

harmony

AUGUST 2014 ₹ 40

celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens



 RETRACING
GHADAR
MOVEMENT

 ARCHIVING
THE 1947
PARTITION

 THE FIGHT FOR
FREEDOM

▪ MAGNIFICENT
MANAPAD

▪ THREE CHEERS
TO TEA

THINK

BEFORE

YOU
DRINK

Ageing and alcoholism: The double whammy



श्री अखिलेश यादव, मा. मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश



1090

वूमेन पॉवर हेल्पलाइन



श्रीमती हिम्मत यादव, मा. सांसद, कन्नौज, उत्तर प्रदेश

जब करें आपको कोई परेशान,
1090 पर कॉल करके पायें निदान

- 1090 वूमेन पॉवर लाइन की स्थापना 15 नवम्बर, 2012 को हुई।
- 11 माह के अल्पकाल में एक लाख 85 हजार टेलीफोन कॉल से मिली शिकायतों में से एक लाख 16 हजार से अधिक शिकायतों का पूरी तरह समाधान हुआ।
- लखनऊ में एक साल के दौरान 28 हजार 714 शिकायतें आईं, जिनमें 14 हजार 510 पीड़ित छात्राएँ थीं।
- शिकायत करने वाली महिला/युवती की पहचान और उससे जुड़ी शिकायतें गुप्त रखी जाती हैं।
- शिकायत दर्ज कराने के लिए पीड़ित महिला/युवती को किसी थाने या कार्यालय में नहीं जाना पड़ता है।
- शिकायत महिला पुलिस अधिकारी द्वारा सुनी जाती है।
- समस्या के पूरी तरह हल निकलने तक सेल के लोग संपर्क में रहते हैं।
- श्रावस्ती से अब तक कुल 2,19,504 शिकायतें दर्ज की गईं, जिसमें से 2,05,613 शिकायतों का निस्तारण हुआ।
- 20 हजार 400 आरोपियों को पॉवर लाइन के दफ्तर लाकर काउंसिलिंग की गई और उन्हें हिदायत देकर छोड़ा गया।



1090 में कर्मचारी

प्रभारी: 01 | महिला एस.आई.: 04 | एस.आई.: 04
महिला सिपाही: 62 | पुरुष सिपाही: 39



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Your Budget

Perhaps our new Finance Minister reads *Harmony-Celebrate Age!*

The new Budget actually includes a provision to establish a national-level institute to promote universal design—the subject of this very column last month. I had bemoaned the lack of home-grown innovations to enable inclusion despite the profusion of scientists and technologists in India; this measure seeks to remedy that and we commend the Government for it. Another step towards inclusion was the provision for 15 new Braille presses and modernisation of 10 existing Braille presses across the country as well as the introduction of Braille in currency notes. Our currency notes, as I mentioned in the July 2014 issue, are already silver-friendly; this move takes it a notch higher.

The Budget brought some more good news for silvers: the raising of the tax exemption limit from ₹ 250,000 to ₹ 300,000; the revival of the Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana, first introduced by the previous NDA government, for a limited period from 15 August 2014 to 14 August 2015 for people over 60; the establishment of the National Institute of Ageing at Madras Medical College and AIIMS; and the constitution of a committee to examine unclaimed deposits in PPF, Post Office and other savings schemes following the demise of the account holders. The Finance Minister stated that this committee must submit a report by December recommending how this

Suresh Natarajan



money can be used to protect and promote the financial interests of silvers.

While the Budget certainly displayed some new ideas, the old bugbears remain, with many long-standing silver demands still unmet. These include a comprehensive health insurance scheme; raising the minimum pension from ₹ 1,000 to ₹ 3,000; a higher interest rate on savings by silvers; higher tax exemptions for people over the age of 80 for up to ₹ 800,000; and more social security and financial initiatives.

We hope the Government, which has been given an unprecedented mandate to govern, takes cognisance of these shortcomings and works to overcome them. There can be no better time to promulgate and execute policies that give our silvers their due. We'll keep advocating the cause in diverse forums and the pages of this magazine relentlessly. And we hope our elected representatives and policymakers keep listening—and reading!

Tina Ambani

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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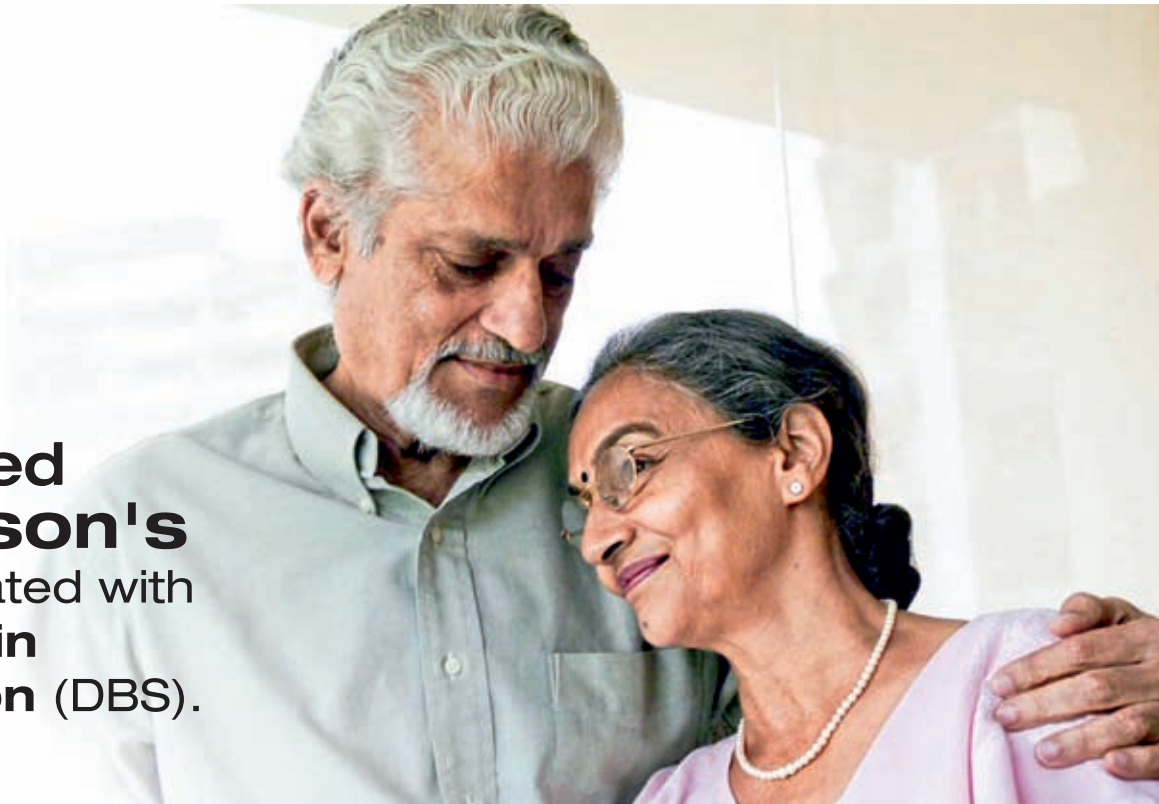
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column one

There's good reason they call alcohol the devil's brew. So many of us have been there—a drink, followed by another, a lightness of the senses, a loosening of the tongue, a headiness that makes you feel more interesting to yourself, and those around you. It's all too easy, though, to get hooked, for urge to become craving and life to revolve around the next fix with disastrous consequences: physical, emotional and financial. Add age to the mix and the cocktail gets deadlier, as we discuss in our cover feature, "One Drink Too Many." The silver lining: with care, counselling and commitment to recovery, it's possible to be free from the scourge.

Freedom is on our minds in more ways than one, as India marks its 67th Independence Day this month. We offer a salute to the unsung heroes of the Ghadar Movement, which celebrates its centenary this year. And tell you about two oral-history projects that seek to keep alive the heart-wrenching stories—and legacies—of the countless Indians whose lives were transformed irrevocably by the trauma of Partition. A catharsis and healing salve for the witnesses themselves, their tales serve as a reminder of the infinite compassion and consummate cruelty of which humans are capable.

There are more journeys to experience this issue. Walk with Odia writer and Jnanpith award winner Pratibha Ray and writer-publisher Namita Gokhale as they share their individual literary voyages; surf in the iridescent waters of Manapad, a fishing hamlet dotted with churches in Tamil Nadu; and trek through the country's verdant tea gardens as showcased in a new book, *Chai: The Experience of Indian Tea*. A safer brew, by far!

—Arati Rajan Menon

With the increase in life expectancy and the rising silver population in India, there is growing interest in active ageing. Many schemes and measures are being deliberated upon with regard to their health and welfare. Silvers need to be recognised as a valuable economic resource that can contribute to national wealth. The New Policy on Senior Citizens makes a specific mention of the same.

Our present generation of silvers mainly comprises persons born in the 1930s and 1940s when living conditions were entirely different; our country was not even independent. Since then, there has been a sea change in the socioeconomic, educational and technological scenario—national and global. The developments, especially during the past two to three decades, have been so fast-paced that they may have bypassed the comprehension of many of our generation. Not many of us are computer-literate or computer-savvy. Adult education, career counselling and training in different skills will open up new opportunities for gainful employment post-super annuity. This will enable silvers to regain their poise and position in society and live with dignity and self-esteem.

K D Bhatia
New Delhi



Knowledge is power; the more you read, the more you gain. The other day, I was reading your February 2014 issue, beginning with "Different Strokes" ('Connect') by the Editor and many other interesting and helpful pieces. I was awestruck to read about enthusiastic silvers participating in the Run, as mentioned in the article "Retired, Not Tired" ('Orbit'). I was pleasantly surprised to read that people over 65 reported being less tired than young 20-somethings!

Every issue of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* makes me more sensitive towards silvers. The silvers you feature working on social issues never cease to inspire me. My sincere gratitude for instilling these values in me!

Megha Chawla
Madhya Pradesh

CONTRIBUTOR



Our columnist in 'At Large' this month, writer and publisher **Namita Gokhale** has written 12 books, including several works of fiction. Her first novel *Paro: Dreams of Passion* celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2014. Gokhale has worked extensively with Indian myth. She retold the *Mahabharata* for young readers and also co-edited the landmark anthology, *In Search of Sita: Revisiting Mythology*. An edited anthology, *Travelling In, Travelling Out*, was launched in early 2014. One of the founders and a co-director of the Jaipur Literature Festival and Mountain Echoes, the annual Bhutan Festival, Gokhale is committed to showcasing literature from the gamut of Indian languages. She currently curates *Kitaabnama: Books and Beyond*, a multilingual book show on Doordarshan.

► CUTTING EDGE

WRIST WATCH

A simple sensor worn on the wrist can save a life. That's the credo of **CarePredict Tempo**, a tracking system for silvers marketed by Satish Movva, a Florida-based entrepreneur of Indian origin. Designed to help family and friends monitor the activities of silvers who live alone, it transmits alerts in case of problems and contacts medical services in case of emergencies. As Movva explains to media, the entire system comprises wrist sensors and beacon units mounted on the walls of the home. The sensors and units capture the movements of the subject and upload an activity pattern chart, which is recorded in a digital journal. Any deviations are then tracked and alerts are sent out via SMS and email. To learn more, check out carepredict.com



Business is booming

According to the latest edition of the *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor*, an international study of start-up activity, people over the age of 50 in the UK are starting businesses in greater numbers than 18-29 year-olds. While the greatest number of start-ups are still being undertaken by people in the 30-49 bracket, the study rubbishes the notion that entrepreneurship is a 'young person's game'.

FOR LOVE AND LONGEVITY

One hormone, different functions. While for many of us, it is 'the love hormone' that triggers good vibes, or even part of the drip to induce labour, **oxytocin has now found a new function: to rejuvenate old muscles.** After extensive tests on mice, scientists at the University of California – Berkeley aver that the hormone has the potential to treat sarcopenia, the age-related loss of muscle mass and strength. "Our quest was to find a molecule that not only rejuvenates old muscle and other tissues but can do so sustainably without increasing the risk of cancer," writes principal investigator Irina Conboy, in journal *Communications*. "Oxytocin reaches every organ and does not cause any tumours, nor does it interfere with the working of the immune system. When we injected older mice with oxytocin, their damaged muscles began to repair themselves after just nine days."

OXYTOCIN

What is it?

neuropeptide

A peptide produced by neural tissue, especially one with hormonal activity

or a molecule that helps with bodily functions such as



analgesia



rewards



food intake



metabolism

----- and more important -----



reproduction



social behavior



learning



memory

FROM A TO D



You may put it down to boredom or malaise but **apathy could have a deeper cause: dementia.** According to scientists at the National Institutes of Health in Maryland, USA, loss of interest in hobbies and activities in the silver years could be a warning sign of cognitive debility and shrinking amounts of grey and white matter, which control memory and communication respectively. For their study, they gave 4,354 silvers without dementia (and an average age of 76) an MRI scan and questioned them on symptoms of apathy, such as lack of interest, lack of emotion, quitting activities and preferring to stay at home, and lack of energy. People who displayed two or more of these symptoms had 1.4 per cent less grey matter and 1.6 per cent less white matter compared to those who didn't display the symptoms. "Just as signs of memory loss may signal brain changes related to brain disease, apathy may indicate underlying cognitive changes," writes study author Dr Lenore Launer in online journal *Neurology*. "The fact that participants in our study had apathy without depression should turn our attention to how apathy alone could indicate brain disease."



BLOOM ON

Scientists at the National Agriculture and Food Research Organisation in Tsukuba, east of Tokyo, have discovered a gene in a Japanese variety of morning glory that is responsible for the short shelf-life of flowers. Suppressing this gene, labelled 'Ephemeral', could slow down the ageing process in flowers by up to 50 per cent.

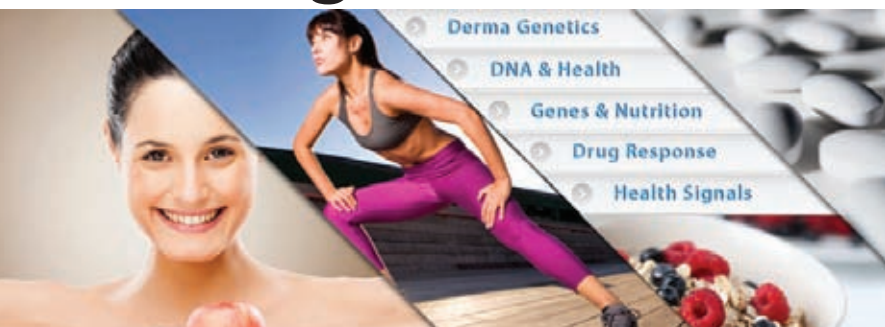
THE MOMMY EDGE

While the jury remains out on whether it's good for your baby, new research declares that **late-life mothering is good for your longevity.** The 'Long Life Family Study', jointly conducted in the US and Denmark and covering 4,875 people from 551 families, has found that compared to a woman who finished having her children by the age of 29, a woman whose last child was born after the age of 33 is twice as likely to outlive 95 per cent of her female contemporaries (born the same year). It gets more interesting—a woman who bore her last child between the ages of 33 and 37 is 2.08 times as likely to enjoy exceptional longevity, while the figure stands at 1.92 times for a woman whose last child came after the age of 37. The study was published in *Menopause*, the journal of the North American Menopause Society.

RECIPE FOR INDEPENDENCE

A safe and smart kitchen is a key ingredient for independent living. A study by UK-based Loughborough University, titled *Transitions in Kitchen Living*, aims to inform kitchen manufacturers and suppliers about the needs of elders while spreading awareness among silvers themselves. For the study, the research team interviewed 48 silvers from the Loughborough and Bristol areas, living in a variety of homes, from independent houses to apartments. They identified problems such as high, hard-to-reach cupboards and window handles; poor lighting, especially in the cooking area. "Better designed kitchens would eliminate such problems," says Dr Martin Maguire, part of the team, in a media release. "Great benefits can be achieved by providing kitchens that better meet people's needs. People need to be aware of what is possible and how to provide it."

Gene genie



If it's in your genes, Chennai-based Xcode Life Sciences has made it its business to know about it. The preventive healthcare company has developed **Come Alive, a DNA-based anti-ageing solution** that customises a skincare package to battle your unique problems. "We will look at you at a micro level and figure out what your genes make you susceptible to," Dr Saleem Mohammed, CEO of the company, tells media. "We then customise a package to counter those problems." The client's saliva sample is analysed to identify aspects like collagen formation, sun protection, antioxidant protection, glycation protection and inflammation control; accordingly, diet and fitness routines are prescribed and a topical cream and facial kit provided. The cost: ₹ 4,999 plus tax, inclusive of a day cream and four facial kits. At present, it is open to women over the age of 26 but the company promises a service for men too. Interested? Go to xcode.in/comealive



HAIR RAISING

It's being called Botox for the hair! BTX Hair is a new salon procedure where the stylist rejuvenates dry, withered hair with an intense moisture and mineral injection that springs it back to its glory. Well, that's what manufacturer Innovatis claims anyway, while informing us that the injection, customised to hair type and texture, contains caviar oil and collagen along with Vitamin E and Vitamin B5. As British tabloid *Daily Star* tells us, after a session, which could cost between £ 25 and £ 50 (about ₹ 2,500 to ₹ 5,000) depending on length of hair, the client gets an aftercare gift of shampoo and conditioner. Right now, the treatment is only available at select salons in the UK. But check it out for a lark at www.btxhair.co.uk



NOW, FOR NAILS

BB—or blemish base—creams that combine a moisturiser, primer and even sunscreen are ubiquitous in the beauty aisles today, with every cosmetic giant worth its salt having a version. Now, going a step further, **American brand ORLY has launched its BB Creme for Nails**. According to London newspaper *Daily Mail*, two coats of the cream, which is packed with hyaluronic Acid and Vitamin C, on bare nails will prime, brighten and smooth them, keeping them hydrated and protected from UV rays, and delaying the brittleness that comes with age. The product will be released in August in the UK at £ 15 (about ₹ 1,500) a bottle. Check it out at www.graftonsbeauty.co.uk/orlybbcreme

BEAUTY MYTH?

L'ORÉAL USA HAS SETTLED CHARGES FOR DECEPTIVE ANTI-AGEING CLAIMS MADE BY ITS LANCÔME GÉNIFIQUE AND L'ORÉAL PARIS YOUTH CODE SKINCARE RANGES. THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION (FTC), A CONSUMER PROTECTION BODY, COMPLAINED THAT THE COMPANY'S CLAIMS—THAT ANTI-AGEING BENEFITS WERE ACHIEVED BY TARGETING USERS' GENES—WERE FALSE AND UNSUBSTANTIATED.

SMILE AND SHINE

A visit to the dentist's chair can fix your smile—and your entire face. That's the premise of Beverly Hills-based 'celebrity dentist' Dr Kourosh Maddahi in his new book, *Anti-Ageing Dentistry: Restoring Youth One Smile at a Time*. Using minimally invasive techniques and no general anaesthesia, he doesn't just restore teeth in his patented 'Smile Lift', but actually goes deeper to improve sagging skin, banish tense jaw-lines and reduce the appearance of wrinkles. "Most people don't realise that typical signs of ageing, like hollowed cheeks and wrinkles around the mouth, are actually caused by correctable structural abnormalities in the mouth," Maddahi explains in a media release. "Anti-ageing dentistry provides a long-term solution for patients seeking to restore their youthful appearance by correcting these or any damage caused by natural wear and tear on the teeth and jaw over the years. And it offers a safer alternative to procedures such as Botox and facelifts." While explaining the techniques used, the book presents case studies, before-and-after pictures, and tips for readers to maintain their own healthy smile. To know more about the book, or order it online, go to www.drsmaddahi.com; it's also available on www.amazon.com



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 WWW.THORBJORG.DK/UK/BOOKS

Having a BALL

So can we! That's the motto of a group of silvers over the age of 70 in Taipei, Taiwan, who gather every weekend to play baseball, physical disabilities be damned. As news agency Reuters reports, the group was formed by 75 year-old Chen Teh-ming, a pitcher for the Taiwanese air force team in his youth who lost a leg 10 years ago. His inspiration: *Go Grand-Riders*, a documentary featuring a group of



silvers who embark upon a 13-day motorcycle tour around Taiwan.

Failing health (cardiac trouble and cancer), accidents and great escapes aside, the riders, with the average age of 81, complete their exhilarating journey in style. Along the way, they stop at nursing homes to describe their tour and share their war stories.

The film released in 2012 and continues to inspire people around the world. Check out gograndriders.com

Cyber bond

We've said it for the past decade—intergenerational bonds can make every learning curve for silvers smoother. And now here's proof in Technicolor. *Cyber-Seniors* is a delightful documentary that follows a group of silvers from two retirement homes in Toronto as they learn about computers, with the help of a bunch of teenaged mentors. The film showcases 10 months of the Cyber-Seniors project, which was launched by teenage sisters, Macaulee and Kascha Cassaday, with the help of their mother, Brenda Rusnak. Keeping it in the family,



their eldest sister Saffron Cassaday is the director of the 75-minute film, which charts a true voyage of discovery. You will see how the silvers, initially clueless, discover enough about this brave new world to get connected on social networks, use Skype and even create their own YouTube videos. And along the way, their teenage tutors learn a few valuable lessons about life too. See clips at cyberseniorsdocumentary.com

Ozone healing

There are more benefits to walking on the beach in the early hours than we thought! Dr Shekhar Vaze, a surgeon and an Ayurvedic practitioner, confirmed this at a session at the Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, Mumbai, on 14 July, where he spoke at length about the benefits of ozone treatment. A new concept to most, he began the session by explaining what ozone gas is, how it is formed, and its curative properties when blanketing the Earth. "The ozone gas is formed in the early hours of day, in open spaces, especially in the presence of trees and vegetation," he explained. "Certain plants, such as holy basil (*tulsi*), sacred fig (*peepal*) and banyan tree produce more ozone, and this is the best anti-bacterial agent found in nature."



Ozone can be used as a healing agent for treating various ailments such as ulcers, osteoporosis and Parkinson's disease and has a positive impact on

heart patients. Ozone can be administered to patients through saline, glucose or even in drinking water. He also let a few of his patients give first-hand accounts of how they benefitted from ozone treatment. Clarifying the audience's queries, he warned that artificially generated ozone was harmful to health.



Sonali Mistry from the J J School of Arts, who had taught the members to make quills and paper flowers last month, came back for another interactive session—this time to make greeting cards. Equipped with cardboard paper, coloured paper, scissors and glue, on 21 July, 26 silvers set about making cards, embellishing them with colourful flowers and creative craft work, ably guided by Mistry. She ensured that each silver made a unique design and pattern. "I got to learn something new at this session," says Ujwala Rajwade. "I enjoy these art and craft sessions a lot. It's always nice to discover how creative we can be." At the end of the session, the members flaunted their creations while appreciating others' work.

