the major physical and mental health challenges faced by silvers. Dr Saptarshi Basu, senior associate and critical care in charge, Institute of Neurosciences, Kolkata (INK), specifically talked about strokes and their prevention.

Next up was a discourse on the need for more senior citizens' resorts in India. Shashank Paranjape, managing director of Paranjape Schemes Ltd, spoke about Athashri, its senior citizen resorts in Pune and Bengaluru, while Ankur Gupta of Ashiana Housing Ltd spoke about Utsav Care Homes in Bhiwadi, Jaipur and Lavasa. In addition,

Vijay Sood, manager, Infinity, talked about starting West Bengal's first senior citizen resort, Jagriti Dham.

In an enlightening session, students from the Entrepreneurship Development Institute, Ahmedabad, showcased a range of state-of-the-art equipment that could empower silvers—from adjustable cots, hydro-massage mattresses and shoes that monitor heart rate to cups with double handles.

Moving on to fitness, 85 year-old Rateria from the Bihar School of Yoga discussed the benefits of yoga, and even conducted an interactive live yoga session. This was followed by a talk by Nikita Sanghai Das of Twist-n-Turn, Kolkata, in which she emphasised the power of dance as the ideal form of fitness for everyone.

Finally, Saurabh Ghosh, chief manager, State Bank of India, rounded off the morning with tips on finance management. While he elaborated upon various retail banking products and investment opportunities for silvers, Dhritipriya Ray Dasgupta of Universal Sompo General Insurance Co Ltd spoke about various kinds of health insurance covers for health checkups and hospitalisation costs—a most enlightening event.

# From art to defence

**F**rom learning how to make masks and flowers to a demo on self-defence, the month of June was exciting for silvers at the Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, Mumbai.

On 3 June, Aswini Shah and Sonali Mistry, students from the J J School of Arts, shared their crafty expertise on making quills and flowers with an enthusiastic group of 30 silvers. Dividing the group into two, they guided each group simultaneously at every step as they got creative. And on 5 June, sculpting expert Maurice D'Cruz from J J School of Arts conducted a session on mask making, a first-time experience for most silvers present. "It felt like the art and craft class from



school all over again!" says Purnima Deshpande, 62. "We really enjoyed making flowers and the masks. But personally, I loved making the quill as it was the most challenging."

Pumped up for the session on self-defence on 20 June, the members welcomed Amit Khatri from the All

India Shotokan Karate Federation. He started off by elaborating upon various situations that could be potentially threatening to silvers, such as inviting salespersons into the house, going to the bank unaccompanied, and false threats. He explained how consciousness is the first and vital weapon against all such threatening situations. "Most such attacks are planned by familiar people or involve the information you share with them, such as neighbours, shopkeepers or other strangers," he said, adding that disclosing one's daily routine or plans could be dangerous.

He followed this up with a short demonstration on how silvers can defend themselves, giving tips on an attacker's vulnerable spots and how to be opportunistic. From where to punch to how to get away from someone's grip and nine different ways of using a stick to attack one's assailant, Khatri demonstrated the techniques while the members tried them out. "We got good practical guidance from Mr Khatri," says Rajnikant Karia, a member who attended the session. "It was not only very useful but quite fun as we practiced the moves."



**Read this.** Magazines and books can help you keep mentally alert well into your silver years, according to a new study from CEU Cardenal Herrera University in Valencia, Spain, published in the journal *Revista de Investigacion Clinica*. The researchers have established that people who don't read are at 3.7 times increased risk of cognitive decline compared to those who read occasionally.



#### RECYCLING FACTS

- In India, recovery and utilisation of waste paper is only 27 per cent, which is low compared to other nations—Germany is the highest at 63 per cent.
- Recycling 1 tonne of waste paper can result in saving 70 per cent raw material, 60 per cent coal, 43 per cent energy and 70 per cent water, compared to making virgin paper from wood.

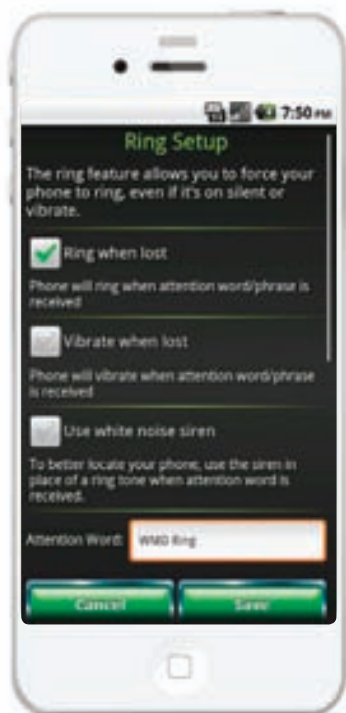
## Then: Stacks of newspapers Now: Tea coaster

Instead of handing over your month's collection of newspapers to the *raddiwala*, make tea coasters out of them this month. A few broadsheet newspapers, glue and tape are all you need. First, take a single sheet, and start folding it lengthwise till you have a thin strip. Repeat this with a few more sheets. Then, join the ends of each strip to another by sticking them with clear tape. Now that you have a very long strip, start rolling one end slowly but

tightly. The longer the connected strip, the bigger your coaster. Occasionally apply glue as you roll so that they are all in place, including the ending tip of the coaster. Let it dry for a day. Paint them in bright colours to enliven your dining table! An alternate method to connecting the strips is to start out by making smaller rolled pieces of 1-inch diameter each, and then connect these pieces to each other using yarn or glue.

#### MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. USE THE METHOD MENTIONED ABOVE TO MAKE NOT JUST COASTERS BUT PLACE MATS AND TRIVETS TOO.
2. USE NEWSPAPERS TO GIFT WRAP. GET CREATIVE AND PAINT THEM BEFORE USE.



## WHERE'S MY DROID

**Available for:** Android v2.2 and up

**What it does:** Forget the worry about forgetting your phone somewhere. Features include finding your phone by making it ring, increasing the ring tone volume, using GPS tracking to locate lost or stolen phones even on low battery, and notifying in case of SIM card change. A similar app for iPhone is called Find My iPhone, available for iOS 7.0 or later. The app is activated by sending a text message, containing 'attention words' from another phone to your lost phone. In the pro version (available for a one-time fee of ₹ 240), you also have the option of wiping your phone clean of its stored password and important credentials, in case it has been stolen.

**After installation:** It will run you through a guide on how to use the app. You can set up different attention words for activating different features, such as Ring, GPS, Lock, Unlock and Wipe. You can also log in to the app's web interface, so you can track your phone from a computer.

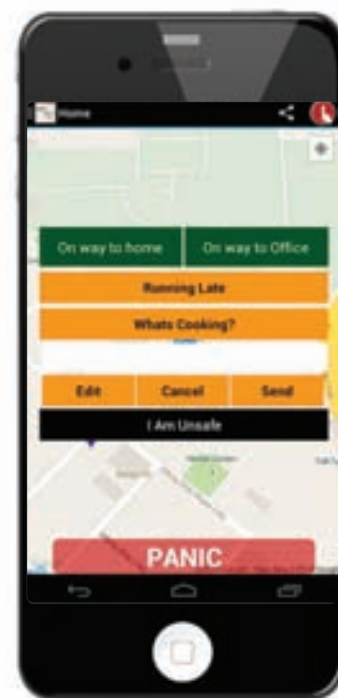
With the increase in social networking sites and online identity thefts, keeping the same password for every site you sign up for makes your account vulnerable. It can get harrowing to remember so many cryptic eight-character passwords. My Eyes Only, developed by Software Ops for iOS 7.0 and later, is an iPhone app that securely stores all your passwords, credit card information, or bank account details. And no, this does not mean they have access to your private information—the data you store is strongly encrypted and sent to a storage cloud, and is decrypted only when you access it with your password. Even if your phone is lost or stolen, you can retrieve the information. While the basic service of securely storing information is free, for more advanced features like cloud backup there is a yearly subscription. Get the app from the Apple iTunes store or at [www.softwareops.com/my-eyes-only-7/](http://www.softwareops.com/my-eyes-only-7/)

## SMART 24X7

**Available for:** Android; Windows; Blackberry; iOS 6.0 or later

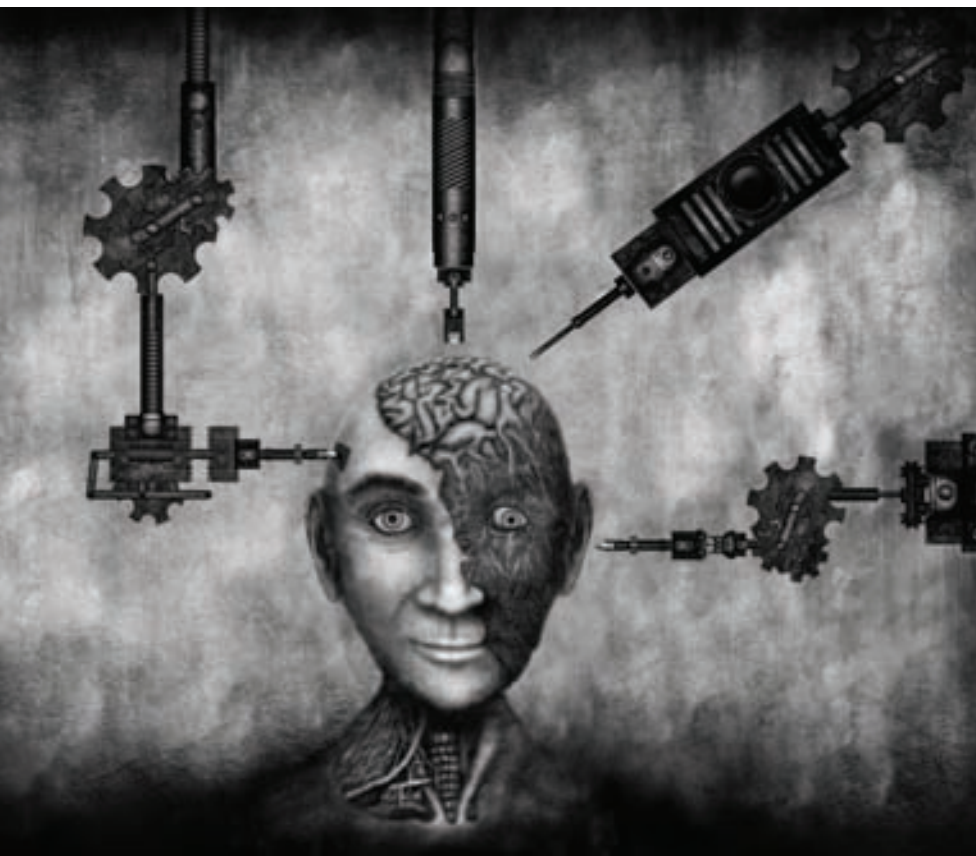
**What it does:** A personal safety app that was released last year by Smart 24X7 Response Services Pvt Ltd, this home-grown free app is currently supported by Gurgaon, Noida, Jalandhar, Amritsar and Jammu Police. A unique feature is that it is connected 24x7 to a call centre for immediate assistance, besides providing immediate connectivity with one press to dear ones. You can also get in touch with fire, police and ambulance services available nearby. Designed for women, silvers and children, it is simple to use and handy: when you press the 'Panic' button, an alert, including your GPS location, is sent to five primary contacts. What's more, you instantly receive a call from the Smart 24X7 Customer Care for assistance.

**After installation:** The app requires that you feed in contact details of five people to get in touch with in case of an emergency. You also need to feed in all your details such as blood group, address and phone numbers. In case your Internet (GPRS) isn't working, the alert would be sent through SMS (service charge for this one might go up to ₹ 30). There is also a basic chat function, as well as an option to store health records and doctor's details that medical agencies can refer to if required.





# SAVE THE CELL



## ApoE4 and Alzheimer's

Women are more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease because of a gene difference, according to recent research conducted at the Stanford University School of Medicine. Women who carry one copy of a gene variant called ApoE4 are found to be at risk of Alzheimer's by two to four times. The same is not valid for men, though; the researchers reveal that the presence of this gene does not increase their risk as significantly as it does in women. The protein-defining gene ApoE has three variants: ApoE2, ApoE3 and ApoE4. Normally, people carry two copies of ApoE3, but one in five carry the ApoE4 variant. Scientists believe this discovery can lead to the development of effective treatment because clinicians can take different approaches to patients with this gene variant depending on their gender.

Scientists have identified a cell that can be saved in stroke victims to reduce brain damage. Pericytes are cells that regulate the blood flow in capillaries. Until recently, scientists believed that blood flow in the brain was controlled by changes in the diameter of arterioles. But this new research, conducted at University College London, Oxford University and University of Copenhagen, indicates that it is, in fact, controlled by pericytes that tighten or loosen around the capillaries, causing them to narrow or widen.

It has been discovered that after a stroke, these pericytes tighten up and die around the capillaries, ceasing

blood flow and causing drastic damage to brain cells. Even though blood clots can be removed when the stroke victim gets in time to the hospital, researchers believe that the constriction of the pericytes can cause a negative long-term effect by restricting blood supply and eventually causing brain damage later in life.

PREVENTING PERICYTE DEATH MAY RESTORE NORMAL BLOOD FLOW IN THE BRAIN

To counter this, the researchers, in simulated lab tests, have found that certain chemicals could reduce pericyte death by half after a stroke. Preventing pericyte death could help restore normal blood flow in the brain and prevent slow devastating damage, further preventing neurological disabilities. Tests are being conducted to develop these into stroke treatment drugs.



## GO GREEN

**A**ge-related muscle atrophy, which is a decrease in mass of skeletal muscle, also called sarcopenia, is a common condition that affects silvers worldwide. Skeletal muscles are attached to the bones and are under voluntary control, so when they begin to weaken, more energy is needed to move. Studies have shown that muscles tend to weaken by nearly 50 per cent between 20 and 90 years, while on an average silvers lose 30 per cent of their strength just between 50 and 70, caused by a sedentary lifestyle.

ELIXIR

But a recent study at the University of Iowa claims that **a certain compound in green tomatoes could be a solution to age-related atrophy**. Tomatidine reverses the changes in muscle cells, stimulating the growth of muscle cells. Scientists also tested their theory on mice by adding tomatidine to their diet, and found it treated and prevented muscle atrophy. Also, while the mice grew stronger muscles, it did not affect their overall weight. Further research will determine how many green tomatoes need to be included in one's diet.



**Caffeine in coffee has its downs but it could decrease your risk of Type 2 diabetes**, according to a study by the Harvard Public School of Health. An increase by one cup a day over a period of four years is associated with an 11 per cent lower risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, whereas a cup less over the same period can lead to a 17 per cent increase in risk. The study covered a large number of people who answered questionnaires about their coffee habits and health every four years. However, this is only a part of the complex story and shouldn't be read out of context.

## Seeing RED

**A UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN** study on menopause has identified what is and isn't normal for older women when they go through a stage that is both irregular and distressing. The study found that **extended and heavy menstrual bleeding during menopause is common; it's not because something is wrong**. Usually occurring in women after 45, re-

Menopause affects women over 45. The new study says that during menopause it is normal for women to:

- Experience bleeding for 10 or more days
- Experience spotting for six or more days
- Experience heavy bleeding for three or more days
- Experience more than one episode of bleeding for 10 or more days within six months

searchers say that this stage can last for up to 10 years. The study looked

at 1,300 American women between 42 and 52 years of age, and took into account hormone therapy, smoking and physical activity. The conclusion: during menopause, 91 per cent of the women experienced bleeding for 10 or more days, 88 per cent reported spotting for six or more days, while more than three-fourth had experienced heavy bleeding for three or more days. More than one-third had almost three episodes of 10 or more days of bleeding over six months. According to researchers, there is a need for guidelines on what women should expect during menopause and what requires medical attention.

# JUNGLE BOOKS

A huge, dark brown *gaur* (wild bison) greets us in the sitting area of ace wildlife photographer **Rajesh Bedi's** work space. Books on wildlife line the many shelves; tiger coasters and elephant foot lamps fill up the table. Bestowed with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 3rd National Photography Awards in March, 62 year-old Bedi's passion for animals is evident everywhere.

This passion goes back to his childhood, which was spent amid nature. Bedi recalls how his father, Dr Ramesh Bedi, an expert in medicinal plants, would treat animals at their home in Haridwar. "I have seen snake eggs being hatched," he reminisces. "My mother would often see a tiger with cubs in the sugarcane fields behind our house. My love for animals, therefore, developed quite early. Money and fame were not our goals but work with wildlife was."

Besides wildlife photography, filmmaking with his brother Naresh has been a passion as well. In their childhood, the two accompanied their father on field visits and learnt the ropes. "I was nine, and Naresh 12; my father would go around collecting plants to make records and would take his own photographs," he shares.

In the 1960s, the family shifted to Delhi and would travel to national parks during holidays. "We went to the Jim Corbett National Park to study elephants," recalls Bedi. "As my brother was older, he got to use the camera first." Eventually, he also got the hang of it.

Naresh went on to study filmmaking at the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune, pursuing documentary filmmaking. In 1970, he came back to start Bedi Films along with Rajesh.

Rewards poured in with their 1984 documentary, *Ganges Gharial*. It took them five years to compose and shoot the film, revealing the breeding cycle of the gharial for the first time. "We travelled across states during those days when the Chambal Valley was known for dacoits," he says. "We would be approached by different groups and had to explain what we were doing. But it was all worth it, as the film was first aired by Channel 4, UK, and later travelled across 40 countries."

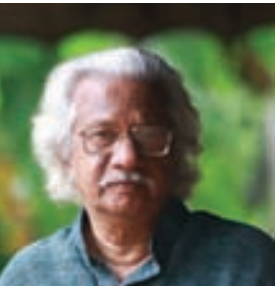
A man who continues to love risks and adventure, Bedi experimented with aerial photography for his coffee table book,

*Rajasthan: Under the Desert Sky*, published by Roli Books and featured in *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, October 2013. Across the world, aerial photography is done with kites, motor drones, hot air balloons or helicopters—none of which are allowed in India. "It was tough convincing the bureaucratic circles," he says with a smile. "I was given a long list of dos and don'ts. But finally my kite was ready to fly in the skies of Rajasthan."

Right now, despite challenges such as extreme weather conditions and remote areas with scant facilities, the brothers are bent upon capturing the snow leopards of Spiti, Himachal Pradesh. "In wildlife, sometimes it takes many cycles to capture what you are looking for as you don't know the nature of the animal," says Bedi. "At such high altitudes, one loses appetite, and the hard terrain sometimes takes its toll." Yet the mission to capture the elusive leopards on camera pushes them to extremes. "Sometimes we would see the signs of the movement of the leopards but we are yet to get what we are looking for." He isn't giving up, though—to no one's surprise.

—Ambica Gulati





## BIRTHDAYS

- Celebrated Malayalam filmmaker **Adoor Gopalakrishnan** (left) turned 73 on 3 July.
- **George W Bush**, the 43rd President of the USA, turned 68 on 6 July.

