

harmony

MARCH 2015 ₹ 40

celebration age

The magazine for silver citizens

the women issue

- Camera girls Nony and Dayanita Singh
- Writer Sudha Shah on her royal quest
- Get financially literate



ila arun
queen of arts

WE HELPED MR. ROY DRIVE AWAY A FROZEN SHOULDER AND GET BACK BEHIND THE WHEEL.

Mr. Roy's frozen shoulder was seriously hindering his ability to drive. So when he heard that Portea's physiotherapists treat patients at home, he called us immediately. A series of sessions later, Mr. Roy's pain vanished. And soon he was celebrating by driving down to his favourite getaway.



FOR A RANGE OF PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES AT HOME

CALL 1800-121-2323 (TOLL FREE) [portea.com](https://www.portea.com)

- Over 20,000 happy customers
- Certified and experienced physios, doctors and nurses
- Recommended homecare partner for leading hospitals

PORTEA
HEAL AT HOME



PHYSIOTHERAPY



24-HR TRAINED ATTENDANTS



NURSING



DOCTOR CONSULTATIONS

Portea services available in Bangalore | Delhi NCR | Mumbai | Chennai | Kolkata | Pune | Ahmedabad & 15 other cities in India.

Based on a true story. Name and identity changed to protect patient privacy.

For careers at Portea, mail us at jobs@portea.com

CONTRACT-01-2015

PAYING IT FORWARD

Generation A can teach Generation Z—and all the alphabets in between—a lot about living life to the full, and paying it forward.

Take Michael Bloomberg, for instance. At the age of 73, the media magnate and three-time mayor of New York City can well afford to rest on his laurels. But he is far too busy helping his company; intensifying his philanthropic endeavours in the fields of the arts, government innovation, education, environment and public health; and making his presence felt as Special Envoy to the UN Secretary General for Cities and Climate Change.

It was in this role that he visited India recently, and my husband Anil and I had the privilege of hosting him for a dinner at our home in Mumbai. The highlight of the evening was a conversation between Bloomberg and Amitabh Bachchan, a UNICEF ambassador himself, and another brilliant man who continues to inspire and redefine traditional notions of silvering. Mr Bachchan's questions were apt and incisive (and unscripted) and the interaction was informative and illuminating, focusing on our cities and environment, change and development, security and sustainability.

Bloomberg impressed us all on many levels—he is vital and energetic, disarmingly open about his life and work and extremely well-versed on a range of subjects. More important, he left us with some valuable takeaways with great relevance for India. For instance, the need to put economic growth in perspective vis-à-vis environmental sustainability and public welfare. The need for successful corporate houses to give back to the communities and cities that have birthed them. And the need to learn from a crisis—and channel it into a unifying force that



Suresh Natarajan

brings people together, an opportunity for learning and progress.

Indeed, at the centre of his vision for the cities of the future are the people that breathe life into them. As he told one Indian newspaper, “If helping people to live longer, happier lives isn't the purpose of government, then I don't know what is. It's easy to quantify economic growth, but how do you put a value to two more years of life? Yes, you need jobs, you need growth, you need a lot of things, but to say you need them before your health—I would say if you are dying, you might look back and say that wasn't a good decision.”

True enough. And something to remember as our country stands poised for a new wave of development with a new government. If growth isn't inclusive, if it doesn't take everyone along—men and women, young and silver—it remains meaningless.

A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

Harmony Celebrate Age—March 2015 Volume 11 Issue 10

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

Special Correspondent **Srirekha Pillai** Correspondent (Mumbai) **Prarthana Uppal** Sub-Editor **Natasha Rego** Design Consultant **Jit Ray**

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

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

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

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

index

features

40 . Interview: Cartoonist Ajit Ninan talks about his life, career and art

44 . Footsteps: Photographer Dayanita Singh on mother Nony and her craft

56 . Journey: Experience Jaipur in all its colour and glory

72 . Bookshelf: Sudha Shah shares experiences of writing a royal biography



48 cover feature

Veteran artist Ila Arun on why theatre is her first love

Cover photograph: **VARUN MEHTA**

columns

25 . YOGA RX: Shameem Akthar illustrates poses for creative Pisceans

26 . FOOD FACTS: Wellness expert Namita Jain busts some common myths about water

28 . SILVER LINING: Parkinson's can shake you, but can't break you, says Padma Shri Dr V S Natarajan

36 . MONEY MATTERS: Get financially literate, economist Priya Desai tells women

every issue

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

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

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

82 . SPEAK: Vinay Shah spreads awareness on the need to draft a will

WEB EXCLUSIVES www.harmonyindia.org



A SPACE CALLED HOME

Sheila Sri Prakash provides a sustainable blueprint for urban living

WARP AND WEFT OF LIFE

Jasleen Dhamija's upcoming book is a treasure trove on Indian textiles

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

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

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

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

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

नमक कम ही खाएँ
पर **अच्छा** खाएँ



OberoiIBC



देश की सबसे बड़ी रिफाइनरी में बना

अंकुर नमक
असली नमक™



column one

When the *Choli ke peeche* rage swept the nation, I didn't quite realise the sheer reach of Ila Arun. It was only years later on a train that it hit me. A couple was trying to get their child to sleep. When all else failed, the mother broke into the catchy *Dilli shahar mein maro ghagro joh ghumiyo*. The child listened, rapt, and was promptly patted to sleep. That's the power of Arun, to entrance India with her rustic voice, powerful rhythms and magnetic personality. At heart a "theatre artist", we are proud to have this woman of myriad talents front *The Women Issue*. "The woman is an embodiment of *Maa Durga*," she says. "Women should realise their worth and live their life."

Dayanita Singh would agree. Introduced to the camera by mother Nony, she is described as 'one of the most important photographers worldwide'. Her creative footsteps bear her mother's indisputable mark. Equally inspiring is the story of Sudha Shah who discovered her calling after reading Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* and won rave reviews for her book on the last king of Burma.

For his part, ace cartoonist Ajit Ninan, found his calling even earlier, despite his parents' desire to make him an engineer. His account is telling and timely in the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* tragedy. Sadly, our interview was punctuated by the news of the demise of R K Laxman, an inspiration to Ninan. Laxman was also very dear to *Harmony*. We interviewed him in 2004 and were privileged enough to produce *R K Laxman – The Uncommon Man* in 2009, authored by our publisher Dr Dharmendra Bhandari. RIP Mr Laxman—we'll miss you.

—Arati Rajan Menon



February, being the month for lovers, brought back memories of my beloved husband, who passed away years ago. I had a dream. I was young and dressed in my best when I sat beside my husband on the sofa. He looked at me and said, "Gorgeous!" The dream ended and I woke up to my 90 year-old self.

It was 29 December 1944 when I got married at 20. My husband and I had never met before, yet we chatted like old friends as we travelled to his hometown Lahore for the first time. Unfortunately, our new life was cut short by Partition. Since then, we lived in Delhi, Lonavala and Bombay, where we finally settled. We had a happy life together, raising our children, and enjoying each other's company as well as independence. We celebrated our golden wedding anniversary in 1994 and he passed on soon after.

There *is* love after marriage, which has no less attachment, romance and beauty than love before marriage. It is, perhaps, more deep-rooted and long lasting, and you don't carry the burden of expectations.

Bansi Singh
Mumbai

I write this in reference to "The Sound of Music" ('Cover Feature', February 2015). The spirit of the music created by Hariharan and his son made me ponder the role of music in our lives. There is a tune for every occasion and mood, a genre for every activity and incident. Music helps maintain mental peace and physical wellbeing. On low volume, it helps one concentrate in the day and sleep soundly at night, whereas loud music can be pleasing

to a few. Music does not recognise human boundaries; it is a universal phenomenon. It bridges physical distances and enables people of different countries to have cordial and peaceful relations. Music is so powerful a tool that it could possibly help us improve relations with our long-estranged neighbour, Pakistan—but only if we let it.

Mahesh Kumar
New Delhi

AN INVITATION FROM HARMONY

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

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

Mail us at Reliance Centre, 1st Floor, 19, Walchand Hirachand Marg, Ballard Estate, Mumbai-400001. Or email at contact.mag@harmonyindia.org

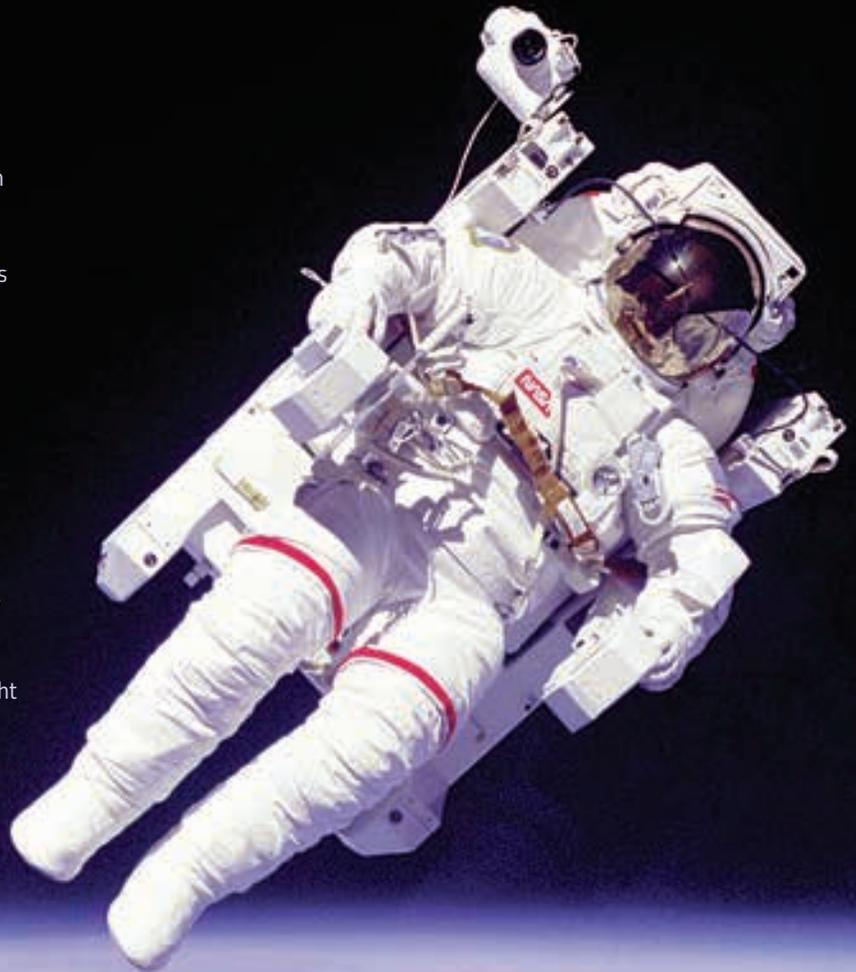
ANALYSE THIS

ROCKET SCIENCE If you have a yen to boldly go where no one has gone before, be warned: terra firma is better for longevity.

Immune systems age quicker in space than on Earth, according to a group of French scientists. With the help of a testing model called Hindlimb Unloading (HU), they examined the effects of spaceflight on mice and discovered that mice in low gravity conditions experience changes in B lymphocyte production in their bone marrow, similar to changes in

terra firma
is better for
longevity

elderly mice living on Earth. "B lymphocytes are an important part of the immune system, responsible for creating the antibodies that identify and selectively target harmful foreign objects such as bacteria and viruses," writes Gerald Weissmann, editor-in-chief of journal *FASEB*, where the study was published. "The results indicate that space flight may be associated with accelerated ageing of the immune system in all types of animals, including humans. If further studies show the same pattern, this means a person spending long periods of time in space might start suffering from age-related diseases younger than they would after an Earth-based life."



Dinodia Photo Library



Dinodia Photo Library

music for the mind

Music is not just balm for the soul—it is fodder for the mind. According to a study conducted at the Baycrest Hospital's Rotman Research Institute in Toronto, **musical training bolsters the brain in the silver years.** The researchers found that silvers who had musical training in their youth were 20 per cent faster in identifying speech sounds than their non-musician peers—the ability to comprehend speech is a cognitive skill that can decay with age. "Musical activities are an engaging form of cognitive brain training and we are now seeing robust evidence of brain plasticity from musical training not just in younger brains, but in older brains too," writes team leader Gavin Bidelman in *The Journal of Neuroscience*. "The findings also highlight the importance of music instruction in schools and rehabilitative programmes for older adults."

- Worldwide, nearly 36 million people have Alzheimer's or a related dementia
- Only one in four people with Alzheimer's disease have been diagnosed
- Alzheimer's and dementia is most common in Western Europe (North America is close behind)
- Alzheimer's is least prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Alzheimer's and other dementias are the top cause for disabilities in later life

(Source: Alzheimer's Disease International)



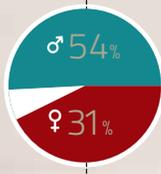
BRAIN TRAIN

Don't complain if your job's too tough. Scientists at Edinburgh University have found that **people in intellectually demanding careers have better memories as they age.** Their study revealed that people in IT, teaching, medicine, management and accounts performed better in memory and thinking tests at the age of 70, reports *The Scotsman*. This holds true even after accounting for early differences in intelligence, education and childhood circumstances. "Our findings have helped to identify the kinds of job demands that preserve memory," says study co-author Dr Alan Gow. "While it is true that people who have higher cognitive abilities are likely to get more complex jobs, there seems to be a small advantage gained from those complex jobs for later thinking skills."

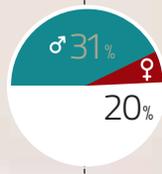


THE SILVER BEDROOM

A survey of over 7,000 people in the UK has reconfirmed what we've been saying all along: silvers are still having sex. The study, 'Sexual Health and Wellbeing among Older Men and Women in England', is part of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) project and published in journal *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*. "This is the first nationally representative study to include people over the age of 80 when asking older men and women in England about their sexual health," study author David Lee tells London newspaper *The Guardian*. "We hope our findings improve public health by countering stereotypes and misconceptions about late-life sexuality, and offer older people a reference against which they may relate their own experiences and expectations."



More than half of men (54 per cent) and almost a third of women (31 per cent) over the age of 70 are still sexually active. A third of these have "frequent" sex at least twice a month.



Many septuagenarians and octogenarians were still affectionate towards their partners, with 31 per cent of men and 20 per cent of women reporting frequent kissing or petting.



Viagra or other erection enhancing drugs were used by just over 7 per cent of men, half of whom reported satisfaction with the results.



Dinodia Photo Library

- Just over 31 per cent of men aged between 80 and 90 had sex or masturbated in the last year, compared to 59 per cent of those in the 70-79 age group. Among women in the same age brackets, the figures were 14 per cent and 34 per cent respectively, though more than 41 per cent of 80-90 year-old women who lived with a partner reported some sexual activity.
- Just over 44 per cent of men masturbated frequently compared to only 15.9 per cent of women.
- Among those who reported sexual activity in the previous year, 1 per cent of men and 10 per cent of women reported that they felt obligated to have sex.
- Problems most frequently reported by sexually active women among 50-90 year-olds were difficulty in becoming sexually aroused (32 per cent) and achieving orgasm (27 per cent), while the most frequently reported problem for men was erectile difficulties (39 per cent).



RTI redress

THE MADHYA PRADESH STATE INFORMATION COMMISSION HAS DECIDED TO EXPEDITE REPLIES TO RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT (RTI) PETITIONS FILED BY WOMEN AND SENIOR CITIZENS.



KOREA AT WORK: Over 40 per cent of Koreans over the age of 65 will continue to work in 2050 to support themselves and their families, according to a report by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs. In 2010, the figure was about 33 per cent.

HDFC Bank just made things easier for silvers. It has announced that it will digitise the submission of Form 15H; at present, the form has to be physically submitted by silvers at their branch to avoid tax deduction at source.



Dinodia Photo Library



advantage all

It literally means 'facility for children and elderly.' **The *yorō shisetsu* is a Japanese 'progressive joint care centre' where kids and silvers interact**, as news agency Reuters tells us. And it serves up a triple whammy: a crèche for kids with working parents, a day centre for lonely silvers and a fantastic way to promote intergenerational bonds. Today, such centres are mushrooming across Japan. One such example is Kotoen, a *yorō shisetsu* in Tokyo's Edogawa Ward—silvers in its care programme have a choice of activities, from changing diapers to serving the children meals or just telling them stories. There are even weekend trips and events to celebrate traditional holidays. An idea worth emulating, to be sure.

ramp-age



Joan Didion, 80,
for Céline

Minimalistic chic is what makes hiring Didion such a coup for Céline

SILVER IS THE NEW BLACK
With 80 year-old Joan Didion, a well-known fashion journalist and essayist, being chosen as the face of Parisian luxury brand Céline, and musical icon Joni Mitchell, 71, fronting an ad for couture house Yves Saint Laurent, **fashion is experiencing a seriously silver moment.** Even more significantly, the two women are not mere clothes-horses. Singer-songwriter-painter Mitchell continues to perform as well as influence young musicians in genres as diverse as folk, jazz, rock and pop. And Didion has remained relevant with the award-winning *The Year of Magical Thinking* (2005), a book on coping with the loss of her husband, and *Blue Nights* (2012), an intense self-examination of the ageing process. In fact, Didion's 1979 collection of essays, *The White Album*, contained her recommendation of a capsule wardrobe for the woman on the go: two skirts, two jerseys or leotards, one pullover, two pairs of shoes and a pair of large sunglasses. This classic, minimalistic chic is what makes hiring her such a coup for Céline. We can't get enough.

POSTERGIRLS WE LOVE



Jessica Lange, 65,
for Marc Jacobs



Helen Mirren, 69,
for L'Oreal



Diane Keaton, 69,
for L'Oreal



Charlotte Rampling, 68,
for Nars



Madonna, 56,
for Versace

Dinodia Photo Library



Part of publishing house Picador's School of Life series, *How to Age*, by British journalist Ann Karpf, discusses ageism, and suggests ways for silvers to redefine 'ageing' positively. "Those who urge us to fight ageing are, in effect, inviting us to stop growing and developing. In so doing, they're depriving us of the opportunity to carry out and successfully complete the task of being alive and human. Individually and collectively we're being infantilised: we should insist on the right to grow up."



Aubrey Cato

PACINO AT WORK

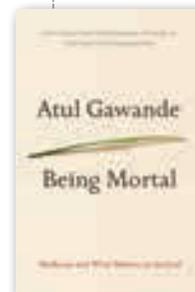
He can relate to his latest character—an ageing actor who fears he's losing his appetite for his craft—but has no intention of following in his footsteps. **The magnificent Al Pacino is back with *The Humbling***, directed by another Oscar winner, filmmaker Barry Levinson, and adapted from a novel by Philip Roth. "I thought I had a better chance of making a movie that was effective because it was about a world I understood,"

Pacino tells *The New York Times*. The 74 year-old remains busier than ever with a bouquet of new projects: reading Shakespeare with the Philadelphia Orchestra; a return to Broadway to appear in David Mamet's *China Doll*; and a possible TV series about Napoleon's final days on the Island of Saint Helena. As for his age, he takes it in his stride. "I do feel differently. I don't quite get up from this table the same way. I may want to but I don't. But that's okay."



Bad medicine

Society's attitude towards death and ageing are central to US-based surgeon and public health researcher author **Atul Gawande's *Being Mortal*** (Penguin; 296 pages), a book that is receiving rave reviews in the US—even President Obama picked up a copy



recently on the First Family's visit to a DC bookstore. As *The Washington Post* reports, the book bemoans the lack of doctors with expertise in geriatrics, highlights how doctors sometimes overmedicate silvers at the cost of their quality of life, and

rues the fact that recalibrated expectations of active ageing have left many silvers feeling inadequate and embarrassed when they are unable to keep up with their more energetic counterparts. "Our reluctance to honestly examine the experience of ageing and dying has increased the harm we inflict on people and denied them the basic comforts they most need," he writes. "Lacking a coherent view of how people might live successfully all the way to their very end, we have allowed our fates to be controlled by the imperatives of medicine, technology and strangers." The book is available on *amazon.in* in hardcover (₹ 325) and Kindle version (₹ 274).



The lustre of copper

From plumbing and utensils to your face, it has sure come a long way. Touted as the latest wonder ingredient, copper is shining bright in a host of anti-ageing products for its antioxidant, anti-bacterial, and collagen- and elastin-boosting properties. London newspaper *Daily Mail* surfs the market:



Tricomin Revitalising Shampoo

£ 26 (about ₹ 2,500)

dermacaredirect.co.uk

A cleansing and body-building formulation that contains copper. Claims to bathe your scalp with essential amino acids and minerals, remove excess build-up and restore lustre.



La Roche-Posay Cicaplast Baume B5

£ 6.50 (about ₹ 620)

laroche-posay.com

Copper peptides help control bacteria growth. Claims to soothe, moisturise and protect sensitive or irritated skin.



Perricone Blue Plasma Cleansing Treatment

£ 36 (about ₹ 3,400)

perriconemd.com

This non-rinse cleaner contains copper to help kill bacteria, clean the skin and prevent inflammatory reactions, while copper gluconate (a peptide) stimulates skin renewal. Claims to remove skin-ageing pollutants.



iS Clinical Super Serum

£ 59 (about ₹ 5,650)

isclinical.com

Contains copper tripeptide to increase collagen and promotes skin-plumping and hydrating hyaluronic acid. Claims to reduce fine lines, wrinkles, scar tissue, stretch marks and poor pigmentation.



Kiehl's Wrinkle Reducing Cream

£ 42 (about ₹ 4,000)

kiehls.com

Contains copper PCA (pyrrolidone carboxylic acid) that regulates moisture in the skin and is a super-antioxidant (40 times more powerful than Vitamin C at getting rid of free radicals). Claims to fortify skin's elasticity and reduce the appearance of wrinkles for smoother skin surface, refined texture and less visible pores.



Illuminage Skin Rejuvenating Pillowcase

£ 50 (about ₹ 4,800)

illuminagebeauty.com

The polyester fabric is woven with copper oxide fibres; as you sleep copper ions are released that stimulate skin regeneration. Claims to reduce the appearance of wrinkles in four weeks.



Thalgo Reviving Marine Mist

£ 25 (about ₹ 2,400)

thalgo.co.uk

Skin-energising seawater concentrate that contains algae, which is copper-rich. Claims to enhance the effectiveness of skincare creams.