Haresh Patel



BIRTHDAYS

- Veteran American actor **Dustin Hoffman** (left) turns 77 on 8 August.
- Former actor and Bharatanatyam dancer **Vyjantimala** turns 78 on 13 August.

● Popular comic actor **Johnny Lever** turns 57 on 14 August.

● American actor **Robert De Niro** turns 71 on 17 August.

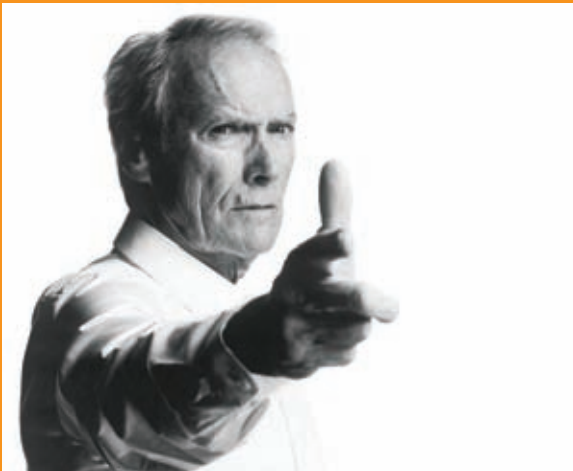
● Lyricist-poet-filmmaker **Gulzar** (right) turns 79 on 18 August.



● The 42nd President of the US **Bill Clinton** turns 68 on 19 August.

● Former actor **Saira Banu** (left) turns 70 on 23 August.

OVERHEARD



"I just never let the old man in. I was always looking for new things to do. I rightfully or wrongly always thought I could do anything. The whole secret in life in any profession, regardless of whether it's entertainment or anything else, is just being interested. Are you interested in life? Are you interested in what's going on? Are you interested in new kinds of music? It's fashionable to pigeonhole everybody. You're 60, you're a senior. At 60, I felt like I was about 40. At 40, I felt like I was about 18. It's just all mental attitude."

—American actor **Clint Eastwood, 84**,
in *The New York Times*

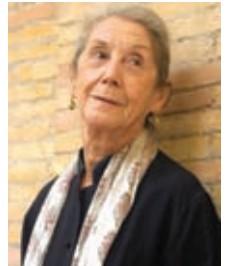


IN PASSING

● Eminent cartoonist **Vijay Narain Seth**, known as Vins, passed away on 26 June after multiple organ failure at the age of 73.

● Veteran actor **Zohra Sehgal**, (above) featured on our cover in August 2004, passed away on 10 July following cardiac arrest. She was 102.

● Anti-apartheid author **Nadine Gordimer**, (right) the first South African to win the Nobel Prize in literature, died on 14 July at the age of 90.



● Eminent Hindi author **Madhukar Singh** passed away on 15 July. He was 87.



● Popular Indian vocalist of Agra gharana **Ustad Aqeel Ahmed**, (left) known as Mohan Piya, died on 15 July at the age of 85 following prolonged illness.

● Malayalam cinema director **J Sasikumar** (right), who has more than 141 films to his credit, passed away on 17 July. He was 85.



● South Indian actor **Kadhal Dhandapani** died of cardiac arrest on 20 July. He was 71.

MILESTONES

● Television personality and journalist **Mrinal Pande**, 68, was awarded the RedInk Lifetime Achievement Award on 7 June. She is the first woman editor of the multi-edition Hindi daily *Hindustan*, and recently retired as the chairperson of Prasar Bharati.

● Veteran plant scientist **Sanjaya Rajaram** (right) was selected for this year's World Food Prize on 18 June for his contribution towards research that has led to an increase in production of wheat around the world.



Take the plunge. Swimming, one of the most effective cardiovascular exercises available, is also one of the gentlest on the body; further, it promotes physical and mental balance. Take a cue from the Third Age Centre at Middletown, Rhode Island, in the US, which put together a special silver swim team this June. “There are 12 of us and we meet twice a week at the local pool,” says 64 year-old Bev Connors. “We ensure we all show up together and swim in a group. That way, it doesn’t matter if some of us are not as good; we always get a helping hand. And, quite frankly, it makes us less self-conscious about wearing bathing suits!”



Then: Cereal box Now: Gift bag



RECYCLING FACTS

- Cereal boxes are made of chipboard or paperboard, which is not the same as the corrugated cardboard used to make shipping boxes. Corrugated cardboard has a higher recycled raw material value than chipboard.
- Usually, cardboard left for recycling is taken to a paper mill to be pulped. This is then used in the production of new cardboard.

Save up on those cereal boxes and make cute gift bags out of them, all in 10 minutes. To begin with, cut the open top part of the box with a blade depending on the size of bag you want. To avoid mistakes, first mark a line with a sketch pen, and then run the blade on the marked line. Next, wrap the outer part of the box in gift-wrapping paper or newspaper, leaving the top open. Here you can get creative by making a really attractive gift bag: from cutting and sticking strips of colourful magazine pages to wrapping it in plain colours and adding embellishments, let your imagi-

nation run wild. Now all that’s left—after waiting for the glue to dry—is to punch in the holes for the handles. Make sure you leave at least an inch-and-a-half gap from the top to punch the two holes at the front and back of the box. Insert a ribbon through these holes. Take one ribbon and thread it into the left front hole and knot it, and repeat for the right front hole; then do the same for the back holes. You’re done! To make sure the box does not give way from the bottom, place a thick piece of cardboard at the base of the box and use thick wrapping paper.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. MAKE A MAGAZINE RACK OUT OF CEREAL BOXES. CUT OFF THE TOP OPENING FLAPS AND THEN, LEAVING THREE INCHES (ON A LARGE-SIZED CEREAL BOX), MAKE A DOWNWARD CUT AT A SLIGHT ANGLE, IN SUCH A WAY THAT WHEN YOU PLACE THE MAGAZINE IN THE BOX AT LEAST HALF OF IT IS VISIBLE.
2. MAKE GIFT TAGS OUT OF ALL THE LEFTOVER PIECES OF CARDBOARD. WRAP THEM IN COLOURED PAPER AND PUNCH A SMALL HOLE FOR A RIBBON.



SILVER SURF

Available for: iOS 3.2 or later

What it does: Made specifically for silvers who want to browse the Internet but find it difficult to figure out tiny icons, small text and dull colours on mobile browsers. Features of the app include large navigation buttons, dynamic text zoom, and high contrast viewing. Available for iPhones and iPads, you also have the option of viewing a website in both portrait and landscape mode. In the contrast mode, you can view white text on a black background so the bright backgrounds don't strain your eyes.

After installation: When you open the browser, you have options for search, organising bookmarks, website navigation, and an interactive zoom slider. Instead of the usual pinch-to-zoom feature found on less-silver-friendly apps, you can zoom here up to 200 per cent by just moving the slider.

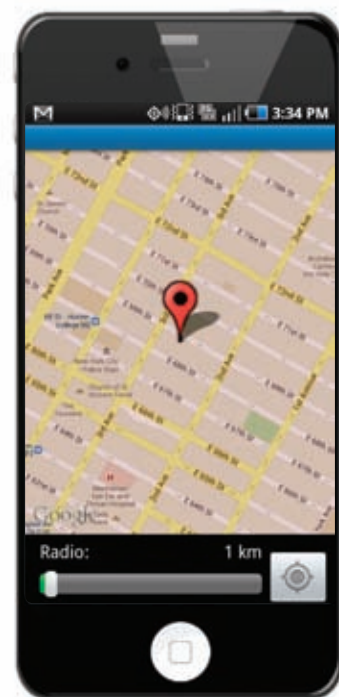
APP GAP: A Deloitte study published this year reveals that there is still a huge generational gap in use of apps among the 55+ demography and the 18-25 age group, even in developed countries. The study pointed out that though more seniors are buying smartphones—34 per cent seniors over 65 years of age owned a smartphone—they are still using it only for calling and messaging, without any apps. Nearly 29 per cent of silvers over 65 who owned smartphones had never downloaded an app on their phones, compared to 22 per cent between 55 and 64, and less than 16 per cent among the rest. The silver demography ranked low even on instant messaging and social networking use. The researchers attribute this to difficult-to-understand data plans (nearly a quarter didn't know how large their data allowance is), senior-unfriendly user interface, and apps that are not mature enough for their age.

TWERI

Available for: Android 2.1 and up; iOS 4.0 or later

What it does: This free app is for people in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease or dementia and their caregivers. Developed to mobilise Alzheimer's patients, give them the freedom to live independently and give caregivers peace of mind while the patient goes out for a walk or to get some air, this app has mainly two features: geolocation and alerts. The caregiver sets up the geographical boundaries within which the patient can move about. If the person goes beyond these boundaries, the caregiver is alerted. However, the app is very basic and the user interface can get a little hard to get used to.

After installation: The first step is to register and make an administrator's password. Once this is set up, you can click on 'Comfort Zone' to set up the boundary; there's also an option to set up the time limit. Now, press back till you reach the start page with a button that says 'Start'. This will prompt you to turn on the GPS. This is when the Alzheimer's patient can go out. Patients who need help just have to press the big (and only) button that says 'Help?' and an alert will be sent to the caregiver's email id. There's an option on the top of the page that says 'Slide Me to End', which ends the alert and geolocating feature.





DIABETES DANGER

The number of diabetics in India is expected to rise to 69.9 million by 2025, according to an estimate by the International Diabetes Federation. The result of unhealthy diet and a sedentary lifestyle, it's a disease that affects both men and women equally. However, a new study tells us that **diabetic women are at a higher risk of death from cardiovascular illness because they are less likely to reach their diabetic treatment goals**, compared to men. Researchers at Queen's University in Ontario, Canada, who examined Type 2 silver diabetics fighting cholesterol with statins discovered that women are less likely to be successful in lowering their low-density lipoprotein (LDL; or bad cholesterol) levels—the figure stands at 64 per

cent compared to 81 per cent for men. The scientists attribute this to pharmacological factors that are possibly different in men and women; for instance, women tend to have lower adherence to the regular use of statins owing to increased side-effects such as muscle pain.

Meanwhile, another study, conducted at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Centre in North Carolina in the US, claims that diabetics with heart disease have a 50 per cent chance of living longer by taking statins. In an eight-year follow-up of 371 people with diabetes, the researchers found that 60 per cent were still living and went on to live longer—a major differentiator factor between the 218 that lived longer and the 153 who died was the regular use of statins.

According to a new study, **centenarians are least likely to die of cancer or heart disease, but are instead more susceptible to death from pneumonia and frailty**, among other causes. The study, based on data about centenarian deaths in England, between 2001 and 2010, included about 36,000 people who died over the age of 100. Nearly 18 per cent of these died of pneumonia, compared to just 9 per cent who died of heart disease and 4.5 per cent who succumbed to cancer. The study also noted that nearly 61 per cent died while in nursing homes, 27 per cent while in hospital, and about 10 per cent while at home.



Alcohol abusers are at high risk of brain damage and dementia, more so after the age of 50. But a new study has found that **fish oil can help prevent dementia caused by chronic alcohol abuse.** According to researchers at the Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine, the omega-3 DHA found in fish oil can reduce cell inflammation and death of brain cells of drinkers by up to 90 per cent.

Aspirin acts

PANCREATIC CANCER IS ON THE RISE ALL OVER THE WORLD;

it is ranked as the fifth most deadly cancer. More common in people between the ages of 65 and 85, it affects more men than women, with the mortality rate highest in the 75 to 85 age group. The survival rate of less than 5 per cent is attributed mainly to late diagnosis—it can take almost 10 to 15 years after the initial stage of the disease for it to be diagnosed. However, if you have



been on a regular dose of aspirin for over a decade, there's hope. According to scientists at the Yale School of Public Health and Yale Cancer Centre in New Haven in the US, **regular use of aspirin in normal or even low doses can reduce your risk of developing pancreatic cancer by half.** The study was conducted between 2005 and 2009, and focused on 362 people who were recently diagnosed with the cancer and 620 people who were free of the disease. In fact, for those who had been using aspirin for over 10 years, the reduction in risk was 60 per cent. The scientists believe it is possibly owing to aspirin's anti-inflammatory properties that negate the cancer's chronic inflammation in its early stage.

STRESS NOT

High levels of stress, anger, hostility and depression are linked to high risk of strokes in middle-aged and older people, says a new study conducted by National Institutes of Health, US. Data of over 6,700 people aged 45 to 85 across different ethnic groups was analysed over two years, with a follow-up 11 years later, by which time

nearly 147 strokes and 48 transient ischemic attacks (TIAs) had occurred. It concluded that psychological characteristics are also a major factor affecting heart and blood pressure levels. The study finds that those who had a high score on negative emotions such as depression were 86 per cent more likely to have a stroke, while those with high chronic stress were 59 per cent more likely. Further, those who had hostility issues were twice as likely. The researchers pointed out that silvers with these emotional triggers could try to develop positive coping strategies to reduce risk, especially if they have other risk factors such as cardiovascular disease or high blood pressure. In India, hypertension is the cause of 54 per cent of strokes, followed by high cholesterol levels (15 per cent).

RISK FACTORS FOR STROKE FOR THOSE ABOVE 55

- Being overweight or obese
- Being sedentary
- Heavy drinking or drug use
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol levels
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Cardiovascular disease
- Sleep apnoea

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.



Chantal Jumel

DIFFERENT STROKES

Every morning, I perform a ritual that is a God-given gift. I pick up a bowl of finely ground rice flour and, as I bend over the threshold of my home, an invisible force seems to guide my hand, creating curves, arcs, lines and dots that come together to form *kolam*, a beautiful design. When sprinkling the flour in freehand shapes and designs, a spiritual voice seems to find expression.

I knew I had a gift when I was but seven years old, growing up in a village near Thiruchi in Tamil Nadu. It was your typical village life, where women would wake up before sunrise, clean the entrance of their homes and draw intricate *kolam*. Just as the *kolam* was complete, birds, ants and squirrels would peck at the rice flour. The thought that the *kolam* fed so many animals was satisfaction in itself.

The art of kolam gives Gopalan's spiritual voice expression

My mother was an expert at freehand *kolam* and I picked up the technique from her. I continued this ritual after I got married and moved to Bhopal in 1962. I lived there for 15 years and participated in several rangoli competitions and, yes, I won many prizes too. Over the years, I developed many original designs, which magically seem to 'come to me.'

Then, one day in 2006 while visiting my daughter in the US, she approached me with a few sheets of paper and asked me to draw *kolam*. She said my grandchildren must learn of my hobby and the art should not be lost. Soon, all my children, scattered all over the world, agreed that I should publish a book on the technique. The project took us three years to complete. Living in different parts

of the world, they would conference every night and discuss names and content for the book. We first thought of a spiral-bound documentation of my work and slowly this evolved into a hardbound book, with Sanskrit names assigned to each *kolam* and the scientific elements behind each design. We titled it *World of Freehand Kolams*.

It is unfortunate that very few come forward to learn to draw *kolam*. I have had many who appreciate my work but very few who ask me how I do it. While in the US, I took classes for some children and the young boys there amazed me with their artistic talent. Likewise, after the book was released, a French lady came to learn from me. I was bowled over by her commitment and sincerity.

I have an irrepressible need to create art; I also make artistic *murrukku*. Not surprisingly, I have been nicknamed *kolam maami* or *murrukku maami* in my neighbourhood! Many seniors say they have back problems and can't draw a *kolam* every morning. However, I believe that if you consistently do it, these ailments will not be a hindrance. I am 70 years old and physically weak but I have mental strength. That's what keeps me drawing one every morning.

—Janaki Gopalan, Chennai

HOW I BROKE THE AGE BARRIER

Mouse, cursor, icons and a barrage of other alien terms used to occupy every nook and cranny in my mind not so long ago. I was hurtling towards a dreaded frontier in my 70th year: the world of computers. It shattered the calm of my retired life, which was filled with wonderful pastimes like music, golf, and the joy of living with a happy family.

Then it happened one day—our daughter, our only child, relocated to Hong Kong. My wife and I could not bear to stay out of touch with her for even a day. Long-distance phone calls were prohibitive and we constantly worried about her and her family. We grew irritable and felt depressed. Gone were the happy days. Life was just not the same. So my son-in-law presented me with a brand new laptop. He said it would help us even see our daughter while we chatted, if we so wished. But operating a laptop was impossible for me, or so I thought. Reluctantly, I signed up for a three-month computer course, where I learnt all manner of things. Sometimes, totally befuddled, I would ring up my friends' children at odd hours to clarify the simplest of doubts. Came a time when I was faced with



Prasad Durga

Technology has opened gateways to a whole new world for Chakravarti

a choice: to persist or throw in the towel and lose touch with my daughter and grandson for extended periods. I decided to vanquish my fears.

I mastered it in stages: First up was email. I progressed with the help of the younger generation in our colony, who were kind enough to help. Every day, I felt more confident and I finally became 'computer savvy'! 'Skype' and 'Face-Time' no longer sounded like nonsense words. Now we share our grandson's play dates as if we were there! We felt proud when we saw our son-in-law's sports trophies, and my wife has long conversations with our daughter—all for free! We are once again a part of each other's lives, once again a happy family. But it didn't stop there. Now I pay all my bills online; purchase cinema and theatre tickets online; buy air and train tickets online; do all my bank work online; even order groceries online. The hassles of daily chores have vanished like magic.

After I grasped this digital technology, I tried to teach it to my wife. She was reluctant at first and I had to gently guide her on the use of the Internet. Next, I encouraged my 76 year-old widowed sister to follow suit. She was lonely and out of touch with all of us. Now she has purchased a personal computer and is slowly learning the ropes. And she is thrilled!

We live in a colony for retired people, and most of us have one or more children living overseas. So my wife and I are trying to spread the word of this miraculous machine, the computer. Change is essential and we must keep up with the times. When I coax the other residents of our colony to learn to use the computer, I always say, "Why should young people have all the fun?"

—Brigadier (retd) P K Chakravarti, Bengaluru



Cutting edge

KAMLESH KAPOOR, 74, HYDERABAD

It was at the age of 54 that I started learning a new form of art—stained glass work—that keeps me busy these days. Sometimes I work for hours together and find great satisfaction in doing this fine work.

I have always wanted to be an artist. After completing my intermediate exams from Government College in Ludhiana, I wanted to go to Santiniketan, but my mother would have none of it. I therefore graduated in arts from Sacred Heart in Dalhousie. A couple of months short of my final year, I read an advertisement in the newspaper about an art scholarship to Italy. It required a qualification in

art and a job in hand. As I had none of those, I completed a special paper that gave me fine arts as an additional qualification during graduation. Then I began my teacher's training at St Bede's in Shimla. Within a year, I was almost close to fulfilling the scholarship criteria—but destiny had other plans. In 1963, I got married to Janak Kapoor, a soft-spoken fighter pilot in the IAF whom I met while I was still at St Bede's. Soon after that, my teaching career began.

I loved teaching English and mathematics. Looking back, I recall my joy in realising that I could bring art into every aspect of my teaching work,

moving from place to place where my husband was posted. When he was posted to the UK for a year in 1970, I joined a school where I was dealing with children with special needs. After returning to India, I taught for a couple of years in St. Columbas, Delhi, where my son was also my student, and at Carmel Convent in Ludhiana, when my husband was commanding a squadron at Halwara, near Ludhiana.

In 1980, my husband was posted as the defence attaché in Cairo. There, I saw a stunning stained glass piece done by a friend's daughter. The eagerness to learn the technique stayed

PERFECT SHOT

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

I am an engineer and retiring soon. I have had keen interest in photography—especially wildlife and street photography. I want to step up my hobby and make it a career. Is this feasible?

Photography is emerging as a favourite pastime for many people, and it is possible to convert it into a career if you have the talent and make the right moves. If you have been pursuing photography, I assume you already have the right camera and lens for the kind of photography you do. If not, invest in one right away. Usually a good telephoto lens would cost as much as a good DSLR camera.

Enrol in a short photography course from a reputed institute. This will not just brush up your skills but teach you something you didn't already know and help you start building your network. Click pictures, and keep clicking. If you have a sizeable collection, try and work out a theme so you can hold an exhibition. For your first exhibition, seek out open spaces that are artsy, yet attract large crowds, such as libraries, restaurants, coffee shops, parks and art festivals. Also look out for exhibitions that invite photographers to display their work; it's a great way to connect with other photographers and be in the limelight. If you know others like you, you can hold an exhibition together and pool in the costs. Don't, however, forget costs of framing and showcasing.

If you're wondering when you will start earning, be patient. It might take a few exhibitions. Price your work reasonably. Start small and keep growing.

—K P Deol is a Delhi-based freelance photographer with 15 years' experience

"Besides stained glass, I dabbled in silver jewellery design, wrought iron pieces and made pattern templates for fabric embroidery"

in India. I started teaching students stained glass work—two students per batch, as I felt I could work best without too many.

Besides stained glass, I dabbled in silver jewellery design, a few authentic wrought iron pieces, and made pattern templates for fabric to embroider as well. I used to participate in exhibitions and managed to sell quite a few pieces. Some of the money went to charity, while most of it paid for costs. I also make mosaics with the leftover pieces of glass.

I am also involved in the Mitr Foundation, a NGO for educating the girl child, which eight friends and I set up in 2004 with the aim of supporting the education of school-children in the urban slum areas of Hyderabad-Secunderabad.

My studio in my house is a great place for me, where I have all my machines such as the glass cutter, the grinder, and the soldering table that takes centre stage in this room with the soldering iron next to it.

The biggest piece of stained glass I have made so far is a 6' x 4' wall panel with some 852 pieces. It took me almost six months to complete. That gave me a lot of satisfaction and a decent price as well! Currently, I am working on a 4.5' square commissioned for a window in an NRI home in Sainikpuri. The client wanted all the seasons incorporated and I feel satisfied that I have managed to do just that!

—As told to Shyamola Khanna

Anand Kumar Soma

with me for long even after I left, but I couldn't find someone to teach me.

My husband retired and we moved to Hyderabad in 1996. My daughter, who moved to California, founded a studio where I could learn the art of stained glass work. While the three-month beginners' course taught me the basics of working on a flat surface, the cutting of glass, grinding, foiling and soldering, I wanted more. I went back the next year for an advanced course and learnt to work on bigger projects. I even worked as an apprentice and did many pieces for the studio free of charge. By the end of the 1990s, I started working on my own designs



Dull days: Beat lethargy with diet and exercise

I am a 70 year-old man. I am a vegetarian and walk for about 45 minutes three to four days a week. For the past few days, I am suffering from fatigue. In fact, I feel lethargic to take on even day-to-day activities. How do I beat lethargy?