● American action hero **Sylvester Stallone** turned 68 on 6 July.

● American Oscar-winning actor **Tom Hanks** (right) turns 58 on 9 July.



- British business tycoon and founder of Virgin Group **Richard Branson** turns 64 on 18 July.
- Veteran film and theatre actor **Naseeruddin Shah** (left) turns 64 on 20 July.

## MILESTONES

● Scientist-turned-Malayalam writer **C Radhakrishnan** (right), 75, was selected for the Moortidevi Award for 2013 on 13 June for his novel *Theekkadal Katanu Thirumadhuram*, a biography on Thunchat Ramanujan Ezhutachan, the father of the Malayalam language.



- Hindi poet **Kedarnath Singh**, 80, was selected for the Jnanpith Award 2013 for his works *Abhi Bilkul Abhi* and *Yahan Se Dekho*, making him the 10<sup>th</sup> Hindi writer to receive the honour.
- 67 year-old **Salman Rushdie** (left) was chosen for the Pen Pinter Prize on 20 June for his contributions toward literature and standing up for freedom of expression.



## IN PASSING

● Marathi film music composer **Anand Modak** (left) passed away on 23 May following a heart attack. He was 63.

● Renowned Sanskrit scholar and Indologist **Sukumari Bhattacharji**, 92, passed away on 24 May.

● Noted American poet, author and civil rights activist **Maya Angelou** (right) passed away on 28 May. She was 86.



- National Award winning Bengali film director **Anjan Das** succumbed to liver cancer on 2 June. He was 62.
- Union Rural Development Minister **Gopinath Munde** (left) died in a car crash on 3 June. He was 65.

● Tamil cinema director and producer **Ramanarayanan**, aged 65, died of kidney-related problems on 22 June.



"The film industry is starting to notice that there is a market for films about older people. For a start, the whole population is ageing, so they've got to make something to entertain us and teenagers no longer dominate box-office receipts. I just think there really need to be stories about people who have been through life and are still hopeful."

—British actor **Kristin Scott Thomas**, 54, in *The Guardian*

## HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

### THE PEOPLE PERSON

I was born in a village near Golaghat in upper Assam and I was a teacher before I joined the Civil Services. If I were to pick the most memorable experience during my career, it would have to be being the chief guest in April last year at the golden jubilee celebrations of the community Bihu in Sarupathar, a small town in Assam, where I had my first-ever posting as a civil officer. Three decades ago, I had got the local people together to organise the first community Bihu there.

If you're wondering what this has to do with being a civil servant, well, this is it: during every posting, I made it a point to get close to the local people, their culture and their lives. Why, there were times when I sourced vital information faster than the police did!

I also have a flair for dramatics, which helped me earn the goodwill of the people. When posted in Lakhimpur in 1964-69, I played the role of Kamsa's father Ugrasena in a play there. People used to ask me how I acted so well in a typically Hindu role from the epics.

When posted in Barpeta in 1971-73, I was the first ever Muslim to enact a role in the annual theatre festival organised in the premises of a Hindu temple. I was also the first Muslim to deliver a lecture inside the 500 year-old Vaishnavite Satra (monastery) in Barpeta. Devout Hindus there asked me how I could wear a *dhoti* so well! I am also proud to say that 10 years after my retirement, I was conferred the Enajori Bota—an award for promoting communal harmony—by the Hindu Yuva-Chatra Parishad, an organisation affiliated to the Sangh Parivar.

During my career, I also pursued my love for writing, and wrote 12 one-act plays, many of which were broadcast by All India Radio. After retirement, once I settled in Guwahati, I began writing satire, personal essays and articles on literary and socioeconomic issues in different Assamese newspapers. I have written 700-odd pieces so far. My short stories, personal essays and other articles have also been published and I have 12 books to my credit.

My wife passed away in 1997 and although I miss her very much, I have no time to be lonely or unhappy. I work in my kitchen garden, take long walks and spend a lot of time writing. I am also associated with several organisations



Tapati Baruah Kashyap

#### Hussain: Looking at the lighter side of life

including the Assam Government Pensioners' Association, All Assam Senior Citizens' Association, Animal Ethics Committee of the Assam Agricultural University, and Kamrup Mahanagar Sahitya Sabha, apart from various socio-cultural and educational institutions.

My happiest moments are those spent with people, especially making them laugh. I treasure those moments when

I get a phone call from someone in a faraway district, to tell me that he or she liked a piece I wrote in a newspaper. Most of all, looking at myself with humour gives me inner strength and a fantastic perspective on life.

—*Tabiul Hussain, Guwahati*

## WRITE CHOICE

As a child, I used to immerse myself in Hindi poetry and developed a liking for songs too. The works of Jaishankar Prasad, Gopaldas Neeraj, Maha Kavi Nirala, Mahadevi Varma and Harivansh Rai Bachchan fascinated me. I have also always loved to write and have pursued this passion since 1964, when I was just 14 years old. I enjoyed writing songs and compering cultural programmes, and have a knack for composing couplets.

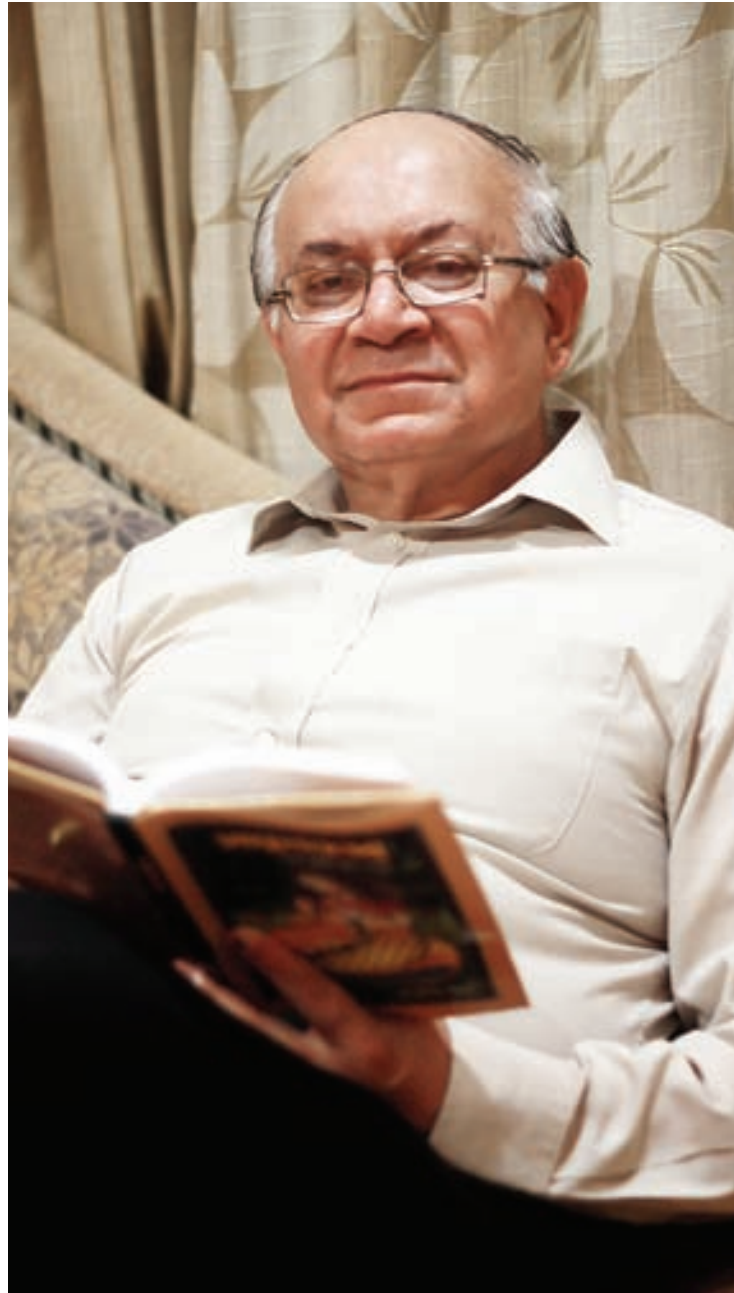
My career, however, took a different path and I earned a doctorate in microbiology from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. I have since worked with pharmaceutical companies in the field of quality assurance and I now have my own consultancy firm. Although my roots are in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, I have lived and worked largely in Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

However, poetry and writing have given me more satisfaction than anything else. One of my most memorable moments came in April last year, when I released my first book, *Shakuntalam*. It was conceived back in 1982 but as my professional responsibilities took precedence, I took a long time to complete it, even stealing time by rising at 4 am to write. This is a divine hour and was well worth the effort!

*Shakuntalam* is a love story between Shakuntala and Dushyant. It was immortalised by Mahakavi Kalidas, who wrote *Abhigyan Shakuntalam* and is considered to be the 'Shakespeare of India'. Far from a mere translation of *Abhigyan Shankuntalam*, my work is a simple story set in a different era that talks about a love triangle between Dushyant, Shakuntala and Rani Vasumati. However, there is no villain. It depicts love, sacrifice, respect and concern for others, while portraying human psychology.

Writing the book was only half the battle won; finding a publisher was the next challenge. As it was my first book, publishers were apprehensive. I also wanted creative freedom, from designing the cover to the quality of paper. So I decided to publish it myself.

My wife was a great support and the book launch was graced by my professor Padma Shri Shreenivas and Pandit Sagar Tripathi. I badly missed my parents and my *mausa* and *mausi* on this occasion because it is they who made me the person I am today. I am now working on my next book, *Roop Sudha*, which is inspired by *Madhushala*.



### Bhalla: High on Hindi literature

I find writing very relaxing and draw inspiration from what is happening around me, whether political drama or the struggles of regular folk. My target audience is the mature reader, who appreciates the nuances of the Hindi language. It is very heartening to receive the kind of response I have, at a time when lovers of Hindi literature are becoming fewer by the day. It is a great cause of concern for me and I hope the numbers improve.

—*Vinod Kumar Bhalla, Mumbai*

# Eco-wise

**K C MAHAPATRA, 84, BHUBANESWAR**



Piusha Mohanty

**I** never had to take a break from work in 84 years; the thought of retiring never came to my mind. Even now, with my renewable energy consultancy firm, I maintain my own office at a cost of ₹ 60,000 a month with three staffers. I follow a strict regime, reaching office sharp at 10 am. I work until 7:30 pm, with a break for siesta and lunch for two hours in the afternoon.

I provide consultancy services to small renewable energy projects like biomass projects and solar photovoltaic projects to various government and non-government organisations.

I am an alumnus of BITS Pilani. I got my electrical engineering degree in 1952 and got a job with the Odisha government, where I worked till 1989. Here, I was a part of many large hydroelectric projects like Hirakud dam project, Muchkund valley project, Baliguda and Paradeep power projects. These years were crucial for me as I spent a lot of time learning about hydroelectric projects.

Although I worked only as part of a hydroelectricity team, my interest in all forms of alternative sources of energy grew and I knew that we needed to switch to renew-

able sources of energy to protect the environment. From being an engineer on conventional energy projects to handling and promoting renewable energy projects, I think I have come a long way.

The idea to start my own consultancy firm to provide small companies with ideas and solutions about renewable energy projects did not come about until I was appointed, after retirement, as advisor to Government of India in Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) in Delhi. This is where I could fully explore the possibilities of all kinds of renewable

**“Thermal power is profitable but highly polluting; we should try to use renewable sources of energy that are abundant and provide employment to many”**

energy sources, how we can harness these sources and, more important, learn about the government policy in this area.

While here, I knew I had to start my own firm to do my bit for society. Before this I had worked as a cog in the machine; now the whole process was in my hands. The scope of renewable energy projects also grew.

My work is a start-to-finish job: it involves design, placement of orders, inspection, project viability, testing and commission. I am proud to have been part of some interesting projects, like the solar project in the Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri with a government grant of ₹ 5 million. The project generates 60 units of electricity everyday, which is a saving of ₹ 6,000 per month on electricity bills for the temple. Many such projects are in the pipeline for other ancient temples in the state.

Another one of my significant projects is the Samal Barrage project, near Angul, Odisha, in which a 20 Mwatt (million watts) hydroelectricity project generates 100 Mwatt of electricity and an estimated revenue of ₹ 360 million per year. I am currently working on Jalaput hydroelectricity dam project, a 18 Mwatt hydro project that will generate a revenue of ₹ 360 million and Baitarani hydroelectricity dam project, which will provide ₹ 450 million turnover per annum.

My passion for renewable energy in my 37 years of career reached its peak when I was posted as chairman of the Orissa State Electricity Board after retirement. I am currently also consultant to the Government of India, Power Finance Corporation

and advisor in IREDA. They appoint me as consultant to various projects and give me paid projects. Continuing to work after retirement happened naturally; I never had to sit idle as this branch has so much work that I was always sought as nominee director for government projects after retirement and, later, private organisations.

Born in 1930, I also participated in the freedom struggle as a student; I loved debating and edited my own magazine called *Swarna Renu*, created by sticking together bits of *beedi* wrappers for pages in the year 1941-42.

I have been greatly inspired by the writings of [Mahatma] Gandhi, especially *My Experiments with Truth*, where he teaches frugality; how to run a month with just 9 paise. Once, posted as junior engineer in Hirakud for a dam project, I tried this experiment, living on a single *bael* or wood apple and a sweet potato a day, for a month—and I could do it!

I also feel my work is part of Gandhi-an principle of *lok-hit* or people welfare, which is fast disappearing today. The idea of commercialisation has replaced people welfare. For instance, thermal power is highly polluting but profitable; but we should try to use renewable sources of energy that are abundant and provide employment to many. For me, the work I do is much more important than the money I earn from my work.

I feel that after the age of 60, it is the right time to give back to society. One must not forget that our society has invested itself in our education, work and in post-retirement care.

—As told to Ruby Nanda

**I am a retired Army officer and animal lover. I want to set up an animal adoption and rescue centre, and am willing to dedicate the ground floor of my house for this purpose. What kind of facilities do I need and how do I sustain the centre?**

An animal shelter would need separate sections for different animals like dogs and cats. You would also need a section for nursing mothers with offspring, and subsections separating adult animals from younger ones. It would also be ideal if you could have an isolation area for new additions, to quarantine them in case they have infectious diseases.

Employ an on-site veterinarian, assistant or volunteer with experience in handling animals, and probably another person for administrative purposes. Even if you have experience in handling animals yourself, you would need to either undergo training or get experience of working at an animal shelter to better understand the possible challenges you could face. Also, you would need essential knowledge of animal health, pet first aid, and animal CPR.

An animal rescue centre, while bringing satisfaction, can be wholly dependent on personal funding and donations from the public. You can set up a membership programme through which you could raise funds regularly from animal lovers. Make sure you keep them informed about how you use their donations through an email newsletter.

—Parul Gupta is an animal lover and rescue centre volunteer in Delhi



## Tummy tuck! A healthy diet can help you knock off stubborn abdominal fat

I am a 56 year-old working man. Though I am largely on a healthy diet and exercise five days a week, my newly acquired paunch, the result of 12-hour days at my desk, is a cause for worry. How do I knock off this stubborn belly fat?

Belly fat, or what we call abdominal fat in medical terms, is the most common problem affecting individuals these days and that too mostly men. Before this unwanted guest becomes stubborn, one needs to start working on it. In fact, belly fat is one of the most dangerous types of fat as it is an indicator of diseases and disorders. Desk jobs and sedentary lifestyles are definitely contributing factors, but there are many other factors like stress, unhealthy eating habits and heredity that can contribute to belly fat.

### What can you do?

**Work it out:** Exercise is one of the most crucial ways to get rid of this fat but the right type of exercise is important. Focus on short bursts of exercises. Don't do very heavy exercises; rather engage multiple muscle groups and work your cardiovascular system. It is always best to hire a personal trainer who can guide you with exercises according to your body type.

**Sleep well!** Monitor your sleeping hours. If you are tired, you produce more ghrelin, which triggers cravings for sugar and other fat-building foods. Losing sleep can also alter your hormone production, affecting cortisol levels that cause insulin sensitivity, a prime reason for belly fat. Getting about seven to eight hours of sleep every night is one of the best things you can do for your body shaping goals.

**Avoid trans-fats:** These are the fats mostly found in convenient foods and are generally hidden. Studies have shown that not only do trans-fats create excessive visceral fat in the abdomen; they actually cause fat from other parts of the body to redistribute. So, you need to be a good label reader to identify trans-fats present in the foods.

**Quit smoking and drinking:** Drinking alcohol and smoking increase the levels of stress hormone cortisol.

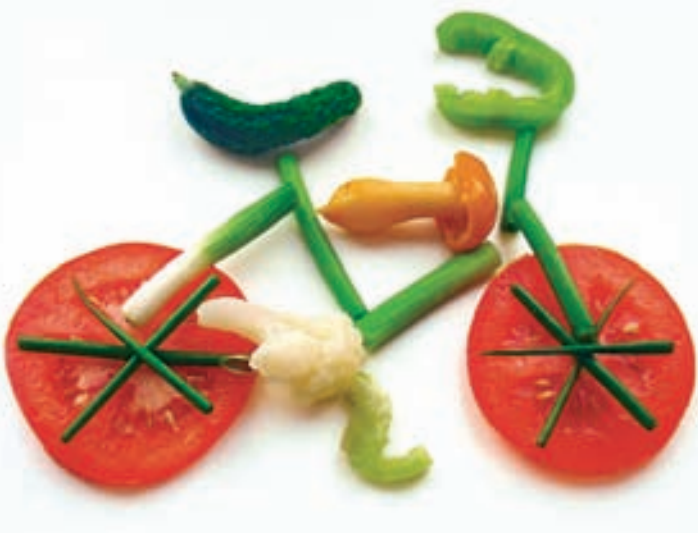
**Adopt a healthy diet:** Belly fat is directly related to healthy diet. One needs to reduce calorie intake according to body weight and the best way is to include more lean proteins, vegetables, complex carbohydrates and fruits in your diet. However, don't skip meals. Not eating for long periods of time puts your body into a catabolic state, meaning it starts to break down muscle tissue for energy and conserves fat.

**Boost your C levels:** Vitamin C has been found to play a major role in the reduction of abdominal fat as it is required for production of molecules used in oxidation, or metabolism, of fatty tissue. Without sufficient Vitamin C, your body is unable to use stored fat. Your body is still producing fatty tissue for energy, but is unable to use it. This causes a build up of fat, especially in the abdominal area. Rich sources of Vitamin C include citrus fruits, sprouts, and green leafy vegetables.

**Monitor salt intake:** Avoid salted products like packaged food, chips, pickles and junk food. Check labels for preserved foods, because preserved foods generally contain extra salt. Salt is very bad for the body because it causes water retention and makes you look bloated.

**Go green:** Help yourself to three to four servings of green tea a day. Several studies have shown that green tea has antioxidant catechins that burn fat cells.





