

# harmony celebrate age

The magazine for silver citizens

JANUARY 2017 ₹ 40



**YOGA RX**

Prop up your  
practice

**NUTRITALK**

Foods to keep  
you warm

**SUDHA  
RAGUNATHAN**  
**QUEEN OF  
raga**



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW  
WITH JEFFREY ARCHER

DEMONETISATION  
WOES

NEW THERAPY FOR  
NARROWED AORTIC VALVE



# NOW, IT'S OUR TURN TO LOOK AFTER MUMMY'S HAIR.

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*dekhbhaal*  
Godrej Expert Rich Crème  
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# Sink or swim

The chasm between intent and implementation can be a wide one indeed.

In the deluge of information, invective and commentary that flooded the virtual world after the Prime Minister's demonetisation announcement last November, one little parable stood out: 'To hunt crocodiles, the water was drained from the pond. No crocodiles were found because they can live on land too. But all the small fish died.'

Heartrendingly true. While the intent to clean up the economy is laudable, a slapdash and hurried announcement with little preparation and constantly shifting goalposts have created a legion of silent sufferers, including millions of silvers across the country who have borne the brunt of the policy.

The interminable (and often futile) wait for money in ATM and bank queues has already claimed elder lives and the paucity of small notes in circulation has made simple transactions for vegetables, groceries and essential services a nightmare. Even more worrying, the politically correct refrain of 'today's pain for tomorrow's gain' does not necessarily hold true for silvers, as columnist Priya Desai writes in our 'Money Matters' column this month. Asserting that silvers will take "a significant financial hit, both in the short and medium term", she argues that the move will adversely affect their income flow for some time to come and require them to tighten their purse strings (*see page 36*).

Adding to silver woes is the digitisation juggernaut. While *Harmony-Celebrate Age* has been relentless in encouraging silvers to embrace technology, we must recognise that it requires a change in mindset and more enabling mechanisms to convince silvers to replace their real wallets with virtual ones. Rather than a gentle transition, silvers are now confronted with a



Dabboo Ratnani

rude awakening: Go digital or get left out. Needless to say, this is adding to their apprehension, especially considering that electronic malfeasance and fraud still abound in India. Thus, as Desai points out, rather than blaming silvers for their intransigence to change, the Government and the banking system need to gear up and provide "secure, user-friendly, efficient and glitch-free mechanisms" to bring them into the digital fold.

Only time will tell if they will deliver with alacrity. One thing, though, is clear: it is imperative to get proactive about digital literacy. If there's one resolution you make at the start of 2017, let it be this one. Reach out to trusted family, friends and advisors, read up, learn about your digital options—debit and credit cards, net and mobile banking, e-wallets—and choose what works best for you. We've been plunged into a new world in the blink of an eye—it's time to learn how to swim. Happy New Year!

*Tina Ambani*

## A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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## Carnatic vocalist Sudha Ragunathan on how she reinvents herself through music

Cover photograph: T Selvakumar

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### **A MOTHER TO ALL**

Lucknow's Sarojini Agarwal runs Manisha Mandir, a home for disadvantaged girls

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# column one

"I believe music is for everyone," asserts Padma Bhushan Sudha Ragunathan. And this carnatic composer-vocalist truly walks the talk. She uses her understanding of her craft and her audience to innovate and improvise, and is determined to take this genre of music from its rarefied ivory tower, making it accessible to a wider demographic, including prisoners. Her radiant persona only adds to her allure, as you will see on our cover.

Our other headliner this month is British author Jeffrey Archer. Catching up with him five years after we featured him on our cover (in May 2011), we find him as prolific, driven and relevant as ever. "I think since I've given up politics and can concentrate fully on writing, I've managed to produce better work," he says in an exclusive interview.

Indeed, a great one-two punch to kick off the New Year! And there's more. In 'Money Matters', we present a detailed analysis of what demonetisation actually means for Indian silvers, in the short and longer term; Raj Kanwar recounts his interactions with actor and "gentleman" Tom Alter; and we explore the Latin Quarter of Goa only to be transported to Portugal.

What's more, in addition to all your favourites, we bring in 2017 with a new column on diet and nutrition by Naini Setalvad, 'Nutritalk'. And our trusted yoga acharya Shameem Akhtar begins a new series of 'Yoga Rx' that will focus on the use of props to deepen your practice. It's all happening right here, this year. Have a great one!

—Arati Rajan Menon

*Harmony-Celebrate Age* deserves a huge round of applause for the wonderful December 2016 issue. I enjoyed reading the entire issue from cover to cover. Some stories were exceptionally good; one of those was the cover story "Get Set, Go!" It was very well-written and executed by your team. P T Usha is an inspiration to an entire generation of go-getters. The number of awards and medals she has received to date stands testimony to all her hard work, dedication and determination. No wonder her name is synonymous with Indian athletics today and, as a coach, she will continue to be a force to reckon with. Thank you once again, *Harmony*, for the wonderful rendezvous with the 'Golden Girl'.

**Maria P**  
Puducherry

This refers to the item "Cash Crunch" published in 'Orbit' (December 2016). I strongly believe that the current limit of ₹ 2.5 lakh on bank deposits (where no questions will be asked by the Income Tax Department) is too low for seniors. The Government should raise that limit to ₹ 10 lakh—for senior citizens as

well as women. This is because the money being deposited by both these strata comprises *vridhavastha jama punji* and *streedhan* respectively, which is their life's capital (and not income) accumulated over the years. It is sad to see that even for such deposits, seniors are being put to so much inconvenience by the Government. Indeed, the best course is not to raise any query as only those who have white capital in cash are depositing it in banks; the others with black money are anyway throwing it in the garbage or rivers.

**Mahesh Kapasi**  
Via email

## ERRATUM

In the article "Charting Her Own Course" ('Encounter'; December 2016), a picture featuring Ketaki Sheth (Asha Sheth's daughter) and her father Vasant Sheth was inadvertently captioned: "With her father K D Malaviya during a trip to Japan". The error is deeply regretted.

—Editors

## CONTRIBUTOR



**Naini Setalvad**, our columnist for 'Nutritalk', is a Mumbai-based obesity and lifestyle disease consultant who journeyed from 160 kg to 60 kg at the age of 34 in 1998, with the help of the right food combination and ancient Indian wisdom. Thereafter, she studied sports and fitness science, diet management and nutrition and dietetics and developed her own technique to counsel

people on nutrition. A nutritionist, columnist, educator and public speaker on diet and food research, she now gives one-on-one diet counselling to those who wish to improve their health and caters to their nutritional goals and health conditions. According to Setalvad, every diet is different and individualised to suit the likes, dislikes and lifestyle of clients. Apart from counselling, she organises nutrition programmes and workshops to help people improve their productivity and lifestyle.



inside

**P16:** Silver tribute

**P24:** Serving love

NEWS ● VIEWS ● PEOPLE ● RESEARCH ● TRENDS ● TIPS



FACE OFF

## KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

Here's a beauty boost hiding in plain sight on your kitchen shelf! While it's best not to eat too much of it, **slathering sugar over your face can rev up your skin**, says organic skincare expert Imelda Burke in her book, *The Nature of Beauty* (Penguin/Ebury Press). "Sugar has a natural humectant or moisturising factor, which helps to draw moisture into the cells," she writes. And as London newspaper *Daily Mail* reports, sugar is also a natural source of glycolic acid that brightens the skin and repairs its texture. There's even a handy recipe for a face mask: Grind raw sugar with olive oil and honey. It's that simple.

iStock



# ACNE = DELAYED AGEING

The next time your young ones weep over their latest skin break-out, tell them to take a chill pill. According to a study by dermatologist Simone Ribeiro at King's College, London, the skin of people who suffer from acne ages more slowly, with wrinkles appearing later in life. The study reveals that these people are likely to have longer telomeres in their white blood cells—telomeres are the caps at the end of chromosomes that protect them from deteriorating. "Our findings suggest that the cause could be linked to the length of telomeres, which appears to be different in acne sufferers and means their cells may be protected against ageing," Ribeiro tells media.



Photographs by iStock

## BUYING TIME?

The latest data from the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery reveals that the number of people over the age of 65 getting facelifts and cosmetic eyelid surgeries has more than doubled over the past two decades. In 2015, 39,772 eyelid surgeries and 37,632 facelifts were performed on people over the age of 65.

**BIG BUSINESS:** BUSINESS IN THE ANTI-AGEING MARKET HAS SURPASSED \$ 150 BILLION IN 2016, A GROWTH OF 7.7 PER CENT FROM 2015. ACCORDING TO A MARKET REPORT, ANTI-WRINKLE PRODUCTS FORM THE LARGEST SEGMENT, CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY HAIR RESTORATION.

# BIZARRE BEAUTY

This device has got a lot of people snickering—for reasons we are too polite to mention in this column. A long rubber instrument with a round mouthpiece in the centre and pockets for weights to sit on either end, you hold it in your mouth and nod your head up and down. (We're not making this up.) Jokes apart, Japanese company Shlab insists

their device PAO exercises and tones your face, diminishes lines, and prevents skin from slackening, if you use it for 30 seconds twice a day. Priced overseas at \$ 990 HKD (about ₹ 8,600), the device is available on Amazon India ([www.amazon.in](http://www.amazon.in)) at an outrageous mark up for ₹ 16,154. But first, watch it in action at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2O5WWVIXVT4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2O5WWVIXVT4)







# MENOPAUSE AND AGEING

Hot flashes and sleepless nights could accelerate ageing, according to research conducted at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA). After studying over 5,000 people, the team concluded that **menopause, which often accompanies insomnia, speeds up cellular ageing by an average of 6 per cent.** And women with symptoms like restless sleep and waking frequently at night tended to be biologically older than others without these symptoms. “For decades, scientists have disagreed over whether menopause causes ageing or ageing causes menopause,” says senior study author Steve Horvath, a professor of human genetics and biostatistics, in a media release by UCLA. “It’s like the chicken or the egg: which came first? Our study is the first to demonstrate that menopause makes you age faster.” The findings have been published in journals *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* and *Biological Psychiatry*.

**NO PLACE LIKE HOME:** Underlining the gap in housing and support options for elders, a new Irish report, *Housing for Older People: Thinking Ahead*, points out that more than the house itself, it is the location (a safe neighbourhood and proximity to family, shops and services) that makes silvers reluctant to move from their homes to age-friendly facilities. Something to ponder for us in India as well.



## NAD+

That’s the name of a **coenzyme with the potential to postpone ageing**, according to scientists at the US-based Centre for Healthy Ageing and the American National Institute of Health. They found that a drop in the level of this enzyme in mice and roundworms results in metabolic errors and neuro-degeneration and ageing. On the other hand, injecting some of this good stuff helps maintain cell health and boosts capacity to repair the genes. Next up are human studies to pave the way for treatment of diseases like Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s.

# 125 all out!

**I**f you’re living in hope of the magical elixir of eternal life, the wait may be, well, endless. According to researchers from Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, **average human life expectancy cannot extend past 125 years.** Their study of the *Human Mortality Database*, which includes information from over 40 countries, indicates that while the number of people who lived until old age has risen since 1900, once people reached the age of 100, their survival thereon has not changed significantly. This indicates that the average maximum span of human life is likely to remain 115 years, the upper limit being 125 years. According to the study, published in journal *Nature*, we should lay more emphasis on extending the human ‘health span’ rather than lifespan.

# EM'OLD'JIS!



Courtesy: Diane Hill & Chris Oxenbury

**T**his is what we call digital inclusion. Cheers to 56 year-old Briton Diane Hill (@EmoldjiNanny)—she responded to an outreach project by the BBC asking if the media could do more to reflect the lives of people by bemoaning the lack of **emojis on smartphones that reflect silver lifestyles**. “I have a really bad back and I wanted to tell my friend about it with an emoji that looked like me when I writhed around the floor in pain,” she tells website *mashable.com*. “Do you know what, stuff that I wanna say to my friends like, ‘I’m going out shopping to spend the kids’ inheritance’, or an

emoji that lets my kids and grandkids know that they’re in big trouble. I can’t find an emoji to depict that!” The Coventry and Warwickshire chapter of the BBC was prompt to revert, commissioning Chris Oxenbury (@okse), a local artist, to design a bunch of **‘emoldjis’**. The designs have been sent off to the Unicode Consortium—which develops, maintains and promotes software internationalisation standards and data—for consideration and could soon make their way to a smartphone near you. Yay! For now, you can find emoldji merchandise such as T-shirts and mugs (with worldwide shipping) on [www.redbubble.com/people/emoldji](http://www.redbubble.com/people/emoldji)



Katelynn Zoellner / KFSM-TV



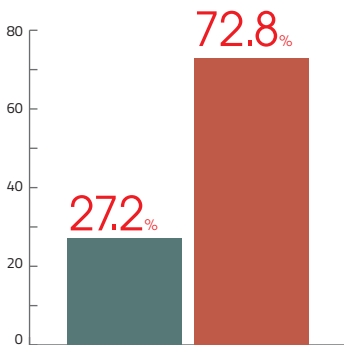
## WATER BABY

Look, no hands—or fear! American great-grannie Millie Sullens has set the Internet on fire with a video of her waterskiing; she rides the waves with nonchalance, going hands-free on occasion, claiming the water as her own turf. And did we mention that she's 90? The Oklahoma resident learnt the sport when she was 34 and it has become a lifelong passion. "Go for it!" she advises her fellow silvers in an interview with *People* magazine. "If you fall, get up and go again. It's no fun sitting at home in a rocking chair." Check her out in action at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=55tEjXfF3U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55tEjXfF3U)

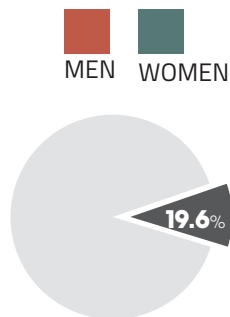
# ENDANGERED SPECIES

Here's a disappearing act, quite literally. Silvers are becoming an endangered species in Hollywood, with the film industry under-representing, mischaracterising and demeaning them, contends a study by the USC

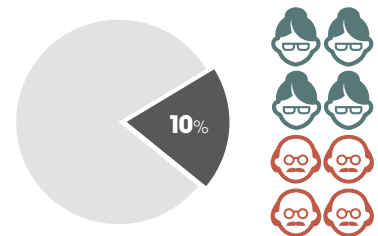
Annenberg School of Communications in Los Angeles. And women have it even worse than men. Here are some highlights of the report, disturbingly called *The Rare and the Ridiculed*:



Percentage of speaking characters



Films with senior leads or co-leads



Senior leads in ensemble films

- Only 11 per cent of the speaking characters in the 100 top-grossing films of 2015 were 60 or over, though they represent 18.5 per cent of the population.
- 43 per cent of the films had no older female characters at all and 78 per cent didn't have any senior females in leading or supporting roles.
- Older female actors, when cast, were outnumbered nearly three to one by their older male counterparts.
- Older actors were also generally typecast as white and heterosexual—of the 4,066 speaking characters, 82.1 per cent were white, 9.1 per cent black, 3.6 per cent Hispanic and 2.7 per cent Asian.
- As for sexuality, only two of the older characters in all 100 films were identified as gay men (in the same movie); not one character over 60 was lesbian, bisexual or transgender across more than 4,000 speaking roles in the 100 films.
- Over half the films with silvers in significant roles featured ageist comments.