To begin with, I really appreciate the fact that you manage to go for regular walks even at this age and maintain a healthy regime. Walking is the best exercise after 60, as it improves the overall health of the individual. However, it is important to know the exact cause of fatigue and lethargy. Fatigue is a normal part of life, but it can also be a symptom of disease, including serious illnesses. There could be numerous reasons for it, of which age could be an important one and cannot be ruled out.

Other factors could be:

- Boredom, stress, anxiety, distaste for work, exhaustion
- Lack of proper sleep
- Any nutritional deficiency. It has been found that deficiencies of calcium, iron and Vitamin D cause symptoms of fatigue and lethargy not only among elderly but in young people too. A recent British survey found that over 50 per cent of adults have lower-than-normal Vitamin D levels

and that 16 per cent had severe deficiency during the winter when exposure to sunshine was limited. Many studies have claimed that Vitamin D deficiency affects not only the bones but the muscles and the cardiovascular, respiratory, neurologic and gastrointestinal systems, so one needs to consult a doctor to check for any such deficiency.

- Deficiency of Vitamin B12; subclinical Vitamin B12 deficiency is common in the elderly
- Low levels of sodium or potassium are very common in old age and can lead to muscle cramps and pain in the legs.
- Any viral or asymptomatic infections
- Endocrine-related fatigue, including both hypothyroidism and subclinical hypothyroidism. Persons with subclinical hypothyroidism experiencing symptoms of fatigue may warrant a trial of low-dose thyroid hormone replacement therapy to lower their thyroid-stimulating hormone levels to normal. Hyperthyroidism may result in muscle atrophy, which can lead to non-specific symptoms of fatigue followed by weakness.
- Dehydration could also be an important cause of fatigue. So one needs to be conscious about the intake of fluids and water in the daily diet.
- DIET! Numerous studies have revealed that a diet lacking in sufficient calories, protein, and/or essential vitamins and minerals may lead to symptoms of fatigue.

Combating fatigue

Depending upon the exact cause, one can adopt measures to fight fatigue. A nutritious diet and healthy lifestyle play major roles in combating the problem of fatigue in all age groups.

- **Get a check-up:** First, I would recommend ruling out the possibility of any health problems like blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, anaemia, thyroid disease or sleep apnoea.
- **Get enough sleep:** Adults need about eight hours per night. Make the necessary changes to ensure you get a better night's sleep.
- **Limit caffeine:** Too much caffeine, particularly in the evening, can cause insomnia. Limit caffeinated drinks



READERS ASK

A well-balanced healthy diet will not only boost your energy levels but take care of your nutritional deficiencies. Increase the amount of fruit and wholegrain foods in your diet

to five or less per day, and avoid these types of drinks after dinner.

- **Balance your diet!** A well-balanced healthy diet will not only boost your energy levels but take care of nutritional deficiencies, if any.

- **Eat healthy:** Increase the amount of fruit, vegetables, wholegrain foods, low-fat dairy products and lean meats in your diet. Reduce the amount of high fat, high sugar and high salt foods.

- **Eat breakfast:** Food boosts your metabolism and gives the body energy to burn. The brain relies on glucose for fuel, so choose carbohydrate-rich breakfast foods such as cereals or wholegrain bread, oatmeal with raisins, and cereal with fruit and yogurt.

- **Don't skip meals:** Going without food for too long allows blood sugar levels to dip. Try to eat regularly to maintain your energy levels throughout the day.

- **Don't crash-diet:** Low kilojoule diets, or diets that severely restrict carbohydrates, don't contain enough energy for your body's needs. The reduced food variety of the typical crash diet also deprives the body of nutrients such as vitamins, minerals and trace elements.

- **Go green with veggies!** Vegetables are rich in minerals and vitamins. Sweet potatoes, carrots and dark green vegetables—like broccoli and asparagus—are high in Vitamin A. Carrots also contain Vitamin B6, while spinach and other leafy green vegetables have calcium, iron and antioxidants. All these nutrients help build up immunity and relieve fatigue.

- **Get fruity!** Fruits are loaded with vitamins and antioxidants required to fight free radicals in the body. They are also a good choice for snacks and desserts, offering a wide variety of choices. Some good fruit sources for essential vitamins are dried apricots for Vitamin A, kiwi for Vitamin C and bananas for B6.

- **Don't overeat:** Large meals can drain your energy. Instead of eating three big meals per day, try eating six mini-meals to spread your kilojoule intake more evenly. This

I am 62. Of late, my nails have become brittle. What could be the cause and how do I strengthen/treat them?

Nails get brittle with age and this can be a cause of worry and frustration. They could also be an indication of a lack of nutrients or even health problems. No matter how much you take care of them superficially through a manicure or pedicure, you need to focus on your diet to make them healthy internally.

- **Eat enough protein:** The nails are made up of a fibrous protein called keratin and if your diet lacks protein, you can experience breaking nails, chronic fatigue, hair loss, inability to quickly recover from injury, and loss of muscle tone. Try to include eggs, fish, chicken, pulses, milk and milk products in your daily diet.

- **Keep hydrated:** The body needs plenty of fresh, pure water to keep the joints lubricated, your hair and nails strong, and the body running smoothly.

- **Eat Vitamin E:** Rich sources include vegetable oil, wheat germ, nuts, nut butter, and seeds.

- **Go for grains:** Yeast and barley are just two grains that contain the B-complex vitamin biotin and protein that can lead to healthy nails. Brewer's yeast, used to make bread, has B-complex vitamins and zinc.

- **Eat eggs:** Eggs contain protein as well as vitamins A and E, and calcium. Biotin is found in egg yolk. For vegetarians, soybean and other legumes are a good source of protein and biotin.

- **Get checked out:** It's important to note that if nails become extremely brittle suddenly, it could be a health issue, such as anaemia or a thyroid condition. If that's the case, you should see the doctor.

will result in more constant blood sugar and insulin levels. Mid-morning and mid-evening meals should be snacky and nutrient-dense like nuts, sprouts, fruits, oats etc.

- **Keep yourself hydrated:** Include lemon water, coconut water, soups, mint water and juices in your daily diet.

- **Maintain your exercise regime:** Exercise boosts metabolism and keeps you energetic and active throughout the day.

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



SILVER LINING BY V S NATARAJAN

Keep moving: Inactivity can kill

Physical exercise is the essence of healthy living. Aerobic exercises are trendy in the West and therefore gaining popularity in India as well. Further, traditional forms of physical discipline like yoga have also received a new lease on life across the world, thanks to us. But the sad part is that all these wonderful physical activities are believed to be useful only for the young and the middle-aged. Ageism, or discrimination on the basis of age, which is discernible in all aspects of life, is most firmly established in the practice of physical exercise. In reality, silvers are more in need of exercise than youngsters.

As most silvers lead a retired life, they do not have the avenues to engage in physical activity as part of their daily schedule. As will be discussed in this column, exercise contributes greatly to preventing diseases or, at least, ameliorating the severity of most chronic diseases that generally affect elders. Therefore, it is a folly to keep silvers away from physical exercise just because they can't exert themselves as intensively as younger adults.

Health benefits

The benefits of exercise far exceed its risks, regardless of the presence of other risk factors. Regular exercise can reduce mortality rates even in smokers and the obese. Indirect benefits include opportunities for social interaction, an enhanced sense of well-being and improved sleep quality. Here are some benefits of exercise:

- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces blood sugar and cholesterol
- Cuts down weight
- Prevents heart attack
- Increases bone density and makes bones stronger
- Fights constipation
- Strengthens muscles
- Improves balance and prevents fall
- Promotes sound sleep

If we walk for three hours a week, our chances of getting a heart attack get reduced by 35-40 per cent. If we walk for five hours a week, the risk of getting an attack is lowered by 50 per cent. If we could walk six hours a week, our risk of cardiac problems, breast cancer, stroke, diabetes and many other such serious diseases are reduced.

Recently, a research conducted in Japan proved that people without any exercise were more prone to developing cancer of the large intestine. A research carried out in the US



proved that risk of cancer of the breast and genital organs was the least for athletes and sportspersons. This, once again, proves that regular exercise reduces even the incidence of cancer.

Types of exercises

Among all exercises, endurance exercises (walking, cycling, swimming) provide the best health benefits for silvers. Jogging is generally inappropriate for silvers who are not already accustomed to it.

Patients do not have to be active for 30 minutes at a time but can accumulate 30 minutes over 24 hours, which amounts to as little as 10 minutes at a time. Three 10-minute bouts of activity will have the same fitness effects as one at-a-stretch 30 minute bout. If one cannot walk properly, the use of walking sticks/walker is advisable.

Generally, walking is the most readily available aerobic exercise for silvers. Silvers can walk 3-5 km daily. Exercises

READERS ASK

are best done early in the morning or in the evening. They should not be done on a full stomach. Silvers can exercise either alone or in a group, although the latter is preferable, as the presence of other participants makes the session a social event and the group leader can motivate them and encourage their continued participation.

A walk with exposure to sunlight for about 60 minutes twice a day, preferably before 9 am or after 4 pm, is essential to get enough Vitamin D from sunlight that, in turn, helps prevent osteoporosis.

Women can do *asana* or floor exercises. People with defective vision and people affected by arthritis of the hip or knees can try to do upper body exercises. The best exercise for any elderly individual should be decided after consultation with a doctor. For example, diabetic patients whose retina has been affected or those who suffer from both diabetes and hypertension should not perform exercises involving standing on the head or bending forward. Those who have a weak heart should avoid strenuous exercises that can precipitate breathlessness. During the month following a heart attack, all forms of exercise except walking should be avoided. Doses of insulin and oral hypoglycaemic in diabetics may need to be adjusted (according to the amount of anticipated exercise) to prevent hypoglycaemia during exercise.

Dos and don'ts

If you noticed any one of the following events while exercising, consult your doctor immediately:

- Pulse rate more than 120/minute
- Palpitation—excessive heartbeat
- Chest pain
- Difficulty in breathing
- Pain in the joints
- Extreme weakness

Here are some tips to keep moving

- There is absolutely no age limit to start exercising.
- Physical inactivity is the leading cause of premature death.
- Before starting exercise, pre-exercise screening by a doctor is essential.
- Exercise on an empty stomach, in the morning or evening hours.
- Minimum 30 minutes of exercise per day for five days a week is a must.
- Those unable to do outdoor exercises can choose indoor cycling, treadmill or floor exercises.
- Walking stick, walker or frames may be useful for people who are not stable on their feet.
- Group exercise is enjoyable and hence preferable.

I am 72. Of late, I have been gradually losing weight; in the past three months, I have lost over 5 kg. I am not diabetic. I have a good appetite and I am on a fairly normal diet. What could be the reason for this sudden weight loss?

As a thumb rule, unintentional weight loss of more than 2.3 kg (5 per cent of body weight) in a month or 4.5 kg (10 per cent of body weight) in six months is cause for worry. Certain medical conditions like cancer, depression, tuberculosis, heart ailments, kidney disorders, diabetes, hyperthyroidism, and certain drugs like Metformin and thyroxin can lead to weight loss. If the cause of weight loss is noted, it should be treated first. Otherwise, follow dietary advice: a protein-rich diet that includes milk, egg white, fish, soy, chicken, mushroom, oats and dal. Further, a starchy, fat-rich diet to increase weight may include rice, roots, butter, ghee, sweets (provided you are not a diabetic, your cholesterol levels are normal and your heart is healthy). Protein supplements in the form of biscuits or powder can also be taken. In your case, you need thorough blood tests, an X-ray and an ultrasonogram of the whole abdomen to ascertain the cause of weight loss. Consult your family physician at the earliest.

Remember your identity cards

All of us must take our identity card with us when we go out. Even if we go out for a short distance, we should not be careless to leave it at home. Sometimes this may be life-saving. We must never underestimate its importance. This identity card must have our name, photograph, date of birth, blood group, address, telephone number, details of diseases (if any), details of important tablets being taken, name and contact details of family doctor, and name and details of person to be contacted in case of an emergency.

And finally!

In a nutshell, the best tonic for old age is regular exercise. Exercise is unmatched for the health of mind and body. Certain things can be learnt, certain things can be heard and certain things can be seen. But the best of all is to feel. Let's keep moving and, thereby, keep the mind and body smiling!

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



Sweet talk: Yoga can keep your voice ageless

It seems natural that the voice—a product of tissue movement within the voice box—should also be affected by age. With time, it acquires a slight quaver, unsteadiness and breathlessness. After all, the voice is a product of the breath too, and reflects the strength of your lungs.

However, in yoga, there are several practices that keep the voice ageless by keeping the natural volume of the lung expanded. Specific practices keep the voice box toned and healthy and challenge the vocal chords naturally to maintain their integrity and health.

The most common exercises that tone the voice from outside involve upper back challenges, such as the cobra (*bhujangasana*), upward dog (*urdhvamukhasvanasana*), snake (*sarpasana*), and cat stretch pose (*marjariasana*), to name a few. Inversions and forward bends that apply a slight pressure at the voice also serve a similar purpose. Some inversions that exert

this natural pressure include the psychic union lock (*viparita karani mudra*), shoulder stand (*sarvangasana*) and plough (*halasana*). In the forward bends, the downward dog (*adhomukhasvanasana*) exerts similar pressure. The same thing happens in the chin lock (*jalandhara bandha*), which may be used during retention in certain breathing (*pranayama*) practices.

Equally—if not more powerfully—*pranayama* practices work towards keeping your voice sweet and young. In fact, they are even advised for singers to improve the quality and texture of their voices. In this category, the list includes cooling breath (*seetali*), hissing breath (*seetkari*), victory breath (*ujjayi*) and humming bee (*brahmari*). However, for the voice to respond, your practice has to be regular, with emphasis on holding the pose for long. Regularity with *pranayama* practices will not only keep the voice young but the mind composed and calm as an emotional side-effect.

YOGIC MOVES

Humming bee (*brahmari*)

This practice is done seated in any meditative pose, with the eyes shut. There are versions that involve shutting the nostrils and other sense organs in the face. But that is a higher meditative practice called *yonis mudra*. Inhale and exhale deeply a few times. Then inhale once, and while exhaling make a humming sound. Initially, the sound may not be long. But with practice, the sound becomes longer, displaying an expanded lung volume. After the sound ends, wait awhile. This is one round. Do five rounds. That is sufficient. Focus on drawing the stomach

lightly in while exhaling. Remember to keep the shoulders relaxed, or drop them as you make the sound. Focus on the face and identify in which area of the face the vibration of the sound is naturally more intense. This involution of the mind will further lengthen and enhance your humming sound.

Benefits: Regarded as one of the most healing of the *pranayama* practices,

it is used for immediate postoperative healing. It is ideal to remove negative feelings, including anger. It sweetens and keeps the voice younger, and calms the mind.

Model: Prafullakumar Javeri,
Harmony Interactive Centre
Photographer: Haresh Patel

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



THE GREAT GRANNY DIARIES BY PRATIBHA JAIN SMT GAURI KARMAKAR, KOLKATA

The last in an engaging series about the wisdom of love, nurturing and culinary bonding across generations

Practical and diligent, and having a deep understanding of life, is how her grandchildren describe her. She is able to see life from their perspective, which makes them reach out to her. Smt Gauri Karmakar, 75, a Bangladeshi great-granny residing in Kolkata, is a mother of four daughters, grandmother of six, and great-grandmother of two. What she enjoys most is cooking, especially Bangladeshi cuisine, and continues to do so at her age.

When I asked her for a recipe, her family unanimously asked her to share the recipe of a side dish with peel of raw plantains, and she did so with great interest and patience. As she spoke only Bengali, her young granddaughter Madhumita happily and efficiently translated her grandma's responses to my questions.

Namaste Gauriji. To begin with, tell me about your childhood.

I was born in Bangladesh, Jessore, which is in Khulna district, on 13 April 1939. After the India-Bangladesh partition, we moved to Bangao in West Bengal. That's where I grew up and studied up to Grade 10. Those days, families were large and I remember watching my elders as they worked. Both my parents passed away when I was quite young and I lived with my great-aunt for five years. She taught me household work and I learnt how to manage a house at a very young age.

How old were you when you got married, and where?

In 1953, when I was in my late teens, I got married to Bhibhutibhushan Karmakar in Bangao itself.



Shilbhadra Datta

When did you move to Kolkata?

After my daughters were born, we shifted to Kolkata and continue to live here. Once all my daughters

were married and moved away, we were just three members at home: my husband, his brother and myself. And then my husband passed away in 2010. Somehow after his demise,

I grew very close to my daughters, more than I was before their marriage. I look forward to their weekend visits and cherish my time with them.

Your family says that your most outstanding trait is your sense of responsibility.

I was the eldest daughter in my family as well as the eldest daughter-in-law; responsibility just became a part of my nature. It also made me a disciplinarian.

Yes, they say that you were quite strict with them.

Jaya Saha (daughter): She was very strict when we were growing up but she always gave us space to talk about our problems to her. I guess she was overprotective of us as we were girls.

Moumita (granddaughter): My mother says grandma has really changed over the years and is quite accommodating now. When I decided to move to Bengaluru for work, she was initially not very happy with the idea, but she did not stop me and allowed me to take my own decision.

Gauriji, what do you think made the change happen? Also, if you compare life now and earlier, what changes do you perceive in general around you?

Change is but natural. Times change, people change. One big difference I find is that nowadays people prefer to live alone. I think people believe in individuality now. Earlier it was all about adjustment and compromise. But I do like the fact that women are encouraged to study now as it gives them freedom. My own youngest daughter took up a job after her marriage.

Madhumita (granddaughter): She is very practical and understands the challenges and problems of our generation, and, most important, she is very smart.

Moumita: She is diligent and hard-working. In fact, that is one quality she has imparted to her own daughters. When I see my mother now, I can imagine how hardworking grandma would have been in her earlier days! Even though she has lot of joint aches nowadays, she cooks by herself. In fact, she does not like anyone's cooking as much as her own [laughs]. She does not like eating out either.

Which of her special dishes are the family favourites?

Moumita: We love her cooking, especially her curries: raw jackfruit curry, raw banana peel curry and her *paneer kofta* curry.

Pratima Bose (daughter): She is an excellent cook; I have learnt most of my cooking from her. She believes in experimenting with food and churns out tasty dishes all the time.

FROM SMT GAURI KARMAKAR'S KITCHEN

Plantain peel curry (*kanchkolar khoshar ghonto*)

Kanchkolar khoshar ghonto is a phrase that took me a little time to decode and get used to. As Gauriji explained to me, *kanchkolar* means raw plantains, *khoshar* refers to peel, and *ghonto* is side-dish in Bengali. This recipe is from the villages of Bangladesh. Once I documented the recipe, it still took an exchange of quite a few emails, text messages and telephone calls with Gauriji's granddaughter to figure out the exact way to peel the raw plantains and then cook the peels! This shared enthusiasm makes this recipe all the more special for me.

Ingredients

- Raw plantains: 5-6 (only peels are needed)
- Potatoes: 2

- Bay leaves: 7-8
- Cumin seeds: 1 tsp
- Turmeric powder: a pinch
- Sugar: 1-2 tsp
- Salt: to taste
- Garam masala: a pinch
- Oil: 2 tbsps
- Ghee: 1-2 tsp

For the paste

- Onions: 1 large; chopped
- Ginger: 1-inch piece
- Garlic: 2-4 cloves
- Green chillies: 2-3

Method

First, you have to cook the peels. With a sharp knife, chop the two ends of the raw plantains and discard them. Now chop the plantains into 2-3 chunks horizontally. If there are any dark spots or blemishes on the plantains, chop and discard them. Now chop away the peels along with some flesh of the raw plantains and immediately drop the chopped peels into a vessel of water. This is to avoid any discolouration. (The remaining plantain flesh can be used in some other preparations such as *paratha* or *kofta*.) Cook the chopped plantain peels in a pan of water along with a pinch of salt for 20-30 minutes. Switch off the flame, drain the water and discard any fibrous layer on top of the peels. Mash the peels roughly with a masher or by hand.

Now, for the curry. Peel the potatoes and chop into bite-sized bits. Heat a tablespoon of oil and shallow-fry the chopped potatoes until they turn tender. Remove from flame and set aside. Grind the onions, garlic, ginger and



Yamini V

green chillies along with very little water into a fine paste. In another pan, heat a tablespoon of oil and add cumin seeds and bay leaves. Now add the paste and sauté for 4-5 minutes until the raw smell disappears. Add turmeric powder, sugar and salt and mix well. Now add the cooked potatoes and raw banana peels. Sauté for 2-3 minutes. Add cooked potatoes and sauté for a couple of minutes. Add *garam masala* and ghee; mix well and remove from fire. Garnish with chopped coriander leaves. Serve

the curry with chapatti or steamed rice and dal.

Tip 1: Smear a little oil on your palms before chopping the plantains, as the juice tends to make the palms sticky. You can also drop the chopped peels and flesh of plantains into a vessel containing diluted buttermilk to avoid discolouration.

Tip 2: Gauriji says you can add roasted cashews and raisins in this curry for a richer flavour.

Tip 3: You can pressure-cook the peels for up to two whistles.

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

After celebrating your 25th anniversary, celebrate your first.

The first time your eyes met.

The first time you mustered up the courage.

The first time you bared your heart.

The first time you heard "Yes".

The first date.

The first time you held hands.

The first fight.

The first time you made up.

Shouldn't you be celebrating, that first rush of love
before life

and the babies and the bills intruded?