Hand Chemistry Hand Cream

£ 14.15 (about ₹ 1,350)

handchemistry.com

Contains copper peptides to boost collagen. Claims to reduce wrinkles by 15 per cent in 15 days.

Philately and proactivity

The silvers at Harmony Interactive Centre in Girgaum, South Mumbai, were introduced to the concept of 'Philately for Grandparents' in a session held on 23 January. The session was conducted by Brigadier (retd) Pavan Kumar Gulati, who is president of The Army Philatelic Society. He began the session by underlining the difference between stamp collection and philately: a collection of stamps is a hobby but studying different types of stamps and postal history is philately. He also introduced the silvers to the 'My Stamp' project initiated by the postal department, where one can make special stamps bearing their own or any other's photograph to mark occasions such as birthdays and wedding anniversaries. You can make a customised stamp at the GPO at the cost of ₹ 300 for six stamps—you just need to fill up a form and provide the soft copy of the photograph of



the subject. Gulati invited the silvers to participate in the project and prepare customised stamps for their grandchildren, reviving the dying era of postal stamps.

A day later, women from the centre attended a self-defence workshop with a succinct message: Be an opponent, not a victim. Organised by the Senior Citizen Association for Women in Andheri, the workshop was conducted by Nitish Saudagar from the All India Shotokan Karate Federation, who highlighted the need for awareness of self-defence techniques among silvers, particularly women. He introduced the audience to simple and effective ways to protect themselves in difficult situations. For instance, he demonstrated how a simple walking stick, commonly used by silvers, can be used to attack an assailant in nine different ways; he also urged silvers to come forward and practise these methods with him. An empowering session indeed!



MAGNIFIER

Available for: Android 2.3 and up

What it does: Tired of trying to read labels and texts with small fonts? Here is an easy-to-use digital magnifier that is a boon for those with poor eyesight. The app has onscreen zoom and lighting controls so you can change it according to your needs; you can also use your phone's flashlight as a torch in low light situations and get a better image. The app enables you to freeze an image and read it comfortably and save or share a magnified image with anyone. Use it at restaurants, movie theatres or anywhere else with low light conditions without bothering to put on your reading glasses.

After installation: Once installed, explore the multiple functions the app offers you. As soon as you open it, it takes you on a quick tour of its functions. You can use the zoom-in function to enlarge text or an image according to your comfort level. You can freeze the image, save it and share it. The app turns on your phone's flashlight automatically in low light. The app also has an image rotating option and comes with an option to read an image in negative for clearer visibility.

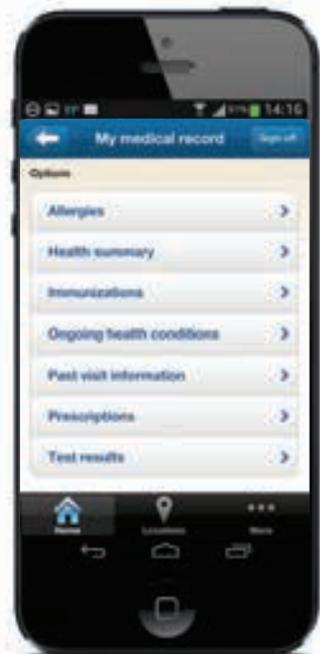
Don't fumble for help in an emergency. Location tracking apps, such as **Real-Time GPS Tracker, GPS Tracker Pro** and **Family Locator - GPS Tracker**, enable you to alert family and friends. For instance, Family Locator - GPS Tracker keeps you connected to your family and friends and informs them about your real-time location. There is also an inbuilt chat feature. In case of an emergency, just press the power button of your phone twice and the application will notify all your emergency contacts about your exact location and alert them about your situation. You can also switch on the 'Follow Me' function when you enter a risky location or are travelling alone. Your designated contacts will get an instant link to your location and will be able to mark you on their private map. Real-Time GPS Tracker and GPS Tracker Pro are similar applications that enable the user to send real-time location and connect with family and friends in case of an emergency. These apps also help you track your phone through their website if it gets lost. The best part: they are free, easy to use, and available on all iOS, Android and Windows phones.

MY MEDICAL

Available for: Android 2.2 and up; iOS 6.0 or later

What it does: This is a comprehensive and secure record-keeping app for personal medical information. It's the perfect replacement for unreliable paper records or electronic systems that hold bits and pieces of your medical history. With My Medical, you can store the medical information of your entire family in one place. Even doctors, nurses and clinicians can use it to maintain notes about their patients. You can import all medical contacts from an address book on the app and add new ones as well. The app also works with your phone or tablet calendar and automatically notifies you about doctor's appointments, prescription due dates and upcoming lab tests. And it provides a range of common test result templates for you to track test results. Further, My Medical is a valuable aid in an emergency situation, as the first responder can quickly access emergency instructions. The app also helps you share your medical information with a doctor or caregiver using email or wireless network or it will generate a Microsoft Excel-readable spreadsheet.

After installation: Once the app is installed, you can register and store complete medical histories for as many people as you wish. Enlist the information under different names and categories like general information, emergency contacts, medication, tests and procedures, allergies, immunisations, surgical procedures, diagnoses, etc, for easy access in the future.





Om's the word. Meditate to maintain your brain in the silver years. According to researchers from University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA), meditation can help preserve gray matter that processes information in the brain. “Accumulating scientific evidence that meditation has brain-altering capabilities might ultimately allow for an effective translation from research to practice,” writes study author Eileen Luders in journal *Frontiers in Psychology*.

Then: Plastic spoons Now: Chandelier

Is your house in need of that extra punch of light? Here's an extremely funky yet inexpensive light/lampshade that can be easily created with just plastic spoons and a plastic bottle. When assembled, the shape of the spoons creates a fascinating piece of artwork. All you need is about 100 plastic spoons, a big plastic bottle or can, a lamp or bulb with a cable, a sharp cutting knife, pliers and a glue gun. To begin with, cut out a big hole in the bottom of a plastic bottle. Then, cut the handles of all the spoons and decide the pattern for the shade. Start gluing the spoons to the bottle in the desired pattern until the whole bottle is covered with spoons and looks like a shell-shaped lamp. Once this is done, it is time to make a collar for the bottleneck, to cover it up. Glue a couple of spoons together in a circular shape, and stick to the bottles to fully cover the neck. Now put the cable through the bottle inside, install a light bulb and hang up your new lamp!



RECYCLING FACTS

- An average Indian uses around 500 disposable plastic spoons over the course of 12 months. Indians even toss out enough paper, plastic cups, forks and spoons every year to circle the equator 300 times.
- Plastic takes up to 1,000 years to degrade in a landfill. Recycling plastic takes 88 per cent less energy than making plastic from raw materials.

MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. STICK COLOURFUL PLASTIC SPOONS, INTERLOCKING EACH OTHER, ON CIRCULAR HARDBOARD LEAVING AN EMPTY CIRCULAR CENTRE. NOW STICK A MIRROR TO THE CENTRE AND ENJOY YOUR COOL WALL MIRROR.
2. CONVERT A BUNCH OF PLASTIC SPOONS INTO A CANDLE STAND BY STICKING THEM ON TOP OF EACH OTHER IN ALTERNATING DIRECTIONS.

berry good

The blueberry has further cemented its reputation as a superfood. Researchers at the Department of Nutrition, Food and Exercise Sciences at Florida State University believe **regular consumption of blueberries could potentially delay the progression of pre-hypertension to hypertension**, thereby reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

The study suggests that daily consumption improves blood pressure and arterial stiffness in postmenopausal women with pre and stage-1 hypertension. Over an eight-week period, 48 postmenopausal women with pre and stage-1 hypertension were assigned to add blueberry in their diet. The participants, meanwhile, continued their normal diet and exercise routines. At the end of the eight weeks, participants receiving the blueberry powder on average had 5.1 per cent decrease in systolic blood pressure, the first number in the reading that measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats. They also found that nitric oxide, a blood biomarker known to be involved in the widening of blood vessels, increased by 68.5 per cent. This is important because arterial stiffness and the narrowing of blood vessels are both part of hypertension. This rise in nitric oxide helps explain the reduction in blood pressure.

Previous studies on blueberries have shown positive effects on cardiovascular risk factors including blood pressure, but they all included large amounts of blueberry powder consumption, anywhere from 50 gm to 250 gm. In the case of 250 gm, that would translate to over 11 cups of fresh blueberries, which may not be realistic for people to consume on a regular basis.



Dinodia Photo Library

health areas where blueberries may play a role



CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH



BRAIN HEALTH



INSULIN RESPONSE



CANCER RISK REDUCTION

Low in fat

A one-cup serving contains only 80 calories and virtually no fat.

Full of phytonutrients

Research suggests that the phytonutrients in blueberries, called polyphenols, have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that may reduce the inflammatory process associated with chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, and other age-related diseases.

Full of dietary fibre

A handful of blueberries help satisfy recommended daily fibre intake. Fibre helps keep the body regular, heart healthy and cholesterol in check.

Packed with Vitamin C

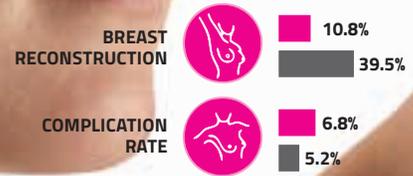
One serving delivers almost 25 per cent of one's daily requirement of Vitamin C that aids collagen formation and helps maintain healthy gums and capillaries, and a healthy immune system.

An excellent source of manganese

Manganese plays an important role in bone development and conversion of proteins, carbohydrates and fats into energy.



Dinodia Photo Library



MASTECTOMY AND BEYOND

Breast reconstruction is a significant step for women who have undergone a mastectomy to regain their self-confidence and self-esteem. And the good news is that silver women don't have an increased overall risk of complications from breast reconstruction after mastectomy, reports the February issue of *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, the official journal of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons. However, there's some bad news too. The researchers suggest that **women aged 65 or older are at increased risk of blood clot-related complications after tissue-based breast reconstruction.** Using a national surgery database, the researchers identified nearly 41,100 women who had unilateral mastectomy (removal of one breast) between 2005 and 2012. Of these, about 11,800 patients underwent breast reconstruction. Women aged 65 or older were less likely to have breast reconstruction: 10.8 per cent compared to 39.5 per cent for younger women. Compared to just mastectomy, women undergoing breast reconstruction had more complications, including increased hospital days and repeat surgeries. The complication rate after breast reconstruction was 6.8 per cent for older women and 5.2 per cent for younger women. The overall risk of complications did not differ significantly between age groups, after adjustment for other factors. The risk remained the same for older and younger women undergoing breast reconstruction using implants. However, after autologous reconstruction—creation of a new breast using the patient's own tissues—the risk of blood clot-related complications, called venous thromboembolism (VTE), was significantly higher for older women. VTE is a common and serious condition in which blood clots form in the leg or other veins (deep vein thrombosis) or lung (pulmonary embolism). On adjusted analysis, VTE risk was nearly four times higher in women aged 65 or older, and more than six times higher for those aged 70 to 75.

Dinodia Photo Library

ALZHEIMER'S IN THE BLOOD Neuroscientists at the University of Southern California have solved another puzzle in the Alzheimer's mystery. The study found that breakdown in the brain's memory and learning centre can be detected before cognitive loss begins; brain scans may be able to detect changes in blood vessels in the brain's hippocampus before they cause irreversible damage, which can lead to dementia characterised by progressive loss of memory, cognition and learning.





Dinodia Photo Library

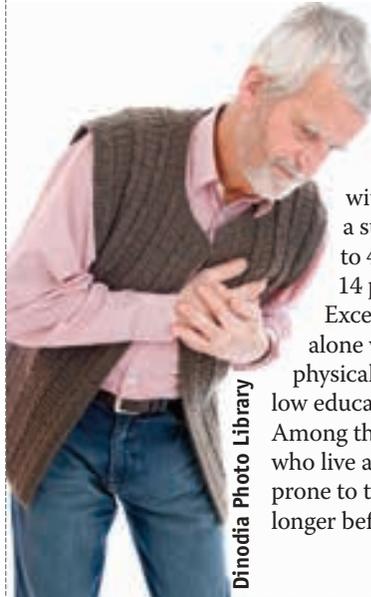
DON'T CONDEMN SALT Salt consumption may not be as bad for silvers as previously assumed, suggests a new study published online by *JAMA Internal Medicine*. The authors analysed the health of 2,642 adults (51.2 per cent of whom were women) over a period of 10 years and found that 881 of the participants had died, 572 had developed cardiovascular disease (CVD) and 398 developed health failure (HF). But sodium intake was not associated with mortality or new development of CVD or HF. The data emphasises the need for strong evidence before applying a policy of sodium restriction to older adults beyond the current recommendation for the general adult population.

Alone and at risk

A study of adults in western Sweden who had experienced a stroke before the age of 70 found that those who live alone are likely to die within 12 years. Also, **single men have a considerably greater risk of dying prematurely than women or men who live with a partner.** As part of the Sahlgremska

Academy Study on Ischemic Stroke (SAHLSIS), Petra Redford examined the long-term prognosis for 1,090 victims of ischemic stroke before the age of 70 and found that 36 per cent of patients living alone, as opposed to 17 per cent of those with partners, died within 12 years after a stroke. Among men, the gap widened to 44 per cent when living alone versus 14 per cent when living with a partner.

Excess mortality associated with living alone was still found after adjusting for physical inactivity, high alcohol consumption, low educational level and other risk factors. Among the conceivable causes are that people who live alone lead less healthy lives, are less prone to take their medication and tend to wait longer before going to the emergency room.



Dinodia Photo Library

Healthier together

A study of older couples published online by *JAMA Internal Medicine* finds that both **men and women are more likely to quit smoking, become physically active and lose weight if their partner joins them in healthy behaviour.** The difference is significant: 66 per cent of silver women take up physical exercise if their husband does and only 24 per cent if he does not. Similarly, smokers with consistently non-smoking partners and physically inactive people with consistently active partners had higher odds of quitting smoking and becoming physically active. The authors used data from 3,722 silver couples, who were married or living together, for the study.



Dinodia Photo Library

Wild passion

For wildlife photographer **Naresh Bedi**, who was recently honoured with a Padma Shri, the journey of a thousand adventures began in a childhood spent on the banks of the Ganga. His family then lived in Haridwar and his pets included a python, jackal, badger and mongoose. His most enduring memory? Spotting a tigress in the sugarcane fields behind his house.

“My father was interested in wildlife and plants and worked on research projects. My brother Rajesh and I would take photographs for him and went on field trips with him in the Himalaya,” reminisces Bedi, whose father, an Ayurvedic doctor, was a noted wildlife photographer and authored many books on the subject.

Bedi’s journey from being a young wildlife enthusiast to the Padma Shri in 2015 has been a passionate and thrilling ride. He was the first Asian to receive a Wildscreen Panda Award (the ‘Green Oscar’) in 1984, which crowned a five-year labour of love that culminated in the documentary film, *The Ganges Ghariyal*. “It was the era of dacoits in the Chambal valley and we had a former dacoit as a bodyguard,” he says with a smile. Fighting snow blizzards, riding on yaks in the mountains, sitting atop trees and filming atop an elephant with a tripod, Bedi says he couldn’t have wished for any other career.

The family moved to Delhi in 1962. Four years later, he decided to enrol for a course in documentary film-making at the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune. “I was always clear that I did not want to do commercial cinema. Even as a student, I had shot the Shirala Snake

Festival. I remember one shot in particular... it was raining and I shot the black umbrellas. It was published in *National Geographic* magazine too,” says Bedi, who is also the recipient of the Earth Watch Award of the National Geographic Society.

In 1970, the Bedi brothers (Naresh and his younger brother Rajesh) decided to make filmmaking a full-time career. In 1977, the Kumbh Mela was approaching and the Bedis shot myriad *sadhu* on the main bathing day at the *samagam* in Allahabad. Senior BBC journalist and Indophile Sir Mark Tully introduced the brothers to Tony Isaacs, an executive producer with the BBC who had produced *The World About Us*, and the Bedis shot an hour-long film on the Kumbh Mela, titled *The Holy Man of India*. It was aired on BBC and later won the gold medal at the 28th International Film and Television Festival of New York in 1983.

They spent time with the tigers of Kanha after Project Tiger was launched. Three years later, they returned with footage for two films: *Saving The Tiger* and *Man-Eating Tiger*. They shot elephants in Corbett, then set off for Ladakh, where they shot the bar-headed goose, lynx, wild dogs, ibex and the snow leopard. They also documented the red panda in the Eastern Himalaya in 2006 and did some hot air-ballooning over Rajasthan to capture some rare footage.

Bedi is now preparing to make another film on the snow leopard in Spiti. “My mother grew quite used to telling people that we were in the jungle,” he laughs. Later his wife would say the same and now his children, Ajay and Vijay. That ‘jungle tale’ is likely to become the stuff of legend in the family as both Bedi’s sons are wildlife photographers and are already taking his legacy forward.

—Ambica Gulati



Himanshu Kumar



Anupam Kher



Dolly Thakore



R K Laxman



R R Patil

BIRTHDAYS

Bihar Chief Minister **Nitish Kumar** turned 64 on 1 March.

Actor and filmmaker **Anupam Kher** turned 60 on 7 March.

Tabla maestro and composer **Zakir Hussain** turns 64 on 9 March.

Veteran theatre actor **Dolly Thakore** turns 72 on 10 March.

Australian media mogul **Rupert Murdoch** turns 84 on 11 March.

Former chief minister of Maharashtra **Prithviraj Chavan** turns 69 on 17 March.

IN PASSING

Legendary cartoonist **R K Laxman** passed away following cardiac arrest on 26 January. He was 93.

Hockey Olympian **Jaswant Singh Rajput** died on 28 January following prolonged illness. He was 88.

Creator of the popular hazelnut-chocolate spread Nutella **Michele Ferrero** died on 14 February after prolonged illness. He was 89.

Noted Urdu poet and litterateur **Dr Kalim Ahmed Ajiz** died on 15 February. He was 90.

Former home minister of Maharashtra and NCP leader **R R Patil** died on 16 February at the age of 57, following a lengthy battle with cancer.

MILESTONES

- VETERAN ACTOR **KAMINI KAUSHAL** WAS AWARDED THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD AT THE 60TH FILMFARE AWARDS 2014 FOR HER CONTRIBUTION TO THE HINDI FILM INDUSTRY.
- EMINENT MARATHI WRITER **BALCHANDRA NEMADE** HAS BEEN CHOSEN FOR THE JNANPITH AWARD 2014 FOR HIS EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO MARATHI LITERATURE.
- ECONOMIST AND NOBEL LAUREATE **AMARTYA SEN** WAS AWARDED THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED CHARLESTON-EFG JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES PRIZE 2015 FOR HIS GROUNDBREAKING WORK IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS WORLDWIDE.



OVERHEARD

“Look, you get older. Passion is a young man's game. Young people can be passionate. Older people have got to be wiser. You're around a while; you leave certain things to the young. Don't try to act like you're young—you could really hurt yourself. Instead, enjoy the new things you can do, right the wrongs of your life.”

American rock icon Bob Dylan, 73, tells AARP on the occasion of the release of his 36th album, Shadows In The Night, which sees him performing a set of classic songs written from the 1920s to the 1960s

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.

BACK TO SCHOOL

As retirement approached after 30 years in the Indian Navy, my first thought was that I should get into the teaching profession. I have always loved being a teacher, having been inspired by my mother who taught at the Kendriya Vidyalaya at BITS Pilani, where I schooled and later studied engineering.

I retired in 2003 and I am so glad that I secured a master's degree in management during my service because I knew that job prospects as a civilian depended a lot on these degrees. Soon after I hung up my uniform, I was offered a job at ICFAI Business School (IBS), where I taught for 10 years. It was an enriching experience because I have always loved being with fresh, young minds. It also gave me the opportunity to go back to my first love: rural development.

I worked hard to coax MBA students to do their internships with NGOs in the rural sector but there were very few takers. Yet those who did take on the challenge did a great job and their papers were published along with two of my books on rural development. I conducted a number of workshops for various rural NGOs, and one of them, Resource Mobilisation and Communication for NGOs, was certified by a UK-based agency.

Next, I took a break and returned to another talent, photography, which goes back to my school days. I also started to write a blog and used my pictures to illustrate my stories. I must be doing something right, which is probably why I have nearly 20,000 viewers reading my blog! I am also passionate about playing golf, and catch a game or two as often as I can. I love the game for two reasons: it helps me connect with nature and gives me the chance to meet like-minded people. It really brightens up my day!

Now I am back to teaching twice a week at a nearby business school. I need to stay in touch with my subject as well as youngsters as this keeps me up-to-date and my



Shyamola Khanna

After retirement, Bhargava revisits his passions

mind alert. My suggestion to other service officers, and anyone else on the verge of retirement, is that they develop a hobby or an interest. If you do not have that, the slide can be very quick. Learn a new language, learn art or learn how to deal with the stock market... learn anything that keeps your mind ticking. And, remember, it's never too late to learn. It could be something you wanted to do but never got around to doing. If you cannot learn something new, volunteer your services to an organisation that needs your help. Everyone has their own strengths.

—Commodore (retd) Harsh Bhargava, Hyderabad

PIANO MAN

R D Burman, Pyarelal, Billy Taylor, Chico Freeman, Roman Rudnytsky are just some of the names that come to mind when I try and list the people whose pianos I have tuned. Moving on to South Indian musicians, from maestro Illayaraja and Oscar-winner A R Rahman to the very young Anirudh, I have had the privilege of tuning their pianos as



Chennai Pix

Pianos are a source of satisfaction for Rao

well. None of this would have been possible if I were not given the opportunity to prove my skill by Giridar Das, the gentleman who bought Chennai-based music company Musee Musicals from the British.

I have worked for this company for 50 years, and I tune pianos for them to this day. My career began in a small town called Masulipatnam, where I learnt to repair harmonium boxes. My father had just passed away and I needed to support my family. My guru N V Ratnavarma repaired the harmonium boxes of great musicians like Balamuralikrishna, Sri Parupalli Ramakrishnayya Pantulu and Veenai Dhanammal, and taught me music as well. But, most important, he introduced me to the engineering aspect of the instruments. By the time I was 15 years old, I was making single-reed harmoniums on my own.