Considering this rampant ageism, it comes as little surprise that a new legislation in California, which will go into effect this year, allows actors to stop entertainment websites from publishing their ages if they are unwilling to make them public. While actors' representatives and unions are heralding the move, critics are calling it a limit on free speech.

# Meet the Irish

As a country, Ireland has gone through its share of churn over the decades. And an award-winning documentary, *Older than Ireland*, chronicles it through the eyes of 30 Irish centenarians. According to website [www.irishexaminer.com](http://www.irishexaminer.com), the documentary, directed by

Alex Fegan, is the only Irish entry amongst 145 eligible films in the Best Documentary category for the 2017 Academy Awards. Will it be nominated for an Oscar? Watch out for the nominations on 24 January. And in the meantime, check out the official trailer at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjSBDE2dKm8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjSBDE2dKm8)

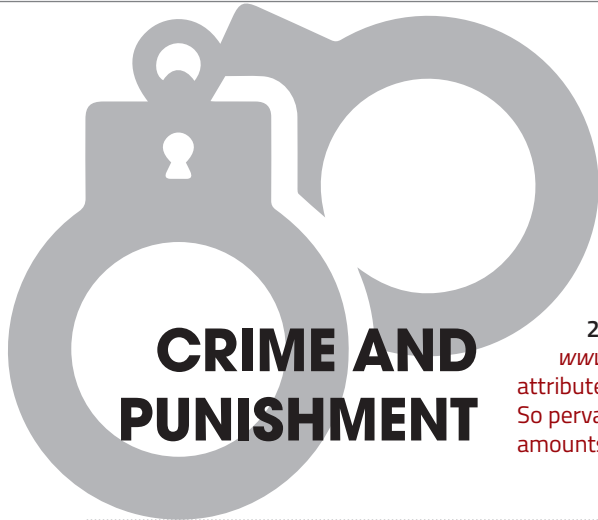


Courtesy: Alex Fegan



**RETIREMENT IDYLLS:** In his book *Young-Old: Urban Utopias of an Ageing Society* (Lars Müller Publishers), architect Deane Simpson, who teaches at the Royal Danish Academy of Arts in Copenhagen, describes how high-end retirement communities around the world are redefining traditional notions of ageing. A standout example from the book: The Villages in Florida, a group of scattered 'villages' housing 115,000 silvers linked by a 90-mile network of car-free, golf-cart roadways, and food, cinema, sports and entertainment options galore. Swank.



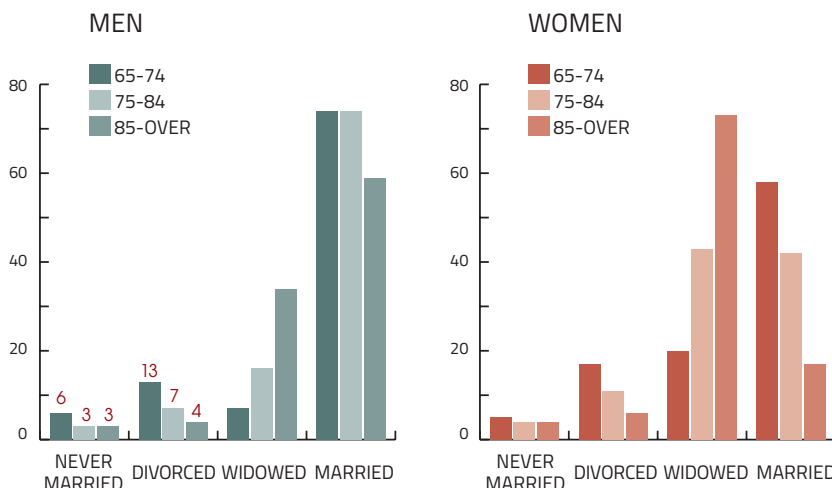


In Japan, labelled the oldest society in the world, silvers are increasingly turning to petty crime, such as shoplifting and small thefts—in greater numbers than the youth, surprisingly enough. According to the National Police Agency, arrests of elderly for criminal offences have doubled in the past decade—from an average 80 per 100,000 residents between 1995 and 2005 to 162 per 100,000 between 2005 and 2015. In fact, 20 per cent of all those arrested for criminal offences in 2015 in Japan comprised people over the age of 65. Quoted in website [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org), Yuki Shinko, researcher and author of *Old People Underworld*, attributes these crimes to dementia, the side-effects of medicines and isolation. So pervasive is the trend that the Japanese government is now spending copious amounts of money to build prison cells designed specifically for silvers.

**INVISIBLE WORKFORCE:** IN THE US, THE LANDSCAPE OF THE ‘INVISIBLE WORKFORCE’—MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY WHO CARE FOR ELDER—IS WIDENING WITH TIME. ACCORDING TO A NEW STUDY, 18 MILLION AMERICANS ALREADY CARE REGULARLY FOR A FRAGILE OLDER RELATIVE, MOST OFTEN A SPOUSE OR A PARENT, AND THE NUMBER IS EXPECTED TO AT LEAST DOUBLE BY 2050.

## STATE OF THE UNION

In America, **silver men are far more likely to be married than silver women**. That’s just one of the trends seen in a US government report titled *Older Americans 2016: Key Indicators of Well-Being*. Here are some highlights of the report, which has been analysed by *New York Times*:



**MARITAL STATUS OF THE POPULATION AGE 65 AND OVER, BY SEX AND AGE GROUP, 2015**

- About three-quarters of men aged 65-74 are married compared to 58 per cent of women in that age group.
- While the proportion of married men in the 75-84 year age group remains the same, in women it drops down to 42 per cent; and in 85 years and above, the gap further widens with 60 per cent married men compared to 17 per cent married women.
- 23 per cent of men above the age of 75 live alone while the figure is twice as high in women.
- Life expectancy is one explanation for the statistic above (women tend to live longer and marry older men); however, another key factor is that men are more likely to remarry than women.

**SILVERS AT SCHOOL:** With the retirement age on the rise in Nordic countries— Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, as well as Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and the Åland Islands territories—silvers between the ages of 60 and 65 will still have five to 10 years in the workforce. Thus, a new report titled *Working Life in the Nordic Region* recommends they be sent ‘back to school’ for skill development and training opportunities in new forms of education to build better job diversity and help them stay productive and financially secure in a changing world.

**Home in the Apple:** In a heart-warming and pocket-friendly intergenerational initiative, New York University (NYU) has rolled out a ‘homestay’ programme that allows students to live in the spare bedrooms of local silvers. The silvers get company and some extra income while the students shave a considerable amount off the prohibitive rental costs in the Big Apple. Nice.



## Thai high

With 68 million people ageing at one of the fastest rates in Southeast Asia, the working age population of Thailand is expected to shrink by 11 per cent by 2040. And the **Thai government is getting proactive about caring for its silvers**. As website *todayonline.com* reports, apart from a huge financial allocation for pension-related schemes, it has announced a slew of measures, including tax cuts to firms for hiring elders; loans to developers of senior housing projects; and a reverse mortgage scheme allowing silvers to borrow against the equity in their homes.

## RETAIL THERAPY

Concerned that online food shopping breeds isolation and removes a vital source of community interaction, a new report by the University of Hertfordshire has recommended that UK **supermarkets should introduce slow checkout lanes for the elderly**. As website *www.independent.co.uk* tells us, the report, funded by the Food Standards Agency and the Economic and Social Research Council, avers that slower checkout lanes would enhance the shopping experience for those who enjoy the social aspect of it. It also recommends targeted promotions aimed at elders, such as ‘shopping-buddy’ schemes and special offers to encourage them to shop at non-peak hours.







## app alert

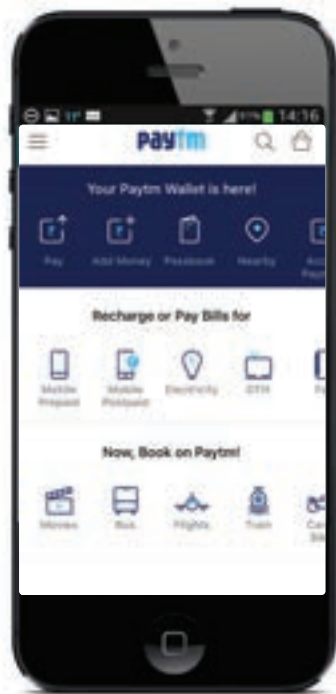
### PAYTM

**Available for:** Android 4.0 and up, iOS 8.0 or later

**What it does:** Demonetisation got you down? If you are low on cash and having trouble paying for your bills and services, this may be the answer for you. The app is a one-stop solution to pay your electricity, gas, mobile, water and many other bills; book tickets for movies, events, trains and hotels; and even shop online. From time to time, you may also score discounts not available in stores.

**After installation:** Once installed, the app asks you to sign in and make an account.

- There is one main home page where all services are offered. At the very top, the options are 'Pay', 'Add Money', 'Passbook', 'Deals' and 'Accept Payment'. When you choose the option to add money, the app adds money to your paytm wallet from your bank account once the details have been filled. The passbook shows you all your transactions, from paying bills to adding money to your wallet. Various offers and discounts for bills and shopping can be found under the deals tab. Through accept payment you can accept money transferred to your paytm wallet by family, friends or someone who needs to pay you back.
- The next section of the app enables you to 'Recharge' or 'Pay bills for'—this section includes options to pay your bills, including mobile (prepaid or postpaid), electricity, DTH, metro, broadband, landline, data card, gas, water and insurance.
- The third part of the app is 'Book on Paytm'. This comprises options to book tickets for movies and events, bus, flights, trains, hotels, events, amusement parks and even cars and bikes.
- The last part is 'Shopping' where you can buy everything from provisions to clothes, accessories and even electronics.
- At the base of the app are tabs that help you go 'home', to the 'mall', to see your 'profile' and 'notifications'. The upper right corner has the option of search and 'bag' (where you can save items to buy later); the upper left side has a shortcut dashboard with options of recharge, book, offers, new launches—which are already present in different sections of the app.

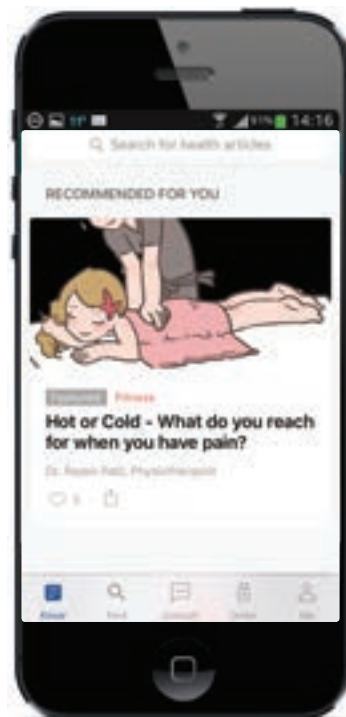


### PRACTO

**Available for:** Android 4.0.3 and up, iOS 8.0 or later

**What it does:** Looking for a doctor in your budget near your area? Here is a user-friendly app that will help you find one as well as book an appointment, order medicine, set medicine reminders, manage health records, get health tips and even consult the doctor online. In essence, it's a one-step solution to your medical needs.

**After installation:** The app asks for your permission to access your location and send a notification after installation. Once access is provided, it asks if you would like to continue with a Facebook account or through your mobile number. After verification and account set up, you go to a page that asks your interests, such as sexual health, stress management, fitness, healthy hair, mental well-being, weight loss, nutrition, skincare, healthy teeth, back pain, diabetes, health and immunity, cancer, eye care, healthy heart, kids' health, women's health, and digestive health. You can choose more than one option. Then, the app takes you to the home page where, according to your choices, you can see articles featured in different publications recommended by the app. On the left top corner is the 'Explore' tab with your list of interests; you can add or remove them as you like. On the right top corner is the 'Saved Articles' tab, where you can find the articles you've saved for future reference. The bottom tab has the following options: 'Know', 'Find', 'Consult', 'Order' and 'Me'. 'Know' shows you the home page of the app while 'Find' gives you a list to find doctors, dentists, alternative medicine, therapists and nutritionists, diagnostic labs and wellness and fitness centres. After clicking on the 'Consult' tab, the app provides you with options of public questions or chatting with an expert through the app. The 'Order' app lets you buy medicines and even shares special offers. And the 'Me' option lets you access your profile, set reminders and save records and even folders.





Haresh Patel

# LIVE LONG AND PROSPER

On 30 November 2016, Bharati Vidyapeeth's New Law College in Pune became a beehive of activity. Members of Pune's International Longevity Center – India (ILC-I) gathered for the seventh annual ILC-I Awards ceremony and cheered on the winners with great enthusiasm and vigour. The awards are a tribute to individuals and organisations advocating the cause of silvers in India and is a coveted recognition that serves to promote the concept of active ageing, a notion close to *Harmony-Celebrate Age's* heart.

Presiding over the ceremony were chief guest Padma Shri Lila Poonawalla, a Pune-based industrialist and philanthropist; guest of honour Dr Shivajirao Kadam, vice-chancellor of Bharati Vidyapeeth; ILC-I president Padma Vibhushan

Dr R A Mashelkar; ILC-I chairman Jayant Umranikar; and chairperson of the ILC-I awards selection committee Padma Vibhushan Dr K H Sancheti. As Dr Mashelkar proudly noted, "the average age of the distinguished panel was around 65 years".

Listed below are the awardees that were honoured under four categories with a citation, memento and cash prize.