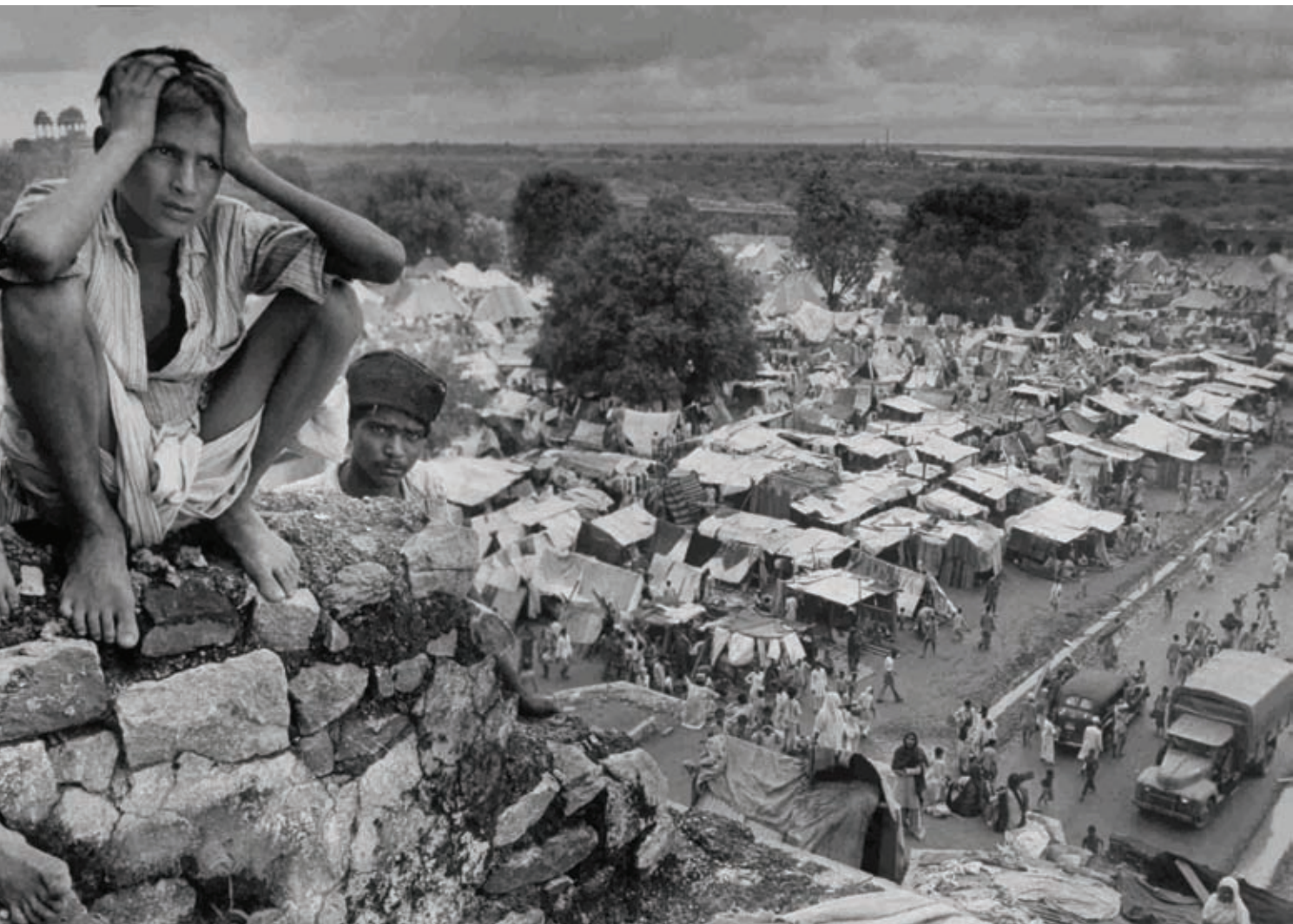
Because for the first time
you're at an age when
you can fall in love with each other
all over again.





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

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Lost and found

 Though it was one of the largest forced migrations of the 20th century, the 1947 Partition remains one of the least documented exoduses in the world. Now, two oral-history projects, varying in scale but equally determined in their commitment, are seeking to revive and preserve the memories, **Deepa Narayanan** reports

While India celebrated its tryst with destiny on 15 August 1947 and documents were signed and exchanged between the statesmen of two newly minted nations, sharp lines drawn on a map through relationships and homes forced an evacuation. It was a historical decision that the political class claimed as the price for nation-building;

a decision, nonetheless, that left the heart of the nation ripped apart.

Dr Surabhi Patel, 80, was born in Ziarat, Balochistan, and grew up in Quetta with her parents and nine siblings. She was 13 and her youngest brother, a six month-old infant, when the first news of riots began breaking out in the sum-

mer of 1947. One day, when Patel and her family returned home from an outing, they stood aghast, staring at their home and another in the neighbourhood marked with paint on the walls outside. Wasting no time, her parents decided it was time to move. After waiting all night for a friend to pick them up, with the increasing roars of mobs heading their way, they used their terrace to escape into their neighbour's house, where they were kept safe in the basement until the mobs went away.

Patel has vivid memories of that night, when even her six-year-old brother seemed to sense the danger to their lives—he didn't utter a cry the whole night. Moving on from their neighbour's home to a friend's place in an army cantonment, Patel and her eight siblings left for Ambala, leaving behind her parents and infant brother, who were to join them in a couple of months. The picture of the massacre around her, as the train passed through Quetta to Ambala, is something she will never forget. Patel was one of millions who were forced to restart their lives in distant, sometimes inhospitable, conditions that were part of one of the largest forced migrations of the 20th century. Yet the 1947 Partition remains one of the least documented exoduses in the world.

But, today, emerging from the shadows of a generation that lived through the trauma, a handful of people have come forward to record the memories of not only the pain but the identities—of culture, traditions, festivals and languages—that may have been lost in the churn.

Stories retold

Dr Guneeta Singh Bhalla, 34, grew up listening to stories of Partition from her grandmother, who had boarded a train in Lahore on 13 August 1947 with her three children, hoping it wouldn't be a permanent move. Although her husband had stayed back in Lahore, waiting for things to normalise, the Pakistan Army evicted him a day later. Bhalla remembers listening in stunned silence as her grandmother told her about the rioting in the station—how she and the kids stayed locked in the waiting room till it was time to leave; and jammed the windows of the compartment with their bags to avoid being shot at. "I feel miserable that I hadn't recorded her story before she passed away," says the California-based physicist who moved to the US with her family when she was just 10 years old. Growing up in Florida, she heard no mention of the historical event.

"It bothered me that they taught about the Hiroshima-Nagasaki bombings and the Holocaust but nothing about the Partition."

In 2008, she visited Hiroshima during a trip to Japan. "There, I heard the oral witness archives of life before, during and after the Hiroshima bombing and was astounded by the power of oral recollections," says Bhalla. "And I knew that was how we needed to tell the Partition story."

She travelled to India later that year and began informally recording the Partition stories of people in Faridkot, Punjab. When she went back to the US in January 2009 and enrolled at University of California - Berkeley for her PhD, she simultaneously began to visit gurdwaras and temples to talk to silvers there. "Soon, people started coming to look for me, telling me their stories. And I knew I was on the right track." In 2011, she set up 'The 1947 Partition Archive', a crowd-funded, live storytelling, oral history that also delves into pre-Partition lifestyles. The idea was to offer insight into lost cultural history; languages spoken at school; prevalent school systems, festivals celebrated, and so on. Interestingly, the Archive has recorded about 89 languages, including Pashto.

Crisis of identity

Indeed, lost cultural history is something many Sindhis—a community given to hard work and

enterprise—are familiar with. "Sindhis were perhaps one of those communities that lost even their identities in the forced evacuation," says Saaz Aggarwal, a Pune-based writer and painter, and author of *Sindh: Stories from a Vanished Homeland*. Aggarwal, who has been writing books since 2005, has a Sindhi mother.

She had already been helping people write their memoirs. And when her father passed away after a long spell of illness in 2010, Aggarwal began to encourage her mother to narrate stories from her life in Sindh. "Back then, I only hoped it would keep her preoccupied and that the recording would serve as a family memoir," she shares. "But the extent of details my mum recalled made me realise that everyone needed to hear about life in Sindh before, during and soon after Partition, in all its demographic complexities. So I did the necessary research and began to conduct interviews."

It was not all smooth-sailing. "Unlike Sikhs or Punjabis, Sindhis are reticent," she says. "Moreover, most of them did

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not even know their family roots.” However, as her work progressed, she began understanding their restraint. “Following the trauma, many Sindhis remained focused on resettling themselves. Also, their homelessness was received with indifference in a world where everyone had their own troubles. While there was violence and mayhem in Sindh, it was insignificant in comparison to the wholesale massacre in Punjab. Not given to talking about themselves, many Sindhis chose to remain silent.”

However, Aggarwal’s approach has struck a chord, promoting more people in the community to speak out. In fact, *Sindh*, which was chosen to participate at the South Asian Literature Festival in London in October 2013, has received many favourable reviews since its launch in November 2013. “I am suddenly flooded with requests from many more people who want to share their stories,” says the author, who is now working on the book’s sequel.

Race against time

It can’t come soon enough. There is a real sense of urgency for the archivists with most witnesses of Partition well into their 70s and beyond. In fact, Dr Patel’s youngest brother, who was six months old in 1947, recently passed away.

With its dedicated team of about 25 full and part-time employees and an ever-increasing team of volunteers, the Archive aims to collect 10,000 stories by 2015; so far, it has collected 1,100 oral accounts from nine countries. “In fact, we get enquiries for interviews from states like Kerala in India and countries like Nigeria and Zambia,” says Kanaad Chatterjee, 24, a full-timer ‘story scholar’ employed on a stipend by the Archive. Before getting started, members of the team are first trained on the goals and methodology of conducting interviews, via a free online workshop on the Archives’ website.

Incidentally, the oldest person to have been interviewed by The 1947 Partition Archive is a 109 year-old tailor from Gurdaspur district in Punjab. Another person who was interviewed, fortunately, in time was the late Khushwant Singh; the transcript of his interview was published on the Archive’s Facebook page, which it uses to spread its campaign. Born on 2 February 1915 to Sir Sobha Singh and Varyaam Kaur in Hadali Village, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan, Singh was in his early 30s during Partition. In his account, he shares how Mohammad Ali Jinnah had requested his father, credited for his contribution to building New Delhi, to remain in Lahore as a High Court judge; he refused for reasons of safety and left for India a few days

HIS STORY

Team Harmony accompanied the Archive team during one of its interviews at the Bandra residence of Capt Kanwal Jeet Singh Malik, 84, former squadron leader and pilot. Born on 7 November 1930 to a well-to-do family who owned a village in Rawalpindi in undivided India, Malik remembers leaving Rawalpindi as a 17 year-old boy in March 1947, when his father sent him away with his mother and siblings to Amritsar, with nothing more than a trunk each. “We hadn’t even known if we would return to the large house we grew up in, bustling with domestic help and activity, with high walls around it and gardens that grew oranges,” he recollects, his voice choking with emotion. Decades later, when Malik was a pilot with Air Lanka, he revisited his birthplace. “The British knew their time was up and were packing their bags to leave, so to speak,” he



Haresh Patel

says with feeling. “With their losses from past wars mounting, they were most disinterested in the future of India or Pakistan. The leaders at the

time waited for their pound of flesh but commoners like us were left to fend for ourselves. And nothing will compensate our loss.”

before 15 August 1947. In his interview, Khushwant Singh speaks of the hauntingly deserted roads in Delhi...of witnessing a group of Sikh men attacking another man. "Partition was a time when there was no humanity," he says.

Speak and heal

That sheer inhumanity continues to haunt many a witness to Partition; the interviews, then, serve as a catharsis or a means to heal. In fact, as a protocol, they can go on for 24 hours or more, with adequate breaks. Also, to respect the privacy of the interviewee, a usual embargo of three years is placed on the interview before it is published. In fact, some well-known people, such as L K Advani, have even asked for an embargo of 30 years after they have passed on before their stories are released in the public domain.

Sometimes, interviewees even confess to their own atrocities. "A man belonging to Sargoda, West Punjab, now in Pakistan, narrated how he had killed other children when he was only eight years old," reveals Chatterjee. The man, now in his mid-70s, had carried out the killings in an Indian refugee camp on the instructions of a group leader, who had called for a rampage against refugees of another community in the camp. The instruction was to kill anyone of one's own height. "For this man, who has lived with this guilt, without divulging it to his family, archiving was a catharsis. He even wanted to upload his story on social media, hoping it might bring him some kind of healing."

In another interview, a 90 year-old recalls a train going from one side of the border to the other carrying bloodied dead bodies and bearing the inscription, *Maarnaa humse seekho* (learn how to kill from us). The train returned from the other side with a fresh consignment of bodies; this time, the inscription read *Maarnaa seekh liyaa* (we have learnt to kill).

Other, more pleasant, stories speak of communities, languages, food and scriptures. "For instance, during a wedding back then, it was natural for a family in Amritsar to buy the bride's shoes from Peshawar or sweetmeats from Karachi—the best of their kind at that time," explains Prakhari Joshi, 24, another story scholar. "The stories have begun making me yearn to visit Karachi and Lahore."

Meanwhile, Aggarwal's project has proved empowering for Sindhis by clearing misconceptions about the community.

Throughout the Partition and after, Sindhis focused their energies on rebuilding their lives from scratch, sometimes in unfamiliar lands. At a time when honour killing of women and children was considered valiant, Sindhis leaving their homeland 'without putting up a fight' earned them the reputation of being cowards. Their enterprising nature and government schemes to help them settle in also turned people against them, often making them the butt of jokes.

In *Sindh*, however, Aggarwal takes these perceptions by the horn by documenting stories of their fighting spirit shining over generations. Her perception on the Sindh movement is unique, equating it with the search for a new life and the ultimate reverence for the gift of life. "It must be acknowledged that there was, in fact, tremendous bravery in their utter renunciation of their previous lives as they moved on, never complaining, never asking for anything, seeking new spaces and livelihoods for themselves, making the best of what they could find, while also contributing to those

around them in any number of ways," said Aggarwal in *Wherever*, a speech she presented at a seminar in Karachi in March 2014.

"My endeavour is to primarily connect between generations, because with the latest generations living in a false sense of humiliation about their identity, they are only adding to the loss of a culture that goes back centuries," she tells us. "Moreover, for everything their ancestors sacrificed for their sakes, it is unfair that the younger Sindhi generations are ashamed of being associated with their cultural heritage."

Indeed, whether it is Aggarwal's project or the Archive, this chronicling of heritage and history serves as an invaluable tool to both preserve the past and inform the future. From heart-warming tales of humanism and compassion to heart-wrenching accounts of horror, these oral histories illuminate the gamut of the human experience—and shed light on a chapter of Indian history that must never be forgotten.

Want to tell your story or learn more?

Email The 1947 Partition Archive at ask@1947partitionarchive.org or go to www.1947partitionarchive.org

Email Saaz Aggarwal at saaz@seacomindia.com or go to blackandwhitefountain.com/sindh/ or www.saazaggarwal.com

Unsung patriots

They scripted a revolutionary chapter in India's freedom struggle but these patriots are all but forgotten today. **Suparna-Saraswati Puri** revisits the legacy of the Ghadar Movement



Tucked away in the footnotes of Indian history is a band of revolutionaries not many remember today. But their stories are being retold, their heroism relived and patriotism recounted, even though India has turned many a page since those heady days.

1913. A time when Punjab was in the throes of economic depression, resulting in large-scale immigration of Punjabis and Sikhs to Canada. The British Crown, which then ruled Canada as part of the Commonwealth, responded with a series of restrictions aimed at limiting the

number of immigrants and restricting their political and social rights. Hurt, humiliated and betrayed, the Punjabis, who had hitherto been loyal to the British, organised themselves into groups that fed on growing discontent and anti-colonial sentiment. Many Punjabis and Sikhs also moved to the US, where they were met with similar restrictions. Their focal point now was to overthrow British rule in India and they were prepared to shed blood through an armed revolution if required.

At the turn of the 20th century, this particular group of revolutionaries

launched the Ghadar Party in San Francisco; it was spearheaded mainly by Punjabi and Sikh immigrants in the US and Canada. Launched with funds raised by the Indian Diaspora, the movement had but one single goal: to liberate India from British rule, by revolt or by mutiny, according to Ludhiana-based expert on the Ghadar Movement, Harish K Puri, who is also a former professor of political science and head, Dr B R Ambedkar Chair, at Guru Nanak Dev University in Amritsar.

Today the legacy of the Ghadar Party—disbanded with Independence—

lives through its patriots' stories of valour and descendants whose strong connect with history shone through at the year-long centenary celebrations of the movement. An international seminar was organised by the Ministry of Culture in Chandigarh in March this year, hosted by the Indian Council for Social Science Research, Panjab University, Chandigarh, and organised by the Indian Council for Historical Research (ICHR) in New Delhi and the Institute of Punjab Studies in Chandigarh along with Panjab University's Department of History.

"*Ghadar* is a pejorative word in Urdu meaning 'revolt' or 'mutiny' and was adopted as a way of defiance," explains Irfan Habib, historian and professor emeritus, Aligarh Muslim University, and former chairman, ICHR. "Ghadarites were fed on the grist that the British colonial rulers were squeezing India dry. Life without struggle was meaningless for them and Ghadarites manifested this not only through the movement but their personal lives."

The seminar held as part of the centenary celebrations of the party offered an insight into the spirit of nationalism as it burned in the hearts of these revolutionaries. During a session called *Reminiscences by Descendants of Ghadarites*, Dr Savitri Sawhney, 75, daughter of pioneering Ghadarite from Maharashtra, Pandurang Sadashiv Khankhoje, shared her thoughts about her father on whom she based the biography, *I Shall Never Ask For Pardon: A Memoir of Pandurang Khankhoje* (Penguin India; 2008). "My father was born in 1886 in Wardha and was responsible for the first-ever organisation of Indians who fought the imperialists," said Sawhney. "He formed the organisation in 1907 with help from Pandit Kanshi Ram, treasurer of the Ghadar Party. He went to America's west coast to get trained in the military academy. He used to say that his grandfather fought with Tantiya Tope and his own father (my grandfather) had participated in the 1857 revolt."

She said Khankhoje's revolutionary inclination was so strong that he had fled from the *pandal* of his own wedding twice, as he did not want to make a woman suffer by getting married to a revolutionary whose life was of least consequence to him. "My father ran away to Pune and met Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who suggested that he take military training from the Japanese, who had defeated the Russian Navy then. In British colonies, this was heartening news for those fighting to liberate their lands. This inspired my father, a little Brahmin boy with only a high school education, to travel to Yokohama, Japan, where he stayed for a year."

"Ghadarites were fed on the grist that the British colonial rulers were squeezing India dry. Life without struggle was meaningless for them and Ghadarites manifested this not only through the movement but their personal lives"

On his travails during his journey by ship to America, Dr Sawhney said, "My father joined the military academy run by Irish revolutionaries, cleaned bathroom floors and saved money to earn a degree from Berkeley University. As a Ghadarite, his main job remained conducting endless meetings at Portland (Oregon) St John's, Estoria, where Indians had a presence. He motivated them with questions like, 'Why are you here prospering when your own country and fellowmen are suffering hunger and oppression?' Within the Ghadar Party, he would also train new volunteers on how to make bombs and use arms."

After many a historic adventure as a Ghadarite in Japan, the US, Russia and

Persia, Khankhoje eventually settled in Mexico, where he rose to prominence in the field of maize cultivation that earned him the title 'Corn King'. "My father never lost his sense of helping people and zest for life. The legendary Dr Sun Yat Sen had met him during his adventures as a Ghadarite and asked, 'What after the revolution?' He suggested that my father study agriculture, which my father did, and went on to revolutionise agriculture in Mexico," Dr Sawhney recollects.

The Ghadar Movement had many valiant torchbearers who kept its momentum alive in Punjab. Among these were Kartar Singh Sarabha, Nidhan Singh, Pandit Kanshi Ram, Jagat Ram Hariana and Vishnu Ganesh Pingley. Revolutionaries from other parts of India who joined their ranks were Rash Behari Bose, Bhai Parmanand, Ram Saran Das, Sachindranath Sanyal and Sikh saint Bhai Randhir Singh. Among the first to raise the banner of revolt against the colonists in India, Ghadarites were a real threat to the British and many paid with their lives. Convicted for waging a 'war against the King Emperor' in a series of conspiracy cases, 46 of them were hanged, 70 sentenced to deportation to the Andaman's Cellular Jail and over 70 others imprisoned for shorter terms, reveals Prof Puri.

Chandigarh-based Punjabi columnist, poet and author Bubbu Tir, 47, offers a firsthand insight into the fiery Ghadar spirit. "My *tayaji* [uncle] Sardar Kartar Singh Brar (1898-1975) belonged to the erstwhile principality of Faridkot," she narrates. "He devoted his life to the Ghadar Movement as a result of a personal incident. He was engaged to a girl from Sangrur but after our family's land was taken away by the British, as was happening across Punjab's landed gentry, the girl's side broke off the engagement. My uncle was greatly affected by this and never married. He took it as a sign from God that he was meant for another purpose and so he involved himself with the movement and its activities."

I have vivid memories of him, as did our entire family, of living in a time warp during the post-Independence years. He remained a *khaddar dhari*, a strict disciplinarian."

What makes the Ghadar Movement and its founders truly remarkable is the fact that when education was a rare privilege in India during the 19th and 20th centuries, Ghadarites published and printed revolutionary material of intense literary calibre. Among this was a weekly paper called *Ghadar* published in Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi, among other languages. When the party urged people to join its ranks, it carried an advertisement that read: 'Wanted: Enthusiastic and heroic soldiers for organising Ghadar in Hindustan. Remuneration: Death. Reward: Martyrdom. Pension: Freedom. Field of Work: Hindustan.'

"One could notice the subtle impact of the Ghadar Movement in the popular uprising of the masses under Mahatma Gandhi and the Akali movement in Punjab," Prof Puri tells us. "Babbar Akalis were particularly influenced by this movement. Shaheed Bhagat Singh confessed that he was directly inspired by Ghadarites. Kartar Singh Sarabha was the hero of Bhagat Singh and his comrades of the Bharat Naujawan Sabha. The *kirtikisan* (Workers and Peasants movement in Punjab) was the direct outcome of Ghadar influence. Ghadarites were the earliest freedom fighters to advance the demand for complete independence for India."

At the seminar, Surinder Pal Singh, 77, grandson of Punjab's Ghadar hero Bhai Bhagwan Singh, reminisced, "My grandfather spent half his life in exile. He left India in 1909 and returned in 1958. He was a fiery orator, a revolutionary poet and president of the Ghadar Party from 1914 to 1920. Hailing from a hamlet in Amritsar district, my grandfather assumed 15 aliases without being discovered by the British authorities hunting down Ghadarites, in and outside India."



Surinder Pal Singh and Dr Savitri Sawhney share their thoughts at the international seminar, *Reminiscences by Descendents of Ghadarites*

Narrating the arrival of Bhai Bhagwan Singh 'Gyaanee' in the US, Surinder Pal Singh shared, "From the Orient to Panama, the British knew that Bhagwan was moving around constantly but were unable to detect him. He had stowed away on a ship to Japan that was carrying a cargo of cow hides. For 31 days, my grandfather hid among the hides and, as a result, lost his sense of smell and eyesight. He finally landed in San Francisco illegally."

Bhai Bhagwan Singh spent his time studying literature. He was a philosopher, educator, and author of many books. He founded the Humanology Society and the American Institute of Culture. Among the many books he wrote were some popular titles such as *The Art of Living*, *Science of Perpetual Youth* and *The Ideal of Friendship*.

"It was my grandfather's wish to travel on an Indian ship flying the tricolour," recalled Singh. "His wish was fulfilled when he finally returned home, to Punjab, when India became independent. And what a memorable return it was! His first act on landing at Bombay harbour was to bend on his knees and say *Bande Mataram*. Then, he

laid flat on his belly to kiss the motherland, which was 'free at last.'"