## Target your ideal body weight! Lowering your BMI between the scale of 19-25 along with healthy diet and exercise has been found beneficial in reducing belly fat

**Check your dairy intake:** When your body is low on calcium, it produces a hormone that signals the body to store visceral fat. Meeting your recommended daily calcium needs (that's 1,000 milligrams for adults) can help reduce levels of this hormone.

**Target your ideal body weight!** Lowering your BMI between the scale of 19-25 along with healthy diet and exercise has been found beneficial in reducing belly fat. Work on weight loss under the guidance of a qualified nutritionist to achieve your ideal body weight. But remember that this will result in proportionate fat loss all over the body and not on a particular spot.

### Daily regime

- A healthy day should start with a glass or two of lemon water, followed by 30-45 minutes of morning walk or cardio.
- A healthy and protein-rich breakfast will keep you satiated for the rest of the day. Milk oats with walnuts is a healthy option rich in omega 3 fats as well. Oats are filling and help you lose weight. Besides, they are also low in calories and provide slow energy to your body and can even lower cholesterol.

### READERS ASK

**I am a 65 year-old woman. Until a few years ago, I had luscious black hair. Suddenly, I have started greying. How can I delay greying through my diet?**

Greying occurs when your hair loses pigmentation. It is a part of natural ageing. Sometimes, though, your genes are responsible if it is a case of premature greying. Nutritious food helps maintain a fit and healthy body and works effectively on your mane as well. The following foods can help:

- **Black sesame seeds:** Chewing on a few of these daily will not only help purify your blood but keep those tiny greys away.
- **B-group vitamins:** Taking vitamins like B2, B6 and B12 is a conscious step to delay premature greying, as a deficiency of these essential vitamins can show up through early ageing signs. If you are not in favour of supplements, consume food rich in Vitamin B such as whole-wheat breads, bananas, eggs, cereals, dairy products, and green leafy vegetables.
- **Berries:** Raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, strawberries...berries are not just delicious but rich in selenium, which plays an important role in production of hormones related to hair and, hence, can delay premature greying.
- **Yoghurt:** It is rich in Vitamin A and is a delicious way to stay away from greying.
- **Curry leaves (*kadi patta*):** They contain an ingredient that helps delay premature greying.
- **Chicken:** Eating more chicken can slow the greying process as it is high on protein, which is essential for the production of melanin, the pigment that provides colour to your hair and skin.

- Mid-morning and evening meals are essential as they maintain your blood sugar levels. Whole fruits and vegetable juices are best for these times.
- Lunch should be wholesome with dal, chicken or fish as a source of protein, one portion of vegetables and salads each to provide you necessary antioxidants, two to three chapattis and a bowl of yoghurt.
- Dinner should be light and taken at an appropriate time. Soups, salad and stuffed chapatti form a very healthy dinner.

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



## Battle of the bulge: Obesity comes with multiple problems and complications

Obesity has become the current pandemic affecting almost the whole of the West and the high income groups of the East. The incidence of obesity is growing by the day, in every nation. Comparatively more common among women, it makes body function bad and the mind sad.

### Why is obese not okay?

The complications of obesity in silvers are manifold. It affects quality of life owing to restricted mobility, falls and depression. It reduces life expectancy by about 25 per cent and also increases the incidence of:

- Colon and prostate cancer in men
- Uterine, breast, cervical and ovarian cancer in women
- Heart attack
- Hypertension
- Diabetes mellitus
- Blood clot in the veins of the legs
- Gall bladder stone
- Arthritis
- Impaired functional status
- Depression

### Overweight is not obese

Being overweight is the result of unnecessary body weight that includes muscle, bone, fat and water, whereas obesity is owing to excessive accumulation of fat.

Obesity can be assessed by the following methods:

### Body-mass index (BMI)

BMI can be assessed with this equation:

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{mass (kg)}}{(\text{height (m)})^2}$$

For example, if you weigh 95 kg and your height is 165 cm (1.65 m), your BMI would be 34.9 (95 divided by 2.72).

If your BMI is below 18.4, you are underweight  
If your BMI is 18.5 to 24.99, you have normal weight  
If your BMI is above 25, you are overweight  
If your BMI is above 30, you are obese

### Waist measurement

Men with a waistline larger than 94 cm and women with a waistline larger than 80 cm would be considered at risk for obesity-related complications, such as hypertension, diabetes, heart attack and premature death.



### Waist-hip ratio

A low waist-to-hip ratio protects against some of these complications. An increased waist-to-hip ratio suggests an increase in internal organ fat, which increases the risk of these complications. Women in general have a lower waist-to-hip ratio than men.

$$\text{Waist Hip Ratio (WHR)} = \frac{\text{Waist circumference}}{\text{Hip circumference}}$$

The normal ratio for men is 0.90 and for women is 0.86. Greater values indicate obesity.

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A majority of overweight elders have put on that extra weight because of unhealthy eating habits. Reduce calorie intake. Another major identifiable cause of weight gain among silvers is lack of physical activity—an exercise programme is the most reasonable approach for weight reduction

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#### What makes you obese?

There is no single factor that can be labelled the causative agent for obesity. Obesity is a result of several factors:

- Heredity
- Hypothyroidism
- Lack of physical activity
- Excessive intake of food
- Drugs for mental disorders, steroids, insulin injections

#### Burn that fat

Get up half an hour earlier than usual and kick-start your morning with a walk. Walk after meals, during breaks at work, after returning from work or before going to bed. The idea is to keep walking; there is no better or simpler way to lose weight.

A majority of overweight elders have put on that extra weight because of unhealthy eating habits. The first step should be to change your food habits. Basically, reduce calorie intake. Your diet should provide at least 800-1,000 kcal per day with the required supplements of vitamins and minerals. As the major identifiable cause of weight gain among silvers is lack of physical activity, an exercise programme is the most reasonable approach for weight reduction. Walking 2 km burns about 100 calories. Thus, walking 5 km four times a week can induce gradual weight loss, as long as caloric intake is restricted. For people with arthritis of knees or poor vision, an upper body exercise programme is advisable. Weight-loss drugs are not recommended for the elderly, as the possible side effects outweigh the benefits.

Here are some tips to lose weight:

- Cut down grazing in between meals. Restrict yourself to three meals per day.
- If you are unable to cut down on snacks, make sure you munch healthy.

- Drink a glass of water just before meals; it gives a sensation of fullness and hence will help decrease quantity consumed.
- Chew well and eat slowly. It takes 30 minutes for the brain to sense that your stomach is full.
- Say goodbye to alcohol.
- Reduce intake of artificially processed taste enhancers like salt, soy sauce and tomato ketchup. Instead, use fresh and natural tomatoes, garlic and ginger.

#### What should I avoid?

- Roots and tubers like potato, tapioca, yam, sweet potato
- Nuts and oilseeds like coconut, groundnut, cashewnut
- Butter, ghee, coconut oil, unrefined oil, Dalda
- Non-vegetarian foods like mutton, crab, prawn, beef, egg yolk, organ meats like liver, brain and others
- Certain fruits like preserved fruits, dates and mango, sapota, custard apple, banana
- Certain milk products like whole milk, cheese, butter, cream, yoghurt, milk sweets, pudding, custard
- Sweets, alcohol, carbonated drinks, fried foods, pickles and *papad*

#### What can I eat?

The following foods are recommended on a modest scale, but care should be taken to see that the daily consumption of calories does not exceed the prescribed amount.

- **Cereals:** Rice, wheat, semolina, ragi, oats, rice flakes, vermicelli
- **Pulses/lentils:** All kinds of pulses like green gram, black gram, red gram, Bengal gram, broken Bengal gram
- **Vegetables:** Snake-gourd, bitter-gourd, ash-gourd, white radish, cabbage, cauliflower, okra, drumstick, cucumber, eggplant and other green, leafy vegetables
- **Spices:** Pepper, garlic, vinegar, mustard, coriander
- **Fruits:** All fruits except dry fruits, mango, sapota, custard apple and banana
- **Meat products:** Chicken, white of hen's egg, fish (small varieties)
- **Oils:** Sesame oil, sunflower oil, soybean oil, refined oil
- **Milk and products:** Skimmed milk, yoghurt made from skimmed milk, buttermilk, whole milk (fat removed)

Obesity is becoming a serious issue all around the world. Regardless of age, it affects anyone who overeats and neglects exercise. Stop being a couch potato and be aware of what you eat and enjoy your exercise.

*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](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org)*



## Muscle is beautiful: Tone up and reap the benefits

In India, we do not appreciate muscle tone as much as elsewhere in the world. Or, if we do, we think it is a prerequisite for youth, which we do not need to bother with. However, muscle tone does not just spell youthfulness or body aesthetics. It also has to do with pure health, a sense of mental focus and emotional well-being.

There is enough evidence to show that we need to maintain our muscle mass to remain independent and fit in advancing years. We start losing muscle mass as we hit our 30s. In fact, even if we have been active for most of our lives, being sedentary starts weakening muscle tone. In fact, being bedridden can cause a sudden loss in muscle mass even as early as one's late 20s. That's why we need daily investment in building up tone just as fast as we lose it.

Here are the benefits of toned muscles: higher bone density, improved blood circulation and an improved sense of balance and coordination. The latter means we have fewer chances of accidents that become common among sedentary people. Muscle tone helps with pain management, and

controls diabetes and cholesterol levels miraculously. On the mood front, it gives us a high; a sense of energy and vitality. And aesthetically, the face looks younger because the sagging caused internally is prevented as the tissues get an internal prop, through strengthened muscle tone.

Yoga is the ideal and safest way to build muscle tone. However, the stamina in poses must be steadily built up to really woo the muscle. Holding poses longer, progressively, is one way of doing it. And using challenging poses like the plank (*setu asana*) and inverted V pose (*parvatasana*) are some tricks. Though props may be used initially to build coordination and get acclimatised to a pose, they must be dispensed with once you learn to hold the pose with structure and confidence. Otherwise, they will prevent muscular challenge. Avoid just doing floor-based exercises and move boldly into balancers and inversions. If you repeat the same poses, the muscles will become 'bored' with the practice. They have to be excited and coaxed into progressive challenges (if only by increasing the time in them) to really become strong. This means you could do less poses, but with longer holds in each pose.

### YOGIC MOVES

#### Plank pose (*setu asana*)

Go on your fours, kneeling as shown. If you have a regular yoga practice, including sun salutation (*surya namaskar*), you will find this easy. Otherwise do the easier alternative suggested and build up stamina for the final pose over a few weeks. Ensure palms are under the shoulders. Look ahead. Keep knees aligned with palms so your body is taut. Inhale and raise the knees off the ground, shifting weight to the palms and shoulders. Keep your arms straight. Continue normal breathing while holding the pose for five to 10 seconds. Later you may increase the duration as you build more stamina. In case you are



new to the pose, stay on your knees but mentally shift your weight to the palms. Lift the knees just a few inches high every week, till you can reach the full plank. Avoid if you have weak wrists.

**Benefits:** This pose builds overall muscle tone, improves physical and mental stamina and tones the whole spine.

**Model:** Purnima Deshpande,  
Harmony Interactive Centre  
**Photographer:** Haresh Patel

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

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## THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN SMT ANANDKAWAR CHOWDHARI, CHENNAI

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

*"Baiji is a darling,"* her granddaughter says. "She is an absolute darling," her granddaughter-in-law says. "She has taken care of me during my sickness more than my own mother," her daughter-in-law says. These were the instant responses I received from the family of Smt Anandkavar Chowdhari, an 87 year-old Rajasthani residing in Chennai. Mother of six, grandmother to 14, and great-grandmother to 17, she is undoubtedly the bridge between different generations, and between her four daughters-in-law. For me, meeting her was a peep into the compromises made by the elders of joint families where harmony and hearts coexist.

As I asked her questions about her life, she replied cheerfully. Her speech is slightly impaired with age, but her family helped eagerly by intervening as well as adding their responses.

**Namaste! Can you tell me about your childhood?**

My maternal family belongs to Kuchera, a village in Rajasthan. But they had moved to Chennai where I was born. My father was a pawnbroker and allowed me to help him in his work. I still remember how I used to enjoy being around him. During the Indo-Pakistan war, they returned to Kuchera.

**When did you get married?**

At the age of 14, I was married [to Sumatmullji Chowdhari] and moved to Nagaur, which is another village [now a town] near Kuchera. After almost a decade, we shifted to Chennai. I have lived here ever since. This is where my children grew up.



Chennai Pix

**Traditionally, have you always lived in a joint family?**

Yes, that is the tradition. It continues. Things have changed a lot in the past few years but, by God's grace, the love and affection remains the same.

**Anita (daughter-in-law):** All of us stayed under the same roof until 1999. As our own families grew and given the space constraint, we have now moved into our respective homes with our sons and daughters-in-law.

**Would you define yourself as being the authoritative figure at home?**

**Sushila (daughter-in-law):** She is strict as well as lenient. As daughters-in-law, we have always seen her care and concern. During pregnancy and sickness, she would nurture us back to health.

**Can you give me some instances?**

**Sushila:** Let me tell you about my marriage. *Baiji* was always particular

that she would choose her daughters-in-law. My husband was very particular that his wife should not wear a *ghunghat*. In fact, it created much curiosity in our locality where I was perhaps the first *bahu* who did not cover her face with *ghunghat* in public. However, I don't know how my mother-in-law managed to convey her own wishes to me without even stating them openly. With her subtle hints, I learnt to wear the *ghunghat* when relatives came to visit, but to remove it in my husband's presence. You can call this a double standard, but I think this is tact and diplomacy.

**Anita:** Being the youngest daughter-in-law, more changes took place when I came to this house. I was the first *bahu* with whom my father-in-law had a conversation because such things were not permitted earlier.

**Sushila:** Once my father-in-law started speaking with Anita, the rest of us also got the permission to do so. Yes, things have changed a lot, gradually at the beginning, but quite drastically in the recent years.

**Shilpa (granddaughter):** If there is one thing that has not changed, it is *Baiji's* caring nature. She cares for each and every member of the family. She is the ultimate diplomat. I have seen her playing the role of a mediator and managing conflicts easily.

**Khushboo (granddaughter-in-law):** She is the epitome of patience and understanding. She does not impose any of her views on us. She strikes a good balance between taking care and imparting the right values. *Baiji* really knows how to make the right adjustments.

**Neha (granddaughter-in-law):** To me, she represents strength as she can handle any kind of situation. I also admire her sharp memory; she remembers the food preferences, likes and dislikes of each and every family member, right from my three year-old daughter to her eldest son. She is not



Photographs by Yamini V

at all orthodox and knows how to adjust with changing times.

#### ***Baiji*, what is needed to ensure peaceful co-existence in a family?**

It is up to us as elders to see that the family members stay in harmony, with each one fulfilling their respective duties. All my daughters-in-law are from different backgrounds; hence, I think it is my responsibility to keep things smooth between them. I really have nothing to complain about. At my age, when I fall sick, the entire family takes care of me. The children as well as the elders shower love and respect on me. What more can I ask for?

**Anita:** The special touch is that each one of us thinks we are her favourite. She manages to care for each one of us in a special way. That is the magic she weaves.

What I have really seen today is the need for diplomacy to tackle a joint

family structure. Thank you all so much for making this a wonderful interview.

### **FROM SMT ANANDKAWAR CHOWDHARI'S KITCHEN**

#### ***Panchdhari (Halwa)***

A *halwa* made with flour, gram flour, semolina and *khoya*, this is a much-loved traditional dish in the Chowdhari family. Smt Chowdhari says it is prepared along with *pakodi* every year on the death anniversaries of her father-in-law and husband. The entire family comes together to partake in the meal on these days.

#### **Ingredients:**

- Wheat flour: ½ cup
- Gram flour (*besan*): ½ cup
- Semolina (*sooji*): ½ cup



- *Khoya* (unsweetened): ½ cup
- Ghee: ¼ cup
- Sugar: 1½ cups
- Cardamom powder: a pinch
- Saffron colour: a pinch

#### Method

Heat ghee in a thick-bottomed wok. Add wheat flour, gram flour and semolina and roast on a low flame until golden brown. Now add *khoya* and roast for five minutes. Switch off the flame.

In the meantime, mix the sugar in a cup of water in a vessel and switch on the flame. Allow to boil until you get sugar syrup that reaches one-string consistency. Add cardamom powder and saffron colour and switch off the flame. Immediately pour the sugar syrup into the flour mixture. Stir continuously to avoid lumps for 5-7 minutes until the ghee separates.

Serve hot along with savoury *pakodi*.

#### ***Besan ki pakodi*** (Fritters with gram flour)

The quickest way to make fritters, all it requires is gram flour, spices and a

loving touch. You will also need two large slotted spoons with holes (the size of fenugreek or sago seeds). One of these is for pouring the mixture through the holes to make fritters. The other is for removing the fried fritters from the oil.

#### Ingredients:

- Gram flour (*besan*): 1 cup
- Red chilli powder: ½ tsp
- Turmeric powder: a pinch
- Asafoetida powder: a pinch
- Garam masala powder: a pinch
- Salt: to taste

#### Method

Mix all the ingredients along with ½ cup water to make a thick batter. Heat oil for deep frying in a thick-bottomed wok. When the oil begins to smoke, place the slotted spoon over the wok. Take a tablespoon of the mixture and pour it on the slotted spoon and quickly spread the mixture in a circular manner over the spoon. This will allow tiny fritters to drop from the holes into the wok.

Now remove the slotted spoon and set aside. Use the other slotted spoon to stir the fritters and turn them a couple of times so they are evenly cooked on all sides.

Remove from oil and drain on absorbent paper. Serve hot.

*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*

*Every Life Matters*

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# The right balance

Allocate assets prudently to rein in risks while optimising returns, advises **Priya Desai**

**D**on't look now, I'm changing," is a sign that stores in makeover mode often sport, in the hope that the transition will bring in profits. A change can swing either way, bringing smiles if lucky and bad tidings if unlucky. Well, asset allocation is a similar predicament—unpredictable and uncertain—but always done keeping eventual profit in mind.

Today, winds of change are sweeping the market, with the Sensex crossing the 25,000 mark and the bull market on a bullish run. This brings to the fore a crucial question: Is it the right time to review and do a quick asset reallocation? Would it be wise for an investor to go into reshuffle mode and cash in on certain investments?

No matter how hard they try, silvers always seem to be on the brink of the crater of inflation that threatens to engulf them. This is more so, as in addition to protecting the capital amount, they also have to make provisions for a regular and steady flow of income.

## The paradox

Asset allocation is a crucial part of retirement planning. The situation is a paradoxical one, though. While regular income stops after retirement, regular expenses never reduce. Moreover, medical issues crop up, putting a strain on silver savings. This is exactly why asset reallocation and repositioning become important. These assets comprise fixed deposits (FDs), PFs and PPFs, bonds, annuities, equities,

mutual funds and gold and silver, as well as real estate.