1. The **Late Shri B G Deshmukh Award**, given to organisations promoting qualitative excellence in ageing:
  - The **Jyeshtha Nagrik Sangha, Jalgaon**, for developing a library with over 15,000 books for silvers, organising free health camps, arranging lectures on

healthy living and promoting intergenerational solidarity.

- The **Sawangadi Jyeshtha Nagrik Sangha, Pune**, for, among other things, setting up a medicine bank where unexpired unused medicines are collected and sorted under the guidance of doctors and distributed free to low-income patients in hospitals. Over the past five years, medicines worth ₹ 1 crore have been distributed to over 80,000 needy patients.
- 2. The **Jeevan Gaurav Puraskar or Lifetime Achievement Award**, given to an individual over 70 years for their worthy work:
  - **Prabhakar Chattrre**, 86, for setting up the Jyeshtha Nagrik Sangha in Mumbai, making



special ID cards for silvers and his instrumental work in designing and developing the FESCOM (Federation of Senior Citizens of Maharashtra) website. He was also recognised for his developmental work for differently-abled children.

- **Madhukar Pawar**, 75, for teaching and grooming generations of youngsters and promoting the silver cause in Pune under projects of the Sawangadi Senior Citizens' Organisation. He is president-secretary of the Teachers' Forum and executive president of ASCOP (Association of Senior Citizens' Organisation of Pune).

### 3. The Special ILC-I

**Commendation Award 2016** was given to **V V Kulkarni**, 86, who, for nearly 30 years, has been working for and with the ageing population in Pune. Among his many impactful initiatives is the Niramay Arogya Yojana (Healthy Ageing Programme), which he designed and conceptualised as a flagship programme by ASCOP.

- The ceremony was particularly special for *Harmony-Celebrate Age* as our executive editor **Arati Rajan Menon** was awarded the **Late Dr S D Gokhale Award for promoting qualitative journalism in ageing**. After 13 tireless years of working towards what Dr Mashelkar termed the 'longevity revolution', this was not only recognition for Menon, who has lent her talent to the issues and concerns of silvers in India, but for all our empowered subjects and dedicated readers who have come on this journey with us.

One of our subjects in the recent past has been Dr Mashelkar himself who, in our October 2016 issue (*The Groundbreaker*), revealed his passion for 'inclusive innovation', i.e. to



Hareh Patel



Courtesy: ILC-I

Executive editor of *Harmony-Celebrate Age* Arati Rajan Menon receiving the Late Dr S D Gokhale Award for promoting qualitative journalism in ageing from chief guest Lila Poonawalla; founder of UE LifeSciences Mihir Shah (second from left) being awarded the Anjani Mashelkar Inclusive Innovation Award 2016

invent, create and develop inclusively. He instituted the annual **Anjani Mashelkar Inclusive Innovation Award** in the memory of his mother, with a prize purse of ₹ 100,000, to honour technologists who develop cost-effective products and services for the poor and elderly.

At this year's award ceremony, held on 17 November, the prize was awarded to Mihir Shah, founder of

UE LifeSciences, for his soon-to-be released gadget, the iBreastExam. Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers diagnosed among Indian women; however, early diagnosis and intervention can go far in minimising fatalities. The iBreastExam is a portable, radiation-free and non-invasive device that uses sensors and material technology to identify cancerous lesions and tumours.

—Natasha Rego



**Spare your time.** This new year, resolve to fit some volunteer work into your schedule. According to two studies, volunteering promotes physical and mental health and well-being in silvers. In fact, it actually proved therapeutic for people suffering from conditions such as arthritis, hypertension, diabetes, cardiac problems, lung disease and even cancer, and is an established stress and depression buster.

## Then: Old socks Now: Teddy bear

Have a pile of unused socks hogging space in your cupboard? Turn them into cute little teddy bears for the grandkids—or even the pet! To make this happen, you will need a sock (of course!), polyester or cotton filling, needle, thread, a pair of scissors, buttons, a marker, cotton gauze and beads. First, mark the head of the teddy bear at the closed end of the sock, where your toes go, and two pair of legs, facing each other, at the other end. Cut the head with scissors, ensuring both sides of the socks don't get detached. Now, cut the first pair of legs and make a little space in between the legs still attached to the body. Insert cotton filling into the head and sew it close. Sew the cotton gauze on the face



and beads and button as eyes and nose. Now, insert the cotton filling into the body and sew it close. The pair of legs cut out will become two hands after filling them with

cotton and sewing them on each side of the body. Now, just sew the head onto the body and your teddy bear is ready for a warm hug.



### RECYCLING FACTS

- The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 6.5 per cent of all materials going into landfills and municipal incinerators are clothing and textile products that could have been recycled.
- Most textile mills recover useful short fibres from blow room waste by passing them through willow machines. In turn, this leaves a non-reusable residue called willow waste, which is too short a fibre to be used for any textile application and is thus disposed of in landfills.

### MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. SOCKS CAN BE GREAT LEG OR ARM WARMERS—JUST CUT THE CLOSED END OF THE SOCK AND IT'S READY TO BE USED.
2. PUT A RIBBON AT THE OPEN END OF YOUR SOCK AND USE IT TO HOLD COINS, RICE, LENTILS...WHATEVER!





## BLINDING PROTEIN

Yes, there are bad proteins but these are not the kind you can yank off the shelves. Researchers from the University of Southampton, UK, have found that **a group of proteins believed to cause Alzheimer's disease could cause blindness too.** They found that amyloid beta proteins, produced in the body, could be causally linked to age-related macular degeneration, a progressive disease that causes the death of retinal photoreceptors, the light-sensitive cells at the back of the eye. They found that cells in the retina started to break down within 24 hours of being exposed to amyloid beta proteins. Researchers are hopeful this finding could help in new treatment for macular degeneration. The study was published in journal *Experimental Eye Research*.

# Salad days

**A**s if salad weren't healthy enough, here's a way to make it even healthier: just add a few boiled eggs to it. According to researchers from Purdue University, US, **adding three whole eggs to salads boosts the amount of Vitamin E absorption four to seven-fold.** Vitamin E is generally absorbed along with dietary fats and is often found in oils, seeds and nuts; all of this abundantly present in salad. Egg is a nutrient-rich food that contains essential amino acids, unsaturated fatty acid, Vitamin B and a small amount of Vitamin E. This study was unique as it measured the absorption of Vitamin E from real food rather than supplements. The findings were published in *The Journal of Nutrition*.



Photographs by iStock

## Forever young

If you needed further convincing, here's why you should clear those dubious anti-ageing products out of your medicine cabinet. Researchers at the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, and

University of California, Los Angeles, might have found a way to stay forever young. They believe the accumulation of mutant DNA in our cells, over a lifetime, contributes to ageing and degenerative

diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and sarcopenia. Now, they have discovered **a way to clear out mutated DNA from mitochondria, the 'batteries' of human cells, and turn the clock back.** At the heart of their research, they discovered a way to manipulate genes

so they break down and remove mutated DNA, thus regenerating cells.

After finding that genetically engineering the fruit fly to 'clear out' mutant DNA from the muscles it uses to fly can reverse the effects of ageing in the insect, they are now looking forward to human trials. So are we.



# GROW A SUPER BRAIN



Photographs by iStock

Researchers from the University of Georgia, Athens, in the US claim to have found a way to reboot your brain. And featuring in this sci-fi type morsel of information are veggies! According to researchers, **the compounds that give plants and vegetables their colours—carotenoids—can boost brain functioning in silvers.** They used fMRI or ‘functional MRI’ to measure

the brain activity of 40 participants aged between 65 and 86 while the latter recalled word pairing that they were taught earlier. They found that individuals with higher levels of the carotenoids lutein and zeaxanthin did not require much brain activity to complete the task. In other words, their brains were more efficient. The researchers,

whose results were published in the *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society*, are now planning to study if changing diets can boost cognitive function. Wait! We’re getting an incoming message: Ensure you get enough carrots, spinach, mangoes and apricots in your diet!

## GESTATION

As the brain begins to grow four weeks after conception, it needs a healthy prenatal environment to develop properly.



At certain times during brain development, 250,000 neurons are added each minute.

## CHILDHOOD

**2x**

The brain produces twice the number of neurons it will need. Only those that are reinforced with use will remain.



By 6 years, the brain is 95% of its adult weight. At this time the brain is as flexible and energetic as it will ever be.

## ADOLESCENCE



The brain is fully grown, but the wiring is still a work in progress. Some say the brain begins to age as early as puberty.



This time in one’s life brings waves of “gray matter pruning”; teens lose about 1% of gray matter every year till they hit their early 20s.

## ADULTHOOD

The brain reaches adulthood in our 20s. The grooves on the brain’s surface widen. Between 20 and 90 years the brain loses 5-10 per cent of its weight.



Brain power peaks between the age of 22 and 27 years.

## OLD AGE

By age 80, our brains have lost a little weight and have shrunk by a few ounces. Most of the weight lost is water. At this point we are steadily losing brain cells.



Shrinkage of the brain usually leads to worsened cognitive abilities. When the hippocampus begins to shrink, there’s a loss of orientation and wandering.

## BRAIN REPAIR

SCIENTISTS HAVE FOUND A DRUG TO MINIMISE THE DESTRUCTION OF BRAIN CELLS CAUSED BY STROKE AND REPAIR THE DAMAGE. ACCORDING TO A STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER, UK, **AN ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DRUG CALLED INTERLEUKIN-1 RECEPTOR ANTAGONIST (IL-1RA), USED IN RODENTS WITH A STROKE, REDUCED BRAIN DAMAGE AND INCREASED THE NUMBER OF NEURONS SEVERAL DAYS LATER.** THE RESEARCH WAS PUBLISHED IN JOURNAL *BRAIN BEHAVIOUR AND IMMUNITY*. THE DRUG IS ALREADY LICENSED FOR USE IN HUMANS FOR SOME CONDITIONS, INCLUDING RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS.



## COLOUR THE CLONE

Science seems to have found a way to track and kill cancer cells in the human body by colour-coding them. Researchers from Boston Children's Hospital's Stem Cell Research Program and Harvard Medical School, Massachusetts, US, have developed **a colour-coding tool to track blood stem cell clones on a specially bred zebra fish, and isolate the cells by colour**, after which they looked at what genetic factors are involved in their expansion. The study provides a starting point to explore how and why a particular blood stem cell clone begins to expand as people age and develop the risk of cancer. The study was published in journal *Nature Cell Biology*.

## BERRY, BERRY GOOD

### VITAMINS

B6	C	E	K
3%	15%	6%	6%

### MINERALS

Copper	Potassium	Calcium	Iron
3%	2%	6%	6%

### NUTRIENTS

Carbohydrates	Calories	Protein
4%	2%	1%

### BENEFITS OF CRANBERRY

- Prevents cancer
- Prevents kidney stones
- Cures sore throats and cold
- Sustains cardiovascular health
- Reduces risk of stomach ulcers
- Helps avoid respiratory infections
- Prevents scurvy and tooth cavities
- Provides relief from urinary infections



Here's something that can thwart bacteria from ganging up against you and spreading infection. Taking a page out of the military's handbook, researchers from the Institut Armand Frappier,

Canada, have discovered that **interrupting lines of communication can stop bacteria in their tracks. And launching the assault is the sweet and innocuous cranberry!** Cranberries are a great

source of antioxidants. They also have anti-adhesive properties owing to compounds called proanthocyanidins (PACs). Researchers fed cranberry extracts to fruit flies and found they lived longer

than their counterparts and had reduced severity of bacterial infection. They now hope the study can reduce our dependence on antibiotics. The results were published in *Scientific Reports*.



## 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.

### EYES TO THE WORLD

When I was a child, my father used to tell me that God whispers the purpose of one's life on the day we are born and will ask us if we have fulfilled it after we die.

I discovered my purpose at the age of 40. The year 1998 marked my sister-in-law's death anniversary and we, my husband and I, decided to donate blood on the occasion. We went to a blood camp at a school in Chennai, where I noticed a large number of blind students gathered around a tree. A reading session was also arranged for the students and visitors. It was my introduction to reading sessions, where volunteers read books aloud to blind students. Here, I met Gopi, a blind boy who opened my eyes to a whole new world.

My daughter, who was then in Class VIII, read to Gopi first. When she couldn't make it the following week, I stood in for her and this became a routine practice. I took the 1.30-3.30 pm slot at the Little Flower Convent, a school for the blind, to do my reading sessions for vari-

ous students, twice a week. Next, Gopi requested me to record some books for him. He would drop off the books at my home and I would record the audio version for him. As Gopi pursued his BA, MA and B Ed (2001-2005), I read, recorded and wrote exams for him as a scribe.

People started calling me Gopi's 'teacher' but, in reality, he taught me so much. He taught me how to be with visually challenged people and how independent they are. He would walk across the busy T Nagar area with no help at all and land up at my flat without losing his way.

Married to a banker, I have relocated to various cities across India with our children in tow. In 2005, we shifted to Thoothukudi, where I went to a Christian organisation close by and would read newspapers and books, or write letters for a group of middle-aged women who were visually challenged. In 2007, we came back to Chennai and I continued with my reading sessions at Little Flower Convent. I also signed up with iScribe, which lets volunteers write exams for visually challenged people as well as special children.

**Reading and writing for the blind brings Ramakrishnan great joy**



Nivedita Raja

I have written exams for children with various mental and physical disabilities. We don't maintain personal relationships with the children as they need to get used to new scribes regularly. But I do ask for their marks after the results are released. In fact, my entire family prays every time I write an exam for someone. And, yes, my first student Gopi is married, and well-settled with a lecturer's job, his own house and a car.

After shifting base yet again, reading sessions have become difficult. So I spend more and more time recording books. It gives me immense satisfaction; my son can tell when I have completed a recording session just by looking at the joy on my face.

There have been times when it was tough. Once, I had a hairline fracture in my leg and somebody from Kanyakumari had come all the way to ask me to record his syllabus. Despite the pain, I recorded for 45 days and, somehow, it made me feel better. I take special care of my health, especially during exams. Once I commit to help, the Lord always helps me get through it like a breeze.

I have written exams for Class 1 kids and PhD students. At the age of 55, I maintain a diary to practice my hand-

writing. The good news is that my husband is now retired and has become a scribe too, so we now write exams together.