For those who sacrificed their lives, has an independent India given Ghadarites their due by recognising their contribution? Prof Puri sets the record straight. "Even though India's revolutionary patriots held the Ghadar heroes in high esteem, and Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose showed great personal regard for Ghadari Babas, the movement remained more or less ignored by intellectuals, leaders and historians," he points out. "It received an official nod for the first time ever, when then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh honoured the movement during its centenary last year. Movements other than the Gandhian, Indian National Congress-led ones need to be given due attention for a balanced approach to the study of our freedom struggle."

The centenary celebrations of the Ghadar Movement boasted a host of academic activities commemorating the contribution of these revolutionaries. In January 2013, a commemorative Ghadar Centenary Postage Stamp was released by Manmohan Singh; a special volume, *The Ghadar Movement: Background, Ideology, Action and Legacies*, published by Punjabi University, Patiala, was released at San Francisco in July 2013.

A Ghadar Martyrs' Memorial has been set up in Jalandhar through the efforts of former Ghadarites and their supporters. It serves as a Ghadar archive and museum. The Working Committee maintains contacts with the families of former Ghadarites while the descendants of Ghadarites meet during a five-day Ghadari Babian da Mela in October-November, besides casually on other days. Families of Ghadarites are encouraged by the centenary celebrations but they still feel it is mere tokenism. They believe their kith and kin, who laid down their lives for their country, have been denied their place in history by successive governments in India. Hard to argue that. ✨

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ONE TOO DRINK MANY

IT'S A DISEASE THAT OFTEN REMAINS A SECRET WHILE IT INSIDIOUSLY WRECKS FAMILIES, DRAINS LIFE SAVINGS AND ISOLATES THE INDIVIDUAL. ALCOHOLISM IS RAMPANT TODAY, AND AFFLICTS ELDERLY JUST AS DEEPLY. HOWEVER, AS **NEETI VIJAYKUMAR** REPORTS, THERE'S ONE SILVER LINING: HOPE OF RECOVERY

It's touted as an elixir and a social facilitator but the sad truth is, the genie in the bottle—alcohol—can also cause irreparable personal and social harm. Freely available and encouraged not a little by the media, 'alcohol consumption' often turns into 'alcoholism', the two habits separated only by a thin and invisible line.

Here's a reality check: while the visible face of alcoholism is the young to middle-aged demographic, it is an illness that afflicts seniors just as much, for it is a chronic and progressive disease. In fact, silvers have a more serious problem on their hands, considering they have been labouring under the disease longer than younger alcoholics. By the time the alcoholic comes around to admitting there's a problem, families have already suffered considerable emotional damage, not to mention the possible professional and financial price already paid.

There's another massive downside of alcohol abuse: ill-health and, for some, even loss of life. Chronic alcoholism compounds age-related diseases, dealing the senior alcoholic and his or her family a double-whammy. Worse still, given the compulsive nature of the disease, the alcoholic just can't seem to stop.

According to individuals and groups working with recovering alcoholics, the disease is more widely prevalent among silvers than one might imagine.

Mahendra Kanitkar, who works at Mukangan, a Pune-based NGO that works to rehabilitate alcoholics, says nearly 10 per cent of individuals admitted for alcoholism every week are over the age of 57. "When I was admitted in 1995, there were hardly any alcoholics over 50," he says. "Today, the numbers have increased drasti-

cally, with the age of seniors admitted ranging from 57 to 75."

However, there is hope. If this story touches a chord, directly or indirectly, remember there are countless silvers around the world who have recovered from alcoholism. They have healed, pulled their lives together and gone on to live sober and emotionally healthy lives. And it may not be as difficult as one may imagine.

Let's take a closer look at alcoholism from the personal and social point of view, for silvers in India. "As alcohol is available to everyone in a variety of forms, from cheap toddy and home-made brews to expensive brands of whiskey, the consumption cuts across classes and the urban-rural divide," points out Debojit Majumdar, executive director of Delhi-based Rama Rehab. A core team member of a rehab centre that works with addicts from the privileged class, he emphasises, "It doesn't matter who you are, what you do, where you are from; alcoholism can affect anybody." There's also no gender divide. There are both male and female alcoholics in India, as there are world over. In fact, with an increase in economic independence and changing gender roles, women prone to becoming alcoholics are just as likely to develop the disease as men are.

WHO IS AN ALCOHOLIC?

According to professionals who work with recovering alcoholics, alcoholism is a physical disease just like any other. There is a physiological predisposition towards alcohol consumption, which develops into a full-blown need when the individual frequently consumes the substance. As tolerance and frequency of consumption increase, the alcoholic is physiologically driven to drink and is powerless over the problem. "It is 100-per-cent physical because your body and your brain are addicted to the chemical," explains Kanitkar.

Alcoholism doesn't manifest itself overnight but gradually there comes a time when it starts affecting the individual's daily routine, eating through finances, and takes a toll on family and other close relationships. Eventually, drinking becomes



so enmeshed in the daily routine of alcoholics that their lives revolve around it. They will typically begin to experience withdrawal symptoms if they cannot drink. Unfortunately, owing to personal denial or fear of social censure or both, the problem becomes undeniable only when relationships and finances start crumbling and they fall into a self-destructive, downward spiral.

WHY DO SILVERS GET ADDICTED?

There are many silvers who, unaware of their predisposition towards alcohol, 'turn to the bottle' later in life. And before they know it, they are hooked. Kanitkar points out that many elders turn to alcohol for want of anything better to do. "Their children have flown the nest; they have a good pension coming in; they have no social activities—all they have is time and money."

Father Joe Pereira, founder of Kripa Foundation, Mumbai, corroborates this, saying he has encountered more senior alcoholics than he cares to count, who drink because they are lonely and bored. "After leading active lives in their younger days, a large number of silvers cannot deal with the sudden change in the pace of their lives when they retire," he observes. "I have seen heads of organisations and senior executives approaching 60, who within two years of retirement, turn into full-blown, dysfunctional alcoholics. They just lose their sense of meaning; there's nothing to live for. That affects people so badly that it is very difficult for them to spend time in loneliness without the bottle."

Isolation and feeling neglected by family, lack of physical strength to move about or even disabilities that cripple social interaction can nudge seniors towards alcohol abuse. Sometimes, patients of arthritis or other painful chronic conditions are likely to rely on alcohol and prescription drugs like painkillers to numb their pain. A feeling of powerlessness over one's life is another contributor. Often, the younger generation, owing to increased financial independence and responsibility, tends to take over the lives of the older generation, making silvers feel dependent on them, and leaving them with no sense of importance or dignity. This could also prompt silvers to fall into a cycle of self-destructive, alcoholic behaviour.



ARE YOU AN ADDICT?

YOU MIGHT BE AT RISK OF ALCOHOL ADDICTION AND ITS HARMFUL EFFECTS IF YOU ANSWER 'YES' TO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- Y Do you drink more than you intend to?
- Y Do you tolerate more alcohol now than when you started drinking?
- Y Do you set a limit on the number of drinks you will have but fail to stick to it?
- Y Do you feel guilty or ashamed about your drinking?
- Y Do you need a drink to relax or feel 'normal'?
- Y Do you spend a lot of time thinking about drinking or where your next drink will come from?
- Y Do you suffer from more fatigue and ill health than before you started drinking?
- Y Do you have more financial problems after you began drinking?
- Y Do you need a drink to fight back a hangover?
- Y Do you often have blackouts, not being able to recall what happened when you were drunk?
- Y Do you lie to others or try to hide your drinking habits?
- Y Does your family worry about your drinking habits?
- Y Do you try to avoid family, friends and other people when you drink?

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND OVERCOMING DENIAL

Professionals who work with alcoholics say the first and most important step towards recovery is admitting that one is an alcoholic—which is also most difficult for a senior alcoholic to do. Denial is the alcoholic's biggest stumbling block to recovery.

Then, there's enabling the alcoholic. Family and other people close to the alcoholic often fall into the trap of defending the alcoholic's actions. This is often motivated out of love and concern but can be very dangerous, as it develops into an 'enabler' attitude. It is also the family's way of denying the problem exists and it works in favour of the alcoholic.

For instance, when a wife cleans up her alcoholic husband's mess, she is not only tolerating his behaviour but enabling him to continue to behave that way. There are also cases

where the family refuses to acknowledge the problem owing to shame or guilt. Fear of hurting a loved one or fear of repatriation from them is also a major cause.

Alcoholism among silvers is compounded by the physical and psychological changes associated with ageing. Making detection complicated is the family's reluctance to admit, acknowledge or talk about it for fear of social censure. This often leads to the condition being swept under the carpet and ignored.

Doctors sometimes overlook the symptoms of alcoholism by mistaking them for symptoms of other diseases such as dementia or depression. The problem is hidden from plain sight as older alcoholics do not have to go out to work; they likely don't drive; and they may not have their own social circle. In an era of the nuclear family, it is possible that children or grandchildren who visit the elderly miss out on the symptoms during their brief encounters. Silvers themselves can add to the problem by denying that they are alcoholic and are less likely to seek professional help on their own.

ALCOHOLISM AND AGE-RELATED PROBLEMS

As you age, your body begins to wear out and slow down, and depending on whether or not you led a healthy life earlier, you are likely to develop chronic conditions precipitated by heavy drinking. In sum, alcoholism is an unwanted cause of illness. According to a WHO report, alcoholism is one of the top five risk factors for major diseases, disability and death around the world.

When one feels like a drink because of problems like insomnia, physical pain, grief, depression or fatigue, it only provides temporary relief. All too soon, the problems one tries to alleviate with drinking turn into larger problems as the impact of drinking on one's health is aggravated and can lead to serious, chronic conditions.

"It can affect every part of the body; it just depends what part of the body is not strong enough to withstand the alcohol intake," observes Dr Dean Creado of Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital. "So older people, especially, can get memory issues; it affects their balance, causes psychological issues like mood changes, and disturbs sleeping patterns and appetite." What's more, it interacts with medication, increasing risk for serious side-effects. "Alcohol can also reduce the effect of these medications by up to 50 per cent," he adds.

Indeed, alcoholism comes with a range of illnesses, such as ulcers, liver damage, lowered immunity and long-term brain damage. Studies show that nearly seven out of 10 cases of liver disease called cirrhosis are found in alcohol-dependent patients, and can only be treated if the individual stops drinking for at least three months to be eligible for a liver transplant.

Besides its obvious effects on the liver and stomach, excessive drinking can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, Parkinson's disease and delirium tremens. About 4-25 per cent of some cancers are attributable to excessive alcohol consumption. While some studies have found that drinking wine is beneficial in preventing cardiovascular disease, excessive drinking or binge drinking can negatively affect the heart. Further, alcohol erodes one's ability to function normally, increasing the risk of accidents, falls and fractures. As alcohol is broken down slower in ageing bodies because of slower metabolism, it remains in the blood longer, making one susceptible to falls long after a drinking episode.

Alcoholism can worsen pre-existing conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure, while also making it hard for doctors to detect and treat other illnesses. For instance, alcohol consumption can cause changes in the heart and blood vessels, which in turn dulls any pain that could po-

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), US, and the American Geriatrics Society suggest that for people above the age of 65, consuming two drinks (for men) and one drink (for women) in a single sitting is the recommended safe drinking limit. However, having more than seven alcoholic drinks a week or more than three alcoholic drinks on a single day is considered risky drinking. It's not just the number of drinks one should watch out for; even the size of the drink matters and the safe limit varies according to the kind of liquor consumed.

ONE DRINK IS IDEALLY:



One 12-ounce (about 355 ml) can or bottle of regular beer, ale, or wine cooler



One 8 or 9-ounce (about 235-265 ml) can or bottle of malt liquor



One 5-ounce (about 150 ml) glass of red or white wine



One 1.5-ounce (about 45 ml) shot glass of hard liquor (spirits) like gin or vodka

tentially lead to a heart attack. And during withdrawal, chances of stroke and seizures are always high, which is why most silvers undergoing de-addiction and detoxification treatment are admitted as in-patients in a hospital.

Mentally, too, alcohol can cause silvers to feel puzzled or forgetful, and these symptoms could be mistaken for Alzheimer's disease. It increases feelings of anxiety and depression and puts you in a vicious circle: you drink because you are lonely and depressed, and alcohol only increases that feeling. Most elderly alcoholics, according to one study, are diagnosed with alcoholism and depression together.

ROAD TO RECOVERY

Many recovering alcoholics will tell you that getting back on track is not as difficult as one might think and, as mentioned above, admitting one's alcoholism is the first—and biggest—step. After that, family intervention and support in combination with detoxification and rehabilitation can follow.

"An alcoholic needs his family to intervene," says Kanitkar. "If you know someone who is alcoholic, immediately approach a de-addiction centre. As the body is already conditioned to alcohol, don't blame the alcoholic. Instead, try and get them some help."

Today, there are many de-addiction centres all over India, most of which provide detoxification programmes, counselling and social initiatives. These range from long-term residential programmes that last from three to nine months to short-term, in-patient programmes that last a week or two. Treatment at hospitals or de-addiction centres under specialists is recommended for silvers who have one or more chronic conditions as well as alcoholism to deal with. Alternatively, there are out-patient programmes and support groups that have sessions almost daily. Sometimes, if the problem is detected early enough, there is no need for silvers to be admitted as in-patients.

De-addiction centres across India offer holistic treatment options, most of which may involve the following:

- A detox programme to flush out all the alcohol content in the blood
- Group therapy sessions such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or other initiatives to open up and talk about guilt and other problems, including yoga and meditation
- Individual counselling sessions to motivate, confront problems and build confidence and positivity
- AA's 12-step programme, which involves putting faith in a higher power and believing in the power to heal oneself (Visit www.aagsoindia.org/steps.htm)

- Family support and counselling, as alcoholism does not negatively affect just the addict but also family and friends

Family support also plays a key role in recovery. Hope Trust India, a NGO in Hyderabad, has family support services that include rehabilitation for family members of alcoholics, called the Adult Child of Alcoholics. Their aim is to repair the psychological damage done to the relationships between the alcoholic and his or her kin, ease feelings of guilt, shame and anger, and bring about love, care and concern.

Rahul Luther, executive director of Hope Trust, points out three main complex factors to deal with in alcoholic seniors. "They might have a host of other conditions along with alcoholism. Second, their drinking is so rigid because of their age and because they have been doing it for so long without any intervention, that it makes it quite difficult to unlearn the habit. Finally, they usually escape responsibility of recovery, thinking that they have no more obligations towards their families in their twilight years."

Meanwhile, Dr Creado says, "I think about 70 per cent of those who come to de-addiction centres are brought by their families, either because the older patient has fallen down owing to their drunkenness or because they have severe withdrawal symptoms. Educating the family about monitoring older alcoholics and taking care of lapses or relapses is as important as helping recovering addicts feel involved, keeping them more active and not allowing them to feel isolated."

For his part, Father Pereira says, "Elderly people actually have much more maturity and understanding than we give them credit for. While youngsters have great difficulty getting over the first step, which is admission, seniors are quite ready to acknowledge that they messed up. But, of course, there is a certain percentage of people who will never acknowledge it."

Last, but not least, there's **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)**, an organisation that has been helping alcoholics sober up across the world for over 79 years. AA meetings are held across cities and towns in India, and are replete with stories of recovery and hope. For family members of alcoholics, there's a sister organisation called Al-Anon; this support group also conducts meetings all over India. (Visit www.aagsoindia.org to find the AA centre closest to you.)

SOBERING UP

Indeed, intervention can turn lives around. We met Varun, a soft-spoken 72 year-old who has been sober for 28 years, at an AA meeting in Mumbai. He started drinking at a young age with friends. "I had a good job and alcohol gave me a boost to talk, dance, eat and even get a good



DOCTORSPEAK

Dr Dean Creado gives us a step-by-step process of the treatment procedures for alcoholics at de-addiction centres:

With any de-addiction, the patient goes through a cycle. It starts with pre-contemplation, which is where you think there's no problem with you until something drastic happens.

The next step is contemplation. Here you are faced by a team of doctors telling you that your alcoholism is causing problems with your memory, your balance, your liver, stomach, kidney, etc. You begin to think that there might be a problem.

Once it is out in the open that you are drinking, we get you to understand that the quantity you are drinking is dangerous. For that we use a technique called motivational interview. Here we try to show you the pros and cons, tell you about the health benefits of alcohol—which are very few—and then the health risks, which are many. Then we try to motivate you to take the first step to try to manage your lifestyle without alcohol, and figure out what obstacles or difficulties you face when you do that.

After contemplation is action, when you're sufficiently convinced and decide to do something about it. In the action phase, you go through detox, which lasts up to a week

or 10 days, depending upon the quantity of alcohol being consumed every day. This can be done in the hospital or at home, but it's important to have one family member aware of the treatment.

Some patients experience withdrawal symptoms, which is easily managed with medications. The withdrawal starts within 72 hours of the last drink; it peaks with four to five days, and wears off in seven to 10 days.

After detox, there's a period of maintenance. This includes keeping you stable and preventing relapse.

30 per cent of patients use alcohol to medicate themselves when they are suffering from loneliness, depression or anxiety. So if that's the situation, treating that anxiety or depression is priority; also making the family aware that they need to include older people in their lives more

often to reduce loneliness is important.

When you have an occasional drink, it is called a lapse. It is very important to remember that lapses do happen. And when they do, you must let your doctor or family know you've had a drink because of such and such reason; we then work towards closing that gap or try to prevent that from happening again. When lapses happen more frequently because they're hidden or not treated, it leads to a relapse. This takes you back to the first step of the cycle of de-addiction.

Evidence has shown that patients normally need to go through six to seven cycles till they finally become free from the addiction.

—Dr Dean Creado, consultant (psychiatry) at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai, deals with de-addiction, geriatrics and neuropsychiatry

DE-ADDICTION CENTRES AND NGOS

Alcoholics Anonymous, Mumbai HO:
(022) 2307 5134

Kripa Foundation, Mumbai:
(022) 2640 5411

Muktangan, Pune: (020) 6401 4598

Hope Trust India, Hyderabad:

(0) 90007 20003

Freedom Foundation, Bengaluru:

(080) 2544 0134

Asha Bhawan, Delhi: (011) 2618 6482

Serene Life Hospital, Chennai:

(044) 6455 4145

night's sleep," he recalls. "But one day, I missed the mark of 'safe drinking.' I don't know when or how I crossed that line." The downward spiral began—devastating hangovers that caused him to miss work, arguments at home, lies and crumbling relationships. When, finally, he lost his job, he was drinking at any time of the day, sometimes even starting at 4:30 am. "Before that, I used to laugh at people who would drink during the day but I too fell into that

habit," he confesses. There came a time when Varun's body trembled so much he couldn't stand without a drink to 'steady' himself, times he would not bathe for three or four days. "Alcohol had trapped me so badly that I did not care about anything."

Then, one day, his wife took him to an AA meeting, his first ever. "When I was introduced to AA, I used to think



the meetings were like 'lectures.' But then my life came undone right in front of my eyes. I was admitted to hospital three times for stomach and liver damage and my wife tried to put me into rehabilitation centres many times and even tried to find spiritual and religious solutions." When nothing worked, he gave AA another chance. "There was one single line that cut straight to my heart. They say, 'If you cannot change your suffering, your suffering will change you.' It got me thinking. I started asking myself, 'What were you before, what are you doing to yourself now?' That is the day I surrendered myself. When I went back for the next meeting, I was welcomed and given courage."

AA's 12-step programme is a simple but powerful self-healing approach that works once an alcoholic accepts the existence of a problem. The programme gives the addict a chance to realise that there can be life without alcohol, and focus on creating a new lifestyle devoid of alcohol or the need to drink. While opening up to a group of strangers about one's drinking, guilt and other problems may seem simplistic, it can be a powerful healing force central to the recovery process. There is no advice given, no social or personal censure and no pressure to say or do anything. Recovery is entirely self-driven and the catharsis, introspection that follows and silent 'group therapy' are the only actual tools the programme uses.

However, Sharma, a 67 year-old recovering alcoholic at the Mumbai AA meeting we attended, points out that the psychological and family problems of the alcoholic must be addressed simultaneously. "I have been attending meetings for 27 years and I see myself in each new person who comes here. I know that if I pick up the glass again, I will slide right back to where the newcomer is."

STAYING SOBER

For Varun, the programme has worked wonderfully. Today, he may not have the perfect life—15 months after he stopped drinking, his wife left him. Yet, he holds no grudges. "I truly believe that an idle mind is a devil's workshop and set about keeping myself busy," he says, adding that a sense of responsibility was missing in his life. So he vowed to help out his friend's daughters who were suffering be-

cause of their father's alcoholism. Today, the girls have good jobs abroad and are married, thanks in no small part to him. "Although I live alone, I live happily. I have respect in society and my family does enquire about me."

Indeed, leading an active life and involving oneself in social activities can keep an individual away from the pattern that

IDENTIFYING ALCOHOLISM

The indicators of alcoholism can be visible or hidden, physiological and psychological. Being a progressive disease, it starts with alcohol abuse. Detecting abuse early can prevent one from turning into an alcoholic. Watch out for the following red flags:

- Neglecting work or household responsibilities because of a hangover
- Resorting to alcohol use in situations where it is illegal or potentially life-threatening, such as drunk driving or mixing alcohol with prescription medication against doctor's orders
- Inability to stop in spite of knowing your drinking is causing problems, such as when your family is upset, or defending your actions when they bring up the issue
- Not being able to de-stress and unwind without having a drink

The problem can turn into full-blown alcoholism, which involves physical dependence on alcohol to get through the day. Sure-shot signs of alcohol dependence include increased tolerance and withdrawal symptoms:

- Increased tolerance: Regular and heavy alcohol use can raise tolerance, and soon the alcoholic needs large amounts of alcohol to get a buzz. This not only erodes the individual's health but inevitably traps him or her in an alcoholic pattern, as the body begins to experience withdrawal symptoms.
- Withdrawal: By this point, it is difficult to stay away from alcohol, as the individual is physiologically hooked. Every time the alcohol level in the blood drops, the individual begins to feel the uncomfortable effects of withdrawal, such as anxiety, trembling, depression, irritability, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, sweating and insomnia.

These major indicators are accompanied by the following signs:

- Loss of control over the number of drinks in one sitting
- Resolving to quit but being unable to
- Loss of interest in hobbies, exercise and social activities that do not involve drinking
- Spending a lot of time thinking about drinking or getting over hangovers
- Being aware of the problems in relationships and finances that alcoholism is causing but continuing nevertheless

MYTHS ABOUT ALCOHOLISM

1. I can stop drinking whenever I want.

This is only an excuse used by the alcoholic to continue drinking. By telling oneself—and others—that one can stop any time, one feels in control of one's drinking. This is only an illusion. Most likely, one would not be able to stop in spite of evidence of the damage it is causing to one's life.

2. My addiction affects and hurts only me, so others don't need to be involved.

Often, an addict's self-destructive behaviour is also a cause for alcoholism. It affects not just the addict but their family and people they are close to. The ultimate decision to stop drinking might be theirs, but it is essential that family or loved ones get involved in trying to convince the addict to quit.