Each one of these assets is different from the other in terms of its time frame and performance. They are also different in terms of risk levels, liquidity and penalties. The factors that will have to be taken into consideration are resources, liabilities, responsibilities and contingencies; asset allocation will have to be carried out

based on financial goals, risk tolerance and time frame, with the success of the combination deciding success of the outcome. Each asset class will perform differently over time.

There is nothing random about asset allocation. So, while FDs will provide a predetermined income at regular intervals, this is susceptible to changes in interest rates that banks, financial institutions and companies offer. In addition, inflationary trends and taxation requirements affect income. You could invest in other asset classes like equities to offset the lower interest rates that

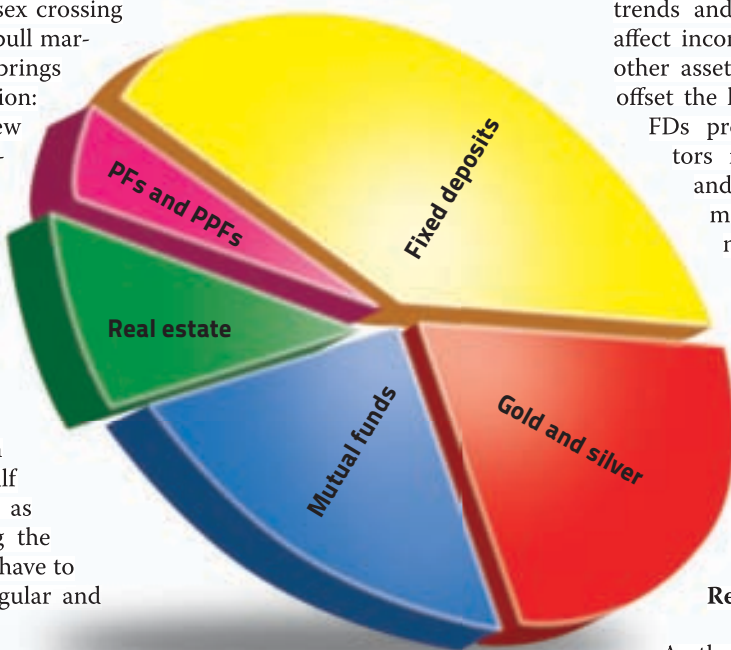
FDs provide. However, investors need to be hawk-eyed and keep track of developments in the financial market to capitalise on bonds. Similarly, when it comes to investing in precious metals like gold and silver, investors should be sharp enough to know when the time is right to dig them out of the vaults and cash in on them.

## Reverse mortgage

As the concept of social security is nonexistent in India, finance is every individual's responsibility. Though many silvers have ownership homes, it is not a liquid asset as they need a roof above their heads. Of course, in dire need silvers can create income via reverse mortgage where the annuity is now tax-free.

## Longevity

Is it true that age should determine asset allocation? The old thumb rule



based on these parameters. Striking the right balance is crucial for accessing income at the right time.

## Investment strategy

Keeping all the above aspects in mind, a well-devised investment strategy will cut down risks while optimising returns. The choice of investment instruments should be

was that one should subtract one's age from 100 to arrive at the percentage of the portfolio that should comprise stocks. Is this golden rule as relevant today as it was a decade ago? With Indians living longer, financial planners feel the thumb rule should be modified to '120 minus your age'. The bottom line: Judge the risks and be ready with an alternative plan to make amends.

Keeping the longevity factor in view, I would suggest that once your regular flow of income is assured, it is important to sink more funds in growth-oriented assets rather than fixed income. Of course, individual needs will differ and the golden rule will have to be tweaked as required.

When it comes to risk versus reward, every person will have a different comfort level and it might be wise to consult a financial adviser before zeroing in on what you feel works best for you. Your asset allocation should not expose you to losses.

After the recent 'bull run', some investors are rushing to convert all their investments into stocks and mutual funds into fixed income earning assets. They don't want to cope with market volatility and prefer to make the most of current market conditions. This also means their heirs will have fewer hassles to deal with.

### Overcoming hurdles

Contrastingly, some senior folks are open to taking risks and will leverage the vibrant stock-market situation and restructure their portfolios of equities and mutual funds with focus on growth orientation, better returns and tax considerations. Computer-savvy seniors have a distinct advantage as they are able to deal with investments via Net banking and e-trading, which cuts out a certain amount of stress and strain.



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Though many silvers have ownership homes, it is not a liquid asset as they need a roof above their heads. Of course, in dire need silvers can create income via reverse mortgage where the annuity is now tax-free

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Silvers who invest cannot afford to remain indifferent to or clueless about what is happening to their assets. Thus, upping computer and financial literacy should be a priority for senior citizens. Technological advancements have helped keep seniors mentally agile, market-savvy and empowered to guard their assets more effectively. Asset classes are like our fingers, each one different from the other, but put them together and they will form a fist that can wield a powerful punch.

### Dive in

The financial world is like an ocean, holding valuable treasures in its depths. Having the right gear and knowing when and how to dive are important in getting to that treasure.

Just as you take care of the social, intellectual, spiritual and health aspects of your life, do not wear blinkers when it comes to financial planning and asset management. When you build a stronger financial base, it goes without saying that the structure of life that is built on it will be more stable and strong.

Asset allocation is a way to ensure you have a magic carpet of your own that will help you sail smoothly during the roughest of times. Finances are like flowering plants; if you provide them with the right mix of manure and water, aerate the roots well, prune and trim them when necessary, you will see them thriving in all weathers. Do the same with your finances and enjoy perennial blooms.

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*The writer is a Mumbai-based economist*



Photographs: Harmony Archives

# Tooned in

Veteran animator and recent Padma Shri winner Ram Mohan speaks about the industry in the pre-technology era and why he thinks the award is finally the recognition the industry has been waiting for. **Deepa Narayanan** catches up with the living legend, who is still crafting dreams

**H**e lives in a simple but tastefully decorated home in a nice neighbourhood in Mumbai. His quiet demeanour is in perfect synch with the lush terrace garden framed by large French windows, the foliage aglow in the soft evening light. As we take our seats in his living room, the stage is perfectly set for veteran animator Ram Mohan to reopen a glorious chapter in the history of Indian animation.

"I was always drawn to cartoons," says the 83 year-old. "After completing my graduation from St Aloysius College,

Mangalore, I came to Mumbai in 1956 to pursue my master's in science. But I was not particularly keen on molecular spectroscopy, the subject I had enrolled for. So I began looking around for something else to do."

## For art's sake

Mohan was already self-taught in cartooning. "Just next to my college was a lighthouse with a library," he recalls. "It was not very well-attended but stocked many international magazines. The cartoons in those whetted my appetite and

I began studying the characteristics of those drawings, applying those techniques to Indian characters.”

Once in Mumbai, Mohan began freelancing for publications like *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, and his cartoons were published in a column called ‘Dulli Maufry’. Then, providentially, he got the chance to meet Clair H Weeks, the famous animator from Walt Disney who was in India for a training camp with the Cartoon Films Unit, Films Division. Weeks liked Mohan’s work and, after clearing a prerequisite test, Mohan was recruited into the team. For the next three years, Mohan worked directly under Weeks and learnt hungrily, as anyone who worked under a mentor of this calibre would. He remained with Films Division for 12 years, until 1968.

Animation is a demanding job, with each sequence requiring many strips of cartoons to represent even the slightest movement. Moreover, back then, with none of the present-day computer-aided technology, Mohan had to rely on manual, drawing skills. “A joke among animators was that anyone who was lazy in their previous birth was sent back to earth as an animator,” chuckles Mohan. “In retrospect, I have no regrets.”

### **Making the right moves**

In 1968, Mohan moved from Films Division to Prasad Studios as head of the animation department. This was a feature-film studio in Chennai, where his talent flourished and awards soon followed. His film *Baap Re Baap*, a film on family planning, went on to win a National Award in 1969, in the Best Film category.

Then, in 1972, Mohan opened his own studio called Ram Mohan Biographics, which besides being a full-fledged studio was a training school for eager animators looking for experience. He went on to run the studio for the next 35 years, up to 1997.

Everything went on well for a while, with more awards and accolades coming his way. He won his second National Award in 1972 for the animation film *You Said It* and, in 1984, he won his third, this time for the animation film *Fire Games*.

But in a country where Bollywood eclipses all other forms of entertainment, Mohan’s efforts remained unnoticed. And it was so even in the case of the spectacular animated film *Ramayana: The Legend of Prince Rama*, which he co-directed with Japanese filmmakers Yugo Sako and Koichi Sasaki in 1992.

### **Divine challenges**

Unfortunately, the film also ran into trouble with the Government of India, which refused to be associated with ‘foreigners making cartoons on sensitive topics such as divinity’, especially with the Ayodhya issue simmering at the time. “Finally, after running around for six years, the team decided to raise money for the project in Japan, and the film saw the light of day in 1992,” remembers Mohan.

But the movie’s troubles were far from over. With no publicity given to the movie in India, it was a while before it could rake in any profits. “We were not even allowed to make posters, let alone show the movie in cinema halls,” says Mohan, disbelief still rife in his voice. “Fortunately, there was a Children’s Film Fest being held in Udaipur at the time. We entered our film there and it was a big hit, and Cartoon Network telecast the movie during every Dussera and Diwali.”

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“Most Indians still consider animation children’s entertainment. We haven’t been able to make that leap in imagination. Even with a talent pool that is on a par with Hollywood’s, we have very few takers”

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Thereafter, DVD sales picked up, and the film was dubbed in Hindi, Japanese and some other Asian languages. A shortened version with American voices was crafted out of the original for the US audience too, and a version that was even nominated for the Oscars. Finally, profits began showing.

### **Teacher unparalleled**

Not one to rest on his laurels, in 1995, Mohan created an animated series called *Meena* in collaboration with UNICEF, about issues concerning the girl child in South Asia. The series

went on to win him the Communication Arts Guild Hall of Fame Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1996.

Then, in 1997, Mohan and Ronnie Screwvala of UTV set up a studio to get outsourced work. That was the genesis of Ram Mohan-USL, which later morphed into UTV Toons. To tackle the challenge of taking on the large volume of work coming in from Hollywood, the team hired 30 arts students and trained them for six months, and repeated the process for five years. “That way, in five years, we managed to add a skilled set of 300 artists,” he shares. “By the time I left the studio in 2001, it was well-equipped for fast turnaround of work.”

Besides being an ace animator, Mohan has always been a sensitive teacher who has revelled in imparting the art he so cherishes. Dasharath Tharali, 58, a cameraman with Mohan back at Ram Mohan Biographics and who worked with him for more than 25 years, vouches for this. “He was always training us in the nuances of the trade,” he says.

"Everything I learnt about animation, I learnt from Mohan Sir. And he always trusted his crew, never once raising his voice or making them feel pressured to do anything. But if he said something needed to be done, we would do it, no matter what, because we couldn't let him down."

In 2001-2002, Mohan joined Graphiti Multimedia as chairman. And, as was his wont, he opened a school for animation artists at Graphiti. But the dearth of talent was real and remained on top of his mind even in 2006, when he was conferred the Dr V Shantaram Lifetime Achievement Award. At the time, he expressed the hope that we could tackle the challenge of the limited number of skilled animation artists in India before thinking of innovations in production. Now, 58 years since he gave his passion wing, he has been awarded the Padma Shri for his contribution to the field of animation. On receiving the honour, he remarked, "This award means that Indian animation is finally being recognised."

For a man with prodigious talent, Mohan's humility only adds to his stature. "He is an institution all by himself," says 46 year-old Tilak Shetty, CEO of Graphiti Multimedia. Shetty, who has been associated with Mohan for close to 25 years, began his career under Mohan's mentorship when he was in his early 20s. "I will never cease to learn from him, whether it is his vast knowledge of animation and storytelling, his humility or simplicity, both in terms of his outlook or his approach to solving problems, or just his ability to source and trust new talent. Of course, his humility has been taken advantage of many times, but he refuses to change for fear of a few. Yet, he is a tough taskmaster although gentle to the core, and I am yet to meet someone with such a storehouse of ideas. Moreover, his ability to blend in with people much younger than himself is probably what keeps him so vibrant. Now that he is 83, one assumes he has slowed down but his work and imagination keep him going."

### Challenges to the industry

Indeed, his concern for the future of Indian animation runs deep. When the new millennium rolled around, the industry seemed to be waiting for takeoff. "But we made the mistake of taking up outsourced work too soon, where we were not visualising or offering creative inputs but only doing the hard, physical labour," says Mohan. "With the outsourced markets increasing and China taking on a larger chunk of work for much less money and faster turnaround than ours, the industry began collapsing."

However, Mohan believes the Indian audience's lack of interest in animation is the biggest stumbling block to the industry. "Most Indians still consider animation children's entertainment. We haven't been able to make that leap in imagination. Even a movie like *Roadside Romeo* bombed at



the box office despite its animation quality and giants like Walt Disney taking on its distribution," he points out. "So even with a talent pool that is on a par with Hollywood's, and despite Prana Studios, Mumbai, taking on the filming of the Hollywood movie *Planes 2*, we have very few takers."

The veteran does see a glimmer of hope though. "Perhaps by showing short movies in cinemas, like Pixar used to do, we can make our audiences relate to animation," says Mohan, who is excited about setting up another training institute modelled on Ram Mohan Biographics, where artists will get trained on the job.

### A slower pace

Mohan suffered a mild stroke last year and has dialled down his pace of work. "Now I only attend a few meetings at Graphiti. And although I do some exercises, I am quite happy to let my cardiologist wife take care of me," says Mohan of his wife Dr Sheila Mohan, 79, who works with a city hospital.

Talking about his family brings a warm glow to his face, and Mohan speaks of their son, Karthik Mohan, as having absorbed the best of his parents' skill sets—the 42 year-old is a medical animator for a company in Philadelphia.

When he's told that people often call him the Father of Indian Animation, he remarks, "I think that's giving me more credit than I am due. Dadasahib Phalke should be bestowed that title. Even before he did his first movie *Raja Harishchandra*, he made animations using coins and matchsticks. In fact, it is said that to impress a moneylender to finance his first film, Phalke shot the growth of a pea plant over 15 minutes for weeks, and showed the whole growing sequence to the stunned but visibly impressed moneylender," says Mohan, signing off warmly. ✨

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

## Experience

### A second childhood

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Shilbhadra Datta

# Golden eye

Vignettes of a bygone era come to life as ace cinematographer Ramananda Sengupta shares a slice of the glorious days of cinema with **Partha Mukherjee**

**T**here is a reason Ramananda Sengupta shares an umbilical connection with the natural world, for it was from the earth and its wondrous beauty that his gift sprang forth. He recalls a special chapter in his life. "Part of my formative years were spent in Southern India. Among the many places where my father was posted, Tuni, a picture-postcard village, is still fresh in my memory. The sleepy hamlet in the East Godavari district on the banks of the Thandava, surrounded by hillocks, instilled a sense of aesthetics in me."

The verdant countryside of Andhra Pradesh taught him to study colour and light, and later play with their myriad shades and hues. It was this grounding that stood him in good stead as he went on to become a celebrated cinematographer, one whose work is still discussed at discourses on Indian cinema and its heritage.

The 99 year-old, ace cinematographer is happy to shed light on the different phases of his career, imbuing each frame with eloquence and nostalgia. "My father, Satishchandra Sengupta, was a railway track inspector and a brilliant architect who died in 1928 when he was only 53," he shares. "Those tombs at Chennai Railway Station and Perambur Railway Workshop bear testimony to his excellence as an architect. I remember *Baba* leaving home in a deer-driven carriage with assistants equipped with sickles and axes. When he returned home in the evening, he would recount many titbits from his work in the dense forest."

But young Ramananda's stay in the sylvan South was cut short and he was

bundled off to Santiniketan in Bengal. You see, he was fluent in Tamil and Telugu but couldn't speak a word of his native tongue, Bengali! The lad was introduced to Rabindranath Tagore at his Jorasanko residence in Kolkata and the poet took him into the fold. "I still remember the music that played in Gurudev's room. I felt humbled before such a great personality and bowed to the sacred dust beneath his feet."

Barely 10 years old then, Sengupta was admitted to Sishu Bibhag (Children's Section) in Santiniketan. From 1925 to 1928, he learnt Bengali and did his mother, Surama Devi, proud. "Perhaps it was the ambience of the place that helped me learn the language so quickly," he reminisces. "Here, I soaked in cultures from different parts of the world as well. Gurudev would often enquire about our correspondence with our parents, encourage us to take part in football matches in the ashram and develop a bond with nature by taking us on excursions to the glades in and around the vicinity. Although I was only a child and did not comprehend his greatness, his very presence used to leave me awestruck."

Three years later, Sengupta had to return home as his father had passed away. He went to Dhaka but returned to Kolkata when his brother moved there. "My mother wanted me to study engineering as she perhaps wanted me to follow in my father's footsteps." Sengupta secured admission to Calcutta Technical School for a diploma in engineering but quit the course midway. "I had no workshop training as an apprentice, which was mandatory to complete

the course. So I quit." Egged on by his mother, he then took the test for an engineering apprenticeship with the Railways but was not selected as he "could not compete with graduate engineers".

Unbeknownst to Sengupta, fate had been steering him in an altogether different direction. The lad had already been experimenting with photography and was bitten by the shutterbug. "I had a Rolicord camera and used to take shots of anything that had natural splendour," explains Sengupta. "It was an amazing experience for a boy still in his teens to capture on camera things that moved. I also used to visit New Theatres Studio to watch film shootings, mainly those with Bimal Roy as cinematographer. That's when I decided to become a cinematographer."

Now focused on a career in film technology, he visited the studio of Motion Picture Combine, Chennai, which was later renamed Gemini Studio. "Here, I met Bengali technicians like Dhiren Dasgupta, Sailen Bose and Ram Babu," he continues. "I was acquainted with Dasgupta as he used to share a room with one of my classmates in Calcutta Technical School. Dasgupta spoke to Bose for an opening in the studio but it was open to training only South Indian boys."

Finally, Sengupta picked up the courage to speak to Bimal Roy, who advised him to approach the Film Corporation, where he found a berth as an unpaid apprentice. He was finally a cinematographer in the making. "I began my celluloid journey in 1938, which was coincidentally the year my mother passed away. I owe my



Meeting British cinematographers Peter D' Bradley and Perry Davis was a turning point in Sengupta's career. He was assigned the responsibility of marking the shooting area with chalk, to facilitate the trolley's movement

success, if I really have any, to my mother. Without her support, my journey would have been incomplete."

Meeting British cinematographers Peter D' Bradley and Perry Davis in Kolkata was a turning point in Sengupta's career. "However, Bradley told me not to work with the camera as it could easily lose its balance if handled by an untrained hand. Although that hurt me initially, I later realised the significance of Bradley's instructions, when I became a full-fledged cinematographer." To begin with, Sengupta was assigned the humble responsibility of marking the shooting area with chalk, to facilitate the trolley's movement. "Mind you, there were no zoom lenses in those days," he says. "With time, word of my expert control over the operation of the trolley spread and I was called to help other units when they had difficulties."