—Usha Ramakrishnan, Chennai

## RETURN FROM THE ABYSS

For all of March 2016, I felt my vision wasn't quite all right in my left eye but the eye specialist couldn't find anything wrong. Things came to a head when, while overtaking, I crashed the left bumper of my car into a parked taxi—I had simply not seen it! I got an MRI and later a biopsy, which revealed I had an aggressive tumor in my brain. My treatment would be a six-month course, and it included the works—chemotherapy, radiation and other treatments.

At a time like this, one banks on family and friends. I have no living family in India except my brother's widow, Rekha, a teacher who lives in Delhi. My daughter lives in the US and was expecting her second child, so she was out of circulation. Rekha and a couple of friends came down from Delhi and bundled me off from my home in Hyderabad, saying the best oncologists were in the capital. Let's face it, taking care of me was going to be a huge responsibility and Rekha, her friend Mani and my old friends Abha and Soma were absolutely wonderful. They worked out a schedule for the trips to the hospital and the time they would each be spending there.

In the last week of April, my chemotherapy cycles began. I had two mishaps when I went into septic shock and was knocked out for 48 hours. Finally, stem cell therapy was suggested and I agreed despite its low success rate. What did I have to lose?

After my last MRI on 26 October, the doctor smiled and said, "Go home; go get a life. You are free!" When I left Hyderabad in April, I knew my chances of returning home were minimal, and here I was being told I had a second chance at life! I believe Rekha, my friends and their families, who tended to me with so much love and patience, were in part responsible for the dramatic turnaround in my health. I stayed with Rekha, and although it did not register then, I later realised she had recently moved in with her ageing parents whom she took care of along with me.

Even before the chemo started, the tumour had started affecting me in odd ways. At times, I was lucid and at other times, I would wander into rooms looking for the toilet, picking up stuff randomly and then not knowing why I had done that. I would bump into things, stagger and collapse. I couldn't gauge the position of a chair or the toilet seat, so I would fall down. Rekha was worried I would hurt myself, so she slept on the floor in my room to keep an eye on me.



Shyamola Khanna

**Mathews got a second lease on life with the help of a wonderful 'team' of caregivers**

Her biggest fear was my going into the kitchen. While I let the tears flow, she told me more.

Gradually, as the tumour shrank and my health improved, Rekha and my friends helped me get back on my feet. The cancer had left but it had also taken away my confidence. Slowly, they let me do things on my own, always under strict supervision. According to Rekha, it was a great day when I made my first cup of tea on my own!

As if that were not enough, Rekha was generous with her praise for me. She says I was as cheerful as possible at all times, which helped my wonderful 'team' during the toughest periods. I want to mention that my friends in Hyderabad took over as soon as I got back from Delhi, and have offered all kinds of help, from food to trips to the local hospital. I never feel I am alone. I am also utterly grateful to the young people from a portal called [bloodconnect.com](http://bloodconnect.com). They responded as soon as Rekha posted a request. I was so moved by the humane efforts of all these people. These guys saved me and I shall be forever indebted to them!

—Roma Mathews, Hyderabad



# Soul food

SARASWATI GOVINDARAJAN, 76, HYDERABAD



**I**f there's anything I have learnt from the challenges life has tossed at me, it is to pick myself up every single time and roll with the punches. Thanks to this attitude, I am now the happy proprietor of a restaurant in the heart of Hyderabad, at the age of 76. Apart from the satisfaction this brings me, I also feel a sense of fulfilment from being able to provide employment to the people who work for me.

Here's a little background. I was born in Secunderabad and moved to Mumbai after marriage. I was a homemaker and, through experimentation, I mastered the art of cooking. At age 33, life took a difficult turn and my husband passed away, leaving me to care for three young children: two boys and a girl. I learnt typewriting and took up odd jobs. To be able to give them a good education, I also started a small textile business from

my home. In 2004, after my children got married and moved out of home, I moved to Hyderabad.

All this while, I had nurtured the idea of starting a restaurant but it would still be a while before that dream actually came true. In the meantime, in 2013, I started selling buttermilk and lassi to pedestrians from a small thatched shed in front of my house. My house is strategically



## THE KITCHEN QUEEN

Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement

**I'm a 60 year-old retired banker. Though I'm enjoying retirement, I want to stay productive and busy. As I love to cook, I want to start a tiffin service from home. Please suggest the way forward.**

It's nice to know that you want to take up a tiffin service as your second career. First look for potential clients in the form of working couples, college students, senior citizens living alone, etc, who want to eat homemade food but cannot cook for themselves.

Think about the kind of food you can cook—something that isn't elaborate or time-consuming—and see how you want to structure the meals. Usually, one tiffin meal consists of four chapattis, one or two vegetable dishes, dal, rice and some salad too. On the basic expense, add a service charge to work out the price of a single meal. Getting disposable containers saves you the hassle of washing and cleaning. Do not get into the entire cooking process yourself. Hire help to do the cutting, chopping and making chapattis; just do the final cooking to add your special culinary magic. You will also need a delivery boy.

To spread the word, get pamphlets with your contact details distributed in your area and advertise on social media. Finally, think of an interesting name for your business. To get things going, send sample meals on a trial basis. In the current times of demonetisation, encourage your clients to pay online or via a cashless service. Once your business is up and running, you can get it registered too. All the best!

**—Geeta Kapoor in Kolhapur runs a tiffin service from home**



Photographs courtesy: Saraswati Govindarajan

placed between a shopping area, a bus stop and crossroads, and the customers kept rolling in. With the profit I earned, I was able to build a concrete shed and converted it into a small kitchen. I was ready for the next step and started a small tiffin service that served organic food. The food was great but it was not selling. I think people in the locality, Sai Nagar, Malkajgiri, were not aware of the concept of organic food and the price was not compatible with their lifestyle. But that's all right because I am a first-generation entrepreneur and eager to learn from my mistakes.

I stopped the organic tiffin service and decided it was time to launch my dream venture. In the middle of this year, I opened Hotel Akshaya in the same location. This is a vegetarian restaurant that can serve about 35 people at a time. For breakfast, we serve South Indian specialties; for lunch, there are varieties of rice; and the Chinese section opens after 4 pm.

All businesses, big and small, present challenges, and I was prepared for anything. If the restaurant didn't take off, I would shut shop and rent the space. That was Plan B. But we get over 100 customers and earn close to ₹ 20,000 every day. I plan to introduce a chaat counter early next year.

**"I am a first-generation entrepreneur and eager to learn from my mistakes. All businesses present challenges, and I was prepared for anything"**

Running a restaurant is not easy. For instance, when the staff turns up late or not at all, it is very problematic. We still have hungry customers who need to be served. So I get on my phone and make alternative arrangements. This is one of the biggest challenges I have faced to date. I could so easily live a simple, retired life. But the fact that at this age, I am able to provide a livelihood to so many people and feed so many keeps me going. Also I believe one should always keep oneself busy as an idle mind tends to be filled with negative thoughts. When the mind is sick, the body becomes sick. I also love the fact that, owing to my job, I meet so many people from all walks of life. And, what do you know—many fondly call me 'Sachu paati' [Granny Saraswati]!

**—As told to Jayanthi Somasundaram**



**Javed Akhtar**



**Kavita Krishnamurthy**



**Anand Yadav**



**Cho S Ramaswamy**

## BIRTHDAYS

Actor **Nana Patekar** turns 66 on 1 January.

Former Indian cricketer **Kapil Dev** turns 58 on 6 January.

Columnist and author **Shobhaa De** turns 69 on 7 January.

Theoretical physicist, cosmologist and author **Stephen Hawking** turns 75 on 8 January.

Actor **Kabir Bedi** turns 71 on 16 January.

Poet and lyricist **Javed Akhtar** turns 72 on 17 January.

Filmmaker **Subhash Ghai** turns 72 on 24 January.

Singer **Kavita Krishnamurthy** turns 59 on 25 January.

## IN PASSING

Sahitya Akademi award-winning Marathi author **Anand Yadav** died on 27 November in Pune. He was 80.

Former actor, AIADMK leader and Tamil Nadu chief minister **J Jayalalithaa** passed away on 5 December in Chennai. She was 68.

Veteran journalist, political analyst and comedian **Cho S Ramaswamy** passed away on 7 December following a prolonged illness in Chennai. He was 82.

Former US astronaut **John Glenn**, the first American to orbit earth, died on 8 December in Columbus, Ohio. He was 95.

Hungarian-American actor and socialite **Zsa Zsa Gabor** died on 18 December following a heart attack. She was 99.

## MILESTONES

👉 **Emma Martina Luigia Morano**, an Italian supercentenarian, celebrated her 117<sup>th</sup> birthday on 29 November. She is the world's oldest living person, and the last living person verified to have been born in the 1800s.

👉 On 15 December, the Indian Council of Food and Agriculture (ICFA) presented the 'Global Agriculture Leadership Award 2016' to **Ratan Tata** in Mumbai, for his transformational role in scaling the Tata Group during his 20-year stint as chairman.



Dinodia Photo Library

## OVERHEARD

"There is a lot of pressure on women to, well, not age. Being a model and having your whole career being based on how you look, I am probably even more sensitive to it—but you can't keep chasing this impossible thing.... It's not about looking 20, or looking 30, 40, or 50, it's about looking like you take care of yourself. Exercising, eating right, taking care of your skin—that is looking great at every age, and that's the message that I really believe in. As much as I try to take care of myself I still don't look like my daughter when I wake up in the morning. And I don't want to feel bad about that."

—American supermodel **Cindy Crawford**, 50, speaking to website [www.refinery29.uk](http://www.refinery29.uk)



## Warm up this winter: Beat the chill with the right foods

As the winter frost sets in, there's a nip in the air. With the drop in temperature, the mornings become lazy and the evenings even cooler. Unfortunately, winter is also the time when you tend to catch colds, coughs and influenza. You drink less water as you do not feel thirsty and, in turn, your body gets dehydrated. This is also the time when many seniors experience dry skin, painful joints, lethargy, depres-

sion and even chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. However, your diet can come to the rescue. Traditional Indian medicine categorises foods into warming and cooling foods. So, besides layering your body with fuzzy clothes, consume warming foods that generate heat in your body to boost your immunity and prevent winter woes. Here are some foods to keep you warm and toasty this season.



Photographs by iStock

### GHEE

Known as liquid gold, ghee is absolutely essential during winter. It lubricates joints, prevents constipation, soothes sore throat and promotes memory and energy. Being balanced, soothing, moisturising, satiating and nourishing, it is considered an ultimate sattvic food. Use daily to either cook vegetables or dal, or add it to your rotis and rice. And make it a point to use cow's ghee.

### GINGER

The spicy warmth you feel when you eat a ginger root is what stimulates blood circulation and eases congestion in the throat and lungs. Ginger is a natural anti-inflammatory food that prevents and soothes all types

of arthritis, bursitis and other musculoskeletal ailments. Add it to vegetables or make piping hot tea with it to relieve you of cold.

### TURMERIC

Known as India's other gold, turmeric contains amazing healing properties; it is anti-inflammatory and an antihistamine. It prevents and cures throat or chest infections and flu. It also boosts immunity, prevents rheumatoid arthritis and retards the progression of Alzheimer's and cancer. Fresh turmeric root is found best in winter months. Add it to your plate daily and enjoy an infection-free winter.

### AMLA AND TURMERIC CHUTNEY

#### Ingredients

- Fresh turmeric root: 250 gm
- Amla (Indian gooseberry): 500 gm
- Salt and lemon, to taste

#### Method

Chop the turmeric into pieces. Deseed the amla and chop into pieces. Blend the amla, turmeric, salt and lemon in a grinder and make a paste. Serve the chutney as an accompaniment to any dish.





## SEEDS AND NUTS

Seeds and nuts contain good quality fat that promotes better health, lowers cholesterol and boosts immunity. Sesame seeds are a rich source of calcium; cashew nuts contain zinc; almonds are rich in Vitamin E; pistachios contain Vitamins B6 and A; and walnuts are an excellent source of Omega 3 fatty acids. All the above nutrients are needed to maintain good health in winter. Eat them directly or add to your beverages and desserts.

## SPINACH SOUP

### Ingredients

- Spinach leaves: 1 bunch; torn by hand
- Bay leaf: 1
- Ginger: ¼-inch piece
- Cow's ghee: 1 tbsp
- Juice of half a lemon
- Salt to taste

### Method

Heat ghee in a pan and sauté the spinach leaves, bay leaf and ginger in it for a few minutes. Allow the mixture to cool. Now, remove the bay leaf and run the mixture in a blender. Add salt and lemon juice as per taste. Serve hot.

## FRUITS AND DRIED FRUITS

Fruits like orange, guava and *amla* are high in Vitamin C and help prevent common cold and flu during winter. Dried fruits like dates, figs, prunes and apricots are also warming foods. Packed with fibre, they help prevent constipation, dry mucus and satisfy your sweet cravings. Like fruits, these contain less than 1 per cent fat.

## LEAFY GREENS

Leafy greens are a boon to mankind. They are a rich source of calcium, iron, beta-carotene and potassium,

## SEEDS MIX

### Ingredients

- Almonds: 25 gm
- Fennel seeds (*saunf*): 50 gm
- Sesame seeds (*til*): 50 gm
- Flaxseeds (*alsi*): 50 gm
- Ghee: 1 tsp
- Rock salt and lemon, to taste

### Method

Heat ghee in a pan. Add almonds (chopped lengthwise) and roast for 5-7 minutes till crisp. Take fennel and sesame seeds in a vessel. Add salt and lemon and mix well. Dry-roast the seeds continuously on slow heat till crisp. Add flaxseeds and sautéed almonds to this mixture and toss well. Serve.

and an exceptional source of fibre. Greens like spinach and fenugreek ease lung congestion and are excellent for your immune system during winter. You can either have them as a soup or add them to your vegetables, roti, rice or dal. The best way to cook greens is to steam them; you can even sauté them in cow's ghee. Remember to squeeze lemon on top as Vitamin C helps absorb iron from the greens.



## WINTER WELLNESS POTION

### Ingredients

- Mint leaves: 6
- *Tulsi* (holy basil) leaves: 6
- Lemongrass: 2 tbsp; chopped
- Ginger: 1 tbsp; grated
- Water: 500 ml

### Method

Boil all the above for a few minutes in a pan and strain. Serve directly or mixed with honey or jaggery.



## GRAINS

Winter is the perfect time to swap wheat with *makkai* and *bajra* for rotis. These winter grains keep your body energised for a longer time and prevent lethargy that sets in as the temperatures drop. Remember to add a spoonful of cow's ghee to the flour while kneading, for easy digestion.