After that, I worked in Kannan Harmonium Shop in 1951 in Georgetown, then in a very small guitar repairing shop in Park Town called 'Madras Musical Warehouse'. The shop was just big enough for one person to sit in, and every day on his way home for lunch, Giridar Das watched me work. I had a friend in Musee Musicals who required an assistant; delighted with my speed and agility with guitars, I was given a life-changing opportunity to work there in 1955.

I have a God-given gift for sound and would spend hours at Musee Musicals. People could never understand why I was there. I would literally forget my family and relatives, and focus solely on the piano. It went beyond remuneration. Many tuners would come and I would sit on a footstool and watch them work. One day, I told my boss I wanted to tune pianos. He smiled and said the piano was not easy to tune. But, he said, if I knew the job well, I should do it. Otherwise I should not, because it would damage the company's reputation and the trust it had built in clients over the years. I will never forget those words.

I have a confession to make: there was a time I wanted to become a music director. I was able to grasp sounds and sing in the same tune and rhythm immediately. I never did become a music director but I was able to help so many people play wonderful music.

Now at the age of 79, I may not work full-time but I still spend at least four hours a day tuning pianos at Musee Musicals or at the homes of customers. When I am not tuning, I am at home doing research. I have a small keyboard and my own toolset, and I spend hours studying the instrument. It's all that matters to me.

—S Venkateswara Rao, Chennai

Aja's school

PRATAP PATNAIK, 75
BHUBANESWAR



The children studying in my preschool are like my grandchildren and affectionately call me *aja*, or grandfather in Odia. I became a franchisee of Kidzee in 2008, with just 11 students. The journey has been a great learning experience and today we have two branches, in Chandrasekharpur and in Jagmara, with over 250 students on our rolls. As my actual grandchildren live outside Bhubaneswar, these children keep me very busy.

I am a civil engineer and I retired from M D Orissa Bridge Construction Corporation in 1999 and settled in Bhubaneswar. I also have an LLB degree, so after retirement I registered with the Odisha Bar and started practising in the Odisha High Court. I also received many offers as a consultant in the field of engineering but having devoted my entire career to civil engineering, I was determined to do something else after retirement.

I come from a village in what is now Jharkhand, and studied in a small school. Therefore, nature is very close to my heart. I always wanted to be a farmer and bought 10 acre of land in Katabadi, 20 km from Bhubaneswar. For five years, my partners and I supplied seeds to the Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology as well as the Odisha State Seeds Corporation but suffered huge losses owing to intermittent elephant herd attacks. My son advised me to sell the property and I did.

The question was, what should I do with my time now that I was retired? After some deliberation, my children advised me to start a school as I loved kids; after a lot of research, I decided to become a franchisee of the Kidzee chain of preschools. We opened ours at my daughter's

house at Chandrasekharpur. It includes a play group, nursery, junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten classes as well as various extracurricular activities. I have always placed a premium on education, and both my daughters and my son are very well-qualified. I consider preschool the first building block towards that end.

I am keenly involved with the school and am present there from 7 am to 2 pm. The day-to-day affairs are managed by a school coordinator, but I keep a sharp eye on the goings-on. Our dedication has been richly rewarded with many awards and certificates. In fact, we are the only Kidzee with five tiers in the state. Last year, we were awarded a 'golden star' for being the best Kidzee School in Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha. We have also managed to compete with some top schools in Bhubaneswar.

I run these preschools not for profit per se but because I love children, and the love and respect I receive in return keeps me going. I live a simple life and have simple habits. I am also deeply religious and spend most afternoons in our neighbourhood temple, of which I am the president.

I have also travelled across the globe thanks to my children. I have visited Europe, Australia, Singapore, Thailand and many other places. I lovingly visit my son overseas but I always look forward to returning to my school, which resonates with the laughter of tiny tots. My experience with preschools has been so good that my next goal is to build a high school. We have received the necessary permissions and I plan to open a school up to Std V by next year.

—As told to Ruby Nanda



YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR



In yoga, the science of nostril breathing and health is a full-fledged branch on its own. And recent research in neurology is confirming much of what our yogis recorded in ancient times. A study by Florida-based Dr Kenneth Heilman has found that chronic blockage of the left nostril (tested through the ability to smell peanut butter) was an indicator for the onset of Alzheimer's. In fact, one of the reasons for forceful exhalation in certain *pranayama* or alternate nostril breathing in others is to facilitate (or even force) both nostrils to maintain a state of balance. It is found that most of us switch nostril dominance every two hours or so. Those with chronic ailments, however, favour one nostril. In fact, many psychological problems are also tracked to such a chronic state of nostril dominance, according to Dr V S Ramachandran in his exciting book, *Phantoms in the Brain*. Yogis used the *danda* (the curved stick often seen in ancient Indian art) to manage their nostril flow and bring errant breathing under control.

PISCES

20 February to 20 March

Pisceans are daydreamers who give their heart to the world. With super-strong intuition verging on the psychic, the Piscean lives in two worlds: One of his making and the other where his heart connects. The dreaming helps the Piscean be creative while the compassionate nature makes the Piscean hypersensitive. In fact, the need to please everyone may make the Piscean indecisive.

As they are social creatures, the problem of indulgence and associated issues are an issue for Pisceans. Because of their hypersensitivity, they are also prone to psychosomatic ailments. Often, this could have something to do with respiratory and sinus troubles. Water retention, too, (being a fish sign) is an issue, as is trouble with excessive mucous. Taking on more trouble by lending their shoulders for others to cry on means the Piscean can end up thoroughly fatigued. Constantly looking out for the other guy can be exhausting indeed!

The Piscean needs to be grounded through the *asana* practice. Having moderate but regular *sadhana* is the first step. Practices to make the legs stronger (because Pisceans are also artists who use their limbs) could also help. Inversions like the shoulder stand (*sarvangasana*) and headstand (*sirsasana*), and standing balancers like the standing crescent (*ardha chandrasana*), will help. Breathing (*pranayama*) practices that help remove mucous, like the skull cleanser (*kapalabhati*), must be done every day. Inversions also help drain water from the body and clear the lungs of mucus overload. There should be more focus on leg-strengthening poses that will help ground the dreamer in the Piscean—either supine poses or standing ones like the warrior (*virabhadrasana*) series.



Warrior pose (virabhadrasana)

Stand with feet a metre apart; right foot pointed out right side, left foot turned in, hands out at shoulder level. Inhale; exhale to lower the hips straight down, with the right foot lightly bent at the knee. Continue normal breathing and hold the pose, looking towards the right palm. Maintain aware-

ness at the arms to ensure both are in one straight line. The back leg and hips should take the brunt of the pose. Hold for 15 seconds. Do for the other side. Increase stamina in final pose with regular practice. Avoid if you have problems with your knee or lower back. In that case, hold the pose without bending the knee.

Benefits: This pose builds overall muscle tone, promotes mental stamina and strength, and grounds the mind.

Model: Anita Namole,
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 truth about H₂O: Are you drinking enough, or too much?

Water is the largest constituent of the body; in an average person, it makes up 70 per cent of body weight. To mark World Water Day on 22 March, we look deeper into how much water your body really needs.

For starters, let's bust some common myths about H₂O.

Myth: Water promotes weight loss.

Fact: Water does not directly affect weight loss. But staying hydrated could help you avoid overeating and stop craving extra snacks and food that lead to weight gain. Drinking a glass of water right before a meal helps you feel fuller and eat less.

Myth: Everyone must drink eight glasses of water a day.

Fact: There is no truth to the claim that everyone needs exactly eight glasses of water a day. Water is important for good health and it is your best choice to satisfy thirst, but other liquids are also hydrating. The amount of water you need to hydrate your body varies daily and depends on factors like your gender, physical size and how active you are, as well as environmental factors like heat and humidity. To stay hydrated, drink plain water plus other beverages like milk, coffee or tea throughout the day. And remember to drink more in hot weather and when you are very active.

Myth: Don't drink water with meals.

Fact: While you shouldn't drink excessive amounts, a small glass with a meal will help your food to be covered more easily with digestive juices.

Myth: Drinking water at night will speed your metabolism.

Fact: Chugging water at night could interfere with a restful sleep. Your bladder may rouse you well before your alarm. Actually, some people drink

lots of water before they go to bed in order to get up earlier in the morning via the need to relieve their bladder.

Myth: Drinking lots of water helps clear out toxins.

Fact: Kidneys filter toxins from our bloodstream. Then the toxins clear through the urine. Drinking large amounts of water surprisingly tends to reduce the kidney's ability to function as a filter. It's a subtle decline, but definite.

Myth: Bottled water is better than tap water.

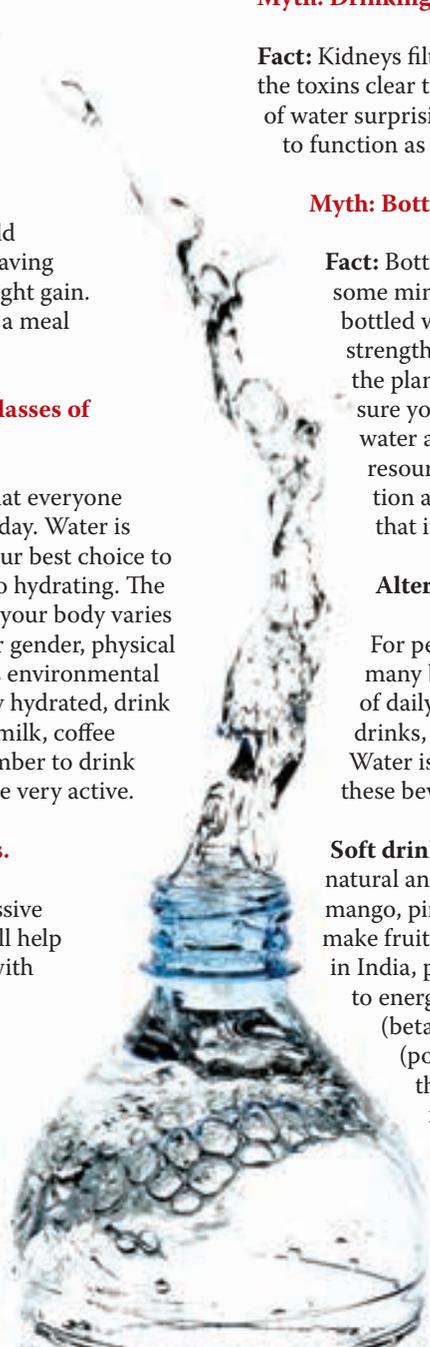
Fact: Bottled water can contain lower levels of some minerals than tap water. For example, most bottled waters don't contain the fluoride that strengthens teeth. Also you can save cash (and the planet) by drinking tap water. Just make sure you get a quality filter/purifier. Using tap water also helps protect the environment as the resources and energy involved in the production and delivery of bottled water is so high that it is actually counterproductive.

Alternatives to water

For people who scarcely drink water, there are many beverages that provide a large proportion of daily fluid intake, such as tea, coffee, soft drinks, fruit juices, soups, buttermilk and milk. Water is the main constituent of all these beverages.

Soft drinks come generally in two categories: natural and synthetic. Orange, lemon, grape, mango, pineapple and apple are generally used to make fruit juices. Sugarcane is also extensively used in India, particularly during summers. In addition to energy, natural fruit juices provide vitamins (beta carotene, Vitamin C) and minerals (potassium, calcium). Being potassium-rich, these drinks are ideal for those suffering from hypertension. Compared to natural fruit juices, synthetic drinks do not contain nutrients unless they are fortified. Generally, synthetic drinks are prepared using preservatives, artificial colours and flavours such as cola,

Dinodia Photo Library



There is no truth to the claim that everyone needs exactly eight glasses of water a day. Water is important for good health and it is your best choice to satisfy thirst, but other liquids are also hydrating

orange, mango and lime. And they are mostly carbonated. Carbonated beverages contain phosphoric acid and may damage the enamel of the teeth and affect appetite if taken in excessive amounts. Thus, natural beverages like buttermilk, fruit juices, coconut water, soups, tea and coffee are better alternatives to synthetic drinks.

Tea and coffee are often taken at the start of the day for their effect as stimulants. Taken hot, these beverages induce intestinal peristaltic activity, which is useful to stimulate normal bowel evacuation. They also provide a large proportion of daily fluid intake. In diarrhoea, they are useful drinks to combat dehydration.

Milk is a well-accepted and wholesome food and beverage for all age groups. It contains most of the nutrients necessary for growth and development and provides a large amount of daily fluid intake. Further, solid foods, particularly **fruits and vegetables**, also contain a high proportion of water. In fact, almost all foodstuffs (except pure fat) contain varying amounts of water. For instance, cooked rice contains about 70 per cent of water and cucumber about 97 per cent. When food is metabolised, the ultimate breakdown products are carbon dioxide and water. The total water available from oxidation of food is about 300 ml per day.

Daily requirement

As mentioned above, a person's water requirements vary considerably according to the climate, dietetic habits, activities and body build; as such, it is not possible to specify a daily requirement. As a working rule, a person should take enough fluid to excrete 1,200-1,500 ml of urine a day. In the tropics, where much water is lost through perspiration, about seven to 10 glasses (2,400-3,000ml) of fluids are needed to maintain this volume of urine. In fact, the colour of urine is a practical guide to the adequacy of fluid intake: in a healthy person, pale yellow urine indicates adequate intake while dark coloured urine indicates insufficient fluid intake.

Excess water

When excess water is taken, especially when excretion is deficient as in kidney or adrenal failure, water intoxication

READERS ASK

I am a 55 year-old woman reaching menopause. I am suffering from symptoms such as weight gain, hot flashes and night sweats. What are the foods to eat as well as avoid to ease the symptoms?

Every woman experiences different symptoms during menopause. Most have hot flashes, some feel irritable and a smaller number battles headaches, nausea and night sweats. Avoid hot drinks, spicy foods and caffeine; they can all trigger hot flashes. Isoflavones, compounds found in soybeans and other legumes, provide relief from hot flashes. Eat or drink two servings of soy a day; also have chickpeas, lentils, tofu or soymilk. Fruits and vegetables contain phytoestrogens that diminish discomforts caused by lower oestrogen levels during menopause. Eat more of the right fats like fish, olive oil, canola oil and nuts, and avoid unhealthy fats like transfatty acids and unsaturated fats like chips and cookies. Eat calcium-rich foods every day like low-fat yogurt, cottage cheeses, leafy green vegetables and broccoli. Minimise extra calories from high-sugar foods that don't provide a bounty of nutrients. Add flaxseeds to your diet; these contain omega-3 that helps decrease blood cholesterol levels. They also have lignin, which blocks some of the effects of oestrogen your body naturally produces. Manage your weight with regular exercise; it will decrease bone loss, relieve stress, boost circulation and improve the body's ability to absorb nutrients.

can occur. Ingesting more water than you need could increase your total blood volume. And as your blood volume exists within a closed system (your circulatory system), needlessly increasing your blood volume on a regular basis puts unnecessary burden on your heart and blood vessels. The symptoms of water intoxication are weakness, lethargy, confusion, vomiting, coma and convulsion. The condition is treated by withholding water and being given a dry diet. In severe cases, hypertonic saline may have to be administered intravenously.

Thus, be wise when it comes to water—drink enough to stay hydrated and healthy. But remember, there can always be too much of a good thing!

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



Reclaim control: While Parkinson's can challenge the body, a positive mind and family support can do wonders

"I can't always control my body the way I want to, and I can't control when I feel good or when I don't. I can control how clear my mind is. And I can control how willing I am to step up if someone needs me," says actor and Parkinson's disease fighter Michael J Fox, who has launched the Michael J Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research.

Parkinson's disease distresses both the sufferer and the caretaker. It occurs owing to deficiency of dopamine. Usually beginning in one's 60s or 70s, it has a prolonged course towards disability. As changes come on slowly, silvers often ascribe them to ageing and the disease may become quite advanced before it is properly diagnosed. Some differences in symptoms are seen depending on the age it begins. When it starts in middle age, one may experience a very marked tremor; rigidity and difficulties with movement may develop later. In older people, the tremor is sometimes absent or very slight, but there is severe muscle stiffness, movement problems and sometimes mental impairment.

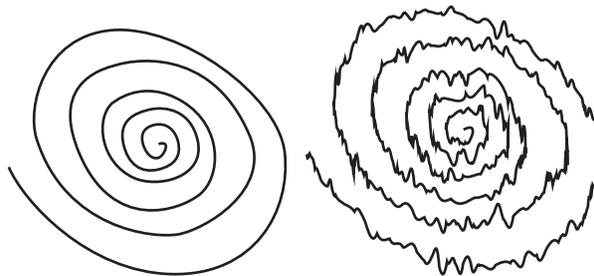
Symptoms

The tremor often starts in the hands, and progressively involves the face, tongue and legs. It is worse at rest and is lessened during purposeful movements. It disappears altogether during sleep. The tremor becomes much worse during stress and the embarrassment felt may limit social activity dramatically.

Rigidity

Because of the muscle stiffness that occurs with the disease, the person may adopt a stooped and flexed posture.

This often makes breathing less efficient as the chest cannot be expanded fully and the strange positioning of joints may lead to pain. The rigidity affects the facial muscles too and the person often has a fixed expression with staring eyes and infrequent blinking.



When Parkinson's disease starts in middle age, one may experience a very marked tremor

Physical difficulties

A person with Parkinson's disease has difficulty in starting movements (such as walking), and maintaining and controlling them. Getting up from a chair and turning over in bed are difficult movements. Walking is also hard; they tend to take short, shuffling steps and rise up on their toes—this frequently causes falls. When trying to turn or to deal with an obstacle in their path (such as a doorway), they may stop for no apparent reason and be unable to start walking again.

Difficulty in swallowing, heartburn and constipation are common, and loss of weight is liable to occur.

Speech difficulties

In Parkinson's disease, the speech muscles become stiff and uncoordinated. Speech is often indistinct and tends to speed up so that it is difficult to understand the end of a sentence. The voice tends to be all on one level.

Mental difficulties

As mentioned above, there may be mental impairment when Parkinson's disease develops in old age, with dementia-like symptoms. Depression is also a common feature, which is understandable given the very disabling nature of the disorder. It is made worse when caregivers or others do not understand the problems and behave in an

indifferent, belittling or patronising manner towards the sufferer.

Consequences of the disease

“Parkinson’s is a slow but inevitable process,” said actor Helen Mirren. “It’s hard living with it on a daily basis. The difficulty facing people with it is that they never quite know, ‘Can I or can’t I do this today?’”

- Falls are frequent and may lead to serious injuries.
- Difficulty in walking.
- Clumsiness leads to difficulties in performing daily activities like eating, drinking, washing, dressing and many others. This in turn leads to deterioration of physical health.
- Owing to difficulty in movement, the patient may be confined to bed. This leads to urinary tract infections, pressure sores, chest infections and constipation.

Treatment

Parkinson’s disease is a progressive disease, but manageable if treated early. However, there is no true cure and all patients ultimately get worse. The patient and relatives need to understand the nature of the disease and what can be done to help. Nutrition should include sufficient fluids, calories and roughage. Laxatives may be required for constipation.

- **Drugs:** Medicines are now available to control the disease but have some side-effects. As treatment is prolonged, the effects of the drug begin to wear off after some time. The drugs should be started with a low dosage and gradually stepped up till the symptoms are controlled. The patient can be treated with one of the following drugs: Levodopa plus decarboxylase inhibitor, Dopamine agonists, Monoamine oxidase inhibitor and Amantidine.
- **Physiotherapy:** Physical therapy is required for the rest of the patient’s life. Relatives are encouraged to cooperate with the exercises. Heat and oil massage are soothing to the stiff, painful muscles. A person with Parkinson’s requires the physiotherapist’s advice on the best ways of achieving mobility because of the stiffness and rigidity in almost all muscles. While walking, well-fitting, strong shoes should be worn. A walking aid may be used. As mentioned earlier, stress and tension make the patient worse and people around should be patient and kind. Along with family support, the resolve to get up and fight will make all the difference.

READERS ASK

I am 70 years old and have a peculiar problem. After any meal, I feel drowsy. If I sleep for about an hour, I wake up refreshed. Is it a sign of ill health or normal ageing?

There are three reasons for feeling drowsy after a heavy meal:

- Blood pressure decreases significantly after a meal. This condition is called post-prandial hypotension. The incidence is greatest in silvers with hypertension or autonomic nervous system dysfunction. To confirm this condition, blood pressure should be measured once before a meal and again 30-60 minutes after a meal. These patients should not take hypotensive drugs before meals and should lie down after meals. The dose of blood pressure medicine may be reduced.
- Blood sugar shooting up suddenly may also lead to a drowsy state. It is common among diabetic people, particularly those who take a semi-solid or liquid diet that causes rapid absorption of sugar from the intestine, which in turn leads to high blood sugar. To avoid this condition, a semi-solid or liquid diet should be avoided.
- After a heavy meal, blood circulation to the stomach increases to enable digestion. This reduces blood circulation to the brain, which is responsible for the drowsy state. This condition is more common among diabetic people. Small, frequent meals will decrease the incidence of all the above mentioned causes. As you don’t suffer from any major diseases like hypertension or diabetes, you need not worry about your condition. Try to take small, frequent meals for some relief.

- **Surgery:** Neurosurgical treatment like pallidotomy (ablation), thalamotomy, electrical stimulation and foetal tissue transplantation are currently being tried on selected patients, who are resistant to medical therapy.

You can affect change if you are bold, strong and positive. After all, Parkinson’s can shake you but it can’t break you. To sign off on a lighter note, here’s a quip by Anshul Nankana: What is preferable, Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s? Parkinson’s. It’s better to spill half the peg of scotch than to forget where you kept the bottle!

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



HIS LADLE LOVE BY PRATIBHA JAIN

Keeping it simple

KULBHUSHAN KHANNA • PATHANKOT

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

While cooking, I simply take the ingredients in my masala *dabba* for granted—cumin, chilli powder, turmeric and asafoetida feature in most of my Indian dishes. So I do not think twice before adding ginger and green chillies to a dish! But I was forced to examine this presupposition when I met Kulbhushan Khanna, a retired Navy commander from Gurgaon,

now residing in Pathankot. He reeled off one recipe after another while I kept repeating the same questions: No turmeric? No coriander powder? Not even asafoetida? His answer was simple: Know the power of each and every ingredient. Decide whether it is really needed in a specific dish or not! Chuck away your stereotyped recipes and habits. Think for yourself

and be creative. Needless to say, my interview with Kulbhushanji was a thought-provoking experience. I also came to realise how important it is to keep oneself occupied and happy. We spoke about many things—life after retirement, being alone yet happy, exercising one's creativity, and many, many recipes.