The next skill he mastered was loading a camera. "There was an old man from East India Studio who showed me how to load film into a camera. I went to Lahore accompanied by Kedar Sharma to take some outdoor shots in 1939-40. Sharma used to write Hindi scripts and dialogue in New Theatres."

Meanwhile, Sengupta made a short film, a two-reel film called *Hari Kirtan* on the childhood of Lord Krishna. He also found a new mentor, G K Mehta, a famous cinematographer, and worked with him as first assistant on the film *Kurukshetra* in 1941. The two of them made many films together, which offered Sengupta valuable experience. "Mr Mehta constantly supported my technique and flooded me with suggestions to hone my skill. I will never forget him," recalls Sengupta, who went on to

build a reputation in the use of light in cinematography.

Sengupta's first independent work was *Purbaraag* directed by Ardhendu Mukherjee. "The film had many debutants like Hemanta Mukherjee as music director, Asit Sen as assistant cameraman, Jawahar Roy as a comedian, Deepak Mukherjee as an actor and Nabendu Ghosh as assistant director. They all went on to become greats in their respective fields."

Some techniques Sengupta used and even pioneered may seem rudimentary today but they were experimental and even cutting-edge back then. "To retain the soothing effect of the colour of costumes, we would let white costumes soak in water with tea leaves or water boiled with shells of green coconut. These would give a special tint to the white cloth. For outdoor shooting, we used a fine white cloth so shadows did not fall on the actor's nose or below the eyes."

He says the best phase of his career was when he worked with Agradami, a group of film directors. "There was a congenial atmosphere and that brought out the best in us. We did many films together like *Nishithe*, *Headmaster* and *Dakharkara*. In *Headmaster*, I used brown foundation to tone down the fair complexion of Chabi Biswas, who was the main protagonist in the film. Chabi Da would scold me as it took him a minimum of two hours to later remove the paint."

Another turning point in Sengupta's career came when famous French director Jean Renoir came to Calcutta in 1948 for a reconnaissance and to cast for *The River*. It was Renoir's first colour film, shot on location, and the Ganges was a metaphor for the ebb and flow of human life. The film was later described by Martin Scorsese as "one of the two most beautiful colour films ever made".

"I was the operating cameraman," says Sengupta, who handled the camera



Sengupta with Jean and Claud Renoir while filming *The River*; behind the lens; (opposite page) a scene from *The River*

while Renoir's nephew Claude Renoir was director of photography. "Renoir once visited my home and liked the red sari my wife was wearing. He used a sari of the same colour for the female actor in the film."

Sengupta says he was amazed with the sensitivity with which Renoir regarded India and Indians. "He was looking for some Indian faces as extras and was introduced to some poor crippled men. He rejected them, saying India would be misrepresented through them. Renoir felt Indian gestures and postures were very significant. For instance, he believed sitting cross-legged showed peacefulness." He adds with great affection, "He made arrangements to send me to the UK, where I learnt a lot by watching shooting in several studios. I shall never forget watching the cinematographer on the film, *La Bella Elabeth*."

Equally significant was Sengupta's collaboration with famous filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak, with whom he worked on the film *Nagarik*. "Ghatak used to visit Technician Studio, which I opened with Asuthosh Nag and Kalyan Gupta after buying Kali Studio in Tollygunge. He didn't have the money to complete the film but I stood by him. He insisted on taking

shots from either low or top angles, which was very different from the style of other directors. His style was strongly influenced by Russian films although he had originality."

Sengupta stood behind the lens for more than 70 films, including documentaries like *Modern and Ancient Architecture of India*, *Religion*, *Autobiography of an Elephant* and *Life in the Backwater of Malabar Cochin*. Old Bengali hits like *Nishithe*, *Dakharkara*, *Bindur Chhele*, *Kankabatir Ghat*, *Personal Assistant*, *Shilpi*, *Bandhu*, *Tin Bhuvanar Pare* and *Raat Bhor*, the first film by Mrinal Sen, are still talked about in select circles to date.

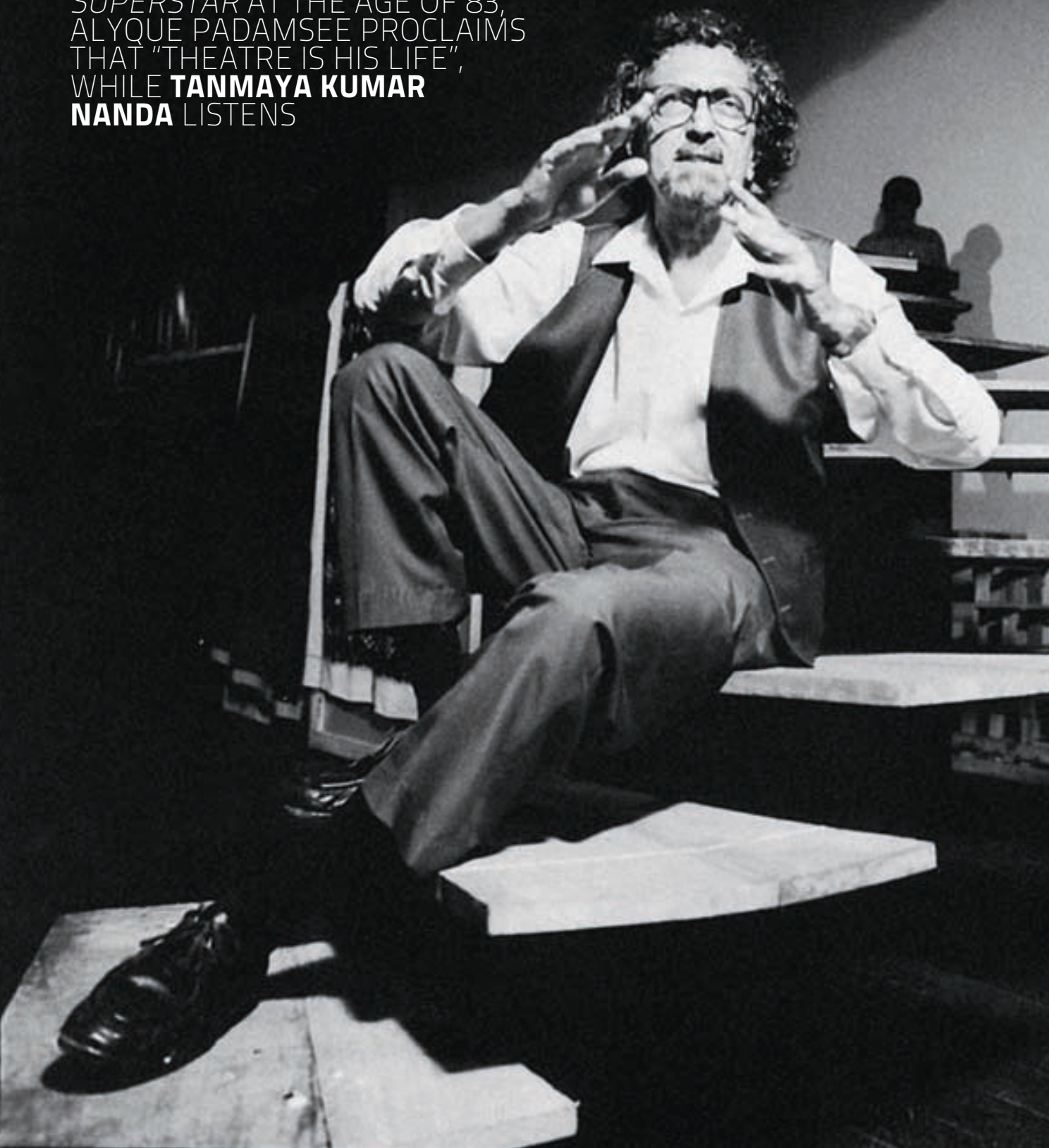
And, no, he never worked with Satyajit Ray. "I was not fortunate enough to work with the master filmmaker but my only consolation is that one of my favourite students, Soumendu Roy, worked on many films with him and I am proud of that." When Roy was asked to comment on Sengupta's greatness as a cinematographer, he said, "We were among those fortunate few who could learn a lot from him. He was a great teacher and we learnt some basics from him." On Sengupta's mastery over lighting arrangements, Roy added, "He, in fact, pioneered the special effect of black and white when

we had barely any technological support. You can see his skill in films like *Dakharkara*, *Nisithe* and *Nagarik*."

Adds internationally acclaimed filmmaker and cinematographer Goutam Ghosh, "Ram Da was certainly an artist who used the camera as a brush and light as paint to give the effect to black-and-white scenes in his inimitable style. Those scenes in *Hangsamithun*, directed by Partha Pratim Bandopadhyay, show off his sense of artistry. And Jean Renoir's *The River* brought out the best in him as a cameraman." Remarks film critic Ujjal Chakraborty, "The way he brought out different layers of shade in black and white was truly amazing. Remember the crack lines on the walls in the room in Ritwik Ghatak's *Nagarik*? It seemed as if you were in an old room imbued with pangs of despair."

Twilight casts a violet glow as Sengupta sits in his rocking chair. The light is just perfect and the scene could well have been one of those sepia-toned frames Sengupta once saw through his lens. Appearing like a sage bathed in the dying light of the evening sun, Sengupta is, and will always be, remembered as an icon in the annals of Indian cinema. ✨

GEARING UP TO RESTAGE HIS  
VERSION OF *JESUS CHRIST*  
SUPERSTAR AT THE AGE OF 83,  
ALYQUE PADAMSEE PROCLAIMS  
THAT "THEATRE IS HIS LIFE",  
WHILE **TANMAYA KUMAR**  
**NANDA** LISTENS





# LUST FOR LIFE

BY any reckoning, 40 years is a long time. Certainly long enough to dull a few faculties, depending on which direction you are counting from. And if you are an octogenarian, bridging that gap can sometimes be a battle.

Not for Alyque Padamsee, though. The father of the brand creation and management business in the country who, during his time at Lintas, gave India such memorable characters as *Lalitaji* of Surf fame and the Liril girl, refuses to hang up his boots. If anything, he seems all set for a second innings that is just starting. Actually, scratch that—his first innings is still not over! “People tell me they thought I had retired. I tell them, ‘Rubbish, I will *never* retire!’” he says emphatically, before adding, “Retirement is death! The sooner you retire, the sooner you die, and I truly believe this.”

Fittingly enough, the 83 year-old is racing to restage his version of *Jesus Christ Superstar* later this year in December, a full 40 years after he first produced and directed it in 1974, giving India such theatre talents as Nandu Bhende and Madhukar Dash. “It [also] made a star of a singer, Devika Rajvans, who sang a song we specially composed for Mother Mary, which is the theme of my produc-

Samar Jodha

tion,” says Padamsee, “which is that all men, or all persons really, who speak of peace and brotherhood are eventually assassinated in violence, whether it was Jesus, whether it was Mahatma Gandhi, whether it was Martin Luther King Jr and so many all over the world.”

Seated in his tastefully decorated apartment in tony Warden Road in South Mumbai, Padamsee's excitement about the revival is palpable. A lifelong theatre person, he keeps returning to his pet project through the conversation, reiterating the primacy of his theatre experience over his almost legendary advertising career. Dressed in a bright crimson shirt and dark pants, he can barely contain his excitement about the production; indeed, each time he returns to the topic, it is as if he had just gulped down an energy drink. “I have spent the past five months auditioning for the cast, and we have just locked in and I will be rehearsing every single day for the next six months till the first week of December, when the play opens in St Andrew's Auditorium in Bandra,” he says.

As if that weren't exhausting enough, Padamsee is doing two versions of the mega-production, with two sets of actors. “I thought that two different productions will give the audience to see Jesus in two different lights—those who are religious-minded will see him as the son of God and those who feel Jesus had a message for us humans will see him as the son of Man,” he says.

This continued indulgence of his passion is perhaps what has sustained him, both through his advertising life as well as his work in theatre. “People ask me, ‘What's the secret of your youth?’” he says. “The secret of my youth is that when I wake up in the morning, I say to myself, ‘I am a 17 year-old college boy; what is life going to show me today that will make me wonder? What new thing will I discover?’ I fall in love with life every day, *every day*. Fall in love with life and you will never be bored.”

There's no chance of boredom for Padamsee. He is directing Shabana Azmi in Girish Karnad's *Broken Images* and acting in *Death of a Salesman* even as he prepares *JCS*. “I haven't acted in 30 years so [daughter] Raell said I should come back and do a play, but I was apprehensive because not acting for so long makes you rusty. She suggested *Death of a Salesman*, which I have done before, and by God, when I am on stage, I really do have the energy of a 17 year-old!”

In fact, despite his legacy to Indian advertising—“Most of today's creative heads have been trained by me”—he says his advertising work was actually inspired by his

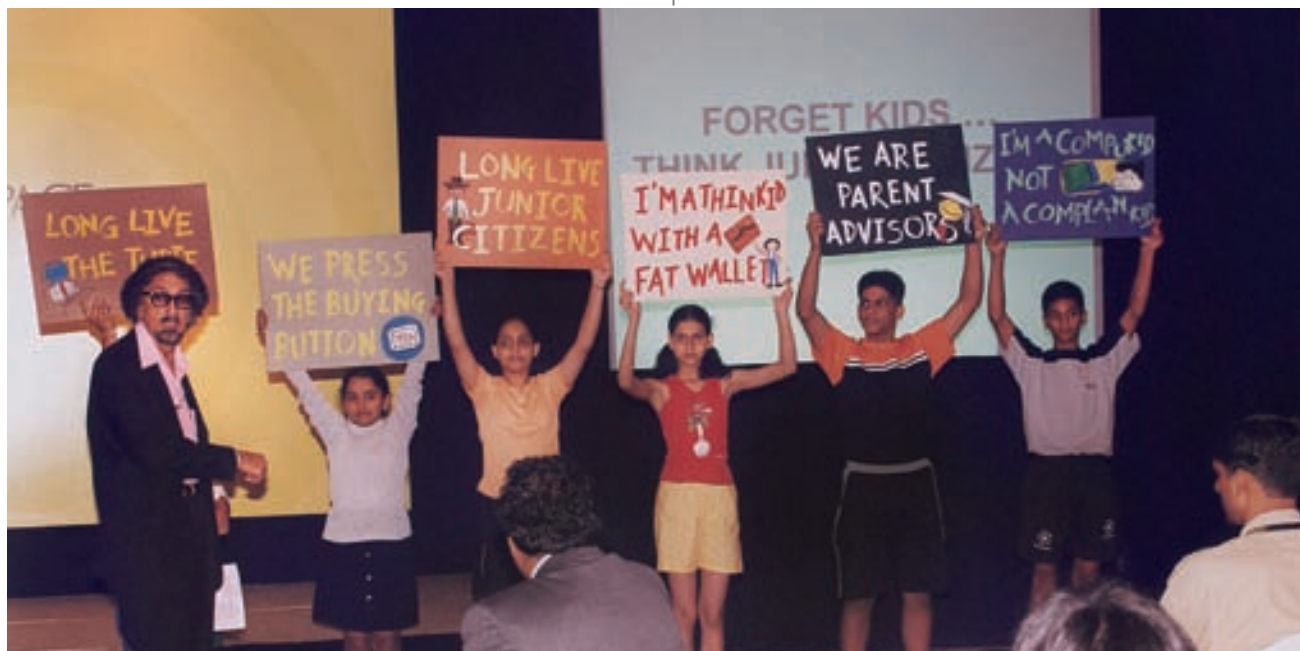
“EVERY PLAY, I'VE BEEN REBORN, SO I'VE LIVED 70 LIVES AND I'VE HAD 70 FAMILIES, BESIDES THE THREE THAT I HAVE FROM MY MARRIAGES. I'VE REALLY BEEN REBORN 70 TIMES AND EACH PLAY IS A WHOLE NEW LIFE AND EXPERIENCE”



Fotocorp

love of the stage. “All my advertising is very much like my theatre work; I try to see what the insight is that will make people emotionally empathise with my character. So, Lalitaji is the *chachi* who is always giving good advice. You might grit your teeth but you know what she is saying makes sense.”

And he gives credit where it is due: Shakespeare. “Shakespeare is my God, *God*, because he created characters who had basic human instincts that never die,” he exclaims. “Jealousy, Othello; ambition, Macbeth; indeci-



At an event; with wife Sharon; (opposite page) with youngest daughter Shazahn

sion, Hamlet, ingratitude, King Lear; he took those themes and they are still as relevant in 2014 as they were 450 years ago. The man was a sheer genius!"

And to paraphrase the Bard, all Padamsee's world is a stage! "Theatre is my life; it's as simple as that," he says. "Every play, I've been reborn, so I've lived 70 lives and I've had 70 families, besides the three that I have from my marriages. I've really been reborn 70 times and each play is a whole new life and experience."

Interestingly, all his three children—one from each of his three marriages; Raell, Quasar and Shazahn—are related to theatre. Raell is a theatre producer, Quasar has his own group, Quasar Theatre Productions, and organises an annual youth drama festival called Thespo, while the youngest Shazahn has made the move to films. "Shazahn has crossed over to Bollywood; she is a starlet," he says with a chuckle. "She has done three films and she's shooting for three more."

"I have a wonderful relationship with my children, particularly my youngest," he adds. In fact, the sign on the door to his Warden Road apartment has both their names on it. And now, Raell and he are working together on *JCS*, as well. "People don't realise what theatre is ... I rehearse a play for three months and *Superstar* will be rehearsed for six months, so every rehearsal my whole



life is recreated. I'm dealing with a new Jesus, two Jesuses, two Judases, two Mary Magdalenes, two Pontius Pilates, two King Herods, it's a new everything, it's going to be fascinating. I can't tell you until you are in the theatre, you don't realise what the life is."

There are risks, of course. For example, at the time of its first staging, *JCS* saw some dissent among the Catholic community who felt it was sacrilegious to show Jesus Christ as a rock star. In fact, years after the first staging, which eventually went off smoothly, Padamsee directed a version of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, in which he replaced the Roman emperor with a woman who resembled Indira Gandhi, the Indian prime minister who had imposed a national Emergency. In fact, even the title of the play was changed to just *Caesar*.



"I was warned that I would be arrested but the Gandhi family had better sense, as did some of the states," he says. This time, too, he doesn't foresee any problems for *JCS*, though he concedes that the *raison d'être* for this staging is the rift he sees in the country, whether it is between communities or states.

"Finally, I said this is the year, this is the time; we've just had an election, people are very divided, not just about the prime minister but also about the different parties," he says. "Harmony is what we need now and the theme of *Jesus Christ Superstar* is harmony. I wanted to bring back this important message that in India, today, we seem to be more divided than we were in 1974. Not only is it Hindus and Muslims, Christians are also now being persecuted as minorities. After Indira Gandhi's assassination,

**With children Raell, Quasar and Shazahn**

it was Sikhs and today and for a thousand years, it's been the Dalits who have been persecuted."