## OTHER WINTER REQUIREMENTS

**Sunlight:** Sunlight is an important food for your body that helps beat the winter frost. Being a natural source of Vitamin D, it helps in the absorption of calcium and prevents pain in the joints, knees and back. Vitamin D also promotes memory, is a great mood-booster and reduces

the chances of getting dementia and Alzheimer's.

**Water:** Drinking water can be very challenging during winter, as one tends to feel less thirsty. However, lack of water causes innumerable health problems like dehydration,

digestive disorders, urinary tract infections, joint pains and fatigue. So, remember to drink at least eight to 10 glasses of water a day.

Now that you know which foods are important to eat during winter, go ahead and add them to your diet for excellent health, good mood, superior memory, better immunity and a pain-free winter. Remember, nature has its reasons, so eat according to the seasons.



*Setalvad is an obesity and lifestyle disease consultant who offers diet counselling at Health for You, a wellness clinic in Mumbai, as well as online. Visit [www.nainisetalvad.com](http://www.nainisetalvad.com) for more details or write to [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org) if you have any queries for her*





# Prop up your practice!

In the first of a new series, learn how a simple belt can help you transit classic poses



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**W**e will zest up this New Year's column with a novel approach to yoga: the use of props to deepen your practice. Actually, it is an ancient practice, not just in yoga but in martial arts as well. Props were common to boost flexibility, agility and confidence in a particular activity. Therefore, their use is actually a comeback of sorts. In the yoga style credited to Lord Hanu-

man, for instance, the use of a rope or pole (*mallakhamb* style) was rather common. Sand bags, filled gourd skins and bamboo were also used as weights or props for such purposes. Other props used back then were acupressure *paduka* (still available at crafts exhibitions or wooden artefact stores) and yoga poles (*danda*) to correct posture.

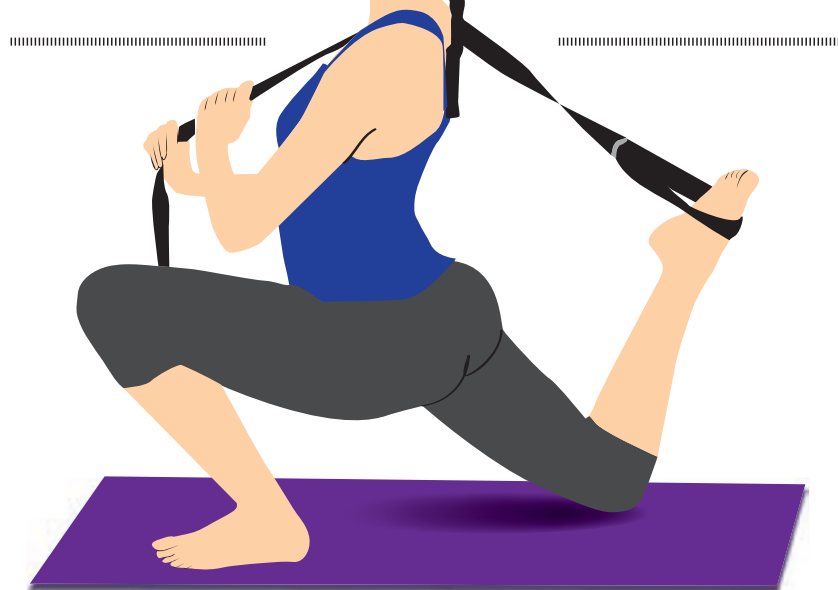
Every month, we hope to introduce you to a prop that will help you tran-

sit classic poses. You may continue to use them or drop them once a particular issue with a pose has been sorted. Owing to space constraints, we can only show you one pose per prop. But you can certainly use them for various other poses. While much of this is available online, you should ideally consult an expert when following these instructions. In essence, the intention of this column is to open your mind to the potential for growth through the use of props.



This month, we start with the simple yoga belt. It is easily available in most sports shops and online stores. If you are unable to buy one, you can make do with any long cloth material (such as a dupatta) that is 2 m or longer. Other than the pose shown here, you can use it to do several others. Try leg stretches, lying

or standing; use it for expansion of the chest, in poses like the cow face (*gomukhasana*). It is particularly useful in the latter, where beginners may find that one hand does not reach across to touch the other one. Using a belt will help you align the muscles and, eventually, you will find that the initial awkwardness will vanish and the pose will become more negotiable.



## YOGIC MOVES

### CRESCENT POSE, kneeling variation (*ardhachandrasana*)

Start on your fours; use a cushion at the knees or fold the mat to cushion the knees. Draw the left foot in front between the palms or as close as possible towards them. The other leg extends behind. This is the first stage. Now, pass the belt over the left shoulder and loop it over the left ankle. Fold the left leg at the knee, to hold as shown. Use both hands to hold the belt firmly while your torso is now upright, as shown. Initially, do not draw on the belt too much. Later, as you become comfortable, you can draw up the foot closer to the hip. This gives a lovely stretch to the thigh muscles. Release; repeat for the other side. Breathe normally throughout.

**Caution:** As this pose is rather intense, ensure you have done some warm-up. Avoid in case of knee problems.

**Benefits:** This pose improves stamina and flexibility of the hips and legs. It mimics a backbend, toning the spine, and uplifts the mood.



## KREEDA YOGA

### HASTAMALAKAM (stone on the palm)

This month, we also introduce yoga games, or *kreeda* yoga. These are games we played as children; often without realising they form part of the yoga and martial arts tradition of India—like hopscotch! Using fun, these games developed sharp reflexes, agility and overall fitness. *Hastamalakam* (stone on the palm) is a group game. One player places a stone on the back of the left hand and moves about the group to touch as many people as possible with the right hand, all the while ensuring the stone does not fall off. Those who have been touched are obviously out of the game. When the stone falls, the main player is out and is replaced by another. The one who manages to touch the most people before the stone falls is the winner!

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



## HEART TO HEARTH BY PRATIBHA JAIN

A series about silvers who believe nurturing the body and mind is the key to joy

# Zest for life

**Kamini Agarwal**

MUMBAI

She composes poetry on instant demand at weddings and get-togethers; she dances with a grace that defies her age; she sings melodiously (the ghazals she has performed for All India Radio are proof enough); she has performed in front of the camera for several serials on Doordarshan; and she cooks effortlessly. Kamini Agarwal, 66, a Baniya from Uttar Pradesh now living in Mumbai, has a true ‘zest for life’—a phrase aptly used by her dearest friend Sulakshanaji Arora when introducing Kaminiji to me. Speaking to Kaminiji about her varied interests, I could not help but admire her zeal and compassionate spirit.

Photographs by Hareesh Patel



### IN HER OWN WORDS

I grew up in Lucknow. After my graduation, I got married and moved to Ahmedabad. After some years, we moved to Assam and then to Chennai and, finally, in 1995 we moved to Mumbai. My husband, Hari Om Agarwal, worked with ONGC [Oil and Natural Gas Corporation] where he retired as DGM [Deputy General Manager] in 1999. ONGC has a strong history of fostering local cultural groups and I enjoyed participating actively in these wherever we shifted. I also served as a secretary to the group in Mumbai. We are blessed with a son and a daughter who are now settled in Mumbai as well.

### CULINARY START

My mother! She was an awesome cook and I learnt just by watching her. She never really taught any of us how to cook. In fact, I remember making rotis when I was in Class 5! And I can see the journey of how the process of cooking itself has changed over the years: from *chulha* to *angithi* to the kerosene stove to the gas stove and now the microwave!

### TASTY COMPLIMENT

All my friends and family love my *aloo tamatar ki sabzi*, which I make in a jiffy. My friend's daughter Shivani Arora once told me, “No one else can make such a tasty dish at this speed.”

### INSTANT INSPIRATION

When sudden guests arrive, I prefer serving a meal to snacks. So it's usually a meal of rotis, a *sabzi*—preferably stuffed *mirch*—*arhar ki dal* and steamed rice. Another favourite and quicker option has always been hot parathas with *aloo tamatar ki sabzi*. I always keep bread and boiled potatoes in the fridge. If you wash the potatoes well and pressure-cook them along with the skin, they stay fresh in the fridge for up to two weeks. When you want to prepare a dish with potatoes, simply heat them in the microwave and proceed. My preferred dishes with potatoes are sandwiches, cutlets and a variety of *aloo chaat*.

## LEFTOVER RECIPES

For me, half the fun of cooking is the *hungama* one can create with leftovers. Here are my top two favourites:

- Cutlets with *kadhi*: When *pakode ki kadhi* is left over, I simply cook it in a non-stick pan until it thickens. Then, I mix powdered bread slices, finely chopped onions and some masala powders, such as chilli powder and garam masala. Now, you can make delicious tava cutlets out of these. I make cutlets by adding bread slices to just about anything, including leftover gravy or dry curries such as potatoes, rajma and channa.
- Paratha with *aloo methi*: Though most North Indians make parathas with leftover *sabzi* and dals, my family loves the parathas I make with leftover *aloo methi ki sabzi*. Dry-roast the leftover *sabzi* and add masala powders of your choice. Now, roll plain rotis and sandwich this mixture between two thinly rolled out rotis. Roast on the *tava* with ghee or oil until the paratha evenly turns golden brown. Serve hot with plain yoghurt.

## DAILY RITUAL

Green tea in the morning! I used to be addicted to tea and would have 10-12 cups every day. I have now reduced that to three cups, and that's all thanks to green tea.

## KITCHEN TIPS

When you store vegetables such as ridge gourd, bottle gourd, brinjal, carrots and radish in the fridge for a few days, they tend to shrivel up. So whenever you want to use them, just blanch for a minute in hot water and they will become as good as fresh. This also allows you to peel them without wasting too much of skin. My other tip is to help preserve

coriander leaves. As soon as I buy the fresh leaves, I clean and wipe them well. Then, I dry the leaves in the sun, crush them and refrigerate. Use whenever required and you will find the dried leaves as flavoursome as fresh ones.

## FAVOURITE RESTAURANT

As a family, we prefer home-cooked meals. But if there was one restaurant we frequented during the early years of our marriage, it was Havmor on Relief Road in Ahmedabad. We loved the dosas there. I became a dosa fan ever since.

"One of the best values I learnt growing up was to know how to be content. The routine and rat race, the competitive life people lead today are crazy. In that sense, I think we grew up with more happiness and togetherness than I see now"

## ALL FOR A CAUSE

In 2000, I established Dheeraj Satsang Samiti in Borivali along with Anil Lath. We support widows abandoned by their family. We give them shelter and empower them. We are interested in women's welfare, and we raise a voice against injustice. If any of the domestic help working in our locality are ill-treated by their husbands or family, we report it to the police and take active measures. Today, we have 125 members in the group. Further, we have placed a large drinking water tank for passers-by, like auto and taxi drivers, vendors and maids. We have also adopted 12 street children and teach them. They have shown tremendous interest and improvement, but it has to be a diligent and constant process.

## A HOBBY I CHERISH

I love writing poems and bhajans in Hindi—I have a collection of almost

150 poems in my diary so far. I also compose bhajans in melodious tunes that are loved and sung by members of our group. When we lived in Chennai, I joined Anubhuti, a poetry group headed by Neeraj Gupta. I was also a part of Abhyudaya, which was a theatre group headed by Sushma Ahuja. My poems and articles have been published in popular magazines such as *Kadambini*, *Reader's Digest* (Hindi), *Mukta*, *Vama* and *Meri Saheli*. Recently, many have been published in *Saamna* too, which is a local magazine. I must add that the credit of inspiring me to write goes to my friend Sulakshana Arora. She always

urged me to write more and more. Let me share one of my poems that is kitchen-inspired [laughs]. With the analogy of kitchen ingredients, I have explained the myriad aspects of life: "*Mera dil hai ek masaledaani, iski bhi hai ek dilchasp kahaani...*" [My life is like a spice container; it has its own varied flavours.]

## VALUE ADDITION

One of the best values I learnt growing up was to know how to be content. More than accumulating wealth and property, we cared about being happy. When I got married, my father gave me some exquisite furniture, which we did not use for almost 17 years because of my husband's job that required us to move frequently. But it did not matter. How can chasing after material success ever lead to contentment? The routine and rat race, the competitive life people lead today are crazy. In that sense,





I think we grew up with more happiness and togetherness than I see now.

### BUCKET LIST

I like my life as it is. I feel loved and cherished. All of this would have not been possible without the support of my family. I appreciate their encouragement and participation in all my activities and interests. If there is one wish I have, it would be to see my poems published in a book.

### BHARWAN BESAN KI MIRCH (Stuffed green chillies)

In Uttar Pradesh, a common meal is steamed rice with dal (*arhar ki dal*) along with any *sabzi*. A favourite in Kamini Agarwal's family is stuffed chillies with dal and rice. These stuffed chillies are cooked using very little oil, can be preserved for a week and are ideal as travel food.

### Ingredients

- Long green chillies (the light green variety): 5-6
- Besan (gram flour): 150 gm
- Refined oil: 1 tbsp
- Red chilli powder: ½ tsp
- Coriander powder: ½ tsp
- Amchoor (dried mango powder): 2 tsp
- Garam masala: 1 tsp
- Salt to taste
- Coriander leaves to garnish

### Method

Wash the green chillies and pat dry. Remove the stalks and carefully slit them lengthwise.

Roast the besan in a non-stick pan on low flame until it turns light brown in colour. Remove from pan and set aside. Mix the masalas: chilli powder, coriander powder, amchoor, garam masala and salt with the besan. Add

2 tsp of oil to the besan mixture and mix well. Stuff the slit chillies with the besan mixture. Keep the remaining mixture and set aside. Coat the chillies with ½ tsp of oil. Now, heat the pan again with ½ tsp of oil. Reduce the flame and place the stuffed chillies in the pan. After 4-5 minutes, turn the chillies and cook again. Within 3-4 minutes, switch off the flame. Add the extra besan mixture and coriander leaves on top and cover for 3-4 minutes. Serve with rotis or steamed rice and dal.

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



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## MONEY MATTERS BY PRIYA DESAI

**Bold, not beautiful:** Demonetisation may be a timely move but silvers are bearing the brunt



**S**ending old notes of ₹ 500 and ₹ 1,000 denomination out of circulation is like sending silvers on *vanaprasthashram* (a forest retreat), mentioned one of my silver friends in jest recently. Sarcasm apart, his remark was the outcome of his frustration. The local grocer, he said, was unwilling to accept a ₹ 2,000 note and return the change. He was also upset with the serpentine queues at the bank. My 74 year-old friend is unable to stand the rigours of demonetisation. He is unaware of e-wallets and other virtual payment options. What is he supposed to do?