Namaste Kulbhushanji. To begin with, how long did you work in the Navy?

I graduated in 1967 and joined the Navy. At that time, graduation was a sufficient qualification. I served for 20 years and, in 1987, I opted for premature retirement.



Amit Gaur

“Know the power of each and every ingredient. Decide whether it is really needed in a specific dish or not! Chuck away your stereotyped recipes and habits. Think for yourself and be creative”

When did you move to Pathankot?

When I retired from the Navy, my family was in Gurgaon. After retirement, I moved to Mumbai and joined ONGC. Later I went back to Gurgaon. At present, I am staying with my niece Nandita and her husband Aseem in Pathankot. Both of them are doctors by profession.

I have heard so much about your expertise in the kitchen. Have you always been a good cook?

Only since 1990. In my growing years, the food in our house was typical Punjabi vegetarian food. But in the Navy, I was exposed to a variety of cuisines and tasty food. It was then that I became interested in what I was eating.

Do you remember your first culinary venture?

I remember it clearly. It happened in Gurgaon after my retirement. We had a novice cook at that time. One day, I walked into the kitchen and asked the cook what he was preparing. Out of the blue, I told him which masala to add to the *sabzi*. I also showed him how to fry the masala perfectly. Over the years, he started cooking very well. He used to make excellent *dosa* and *idli*.

Did your wife mind your sudden presence in the kitchen?

Not at all. I guess she was happy to relax a bit and eat tasty food. At home, it was just the two of us as we did not have any children.

After she passed away, how did you manage?

She passed away in 2000. At that time, I came to realise the difference in the roles of men and women. Women somehow find something to do the whole day at home. They have a different life because of household chores. On the other hand, I had a lot of time on hand and nothing much to do. How long can one read the newspaper? So I just poured all my interest into cooking.

What is it that excites you so much about cooking?

It is a creative activity. You can go on innovating. There is just no end to the permutations and combinations of ingredients and flavours.

That is so true. But what about measurements—how did you arrive at the perfect measure?

According to me, a good cook needs no measurements. It is all about *andaaz*—one learns to estimate correctly.

What dish do you prepare when there are guests?

I enjoy cooking non-vegetarian food and my *biryani* is loved by family and friends.

What would you say is your signature vegetarian dish?

I would say my garlic chutney. The family calls it Szechwan sauce [laughs]. I prepare it as frequently as most Punjabi families prepare mint chutney. My garlic chutney is an excellent accompaniment with our typical Punjabi food, almost any Indian food.

What are the ingredients that go into your garlic chutney?

It is a simple preparation with mustard oil, tomatoes, garlic and green chillies. Grind 2 pods of garlic and 10 green chillies into a coarse paste and set aside. Grind 5 tomatoes into a coarse puree. Heat mustard oil and add the tomato puree. Cook until the tomatoes are well cooked. Add 2 teaspoons of Kashmiri chilli powder. Add the chilli-garlic paste and cook for 10 minutes. Add salt, mix well and switch off the flame. Allow it to cool and it is ready. You can use it for a week if kept in the refrigerator. Add acetic acid if you wish to preserve longer.

When you pulp the tomatoes, do you remove the skin?

I never remove the skin of tomatoes as it is the skin that lends the rich colour. You can try this chutney with and without the tomato skin and see the difference for yourself.

Last year in March, when my neighbour and your cousin Sulakshanaji visited you, she returned and raved about your *aloo shimla mirch ki sabzi*.

It is a simple dish, yet delicious and much loved by all of us. Heat the oil and add crushed garlic and thinly sliced onions. Sauté for a while and add potatoes cut into long pieces. Allow to cook uncovered until the potatoes are half-cooked. Now add finely chopped tomatoes and cook until the potatoes are fully cooked. Add salt and lots of thinly sliced capsicum. Cook for a few minutes and switch off the flame. That's all—as simple as that!



Left to right: Aloo shimla mirch ki sabzi; garlic chutney; mixed Punjabi achaar

All you have added is garlic and tomatoes; not even chilli powder or garam masala! So what is the secret to its taste?

Food has taste only when it is cooked with interest and love. Forget about the stereotyped *sabzi* and masala. Garlic is a powerful ingredient, both in its goodness and flavour. In this dish, I use it in generous quantity for that special taste. While cooking, I also don't cover the pan with a lid as the dish would lose its fresh colour and crisp texture.

So what masala powders do you buy and preserve, like chana masala, garam masala?

I have never bought any of these.

I am surprised at how sparingly you use turmeric. Don't we need its goodness in our daily Indian cooking?

I add ½ tsp turmeric to a glass of hot milk that I drink every morning. That is the perfect way to ensure its goodness in your system. Most masalas lose their quality when they are fried in ghee or oil.

What about asafoetida [*hing*]?

Oh no, please do not add it to anything and everything. When I think of *hing*, I think of *kadhi*. In *kadhi*, I do not add garlic; instead, I prefer adding *hing*.

I think I need to check many more ingredients. What about coriander leaves as a garnish? Should one think before adding that as well?

[Laughs] You can add them as garnish if you like. I don't really bother as they do not have any flavour these days. I remember the fresh smell of coriander leaves in my childhood.

And chilli powder?

I prefer *degi mirch*, also known as Kashmiri chilli powder, because of its crimson red colour.

Can I conclude that garlic is your favourite ingredient?

Undoubtedly, yes. In fact, if you enjoy garlic, you must try my *rajma* recipe. Soak *rajma* [kidney] beans overnight. Pressure-cook the next morning with half the quantity of salt. Make a paste with some onions, another with tomatoes, and grind 5 green chillies along with 8 cloves of garlic into a fine paste. This is to serve approximately four. Heat the oil; add the onion paste and sauté until it turns light brown. Now add the tomato puree and allow to cook well. Add the chilli-garlic paste to the cooked onions and sauté for 5 minutes. Add the cooked *rajma*, salt and a teaspoon of *degi mirch*. Cook for a couple of minutes and switch off the flame.



Photographs by ATIPRAEK

We usually grind the garlic and onions and cook them together so the raw smell disappears. But you have not cooked the garlic much.

You must learn to enjoy the slightly raw flavour of garlic. This recipe, like many of mine, is for garlic lovers. But remember to use fresh *rajma* beans, even though it is the dry variety. Stale *rajma* beans never get fully cooked. Now let me share a recipe without garlic, especially as you are a Jain. It is that famous *aloo ki sabzi*.

The one eaten with *puri*?

Yes. Boil potatoes and chop them into bits. Heat oil in a wok and add a teaspoon of *jeera* [cumin]. Next, add chopped tomatoes and roast them until well cooked. Add a pinch of turmeric powder and a teaspoon of *degi mirch*. Add ½ cup water and allow to boil. Add the chopped potatoes and salt. Allow to simmer for a while. It is so simple to prepare and turns out into a delicious *rasedaar sabzi* [side dish with gravy].

I also noticed you have not mentioned mustard even once.

I add mustard primarily while making pickles. I enjoy preparing instant pickles with seasonal vegetables. Last week, I made a large jar of our typical *achaar* with mixed vegetables.

That sounds like a must-learn recipe. Can it be preserved?

Yes, you can preserve this pickle by adding a teaspoon of acetic acid. All you have to do is chop the vegetables—I like a combination of carrots, cauliflower and turnips (*shalgam*)—into long pieces and put them on a sunny terrace for about two hours. Heat mustard oil and add chopped ginger, garlic and green chillies. Roast for a minute and add 2 teaspoons each of *degi mirch*, vinegar and mustard powder. Add a dash of salt and jaggery (*shakkar*). Add the chopped vegetables and cook for about 3 minutes. Allow to cool and preserve in a glass jar, shaking it at regular intervals for a day or two.

Fabulous. Tell me, apart from cooking, what else gets packed into your day?

I have always been interested in the stock market. I keep track of what is happening on television. I also enjoy gardening very much. I am growing fenugreek, tomatoes, cauliflower and mint leaves. We have also planted onion buds that should be ready in a couple of months. It's time for me to show you my garden now.

Thank you so much! I am also looking forward to trying out all your recipes.

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

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

Beware and be aware

Financial literacy is crucial in securing the future and rights of women; **Priya Desai** analyses the situation and suggests ways women can keep check on their money

Of late, in India there has been a surge in the number of women helming top positions in the world of finance. Whether it is Chanda Kochhar of ICICI, Shikha Sharma of Axis Bank, Naina Lal Kidwai of HSBC India and Arundhati Bhattacharya of the mammoth State Bank of India, there are innumerable examples that can lend us a false sense of complacency when it comes to women and financial literacy.

What we often forget is that like the revamped façade of an old building, what we get to see here is only the glamorous side, while the rest of the structure lacks sheen and remains as dilapidated as ever. The shiny exterior only shrouds the fact that even today women are kept out of financial decisions. And surprisingly, this is not something that happens only among the uneducated masses, but is rampant among the educated elite as well.

Recently, a lawyer acquaintance died suddenly of cardiac arrest at the age of 64. Neither did he leave a will nor keep his wife (the first heir) fully informed of his financial affairs. Maybe he felt she was incapable of understanding the intricacies of his financial dealings. Fortunately, she has caring children who will look after her financial wellbeing. But this does not waive off decades of lethargy of the highly educated husband in ensuring that the lady became financially literate. Maybe she, too,

lacked the motivation to keep herself abreast of financial matters.

The paradox

The general perception is that women lack the confidence to handle financial matters. It's no surprise that in the male-centric society we live in, men continue to hold the financial reins in most families. The paradox in our male-centric society is hard to miss—you will see mobile phone advertisements

The fear of financial concepts only worsens with age. Thus women need to be empowered with financial education through the creation of credible centres of help and become independent in financial thinking through sustained efforts

on TV where women in Haryana's villages are becoming literate because they have access to the Internet via a mobile phone; but even today, every single car commercial (whether it is a Nano or a Skoda) is targeted at men with the women almost always smiling beatifically, sitting on the passenger seat, while the man proudly takes the family out on a spin.

It's the same in real life; despite the fact that many women contribute to the family's finances in a 50:50 ratio with their husbands (in some cases, the woman is also the major/primary breadwinner), when it comes to financial management they are still given the cold shoulder. A MasterCard survey on financial literacy in the Asia-Pacific region found that India is at the fag end of a list of 16 countries, with Japan lagging a step behind.

This makes us wonder about the extent to which the Government's Jan Dhan Yojana will benefit women. Will it be like putting the cart before the horse, given that financial literacy is the bedrock of financial inclusion and related schemes?

Interestingly, during periods of financial stress, it is the lady of the house who plays a major role in maximising the use of available finances and minimising waste. But once the crisis tides over, her pivotal role is all but forgotten. This shows that if presented with the right opportunity, most women have the capacity and will to strengthen their understanding of financial matters.

Financial empowerment

It's generally observed that though many women enjoy successful careers today, they are still not well-versed in financial matters. The fear of financial concepts only worsens with age. Thus, the focus needs to be on



Dinodia Photo Library

empowering women through financial education, creation of credible centres of help and making women independent in financial thinking and action through sustained efforts.

Women in particular harbour a certain amount of discomfiture dealing with financial issues and ignore planning for retirement. Silvers are commonly seen throwing caution to the wind while using retirement savings for children's education and lavish weddings. It goes without saying that one of the cornerstones of financial wisdom is to keep retirement savings intact.

The world around is evolving at a rapid pace and there is a kaleidoscope

of financial products that financial and insurance companies aggressively market to silvers. Investing prudently in them can help in creating a financial cushion for silver years.

Opportunities and potholes

Though there are a significant number of opportunities for investment, there are an equal number of potholes too. Promoters of financial products hardly, if ever, keep consumers informed about the downsides, if any. This is where financial literacy comes in handy—to decide the right investment vehicle. Financial literacy acts as a shield against frauds and mis-selling, which are an intrinsic part of the current scenario.

Being financially aware also helps while taking loans from banks and other financial institutions. The changing interest rates are confusing enough to fox even people who have some understanding about how these things work. Bank officials dangle the carrot of benefits, but never highlight the risk while they are selling credit cards, finance schemes, mediclaim policies and mutual funds to prospective investors. The mantra to survive: Leave no question unasked, no information unsought and do not share your personal financial information unless mandatory, and till the seller has been vetted. There is no place for ignorance in financial matters.

| EMPOWER YOURSELF | | |
|--|--|--|
| Institution | Initiatives | Comment |
| Swashrayi Mahila Seva Sahakari Bank | Self-Employed Women's Association of India (SEWA)'s cooperative bank created and managed entirely by women for women | First of its kind in India. Making women financially literate is the mission of this endeavour |
| Citi and Parinaam Foundation (jointly) | Parinaam's Diksha Financial Literacy Programme | Financial literacy training programme for over 31,000 poor women in seven states of India |
| UNDP in partnership with NABARD and the Indian School of Microfinance for Women | Empowering women through programmes of business correspondents | Aimed at achieving inclusion of women as a disadvantaged group |
| Bharatiya Mahila Bank (inaugurated in November 2013) | Empowering women and lending predominantly to women | India is the third country in the world to have a bank exclusively for women. The bank has 42 branches and plans to open more than 700 branches in two years |
| Technician Group on Financial Inclusion (TGFIFL) created under Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC), Government of India | Establishment of National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE) | National strategy to increase the level of financial literacy. Key objective is to focus on banking needs of women and promote economic empowerment through growth and development |

Compiled from various sources

The initiatives

The aphorism, 'If you educate a woman, you educate a family', applies to financial literacy too. A financially literate woman in turn will make her children financially literate from an early age, and help in furthering the cause of the financial literacy mission. Interestingly, efforts are constantly being made by the Government, Reserve Bank of India, SEBI, NSE, various banks and NGOs to spread financial education among various groups, including senior citizens. While some of the programmes are targeted at women, creating general awareness continues to be the focal point.

Many women outlive their husbands; silver women need to shed the fear of money matters and sharpen their financial knowledge so they remain in control of their finances and life

Surveys suggest that women are good investors. Constant learning is essential to keep up with the rapidly changing financial environment within the country. Once the basics have been mastered, knowledge must be updated through refresher courses.

A long road

Many women outlive their husbands and should be empowered early on to manage their own finances. Silver women need to shed the fear of money matters and sharpen their financial knowledge so they remain in control of their finances and life. In India, while women form more than 50 per cent of the total population, only 26 per cent

hold accounts with formal financial institutions versus the 43 per cent of men with accounts. It is time for this situation to change. Hopefully, the next generation of silver women will be better equipped in terms of financial inclusion.

The writer is a Mumbai-based economist

Leadership and beyond



**A.M. Best
Financial
Strength Rating
"A"(Excellent -
Stable)"**



**Golden Peacock Award, 2013
for Excellence in
Corporate Governance**

Global Premium 2013-14 ₹ 14,304 Crs.

At New India, we understand that every client's need is unique. We provide solutions through innovative approach, with the widest range of products and services, with a rapid speed of response. Our clients in India and abroad totally depend on us for complete Insurance Solutions for their Individual & Business needs. **These business standards have contributed towards achieving a Global Premium of Rs. 14,304 Crores in 2013-14.**

- India's only Non Life Insurance Co. Rated A - (Excellent) by A M Best
- Total Assets: ₹ 53,000 Crs.
- Net Worth: ₹ 8621 Crs.
- Global Premium: ₹ 14,304 Crs.
- Global Network: More than 2000 offices

CIN : U 99999 MH 1919 GOI 000 526



**दि न्यू इन्डिया एश्योरन्स कंपनी लिमिटेड
The New India Assurance Co. Ltd**

(Wholly owned by the Government of India)

India's Premier General Insurance Company

Head Office: New India Assurance Building, 87, M. G. Road, Fort, Mumbai - 400 001 INDIA

More than 170 General Insurance Products

IRDA REGN. No. 190
Insurance is a subject matter of solicitation

Toll free - 1800-209-1415

| www.newindia.co.in

| online.newindia.co.in

Shafati Anand



Ninan's words

The renowned cartoonist tells Partha and Priyanka Mukherjee about his life, career and the nature of his craft

prevented me from drawing utilised my drawing skills for all its activities—posters, science charts, paintings, caricatures of famous authors, signboards.

Can you name any particular cartoonist, apart from your uncle, who influenced your style?

There are four cartoonists who influenced me: Laxman for composition; Mario for detailing; Abu for captions; and Tailang for simplicity.

What makes an Ajit Ninan an Ajit Ninan—skilful craftsmanship or acute observation?

I would say it is acute observation. The physical world is so beautiful on this planet that even words cannot match it—the types of people, architecture, technologies, landscapes, animals and millions of objects. Right from childhood, God has given us an in-built camera of eyes and brain to store these in our memory so we could draw later whenever we had the time. That is the beauty of art.

Given the nature of the craft, a cartoonist cannot perhaps claim to be 'objective' the way a fellow journalist can. Does that empower him or make him more vulnerable?

See, we cartoonists are working for newspapers with readership of various sections of society. I have to be balanced politically to maintain my neutrality. Socially, I have to respect

It has to be punchy, to the point, with the readers in mind. Either way, cartooning is a 24x7 scoping of mental rot of the buffoons in our polity.

While driving, under a shower, on the commode—an idea can hit anytime, anywhere." Ajit Ninan should know. Beloved for his *Centrestage* series in *India Today* magazine and *Ninan's World* in *The Times of India*, the 60 year-old is only getting sharper with time, his observations more incisive. His parents, A M Mathew and Annie Mathew, wanted their son to be an engineer. But the boy had other plans. "Thank God, I was so poor in math," he tells us. Excerpts from the exclusive interview:

Is a cartoonist primarily a humorist or satirist?

[R K] Laxman is a satirist and Mario [Miranda] is a humorist. Satire is like a thin laser beam; the sharper it is, the more its power to penetrate, whereas a humorist has a broader spectrum of entertaining the readership. Among

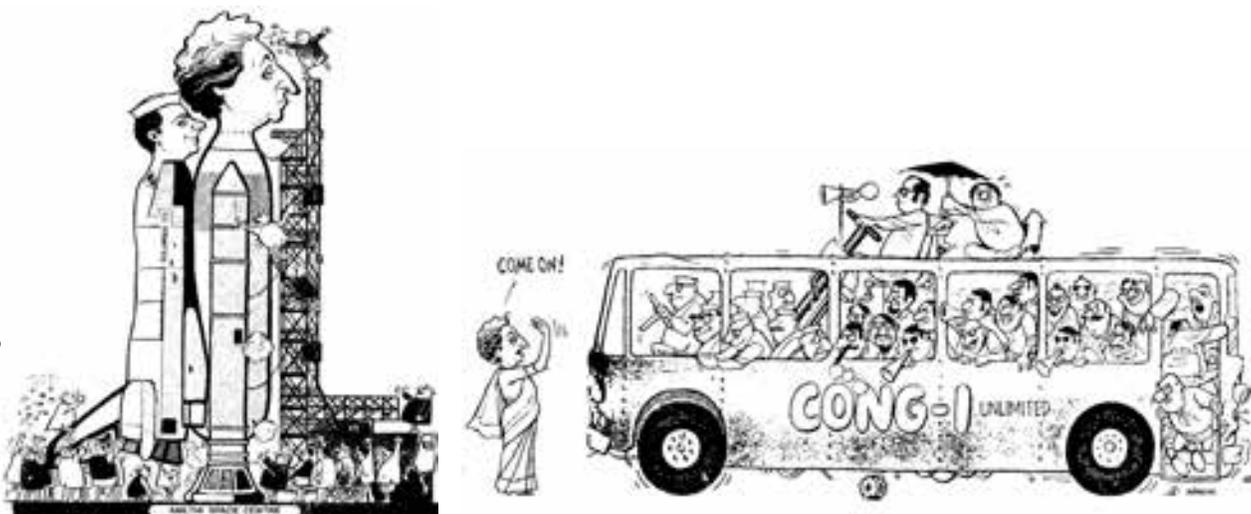
satirists you have Abu Abraham, Vijayan, Ravi Shankar and Sudhir Tailang; on the humour side, Ajit Ninan, Neelabh, Jayanto, Arul Raj.

As Abu Abraham's nephew, were you predestined to become a cartoonist?

I was discouraged from drawing by my parents, teachers and friends. Abu was the only human in my life who encouraged me to draw because he wanted me to be a cartoonist and prompted me to read a lot of books, newspapers and the dictionary so that I could master the art of jugglery of words.

What was it like growing up in Hyderabad in the late 1950s and '60s?

It was a city with a lot of humour because it had a large cross-section of community where everyone was teasing each other. That created an atmosphere of fun, which is there even today. The same school that



“My readership has to be respected without ‘me’, the cartoonist, trampling on their sensibilities. There is an unwritten Lakshman rekha all cartoonists should adhere to”

communities around me in terms of their looks, languages and ethos. When it comes to religion, no country in the world can match up to India in terms of variety. My readership has to be respected without ‘me’, the cartoonist, trampling on their sensibilities. I cannot distort their religious symbols to forward my political cartoons. There is an unwritten *Lakshman rekha* all cartoonists should adhere to—the same with national symbols like the flag, the map, *Ashoka Chakra*, the President and the constitution.

This is particularly relevant given the latest *Charlie Hebdo* shooting? What’s your take? Should an artist be more conscious or cautious?

Definitely, he or she should be cautious.

What is it like being a political cartoonist in India? Do we, Indians, have it as a society to take it on the chin?