On a personal level, *JCS* also marks a new high for his lifelong passion for theatre. "I first fell in love at the age of seven, with the theatre, and then I fell in love again at 17, with Pearl [his first wife] and when we got married, my family threw me out of the house because they didn't approve, so I took up a job in advertising to support ourselves," he remembers, chuckling again. That move turned out to be rather fortuitous, both for him as well as the Indian advertising industry. During the course of his career, Padamsee created some of the most memo-

"HARMONY IS WHAT WE NEED NOW AND THE THEME OF *JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR* IS HARMONY. I WANTED TO BRING BACK THIS IMPORTANT MESSAGE THAT IN INDIA, TODAY, WE SEEM TO BE MORE DIVIDED THAN WE WERE IN 1974"



## ICONIC CHARACTERS CREATED BY PADAMSEE

- Lalitaji for Surf
- Cherry Charlie for Cherry Blossom Shoe Polish
- The MRF Muscle Man for MRF Tyres
- The girl in the waterfall for Liril
- The couple for Kamasutra
- The Indian middle class family in the Hamara Bajaj ad series
- Detective Karamchand for the TV series



## PADAMSEE'S LANDMARK THEATRE WORK

- Evita
- A Streetcar Named Desire
- Kabaret
- Tughlaq
- Jesus Christ Superstar
- Death of a Salesman (picture on left)
- Broken Images

Courtesy: NCPA

rable characters that Indian advertising and television has seen; apart from Lalitaji and the Liril girl, there were Cherry Charlie of Cherry Blossom shoe polish, the MRF Muscleman, and even Karamchand, the home-grown detective whose carrot-chewing, Kitty-admonishing character became an instant hit with a nascent TV viewing audience. In fact, Lalitaji, who was famous for the line '*Bhaisaab, sasti cheez aur achchi cheez mein farq hota hai*', was loosely based on his own mother. "She was well-off, she could afford a Mercedes," he says, "but she would haggle over five rupees with the *sabzi-waali* because she thought she wasn't getting value for her money!"

Clearly, his theatre background gave him a great advantage in advertising. "I created characters," Padamsee says with pride. "So those became legendary because they had

longevity; they still appeal to people today." This overlap of theatre and advertising gave him an edge, creating a new strand of campaigns that set a new, higher standard for others to follow. In doing so, he also created a rule of thumb for himself and his co-workers that has become the gold standard for Indian advertising: "Be a professional; don't just dream up a headline or a film idea. First, study the consumer at whom you are aiming it; first understand your consumer's emotional needs; it's not just rational needs."

In a sense, Padamsee is also applying that credo to his own life, as he juggles his multiple hats; some that serve his rational needs while his lifelong love affair with theatre fulfils his emotional needs. Because, as he says himself, "I am basically a theatre man who makes a living from advertising." 🌸

# What is 60?

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

The number of movies you have to catch up on.

The number of bad jokes you cracked last month.

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

The number of places you have to travel to.

What it's not, is your age.

At least not in your head.

Or in your heart.





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

*harmony*  
**celebrate age**





Shilbhadra Datta

# RIP AMBY

**I**t has ruled Indian roads for close to 56 years. If there's one car that's etched into the consciousness of our country, it's the Ambassador. Beaming the red beacon outside the corridors of power in Delhi, balancing humongous suitcases of Gulf-returnees riding into the dusty interiors of Kerala, carting Army officials through tough terrain in the Himalaya and assembling three generations of a family on a

joyride across the length and breadth of India, the Ambassador has been ubiquitous.

Despite its British origins, the Ambassador, or the Amby as it's lovingly called, was embraced by a newly independent nation trying to find its feet on the world arena. The size and the comfort it afforded big joint families made it the definitive Indian family car—and a status symbol.





Shilp hadra Datta

Legend has it that when the Birlas wanted a new model to replace their old Hindustan Landmaster models based on the Morris Oxford Series II, they scouted for the new Morris Oxford Series III, which shifted gear into our own Amby in 1958. With hardly any competition, the Ambassador's success story continued unchallenged for decades till the zippier Maruti marked its entry in the early 1980s. And, with flyovers and expressways replacing narrow, bumpy roads, allowing Japanese, Korean and German models to perform well, the aspirational middle class took to stylish and snazzy fuel-efficient models that were swift and agile.

While the Amby continued to be the first car of choice for most politicians and bureaucrats, the death knell finally sounded when former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee opted for a sleek custom-made BMW in 2003. Gradually, the political elite shifted its loyalties from the stately white Ambassador car to western luxury brands. Today, the relevance of the curvaceous Amby is more as a taxi, ferrying tourists and travellers in its spacious backseat.

Sadly, the recent decision of Hindustan Motors to pull the plug on this iconic car comes just a year after it fought



Shilbhadra Datta



Shilbhadra Datta



off competition from motor cars from Britain, America, Germany, South Africa and Russia to win the crown for the world's best taxi at the Beaulieu's World of Top Gear motorsport show. And this, even as taxi fleets once loyal to Hindustan Motors have largely switched over to workhorse designs of Honda and Toyota in India.

However, even today, a trip to India for many a tourist is considered incomplete without a cruise in an Amby under the intense gaze of tiny figurines of gods and goddesses glued to the dashboard. As the Amby rides into the sunset, it's time to take a drive down memory lane and relive vignettes of India's most-loved car.

# Pilgrim's progress

Piety, peace and prayers mark the 12-km uphill trek to the holy abode of Vaishno Devi, nestled amid misty mountains

❖ 📷 Gustasp and Jeroo Irani

A virtual army of pilgrims trekked up to Vaishno Devi temple, located in the folds of the Trikuta mountains in the state of Jammu and Kashmir; some were barefoot with a look of single-minded devotion, while others walked balancing infants in their arms; yet others like us marched with a determined smile as a gaggle of youngsters chanted ardently “*Zor se bolo Jai Mata Di; pyaar se bolo Jai Mata Di; saare bolo Jai Mata Di.*” Soon the mountains reverberated with the rallying cries of the faithful, binding us all in a holy circle of fidelity to the Goddess.

There were old, infirm, physically challenged believers as well as ones in their prime; while some chose to fly uphill in a helicopter, others clip-clopped their way to the top on horses and yet others swayed past us in *paalkis* borne by men who goose-stepped their way upwards to put less pressure on their knees. *Pithoo* or porters, carrying luggage, were also part of the human tide of love and compassion that swept upwards in a divine surge.

And then we saw him—a man slithering up the paved path on his tummy. So intense yet private was his aura of sacrifice and devotion that we lowered our cameras to half-mast and did not take any photographs. “The greater and harder the difficulties, the sweeter the fruit,” a grizzled veteran of many treks to the temple whispered to us in an aside, leaning her weight on a stick as she marched on, her face radiating pure spirituality. “Some people roll all the way to the top because *maa aap bulandi* [the mother herself calls].”

One of the best maintained pilgrim sites in the country, Vaishno Devi has paved, covered paths, dotted with benches and toilet facilities. Electric cars are available for








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Piety, sheer practicality and commerce stir here in a heady cocktail, even as mist hangs like tattered veils over the mountains. As you edge your way up, you can hear the pounding of drums, energising weary trekkers who break into impromptu dance steps

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senior citizens and the physically challenged all the way to the shrine from Adhkuari, the halfway point to the top. The place is named so after Adi Kumari or the eternal virgin. En route, you find hawkers selling everything from fruits, biscuits and noodles to juices, tea and coffee, besides incense sticks, holy threads, etc. Closer to the temple, there are many *bhojanalaya* where pilgrims can have *rajma-chawal* and other local vegetarian delicacies. There is even a Cafe Coffee Day outlet that serves a variety of coffees, teas and sandwiches.

It was our first trip to Vaishno Devi and most pilgrims we spoke to said that the facilities had improved tremendously since the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board was set up in 1986, under the leadership of then Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Jagmohan. Now one can see more refreshment centres and sanitary arrangements along the well-lit route. Earlier, the paths were unkempt and dishevelled and the facilities for pilgrims were minimal. The shrine was then managed by a private trust and *baridar*, a group of local residents, who took turns or *bari* to take the offerings, while the trust took the rentals and royalties.

Pilgrims have to register at the base town of Katra from where they can hire an auto to Darshani Deodhi; that's where the 12-km trek to the shrine starts. Security around the area is tight. And when you are on your way, secure in the knowledge that all's well with the world around you, the sight of the road unscrolling upward and coiling around the bulging belly of the mountains up to 5,200 ft can make your heart skip a beat.

We vowed to make it on foot as far as we could and, thankfully, the collective energy of the pilgrims seemed to propel us upwards, challenging us to prove our faith. When it started to drizzle and the paved path became a river of mud and horse droppings, an army of cleaners appeared from seemingly nowhere to clean it all up while vendors of plastic raincoats came to our rescue as rain pelted down in seeming benediction. It's alarming to see the amount of plastic waste that is casually strewn all around by apathetic pilgrims. This is so despite the fact that there are dustbins all along the route and sweepers who are on the job round the clock. But clearly, the sheer number of pilgrims outweighs cleaners.



**To each his own: Pilgrims—young and old—on a holy trail to the main shrine**  
**Opposite page: View of the temple complex; imprint of the Goddess' feet**

Despite the drenching, we soldiered on, reassured by the sight of a doctor's clinic and even a diagnostic centre that offered to monitor blood pressure, sugar levels and cholesterol. The shrine board's helpline number (0-9797477777) and the rates for horses, *pithoo* and other services are scrawled on mountain slopes in several places. Piety, sheer practicality and commerce stir here in a heady cocktail, even as mist hangs like tattered veils over the mountains. As you edge your way up, you can hear the pounding of drums, energising weary trekkers who break into impromptu dance steps.

By late evening, when we were around 2 km from Adhkuari, our muscles started to protest and the backpacks

began to weigh us down. Finally, we succumbed to the temptation of hiring horses. As we moved upwards, we saw a dead horse being carted away in a wheelbarrow. Our horses were recalcitrant, wanting to return to their stables, but with much prodding by the owners who walked alongside we reached Adhkuari, from where we bought tickets to travel in one of the electric cars to Bhawan, the hilltop. Most horses here seemed overworked and reluctant to make the steep climb. They were being rapped with spiked sticks to keep going, lugging around more weight than they could invariably cope with!

Dusk had fallen by the time we reached there; the mountaintop glowed like a fairyland as lights glimmered in vari-




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Inside the temple, the air was thick with devotion, even as rain and the cold marble flooring made our feet feel like blocks of ice strung on numb limbs. As we stood in a slow moving queue, the familiar chant of *Jai Mata Di* started to ring out. Despite exhaustion, we joined the chorus

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ous buildings of the shrine board, its rooms, dormitories and restaurants. A stirring *aarti* was in progress, which we did not attend because of endless queues, preferring to watch it instead on strategically placed large TV screens outside. We booked beds in a dormitory as rooms weren't available and then headed for a *darshan* after a ritual washing of the face and arms. Inside the temple, the air was thick with devotion, even as rain and the cold marble floor made our feet feel like blocks of ice strung on numb limbs.

As we stood in a slow moving queue, the familiar chant of *Jai Mata Di* started to ring out. Despite exhaustion, we joined the chorus.

Legend has it that Mata was a devotee of Lord Rama, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Mata Vaishno Devi had taken a vow of celibacy but Bhairon Nath, a tantric demon god, was taken by her beauty. She fled from his advances to the Trikuta Mountains, but en route rested at Charan Paduka, a holy site marked by the imprint of her feet. The Goddess then rested in the cave at Adhkuari (the cave is now called Garbh Joon as it's shaped like a womb) and it took Bhairon nine months to locate her. Mata escaped Bhairon from the other end of the cave by plunging her trident into the rock face and creating an aperture to pass through. When she reached the top of the mountain, Mata assumed the avatar of Mahakali and lopped off Bhairon's head, which fell at the place where the Bhairon Temple is now located, 1.4 km from her shrine. In his death throes, Bhairon saw her divine form and begged for forgiveness. Filled with compassion, Mata forgave him and promised that a pilgrim's journey to her shrine would be incomplete without a visit to the Bhairon Temple on the neighbouring hill, which in itself is another steep climb.



## factfile

### GETTING THERE

Vaishno Devi is accessible throughout the year, though May, June and July are peak periods as are the *navratra* (March-April and September-October) and New Year.

**By air:** The closest airport. Jammu, is 48 km away. Daily flights are available from Delhi, Srinagar, Mumbai, and other major towns.

**By rail:** Jammu is the nearest railhead, well-connected to all major cities.

### ACCOMMODATION

Rooms are available at Main Bhawan, Gouri Bhawan and Vaishnavi Complex. A dormitory is available at Manokamna Bhawan (₹ 120 per bed). Accommodation can be booked online. In addition, there are a number of large halls where pilgrims can sleep for the night for free but this is subject to availability. The Shrine Board runs *bhojanalaya* at Main Bhawan and Manokamna Bhawan, rustling up wholesome vegetarian fare. For more information, visit: [www.maavaishnodevi.org](http://www.maavaishnodevi.org)

### TIPS

- Pilgrims have to get their registration slips from the registration office in Katra.
- One can trek up to Bhawan, hire a horse or palanquin (prices are negotiable and can range from ₹ 800 upward one way, depending on the season and distance), or fly up to the mountaintop in a helicopter (between 8 am and 5 pm). A helicopter ride takes 8 minutes. The fare is ₹ 1,500 one way and ₹ 2,700 for a two-way trip.
- Avoid the monsoon, as the trek can get treacherous. Make sure to wear shoes with a firm grip for better support during the climb.



A food shop in the temple complex; (opposite page) a *prasad* stall

Mata's presence, palpable in the thick chilly night air, urged us to move onward despite our extreme discomfort. To the right was the cave through which pilgrims usually slither on their stomach for Mata's *darshan*, one at a time. Now this cave is opened only during the lean season and for festive occasions. Two new tunnels have been created to enter and exit the sanctum sanctorum, so a larger number of devotees can be accommodated.

We walked past a large idol of the Mata shielded behind huge silver doors, and statues of the lion, her mount, and then down a marble tunnel-like corridor that led to a raised platform, where Mata Vaishno Devi has revealed herself in the form of three *pindi* or rock formations that represent Saraswati, the energy of creation; Laxmi, the energy of maintenance; and Ma Kali, the energy of dissolution. Ma Vaishno Devi combines all three energies. The *darshan*, though soothing, was brief as we had a long winding queue behind us.

Outside, pilgrims washed their feet in the Amrit Kund where water flowing out of the cave collects. They bent down to fill the sacred water in bottles to take home to family and friends, and walked back to their dormitories or rooms with a spring in their step. After a light dinner, sleep claimed our weary bodies; we slept oblivious to the snores, moans and groans of our fellow travellers in the dormitory. The next morning we skipped down blithely, along with other pilgrims, as though gravity had been switched off and we were floating on air. We felt blessed to have been summoned by the Goddess. ✽

***The first day at school***

*The first time you rode the bicycle.*

***The first crush you had at thirteen***

*The first drama you got a part in*

***The first day at college***

*The first date you went on*

***The first kiss***

*The first time you proposed*

***The first job interview***

*The first board meeting you addressed*

***The first day after retirement***

***BUTTERFLIES*** never retire

**The first click of the mouse.**

The all new

**[www.harmonyindia.org](http://www.harmonyindia.org)**

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**celebrate age**

## RIDER'S PRIDE



Chennai Pix

**H**e has been dubbed 'the oldest super randonneur in India' by Madras Randonneurs recently. But 'old' is certainly not a term you would associate Sundar Rajan with. In fact, with his gruelling fitness regime that involves cycling 40 km a day, gym workouts and Sivananda yoga practice, the Chennai-based 64 year-old could put many youngsters to shame. And, for those of you who are wondering what exactly randonneuring is, over to Rajan.

"Randonneuring, popularly called Brevet [and Audax in the UK, Australia and Brazil], is a non-competitive endurance cycling sport that originated

### THIS 'N' THAT

in France and was introduced in India only in 2011," he explains. "One has to finish a 200-km cycling course in 13.5 hours, 300 km in 20 hours, 400 km in 27 hours and 600 km in 40 hours inside one Brevet calendar [November-October] to be acknowledged as a super randonneur and you also earn the 'grand' tag if you are above 50." Having successfully completed the four rides in the past two consecutive years, Rajan is now a 'grand super randonneur'.

Affectionately called 'Sundar sir' in cycling circles, Rajan took to cycling in his 50s when he observed his friends succumbing to health issues.

"I wanted to do something to stay fit. One day, I just took my son's cycle out for a ride. Gradually, it became a routine to ride around the Chennai beaches with other cycling enthusiasts. Soon, I decided to take it to a challenging level."

Brevet is a battle of both body and mind because it requires the rider to be completely self-sufficient, for food, sleep, first-aid, et al. The riders have overall and intermediate time checkpoints. Next, he has an ambitious goal to complete 1,200 km in the prestigious Paris-Brest-Paris event in 2015 and is training rigorously—par for the course for Sundar sir!

—Ramya Srinivasan



# Fine **tune**

Sarod maestro Pt Brij Narayan tells **Deepa Narayanan** why Indians need to retain the sanctity of classical music

Indian classical music is viewed with a lot of reverence around the globe because it is a tradition we have nurtured for over 5,000 years,” says sarod maestro Pandit Brij Narayan. Just back from Paris, where he was invited to conduct workshops and musical concerts at the Theater of Blanc Mesnil for the Le Forum in France, he is perhaps one of the few remaining traditionalists who has propounded the need to retain the purity of Indian classical music. The workshop, which comprised explanations on classical instruments and Indian music, was conducted in tandem with the maestro’s

son and upcoming sarangi player Harsh Narayan for a French audience.

As we wonder how he got across these technicalities for a crowd of 300 French classical music lovers, he gives us an insight into the Indian classical music lectures at the workshop. “The phrase ‘classical music’ translates into *shastriya sangeet* in Hindi, where *shastriya* means science,” he elaborates. “I explained the basic principles of classical music, which must be adhered to and respected. Otherwise, it just results in the musical note becoming a scale without transforming into a raga.”

## MUSIC

Having largely trained under his father, renowned sarangi player Padma Vibhushan Pandit Ram Narayan, the 62 year-old had taken to music very early in life and is perhaps the only sarod player trained by a non-sarod player. Incidentally, the maestro plays the sarod without microphones, which he insists is the best way to play Indian instruments. “Our musical instruments are scientifically made,” he explains. “And the sounds they create do not need further amplification.”

For someone as precise, it seems natural that one of his biggest concerns—something he is very vocal

about—is the falling standards in the purity of Indian classical music, especially within the country. “Sadly, while most countries work hard at archiving heritage, in India archiving is not only a very lethargic process but seems very slack,” he points out. “In fact, our institutes invite very few *vidwaan* with the real knowledge to conduct these workshops.”