### Our very own 9/11

This isn't a one-off occurrence; it has become a common story since 9 November 2016 when demonetisation came into effect, making old notes of ₹ 500 and ₹ 1,000 illegal tender. On the day Donald Trump was declared America's

president-elect, shocking people around the world, our very own Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a bold announcement on demonetisation. Needless to say, it was a bolt from the blue.

He announced that the objective was to rout black money and terror funding. The country was awash with mixed emotions, but most looked upon the move as a favourable one; it was hailed as path-breaking in the democratic world. As this 'surgical strike' unfolded over the weeks, its weak execution and messy implementation has become the hot topic of debate across various demographics.

People from all strata of society have been hit badly; the move has generated undercurrents the Modi Government had not foreseen. Initially, the public did not grasp the real meaning of demonetisation and had no clue about the hard days that awaited them.



## Demonetisation decoded

Demonetisation is a radical monetary measure—a step that simply puts an end to circulation of a currency unit or units by declaring them to be 'not a legal tender'. It means the particular currency will not be accepted as a payment from the time it is banned.

The announcement on the night of 8 November unleashed shock, disbelief, worry, disconcertion, indignation and even fear across the country. As mentioned earlier, the avowed objective of such a prodigious experiment that involved replacing 86 per cent of the cash in circulation was to curb black money and terror funding. But over the past few weeks, the Government's narrative has changed with a heavy push being given to the concept of a cashless economy (sometimes dubbed as less-cash economy). The Government is propagating the use of electronic and other payment methods that obviate the need to use cash.

When the announcement was made, the Government also released comprehensive information on how and where the ₹ 500 and ₹ 1,000 notes could be exchanged or deposited, and a deadline was set for this as well. On the face of it, this exercise looked simple and straightforward enough; however, the daunting experiences that people are going through are a far cry from what was portrayed in the government announcement. Long-winding queues, unavailability of sufficient cash for withdrawal, and empty or out-of-order ATMs seem to be the order of the day in cities and towns across the country.

## Hardships galore

The sections of society that have felt the biggest brunt of demonetisation are the silvers, the disabled, daily wage earners and an unaccountable number of people in the unorganised sector of our economy. Silvers find it extremely difficult to stand in queues for hours. What adds to their woes is that most banks have also set a highly truncated daily withdrawal limit versus the ₹ 24,000 limit set for weekly withdrawals. If they choose to use an ATM instead (provided cash is available), the withdrawal limit is ₹ 2,000.

This compels them to go through the same routine every single time they withdraw money. Adding fuel to the fire is the fact that even when the ATMs decide to be generous and spew money, the only notes they dispense are in the ₹ 2,000 denomination. Trying to get the local provision store, domestic help and the milk, bread and vegetable vendors or medical stores to accept these notes is the next insurmountable task facing them.

The situation has now reached a point where silvers are unable to conveniently buy their basic medicines and provisions; this amounts to nothing less than harassment.

## Far-reaching impact

There is no doubt that such radical measures have evident and immediate side-effects. However, there are bound to be certain medium-term effects, too, that vary for different sectors of the economy and different sections of the population. Silvers are one such group that will take a significant financial hit, both in the short and medium-term. Let's see how it affects them adversely:

- **Income:** A recent trend is declining interest rates on fixed deposits, a major investment avenue for silvers to earn fixed income. This trend will accelerate in the short and medium-term, making a sizeable dent in seniors' income flow. This will be owing to the availability of additional liquidity for banks, and the Reserve Bank of India's policy of reducing the repo rate. The bank FD rates have been reduced to 7.45 per cent per annum.
- **Stock prices and mutual fund (MF) NAVs:** Silvers have been experimenting with asset allocation wherein they invest in stocks and MFs. In the post-demonetisation period, there has been an increase in uncertainty in the financial world and the economy in general. This has led to volatility in the stock market, and no one can hazard a guess as to how long it will continue. Overall, there has been a decline in the economic growth rate. Keeping in view the adverse impact of demonetisation and the resultant economic disruptions in various industries, there is no ruling out a further dip in the growth



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Keeping in view the adverse impact of demonetisation, there is no ruling out a further dip in the growth of the economy. For investors, this translates into lower dividends, both on stocks and mutual funds. This has a direct impact on silvers' income flow in the forthcoming year

of the economy. For investors, this translates into lower dividends, both on stocks and mutual funds. This has a direct impact on silvers' income flow in the forthcoming year, making it a double whammy for them.

- **Bonds:** Many seniors invest in a variety of bonds for a stable income. The volatility in the financial world could have a negative impact on bond yields too.

In a nutshell, silvers are bound to feel a financial crunch and will have to tighten their purse strings. Even as inflation continues its upward trend, silvers may have to cut down on necessities, medical expenses, travel and small comforts that make life liveable in the sunset years.

### Be on a learning curve

As the spotlight shifts from black money to a cashless economy, the expectation is that every Indian becomes adept at using digital mechanisms for transactions. In fact, as the Government makes a determined move to unleash the 'Digital India' experiment, the time has dawned for silvers to educate themselves on the essentials of a digital economy; this encompasses a variety of aspects including:

- Online payments using debit and credit cards
- Rupay and ATM cards
- Net banking and payment gateways of banks
- Mobile banking
- E-wallets like Paytm (*refer to 'App Alert' on page 15*), Freecharge, Mobikwik, etc.

The financial world is in a mode of constant change and keeping pace with these changes means keeping your knowledge updated too.

### Are silvers ready?

Even before silvers start using these digital payment and financial transaction options, they have to be convinced of their practicality and functionality. The newspapers and the Internet are awash with stories of electronic frauds. It makes seniors wary about using their cards, as it exposes their accounts to the risk of these frauds.

Concerns such as the absence of privacy laws, phishing and hacking attacks, payment options that aren't 100 per cent secure, and complicated and baffling interfaces that require you to be familiar with technology become distinct hurdles when it comes to silvers embracing these digital options. It's why they prefer using good old cash for all their purchases and payments.

That aside, there are very real operational obstacles to changing their mindset too. The need of the hour is the availability of easy and risk-free options. Before castigating silvers for sticking to their 'cash is best' mindset, the Government and the banking system need to gear up and prove that they are prepared and will be able to provide secure, user-friendly, efficient and glitch-free digital mechanisms.

### Higher tax-exemption limit

As a constituency, silvers are in dire need of government attention and care. In view of the adverse effect on their income flow, the Government should provide a higher tax-exemption limit, exceeding ₹ 600,000 for silvers above the age of 70. In our society, the corrupt are mollycoddled and wooed using exemption schemes to get them to announce their disproportionate wealth. Ironically, honest senior citizens are ignored. They, too, deserve a higher exemption to be able to meet their medical and caretaker expenses.

### The jury is out

Whether demonetisation, a radical reform, has really turned the ill-gotten wealth of corrupt Indians into garbage overnight is something only time will tell. However, there is no doubt that the short and medium-term impact on senior citizens and super senior citizens has been debilitating, to say the least.

It seems like the post-demonetisation era has left silvers with no option but to reinvent themselves. So, get, set, go and embrace the digital world and its new cashless payment system—the buzzword and future of India!

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*The author is an economist based in Mumbai*

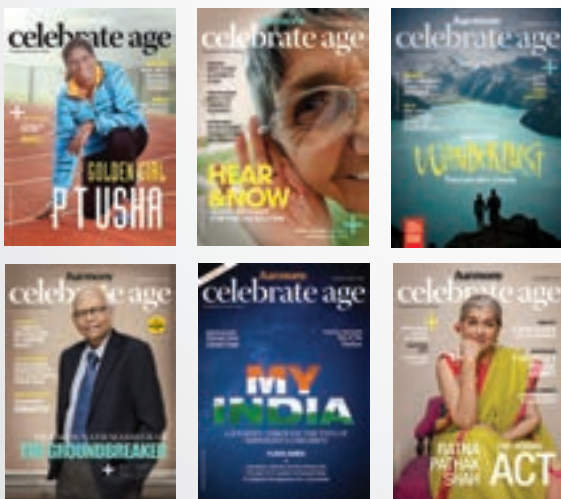


# Harmony-Celebrate Age GOES DIGITAL

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# Take heart

Until recently, open-heart surgery was the standard therapy for aortic stenosis or narrowed aortic valve. Now, the condition can be treated with a minimally invasive procedure called Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation (TAVI). Fresh from the first non-surgical, balloon-mounted, heart valve replacement procedure in western India, **Dr Jamshed Dalal**, director, cardiac sciences, and **Dr Sunil Wani**, consultant, cardiology, at Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, discuss what causes aortic stenosis and the advantages of TAVI, which has the potential to replace open-heart aortic-valve replacement surgery in the future

**A**ortic stenosis or narrowed aortic valve is a common public health problem affecting millions of people around the world—it is estimated that up to 12.4 per cent of people over the age of 75 have aortic stenosis. About 80 per cent of adults with symptomatic aortic stenosis are males. Without treatment, half the people who fall ill from this problem die within two years.

## Risk factors

- Increasing age
- Deformed aortic valve
- Family history

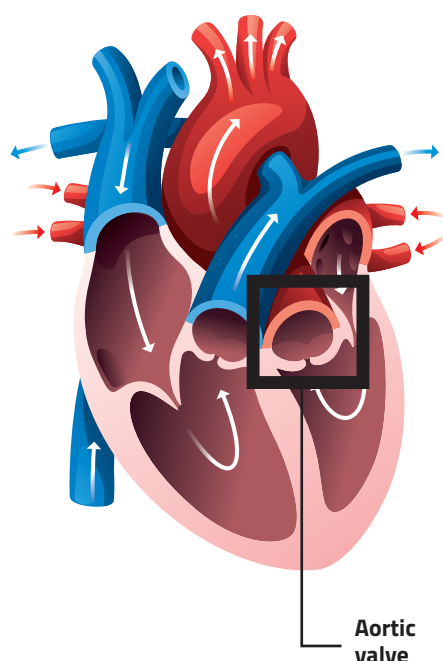
## What causes aortic stenosis?

- **Calcium build-up on the valve:** With age, heart valves may accumulate calcium deposits. This has nothing to do with oral calcium intake.
- **Birth defect:** Some people are born with an aortic valve that has only one or two leaflets instead of three. This may not cause any problems until adulthood, at which time the valve may begin to narrow or leak.
- **Radiation therapy:** In rare cases, calcification of the aortic valve can occur more quickly in patients who have received radiation treatment to the chest.

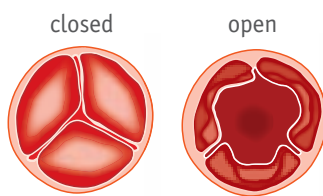
- **Rheumatic fever:** This is a disease of childhood resulting in scar tissue on the aortic valve, creating a rough surface where calcium deposits can collect and lead to narrowing.

## The symptoms

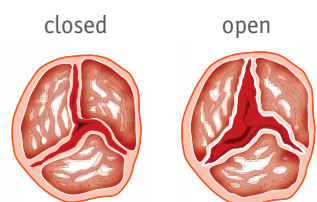
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Difficulty in walking owing to breathlessness or chest discomfort
- Lightheadedness, dizziness and fainting
- Swollen ankles and feet
- Rapid heartbeat
- Chest pain on exertion



### HEALTHY AORTIC VALVE



### DISEASED AORTIC VALVE



## WHAT IS AORTIC STENOSIS?

Aortic stenosis is a build-up of calcium deposits on the valve that causes it to narrow and reduces the blood flow to the rest of your body. Over time, the leaflets of the aortic valve become stiff, reducing their ability to fully open. When the leaflets don't open fully, the heart must work harder to push blood through this narrow aortic valve and into your body. (Your heart cannot supply enough blood to your body.) Eventually, your heart gets weaker and this results in congestion of multiple organs, known as congestive heart failure, which could lead to death.

If you notice these symptoms, you should first see your family doctor or cardiologist who may then refer you to a multidisciplinary heart team at a local hospital. Before your appointment, check with your family members to find out if any close relatives have been diagnosed with cardiac disease. Knowing as much as possible about your family's health history will help your doctor make informed decisions. The above symptoms could also be those of heart congestion. So if you have been diagnosed with heart congestion, ask your doctor to test for aortic stenosis too. (The diagnosis can easily be made using 2D echocardiography.)

### Treatment options

Treatment depends on how far your disease has progressed. If your stenosis is mild, medication may be prescribed. However, if you have severe stenosis, your doctor may recommend replacing your diseased aortic valve as severe aortic stenosis cannot be treated with medication.

Today, there are two options to replace your diseased aortic valve. A properly trained multidisciplinary team must conduct a thorough evaluation to determine the appropriate

treatment option for you based on your overall health.