3. Drinking wine or beer doesn't make me an alcoholic.

It does not matter what kind of alcohol is consumed, how much of it or during what time of day. One is an alcoholic if the effects of drinking cause problems to one's health or relationships.

4. It's just alcohol, not drugs. It can't be all that bad.

Alcoholism can be just as damaging as drugs, as both types of substances cause significant changes in the way the body and brain function. Long term use can affect one's health. What's more, the withdrawal symptoms of alcohol are similar to that of drug abuse.

5. My father/mother/spouse has a lot of psychological and emotional problems, and alcohol is a way to relieve that stress.

This is a common enabler attitude that takes on the role of a sympathiser. But one often forgets that everyone—alcoholic or not—has problems in their lives, and alcohol is not the solution. In fact, alcoholism only aggravates those problems as one loses the ability to think clearly and rationally, and messes up one's emotions too.



6. Alcohol brings out a person's true personality.

This belief causes society and family to alienate or ignore the addict as being a 'bad person'. Alcohol causes changes in the psychological and emotional functionality of the brain, disabling reasonable thinking, leading the alcoholic to make bad decisions or behave inappropriately. Being sober reveals the alcoholic's true personality; not the other way around! Acknowledging this can inspire confidence and help the addict realise that he/she needs to quit.

7. I can't help it if my alcoholic father/mother/spouse does not want to be helped.

Alcoholics are not in the right frame of mind to think rationally about the ill-effects of their addiction. While some can be motivated into treatment using counselling and a pep talk, others need to be forced into treatment, and will get self-motivated only during treatment, when they break out of the cycle.

8. As a recovered alcoholic, I can get back to drinking moderately without causing any problems.

Unfortunately, it is possible that recovered alcoholics can relapse if they have one or more drinks, no matter how little they have. It can be easy to fall back into the cycle that caused them to become addicts even with just one drink.

9. Alcoholics lack will power.

This is justified by adding that if they did have any will power, they would be able to stop drinking. In fact, most alcoholics have immense will power, which helps them *stay* addicted—when their minds are consumed by thoughts of when they will get to have their next drink and the lengths they would go to get it.

10. Alcoholics can never lead productive, fulfilling lives because they can never quit.

It is essential to have faith in treatment and social efforts such as Alcoholics Anonymous. Success stories are aplenty; most silvers have gone on to be active participants in society and give back to society as recovered alcoholics.

led to the addiction in the first place. If boredom and loneliness were reasons to turn to the bottle, it is essential to spend time outside the home, interacting with people and doing things one loves.

Building awareness is another empowering activity. "If you receive the message of staying away from this deadly chemical, you can only maintain your sobriety by spreading the message," reasons Father Pereira. "Once you get well, you offer your well-being to others who are suffering."

To this Kanitkar adds, "Many NGOs require the expertise of senior citizens, as administrators and more. The best solution to keep away from alcohol is social service." He tells the story of V Kelkar, a 63 year-old, who retired from Tata Motors and is a table tennis coach. Kelkar was admitted to Mukangan after severe bouts of alcoholic drinking but managed to recover from his addiction. With a lot of time on his hands and his children married, he decided to stay on as a counsellor and help other addicts—now, he is deputy manager of a new rehabilitation centre. ✨

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

SAND, SURF AND SERENITY

A beach lover's paradise, Manapad boasts of shimmering turquoise waters and aqua sports, as well as an interesting Christian history

❖ 📷 Susheela Nair





A walk to the promontory in the early hours of the morning was refreshing. As I looked down from the elevation, I could see the shimmering turquoise sea under the orange rays of the sun. One does not need to go to Kanyakumari to witness a dramatic sunrise; Manapad at sunrise and sunset is a veritable visual treat. I peered into the distance to see fishermen returning in their catamarans with their night's catch,

while some were going out into the sea in their little canoes, and hurling their nets just as the waters began to glisten in the morning light. Some of the fishing boats were moored amid tiny islets. Women trudged along the beach to carry drinking water from a well dug up on the beach. The steeples and spires of a multitude of churches amid the brick-red roofs of the white-washed houses was a sight to behold. No wonder, this is referred to as '*chinnna*' (small) Jerusalem.



EXPLORING THE TINY HAMLET IS INDEED A DELIGHT WITH ITS CLUSTER OF HOUSES WEDGED BETWEEN THE MAIN ROAD AND SEAFRONT. THE BEST WAY TO ENJOY ONE'S STAY AT MANAPAD IS TO ALLOW ITS TRANQUIL ENVIRONS TO SET THE PACE

Though not as flamboyant as Kovalam, I was astounded by the unique ambience, quietude and peace of Manapad, a tiny fishing hamlet, 58 km south of Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu. I could see miles of spectacular windswept stretches of sand, made even more beautiful by the fact that there's no one around except for the local fisher-folk. The view of the blue lagoon from the top is mesmerising. There's no trace of the crowd that throngs the beaches of Goa and vendors peddling souvenirs to tourists. The sacred churches and blessed waters lend a sublime aura to Manapad. There are stories too about miracles associated with the place. The waves unravel the story of Manapad's origin.

Before its brush with Christianity, Manapad was inhabited by the Paravas, a maritime community that indulged in pearl diving and fishing. It is believed that in 1540, a

Portuguese ship while sailing around the Cape of Good Hope was caught in a horrendous storm, which led to the splitting of its sails and snapping of its hind mast, leaving it on the verge of sinking. The captain vowed to construct a cross from a portion of the splintered mast if everybody aboard escaped alive, and have it installed wherever they alighted safely. After drifting for several days, the ship washed up on the shores of Manapad. The captain had a cross planted atop a hillock, redolent of the last journey of Christ on Mount Calvary. Locals claim that victims of cobra bite and leprosy have been miraculously cured after touching the cross, which still stands tall on an elevated platform atop the hillock.

Besides this cross, Manapad's Christian antecedents go back to its association with St Francis Xavier, the mis-





Clockwise from top left: Steeples and spires dot the Manapad landscape; the monumental Holy Ghost Church; the majestic St James Church; Holy Cross Church—home to the relic of the True Cross of Jerusalem; (opposite page) quietude and peace at the blue lagoons

sionary whose embalmed body is now in Goa's Basilica of Bom Jesus. The story goes that the saint came to Manapad in 1542 and lived in a dugout sandstone cavern on the seaward face of a cliff. Then it was known as Valli's (Lord Murugan's consort) cave as she is believed to have hidden in it while Lord Murugan chased her in disguise. St Francis initiated missionary activity on the coast, preaching the gospel to the fisher-folk, supposedly from this cave, roughly 10 ft from the sea. At the entrance of the cave is a stone tablet with an inscription that says, "This dwelling of a Saivite *sanyasi* has been sanctified by the prayers and penance of a lonely hermit, St Francis Xavier, who had a thirst for austerity and renunciation." Locals claim that the water in the well inside the cave has healing properties. Most of the caves that extend along these shores all the way to Tiruchendur, a neighbouring town with a prominent Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva's son Murugan, similarly boast of such miraculous waters.

With the completion of the Church of the Holy Cross in 1581 in honour of St Francis, the parish priest appealed to have a relic of the True Cross of Jerusalem on which Je-

sus Christ is supposed to have been crucified brought to Manapad. The relic arrived from Rome in 1583. Tourists come here in droves annually from 1 September to 14 September, when the relic is publicly displayed.

Our church-hopping spree also took us to the St James Church, known as *periakovil* (big church). The main altar here is made of teak. Equally fascinating is the Holy Ghost church, situated bang opposite St James Church. Though as huge and grand as St James's Church, it is for some strange reason called *chinnakovil* (small church). An engraving of *The Last Supper* in marble chips and the marble altar at the church grabbed our attention.

Villa De Joseph, the heritage homestay where we stayed, run by Chennai-based Arun Miranda, an enterprising entrepreneur in the steel industry, and his wife, Francina, who hail from Manapad, is an early 19th century mansion painstakingly restored with modern amenities. Its unique architecture channels a Portuguese castle. "I had not visited my ancestral town till my marriage in 1995," reminisces Francina. "When we visited it on the insistence of

MANAPAD IS BEING PROMOTED AS A KITE SURFING AND OCEAN KAYAKING DESTINATION AS IT HAS THE RARE DISTINCTION OF WITNESSING THE BEST WAVE FORMATION ALL THROUGH THE YEAR. THE HIGH WIND SPEEDS HERE CAN SEND ANY SURFING ENTHUSIAST INTO RAPTURES



Villa De Joseph, the heritage homestay

our parents, we were enamoured by its charm and started visiting it frequently. In 2007, we bought an ancient property and restored it to let it out as a bed and breakfast for tourists." The couple believe in community empowerment. "All staff members are from the local community; we have given them an alternative to fishing, which was earlier the sole source of income here," she adds. The homestay features great food with a fair mix of South Indian, Sri Lankan and Continental cuisine. Fresh catch from the sea is usually part of the day's lunch and dinner. We especially loved their melt-in-the-mouth *appam* and tangy *rasam*. The resort organises heritage walks around the hamlet for those who stay with them. This includes visits to churches and beaches. "The entire village exudes a feel of ancient European villages and you can find many huge mansions built according to European designs," says Arun.

Exploring the tiny hamlet is indeed a delight with its cluster of houses wedged between the main road and seafront. The best way to enjoy one's stay at Manapad is to allow its tranquil environs to set the pace. A walk down 'Solitary Beach' and 'Wanderers Trail' taking you through kilometres of unspoilt, uninhabited beaches can be very relaxing. As we ambled around, we noticed that many of the cottages here are reminiscent of Chettinad opulence with embellishments of marble and Burma teak and wide inner

factfile

BEST TIME TO VISIT

October to March

GETTING THERE

Manapad is 18km from Tiruchendur, 72 km from Tirunelveli and 58 km from Tuticorin (Thoothukudi).

By air: The nearest domestic airport is Tuticorin and international airport is Thiruvananthapuram, 166 km from Tiruchendur.

By rail and road: Tiruchendur, which is very close to Manapad, is well connected by train and bus services to Chennai, Madurai and Thiruvananthapuram.

ACTIVITIES

Adventure seekers can indulge in water sports like kite boarding, wind surfing and stand-up paddling while history buffs can go on a heritage trail and church-hopping.

WHERE TO STAY

You can stay at Tiruchendur, or Tuticorin where a wide range of hotels are available. GRT Regency (0461- 2340 777), a boutique hotel, is the best option in Tuticorin. At Manapad, you can stay at Villa de Joseph, a six-room heritage homestay (91-4639 226353, 098403 47523). As it's the only accommodation available at Manapad, it's advisable to book well in advance. For more details on Manapad, go to www.manapad.in

courtyards and spacious rooms. Their distinctive features can be attributed to the fact that many of the locals used to work in Sri Lanka and, on their return, built palatial mansions with a well laid out garden in front.

On the last day of our stay at Manapad, we went on a tour of the Palm Leaf Weavers Cooperative Society. The fisher-



A local goes surfing in the clear waters of Bay of Bengal

women in this coastal village create crafts using dried palm leaves. They make baskets, boxes, mats, trays, purses, hats, handheld fans, toys and many craft items sold through this cooperative society to major metros and for export.

Manapad is also being promoted as a surfing, kite surfing and ocean kayaking destination. It has the rare distinction of witnessing the best wave formation all through the year, thanks to its unique point break and coastline formed by multiple layers of lava accumulated over a vast period of time. The high wind speeds here can send any surfing enthusiast into raptures. “Even international surfers have vouched that that these waters are most conducive for wind surfing, kite surfing and ocean kayaking. The world’s best surfing guide *Magicseaweed.com* lists Manapad as one of the best surfing sites globally,” says Arun Miranda, one

of the promoters of the aqua sport project. With a view to promoting the beach as a water sports hub, he is renting out water sports equipment. “The Surfing Federation of India recognises Manapad as a premier surfing destination in India and is helping promote the cause,” he adds. “As a social entrepreneurship initiative, local village lads are trained in these aqua sports so they can train other water sports enthusiasts. This also provides alternate employment opportunities to the local community.”

The picturesque beach that it is, Manapad has also attracted many film crews over the years. While a major portion of Mani Ratnam’s *Kadal* (Sea) was shot here, Tamil blockbuster *Singam* and Shoojit Sircar’s *Madras Café* were also filmed on this picture-perfect beach—truly the place to head to if sand, surf and solitude are on top of your list. ✨

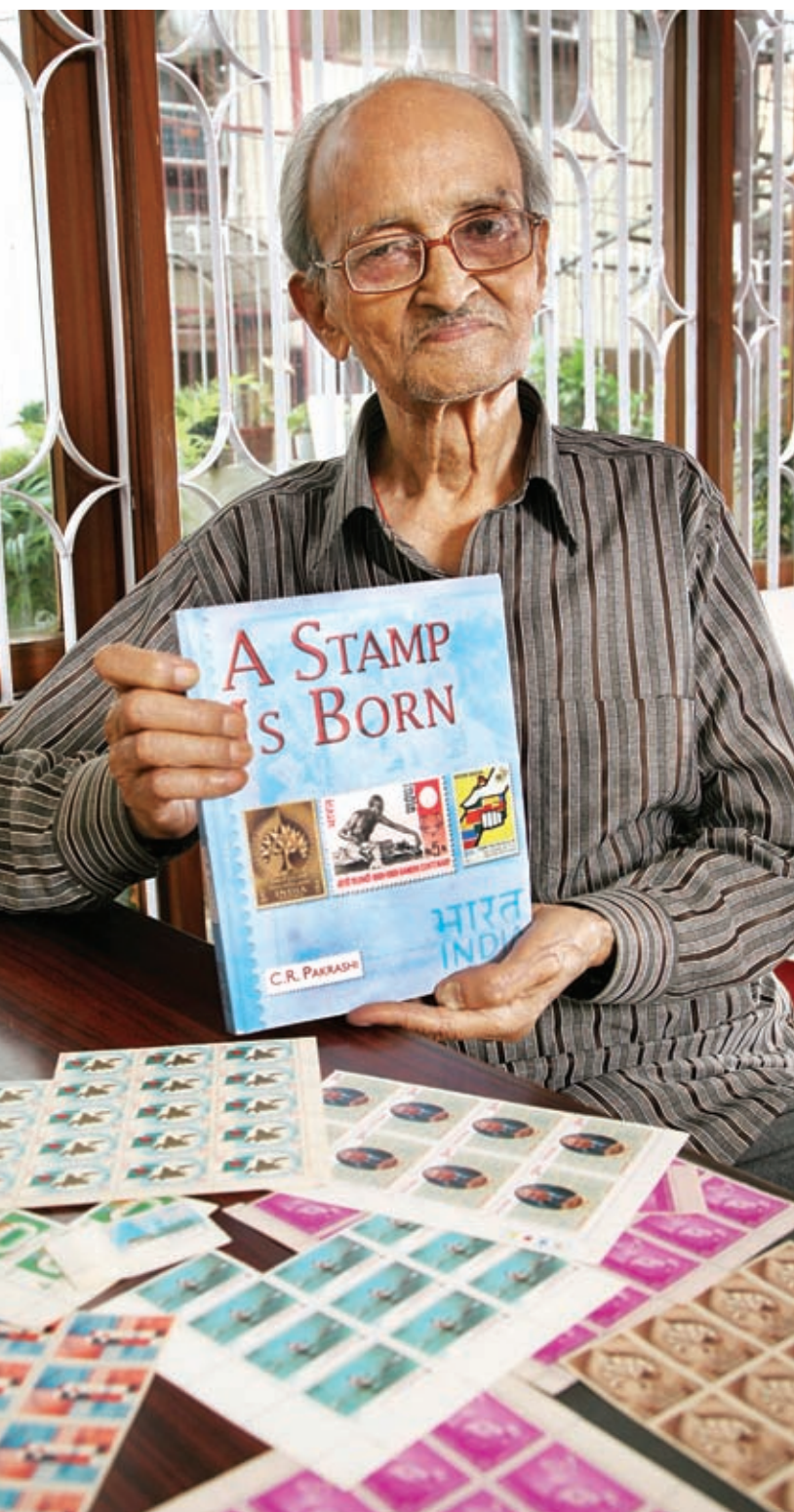
Experience

A second childhood

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celebrate age



History, on a thumbnail

In today's digital age of ubiquitous instant messaging, who knew a humble postage stamp would make it to the pages of a mighty book? Certainly not C R Pakrashi, a 94 year-old stamp designer who launched his labour of love, *A Stamp is Born* (Niyogi Books; 216 pages; ₹ 695), recently. Perhaps the country's first authoritative book on stamp design, it took 15 years for the Delhi-based stamp designer to publish it. Juxtaposed against the history of stamp making, it traces Pakrashi's journey and tells the unique stories of the 56 commemorative stamps he designed.

The journey began in 1955 for this graduate from the Government School of Arts and Craft, Calcutta. "I saw an advertisement inviting designs of postage stamps to commemorate the 2,500th birth anniversary of Lord Buddha," he shares. "I was working as a commercial artist for the Government of India and had no idea about the prerequisites." Instructed that the design had to be symbolic, he spent a

lot of time on research. The result: a sepia-tinted Bodhi tree on a full moon night! The two-anna stamp won him an award of ₹ 1,000. It was another decade before he designed his next stamp, commemorating the birth anniversary of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. "Each stamp has a message and precision is the key." The idea for the book was born in 1999 when he held an exhibition of his stamps at the Indian Museum in Kolkata. "Though the person who had promised to publish the book passed away, I completed the manuscript and kept looking for publishers," he reminisces.

His last stamps—of Ustad Bismillah Khan and Shirdi Sai Baba—were designed in 2008. But he continues to paint today and an exhibition is on the anvil. Another ambitious venture is a book on the Bengalis of Delhi. A Bengali who moved to Delhi in 1945, he considers Delhi his home. "It was tough finding out who was the first Bengali to settle in Delhi way back in 1837," he says with a smile. Here's what determination looks like!

—Ambica Gulati

Himanshu Kumar



Chennai Pix

Stage supremo

Vinita Nayar meets veteran theatre actor 'Kathadi' Ramamurthy who has been breathing his craft for 60 years

He has enthralled audiences for six decades with his sharp wit and comical demeanour. Today, at 75, 'Kathadi' Ramamurthy's ability to transform into the character he plays is still intact. He has acted in over 6,000 plays and won several prestigious awards during his long and successful career, with his plays *Dowri Kalyanam* and *Honeymoon Couple* having been staged 350 times.

Charming and affable, Ramamurthy instantly draws you into his world. "I forayed into theatre as a young lad from Kumbakonam when I came to the big city of Madras to pursue my college education," he recalls. "While

THEATRE

studying at Vivekananda College, which stood out in dramatics, my interest in theatre was sparked." The college would put up a Tamil play every year and Ramamurthy's first break came when, as a 15 year-old, he acted in *Gomathiya Kathalan* as the villain's assistant, Pakiri. "After passing out of college in 1958, I along with my friends Jaishankar, Ambi, Narayanaswamy, A N Radhakrishnan and P N Kumar started a drama troupe as a pastime. It was indeed a golden era for amateur drama. Ours was an all-men troupe as that was a time when women were still behind the veil." The troupe was named after their college: Viveka Fine Arts Club.

During this period, renowned playwright-comedian-editor Cho Ramaswamy joined the team and wrote a play, *If I Get It*, which took the comedy genre of theatre by storm. "Situation comedy—popularly called sitcoms today—was unheard of then. The play became so popular that we used to stage 20 to 25 shows a month." The play earned Ramamurthy the famous moniker 'Kathadi' (kite in Tamil) as he essayed the role of a cartoonist by that name. "In fact, I felt bad when people started calling me 'Kathadi'. But I let it continue on the insistence of the famous dramatist Sambu Nataraja Iyer; he suggested I keep it as it would give me exclusive recognition."

In 1965, he launched his theatre company, Stage Creations; many renowned writers penned plays for it. The company is now going strong with 49 productions to its credit. Apart from stage acts, Ramamurthy has also acted in several Tamil movies. "Films gave me familiarity and recognition, which indirectly helped me popularise my plays in smaller towns and cities. Owing to my passion for the stage, I took up small roles in movies without interrupting my official duties [he was a branch manager in an MNC]." In 1982, he played the lead role of Raghupathy in comedy playwright Crazy Mohan's *Ayya Amma Ammamma* on Doordarshan, where he essayed the role of a beleaguered husband caught between the demands of his mother and wife, who—unlike stereotypes—are fond of each other. His inimitable style of dialogue delivery and unique mannerism that sent audiences into peals of laughter made the comedy hugely popular and Ramamurthy a household name.

He believes his love for theatre was inspired by his father Sundaresan, who was an amateur artist in his native Kumbakonam. "I used to go and see all his plays," he reminisces. "In



Ramamurthy (right) with playwright Cho Ramaswamy in a drama

those days, when they changed the scenes, they needed time and actors used to fill the gap by breaking into spontaneous conversations, including current affairs." Watching this sparked an interest in the young Ramamurthy.

Though Ramamurthy has played character roles, comedy has been his forte. Ask him why and his reply is to the point. "Because it suits me and my audience likes to see me in comedy roles." Speaking of the challenges of performing in theatre vis-à-vis movies, he elaborates, "Each play is an experience for a stage artist. If you make a mistake, it cannot be rectified until

the next show. The most important thing is to have the presence of mind to overcome difficulties."

As his wife Meena, who shares her husband's hospitable streak, bustles in and out of the kitchen, he says, "She is one of my best critics." The couple has two daughters, both married and settled in the US. Today, on average, he acts in four to six shows every month, a sea change from the 30-plus shows he used to do earlier. He explains, "Earlier, performing arts such as drama and music were the only source of entertainment. These days, we stage plays only on weekends." He is currently working on several award-winning plays including *Neenga Yaar Pakkam*, *Pillayar Pidikka* and *Appa Appappa*. He shoots for serials at least 10 to 15 days a month; he can be seen in *Bommallattam* on Sun TV and *Vazhve Daayam* on Podhigai.

Ramamurthy has just one wish: "More actors need to come forward to act on stage. In fact, most actors from the television industry haven't even experienced theatre." And what's the secret to his youthfulness? "The pleasure I derive from my audience's applause keeps me young and going!"