While his musical journey has taken him across the globe, he has a musical memory that takes over any other, as he fondly recalls the Festival of Etampes in 1986 in the outskirts of Paris. “As the concert was scheduled for 8 pm, I decided to play Jaijavanti,

a night raga, and follow it up with Maalkaus. But when I got to Etampes at 7 pm, it was bright as day... and I wondered how I could play a night raga. I remember walking into the venue at Etampes Cathedral and looking awestruck at the imposing statues and incredible paintings of Mother Mary and Jesus Christ. Then, I only remember the tanpura leading me on, only to be woken from my reverie by the thunderous applause of an audience of 7,000!” he reminisces. “I was in complete communion with God. It was a humbling affair.”

Does the maestro appreciate fresher, younger talent? “Everything is not

lost yet. The new generation is very talented, but they do have a long way to go as far as classical music is concerned,” he clarifies. “Indian classical music, as spiritual music for the soul, was very pure till it remained in the temple...and I don’t mean temples in a religious connotation,” he adds in the same breath.

He believes classical music began to lose its purity the moment it became a means for entertainment. “The younger generation needs to learn and respect the purity of the music and keep it that way. Indian classical music is already perfect and needs no further experimentations,” he signs off.



## REGAINING LOST GLORY

After the consistent efforts of two years and a cost of ₹ 20 million, one of the oldest landmarks of Mumbai, the 152 year-old ‘Khada Parsi’ statue, was restored last month. The 40 ft-tall historical landmark—a Grade I heritage monument and the only cast iron statue in the city—is located in one of the city’s busiest junctions in Byculla. It was erected in the 1860s by Manockjee Cursetjee, a Parsi businessman and a reformer of education for women in India, to commemorate his father and illustrious community leader, Shet Cursetjee Manockjee. Over the years, the statue, which cost a princely amount of ₹ 20,000 at the time, fell victim to vandalism, pollution and theft; the four mermaids at the base were in ruins, the metal structure suffered corrosion owing to massive pollution and the lamps were stolen. The monument, now restored by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), has prompted fresh hope for the city’s other historical ruins.

# Rural murals



Photo courtesy | Tasveer

Master of many a medium, **Jyoti Bhatt's** simple black and white photographs are silent, beautiful witnesses to rural India from the 1960s to the 1990s. Considered an important chapter in the history of Indian photography, these images chronicle Bhatt's travels through the interiors of states such as Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha, and the simple lifestyle, culture and tradition of their rural communities. Many of these photographs are now being held at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, Delhi, and Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong. For the 80 year-old, for whom art has always been a means of documenting his surroundings, the passion to preserve the vanishing art and culture of India became a focus in the 1960s. In fact, he considers his documentary photographs an art form. Tasveer recently held a series of exhibitions across India, titled *Jyoti Bhatt, Photographs from Rural India*. **Sai Prabha Kamath** caught up with Bhatt to re-trace his photographic journey and his love for the lens. Excerpts from the interview:



## PHOTOGRAPHY

**What is the inspiration behind these documentary photographic works?**

I am guided by Gandhiji's statement that India lives in her villages. I started photographic documentation of visual art traditions that were being practiced in rural regions to show the integral relationship of the art forms with their environment and life. That was during 1967. But then I realised that even though some of the traditions were alive, they were dying or changing owing to the forces of politicised modernisation of our country. So I more or less stopped painting and print-making and concentrated on photographing in several regions in India such as Bastar, Koraput and Nicobar.

**Why are these images important now?**

Through my photographic images, I have been able to record what may be called an important and beautiful aspect of the Indian social fabric that has survived for many ages in spite of all kinds of turmoil. It is quite possible that many of the art forms do not exist anymore. Or, the number of people who made them has decreased. Some traditions have continued but have changed drastically. For instance,

people now buy Kolam [Rangoli designs] in the form of plastic stickers even in shops within South Indian temples that used to support this art tradition. In my photographs, I have not tried to concentrate on just art forms but on capturing the integrated relationship of art and people—how these were interwoven in their lives. We may not see much of this today, and certainly won't be able to in the future.

**How is the creative process of these images different from your other work?**

Two-dimensionality has always been my choice for pictorial compositions and I have for long appreciated Rajput miniature paintings, especially for their treatment and interpretation of space—not as seen by the eye but as conceived by the mind. This seems to have influenced my framing of most of the subjects that attracted me. I studied painting at M S University of Baroda between 1950 and 1959. When I started using a camera, it was mainly to keep a record of my paintings and replace a pencil. For me, then, the camera was only an advanced and faster tool. Soon, I realised the camera recorded so many details that I had opted to ignore at times and, more often, had failed to notice. What I found most fascinating was the fact that a camera could record so accurately and objectively in just a tiny fraction of a second.

**Would you like to revisit the places you have captured?**

I had photographed the rural art scene between 1967 and 1995. If I could travel and photograph now, I would go to the regions I could not see earlier and go to places I had photographed earlier to record their present state. I want to record how our ruralites have adapted to the onslaught of modernisation—beautifully, cleverly and bravely. But this looks impossible now owing to my failing eyesight.



**What are you working on currently?**

It became necessary for me to more or less stop photographing after the mid-1990s owing to age-related issues. At present, I am reviving and digitising these old images with the help of my young artist friends.

## GOLDEN MEMORIES

Veteran radio presenter Ameen Sayani recently launched a new radio programme, *Sitaron ki Jawaniyaan*, which features a repertoire of old Hindi film melodies interwoven with interviews of legendary artists such as R D Burman, Meena Kumari, Pran, Naseeruddin Shah and Kishore Kumar. "The new show is a retake on the originals aired 15-20 years ago," Sayani tells us. "This is the first revival of the treasure comprising heart-warming and comic interviews of some of our celebrated stars." Talking about today's radio presentations, he adds, "I am baffled to hear extempore interviews and unscripted chitchats that lack depth, whereas my shows are well-researched and meticulously planned. Radio presenters need to do a lot of planning and have to be ready for overseas promotion, which requires a lot of time and energy. This might be the reason we don't find many seniors on radio today. For my part, I'm limiting myself to reviving my earlier programmes."

*Listen to Sitaron ki Jawaniyaan on Radio City 91.1 FM on Sundays from 12 pm to 1 pm, with a repeat show from 9 pm to 10 pm*

# Listen to the rain

To celebrate the advent of monsoon, we present an extract from Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), a war novel where rain plays a pivotal part, mirroring the love life of Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley

"Wouldn't you like me to have some more exalted rank?"

"No, darling. I only want you to have enough rank so that we're admitted to the better restaurants."

"That's just the rank I have."

"You have a splendid rank. I don't want you to have any more rank. It might go to your head. Oh, darling, I'm awfully glad you're not conceited. I'd have married you even if you were conceited but it's very restful to have a husband who's not conceited."

We were talking softly out on the balcony. Outside the mist turned to rain and in a little while it was raining hard and we heard it drumming on the roof. I got up and stood at the door to see if it was raining in but it wasn't, so I left the door open.

"Who else did you see?" Catherine asked.

"Mr and Mrs Meyers."

"They're a strange lot."

"He's supposed to have been in the penitentiary at home. They let him out to die."

"And he lived happily in Milan forever after."

"I don't know how happily."

"Happily enough after jail I should think."

"She's bringing some things here."

"She brings splendid things. Were you her dear boy?"

"One of them."

"You are all her dear boys," Catherine said. "Listen to it rain."

"It's raining hard."

"And you'll always love me, won't you?"

"Yes."

"And the rain won't make any difference?"

"No."

snow and in the hail and—what else is there?"

"I don't know. I guess I'm sleepy."

"Go to sleep, darling, and I'll love you no matter how it is."

"You're not really afraid of the rain are you?"

"Not when I'm with you."

"Why are you afraid of it?"

"I don't know."

"Tell me."

"All right. I'm afraid of the rain because sometimes I see me dead in it."

"No."

"And sometimes I see you dead in it."

"That's more likely."

"No it's not, darling. Because I can keep you safe. I know I can. But nobody can help themselves."

"Please stop it. I don't want you to get Scotch and crazy tonight. We won't be together much longer."

"No, but I am Scotch and crazy. But I'll stop it. It's all nonsense."

"Yes it's all nonsense."

"It's all nonsense. It's only nonsense. I'm not afraid of the rain. I'm not afraid of the rain. Oh, oh, God, I wish I wasn't." She was crying. I comforted her and she stopped crying. But outside, it kept on raining.



"That's good. Because I'm afraid of the rain."

"Why?" I was sleepy. Outside the rain was falling steadily.

"I don't know, darling. I've always been afraid of the rain."

"I'll love you always."

"I'll love you in the rain and in the

## Chemical age

**T**his year's winner of the Pulitzer for general non-fiction, **TOMS RIVER: A STORY OF SCIENCE AND SALVATION** (Random House; ₹ 1,675; 538 pages) is a gripping environmental thriller much in sync with our times. Meticulously researched and put together by journalist **Dan Fagin**, it is a touching account of an American town's struggle with a legacy of toxic pollution and cancer clusters, resonating globally. Toms River is a microcosm of a world that rampantly uses/misuses chemicals without quite realising the associated dangers or the fallout on our health.

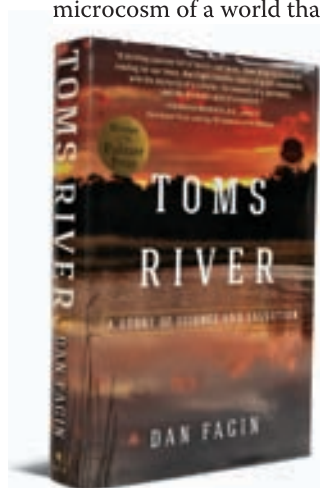
Fagin exposes how vested corporate interests and corrupt politicians turned a quiet suburban beach community, which would rather be known for its baseball champions, into a notorious cluster of childhood cancers. What emerges is the helpless and hapless human side of reckless industrialisation. Toms River

became a toxic dumping ground, with tens of thousands of leaky drums being emptied into open pits and gallons of wastewater being released into the town's namesake river.

The different layers of subplots take you through a short history of the European dye industry, the hazards looming in industrial alleys and the molecular structure of cancer. Though a Dickensian cast of hundreds fill the pages, those who stay with you are the everyday heroes, including the cherubic boy with a chunky medicine box as his bedside companion, the nurse who brought the alarming incidence of childhood cancers to the attention of indifferent authorities, and the elderly woman who threw open her beach house for Greenpeace activists. Others who walk the pages include pioneering scientists and civil rights lawyers.

A sign of the times, the story ends in a Chinese province where many chemical factories, including Ciba-Geigy, which exited Toms River, are now ensconced, with new clusters of diseases mushrooming around it. Melding hard-hitting investigative reporting, systematic research, and an unforgettable cast of characters, this is a tale of corporate avarice, government involvement and citizen journalism.

—Srirekha Pillai



## Demystifying the silver years

**C**ruising through later life is both an art and a science—an art because you make the best use of your qualities not just for your own happiness but that of others; science because you need to plan and work towards it in a systematic way to make the silver years worry-free. In **THE ART OF AGEING: PLANNING FOR A COMFORTABLE OLD AGE** (Indus Source; ₹ 300; 296 pages), octogenarian author **S K Kulkarni** shares tips for leading meaningful and purposeful silver years, while delineating measures that need to be adopted during the younger days to make the transition smooth and happy.

Banking on the traditional Hindu philosophy of dividing an individual's life into four stages, the author makes suggestions to ensure happiness in the third (60-80 years) and fourth (beyond 80) stages. His basic premise is that happiness in the later years is entirely dependent on the quality of life, attitude and planning adopted during the



initial stages. The section on finance offers a wealth of advice, from financial planning to estate planning.

While an individual's age is generally assumed to be his biological age, the author lays more emphasis on the age of the body (health and fitness) and age of the mind (mental attitude). According to him, the three cornerstones to feeling and looking young are maintaining health, discipline and contentment. While speaking about the need for physical and psychological well-being, Kulkarni also offers some valuable advice on dealing with elderly abuse.

In view of the modern nuclear family system and increase in lifespan, the author advocates a coordinated effort by individuals, family, society and the state to take care of our silvers. Enriched with statistics, real case studies, expert advice and interesting responses to questions put to silvers, this book is a wholesome guide to making the silver years truly count.

—Sai Prabha Kamath

Charanjit Singh



## 'I'm not aged but engaged'

Award-winning author **Kamla K Kapur**'s grasp of mythology allows her a unique ability to create literary magic, lending her the distinction of a writer who transcends genres with ease. The 66 year-old, who lives half the year in Kullu Valley in the Himalaya and the other half in California with her husband Payson R Stevens, is well-known both at home and overseas for an interesting range that includes *Ganesha Goes to Lunch: Classics from Mystic India* (2007, Mandala, USA) and *Rumi's Tales from the Silk Road* (Mandala, USA, and Penguin India 2009). Her plays have been showcased at the Marin Shakespeare Festival in San Francisco, Gas Lamp Quarter Theatre in San Diego, and Dramatic Risks Theatre Group in New York. They have also been produced by the National School of Drama, Yatrik, and The Company, in India. Kapur was in India recently to attend the staging of her award-winning play *Kaamiya* in Mumbai. She spoke to **Suparna-Saraswati Puri** about active ageing and her soon-to-be published book, *The Singing Guru: Legends of Guru Nanak*.

### AUTHORSPEAK

#### How has age contributed to your writings?

I will be 66 soon. I look at myself in the mirror and though I know this creature with silver hair that looks back at me with often-puffy eyes as 'me', I can see how the contours of its face have changed over time, as everything in nature changes. I feel in better shape than I ever have been in my life, both physically and mentally. The former is owing to a passion for movement and exercise. There are days on which I strain for words, can barely catch the edges of thoughts, and forget crucial things. But we cannot let the brain atrophy and my way of exercising it is through writing. Of late, I have started blooming in ways that have surprised and delighted me. Age has brought me to subjects I adore, which elicit my passion and engage my curiosity. I am not aged but engaged. Undeniably, age has been a great guide and ally.

#### Does age influence an author's creativity?

In terms of linear time, by which we tend to categorise the stages of our lives, we are ailing and ageing. In one sense, time and the changes it brings are very real and obvious. We see it blaring all around and inside us. The images are

all too numerous—plants and people blooming, decaying and dying.

After I retired at the age of 55 from my comparatively brief career as an educator, there was a phase during which I felt within myself the ravages of time. I could not write for a long and tortuous stretch. How I overcame it, the strategies I used, are too long to enumerate here. I have written a book *The Writing Warrior*, yet to be published, on the subject. It deals with the essential lessons to be learned from our adversities and suffering, and the techniques, tricks, and perceptual shifts that helped me pull through those tough times.

There is always the danger after 'retiring', of falling into a pit of depression and futility. I have known people who have died shortly after retirement. One must recognise the need to be relevant. I am thankful to come out of those difficult days, whole and unimpaired. I know for a fact that if I am granted health and longevity, my best work lies ahead of me.

#### How was the idea for your soon-to-be-published book, *The Singing Guru: Legends of Guru Nanak*, born?

My father wanted me to write about Nanak. I've always held the Gurus, the *bhakti* saints and the league of spiritual masters as my heroes. They give us a perspective on life and its myriad concerns. I find Sikhism eclectic and egalitarian. For instance, the *Guru Granth Sahib* integrates the voices of various poets including cobblers and butchers.

#### Can you elaborate on the title, *The Singing Guru*?

The title is in consonance with who Guru Nanak was—theatre person, musician and singer. He propagated singing. I'm reminded of Osho's prophetic words here, "*Guru Nanak ne gaya aur ga ke pee liye*."

#### How have you structured the story?

When I got down to writing, I realised I had to surrender to my material. The book wanted to be a long story strewn through the *Janamsakhi* [birth stories relating to Guru Nanak and his life and teachings]. So I've expanded each

*Janamsakhi* into longer stories. The basis of the book is that many questions may not have answers, yet the search is of paramount importance. In the book, Nanak is seen through the eyes of Mardana, the central character of my book, who plays the *rabab* [a string instrument] well. His travels are pivotal to the plot. The story is narrated through Mardana's experiences.

**While working on the book, was your faith overpowered by your sense of imagination?**

When I was writing short stories for my other two books, *Ganesha Goes to Lunch* and *Rumi's Tales from the Silk Road*, I was already thinking of the third one, short stories from the Sikh tradition. After I compiled the stories, I was stuck for a year mainly owing to an erroneous and limited idea of how I wanted to structure the book.

The story of my writing is not disconnected from my faith that our primary endeavour in this journey called life is to stay as close to the realities of the heart and think from it, accepting miracles and mysteries. We have to keep our awe, curiosity and passions alive as we age, and nurture them till they grow even larger. These bestow vibrancy to our lives and keep us young. I am certain that if we keep

ourselves open to the possibility of 'mystery,' and don't fall into the trap of straitjacketing things, we can be potent at any age.

**What was the toughest part about restructuring the narrative?**

Every book has its challenges. Even if a book is stalled for a year, the connection with it is never lost. I am aware that traditional Sikhs may not be open to new interpretations. So, it was fear, another form of the ego, which kept me from taking this liberty with the story. When you are writing, you have to let the material rather than your ego or preconceived notions dictate its needs and directions.

In addition to this, another conflict arose that had me in knots for a while. A writer above all must have no allegiances except to the truth as he or she sees and experiences it. And here I was, writing about *Janamsakhi*, which is anchored in tradition, by inventing my own characters and changing the chronology, as traditionally accepted, of Guru Nanak's travels, making the stories entirely mine to do with as I please, bending, stretching and twisting them as I had done with the other two books. A writer must have this freedom if she is to write with sincerity.

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- The first time you held hands.
- The first fight.
- The first time you made up.
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celebrate age

# Fantastic firsts

Open yourself to new experiences to put the spring back in your step, says **Patricia Spadaro**

At a book signing for my new book *Honor Yourself* last summer, I met a special young lady who taught me to appreciate the 'firsts' in life—no matter what age we are.

She was about five or six years old, and she told me about a trip she would be making in a few months to Virginia for a wedding. With just a touch of timidity and a heart full of excitement, she explained to me that it was the first time ever she would be flying on an airplane. As we talked, we realised that it was also the *first* wedding she would be attending, the *first* time she would be a flower girl, the *first* visit she would be making to Virginia, and the *first* time she would be in the spotlight, walking down the aisle in front of a lot of people. I watched her eyes open wider and wider as it dawned on her how many new experiences she was going to have.

Running through all those firsts with her was refreshing. After all, that's what puts the sparkle into life, isn't it—experiencing new things, or at least doing the things we do as if we are touching, feeling, tasting, and seeing them for the first time?

I realised in that moment that we don't have to be a little child to keep counting our firsts. Our new experiences don't have to stop when we're 10 years old or 30 or 60 or even 90. In fact, whether it's biting into a juicy, new kind of fruit we've never tasted before or sharing a moment of laughter with a chance acquaintance, it's the firsts that keep the excitement in our eyes and the skip in our step.