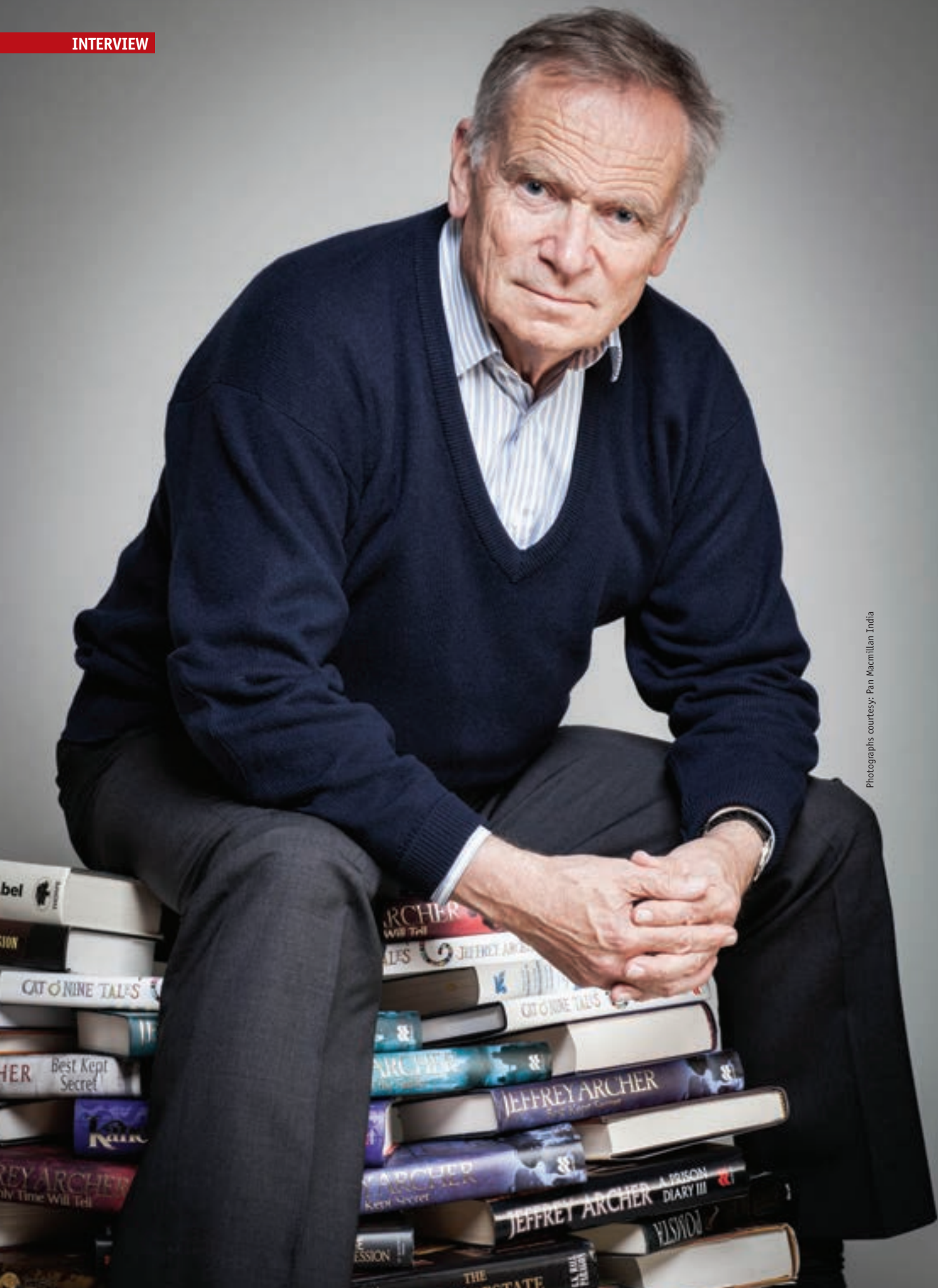
- **Open-heart surgical aortic valve replacement:** Aortic valve replacement through open-heart surgery has been the standard therapy for aortic stenosis, and is not recommended for high-risk patients. It is performed through an incision on the breast bone or sternum. Open-heart surgeries require the use of a heart-lung machine that temporarily takes over the function of the heart. During the procedure, the surgeon will completely remove the diseased aortic valve and insert a new valve. There are two types of surgical valves: mechanical (man-made material) and biological (animal or human tissue).
- **Transcatheter Aortic Valve Implantation (TAVI), also known as Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement (TAVR):** TAVI is new and may be a better option for people who have been diagnosed with severe aortic stenosis but are considered high-risk for open-heart surgery. TAVI (or TAVR) is a less-invasive procedure that uses a catheter to implant a new valve within your diseased aortic valve.

TAVI can be performed through multiple approaches. However, the most common approach is the transfemoral approach (through a small puncture in the thigh). Only professionals who have received extensive training are qualified to perform the TAVI procedure. Given the recent development of the procedure, data confirms a six-year durability of the valve. However, extrapolating from available data, the valve could have a durability of 15 to 20 years.

### Salient features of TAVI

- The procedure is done within an hour
- No incision, so recovery time is reduced
- No stopping of the heart
- Can be done under local anaesthesia
- Costs more than open-heart surgery
- At present, the procedure can be carried out only on patients who are inoperable or at very high surgical risk. ☼

*For more information  
contact Dr Sunil Wani at  
sunil.wani@relianceada.com*



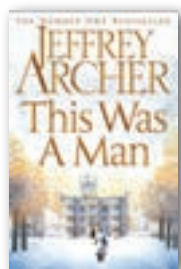


# And thereby hangs a tale

Just like his stories, there has never been a dull moment in the life of the master of intrigue and suspense Jeffrey Archer, writes **Srirekha Pillai**

**H**is life is the stuff his stories are made of—full of intrigue, twists and turns. Jeffrey Archer's fans have grown accustomed to the master storyteller's ability to spring surprises through his plots. His life, too, has been dramatic enough. In a case of life imitating art, Archer has survived near-bankruptcy, political resignations, controversies and a prison term. Yet, he has bounced back every single time.

Archer, who turned writer to pay off his debts at the age of 35 with *Not A Penny More, Not A Penny Less*, is one of the most prolific authors today. At 76, he is busy churning yarn after another, which top bestseller charts. The final instalment of the 'Clifton Chronicles'—a series of seven novels—*This Was A Man* (Pan Macmillan India; ₹ 599; 400 pages) has just released, but the storyteller has already moved on to his next, an anthology of 12 short stories scheduled for next year. In fact, for over 40 years, Archer has stuck to a gruelling writing schedule, which sees him working in two-hour shifts alternating with two hours of break, from 6 am to 9 pm. "I always think three pages in advance," he says. The first draft of each book is conjured up in his luxury villa in Majorca—a group of islands that is part of Spain—named 'Writer's Block' in his signature tongue-in-cheek English humour. A strict disciplinarian, Archer doesn't compromise on his hourly gym routine thrice a week.



## CLIFTON CHRONICLES

*Only Time Will Tell*  
*The Sins Of The Father*  
*Best Kept Secret*  
*Be Careful What You Wish For*  
*Mightier Than The Sword*  
*Cometh The Hour*  
*This Was A Man*

As part of his continent-hopping publicity exercise for the final series of the Clifton Chronicles—a gripping family saga spanning the 20<sup>th</sup> century that captures the trials and tribulations of the Cliftons and Barringtons, two families at opposite ends of the social spectrum—Archer was in India recently on a tight four-city tour, zipping between Gurgaon, Bengaluru, Pune and Mumbai. Interestingly, India, the largest market of his books, has found mention in *Cometh The Hour*, the penultimate book of the Clifton Chronicles, besides the short story *And Thereby Hangs A Tale*.

Elected a Member of Parliament at the age of 29 and appointed deputy chairman of the Conservative Party much later, Archer's brush with politics was rocked by scandals. But he remained the blue-eyed boy of former British prime minister and Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher. Another lady who has stood by him through thick and thin is his wife Mary Doreen Weeden, a scientist specialising in solar power conversion, whom he met at Oxford University. The couple has two sons, theatre producer William Archer and James Archer, a financial advisor and businessman.

In an email interview from London, Archer, whose bestsellers include *Kane And Abel*, *First Among Equals* and *Cat O' Nine Tales*, talks about the future of publishing, his admiration for Indian storytellers and his lack of technical skills. Excerpts from the interview:



Working on his next manuscript at 'Writer's Block', his luxury villa in Majorca

**You've been living with Harry Clifton and Emma for nearly seven years. Is it difficult to move on?**

Yes, but at the same time it's good to have come to an end after seven volumes and a million words. I'm ready to move on.

**You've succeeded in pushing gender boundaries with strong women characters. Is it in some way a reflection of the women who have walked into your life?**

I am lucky to have had three immensely strong female role models in life: my mother, my wife Mary and, of course, Margaret Thatcher.

**When it comes to your political associations, Margaret Thatcher's name stands out. How has she enriched your life?**

It was a privilege to have worked for 11 years for Margaret Thatcher, and both Mary and I consider our lives were more than enriched by her friendship after she had ceased being prime minister.

**Now, Britain has another woman leader, Theresa May, while the US just lost a chance to make history with the first woman president. What are your views on it?**

I'm delighted we have a second woman prime minister, but should point out that in England,

## HIS FAVOURITES

Indian book:  
*Malgudi Days*

Indian cricketer:  
**Sunil Gavaskar**—  
"I dreaded him coming  
to the crease"

Indian food:  
**Mild chicken curry**

Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, there are female leaders—the world is a changin', to quote Mark Twain.

**With Brexit and Trump's victory, will we see a resurgence of right-wing politics and greater insularity across the globe?**

What I see from Brexit and Trump's victory is that the public is fed up with politicians, and anyone who can say, 'I've never been involved in politics,' has a chance of winning.

**It is said you wanted to be an orator because you loved the way words formed.**

I've always loved the theatre and was hooked when, as a teenager, I first saw Laurence Olivier playing Coriolanus at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon. That performance was the beginning of a lifelong love of the theatre. And so it's no surprise that I've always loved great oratory. However, it never crossed my mind that I'd be making a living out of putting those words on paper!

**Is it ironic that you have a villa named Writer's Block, though apparently you've never suffered from one?**

I think I named my home Writer's Block to remind myself how lucky I've been over the years, and I hope that it lasts!

**“As a teenager, I first saw Laurence Olivier playing Coriolanus at the Royal Shakespeare Company. That performance was the beginning of a lifelong love of the theatre. However, it never crossed my mind that I’d be making a living out of putting those words on paper!”**

**I hear you have a Ganesha in your writing room!**

Yes, that’s true. I do have an intricately carved wooden Ganesha in my writing room overlooking the sea, and I am grateful for his assistance.

**India is one of your largest markets. Besides that, what is it about India that appeals to you?**

I have immense affection for the people of India, not least for their love of books, and enthusiasm for reading and, of course, have always enjoyed the cricketing battles over the years.

**You’ve been acquainted with Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi since your Oxford days. What are your memories?**

I first met Mansoor in the 1960s when he was captain of the Oxford cricket team, and a much-loved figure. It was a friendship that lasted many decades, and I was only too delighted recently to do an auction in London for his daughter Soha Ali Khan’s charity.

**Talking about your love for cricket, which is your favourite cricketing team in the world besides England?**

I do not love any other cricket team; they are all the enemy.

**You managed to get The Beatles to tour your college.**

The Beatles very kindly came to Oxford to support the charity Oxfam in their 21<sup>st</sup> year, and the *Daily Mail* managed to raise £ 1 million—a vast amount of money at the time—to support Oxfam’s overseas work.

**Do you see the Clifton Chronicles being adapted for television one day just like *Kane and Abel* and *First Among Equals*?**

I only wish! Now the seven books are finished, I hope someone will want to make it into a television series.

**You’re known to be a great admirer of R K Narayan. Who are the other Indian writers you love to read?**

R K Narayan is one of the great storytellers of his time, and *Malgudi Days* is a work of genius. I also admire Vikram Seth, not least because he’s a polymath. He seems to have done everything except open the batting for India!

**Are e-books the future?**

We have to accept that e-books are here to stay and will take a large part of the market. However, there’s no reason to believe, particularly in India, that the book will be overtaken. Because the majority still prefer to ‘have and to hold’ a book rather than read on a screen.

**In an interview with *Harmony-Celebrate Age* in 2011, you said you’d like to learn to operate the computer. How tech-friendly have you become?**

I still handwrite every word of my books, and my technical ability stretches to turning on a light...and often forgetting to turn it off!

**You’re quite active on Twitter. Do you manage it yourself?**

No, I’m not capable of doing any social media without the help of my personal assistant, Alison Prince.

**You’ve set a rigorous writing schedule for yourself, from 6 am to 9 pm. With so much success coming your way, have you ever gone easy on your schedule?**

Certainly not. You set yourself the task and stick to it. If you relax your routine or think I’ll just start work again a bit later, it’s very easy to find an excuse not to do the next session at all.

**You seem to be getting better with age. What is the secret of your longevity as a writer?**

I think since I’ve given up politics and can concentrate fully on writing, I’ve managed to produce better work. ✨

Archer’s scientist wife Mary Doreen Weeden has stood by him through the difficult times





:: cover feature ::

T Selvakumar



# STRIKING THE RIGHT NOTE

**Composer and vocalist Sudha Ragunathan loves to play it by ear even as she attempts to take carnatic music out of air-conditioned concert halls, writes Jayanthi Somasundaram**

**U**nderstanding the pulse of the *rasika* or connoisseur of music is a trait only a few learn, and even fewer master. Padma Bhushan awardee Sudha Ragunathan is one of those carnatic musicians who can judge the audience with just a fleeting glance and improvise on the go, leaving the connoisseur pleasantly surprised. Critics point out that audience engagement sets apart this evocative singer who has trained under the legendary M L Vasanthakumari, mastering a school of music that presents a striking combination of melody, rhythm and intellect, often bringing to the forefront unfamiliar ragas or musical modes, and adding innovations.

At her Alwarpet residence in Chennai, she attends to everyday chores, bids adieu to her husband Ragunathan, and glides into interview mode with ease. She's clad in a simple blue cotton salwar; no makeup, jewellery or the crisp *kancheevaram* her fans are accustomed to—just the signature bold red

bindi and trademark smile. “People are often surprised I can dress like this. On stage, I think it’s important to present a neat package,” she tells *Harmony-Celebrate Age* as she settles in for a conversation.

Performing annually at the renowned ‘Madras Music Season’ since 1990, audiences, contemporaries and pundits in the classical music world unanimously cite her as a leading female vocalist of southern India. The contemporary doyen of Hindustani classical vocal, Sangeet Martand Pandit Jasraj once remarked that her music “combines intellectualism with *bhava*”. Indeed, with her style, performance and mellifluous voice, Ragunathan has won both critical and commercial acclaim. Adding to the plethora of awards, she recently brought home the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Chennai Cultural Academy and the Sangeetha Kalasikhamani Award by the Indian Fine Arts Society. “Every award has a special place in an artist’s life,” she says, as she talks about her musical influences, her bid to popularise Carnatic music, and causes close to her heart.



## EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW

### Let's start at the beginning. Were you trained to become a carnatic vocalist?

Till the age of 18, I had no inclination of becoming a professional singer. I wanted to become a gynaecologist. I was a bright student, and was one of those who always raised her hand at the examination hall for more sheets of paper to write. I was good at writing, my dissections were perfect and my presentations were fantastic. When I was three years old, I was able to recite the *Venkateshwara Suprabatham*. Assured of my skill, my mother began to teach me carnatic music.

### So, technically speaking, your mother was your first guru?

My mother played an important role in my life, especially in my childhood. She was the first person who sowed the seeds of music in me. If it were not for her perseverance and commitment to exposing me to competitions and pushing me each and every time, I may not have pursued music so deeply. As a child, I took part in competitions and sang simply because I had an audience that cheered and there were prizes to be won!