FLEETING MOMENTS

SMALL, SEEMINGLY INSIGNIFICANT MOMENTS IN OUR LIVES SOMETIMES TURN OUT TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT. 95 MANI VILLA, A VISUAL TRIBUTE TO A GRANDFATHER, DHANJI ANKLESARIA, FROM HIS GRANDSON-PHOTOGRAPHER, ZISHAAN AKBAR LATIF, 25, WAS RECENTLY SHOWCASED IN MUMBAI. "THESE FLEETING MOMENTS WERE CAPTURED IN THE LAST THREE YEARS OF MY NANA'S LIFE, AND GAVE ME AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROBE AND UNDERSTAND HIS LARGER-THAN-LIFE PERSONALITY IN THE FAMILY," SAYS LATIF. THROUGH HIS BLACK-AND-WHITE IMAGES, LATIF CREATES AN INTIMATE SPACE FOR VIEWERS, FLOODING THEIR SENSES WITH NOSTALGIA, HAPPINESS AND EMPATHY. "95 MANI VILLA HOPES TO INVOKE CURIOSITY AND LET PEOPLE SEE THAT PHOTOGRAPHY CAN BE VERY PERSONAL." THE SHOW WAS CURATED BY AMIT MEHRA. IN FACT, THIS PICTORIAL ESSAY WAS AWARDED A NATIONAL AWARD IN 2012 BY THE PRESS COUNCIL OF INDIA UNDER THE TITLE *SOLITARY SPLENDOUR*.



Seeking the child within



Himanshu Kumar

For years, she has been inspiring creativity in kids and awakening the child within us. Winner of this year's Padma Shri for her contribution to children's literature, **Manorama Jafa** has over 100 books to her credit. A prolific writer in Hindi and English, Jafa has also written 11 novels in Hindi for adults; her first one, *Devika*, was conferred the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2006. Finding a large vacuum in children's literature in India, along with the cognisance that we were lagging behind when it came to making reading fun, in 1997, she founded Khaas Kitaab Foundation, a non-profit voluntary organisation dedicated to publishing special books for children. Winner of several national and international awards, she is secretary general of the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC) since 1981 and the Indian National Section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) since 1990. She was chosen as the 'Living Treasure of Children's Literature' at the Nambook Festival (2011) in the Republic of Korea and nominated among 2,000 outstanding scholars of the 20th century at the International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, England, in 1999. Today, the Delhi resident still drives herself to work and continues to spin innovative twists to her tales. In a conversation with **Ambica Gulati**, the dynamic au-

thor reveals what keeps her penning inspiring stories for children. Excerpts:

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Which was the step that started it all?

Armed with my master's in geography, I wanted to explore teaching. But my husband, V S Jafa, a bureaucrat, was based in Patna in 1961-62 and I was busy looking after our children Aseem and Navina. During this time, we met an acquaintance [late] Mr Jha from my Allahabad University days. He owned a weekly newspaper, *Indian Nation*, and the features writer had just quit. He needed someone to give him children's stories for a page and my husband told him that I would do it, even without my consent! I had never written anything, much less children's stories. But as my husband had committed, I wrote a story and submitted artwork to go along with it. It was published and I was paid ₹ 10, a handsome amount for the time. It then became a regular feature.

Which was your first published book?

When my husband was posted in Assam and Meghalaya, I would send my stories to *The Times of India*. Based on

LITERATURE

these articles, I was inspired to write a book. The quality and popularity of children's books in India have not been very good. While educational books are easily available, we do not find many pleasure books in India. In this scenario, I approached eminent writer and cartoonist [late] K Shankar Pillai, founder of the Children's Book Trust (CBT), in 1957 to bring out my first picture book, *Lambu aur Motoo*.

How do other nations fare when it comes to producing children's books?

In countries such as the US and the UK, books are published for different age groups. Publishers are more aware of the likes and dislikes of young readers. At IBBY, we hold regular conferences at an international scale to integrate innovative practices and inspire love for reading. In fact, after 26/11, we launched the Book Therapy Project to promote use of books to help children overcome trauma. In 1998, Empress Michiko of Japan delivered the keynote address at the IBBY's Congress in New Delhi. She has constantly kept up her interest in children's literature and has worked tremendously to promote it.

How do you bring out the child within you?

Though everything around me acts as inspiration, the most important factor is going back to your childhood and reliving all that you liked—the people, the things, the emotions you experienced. Recently, I visited a school in Ladakh where children had planted trees to encourage rainfall in the dry land; I evolved a story around this inspiring incident. Then there is another story, *Mithai Chor*, about an elephant who loves sweets and goes around stealing!

Please tell us about the activities at AWIC.

With Pillai's initiative, AWIC was formed as a voluntary organisation to publish children's stories and hold workshops for aspiring authors and illustrators. The famous *Kaziranga Tales* also came through these workshops. We also bring out special books for differently abled children. AWIC's literacy project has prepared books in eight Indian languages. Books have been distributed among poor and needy children across India.

What does Khaas Kitab Foundation endeavour to do?

Noticing the lack of well-produced books in India that are fun and educative, my husband encouraged me start the Foundation. It works to promote the ideas of peace, non-violence and universal values through stories. We have published popular books such as *Magic Pencils*, *Great Tales from India* and *Hoppy and Jumpy*, and some tactile books for children with disabilities. Children love illustrations; I personally work with the illustrators and keep innovating.



Sooni Taraporevala

A MUSICAL JOURNEY

At 90, he could have easily continued to enjoy foot-tapping Latin American music and the charming waltzes of Johann Strauss. But with "a missionary-like zeal" to ignite a similar interest in readers of all ages, Homi

Dastoor has brought out his book, *Musical Journeys: A Personal Introduction to Western Classical Composers* (Foreword by Zubin Mehta; 49/50 Books; ₹ 1,000; 192 pages). "I grew up enjoying popular Western melodies ranging from Hollywood musicals to the Big Bands of the 1930s and 1940s. The turning point came when I was 18 and saw the film *They Shall Have Music*, featuring Jascha Heifetz, the world's greatest violinist. For days thereafter, the music kept haunting me," he recalls. Thus began his hunger to know all about Western classical music. "I pored over books such as *Lives of the Great Composers*, making copious notes from these books to become a self-taught aficionado of this beautiful genre." As his music appreciation became an all-consuming passion, he started attending recitals and buying vinyl discs. At 75, he decided to learn the violin, strongly feeling that his fingers needed to wrap themselves around an instrument. "Two years ago, I accepted my children's suggestion to share my encounters with western classical music in a book," he says. "Owing to my age, the challenge was tremendous. A large part of it was undertaken by my daughter Meher Marfatia, a writer and independent publisher, who transformed my handwritten manuscript into a beautiful book." Does he enjoy listening to Indian classical with the same zest? "There is really no mystique about any classical music," he responds. "All it asks of you is one thing: your time."

—Sai Prabha Kamath



TO A tea

TEA MAY HAVE ORIGINATED IN CHINA, BUT THE REPERTOIRE OF TEAS OFFERED BY INDIA IS, PERHAPS, LIKE NONE OTHER IN THE WORLD. THE GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD AND CLIMATIC VARIATIONS OF THE LAND IMPART DISTINCT CHARACTERISTICS TO THE DIFFERENT VARIETIES OF TEA GROWN IN EACH REGION, WHETHER IT IS ASSAM, DARJEELING, THE NILGIRIS, KANGRA VALLEY AND DOOARS. **REKHA SARIN** AND **RAJAN KAPOOR** GO ON A TEA TRAIL, TAKING US ALONG ON A PICTORIAL JOURNEY THROUGH TIME INTO THE HEARTLANDS OF INDIA'S FINEST TEA GARDENS. THEIR BOOK, **CHAI: THE EXPERIENCE OF INDIAN TEA** (NIYOGI BOOKS; ₹ 1,995, 302 PAGES), REVEALS WHAT MAKES THE BREW, KNOWN FOR ITS HEALTH BENEFITS, AN EXPERIENCE TO BE ENJOYED AND CHERISHED



A Kashmiri warms up with *noon* chai, a traditional beverage that uses salt instead of sugar in tea, and has slivers of pistachios and almonds for added flavour

NOON CHAI

Ingredients (For 2 cups)

Pure green tea leaves: 2 tsp
Green cardamom pods: 2-3; seeds removed and crushed
Sea salt: ½ tsp
Bicarbonate of soda: 1/4 tsp
Milk: 1 ½ cups
Water: 1 ½ cups
Almonds: 1 tsp; ground

Pistachios: 1 tsp; ground
Poppy seeds: 1 tsp

Method

Pour ½ cup water in a medium saucepan and sprinkle tea into it. Bring it to a boil over moderate heat. Stir in a dash of bicarbonate of soda until it mixes well. Beat the mixture briskly for 10 seconds and pour in the remaining water. Sprinkle the crushed

cardamom seeds into it and bring the mixture back to a boil. Continue to boil the tea until it turns a vibrant shade of red and bring it down to a simmer over moderately low heat. Beat in the milk vigorously until well combined and the tea turns slightly frothy while it appears dark pink in colour. Stir in a dash of salt and strain it into a couple of cups. Sprinkle the ground nuts as well as poppy seeds on top of each cup to garnish. Serve hot.

CHEERS



Bold and colourful Assam teas have bright, coppery tones. Assam tea is also known for its body, briskness and malty flavour

ASSAM TEA

Ingredients (For 2 cups)

Water: 2 cups
Loose-leaf Assam tea: 2 tsp
Milk: 1/3 cup
Sugar to taste

Method

Boil the water in a kettle. Put the leaves in the pot and pour the boiling water in it while stirring. Leave to brew for three minutes. Pour milk

into the cup first, followed by the tea to achieve the desired colour and richness. Add sugar.



DARJEELING TEA

Ingredients (For 2 cups)

Water: 2 cups
Darjeeling whole tea leaves: 2 tsp
Milk: 1/3 cup
Sugar to taste

Method

Put the tea leaves in a clean empty pot. Boil the water and pour it into the pot. Don't forget to cover the pot with lid. Leave to brew for three to five minutes. The duration will depend on how strong you want the infusion to be. Pour milk into the cup first, followed by the tea to achieve the desired colour and richness. Add sugar.

Darjeeling teas release a light liquor when brewed and each variety has its own inimitable character. Their production is always long leaf orthodox

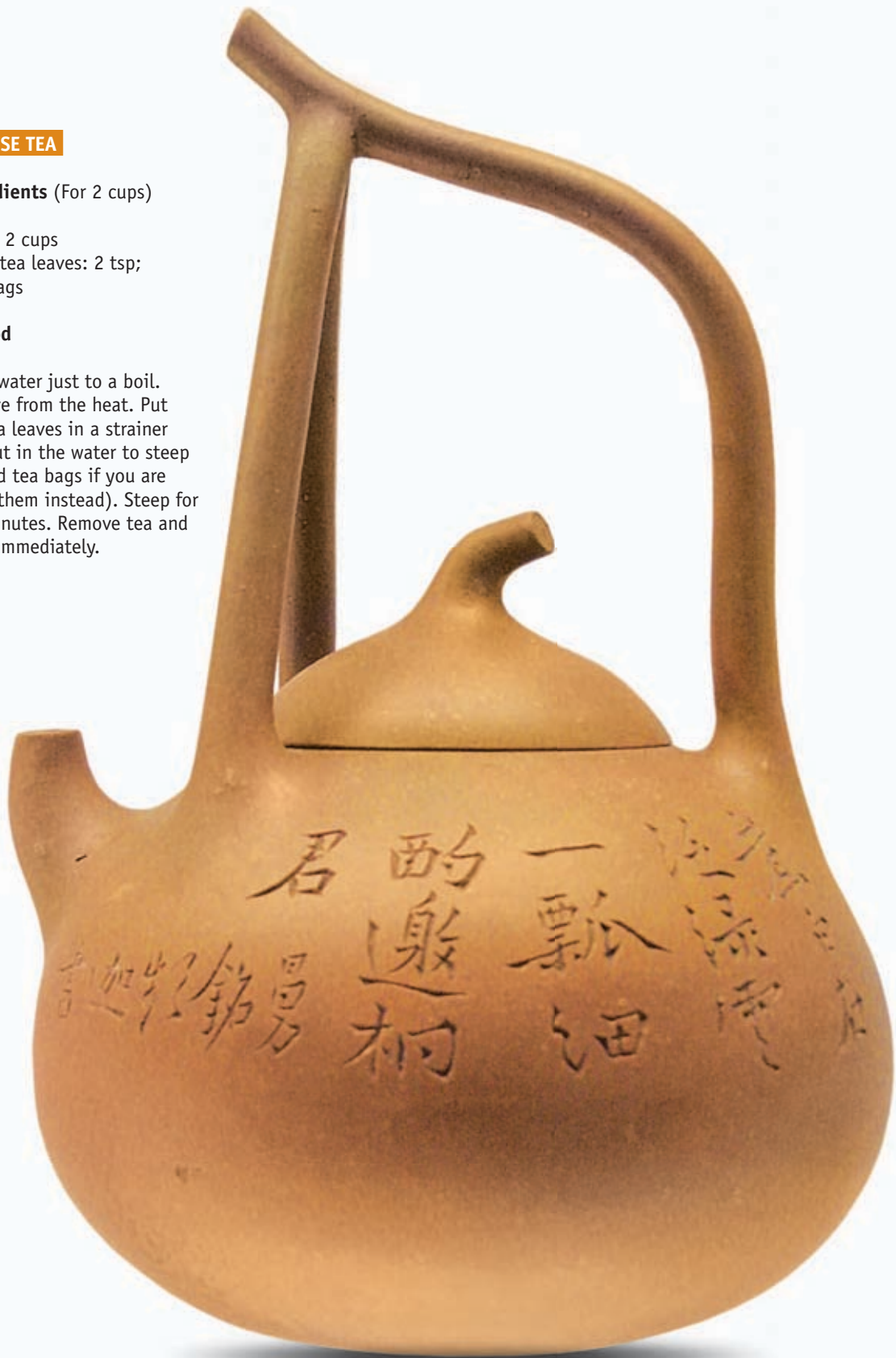
CHINESE TEA

Ingredients (For 2 cups)

Water: 2 cups
Green tea leaves: 2 tsp;
or 2 bags

Method

Bring water just to a boil.
Remove from the heat. Put
the tea leaves in a strainer
and put in the water to steep
(or add tea bags if you are
using them instead). Steep for
3-5 minutes. Remove tea and
serve immediately.



A Yixing pot with inscriptions in Chinese. Yixing pots were the first and foremost tea ware made in China from the local *zhizha* clay. This pot dates back to somewhere around 1900. Yixing pots have long been known for their simple beauty and unique tea brewing qualities

MASALA CHAI

Ingredients (For 2 cups)

Tea leaves: 2 tsp
 Milk: ½ cup
 Cinnamon: 1 piece
 Cardamom pods: 2
 Black peppercorns: 4
 Ginger: ¼ tsp ground
 Grated nutmeg: a pinch

Method

Dry-grind the *masala*. Boil water in a pan. Add tea leaves, milk, the powdered *masala*, crushed ginger and sugar and bring it to a boil. Boil for a couple of minutes. Strain and serve piping hot.



A tea stall outside a bustling bus stop in Coonoor, Tamil Nadu, offers chai with popular snacks like chick-pea batter fried chilli *pakoda* and *vada*



Nothing is more relaxing in a Kashmiri home than a *hookah* and a sip of *kahwa*—traditional green tea mixed with saffron, cinnamon and occasionally Kashmiri roses—with the family. In the centre stands an engraved copper samovar or tea urn to keep the brew warm

KASHMIRI KAHWA

Ingredients (For 2 cups)

Kashmiri green tea: 2 tsp
 Saffron strands: 2 pinches
 Cardamom: 1; slightly crushed
 Almonds: 4; blanched and chopped

Cinnamon: 1 small piece
 Clove: 1
 Sugar: 1 tbsp

Method

Boil water along with cinnamon, cardamom and cloves and pour over

the tea. Leave to infuse over a very low flame. Meanwhile, dissolve saffron in a little water by rubbing it gently. Strain the tea and add the saffron pulp, along with almonds. Serve hot.

GUGUR CHA

Ingredients (For 2 cups)

Water: 4 cups
Green tea bags: 2; or 2 tsp of loose green tea leaves
Salt: $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp
Butter: 2 tbsp
Milk: $\frac{1}{3}$ cup

Method

Bring the water to a boil. Put the tea bags/tea leaves and let steep for a couple of minutes. Add salt. Take out the tea bags or strain the tea. Add milk and turn off the stove. Pour the tea into a churn and add butter. If you don't have a churn, use a big container with a lid so that you can shake the tea. You can also use a blender. Churn or blend the tea for two minutes. Serve the tea while it's still hot.

A local prepares the salty *gugur cha* in Rombak, Ladakh. The normal cuppa here is a mixture of green tea, butter, and salt. It is mixed in a large churn and called *gugur cha* after the sound it makes when mixed



The fight for freedom

 We toast our 68th Independence Day with an article written in 1938 by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, leading Indian nationalist and founder of the Azad Hind Fauj

Since its birth in 1885, the Congress has made considerable headway and has brought the Indian people nearer to their goal of *Swaraj* or Independence. But though we are within sight of power, there is yet a struggle ahead of us. If we desire that this struggle should be the last hurdle in our march towards freedom, we have to do three things. The membership of the Congress should be so enlarged as to embrace the vast majority of our countrymen. Our organisation and discipline have to be perfected and last, but not the least, we have to be prepared for greater suffering and sacrifice.

In this short article, I desire to deal mainly with the first of the above three requisites. In a political organisation which uses the method of non-violence, as opposed to armed struggle, the question of numbers assumes great importance. The ultimate weapon in a non-violent struggle is *Satyagraha* or mass civil disobedience which presupposes the rallying of the masses under one banner. In proportion, as the Congress has been able to draw the masses to its fold, it has increased its influence and strength.

When the first session of the Congress was held in Bombay in 1885, only a handful of middle and upper class intellectuals assembled. Today, a session of the Congress can draw as many people as it can accommodate.

There is no doubt that Mahatma Gandhi was the first leader to bring the Congress into intimate contact with the masses of this country. I do not propose to attempt an analysis of the personality and programme of Mahatma Gandhi which enabled him to attract the masses towards the Con-

gress in an unprecedented manner. The process which Mahatma Gandhi set on foot has now to be brought to fruition. How can this be done? There are so many false and extraneous issues which tend to mislead the dumb millions, to create differences and dissensions and to emphasise fissiparous tendencies. Our weapon against them is a twofold one: political and socioeconomic. On the political side, we must stress the nationalist appeal as against the lure of narrow communalism.


We must all learn to think and feel in terms of the nation and not in terms of a group or sect. On the socioeconomic side, we must open the eyes of our illiterate countrymen to the fact that despite differences of religion, caste or language, our economic problems and grievances are the same and can be solved only when we are free and have a national Government, truly representative of the will of the people. It is absolutely necessary to stress the economic issues which cut across communal divisions and barriers. The problems of poverty and unem-

ployment, of illiteracy and disease, of taxation and indebtedness affect alike the Hindus and Muslims and other sections of the people and it should be easy to explain to our masses that their solution depends on the prior solution of the political problem, i.e., on the establishment of a national, popular and democratic Government.

Scientific mass propaganda on the above lines, if persisted in, is sure to bring the people of all religions and castes under the banner of *Swaraj*. When the masses come to the Congress in thousands, the influence and strength of the Congress will increase proportionately. The only problems that will then remain will be to organise and discipline this vast membership and prepare them for the suffering and sacrifice which the future struggle for *Swaraj* will involve.

Our needs and our duties at the present time are simple indeed. But to fulfil them requires herculean efforts. There is no time to lose; let us, therefore, put our shoulders to the wheel at once.



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

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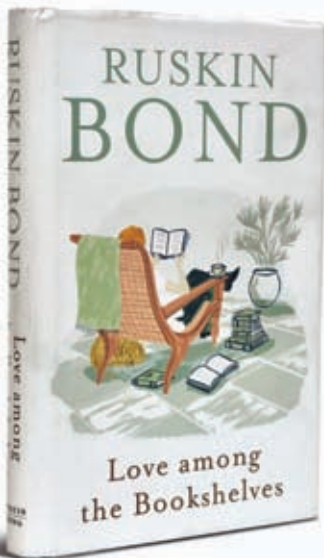
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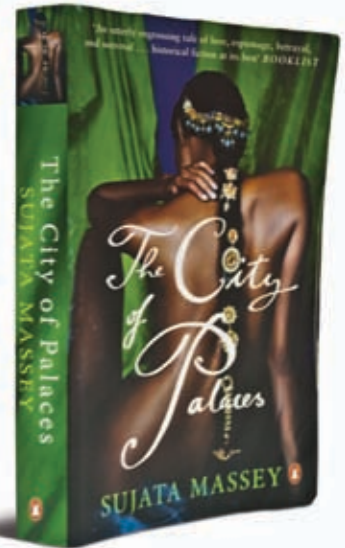
Many of us have grown up reading and relishing **Ruskin Bond** for his unassuming humour and evocative writing that captures the beauty of the Himalayan landscape and its people. In **LOVE AMONG THE BOOKSHELVES** (Penguin; ₹ 299; 185 pages), one of India's beloved writers shares with us stories he grew up on. Part-memoir and part-anthology, the book is a journey into the writer's life through the books he enjoyed during different stages. It also serves as a delightful collection of excerpts from some forgotten classics like *Love among the Chickens*



by P G Wodehouse, *Cakes and Ale* by Somerset Maugham and *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens. The memoirs begin with a week in a forest rest-house, where Bond accidentally discovered the joys of reading. Thereafter, we come face to face with a young Bond who dodged sports at school and found his quiet corner to escape into the magical world of books. Each section has a memory that has stuck with the author, reference to books that belonged to that period, and an excerpt from one of them. Through it all, Bond's writing stays the same: simple and straight.

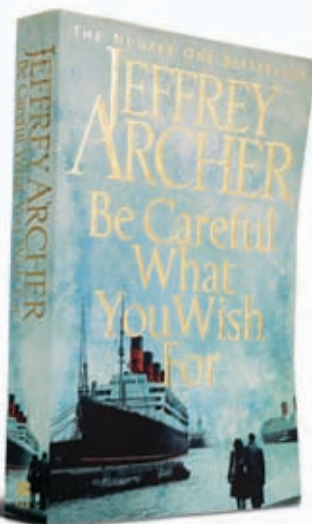
To say that **THE CITY OF PALACES** (Penguin; ₹ 499; 463 pages) is the tale of a young girl in search of her identity would be trivialising it. Though at the surface level, it's yet another rags-to-riches story, **Sujata Massey** spins her tale around India as it marches towards Independence. The name is inconsequential, as the central protagonist herself admits at the beginning, "You ask for my name, the real one, and I cannot tell." Massey effectively blends the historical narrative with the protagonist's personal story as she moves on from being Pom to Sarah, to Camilla, to finally settle for Kamala Mukherjee. Caught up in the vortex of the freedom struggle, Kamala learns to trust her instincts and, in the process, finds her moorings and true love.

Packed with the colours, smells and flavours of British India, Massey manages to conjure up vivid



images. Each chapter is dotted with an epigraph and most are short verses from Rabindranath Tagore's poems. Through it all, Calcutta emerges as a strong character with sepia-tinged references to the city's colonial past—right from Flury's and 'sleeping dictionaries' to the Writers' Building.