I suspect that's part of what the sages of East and West meant when they talked about "becoming as a little child." You've heard those famous lines from Jesus before: "Who-soever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" and "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

As it turns out, Taoist sages use similar language as they inspire us to become like an 'infant' or 'the uncarved block'. Those images are ideals for living life as it is meant to be. The infant is a model for returning to simplicity and being fully receptive, exploring life anew without preconceived notions—being childlike in the most beautiful and sensitive sense of the word. Continuing to delight in new firsts helps us to hold on to our sense of wonder and delicious



expectation. To experiment, open up, and see things in new ways.


Cultivating that refreshing sense of newness and adventure may take some deliberate effort. It's all too easy to fall into the sameness of our habits. But if you think about it, there are myriad ways to invite new experiences into your life.

You can listen to a different kind of music, paint a brand new piece of pottery, or watch an entirely new genre of movie or a foreign film. You can try your hand at a new sport or game, intentionally tune in to a programme with a different political slant than you usually listen to, or invite a new acquaintance over for dinner. How about cooking an exotic food you've never tasted before or taking a short trip to a nearby town or wilderness area you've never visited, slowly savouring the new sights, sounds, and smells. Or simply bite into an ice cream cone with a zany new flavour you never imagined possible.

As for me, I'm not quite ready for skydiving, but learning some Spanish and some new dance steps sounds like a lot of fun. *Hola!*

---

*Spadaro writes on personal growth, spirituality and world traditions. Read her articles on [www.practicalspirituality.info](http://www.practicalspirituality.info)*

A photograph of an elderly man with a grey beard and a young girl with dark hair playing in a pond. The man is in the water, wearing a dark shirt, with his hands outstretched towards the girl. The girl is sitting on a wooden dock, wearing a white dress, looking at the man with a smile. The water is dark blue, and the dock is made of wooden planks.

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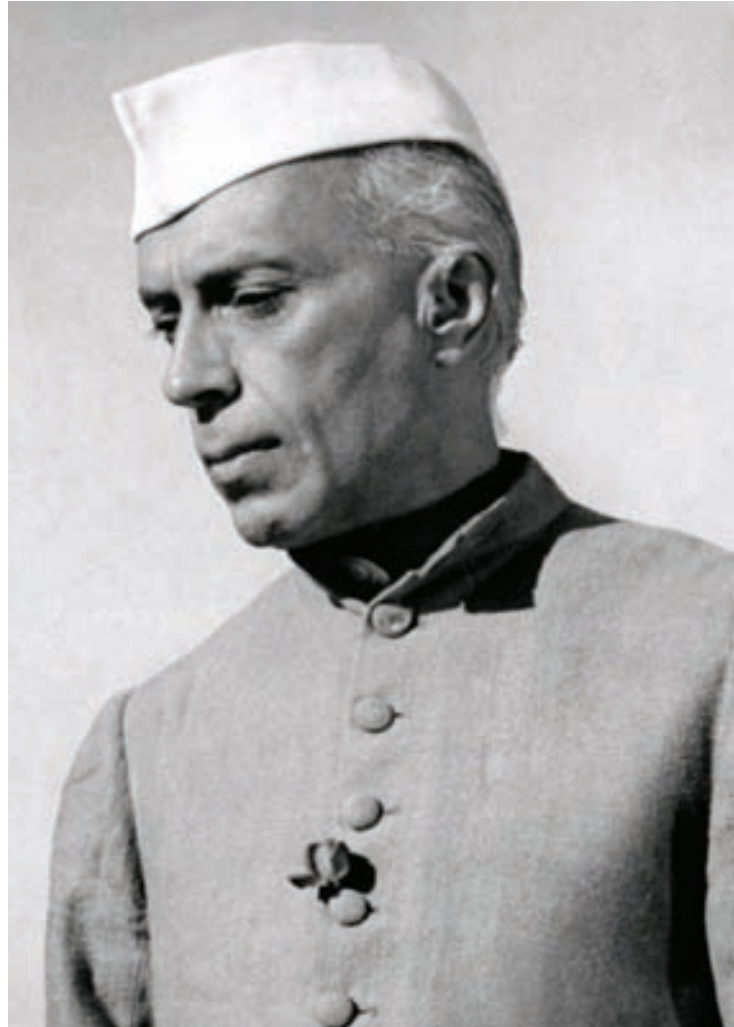
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## NEHRU'S LEGACY

**H**e put together the building blocks of a newly independent nation awaiting its “tryst with destiny.” As the architect of modern India, Jawaharlal Nehru, prime minister for 17 long and formative years, laid the foundations of a democratic, sovereign, socialist and secular nation, while embarking on a non-aligned foreign policy. Such was his impact on the political and cultural landscape of India that even his sartorial choices—the ‘Nehru’ jacket, Gandhi cap and buttonholed rose—made headlines. Five decades after his death on 27 May 1964, many new-generation politicians, including the current Prime Minister Narendra Modi, slip into the Nehru jacket to fit into the image of the suave but humble politician. In fact, TIME magazine recently listed the Nehru jacket as one of the top 10 global political fashion statements.

Going against the grain of the Gandhian philosophy that India could be built around its villages, Nehru realised that Indians needed to move beyond their ethnic and tribal loyalties to develop a new national identity to hold their own on the world stage. While his universal primary education system reached out to the most remote corners of rural India, he built centres of academic excellence such as the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Management. Advocating “scientific temper”, he set up indigenous space and atomic energy programmes. Research laboratories, mills and dams all across the nation were the manifestations of the prevailing scientific temperament. Nevertheless, though India’s thriving democracy and knowledge advantage are credited to Nehru’s farsightedness, his insistence on public sector and state planning is blamed for retarding the economy by choking it in a maze of controls.

Though schooled in Harrow, the patriotic nationalist co-existed with the cosmopolitan liberal in Nehru. Fondly referred to as *Chacha* Nehru, his birthday on 14 November is celebrated as Children’s Day. An intellectual politician and prolific writer, his books, *The Discovery of India* and *Glimpses of World History*, remain classics to this day.



The letters he had written to his daughter Indira Gandhi while she was in boarding school in Mussoorie were compiled later as *Letters from a Father to His Daughter*. Shyam Benegal’s television series *Bharat Ek Khoj* is based on *The Discovery of India*. That said, Girish Karnad’s historical play *Tughlaq* is an allegory about the Nehruvian era, which started with idealism and ended in disillusionment. Indeed, no political legacy is pristine, but few have been so seminal in the development of a nation.

### THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: JULY 1964

- On 2 July, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law, abolishing racial segregation in the US.
- On 10 July, over 300 people were injured when a crowd gathered to welcome The Beatles back to Liverpool after their successful first international tour.
- On 28 July, former UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill, one of the greatest wartime leaders of the 20th century, retired from the House of Commons at the age of 89.
- On 31 July, US country singer Jim Reeves was killed when the plane he was piloting encountered a violent thunderstorm while flying over Tennessee.

## crash blossom

*n.* An ambiguous or misleading headline, particularly one that leads to a comical or nonsensical interpretation.

**Example.** The BBC headline is supposed to convey the notion that the law firm representing George Clooney's girlfriend confirms that the two have agreed to get married. But its syntactical ambiguity makes a lovely **crash blossom**.

—A. Barton Hinkle, "Today's crash blossom: A little TMI, Mr. Clooney!",  
Richmond Times-Dispatch,  
28 April 2014

## eruptionist

*n.* A person who believes that life on Earth can or will be mostly destroyed by a massive volcanic eruption.

**Example.** The difference between my interest and that of **eruptionists** is that they think the big bang will happen tomorrow because it didn't happen today.

—Ken Newton, "Amid the mysteries of Elwood", St. Joseph News-Press,  
5 April 2014

## dronie

*n.* A video self-portrait taken by a self-controlled drone.

**Example.** A **dronie** is a video selfie taken with a drone. I featured Amit Gupta's beautiful dronie yesterday.... Other people have since taken dronies of their own and the idea seems like it's on the cusp of becoming a thing.

—Jason Kottke, "Dronies!",  
Kottke.org, 16 April 2014

## practocalypse

*n.* A drill that simulates a disastrous situation, particularly a shutdown of the Internet.

**Example.** This was only a test—a cross between a role-playing game and a fire drill. The attendees were at Eyebeam, an art and technology space, for a practice Internet apocalypse, or **practocalypse**, intended to teach them what to do if external forces—extreme weather, tyrannical governments—cause our communications systems to fail.

—Joshua Kopstein, "How to survive an Internet apocalypse,"  
The New Yorker, 12 April 2014

## POLLEN VORTEX

*n.* High levels of spring pollen created when temperatures rise quickly following an extremely cold winter.

**Example.** And for that, you can blame the polar vortex—the extreme cold system that repeatedly hovered over much of the United States this year—along with the rest of this winter's brutal weather. Those cold snaps helped spawn a spring allergy season so intense that it already has its own headline-ready nickname: the **pollen vortex**.

—Molly Redden, "A brutal allergy season is ahead.  
Blame the polar vortex", Mother Jones, 15 April 2014

## normcore

*n.* A fashion trend that features bland, mainstream styles and colours.

**Example.** Any old trainers, a grey t-shirt, zip-up fleece. Just stuff. Shirts, chinos, jumpers—even if they come from Gap. Nondescript, loosish (but not baggy) blue jeans, deck shoes. If you wear any of these, then chances are you're **normcore**, and that, peculiarly enough, makes you both a fashion icon *de nos jours* and probably not remotely interested in fashion. Normcore has been called the internet meme of 2014.

—Catherine Ostler, "Normcore, where being off-message is on-trend",  
Newsweek, 11 April 2014

## SCREENSHOT

*v.* Sharing text by taking a **screenshot** to ensure that the text cannot be searched, tagged, or parsed, particularly by an algorithm.

**Example.** Another way to escape the algorithmic gaze is to screenshot text instead of linking to a story or person directly. While humans can read the text of a screenshot easily, the algorithms on the major social platforms cannot. This allows for conversations that are silent or invisible to the machine, but work perfectly well for humans.

—Alexis Madrigal, "Behind the machine's back: How social media users avoid getting turned into big data", The Atlantic, 14 April 2014

“As you grow, you learn more. If you stayed at twenty-two, you’d always be as ignorant as you were at twenty-two. Ageing is not just decay, it’s growth.

—American author Mitch Albom in *Tuesdays with Morrie*

## speed bump

v. Software or hardware added to a securities trading system to slow down high-frequency, computer-generated orders.

**Example.** Rather than keeping the traders out of certain marketplaces, fees will be used as a disincentive, and **speed bumps** will be put in place to slow down the electronic traders whose lightning-fast speed allows them to profit from tiny price differences, Mr. Schmitt said.

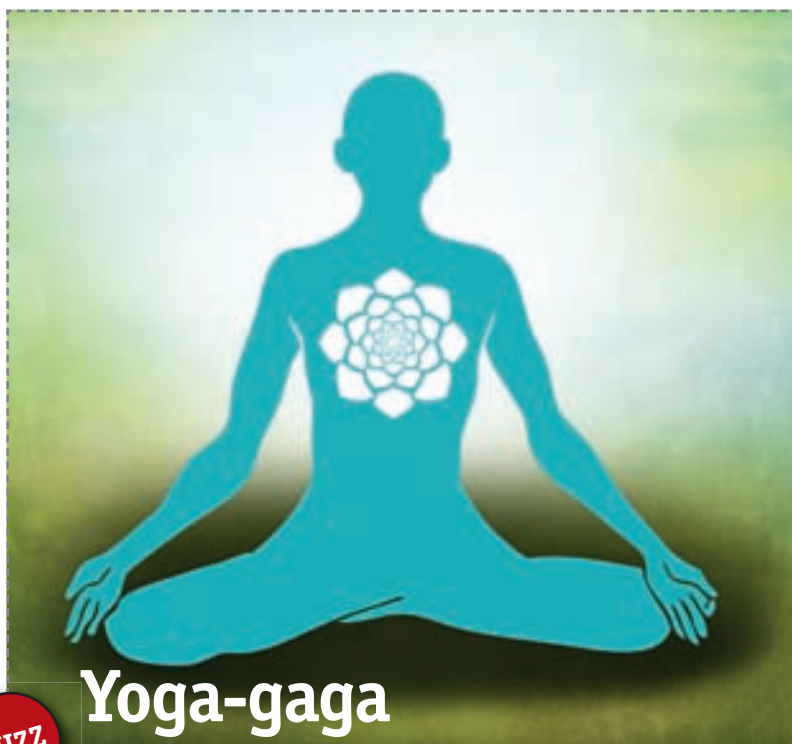
—Barbara Shecter, “Would-be TSX rival forced to revise plan after OSC raises ‘fair access’ concerns”, *The Financial Post*, 16 January 2014

## hate-link

v. To post a link to an article or website that one vigorously dislikes.

**Example.** Yet another practice, colloquially known as **hate-linking**, limits the algorithmic visibility of engagement, although this one is potentially traceable. Hate-linking occurs when a user links to another user’s tweet rather than mentioning or quoting the user.

—Zynep Tufekci, “Big questions for social media big data: Representativeness, validity and other methodological pitfalls” (PDF), ICWSM ’14: Proceedings of the 8th International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media, 14 April 2014



## Yoga-gaga

BUZZ

Calling silver Mumbaikars! If you haven’t taken to yoga yet, whether it’s because you are clueless about the basics or because you don’t want to deal with travelling around the city for an hour’s class of yoga, help is at hand: Diksha Lalwani, a yoga instructor, comes home to guide you through all the *asana*.

Founder of Smiling Yogi, she teaches Hatha Flow, Yin, and Restorative Yoga with focus on hip opening and core strengthening in Mumbai, and provides at-home yoga classes between the Bandra and Juhu areas three days a week. She also teaches at the Art Loft and Yogacara in Bandra, in case you want to enroll for her drop-in classes. Call her on (0) 9561561775, email [dikshalalwani89@gmail.com](mailto:dikshalalwani89@gmail.com) or check out her Facebook page for more details: [www.facebook.com/smilingyogimumbai](http://www.facebook.com/smilingyogimumbai)

At-home classes cost ₹ 4,000 per month

## “When my former students tell me their kids are going to good schools, I feel proud”

*Mangesh Bhalekar, 63, Mumbai, sponsors the education of poor children*



To say Mangesh Bhalekar bats for the underprivileged is an understatement. For the past 30 years, not only has he been coaching poor children in cricket for free, but has also been instrumental in putting bright students into colleges and sponsoring their education. So far, this 63 year-old has supported over 150 students, including Test players Chandrakant Pandit and Lalchand Rajput. Having gone to a municipal school himself, Bhalekar could not realise his dream of playing for the country, as he didn't have the resources to buy expensive cricket gear to join a coaching club. In 1975, however, he joined the Dadar Parsi Zoroastrian (DPZ) Cricket Club in Matunga in Mumbai as a manager. So impressed was the owner of the club Jahangir Pithawala with his work that he willed the club in Bhalekar's name. "I couldn't realise my dream of donning the Indian team jersey," he says. "But I didn't want others to lose out on their dreams because of their background." In 1982, the club started coaching students from municipal schools for free. "My students come

from families that struggle to make ends meet. We provide them with a cricket kit, food and education." The money comes from friendly matches with other clubs. Former students help the club in kind; a former student-turned-businessman sponsoring shirts and shoes for 22 years is just one such instance. Many of the coaches at the club are former students like Rajput, who used to open the innings for India. In fact, DPZ has produced 18 Ranji Trophy players. Annually, the club selects 15 students each for their under-14 and under-16 teams and focuses on their overall development. Every Saturday, it conducts yoga classes. At night, the dressing rooms become study rooms. "It's sad that many municipal schools are closing down because they don't have students," he observes. "If these schools offer cricket coaching, I'm sure they will find enough takers." Meanwhile, Bhalekar is working towards realising another of his dreams—to start a cricket tournament for children in the 14-16 age group.

—Lachmi Deb Roy

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## DIABETES - A THREAT TO VISION

According to the ICMR-INDIAB, a National Diabetes Study, India currently has 62.4 million people with diabetes. [1] This is set to increase to over 100 million by 2030. [2] In India, diabetes affects the younger population in the prime of their working lives and thus poses an even greater threat to the health of these individuals. This epidemic of diabetes is unfortunately paralleled by a corresponding increase in the prevalence of its complications. Diabetes can cause blindness, heart disease, kidney failure and lead to limb amputation. It can also adversely affect the eyes. Various eye problems ranging from cataract, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy can affect patients with diabetes.

Nearly half of all people with diabetes will develop some degree of Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) during their lifetime. DR is an increasing cause of blindness in the working age group. Yet, only a very small percentage of the diabetic population gets referred for regular eye check-ups.

## WHAT IS DIABETIC RETINOPATHY?

Diabetic retinopathy (DR), the most common diabetic eye disease, occurs when blood vessels in the retina change. Sometimes these vessels swell and leak fluid or even close off completely. In other cases, abnormal new blood vessels grow on the surface of the retina. Often, patients are unaware that a retinal detachment has formed. Patients may have lost significant vision in one eye while retaining good vision in the other. Many patients are unaware of significant vision loss when only one eye is affected, thus delaying timely treatment.

## THE SOONER THE BETTER

In the early stages of the disease the patient does not notice any symptoms and therefore does not visit a retinologist for a screening test. By the time symptoms are noticed, the disease is fairly advanced. Some people, however, notice wavy lines, blurred vision and black spots when looking at objects. Most diabetic patients consult retinologists only when they experience a marked reduction in vision.

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## TREATING DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

Diabetic retinopathy can be treated through 4 main treatment options:

- Laser treatment: helps in stabilizing vision and arresting vision loss
- Intravitreal injection: blocks the factor that stimulates the growth of new blood vessels and reduces edema
- Steroids: help reduce edema
- Vitrectomy: a surgical procedure used in advanced stages of disease that helps in clearing non-resolving hemorrhage and managing retinal detachment complications

Your retinologist will advise you on the retinal modality that best suits your medical condition.

## LOOKING AHEAD FOR A HEALTHY VISION

### Monitor your own vision regularly

- Have a detailed eye examination by a retinologist at least once every year
- Monitor your vision at home and inform your doctor if you notice any changes

### Take care of your diabetes

- Keep blood sugar levels in control to maintain vision
- Regularly monitor your blood sugar levels as instructed by your doctor
- Take medication as directed, both for your diabetes and for your DME

### Maintain a healthy lifestyle

- Manage your diet in consultation with your doctor
- Exercise regularly and maintain a healthy weight

**ARE YOU A DIABETIC? DO YOU SEE BLACK SPOTS?**

**IT COULD BE DIABETIC RETINOPATHY LEADING TO BLINDNESS.**

If you experience the following symptoms, consult an ophthalmologist, TODAY!

- Blurred vision
- Wavy lines
- Black spots

SMS 'OYE' to 9246356765 for a list of eye check centres.

Always consult your doctor for medical advice

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