First of all, I would like to thank the Congress Party for allowing cartoonists to survive. Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, all three had their favourite cartoonist. Jawaharlal had K Shankar Pillai, Indira had Abu and Rajiv had Laxman. But Madam Sonia Gandhi destroyed cartooning by making Manmohan Singh prime minister—three-fourth of his head was ‘religion’, which was covered by the turban and the beard. There was no room for cartoonists to induce humour, plus he was academically so qualified, non-controversial, excellent

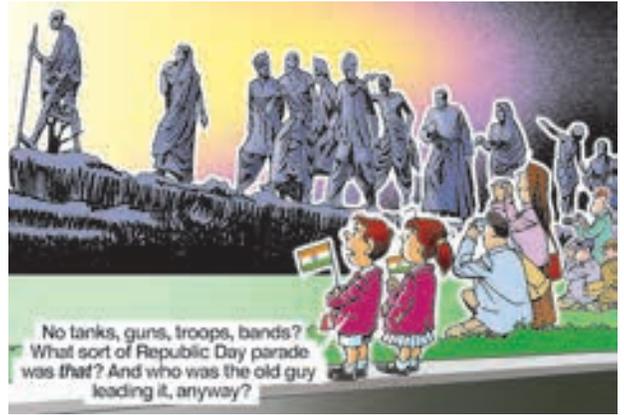
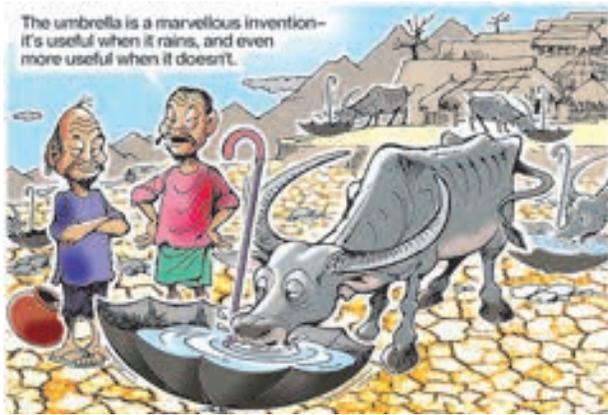
credentials till the time scams started coming up. Then it was too late for the cartoonists. He had to go. Political leaders in India are very tolerant—Indira Gandhi, Pranab Mukherjee, Sharad Pawar, Jaswant Singh, Sheila Dixit, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Mani Shankar Aiyar, Arun Shourie and a lot of others loved cartoons and their offices always contacted cartoonists for the originals. More than the cartoonists, editors are scared because they don’t want party *goonda* to attack their premises, supporters of Maya, Jaya, Mamata, Uddhav....

Was there ever a time you felt jeopardised because you took the liberty to express your point of view?

When I drew Rajiv Gandhi as a pope surrounded by black sheep and a white one (V P Singh) jumping over the fence and leaving, a certain Mrs Lobo sent me a notice for hurting her sensibilities. Nowhere on the robe was there a cross, only Congress hands. Then I had to apologise. Later, when I drew Ganesha with an India map as the head on a PSU piece on expenditure, many Ganesha forums sent me court notices. These incidents help you carve out your boundaries more than editors.

Would you call absolute freedom of expression an unachievable ideal?

There are degrees of elasticity of rubber bands in different countries. India is tolerant but has many religions



Courtesy Times of India

so cartoonists have to be extra careful, even while flattening Mayawati's elephant in a cartoon.

Centrestage, Ninan's World, Detective Moochwala, Just Like That!, Like That Only!.... We've been ardent fans of all your series. Which is your personal favourite? Is there any particular character that inspired you to do the Detective Moochwala series?

Politically, it was *Centrestage* in *India Today* because it was digitally rendered and coalitions were active with regional satraps weakening Delhi. Plus, the offices of political leaders used to call for originals. Detective Moochwala was inspired by Pink Panther, the bungling detective, but the looks came from Colonel Blimp of David Low [Laxman's guru]. I love baldies for easier renderings.

If you were asked to make a cartoon of yourself, how would you portray yourself?

A bulbous nose with a flat head and a helipad on top.

Where was your first cartoon published? How old were you?

It was published when I was 10 in *Shankar's Weekly* and I got ₹ 10, which was like ₹ 800 in those days. I also got a note from Shankar saying my drawing was good but the captions were poorly drafted. I had sent him four cartoons; one got published.

So how did your career take shape?

I did political science in college to gear up for political cartooning. I did a lot of freelance advertising work from the college hostel for agencies. FD Stewart of Chennai said its Delhi office wanted a cartoon illustrator for about six clients. Once in Delhi, when the GM couldn't understand my visuals, he started calling me Picasso which later evolved to 'Big Ass'ole!' Everybody called me that. One fine day, Aroon Purie started a children's magazine, *Target*, and wanted a detective comic character. He saw my strips and invited me to join the India Today Group.

How do you write captions for your cartoons? I know you take more time to prepare them than you require to draw the caricature.

This is simply to respect the readers' time. When the drawing is detailed, cut down on words, especially in this

“Modi has a very versatile face for transforming into anything from a bulldozer to a hawk...a powerful stare. The more powerful you are, the more cartoonists like to take you on”

‘SMS’ age. So that is what takes my time because English is such a vast language, it’s worth the effort.

How do you judge the merit of a cartoonist?

Cartoonists should be versatile and knowledgeable in all fields but not too intellectual to be too cerebral in ideas. Complete knowledge of the physical world is a must, from rockets to igloos, with reasons for their shapes. For instance, why do igloos have a tunnel entrance for crawling to a dome with a hole on top? It’s to prevent polar bears entering and the hole is for the smoke; it is round for maximum strength to withstand blizzards and snowstorms. Complete control of leaders’ faces and their psyche with weaknesses must be studied. A rear-view mirror in cartoons is paramount in lampooning leaders for doublespeak, even to track one’s political ascent or descent.

Tell us about some of your favourite cartoonists in the country.

Laxman is the first in my list of favourites; Mario for his detail, funny faces and architecture; Abu for his simplicity and incisive satire; Surendran and Keshav of *The Hindu* for their versatility and political knowledge. In the West, I adore Auth, Oliphant, McNelly, Jack Davis, Sergio Aragones and Don Martin.

Is there any particular reason why Kerala has produced so many cartoonists?

Matriarchal societies always have humour for husband and wife one-upmanship. Children get the feel of dining table humour early in life. Literacy, political awareness, culture of cynicism, artistry, anti-establishment, simplicity, wordplay and archaic customs play a great role in shaping the cartooning mindset.

Any plans for a school where budding talents can sharpen their skills?

Political animation is a great area but the individuality of the cartoonist takes a beating because of the assembly-line nature of motion pictures. Cartoonists are loners and there’s considerable tension generating ideas in a complex polity. We ideate, conceptualise, draw, draft captions and send it all ourselves without a secretary or ancillary staff to help—a total one-man show. Cartooning can’t be taught;

it’s self propelled by studying universal cartooning styles. There must be a foundation for drawing or you work in pairs like famous global comic strips *Asterix*, *Bringing Up Father*, etc.

Is there any cartoon you regret having made?

Maybe one Modi cartoon where I showed him as the T Rex dinosaur with canines holding Rahul and Priyanka in both claws...he’s turning out to be such a darling, loved and admired by all except the opposition who find no room for manoeuvrability. What will destroy him are the corrupt rascals in the bureaucracy down the line needed to implement his vision. No matter who heads the Government, these guys are there. If there are 10 counters in a post office, only two are occupied; the rest sign in and go off for other part-time earnings. It’s scary for India; it’s like a treadmill—you run but go nowhere.

What is the contribution of a cartoonist to the society—an eye-opener?

Of course! He’s a barometer, educator, entertainer, messenger, soothsayer, trickster, guide, sieve, visualiser and mental voltage stabiliser.

Who do you really enjoy drawing?

All PMs, because they head the Government. The best was P V Narasimha Rao. Today, of course, Modi, who has a very versatile face for transforming into anything from a bulldozer to a hawk...a powerful stare. The more powerful you are, the more cartoonists like to take you on, no matter how credible you are. That is the ethos of cartooning—to take on the high and mighty with impeccable humour, and not contrived personal attacks, in utmost political balance without taking sides.

As we are about to switch off the recorder, Ninan gets a message on his cell phone. He reads it, shudders; his eyes turn moist. “R K Laxman is no more,” he speaks haltingly. “The god has left us forever for his heavenly abode. Laxman was the original god of cartooning. I think he was one of the most talented cartoonists in the world because he had such a lovely overview of Asia and western societies. All the metaphors that emanated from his hands and mind are unmatched, I think, for a long time to come.” We leave Ajit Ninan, a man who never fails to make us laugh, in tears. ✨



Beyond the aperture

Celebrated photographer and bookmaker Dayanita Singh speaks to **Suparna-Saraswati Puri** about the two constants in her life: photography and her mother Nony

With technology consuming urban sensibilities and intruding into private spaces all the time, familial conversations are a rarity. However, when a form of art and aesthetic expression like photography is a family's legacy and shared passion between mother and daughter, the story is even more enduring.

Described as 'one of the most important photographers worldwide', New Delhi-based Dayanita Singh, 53, was introduced to photography by her 78 year-old mother Ranjit 'Nony' Kaur Singh. Over the years, the mother-daughter bond grew even stronger as they pursued the art.

Born in Lahore in 1936, Dayanita's mother fled to Patiala with her family in 1947. Nony Singh recalls, "When Partition happened, this camera along with a book and a rag doll were the priceless possessions that came with me from Lahore." Amid the unfamiliar and drastically changed scenario of a new and free India, it was Nony's relentless pursuit of photography that kept her sane, allowing her to study, marry and become the mother of four daughters.

In addition to the innate talent photo-artist Dayanita is blessed with, the uniqueness of her body of work stems from the fact that she has nurtured the ability to gaze beyond the obvious. Dayanita likes to 'tell by showing', making the book her preferred mode of presentation. In 2014, this NID alumna built the Book Museum at the National Museum, New Delhi, using her publications, *File Room*, *Privacy* and *Nony Singh: The Archivist*. It is with this unique technique that Dayanita's idiosyncratic and intensely character-based photographic craft gets the universal attention it attracts. "The form of the book is a very intimate form. To me, it's the best way to look at photography. I would rather give up on print quality, but I cannot bear the glass that comes between the print and me. So I love the book," reveals Dayanita, recipient of the Prince Claus Award (2008) and the first Indian to hold a solo show at London's Hayward Gallery (2013). Amid an impressive list of publications, her 12 books, each amazingly unique in subject, content and presentation, enhance her position as an internationally acclaimed photographer. Whether it is her first book while she was

still a student, on tabla maestro, *Zakir Hussain* (1986), the much talked-about *Myself Mona Ahmed* (2001), *Sent A Letter* (2008), or the hugely celebrated *File Room* (2013), she continues to stun with her remarkable talent.

Dayanita's initiation to the medium was somewhat theatrical—as a prop. The cover of *Nony Singh: The Archivist* (2013) sports a photograph with a baby lying on her back in the centre of the Presidential Suite of the Oberoi Palace Hotel in Srinagar in 1961. The infant is Dayanita Singh. Now Dayanita's own body of work exudes a signature style that provokes the norms of photography. Among her most iconic works is *Go Away Closer*, a black-and-white photograph of a young girl in bed hiding her face under a pillow, refusing to expose her face to the camera. Another enduring image in her vast body of work is *File Room*, an elegy to paper in the age of the digitisation of information and knowledge. In a candid chat, Dayanita Singh muses about the two constants in her life: her mother and photography. Excerpts:

I got interested in photography while photographing Zakir Hussain for a class assignment at NID, and realised that this could be my ticket to freedom...no marriage, no children, no in-laws. As a photographer, I could go where I liked, with whoever I liked, and be as I like. I made my own rules.

My mother has influenced decisions in my life by letting me go, even from herself. She set me free when I was 18 and my father had just died. She told me I did not have to marry if I did not want to, never to let anyone make me feel less for not having children, that I should follow my art. What more could one ask for?

As far as accolades and recognition go, I don't take any of that seriously. Of course, it is nice to be appreciated, but there is always more to do, more to push, both in my medium and myself. I am never satisfied. I hope I never will be.

I am a workaholic, so I have no free time, or you could say all my time is my free time. My mother says I am like a soldier who marches in his sleep. She always talks of losing everything during Partition, and that makes all the litigation losses [property matters] somewhat bearable.

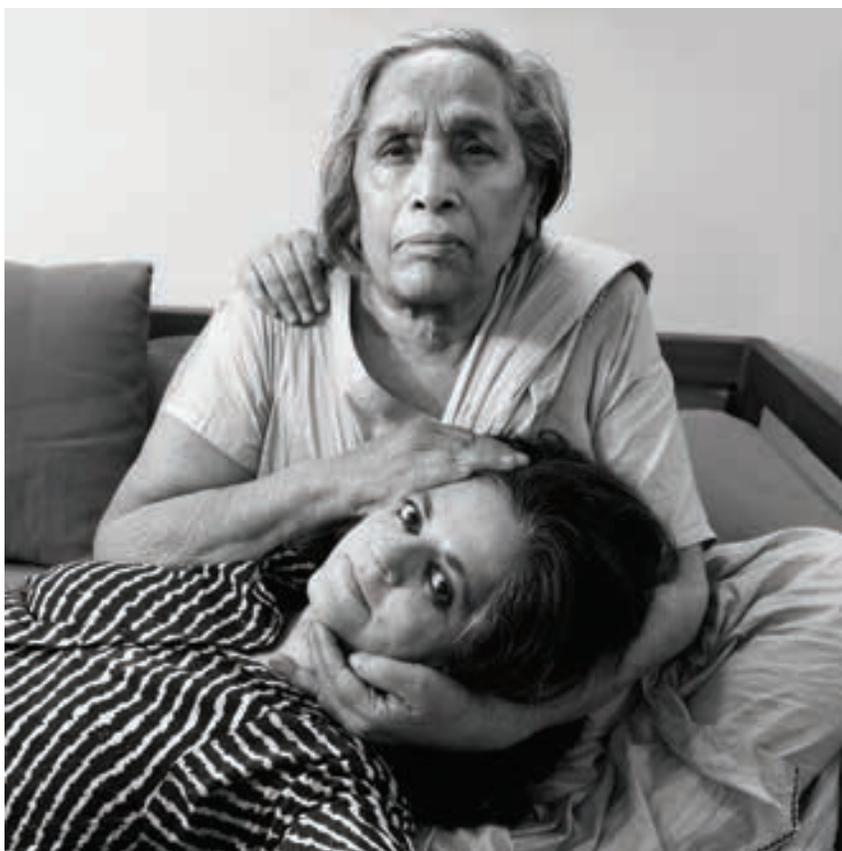


Top: Nony Singh captures her sister Guddie in a Scarlett O' Hara look (1960)

Bottom: Dayanita on the lap of her favourite subject Mona Ahmed, protagonist of her book *Myself Mona Ahmed* (New Delhi, 2013)

Opposite page: Dayanita on Nony's mother's lap (Srinagar, 1961)

Copyright: Nony Singh





"I have been watching, reading and trying to understand the depth and creativity of Dayanita Singh during the long journey of her life till date. Every time I think, 'That is it!' a turn comes with a surprise; and the journey continues as if there is no end. I feel blessed to continue watching this cinema and she keeps adding without a boring scene. I feel blessed to share my journey with her and then I question myself: 'Is she my daughter?'"

Nony Singh on Dayanita

They were hard years; all those court notices, that impending feeling of doom, the stacks of files on every surface, running behind lawyers... I don't even want to think about those days. Thank God I will not inherit them.

My mother was an obsessive album maker so it was only natural for me to assume that photographs were meant to be seen and read in books, that it was an intimate experience to view photographs.

I think Nony Singh is a very fine photographer and perhaps the strength of her work comes from the fact that she was making images for herself, not to show to anyone else, not to please anyone else, not to follow any norms of photography. That gives a certain authorship to her work and allows for her own style to emerge. I think I inherited that. Not that photography comes in the genes, but that's what I grew up seeing all over our house, photographs made by her.

Somehow I've inherited my mother's sense of freedom, her wonderful eccentricity in how she looked at life, that she was not bound by society's expectations in her head. I think I fulfilled her secret desire to be free. But I cannot be sure—you would have to ask her about that.

My mother is much calmer, more forgiving, while I am very impatient and very demanding of myself and others. My mother was a wife with four daughters and a

very demanding husband. I am a soloist. That's a very big difference. Besides, I had her unconditional support; I am not sure if she had that support from her parents in those times.

The Arles Photo Festival where we were both showcasing our work was a very strange experience for me, to be showing in the gallery next to her at a photo festival, with my baby photos in her exhibition, and my *Go Away Closer* images in mine. However, the experience was very humbling too. Another occasion that was deeply emotional was the publishing of *Nony Singh: The Archivist*. Once again, there was an opportunity to see the similarities in our work. I also realised while making the book that I could perhaps go back to the little girls that I had photographed after a gap of 10-15 years, that photography over time is perhaps the most moving aspect of my photography.

My mother lives about 10 houses away and we meet once in two months, usually at an event. I am a constant traveller. She respects the freedom she gave me.

The engagement with photography has been a wonderful one vis-à-vis our relationship and it does not matter that the legacy will not be carried forward. What I will leave is a rich archive of images and many books to anyone who is interested in my work. And I am totally okay with being forgotten too. ✨



:: cover feature ::

Queen of arts



Varun Mehta

As she prepares to release her new album and open a dream theatre, multitalented artist Ila Arun opens her heart to **Sai Prabha Kamath**

he gave a modern spin to the *jhumka* and *ghagra*, breathing new life into traditional folk songs and giving them a whole new audience. In the process, Ila Arun has become a cultural ambassador of her beloved Rajasthan. “Culture is the strong point of the state and every part of me is a Rajasthani,” she says with humility. “Rajasthan has given me much more than what I have given it.”

Singer, actor, composer, writer, lyricist, folk artist are some of the labels Arun has taken in her stride, preferring to call herself “a theatre artist”. In the 1990s, she grabbed the attention of the world for her uninhibited and sensuous rendition of *Choli ke peeche* in the film *Khalnayak*, which bagged her the Filmfare Award for Best Female Playback Singer along with versatile singer Alka Yagnik. She proved her mettle once again by recording *Ringa ringa* with Yagnik in Academy Award winner *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008). And her love affair with Rajasthani folk has continued over the years with successful albums such as *Banjaaran*, *Chappan Churi*, *Vote For Ghagra* and *Haule Haule*, and her popular live shows.

Equally at ease on screen, Arun has showcased her acting prowess in critically acclaimed movies such as *Mandi*, *Jodhaa Akbar*, *Well Done Abba*, *Ghatak*, *China Gate*, *Welcome to Sajjanpur* and *West Is West*, an international film. And through Surnai, her theatre group, she has turned the spotlight on issues such as women’s empowerment, family ties, marital discord and corruption in plays such as *Riyaaz* and *Jethwa Ujali*. In fact, her quest for meaningful theatre has taken her across the border to adapt plays such as *The Lady From The Sea* by Henrik Ibsen (*Mareechika*), *Greetings!* by Tom Dudzick (*Namaste: Jai Shri Krishna*), *La Chunga* by Mario Vargas Llosa (*Jamilabai Kalali*) and *Peer Gynt* by Ibsen (*Peer Ghani*), infusing them with Indian appeal. In all these plays, she has used the folk forms of Rajasthan and Kashmir to highlight sensitive issues such as the caste system, terrorism, drugs and AIDS.

She has also explored the small-screen space with *Bharat Ek Khoj*, *Lifeline*, *Yatra*, *Tamas* and *Samvidaan* with accomplished directors such as Shyam Benegal, Vijaya Mehta and Govind Nihalani. “These enriching serials gave the common man an insight into the cultural diversity and the Constitution of India,” she says. More recently, in music reality shows *Junoon-Kuchh Kar Dikhaane Ka* and *Fame Gurukul*, she was seen as a judge. Arun also produced a classical *ghazal* and Urdu reality show *Mai Khayal Hun Kisi Aur Ka*, dedicated to Sufi poet Amir Khusro.



Courtesy Ila Arun

As *bhopi* in the play *Mareechika*; at a live show; (facing page) With reputed Norwegian theatre artist Kåre Conradi during the first Ibsen Festival in Mumbai last year

We meet Arun at her modest, unoccupied Versova apartment, unlocked exclusively for this interview. “This is my ‘thinking space’; I’m going to put the flat to better use,” she says, as she welcomes us warmly. Dressed in a dark orange *salwar-kameez*, her waist-length hair flowing, she fields our questions with verve and a girlish charm over green tea, *dhokla* and flavour-of-the-season *til ladoo*. Excerpts from the interview:

Please tell us about your childhood and upbringing.

We are from a middle-class family comprising seven sisters and two brothers. My father I N Pandey was a banker. Though we are from Uttar Pradesh by origin, my parents migrated to Rajasthan in the 1930s. I was born in Jodhpur and brought up in Jaipur. Though my mother Bhagawati was a homemaker, she had various interests such as maths, English, Bengali literature and knitting. She was very progressive for her time and educated all her daughters despite social pressures; in fact, most of us have finished our higher education. I was encouraged to participate in all kinds of cultural activities like singing, dancing and acting. I have performed in front of stalwarts like

Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Lal Bahadur Shastri and S Radhakrishnan. Patriotism was instilled in us; I participated in several flag-hoisting ceremonies on 15 August in Delhi and presented cultural tableaux at the Republic Day parade at Raj Path. Under my father’s guidance, I excelled in debate too.

Your brothers Piyush and Prasoon Pandey are into advertising. In fact, Piyush is an ad guru and Prasoon is a filmmaker too. Do you exchange ideas?

While Piyush took advertising to Hindi, Prasoon ventured into filmmaking too. In all our endeavours, we connect with our roots, with our soil; it’s the reason why the audience finds a different kind of fragrance and soul in our work. Our upbringing has contributed to whatever we are today. Our close observation of Rajasthani locals and interactions with them, being part of their festivals...all these have translated into our work. My brothers were the creative strengths behind my videos such as *Haat mein botal galeme gulubandh*, which was shot in Prague, and *Bichuda*, which went on to become the first Indian video to be telecast on MTV, even before the channel’s

launch in India. For my theatre shows like *Jamilabai Kalali* and *Peer Ghani*, Prasoon erected grand sets. We are there for each other in all our endeavours and trust each other's opinion.

We also learnt that you were the first one in your family to foray into ads....

Yes, because I sing and act, I bagged a seven-second commercial on Vividh Bharati in Jaipur. Since then, we siblings started creating ads as there was no dearth of talent at home.

You are a classical musician by education. How then did folk become your forte?

I completed by BA in classical music with a distinction; yet I feel classical singing needs much more *riyaaz* and dedication. Folk came naturally to me as I was surrounded by these melodies since childhood. Our domestic help Raghunath was my first teacher. When he used to drop me to school on his bicycle, I used to listen to his uninhibited rendition of folklore though his loud mannerisms used to annoy me! The Rajasthani women with long *ghagra* and silver jewellery who came home to pound *masala* and clean pulses used to sing folksongs too. I had absorbed these rhythms and these sounds became my tunes. Naturally, I evolved into a singer, composer and lyricist. You can find all these tunes in my albums, though I worked further on them. Also, I used to actively participate in cultural festivals and have closely interacted with Rajasthani folk musicians, the Langas and Manganiars.