The fourth book in the Clifton Chronicles, **BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR** (Pan Macmillan; ₹ 399; 387 pages) will have you instantly hooked to its plots and twists—but only if you've read the three that have come before. **Jeffrey Archer** jumps right into the middle of the narrative with no background about the past, which can make it a jarring read for someone who doesn't know the cause for all the animosity. For readers of the series,



of course, there's a seamless connect with the characters. This book, set in the aftermath of World War II, takes forward the Clifton and Barrington saga: writer Harry Clifton, now in his 50s, and his wife business magnate Emma Barrington try to fend off Argentine smuggler Don Pedro Martinez's attempts to disrupt the family business, the Barrington Shipping Company, and their lives. There's plenty of action with boardroom power play, secret dealings, share market drama, and Irish Republic Army henchmen; on the emotional side, young romance brews and bitter family secrets are revealed. As always, Archer packs enough thrill, chase and suspense in this book to keep long-time fans happy.

The write path

Fighting caste and religious discrimination through her short stories and novels, **Pratibha Ray**, 71, has carved a niche in Oriya literature. Her novels *Bhagavamra Desha* and *Adi Bhoomi* have depicted the struggles of the marginalised. The first woman Odia writer to be conferred with Jnanpith recently, Ray has birthed women characters that are valiant and fearless, earning her the sobriquet of a 'feminist writer'. Her works have been translated into English and other Indian languages. She attributes the humanism in her writing to the influence of her Gandhian teacher-father, the late Parashuram Das. Retired after an active career as a professor and member of the State Public Service Commission, Ray talks about the need to raise her voice for the underprivileged and suppressed in an exclusive interview with **Ruby Nanda**. Excerpts:

How does it feel to be the first woman Odia writer to win the Jnanpith award, India's highest literary award?

I was delighted when the award was declared because after 19 years, my mother tongue has been honoured yet again. I never brand a writer as a man or a woman. I am the fourth Odia writer to receive the award, for which I am grateful to my readers.

Given that your women characters are bold and outspoken, do you consider yourself a feminist?

I wouldn't say that all strong women are feminists. My mother, grandmother and mother-in-law were strong women; they were decision-makers and played a vital role in running the house. But they were not radical feminists. When I raise my voice through my literature for women, it is for their rights. I consider myself a strong woman and, more important, a humanist.

Your writings are rich in emotions as well as pictorial descriptions. Who or what has influenced your writings the most?

My culture, my involvement with the joy and sorrow of the people around me, my keen observation, and my world-view are helpful for my style and description.

Besides being a writer, you are also a mother, a wife, and an academician. How do you manage your time?

I admit that being a woman writer, the problems are definitely more. Overcoming hurdles on the path of creation and pursuing writing are part of my creative career. I have the habit of writing late into the night, which I consider my personal time, without creating any inconvenience for my family.

You have had a brush with law for writing against the caste system. Do you regret that?

Yes, the regrets are many. But, they exist purely because the caste system still persists and is growing stronger by the day.

You speak for the oppressed, whether it is Draupadi in *Jajnaseni* or the Bonda tribe in *Adi Bhoomi*. Where do you draw your inspiration from?

I get inspiration from within and from the characters I create.

AUTHORSPEAK



Talking about *Jajnaseni*, have you read *The Palace Of Illusions* by Chitra Banerjee Divakarunni, which is also a take on *The Mahabharata* from Draupadi's point of view?

Jajnaseni was published in Odia in 1985, in Hindi in 1988, and in other Indian languages and English much before *The Palace of Illusions* was out. I have not read the book yet; time is a constraint. I do plan to read it.

Whom do you enjoy reading?

I read Indian and foreign authors. It will be a long list, if I mention them all, so here are a few: U R Ananthamurthy, Qurratulain Hyder, Mahasweta Devi, Garcia Gabriel Marquez, Chinua Achebe.

Do you feel Odia should be granted classical language status? And where do you think Odia literature is lacking today?

Odia deserves to be declared a classical language, which is long overdue. The writers of this generation should experience life intensely and widen their vision. Whether it's Odia or other languages, where do we deal with the rural landscape in literature today?

The first day at school
The first time you rode the bicycle.
The first crush you had at thirteen
The first drama you got a part in
The first day at college
The first date you went on
The first kiss
The first time you proposed
The first job interview
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The pages of my life

Namita Gokhale reflects on her journey as a writer

Although I had previously written my share of juvenile poetry and naïve awkward stories, it was at the age of 26 that I truly became a writer. That was the year I wrote my debut novel, *Paro: Dreams of Passion*, little suspecting that the slim novel was to find fame and notoriety and become an enduring success with several generations of readers.

Now, 32 years later, older if not wiser, I contemplate the turning pages of my life. A writer's life operates at different, sometimes conflicting levels. There is the observer within oneself, recording, taking notes, using the raw data of life to construct a narrative meta text. There is the creator, finding designs and patterns and life scripts in the chaos of the real world, and fusing and transforming this material into a parallel universe. And then, there are the mind, ego and identity that drive all this activity; the complex individual personality of the writer, both in the story and outside it.

We are each other's stories. Shared human experience comes from the fireside tales of our ancestors, the epics, ballads, novels, e-books and blogs where heroic myths and personal tales all help us situate and make sense of our lives. When I wrote *Paro*, I was completely unprepared for the furore that greeted its publication. I had been brought up, at least by default, to say what I thought, and had never bothered too much about other people's opinions of me. I was married when I was 18, having fallen in love the year before. My husband's family was loving and supportive; much of who I am today derives from what I learnt, observed and imbibed from them in those formative years.

The highs and lows of romantic love are quite different from the responsibilities of marriage. Reading poetry and Greek drama in college didn't always help my reality checks with domestic life. To add to the chaos, I was debarred from giving my third year examination for having chosen the less-trodden path and electing to sit for a paper on 'Modern Indian Literature in Hindi' rather than the one in the course on 'Chaucer and Old English'. A dysfunctional nun, and a clash of egos, ideals and identities, led to a flash point where over a hundred students were held back from giving their examinations.

My sister-in-law, the late Justice Sunanda Bhandare, helped us take the matter to court but Sister Aquinas dug in her heels and asserted the power of a 'minority institution'. It was my first encounter with the complicated 'process of living' where one has to constantly negotiate the social, legal, and emotional environment and still retain sanity and balance.

My academic dreams having been thus effectively destroyed, I set out to become an entrepreneur and began publishing a film magazine out of Mumbai, which was still then Bombay. The magazine was called *Super*. It ran for six years and was enormously successful. After my brush with the dark side of academia, those '*Super* days' gave me an understanding of popular culture, possibly one of the most important and lasting lessons of my life.

When *Super* shut down, owing to a variety of reasons, I was at yet another crossroads of my life. I was a mother of two young daughters. Marriage was not a bed of roses, and there was

a rollercoaster quality to my life that was both exhilarating and alarming.

It was around this time that *Paro* happened. A scattered set of observed situations and characters suddenly and magically fell into place, and the voice of the narrator, Priya Kaushal, nee Sharma, assumed a life of its own. I wrote in longhand and the notebooks piled up, as did the old diaries and backs of envelopes. I was seized by the excitement of structuring and containing this story that had possessed me.

I wrote by hand, then transcribed my scribbling, clackety-clack on my Remington Rand portable manual typewriter. That typewriter was the most prized possession I ever had. The ribbons had to be changed and the spools reversed ever so often. My fingers would be smudged with the ink-black, and often my cheeks too, when I wrote. I would insert carbon paper to ensure I had an extra copy of the typed page. Then my husband got an electric typewriter, and I would sit at his desk and write, marvelling at the wonder of technology.

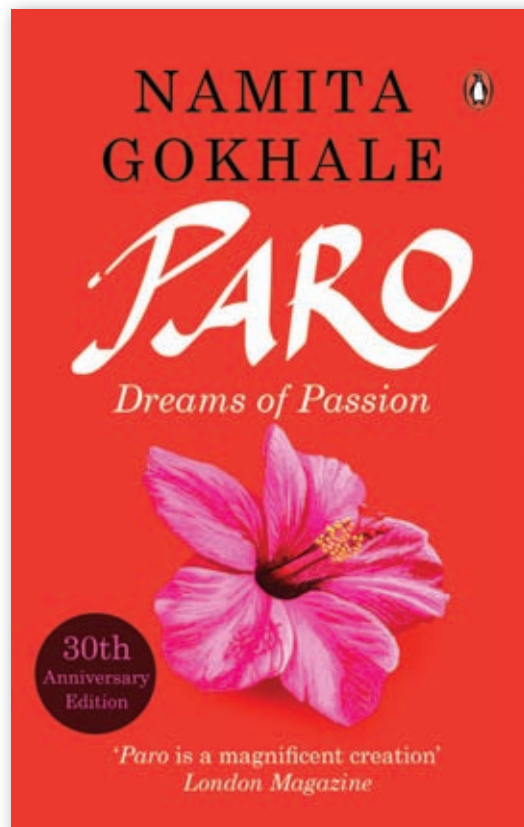
The writing life is the examined life. It is an attempt to find order and pattern and meaning, to record what has passed, to visualise what might be. So much has changed in how we write. But I suspect that the reasons that impel people to read and write remain constant. As I pen this for *Harmony*, I am sitting in the hills of Kumaon, looking out at a landscape of everyday and wondrous sights. I hold a spiral notebook in my hands, and observe the reassuring scratches of my black ink nib on the lined paper with satisfaction. I have 'forgotten' my delightful Mac Airbook back at home

in Delhi, and it is delightful to return to the basics.

Anyway, to return to the story. My husband discovered the manuscript of *Paro* sitting next to his new electrical typewriter. Although it wasn't exactly what most husbands might have expected their dutiful wives to be thumping out at midnight, he felt it was the real thing. "It's a good book," he told me, "you should try to get it published." He gave me a ticket to London as a wedding anniversary present and told me not to come back until I had done what I had to.

I found an enthusiastic agent and two receptive publishers, all in a week. I found myself in the newspapers, and on television, with people saying kind things about me. It was a fairytale debut. Back in India, the storyline changed. Middle-class Indian women were not supposed to write funny, sexy books. And then there was the language I had used. It wasn't the sort of stilted 'proper' English they had encountered in Kamala Markandaya, or even in Anita Desai's perfect and nuanced prose. *Paro* used the English I had encountered in my *Super* days; the breathless mixed-up language I heard around me, in the streets of Bombay, in the drawing rooms of Delhi.

"*Paro* is a magnificent creation," *London Magazine* had observed, when the novel was first published in 1984. It was the tempestuous, dramatic character of *Paro* that survived the passage of time, even though she died towards the end of the book. That indeed is the consolation of art, and of



The writing life is the examined life. It is an attempt to find order and pattern and meaning, to record what has passed, to visualise what might be

literature, that it remains to be read or interpreted even after the moment has passed.

I have written 11 books since then—or is it 12? Each is associated with a phase of my life, a particular quest, an attempt to unravel a puzzle, or to

walk a dream. There is *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, which was made into a memorable play. There is the mountain quartet, *A Himalayan Love Story*, *Mountain Echoes*, which comprises oral biographies of my grandmother and four aunts, the historical novel *Shankuntala: The Play of Memory*, and the new novel I have only recently completed. Another set of books deals with religion and myth. These include *The Book of Shiva*, *In Search of Sita* and *The Mahabharata* for young readers, brilliantly illustrated by Atanu Roy. *The Habit of Love*, a collection of stories, also has short narratives from the perspectives of some characters from Indian myth, including Gandhari and Kunti.

Some years ago, I also returned to my first novel, resurrecting some of the characters from *Paro: Dreams of Passions*. Titled *Priya – In Incredible Indyya*, it was told

in the voice of Priya Kaushal, who had been the narrator in *Paro*. It gave me immense satisfaction to pick up the threads of these familiar lives, and to place them in a 25-year fast forward.

Change is a constant of life. I'm older but no wiser, but my books and the characters that inhabit them are a part of my life, a part of me. The moving finger writes, and having writ, moves on. These, then, are the pages of my life and within those covers, the lessons I have learnt, or even more important, unlearned, or refused to learn. A certain amount of foolishness is important for wisdom, and I'm glad my natural cynicism has not yet been infected with world-weariness. And as ever, the blank pages beckon.

Penguin India recently released a special edition of author Namita Gokhale's *Paro: Dreams of Passion* on the book's 30th anniversary. The book, when released, created waves with its candid sexual humour

We are our thoughts

The mind is but a quantum of energy and our power is in our mind, says **Swami Krishnananda**

Most of us harbour a commonplace belief that the mind is inside the body, and it is moving within us like a ball of mercury, shifting its position from one place to another. The mind is neither inside the body, nor is it outside the body; it is just what we are.

The quantum of energy, capacity, and confidence that we have in our own selves is the mind operating. Our value is not in what we possess as an external commodity from the world, but is the manner we are thinking in our mind. This is not a difficult thing to understand. Whatever may be our quantity of material wealth in this world, if our mind does not agree to accommodate itself with this idea of possession, the possession becomes null and void. It is well said that we are what we think we are.

What do we think we are? What is the opinion that we have about our own selves? The answer would be a bundle of chaos. Our idea of our own selves is nothing but confusing. It is so because every moment we change the idea about our own selves. Often, we think that we are well off; often, we think that we are miserable. Many a time we think that we have everything that we need; and often we think that we do not have what we actually want.

The mind is a quantum of energy that is operating in us. It is not a thing; it is not an object. It is just what energy can be defined as. It is power, rather. Our power is in our mind. As strong as our mind is, so strong we ourselves also are. If, for any reason whatsoever, the mind is not strong, and it feels that it is incomplete in some way in comparison with somebody else, then the strength diminishes.

The wrong notion that the quantum of energy called the mind is only inside the body is the cause of our difficulty. We know very well that energy cannot be bottled up in any particular place. It is a pervasive reality, which gives meaning and value to everything in the world. This energy is

present in everything in the world. The mind knows everything, and there is no other faculty in us, except the mind, that knows things.

Imagine that there is a beggar who dreams for twelve hours every day that he is a king; and there is a real king who dreams for twelve hours every day that he is a beggar. Now, who is the king, and who is the beggar, because both are kings and beggars for twelve hours?



You may say that only what the waking mind thinks should be considered as real, not what is dreamt. The dream king is not a real king. The waking king only is the real king. Why do you say that? Because you have an indescribable, indemonstrable conviction that the waking mind is qualitatively superior to the dreaming mind. You cannot prove it, but you are convinced that you are qualitatively better in the waking world than in the dream world. Who told you that the waking consciousness is qualitatively superior? Nobody can demonstrate why it is so. It is a self-identical conviction: I am what I am.

No one can own anything that is totally outside. If that is the case, then you can own nothing in the world. What is the situation now? You can own only your own self. As people usually tell you, when you were born, you did not bring the world with you. The child who was born was not a king; and when he passes away, he ceases to be a king. In the middle of its little tenure of temporary existence, an illusion is created that there is a large possession, and the king feels, "I am the king."

This is the reason why people say that the world is an illusion, and it is not a reality. If you consider the world as your possession and your property, and minus this possession of the world you cannot be happy, then you can never be happy under any circumstance, because you can never possess the world. The world was existing even before you were born, so how will you possess it now?

Author of over 200 texts on yoga, religion and metaphysics, Krishnananda (1922-2001) was a prolific theologian and philosopher. His articles are available on www.swami-krishnananda.org

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GURU!

For all his genius, Dutt's personal life was overshadowed by tragedy, with his muse Waheeda seeking to establish her identity outside his banner and a failed attempt to reunite with estranged wife Geeta. Dubbed 'India's Orson Welles' for his consummate skills as actor, director and producer, Dutt will always be remembered for lending a new vocabulary to mainstream Hindi cinema.

- On 24 August, the Anglican Church of India was founded in Kerala by members who withdrew from the Church of South India.

pinkification

n. The attempt to make something that is traditionally masculine more interesting or appealing to women by associating it with stereotypically feminine traits or ideas.

Example. Yet, examples of tech's **pinkification** persist. In February, at a Harvard event designed to get women interested in computer science, sponsor Goldman Sachs handed out cosmetic mirrors and nail files.

—Kristen V Brown, "How not to attract women to coding: Make tech pink," The San Francisco Chronicle (California), 6 July 2014

MAMIL

n. A middle-aged man who is a devotee of cycling or some other sport that requires or encourages the wearing of Lycra. [Acronym: middle-aged man in Lycra]

Example. These middle-aged men in lycra, or **MAMILs**, as the tribe has unflatteringly been dubbed, will be out in force this weekend as the Tour de France begins in the northern English country of Yorkshire, many of them wearing day-glo outfits and tight shorts.

—"Britain's 'MAMILs' switch Ferraris for expensive bikes," Agence France-Presse, 4 July 2014

yacht rock

n. A form of soft rock music with a smooth, melodious sound, often with nautically themed lyrics.

Example. These readers are wrong. Chance the Rapper, of course, did not cover the song by Christopher Cross, king of **yacht rock**.

—Robinson Meyer, "Here come the '90s kids: Chance the Rapper covers the Arthur song," Atlantic Online, 30 May 2014

“ Old age is like everything else; to make a success of it, you've got to start young.

—Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919),
26th President of the United States

FAUXSUMERISM

n. Browsing products and engaging with brands without the intention of purchasing anything.

Example. The rise of **fauxsumerism** was revealed in a recent study of 1,300 14-to-34-year olds in the US. These millennials [sic], born between 1980 and 2000, are browsers rather than buyers. The report found they create wishlists, both to engage with brands and for fun, with no intention of actually buying. Sometimes they don't have the money to make the purchase but save the item anyway. There is even the suggestion that these fauxsumers get the same kick out of saving an item as they would if they had bought it.

—Shailey Minocha, "Fauxsumerism: Cyber window shopping is a millennial habit," Mashable, 5 June 2014

couch-cushion change

n. A trivial or disappointingly small amount of money. Also: couch cushion change.

Example. His Department of Environment and Natural Resources has repeatedly thwarted efforts by environmental groups to hold Duke Energy responsible for its malfeasance in several such spills. For example, the DENR 'punished' Duke for the Asheville-Riverbend spillage by fining it all of \$ 99,111, or as some environmentalists have called the fine, **couch-cushion change**.

—"C Mosby Miller: Legislators ignoring spillage", The News & Observer (Raleigh, North Carolina), 21 February 2014

PROMPOSAL

v. An invitation to a prom, particularly one that is elaborate, unusual, or performed in a public place.

Example. Making a memorable **promposal** has prompted group serenades, Jumbotron questions, public address requests, flash mobs, airplane banners, cheesy public poetry, and tons of flowers, chocolates, and other gifts, including cupcakes with the question spelled out in icing.

—Bella English, "With 'promposals,' excess is a competition", The Boston Globe, 17 May 2014

HOUSING LOCK

n. The inability to move to look for better job opportunities because one's house is worth less than the mortgage.

Example. Since the housing and financial crisis and subsequent recession, the US Census Bureau reports that state-to-state movement in the US (on a per-cent basis) has been about as low as it ever has been. One reason for that, many economists believe, is the fact that there were fewer places to move to that had stronger economic growth that often drives migration. But another important factor has been the phenomenon of **housing lock**.

—Brian Gottlob, "The demographic trend NH should most worry about", *Trend Lines*, 25 April 2014

Sound healing

Indulge in an ancient tribal healing method that uses sound to evoke a sense of calm in your mind, heal your body and cleanse your soul. Called the Singing Bowl, this Himalayan meditation technique involves striking special bowls that 'sing', creating soothing overtone sounds that induce deep trance states and help heal and balance your chakras. Our yoga expert Shameem Akthar invites you to experience this unique meditation therapy at Yoga Kuteer, in Bandra, Mumbai. Trained by Shree Krishna Shahi of Kathmandu, who is renowned world over, she is certified by him to use a specially selected set of bowls for this meditative experience. For individual therapy, she



uses seven bowls that are aligned with the seven chakras of the human body, where each bowl has a different dominant musical note. For the group meditation therapy, she uses a technique where she strikes the bowl in such a way that we perceive it as a prolonged *Om*.

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₹ 500 per person for group meditation (four people), 30 minutes. For more details, call Shameem Akthar on (0) 9820540891 or contact Yoga Kuteer by Shameem, 503, Makani Center, 35th Road, Off Linking Road, Bandra West, Mumbai.

IRB laundering

pp. Getting an ethically questionable study approved by an institutional review board to mask the study's problematic data or methodology.

Example. It could lead to **IRB laundering**, where academic researchers evade formal ethics-review processes by collaborating with corporate researchers who do experiments and collect data within a company where ethics review processes are looser.

—Edward W. Felten, "Facebook's emotional manipulation study: When ethical worlds collide", *The Huffington Post*, 30 June 2014

precrastinator

n. A person who performs tasks sooner than they need to be done, particularly as a way of delaying a bigger or more stressful task.

Example. We **precrastinators** don't put things off until the last minute (well, actually, in other moods, we do that, too, but never mind). Instead, we do things sooner than they really need to be done, even if it costs us more time and energy that way, simply for the feeling of having them over with.

—Oliver Burkeman, "This column will change your life: Precrastination", *The Guardian*, 5 July 2014

“If each one of us realises our ability to make a difference, the world will be a far better place”

Nikhil Desai, 62, Mumbai, tackles civic issues



Armed with a tiny digital camera, he is a one-man army on the prowl in his neighbourhood in Matunga in Mumbai, looking for civic problems—from encroachment, illegal parking and gaping potholes to abandoned old vehicles on streets. For **Nikhil Desai**, who retired as a mechanical engineer, campaigning for green lungs and bringing the attention of the authorities to issues like freeing up footpaths and the presence of druggies in public spaces, are all part of a day's work. “Whenever I see something that rankles my civic sense, I click pictures,” says the 62 year-old activist, who is a co-ordinator with AGNI, an NGO working for good governance. “On weekends, I write letters to municipal authorities, attaching copies of images I have clicked.” The letters rarely get a prompt response; it often requires regular follow-ups with the authorities concerned. “They give a range of excuses, from lack of manpower and materials to bad weather, but I do not give up until I wring a commitment from them,” insists Desai, who, inspired by Gandhian principles, took up the cudgels for civic rights almost 10 years ago. Recently, he trained his lens on trees that were poisoned near construction sites so they would shrivel and crumble, making way for a better view. “Holes had been drilled into them and they had been injected with deadly chemicals,” he adds. Desai started clicking pictures after realising it worked better when he had pictorial proof to back up his grievances. Indeed, from taking on fast food outlets and hawkers on footpaths to jolting BMC officials into quick action over fixing manholes just before the monsoons, the camera has come in handy for Desai who feels the onus of improving our environment lies with each one of us.

—Neeti Vijaykumar

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