Did they approve of your singing folk songs?

I was well-known in Jaipur as an actor. But when I sang folk for the first time in Jaisalmer at a festival, the first approval came from folk artists because I was popularising their songs that were being passed on from generation to generation. Thanks to their encouragement, I kept doing folk shows.

How did you establish yourself in Mumbai?

In 1982, when I came to Mumbai in search of better prospects, Jennifer Kapoor of Prithvi Theatre gave me the chance to do a musical folk show called *A Musical Sandstorm* with the Langas and Manganiars. The show became hugely popular as folk was something new to Mumbai at the time. I was flooded with offers from music companies. Subhash Ghai offered a role in

"I am an actor first. Theatre is my first love. I act while I am singing and sing while I am acting. Singers like Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle, Sadhana Sargam and Alka Yagnik find expressions in their melodies, the reason they are legendary. There are expressions in singing and melodies in dialogues—I explore them"

Karma, which didn't materialise for me. I acted in Umesh Mehra's 1986 film *Jaal* and released my first album *Banjaaran* the same year. *Chhappan Churi* was my second album. The turning point came when Yash Chopraji gave me *Morni baaga ma* in *Lamhe* to sing along with Lata Mangeshkar. Then, there was no looking back; I started singing and acting in films simultaneously.

Which is closer to your heart—singing or acting?

I am an actor first. Theatre is my first love. I act while I am singing and sing while I am acting. Singers like Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle, Sadhana Sargam and Alka Yagnik find expressions in their melodies, the reason they are legendary. There are expressions in singing and melodies in dialogues—I explore them.

How did the idea of folk-pop fusion strike you?

In the early 1990s, pop culture was taking the country by storm. But pop was not my cup of tea. I experimented with fusion as I wanted to take folk to the youth. But I must say that people who loved me for folk were not ready for this kind of experiment.

You do a lot of live shows too....

After the 1993 chartbuster *Choli ke peeche* in *Khalnayak*, I got to do a lot of live performances. The popularity helped me run my plays.

Indeed, *Choli ke peeche* became quite a rage....

Written by Anand Bakshi *saab*, it is one of the most intelligent lyrics I have come across. But after its popularity, I was offered 10 other *choli*-based songs. People were stuck on *choli* and didn't get to the deeper meaning of the song. Such songs happen only once in a lifetime.

Where has your musical journey reached now?

I have released 10 albums so far. My new album is ready. But with audio piracy and illegal downloads, the music industry has collapsed; there are no win-win situations anymore between the singer and the company. I am now finding ways to release and market my album independently.

What gave birth to *Surnai*, your theatre group?

Though I did plays such as *View from the Bridge*, *The Lower Depths* and *Yahudi ki Ladki* with



Courtesy Ila Arun



Courtesy Ila Arun

With Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri (to her right) at a UNESCO event; participating in the Republic Day parade in New Delhi

legendary director Nadira Babbar, I wanted to create plays of my own, to innovate, leave a mark. The idea gave birth to Surnai [the name of a folk music instrument]. Surnai's first production was *Jethwa Ujali*, where I explored the caste system and exploitation of women. It is a Rajasthani folktale I rewrote, enriching it and making it contemporary. In my second play, an original—*Riyaaz*—I touched upon the man-woman relationship, the sacrifices a woman has to make in terms of work and creativity when she's caught in the web of marriage and children.

Did you go through similar circumstances in your life?

Never, thanks to my husband Arun Bajpai who has given me full-fledged freedom and support to pursue my dreams. For me, work and expressing myself are very important. In fact, I have always felt that I have never devoted as much time to my only child Ishita as my work.

Is your husband equally fond of the arts?

Arun probably loves theatre and music more than me. He is also my best critic. Though we had an arranged marriage, we have immense chemistry and understanding. He is with the Merchant Navy and has been talking of his last voyage these days, but then is tempted by the sea. He is deeply involved in all my projects without bothering too much about their commercial viability [smiles].

Your daughter Ishita is also a multifaceted personality. Is she set to follow in your footsteps?

Though she is an artist herself, she chose it differently. For me, work comes first. For Ishita, her family and daughters Amaala [two] and Alaaya [six months] are first priority. I have never pressured her to do something; she lives her life. She runs space designing firms 'Kishmish' and 'D se

dijhaen'. She has also written music for her husband, musician Dhruv Ghanekar. I hope she takes up from where I am leaving.

Please tell us about your days at the National School of Drama (NSD).

It was a proud moment when the Rajasthan Sangeet Natak Akademi gave me a scholarship to do a short-term course at NSD. I was very excited because theatre legend Ebrahim Alkazi was the director. Fortunately, the year I joined, Alkazi *saab* himself took over and conducted our workshops. He directed the play *Oedipus*, a Greek mythology, where I played Queen Jocasta and distinguished actor Manohar Singh played Oedipus. Actors like Om Puri, Rohini Hattangadi and Naseeruddin Shah were in the regular course. I regret that my mother didn't allow me to do long-term projects as she thought "drama was not something to be learnt". But NSD was the most beautiful time of my life where I learnt that drama is not just acting, but a complete study of life. The canvas of theatre is so large that it encompasses culture, music and literature. The course helped me diversify into writing, producing and directing and, today, that gives me great satisfaction.

Please share your golden moments.

First, when I acted in a play directed by Alkazi *saab* and, the second, when I sang *Morini baaga ma* along with Lata Mangeshkar, whom I consider a goddess of music.

You have adapted several foreign plays in Hindi. What is the relevance of foreign adaptations for the Indian audience?

My director K K Raina and I have always wanted to innovate. We found that Russian, Norwegian and South

African plays have the same kind of emotions and cultural ethos we can relate to. I adapt and contemporise these plays to suit Indian sensibilities. In fact, Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's plays are the need of the hour in India. The subjects he touched upon in the 19th century—corruption, women's issues, sexual taboos—are still very relevant here.

What was the reason for using Rajasthani folk forms such as *Pabuji ka phad* and *Kalali* in your adapted plays?

For me, it was a challenge to stage *The Lady from the Sea* in Rajasthan, which is a desert. But it is believed that deserts originated from the sea. I found the *phad* narrative most appropriate to tell the story in the adapted version, *Mareechika*, and carry across the message that women need to speak for themselves. Traditionally, the *phad* narrative is about Pabuji, a folk-deity of Rajasthan, where *bhopa* is the main singer. I played *bhopi*, *bhopa's* wife, who carries

"Russian, Norwegian and South African plays have the same kind of emotions and cultural ethos we can relate to. I adapt and contemporise these plays to suit Indian sensibilities. In fact, Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's plays are the need of the hour in India. The subjects he touched upon in the 19th century—corruption, women's issues, sexual taboos—are still very relevant here"

a lantern to shed light on the scroll to highlight the incidents of the story. I got the entire story of *Mareechika* painted on a scroll by traditional artists. In *Jamilabai Kalali*, I used the folk form of *kalali*, sung by women who make liquor for living, as the story revolved around a woman who was in the profession. Also I recreated [well-known folk singer] Alla Jilai Bai's traditional songs for the play.

You have attempted a lighter take on intergenerational conflicts and issues in your play *Namaste: Jai Shri Krishna*. How do you relate to the subject?

People who went abroad for a living are missing their roots today; they value our culture probably more than us because they are afraid of losing it. And when children go abroad, even parents need to be prepared for a change. *Namaste...* is a hilarious, thought-provoking play that creates a dialogue between the old and the new.



Varun Mehta

After watching the play, Amitabh Bachchan expressed his longing to switch back to theatre....

He is a veteran theatre actor and my role model; he is the source of all my energy. The world is waiting for the day when he's going to give us this pleasant surprise! [gleams]

You have staged many women-centric plays. In *Agni-Leek*, you play Sita who questions Rama's credentials as a husband. What message do you want to send to today's women?

To me, the woman is an embodiment of *Maa* Durga. She has the strength and quality to excel in any field—science, technology, arts—and outdo men. I don't want to glorify women. But she herself is the messenger and a mirror to society. Women should realise their worth and live their life.

Despite talk of women's empowerment, they are still the target of discrimination, injustice and violence. Who is responsible for this?

The woman herself is responsible for her downfall. In the name of responsibility, she has been reduced to forget herself. Don't succumb to pressure. Speak up. It's important to have both economic and creative independence.

Looking at the skewed sex ratio in Rajasthan, you came up with *Kathputli*, a project to save the girl child. What does the project endeavour to do?

I am from a state where child marriages and female infanticide and foeticide are rampant. *Kathputli* is my dream project through which I will communicate with the masses through puppets. Women themselves are being treated as puppets in society and I want these puppets to talk to them through stories. Through workshops and personal interactions, I endeavour to create an awareness to value the girl child.

Any other projects in the pipeline?

I will be doing Ibsen's plays for the next five years. Also for long, I have cherished a dream to build a theatre—maybe an open theatre—where I don't have to look for a date at theatres like Prithvi. I will be starting the project this year, dedicating this dream project to the girl child. Apart from my upcoming album, I am also doing a children's film in Rajasthan.

How do you unwind—do you have any hobbies?

My hobby is my profession. Unfortunately, it has become an expensive hobby [laughs]; it is all-consuming. Even if



Varun Mehta

I go on vacations, I keep thinking of what to write next [giggles]. I do a bit of gardening in my balcony; I am also a regular gymmer. I like to lose myself in the loud music of the gym.

How do you manage time?

I steal extra hours in the day by rising at 4 am. I find peace in the early hours.

One cannot think of you minus your signature multi-layered *bindi* and chunky, ethnic jewellery....

Ila means earth and I like all things earthy. I am fortunate to have a large forehead to wear these *bindi*. They charge me up! While foreigners now think it is fashionable to wear *bindi*, unfortunately we are fast losing that culture.

What's your beauty tip for women?

Keep working. Don't envy. Be happy.

How do you want to grow old?

When I was at NSD, [veteran Bengali filmmaker] Ritwik Ghatak once pronounced, "*Tum stage par marogee* [you will die on stage]." I was shocked to listen to these words. But today, I realise it was a blessing in disguise. As I grow old, I want to remain as energetic as today. I want to grow old as a child without depending on others and keep learning till I die. ✨

Experience

A second childhood

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

Visit us at : www.harmonyindia.org

harmony
celebrate age



Jaipur

jamboree

The gateway to India's regal past is not just a riot of colours but a hub of hospitality, writes **Braja Sorensen**

If someone were to ask me where in this big, beautiful world I would want to settle down forever, I wouldn't hesitate to pull out my shortlist of three places: Mosman Bay, a quiet inner cove on Sydney's northern shores opposite the Opera House; the low-lying hills surrounding Florence; and the warm and colourful city of Jaipur. I have lived in all three, and am torn to call any of them my absolute favourite: they are as different as day and night, each a beautiful, picturesque sanctuary, all for different reasons. I lived in Jaipur in the 1990s and now, after 14 years in India—most of them on the balmy, wet banks of the Ganga in West Bengal—I would still live in Jaipur again, differently than I did all those years ago: this time perhaps in an old *haveli*, its inner rooms shaded from the hot desert sun in the summer months and protected from the sharp plain winds in winter.

It's January, and here I am again in the princely city of Jaipur. It's a pleasant winter month to wander the streets, visit the palaces, discover the markets, and take *darshan* of the deities whose history is as regal and riddled with secrets, twists and mysteries as the palaces that surround them. I've come especially for the spectacular Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF), but truly, I would come to Jaipur even for the opening of an envelope!

Heading towards Diggi Palace, the site of the literature festival, we turn into a wide, tree-lined avenue whose long lanes reach out like outstretched arms, welcoming me back. Jaipur's boulevards are lined with palaces and *haveli*,

all keepers of ancient secrets and royal tales, a stunning, dramatic history like no other. While I usually love to discover a city in my own style, this is one place where I wouldn't hesitate to take along a tour guide to get a better grip on the city's rich history.

Founded in the early 1700s by Jai Singh II from Amber—after whom the city is named—it was a Bengali, Vidyadhar Bhattacharya, whom the Maharaja plucked from the role of accounts clerk in Amber to indulge in his long-held desire of building a city that embodied the specific elements that were so dear to him: *vastu*, astrology, and exceptional architecture. Consequently, Jaipur's layout and design are unique, its crisscross grid roads and layered buildings like no other, and its main temple is one of the city's major attractions.

Of course, everyone knows Jaipur as the Pink City. Many say it is owing to the sandstone used to build the original city, which has a pinkish hue. That may be true, but even to the most casual observer the stone is actually more orange or terracotta-coloured than pink. A more likely reality than the urban legend is the visit in 1876 by the Prince of Wales and Queen Victoria. Maharaja Ram Singh, the then ruler, painted the city pink as an expression of loving welcome for the royal couple. The tradition was maintained and it is now written in the city's bylaws that the buildings must be maintained in the same colour.

Traditionally, business in the walled city doesn't start until respects have been paid to its divine

Intricately carved latticework windows at Hawa Mahal



Dinodia Photo Library

How many times as a resident of Jaipur have I buzzed through this gate on my scooter to swing into ancient temples and shop at stores under ancient carved sandstone walkways that lead from the City Palace?

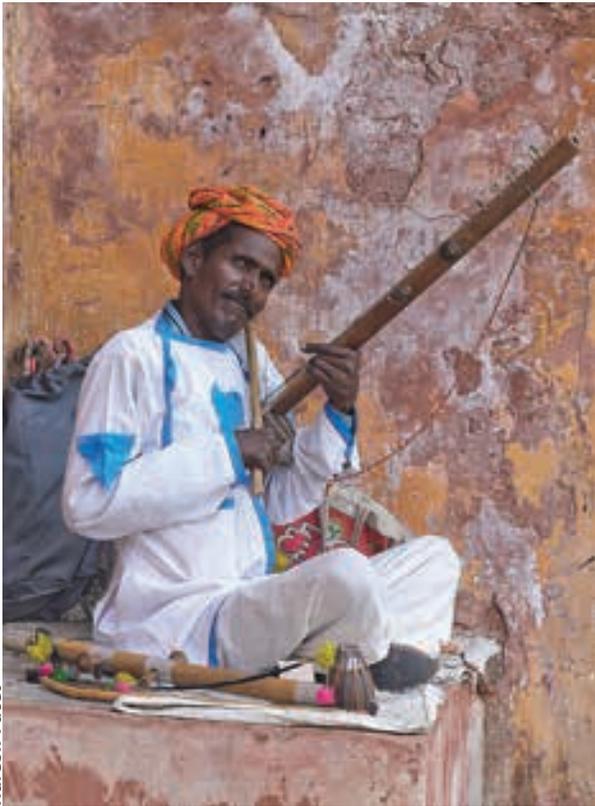
ruler, Sri Govindaji. While I'm eager to reach Diggri Palace and partake in the extravaganza of colour, culture, music, and literature that is the JLE, I follow suit and decide to start at the temple.

Thus, we head for the walled section of the city, and suddenly there stands tall the Ajmeri Gate! How many times as a resident of Jaipur have I buzzed through this gate on my scooter to swing into ancient temples and shop at stores that line the road under ancient carved sandstone walkways that lead from the City Palace? Memories flood my mind and I remember all things good, not necessarily the squeeze we're feeling right now in narrow streets that are unable to handle the growth that Jaipur has seen in the past 20 years. The traffic is crippling, the pollution atrocious, and the sound deafening. Alas, much the same story as any other city in India.

I arrive at the first arched entrance to the palace grounds from the main square near the Hawa Mahal, or Palace of Winds. What a mysterious

and delicious story this *mahal*—whose exterior resembles a beehive—carries! The honeycomb effect is because of the almost 1,000 intricately carved latticework windows, whose openness draws the wind in a suction-type effect, transforming the air and creating a cool, air-conditioned environment. The original intention of the latticework, however, was to allow the royal ladies to walk through an underground tunnel from their *zenana* further inside the palace and up to the main boulevards of the town, where they could watch festivals, parades and daily life without being seen, as they observed *pardah*.

Driving through the first archway, we're in the grounds of City Palace, in the heart of Jaipur. Within its innermost walls lies the sanctum sanctorum of the Palace, Govindaji's temple. The thick stone walls hold so much history: "Lean closer," they seem to say, "and we will tell of sages old, of kings and queens and prayers heard." What secrets are hiding in the curling smoke of the frankincense, like an exotic perfume of time



perspiring from the ancient stone? The worn, smooth marble under the feet of pilgrims shines with their devotion. In true Rajasthani fashion, the story of this temple and the arrival of Govindaji is one of adventure and intrigue.

In 1669, Mughal ruler Aurangzeb decreed that Hindu temples and deities be destroyed. The Vaishnava priests in Vrindavan appealed to the Hindu dynasties of Rajasthan for protection. One of the principal deities of Vrindavan was Govindaji: a 2-foot tall, black marble deity of Krishna, which was moved from the town with two other principal deities, Gopinath and Madan Mohan. It was actually Ram Singh, the Maharaja of Amber, who issued the order in 1671 that Govindaji and the other idols be moved from their temporary shelter at Radha-kunda—a sacred body of water outside Vrindavan—to Kaman, which was then under the jurisdiction of Amber. It is said that the transfer was meant to be temporary: the deities would return to Vrindavan when the political turmoil subsided. But Govindaji never returned to Vrindavan. After 33 years in Kaman, He made another trip, this time to the newly constructed city of Jaipur, as desired by Maharaja Jai Singh II.

Outside the temple, the columns, arches, balconies and walls are a network of individual styles and motifs that observe the language of the

shilpa-sastra—the Hindu manual for sculptures—yet remain faithful to Rajput palace tradition. Intricately carved and decorated, they are works of art and harbingers of the beauty and grace that lie within. I would also recommend the Royal Grandeur Tour, which takes you through Chandra Mahal into the private areas within—Sukh, Chhavi, Shobha, and Sri Niwas—and ends at Mukut Mandir. It is a gloriously rich tour through life from another era.

Yet, leaving the City Palace grounds does not mean leaving the spirit of Jaipur. As I have already mentioned, I had come for JLF, the creation of a man who is perhaps India's favourite adoptee, writer and historian William Dalrymple. The Festival is the epitome of all things Jaipur: regal roots, colour, history, pageantry, architecture, style and even the colour pink! The opening ceremony was, for me, one of the most memorable experiences of the entire festival, thanks to the ridiculously happy and contagious mood of musician Nathoo Lal Solanki from Pushkar and his talented crew of musicians and dancers.

Without doubt, one of the most anticipated attendees at this year's festival was Nobel Prize winning British writer V S Naipaul. As a writer and author, I have respect for the path any writer and author pursues, the journey they embark on

Clockwise from left: A folk artist plays an ancient instrument; handmade string puppets at a souvenir shop; enticing street food in the walled city

Facing page: The busy Ajmeri Gate



Dinodia Photo Library

There are a thousand ways to absorb yourself in the regal and wild past of the state from elephant rides to bazaar tours to cuisine tours... Rajasthani hospitality is something that has to be experienced

to fulfil both themselves and—if they're fortunate enough to have them—their readers. Consequently, I'm slightly averse to criticism of a writer or their work. Yet I can't help but note that I was as disappointed by the appearance of Naipaul as I was by his books. Certainly, the pearl-like drop may spill occasionally from his pages, but it is hardly surprising: any writer of merit should be able to produce that much from time to time; otherwise they should stick to blogging. The over-emotional reunion between Naipaul and his former protégé, American travel writer Paul Theroux, drew more attention than it would have had it not been so public. I heard more than the occasional murmur about the similarly overbearing wife who manoeuvred Naipaul's wheelchair through the crowds, whispered constantly in his ear, and often answered for him.

I was far more attracted to the lively and spirited sessions on poetry, history, and literature among

authors, academics, and artists from all corners of India and the world. I particularly enjoyed the session hosted by Dalrymple—featuring British author and historian Jessie Childs—entitled “God’s Traitors: Terror and Faith in Elizabethan England”, and was enthralled with the grace and beauty of Arundhati Subramaniam and other Indian poets. I finally met Farrukh Dhondy, who I’d known through correspondence when he reviewed my book and wrote a blurb for its release, yet we hadn’t met, and I spent a wonderful hour-and-a-half with Sir Mark Tully discussing British Raj Calcutta, the lawns of Tollygunge, wireless broadcasting, and the good old days. The food was exceptionally good, the crowds well-behaved and quiet (well, they’re all book people!) and the entertainment simply stunning. Do come next January; you will be glad you did!

Diggi Palace is a stone’s throw from Ajmeri Gate and on this visit to Jaipur I did not venture far



Surendra Jain Paras

from the city centre. Rather, I stayed close by in one of the many *haveli* or mini-palace hotels. My two favourites are Arya Niwas, where I've stayed since my first visit to Jaipur, and Narain Niwas, in the same locale. There are many just like them, catering to every need imaginable, with a lower cost and wider smile than any other state in India seems to offer. The Rajasthanis are a different breed altogether: noble, proud, but eager and happy to serve. It's a magical mix.

Still close to the walled city, near the gates and in the walls themselves, every possible need one might have in terms of shopping and eating is fulfilled. I love the stretch of road that leads up to Ajmeri Gate and into Kishanpole Bazaar road. Some of the best jewellers sit alongside wonderful bookstores here; there's a small Hanuman temple, and street vendors sell delicious foods; even Rajasthan emporiums are just inside the gate. In this city, one can eat at the palaces or *haveli*, or have street food: one adventure is as exciting as another, each wrapped in its own delicious flavours. The one street food vendor worth mentioning is Jagannath Sharma Pakodi Wale in Tripolia Bazaar, a hole-in-the-wall stall whose family has been feeding Jaipur for over a century in real street style: a blackened coal stove,

traditional family recipes with no onion or garlic, and the most delicious *pakoda*. Another of my favourite memories is of the *jalebiwallah* outside Govindaji temple, who can be found squeezing fresh batter patterns into the hot ghee in his *kahari* while the steam from a huge vessel of bubbling sweet milk pours into the cold morning air. If you want to experience Jaipur completely, head to Samode Haveli on the outskirts. Lined with quiet paths, lush gardens and pools, this classic Rajasthani palace setting with a beautiful array of restaurants and courtyards makes it to the top of the list in terms of accommodation, experience and food. The entire palace is polished to a sheen that reflects the best the state has to offer.

There are a thousand ways to absorb yourself in the regal and wild past of the state, from elephant rides up to Amber/Amer Fort to bazaar tours through the walled city, and cuisine tours that offer a journey through Jaipur's markets and then lunch in a private home—they have so many varieties of tours that are well worth taking, and Rajasthani hospitality is something that has to be experienced. In the evenings, the *haveli* and hotels provide entertainment including dances, music, puppet shows, and drama. Whatever you do, in Jaipur you just can't go wrong. ✨

A panel discusses one of the themes at the Jaipur Literature Festival 2015

Facing page: The magnificent City Palace

Regal rendezvous

With a marvellous past, Patiala is indeed a Royal City in form and spirit

❖ 📷 Khursheed Dinshaw

Welcome to Patiala, the land of the *juti*, *phulkari* and *paranda*." We were greeted cheerfully by our friendly guide Sarabjit Singh who was to take us through a heritage walk of the architecturally rich city, where tradition and modernity synthesise to create a unique experience for the visitor. "*Pati* means 'property' in Sanskrit and *Ala* refers to Baba Ala Singh, the founder and first ruling chief of Patiala, which literally translates into 'the property of Baba Ala Singh.'"

The Patiala Heritage Walk initiated by the Punjab Heritage and Tourism Promotion Board provides a glimpse into the walled city's glorious past—a kaleidoscope of Rajput, Mughal and Punjabi cultures—and creates awareness about its historical significance. We started at the royal mausoleum, Shahi Samadhan, which contains the tomb—inlaid with intricate Islamic and Punjabi motifs—of Baba Ala Singh, who defended Patiala against the Mughals, Afghans and Marathas in the 18th century. White marble cenotaphs of other mahara-

jas such as Karam Singh, Narinder Singh and Yadavindra Singh lie nearby. The latest addition is the *samadhi* of Inder Singh, son of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh, who breathed his last in February 2014.

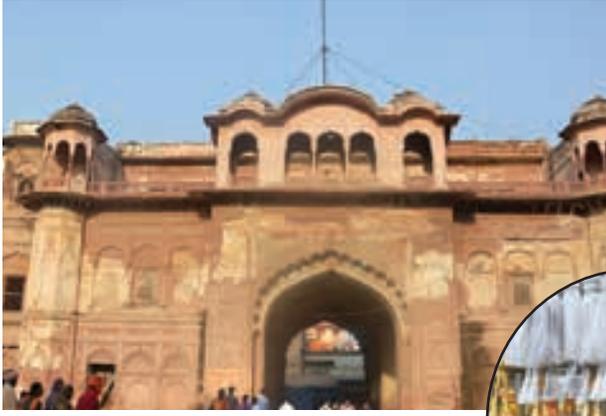
heritage

With rumbling tummies, we reached our second halt, Pammi Purian Wala, a well-known eatery, famous for its lip-smacking *chole bhature* accompanied by an exclusive *pethe ki sabzi* (cooked pumpkin) at an unbeatable price of ₹ 20 a plate. The eatery, started by brothers Pammi Singh and Parinder Singh in 1983, also serves delicious Punjabi specialities such as *samosa* with a filling of *paneer* and peas and *desi ghee pinni*, a sweet dish made from flour, sugar and *desi ghee*.

After the sumptuous breakfast, we walked through Haveliwala Mohalla, lined with traditional *haveli*, the ancestral homes of Patiala residents.

We found the heritage homes of prominent personalities like royal astrologer Ram Kishan, former Union law minister Jagannath Kaushal, and prime minister of Maharaja





The magnificent Quila Mubarak; a *kalaiwala* re-tinning utensils at Bartan Bazaar
Facing page: The serene Shahi Samadhan

Sahib Singh, Chatta Nanumal, who was given the rare privilege of building his house over the road. “Legend has it that he used the arch-shaped structure over the road to conduct public hearings,” Sarabjit Singh told us.

Next, we walked into Bartan Bazaar, the utensils market with metal vessels of all shapes and sizes for all purposes. We observed the traditional practice of *kalai*, where *kalaiwala* or craftsmen skilfully coated and re-tinned brass and copper utensils to give them a permanent shine. The market was a maze of fascinating shops selling local craft. There was a vibrant burst of colours as *juti*, *paranda* and fabrics embroidered with intricate *phulkari* work vied for attention. Patiala *juti* are handcrafted footwear available in myriad colours and named after the places of their origins—Tilla, Lahori, Peshawari and Kasoori. Traditionally, *juti* were made of leather with embroidery in real gold and silver. They are now made of rubber soles in contemporary styles and designs. You can get a quick lesson on the labour that goes into making them at the shops. We picked up two pairs almost immediately. Also, *paranda*, the beautiful hair adornment, could be spotted in abundance at shops. These colourful silk tassels with added embellishments are customarily worn by Punjabi women on special occasions to add length to their braids.

Clothes bedecked with Patiala’s *phulkari* work can be spotted in every second shop. The most finest type of *phulkari* is *bagh* with such heavy embroidery that the base cloth is no longer visible. “It can easily take a couple of months to hand-embroider a metre of cloth with the *bagh* stitch,” Singh said. The work is executed using colours such as pink, blue and yellow in geometric and floral patterns.

Finally, we reached Quila Mubarak, the royal fort complex from 1764. Spread across 10 acre, it was home to the Royal Family of Patiala till the mid-19th century. A unique blend of Mughal and Rajasthani architecture, the complex comprises the Quila Androon (royal chambers), Ran Baas (guest houses) and Durbar Hall (museum). While Quila Androon displays elaborate mirror decorations and frescos depicted from Hindu mythology, the Durbar Hall houses a collection of royal treasures such as a solid silver state carriage and a sword belonging to Persian emperor Nadir Shah who invaded India in 1739.

As we reached the end of our long walk with Sarabjit Singh, we were left awestruck by the beauty and opulence of the Royal City. If revisiting the past along with treating your senses is your cup of tea, you will truly savour the Patiala Heritage Walk.



Courtesy BDL Museum

ART APART

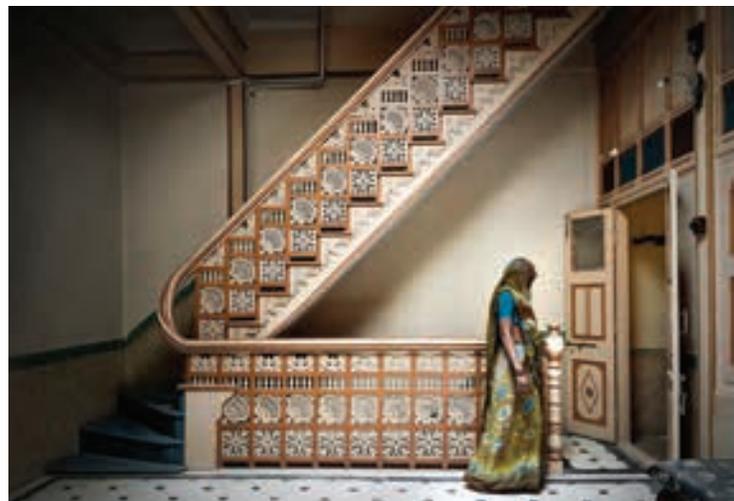
VETERAN ARTIST ATUL DODIYA’S OEUVRE—OIL PAINTINGS, WATERCOLOURS AND SCULPTURAL ASSEMBLAGES—WAS ON DISPLAY AT A RECENT EXHIBITION, *7000 MUSEUMS: A PROJECT FOR THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA*, AT DR BHAU DAJI LAD MUMBAI CITY MUSEUM. THROUGH WHIMSICAL INTERSECTIONS IN HIS WORKS, DODIYA ADDRESSED THE COMPLEXITY OF VARIOUS HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS—IN POLITICS, ART AND CULTURE. THE EXHIBITION IS PART OF THE MUSEUM’S CURATORIAL SERIES, *ENGAGING TRADITIONS*, WHEREIN CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS ENGAGE THEMSELVES WITH THE MUSEUM’S HISTORY AND COLLECTION.



Through the lens

The Bohra Islamic community of Sidhpur, a little-known town in Gujarat, has a rich, distinct heritage. The architecture of traditional habitats exhibits a fine blend of Hindu, Islamic, Persian, European and colonial styles. In an exhibition, *Sidhpur: Time Present Time Past*, photographer Sebastian Cortés explores the unique inner landscapes and distinguishing architectural features of these dwellings, such as windows, stairways and facades of buildings. The exhibition will be accompanied by a new book, *Sidhpur: Time Present Time Past*, published by Tasveer with text by author Rosalyn D' Mello.

Photographs courtesy: Tasveer



“Theatre is around despite more easily accessible mediums of entertainment like television and cinema. People still take that effort to set aside time for theatre; it means there is something unique it offers. Theatre forces its audience to suspend disbelief, to be imaginative, to be an active spectator—and that’s wonderful.”

Playwright, director and filmmaker Mahesh Dattani on the oft-quoted adage of theatre being dead while unveiling Anupama Chandrasekhar’s Free Outgoing, a play directed by him, speaking to The Hindu

FOLK FARE



Courtesy: NCPA

The vibrant folk forms of Maharashtra such as lavni, jagan, gondhal and bhajan will be featured in NCPA Mumbai’s ongoing series showcasing the folk traditions of India, *Living Traditions*, on 13 and 14 March. An ensemble led by Vijay Chavan, one of the leading exponents of the dholki—the premiere folk instrument of Maharashtra—will also feature myriad folk drums of the state such as dimdi, sambal, dhol, pakhawaj and chondke.



Photographs courtesy PARI

Root cause

There are probably more schools and styles of weaving in India than in any other nation. A toddy tapper climbs a height greater than New York’s Empire State Building every day during peak season. But many such highly skilled professions and traditional occupations of the country are in decline. In what could, perhaps, be termed as the first attempt to bring together the 833-million-strong countryside on a single platform, veteran journalist P Sainath recently launched an online journal, *People’s Archive of Rural India (PARI)*, which takes us on a journey through “the everyday lives of everyday people”. “As the Indian countryside rushes through an extremely painful transformation, many of these features disappear, leaving us poorer,” says the 58 year-old Ramon Magsaysay Award winner. “The website will generate and host reporting on the countryside that is current and contemporary, while creating a database of already published stories, reports, videos and audios.” Anyone can contribute to PARI in the form of audio, video, text and photographs. Visit www.ruralindiaonline.org





Haresh Patel

The art of making paper flowers originated in China 2,000 years ago

Flower power

Pink, white, red, yellow... these colourful blooms would brighten up any space. But appearances can be deceptive—and you're forgiven if you mistake these paper flowers for fresh ones! At a recent flower expo in Mumbai, 79 year-old Malathy Mehendale's artificial blossoms gave tough competition to their natural counterparts when they became the cynosure of all eyes. "More than a means of recreation, crafting paper flowers is therapeutic for me; it gets my creative juices flowing," she says. Though Mehendale learnt the craft from a book gifted by her father when she was 18, she was too engrossed in life's journey and motherhood to take it up seriously. Four years ago, she rediscovered herself when she painstakingly replicated intricacies of real flowers on crepe paper. Her daughters didn't fail to recognise their mother's hidden potential and encouraged

craft

her to display her talent to a larger audience. "For the first time, I exhibited my paper flowers at a flower show organised by the Inner Wheel Club of Thane," says the Thane resident. The accolades she received impelled civic bodies such as Thane Municipal Corporation (TMC) and Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), corporate houses and scientific institutions to invite her to showcase her work at their offices and flower expos. "After a workshop at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, when I saw my flowers displayed in a row under the portrait of Homi J Baba, I was thrilled beyond words," she says with pride. Given the tremendous response, will she go commercial? "It's gratifying to watch the joy on others' faces when they look at my creations; I don't need anything else," she says humbly.

—Natasha Rego



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

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

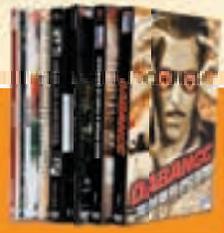
Wouldn't it be great to have a second childhood? To start life afresh?
Because at Harmony, a magazine for people above fifty-five, we believe
that age is in the mind. Which is why, you should live young.
Visit us at : www.harmonyindia.org

harmony
celebrate age



Subscribe to *Harmony - Celebrate Age* now and get

MOVIE DVDs



Subscription Card

(Please tick below for your choice of subscription)

- I would like to gift a subscription **OR**
- I want to subscribe to HARMONY

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

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

Personal details: Mr/Mrs. _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Postal Code _____ Country _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

I wish to pay by: Cheque Demand Draft

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

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

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

- Amex
- Visa
- Master Card
- Diners

Card Number

Card Member's Name

Card Expiry Date Month Year

Card Member's Signature _____

Date of Birth Date Month Year

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

Mr/Mrs/Ms _____ First Name _____

Last Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Postal Code _____ Country _____

Phone (Off.) _____ (Res.) _____

E-mail: _____

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

harmony
celebrate age

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

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



The first day at school
The first time you rode the bicycle.
The first crush you had at thirteen
The first drama you got a part in
The first day at college
The first date you went on
The first kiss
The first time you proposed
The first job interview
The first board meeting you addressed
The first day after retirement

BUTTERFLIES never retire

The first click of the mouse.

The all new

www.harmonyindia.org

harmony
celebrate age

Her voice

Every woman needs a sense of identity that goes beyond the role of a homemaker, argues Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)

The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night—she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question, “Is this all?”

For over fifteen years there was no word of this yearning in the millions of words written about women, for women, in all the columns, books and articles by experts telling women their role was to seek fulfilment as wives and mothers. Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a man and keep him, how to breastfeed children and handle their toilet training, how to cope with sibling rivalry and adolescent rebellion; how to buy a dishwasher, bake bread, cook gourmet snails, and build a swimming pool with their own hands; how to dress, look, and act more feminine and make marriage more exciting; how to keep their husbands from dying young and their sons from growing into delinquents. They were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights—the independence and the opportunities that the old-fashioned feminists fought for.



The suburban housewife—she was the dream image of the young American women and the envy, it was said, of women all over the world. The American housewife—freed by science and labour-saving appliances from the drudgery, the dangers of childbirth and the illnesses of her grandmother. She was healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned only about her husband, her children, her home. She had found true feminine fulfilment. As a housewife and mother, she was respected as a full and equal partner to man in his world. She was free to choose automobiles, clothes, appliances, supermarkets; she had everything that women ever dreamed of.

In the fifteen years after World War II, this mystique of feminine fulfilment became the cherished and self-perpetuating core of contemporary American culture.

If a woman had a problem in the 1950s and 1960s, she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage, or with herself. Other women were satisfied with their lives, she thought. What kind of a woman was she if she did not feel this mysterious fulfilment

waxing the kitchen floor? She was so ashamed to admit her dissatisfaction that she never knew how many other women shared it. If she tried to tell her husband, he didn't understand what she was talking about. She did not really understand it herself.

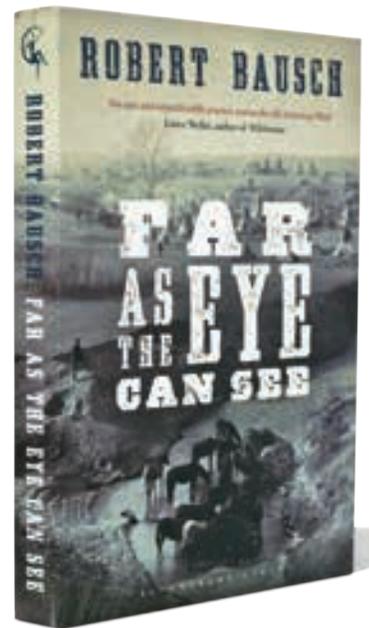
But on an April morning in 1959, I heard a mother of four, having coffee with four other mothers in a suburban development fifteen miles from New York, say in a tone of quiet desperation, “the problem”. And the others knew, without words, that she was not talking about a problem with her husband, or her children, or her home. Suddenly they realised they all shared the same problem, the problem that has no name. They began, hesitantly, to talk about it. Later, after they had picked up their children at nursery school and taken them home to nap, two of the women cried, in sheer relief, just to know they were not alone. ... Just what was this problem that has no name? What were the words women used when they tried to express it? Sometimes a woman would say “I feel empty somehow...incomplete.” Or she would say, “I feel as if I don't exist.”

If I am right, the problem that has no name stirring in the minds of so many American women today is not a matter of loss of femininity or too much education, or the demands of domesticity. It is far more important than anyone recognises. It is the key to these other new and old problems which have been torturing women and their husbands and children, and puzzling their doctors and educators for years. It may well be the key to our future as a nation and a culture. We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: “I want something more than my husband and my children and my home.”



A brilliant debut from BBC journalist and presenter **Anita Anand**, **SOPHIA** (Bloomsbury; ₹ 443; 416 pages) takes us through the life and times of an Indian princess who grew up in England and found an identity amidst a complex socio-political setting. Travelling through the life of Sophia—the granddaughter of Sher-e-Punjab Maharajah Ranjit Singh, the last king of Punjab—the book captures her transformation from a shy girl into a charismatic society lady, and from thereon into a suffragette revolutionary. Though the unique political situations that transpired in both England and India during the early part of the 20th century make it a challenging story to tell, in the mellifluous words of the first-time author, everything seems to fall in place. The second half of the book eschews exoticism and becomes a standard depiction of the suffragette movement. Otherwise, the book travels at a gritty pace and establishes the princess's personal struggle in coping with an indifferent father and devastated mother and her efforts to find relevance in a society that offers nothing to her on a silver platter. That said, it's the character of her father, Maharajah Duleep Singh that best portrays the relationship between the Indian aristocracy and the Empire.

Sharply evocative of time and place, **Robert Bausch's FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE** (Bloomsbury; ₹ 450; 309 pages) is both a treat and an education. It tells of not just the migration from the East, but details the complex relationships between Indians, settlers, trappers and traders, local militia, and government agents. It's not just the story of the protagonist Bobby Hale, a hustler with a heart of gold, but also a story about a place in time—a land of deception, warfare and death—offering the reader a rough ride through a land in chaos, where the only constant seems to be violence. Purpose comes to Hale's aimless life in the form of Eveline Barkley; their fumbling chemistry providing some memorable moments. Though a Western, it's a good advertisement for the tranquil comforts of the East. Bausch has filled the pages with realism, bringing the people, places and time into a believable reality.



Ben Okri's THE AGE OF MAGIC (Penguin; ₹ 399; 287 pages), dealing largely with the notion of self-discovery, takes us on a journey both magical and literal. A group of filmmakers travel from Paris to make a



documentary about happiness in Arcadia, Greece. Unknown to themselves they carry a lot of unwanted baggage: fear, anger, jealousy, envy, attachment. When they arrive in an idyllic Swiss village ringed by mountains and set apart by a luminous lake, they are compelled to confront the demons they have been trying to escape. One by one, they are disturbed, enlightened and transformed, each in a different way. The star of the show is Lao, a self-obsessed poet, who is also the presenter of the documentary. Split into separate books, with some of the chapters being rather short, *The Age of Magic* boasts an unconventional structure, with the opening chapter comprising a single sentence. Though not in the same league as *The Famished Road*, which won him the Booker, Okri's latest offering, questioning illusion and reality, love, death, success and evil, reads like a lucid dream.

Royal quest

It wouldn't be far-fetched to say Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* birthed the author in **Sudha Shah**. Consumed by a burning curiosity to find out more about the last king of Burma, Thibaw—mentioned in Ghosh's book—Shah toiled for eight long years to research and write her first book, *The King in Exile: The Fall of the Royal Family of Burma* (HarperCollins; ₹ 599; 480 pages), a biography of the king. An alumnus of Cathedral & John Connon School, Mumbai, **Sudha Shah** graduated from Smith College in the US and was in the midst of setting up a business before stumbling upon her true calling. Shortlisted for the Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize 2012 and the Tata Literature Live First Book Award 2012, the 58 year-old's debut has been very well received, with translations in Burmese, Thai and Marathi currently underway. The Mumbai-based author shares with **Suparna-Saraswati Puri** the experiences of writing a royal biography and the meticulous research and detailing that went into it.

What triggered the birth of *The King in Exile*?

Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* really moved me and stayed with me long after I finished reading it. I was curious to know how the life of the last king of Burma and his family had panned out after the exile. I was astonished to discover that not much had been written about them. This was literally a book begging to be written!



What kept you busy prior to your book?

I was setting up a small business, which was satisfying but not riveting enough. Although I found my passion rather late in life, I'm glad to have found it at last!

authorspeak

It took you eight long years to write this book. Were there any moments of doubt?

My only angst was whether I would be able to do the story the kind of justice it deserved. The challenge was also in crafting a human-interest story with a strong narrative voice.

Was it easy to access government documents?

Although our government archives have a lot of valuable information, in India these records are not stored in temperature-controlled rooms, unlike the West. Some of the papers I looked

at were literally disintegrating. I don't see this just as government apathy but the result of lack of funding. It really bothers me that not enough is being done to preserve our history.

While working on the book, who influenced your perspective the most?

There were many people who changed or influenced my perspective regarding the narrative, but certainly the ones that had the greatest impact were the four grandchildren of King Thibaw whom I had the opportunity to interview, particularly Prince Taw Phaya, who very generously

penned long letters in reply to my endless questions. When I started my research in 2004, he had neither phone nor email access, and the postman visited his home just once a month—he lives in a hill station in Burma—so you can imagine how long and eagerly I awaited his letters!

What are your memories of the royal descendants?

My research took me to several places including Ratnagiri, Kolkata, Yangon and Pyin Oo Lwin. Most of the royal descendants were surprisingly warm and willing to share information, some of which was deeply personal. Every meeting added to the narrative—sometimes something significant, sometimes just another nuance—and therefore was important. To me, the greatest compliment was when Prince Taw Phaya remarked, "It seems as if a member of the family, who knows the intimate details, has written this book."

While engaging in non-fiction, what is most crucial to you?

I think it is crucial to maintain the integrity of the story without exaggeration or sensationalism. I also keep in mind that what I leave out of a narrative is as important as what I put in. I realise that a biographer can influence how a life is remembered, therefore cultivating sensitivity to the subject and remaining as true to the life story as possible is important.

What are you working on now?

My next book is also going to be in the narrative non-fiction genre. I enjoy it because while researching I feel like a detective on a trail, with one clue leading to another until a clear picture emerges. It's all very exciting! Also, true stories hold a strange fascination for me.

“It is crucial to maintain the integrity of the story... a biographer can influence how a life is remembered”

Whom do you enjoy reading?

I have to begin with Amitav Ghosh, whose writing has had such a huge impact on my life. I love Vikram Seth too. Kazuo Ishiguro, Julian Barnes, Jean Rhys, Pascal Khoo Thwe, P G Wodehouse...there are so many excellent writers who have given me so much joy. I'm reading Mulk Raj Anand's *Across the Black Waters* now; it's a fictional account of our sepoys' experience during World War I. I've

recently read Heinrich Har-
rer's *Seven Years in Tibet*, which is both well-written and absorbing.

What is the support you have drawn from your family while writing the book?

My husband Pradip Shah is in the financial services business in Mumbai, and my son Karan is in his final year of an MBA programme in Boston. Both were incredibly supportive of my research and writing. They read and offered valuable suggestions on my manuscript. Whenever he could, my husband accompanied me on my research. My mother was with me when I started this journey. She had been an avid reader before her illness worsened, and was incredibly pleased and proud that her daughter was writing a book. Sadly, she passed away before it was published.

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 over 50, we believe *celebrate age* is just the magazine for you. It's packed with insider stories, exciting features, and so much more... encourages you to do just one thing: live young.

celebrate age

The voice of everywoman

One of the most influential and authentic feminine voices in Indian poetry, **Kamala Das** represents everywoman, her desires and anguish. **KAMALA DAS: SELECTED POEMS** (Penguin; ₹ 399; 223 pages) takes us through the very best of her works, exploring the evergreen themes of love and betrayal, the earthy and the spiritual, and love and lust. Edited by academician-writer **Devindra Kohli**, this authoritative collection of poems, some of them previously unpublished, offers us insight into one of our most original and controversial women poets.

Confessional and autobiographical, Das's poems are set apart by an intensely personal voice, bold images, and an exploration of female sexuality. An iconoclast, her open and honest treatment of female sexuality, sans guilt or coyness, shocked readers. In 'The Looking Glass' she urges women explicitly to

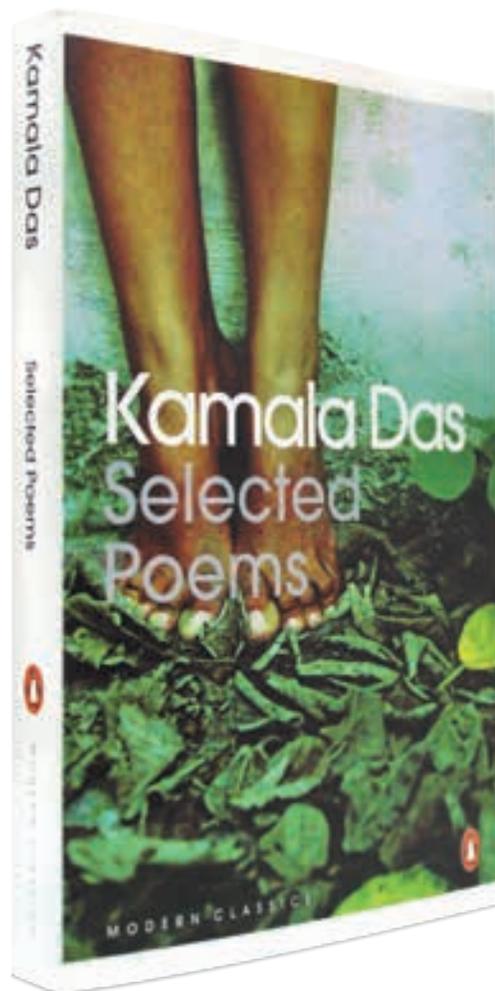
*Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers.*

Making evident her resentment for patriarchy and the traditional role assigned to women, Das says in 'Introduction,'

*...Then I wore a shirt
and a black sarong, cut my hair short and ignored all of
this womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl or be wife,
they cried. Be embroiderer, cook or a quarreler
with servants.*

This strain of rebellion is central to most of Das's work. Revolt in her poems, interestingly, is not limited to language alone. The structure of the poems, with total disregard for the classic iambic meter, takes the dissent further, alternating long lines with short ones and finding expression in a colloquial tone. In 'The Old Play House,' she attacks the need for married women to conform to societal rules.

*You planned to tame a swallow, to hold her
In the long summer of your love so that she would forget
Not the raw seasons alone, and the homes left
behind, but
Also her nature, the urge to fly, and the endless
Pathways of the sky.*



Her poems are critiques of not just marriages and the traditional roles for women, but also question women's need to control their sexuality, as in 'The Snake Shrine.'

*Desire burns
Like the wick we lit
At the family's
Snake shrine
Years and years ago.
Somewhere within
The silken folds
Of the labia minora
A flame lingers on
Resisting age
And defying
Mortality...*

Indeed, there's something deeply intimate about her sexual brazenness. And while Das set about courting controversies with her audacious streak, no one—whether her Muslim toy boy, who prompted her conversion to Islam at the age of 65, or her clinically aloof husband Madhava Das—was spared. Dispassionately discussing her bank officer husband in 'Larger Than Life Was He', Das says,

*He was like a bank locker
Steely cold and shut
Or a filing cabinet that
Only its owner could unlock
Not for a moment did I own him.
Only a few bed-bound chores
Executed well, tethered him to me.*

Engaging, conversational and unpretentious, Das's poetry has been appreciated by others of her ilk for its 'pheromone scent' and pioneering feminist consciousness in Indian poetry in English.

—Srirekha Pillai

A Feminist's Lament

An ideal woman, they said, was but
A masochist. Trained from infancy
To wear the flannels of cowardice
Next to her skin, trained to lie inert
Under a male, committed by vows
To feed her, clothe her and buy for her
The 1000 sq ft flat with a loft
For storing the debris of passing years.
I was never that ideal dream. Nor
Did he buy the flat for me.
Widowed and diabetic
Wrinkling like a bitter gourd
Not even death can perfect me now.
What was courage worth
At the very end?
Even Phoolan the dacoit queen
Finally threw down her guns
To settle for weekly orgasms.

—Kamala Das



The Stone Age

Fond husband, ancient settler in the mind,
Old fat spider, weaving webs of bewilderment,
Be kind. You turn me into a bird of stone, a granite
Dove, you build round me a shabby drawing room,
And stroke my pitted face absentmindedly while
You read. With loud talk you bruise my pre-morning sleep,
You stick a finger into my dreaming eye. And
Yet on daydreams strong men cast their shadows, they sink
Like white suns in the swell of my Dravidian blood,
Secretly flow the drains beneath sacred cities.
When you leave, I drive my blue battered car
Along the bluer sea. I run up the forty
Noisy steps to knock at another's door.
Through peepholes, the neighbours watch,
They watch me come
And go like rain. Ask me, everybody, ask me
What he sees in me, ask me why he is called a lion,
A libertine, ask me the flavor of his
Mouth, ask me why his hand sways like a hooded snake
Before it clasps my pubis. Ask me why like
A great tree, felled, he slumps against my breasts,
And sleeps. Ask me why life is short and love is
Shorter still, ask me what is bliss and what its price....

—Kamala Das

The divine feminine

Embrace your womanhood and let it shine, urges **Teal Swan**

I did an interview with a budding self-help expert Laura Marie. Watching her on the other side of the screen was quite soothing for me. She was like a work of art to behold; porcelain skin that folded across the structure of her face and hair like spun silk. She was full of vigour for life. Her words, lightly tinted with a French accent. I couldn't stop thinking after the interview was over about women in general. It is so important that as women, we are out in the world setting an example of what it looks like to fully embody and express ourselves. It is time that those of us who were born female release our resistance to our own gender and begin to embrace and express our feminine essence. Women have been in resistance to the divine feminine within themselves for far too long just like human society has been in resistance to the divine feminine for far too long.

The dimension we are living in is a dimension designed for the purpose of expansion; and in this dimension, expansion is the by product of contrast. By contrast, we mean polar energies. This is a dimension of duality. And this is why as we digress from the unity of source energy, we can see two polar energies arise. For centuries these polar energies have been referred to as yin and yang or the god and goddess. The goddess represents the divine feminine; the god represents the divine masculine. On a manifested level this translates

to a physical woman and a physical man.

Divine feminine energy represents these aspects within the universe: Restoration, life, renewal, creation, birth, healing, receptivity, openness, motherhood, nurturing, love, understanding, compassion, insight, intuition, wisdom,



Dinodia Photo Library

forgiveness, the moon, connection, harmony and sensuality. To allow the divine feminine within ourselves to surface, we need to search for these aspects within ourselves. You will find that you are more in touch with some aspects of your divine feminine nature and less in touch with others. For example, you may be fully in touch with your own sensuality but not in touch with motherhood. If this is the case, expressing the divine feminine within you means connecting with and expressing the latent motherhood within you in your own unique way.

It is understandable how in today's world, many of us would have suppressed these energies in order to cope with modern day life. For example, it is difficult to allow the softness of receptive compassion into our life when we are expected to maintain competitive careers in the workplace. But our health depends on making the space in our lives to allow these inherent qualities to surface. Our womanhood is unique. Every woman is a unique expression of the divine feminine. Coming into alignment with the divine feminine within us is not about conforming to an archetypal idea of what divine feminine is or isn't. It is about releasing the things that disallow our own unique feminine essence from radiating through us. It is about reclaiming who we really are.

We need to be willing to heal our negative emotions relative to anything we identify as female to set the femininity within us free. The divine feminine does not need to be cultivated or created within us as women. It *is* us. It is the essence of our choice to come into this life as women. And so, it is an ever-present energy that is always there. It is merely obscured by our thoughts and actions. If we begin to clear our minds and lives of the things that are obscuring that essence, it will immediately shine through on its own. It is exhausting suppressing the essence of who we are. And so, it is time to quit suppressing it. It is time to embrace it and let it shine.

Swan is a new-age spiritual leader based in the US. You can read her blogs at blog.thespiritualcatalyst.com

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

HARMONY, OBVIOUSLY.

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

ONE
-on-
ONE

harmony
celebrate age

Name of Advertiser:

Address:

Age: E-Mail:

Tel: Signature:

Tick chosen category

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

Please fill in the space provided below

Terms and conditions

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

For office use only

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

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

Mini revolution

It was *the* fashion statement of the Swingin' Sixties. From the streets to the runaways across fashion capitals, the miniskirt, designed by Briton Mary Quant in 1965, took the world by storm. Short but sweet, the mini mirrored the sexual liberation movement that had gained momentum with the invention of the birth control pill earlier in the decade. Named after Quant's favourite car, the Mini Cooper, the coquettish shortened skirt became an instant rage.

Quant probably took her cue from the young girls in London, who were wearing their dresses shorter than ever in the early 1960s. She raised the hemlines further, inventing an audacious skirt that fell no more than four inches below the derrière. To the world at large, which was wholeheartedly embracing British cultural influences including The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, this was yet another tide of anti-establishment wave emanating from London. French designer Andre Courreges put the mini onto the catwalks of Paris, and fashion houses such as Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Cardin swore by it, with the latter raising hemlines even further to trend micro-skirts.

In 1966, Queen Elizabeth II awarded Quant the Order of the British Empire medal. And by 1969, minis had become so popular in the US that the Japanese embassy advised Prime Minister Eisaku Sato's wife, Hiroko, then 62, to wear one on an official visit. In Japan itself, a visit by British model Twiggy was credited with triggering a boom in mini sales—as well as a debate on whether 'moral standards' were declining as fast as the hemlines were rising. Though the mini lost ground to bellbottoms and long-flowing skirts during the hippy era, it went on to stage a remarkable comeback, clothed in denim and leather, finding a coveted place in closets around the world.



Dinodia Photo Library

THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: MARCH 1965

- On 6 March, members of The Rolling Stones Mick Jagger, Brian Jones and Bill Wyman were fined £ 5 each for urinating on the wall of a London petrol station, after finding the toilet out of order.
- On 7 March, changes to the Liturgy of the Roman Catholic Mass were introduced throughout Ireland, with mass being said in the vernacular for the first time.
- On 18 March, Soviet cosmonaut Aleksei Leonov left his spacecraft Voskhod 2 for 12 minutes, to become the first person to walk in space.
- On 21 March, Martin Luther King Jr led 3,200 civil rights activists in the third march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capitol in Montgomery, for African-American voting rights.

Coldscape

n. Technologies, buildings, and other artificial sources of cold used for the preparation, distribution, and storage of food.

Example. The gigantic tank farms of Tropicana and Citrusuco, the world's largest orange juice producer, occupy one particular corner of the **coldscape**, with its own specific architecture and quirks.

—Willy Blackmore, "The big chill: A look at America's coldscape", *TakePart*, 22 July 2013

flash nonfiction

n. A very short literary nonfiction piece, typically consisting of a few dozen to a few hundred words.

Example. Inside the 5-inch by 7-inch journal are 131 pages filled with four pieces of **flash nonfiction**, four pieces of fiction and one piece of analysis.

—Peter McCrady, "Cracking the spine on *The Austin Review*", *Community Impact Newspaper*, 14 January 2014

Sharebait

n. A social media post with text, images, or video designed to entice the reader to share the post.

Example. In its short life, BuzzFeed has garnered almost as much criticism as it has readers. Competitors and media critics have panned the website as a manifestation of clickable **sharebait** on steroids.

—Stephen Hutcheon, "BuzzFeed, Ben Smith and how to harness the viral power of the bored-at-work brigade", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 November 2014

amatonormativity

n. The legal, cultural and moral privileging and promotion of the romantic couple as the highest form of human relationship.

Example. For those of you who don't know, **amatonormativity** is basically the idea that having or desiring a close, exclusive, romantic relationship is the default, normal setting for *everyone*. It's problematic because it invalidates a whole slew of people who may not desire such a relationship, including but not limited to aromantic people, celibate people or single people who are just fine with being single for whatever reason they might have.

—"When did romance become so dominant? Amatonormativity and fandom", *If History Could Set You Free*, 4 December 2014



Calling all shutterbugs

Courtesy PSM

Here's an opportunity for silvers in Chennai looking to take up photography. Become a member of the historic 1857-born Photographic Society of Madras (PSM) and discover a whole new world. Professionals from different genres, including surgeons, industrialists, students and art critics, make up PSM's 500-odd members of which 150 are silvers. Once a member, you can take part in monthly intra-society competitions, lectures, photo walks, bird-viewing sessions and national meetings. You can also consult existing members on the nuances of the art, and learn to look, shoot, edit and repeat. Whether you are amateur or pro, PSM offers something for everyone for an annual fee of ₹ 1,200. To become a member, call Rama Rao Sridhar on (0)9500077915 or 044-24320605/24353079, or write to focus@photomadras.org. For more information, visit www.photomadras.org

“ If you want something said, ask a man;
if you want something done, ask a woman.

—Former UK prime minister Margaret Thatcher (1925-2013)

death café

n. A social gathering where people discuss death while having a meal or a drink.

Example. I told about five people that I was going to something called a **death café**—the reactions were mixed, but none was particularly positive. “Will it be full of Goths?”, “How morbid”, “That’s weird.” The thing is that people don’t just find talking about death uncomfortable—they find the idea of talking about death uncomfortable. In general, we just don’t do it.

—Eleanor Tucker, “What on earth is a death cafe?”, *The Guardian* (London), 22 March 2014

slow journalism

n. Journalism that eschews instant articles and superficial opinion in favour of a longer-term approach with a focus on in-depth investigation, considered analysis and effective storytelling.

Example. We in the media can be culpable of moving on quickly; the news agenda is by its nature a tangle of loose ends. One quarterly publication is dedicated to challenging this: *Delayed Gratification* describes itself as “the world’s first **slow journalism** magazine, proud to be ‘last to breaking news’”.

—Oliver Duff, “i Editor’s Letter: Your suggestions for improving i”, *The Independent* (London), 8 May 2014

Securitarianism

n. A political philosophy or ideology that sets national security as its highest principle and chief objective.

Example. You may object that libertarian **securitarianism** is more than a bit of an oxymoron, but that’s the point. We live in a time of conflicting impulses. Our characteristic self-indulgence is the thought that we can have a sustainable society that maxes out both liberty and security.

—Peter Augustine Lawler, “Campus security”, *The Weekly Standard*, 25 December 2014

Statement about ownership and other particulars relating to the Harmony—Celebrate Age published under rule 8 of the Registration of Newspapers (Central) Rules, 1956

FORM IV

1. Place of Publication : Reliance Energy Centre,
Santacruz (East), Mumbai 400055
2. Periodicity of its publication : Monthly
3. Printer’s Name : Dharmendra Bhandari
Whether citizen of India? : Yes
If foreigner, state the country of origin : N.A.
Nationality : Indian
Address : Reliance Centre, 1st floor,
19, Walchand Hirachand Marg,
Ballard Estate, Mumbai-400001
4. Publisher’s Name : Dharmendra Bhandari
Whether citizen of India? : Yes
If foreigner, state the country of origin : N.A.
Nationality : Indian
Address : Reliance Energy Centre,
Santacruz (East), Mumbai 400055
5. Editor’s Name : Tina Ambani
Whether citizen of India? : Yes
If foreigner, state the country of origin : N.A.
Nationality : Indian
Address : Harmony, The Magazine,
Reliance Centre, 1st floor,
19, Walchand Hirachand Marg,
Ballard Estate, Mumbai-400001
6. Name and address of individuals who : Harmony for Silvers Foundation
own the newspaper and partners or
shareholders holding more than
Shareholders holding more than
one per cent of total capital. : Reliance Energy Centre,
Santacruz (East), Mumbai 400055

I, Dharmendra Bhandari, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

For Harmony for Silvers Foundation
Sd/- Dharmendra Bhandari
Printer & Publisher

Dated March 1, 2015

“Making a will is your lasting act of love for those you leave behind”

Vinay Shah, 81, Pune, spreads awareness on the need to draft a will



Hemant Patil

Where there's a will, there's a way—literally so. For over 700 families in and around Pune, succession has been a smooth affair, thanks to the initiative of 81 year-old Vinay Shah. An engineer in the construction industry, Shah has helped lay the foundation for a better life for others by getting their financial and property affairs in order, ensuring they don't have to contend with succession struggles and bad blood. “When you are grieving, the last thing you need to be worried about is money,” he says, adding in a pragmatic manner, “Let's face it: survivors do need money and property.” Drawing inspiration from his father—who made a will 19 years before his demise, making the transition hassle-free—Shah has coaxed, cajoled, argued and reasoned with friends, family and sometimes even strangers, to make their will. “Indians often see the making of a will as a death knell and something to be avoided at all costs,” he observes. Shah, who also helps people with the required paperwork, making the rounds of municipal offices, says that a will should be made and signed when one is in good health, with one of the witnesses being a doctor, if possible. “This implies that you are in a sound state of mind and makes for a sounder will.” Shah also set up a trust in 1979 to realise his father's dream of educating children in his village in Saurashtra. Though the trust began on a small scale by distributing books, uniforms and other stationery, it now runs a full-fledged school with over 700 students, a girls' hostel, a computer training centre and BEd classes. Following his mother's death in 1990, Shah set up a trust to provide free lunch to over 200 people daily, with a simple menu comprising chapattis, vegetables, rice, dal and buttermilk. That apart, Shah also spends almost four hours every night painting. How does he manage to get so much done? He replies with a twinkle, “Where there is a will, there is a way!”

—Suchismita Pai

“Knowing exactly what I’ll get in the future lets me focus on more important things; like my son’s cricket practice.”

RELIANCE

Life Insurance

Secure your future with up to 10% Fixed Regular Additions with **Reliance Fixed Savings.**

Call us on **3033 8181 & 1800 3000 8181** to know more.



Reliance Fixed Savings helps you to create a corpus by allowing you to systematically save over a period of time. With this plan, you can:

- ▶ Fix your regular savings: Get Fixed Regular Additions of 8% in first year, 9% in second year and 10% every year from third year onwards*
- ▶ Fix your maturity amount
- ▶ Protect you family with a life cover
- ▶ Avail tax benefits, as per applicable income tax laws

Over 1 crore lives insured | Top 4 most trusted life insurer[^] | Over 8,000[#] outlets | Over 1,00,000 advisors*

Reliance Life Insurance Company Limited. Registration No. 121. Registered Office: H Block, 1st Floor, Dhirubhai Ambani Knowledge City, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra - 400710. For more information or any grievance, 1. Visit us at www.reliance.life or 2. Email us at: rlife.customerservice@relianceada.com. Insurance is the subject matter of the solicitation. Tax laws are subject to change, consulting a tax expert is advisable. For more details on terms and conditions, please read sales brochure carefully before concluding a sale. Trade logo displayed above belongs to Anil Dhirubhai Ambani ventures Private Limited and used by Reliance Life under license. *Conditions Apply. [^]As on 31st March 2014. [#]Top 200 brands according to The Economic Times & Nielsen Best Brands Survey, 2014. [^]Brand Equity Nielsen Most Trusted Brands Survey, 2014. [†]Includes agent offices and premium collection outlets.

Beware of spurious phone calls and fictitious/fraudulent offers. IRDA clarifies to public that 1. IRDA or its officials do not involve in activities like sale of any kind of insurance or financial products nor invest premiums. 2. IRDA does not announce any bonus. Public receiving such phone calls are requested to lodge a police complaint along with details of phone call, number.

Reliance Term Life Insurance Benefit Rider: UIN: 121B009V02, Reliance Major Surgical Benefit Rider: UIN: 121B014V02, Reliance Critical Conditions (25) Rider: UIN: 121B012V02, Reliance Family Income Benefit Rider: UIN: 121B015V02, Reliance Accidental Death and Total and Permanent Disablement Rider (Regular Premium): UIN:121B001V02

CIN: U66010MH2001PLC167089. UIN for Reliance Fixed Savings: 121N101V01

Mktg/FS MAZ AD/V1/Eng/Dec 2014.



CINTHOL
ALIVE IS AWESOME



**OVERCOME
DIRT AND GERMS
WITH CINTHOL
CONFIDENCE+**



99.9% germ protection* soap with Insta Deo fragrance.

* Reduction on contact with product. As per lab test.