My formal training with Vidwan T V Viswanathan and B V Lakshman began later. Successive wins at singing competitions led me to apply for the Central Government Scholarship in 1977 where I sang a few phrases from *Gowrimanohari* raga to a panel of judges comprising violin maestros T N Krishnan and M S Gopalakrishna and vocalist T M Thiagarajan, who nodded their approval. Soon, I was learning under the wings of MLV *amma*.

### What was the key learning from your teacher and guide M L Vasanthakumari?

As I began learning from MLV *amma* very early in life, my mind was like a sponge and I would absorb whatever I heard. *Amma* would say, "Never waste a *sangati* or a *swara*." As learning was more by observing, she ensured we gave her our undivided attention while she sang. Hers was creative music, on the spot. *Amma* has been an inspiration in many ways. For her, courteousness towards the audience was a must. Meticulously planned concerts, which included so much of spontaneity as well, were her hallmark. Stage presence was very much part of the presentation. MLV *amma* would always say that when you are on stage, it's not only about singing but how you present yourself. There must be both an aural and a visual appeal.

However, the most important lesson she taught me was to live life to the fullest. A strong role model, she shaped my life as an artist and young woman. Her demise in 1990 left a vacuum. At that time, I was pregnant with my second child. It was the December music season in Chennai and I sang through the season in full term. My daughter was born soon after the concert season and I named her Malavika, a name that echoed the initials of my guru, MLV!

“M L Vasanthakumari *amma* would say that when you are on stage, it's not just about singing... There must be both an aural and a visual appeal”

At the release of a stamp by the United Nations in honour of M S Subbulakshmi's centenary year







At the book launch of A R Rahman's coffee table book *Reflections*; receiving a memento of Goddess Saraswati from M S Subbulakshmi

### Do you follow MLV's unconventional methodology while teaching?

With MLV *amma*, there were no classes, except the opportunity to tag along, observe and learn. After a whole year of strumming the tanpura at her performances, I graduated to becoming her second voice. Sharing a stage with MLV was not for the musically weak; her exploration with the *raga*, impromptu improvisations and inventions could challenge the most seasoned performers. Taking on the Vasanthakumari *bani* [style], I learnt to adapt and make improvisations on stage. When I teach students today, I do lay stress on observation but, most important, I tell them to practise and listen not to my music alone, but to different vocalists and music forms.

### Do you incorporate technology in your classes?

I am fairly comfortable using technology, though when it comes to teaching I am still a little old-fashioned. There is nothing like sitting with a guru and learning. Accuracy of learning comes when you sit with a guru. For someone who has already crossed a certain stage of learning and is settled abroad, online learning may be useful, because the interest needs to be taken forward. As long as it does not affect the structure of teaching and dilute the art form, the use of modern technology is fine.

I do teach online and I am also working on an online learning project. Personally, I use the Internet, iPod, iPad and so forth to learn, listen and teach. Recently, right before a concert, I had a doubt on a *thalam* [rhythm] and immediately googled it. But, being completely dependent

on technology takes the whiff away from the experience. There is a definite charm in the face-to-face method of learning—there is a guru bhakti.

### Growing up, were you witness to a musical environment at home?

Our household witnessed a lot of dialogues and discussions on music. Like I said, my focus was academics during childhood. Though I would not be active in these discussions, somewhere these conversations and comments settled down in my subconscious, shaping me into the person I am. Today, both my sister Chitra and brother Prasad are graded artists in Prasar Bharati. However, they have not taken up music professionally.

### In college, you were conferred with the 'Outstanding Student Award' three years in a row!

Yes! I enrolled for a BA in economics in Ethiraj College. While I participated in almost all extracurricular activities, it was music that came first. I was called the nightingale of the college and was the first one to perform a hat-trick by receiving the award all three years. Technically speaking, many singers were better than me. But I was able to naturally connect with the audience right from my college days. The faculty and students would come and attend the concert if they knew I was performing.

### What do awards mean to you?

As much as the Padma Bhushan means a lot to me, I have a special place in my heart for the Sangeetha Choodamani



With family during  
a trip to Rome

Award conferred by Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai, in 1997, as it bears my mother's name Choodamani. Today, there are many awards given to performers by organisations that encourage more takers to this profession. It was different when I started off; there were just a handful of full-time carnatic singers. So, it was easy to spot quality performances. Today, an increasing number of young boys and girls have decided to make carnatic music their vocation. It is the golden era for carnatic music.

**Your recent performance brought to the forefront women composers in the world of carnatic music.**

Somewhere down the line, women composers have been sidelined. Most people are not aware of their significant contributions to society. In the first concert in November 2016, we presented songs by three women composers. In the second part of this initiative, we plan to present the works of eight women composers, beginning with Tamil poet Avvaiyar. However, the carnatic music world is primarily male-dominated. There are a few who attribute the success of women vocalists to their

gender and glamour. Sadly, they fail to see the hard work and effort that has gone behind making a successful performance.

**You received a standing ovation at the UN recently. Tell us more about the experience.**

In October 2016, the UN released a postage stamp to honour India's most celebrated carnatic music artist M S Subbulakshmi, who had performed at the world body 50 years ago. I was told I would be receiving the first stamp just two days before the show. I was surprised and really excited. To conclude the ceremony, I was invited to sing. I sang songs by MS *amma* as well as Gandhi's *Ram Dhun*. I performed songs in seven languages, including Bengali.

**Have you been inspired by MS as well?**

While growing up, I used to listen to *Venkatesha Suprabatham* and *Vishnu Sahasranamam* that would play daily at home, and hum along as I got ready for school. I was MS *amma*'s sing-along friend in my own little world. Having heard her music at that impressionable age made all the difference. I longed to see the owner of that divine voice. And I did so at 19 years of age, when I visited her with my esteemed guru MLV *amma*. One of the very special interactions I had with her was during the inauguration of the annual doll exhibition at Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan in Chennai. I sang the invocation and MS *amma* gave me the first doll. At the event, I got the opportunity to sing *Kurai ondrum illai* with her.

**When you were at the peak of your career, you launched Samudhaaya Foundation. Was *seva* a planned step?**

I've always been conscious of the society we belong to. I am an emotional person and make a conscious effort to help people in whatever way I can. The stories of families of soldiers who died during the Kargil War moved me to launch Samudhaaya Foundation in 1999. The reason I started my own trust was because I could choose the causes I wished to support. Since inception, I have been the face of the organisation and make it a point to personally visit corporates to raise funds. For every cause, I make a checklist and personally make calls to fix appointments to make presentations. There are many people out there who are happy to support a genuine organisation. I have been able to establish my credibility and people know that their donation reaches the right people. When I find a cause that

“I believe music is for everyone. Performing for prisoners was a unique experience. While interacting with them, I realised they do not want to be there. That performance had an emotional connect. It was an hour of absolute bliss!”

we wish to support, we create a concert and raise funds for that. After the event, the cheque is laminated and the beneficiaries are invited to come and collect the funds.

**Your performance at Puzhal prison in Chennai was a bold step.**

I believe music is for everyone; I have made several attempts to take carnatic music out of air-conditioned concert halls. It took two months of endless bureaucratic tangles and patient persuasion to organise a performance at the prison. Performing for prisoners was a unique experience. While interacting with them, I realised they do not want to be there. They regretted what they had done and wished to go back to mainstream society. That performance had an emotional connect. It was an hour of absolute bliss!

**It's rare to find carnatic musicians taking up modelling assignments. But you did that as well!**

[Smiles] I was the first brand ambassador for Pothys, a reputed silk house in Chennai for their 'Parampara' brand of sarees. As the product depicted a blend of traditional and contemporary designs, they felt I fit as the ideal face to represent the brand. One of the shoots was at the Athirapally waterfalls amongst the rocks. It was quite a challenge climbing rocks and balancing with a *pattu* saree! I have also been the face for Dheepam oil along with other musician colleagues.

**You also forayed into films....**

Well, entering the world of film music came as a surprise to me too. Every genre of music has unique requirements—from the way the microphone is used to the layers of emotion and depth of notes that need to be presented. When Illayaraja sir gave me the opportunity to sing in his Tamil film *Ivan*, he said the song had been created keeping in mind a carnatic musician. The song was challenging, but as a person who enjoys experimenting I was happy that I signed up.

The visibility and reach you get through film music is immense; at one point you think you'll just do one film song a year, but once you are into it, you want to give each challenging project a shot. Next, I got the opportunity to lend my voice to actor Shabana Azmi's character in the

## Major milestones

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- 1988:** Amudha Isai Vani by Tamil Sangam, New York
- 1991:** Best Performance Award by Music Academy, Chennai
- 1992:** Gaana Sudha Amrithavarshini by Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam
- 1994:** Kalaimamani by the Tamil Nadu government
- 1996:** Thennisai Thilakam by Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America and The Tamil Nadu Foundation, USA
- 1997:** Sangeetha Choodamani by Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai
- 2001:** Outstanding National Citizen Award by The National Citizens Guild, New Delhi
- 2004:** Padma Shri
- 2008:** Sangeetha Kala Nipuna by the Mylapore Fine Arts Club
- 2014:** Sangita Kalanidhi by Music Academy, Chennai
- 2014:** Launch of a book on her musical journey, *Sampurna – Sruthi, Laya and My Life*
- 2015:** Padma Bhushan

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film *Morning Raga*, which sketches the life of an aspiring carnatic musician. Even today, the song from that film is popular; it gave me a connect with the younger generation.

**You turned music composer with a Tamil film last year.**

Yes, director Vasanth's *Sivaranjanikum Innum Sila Pengalum*, reported to be a 'pro-women film', introduced me as a music director in 2015. I've known Vasanth for a long time and when he asked me to score the music for this film, I had no reservations. I've also been roped in for his next film *Thaneer*, which is based on a story by novelist Asoka Mithran.





**“I read a lot of books, both fiction and motivational. As a musician, I need to energise myself. When you are at peace with yourself, a peripheral sheen is added”**

**In your journey as a professional carnatic musician, have there been any speed breaks?**

With the grace of God, there have been no major speed breaks in my life. Marriage can make or mar your career. I've been blessed with an extremely supportive family. In fact, MLV *amma* told Ragunathan before our wedding, “Sudha is just a sapling now. You have to let her grow. You have to give her space, room and time. That will mean a lot of sacrifice on your part.” My husband, who owns Amutham Music, has given me all the support from day one. That is why I am where I am today!

**Tell us about your children.**

My children Kaushik and Malavika have not chosen to pursue music as a career. Kaushik is faculty at Harvard University and my daughter is doing her master's in special education. They are well exposed

to the world of music. I've given them that space and freedom to listen to any kind of music they like. My son's always seen with ear plugs on. During their childhood, Ragu and I made up our own songs for them as lullabies!

**How do you unwind?**

Way back, I used to write a lot of poetry, though I can't write a single line now. I read a lot of books, both fiction and motivational. I think the latter genre is essential and helps one be elevated from within. As a musician, I need to energise myself. When you are at peace with yourself, a peripheral sheen is added. I listen to a lot of film music and enjoy the old songs of MLV *amma* and Illayaraja sir. I also listen to Rahman's melodies and numbers by Hariharan, Shankar Mahadevan, Shreya, Chitra, Karthik and Chinmayi.

**How do you maintain so much energy on stage and off it?**

I have that kind of energy within me that opens all doors. I keep asking myself, how can I improve? Sometimes it's through yoga, sometimes the gym. Mostly, I meditate. I work out to feel energised. On concert days, I meditate and speak less. I drink lots of warm water and avoid cold food. But that rule does not apply while I'm on a holiday! ✨

# Experience

## A second childhood

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# SLIVER OF PORTUGAL

✈️ 📷 Gustasp and Jeroo Irani

The Latin Quarter of Panaji wears its colonial heart on its sleeve

**G**oa was just a blip on the map of India till the 1960s. Then, suddenly, the tiny former Portuguese colony found itself in the spotlight thanks to the flower children from around the globe who headed here to meditate on their navels and seek peace in a troubled world.

Their descendants, the modern-day backpackers, too, file into Goa in search of the Holy Grail of peace or to find their inner selves; to open their Third Eye or even to zone out on trance at underground rave parties on the beaches of North Goa.

Many, however, are in search of the other Goa; its Portuguese heart that throbs in pockets like Old Goa, in Fontainhas, the Latin Quarter of Panaji, and on the atmospheric sleepy island of Divar, accessed by a short two-minute ferry ride. Yes, Goa has multiple avatars—it's

a party destination, a former sleepy Portuguese colony, a beach hangout, a sliver of rural India. That said, we love Goa any which way. But what we find most intriguing is its colonial core. The Portuguese left Goa in 1961 but the love affair between the colonisers and the colonised continues even today, and most passionately in Fontainhas.

Fontainhas lies in the heart of Panaji at the foot of Altinho, a swish hilltop area, and Ourem Creek and seems adrift in a sea of nostalgia. It is a “small chunk of Portugal washed up on the shores of the Indian Ocean”, as writer William Dalrymple has said.

In the course of our frequent wanderings in this quarter, we would often hear the strain of a sad fado, a Portuguese genre of music, which would waft out of a window while further down, the strum of a guitar would override a muscular tenor belting out an Italian opera.





Old churches dot the landscape of Old Goa

On a recent visit, we started our stroll from the northern end, near the petite Sao Tome Church where a group of silver Goan ladies in outmoded frocks conversed with venerable gentlemen wielding ornate walking sticks. They seemed to enhance the period setting and infuse it with flesh and blood.

From the Sao Tome neighbourhood, spaghetti-thin, sunlit alleys snake away amid traditional Portuguese style homes with overhanging trellised balconies and red-tiled roofs. The facades glow in the Mediterranean colours of ochre, green, blue and red, and give the neighbourhood an aura of having been plucked out of the Iberian Peninsula. In small dim tavernas, locals quaff feni in a convivial circle of friends and cafes and eateries, wreathed in the aroma of Portuguese-Goan cuisine, resonate with beer-fuelled laughter. The Sao Tome quarter lies around the main post office, which was the tobacco trading house in the

Portuguese era, with the adjacent building serving as the mint, according to our guide.

The square facing these buildings has a bloody history—it was the scene of executions, attended by townspeople in the mood for some gory ‘entertainment’! The conspirators of the Pinto Revolt were also put to death here for their part in an aborted coup to dislodge the Portuguese in 1787. In contrast to the bloody goings-on, we stumbled on a beautifully restored building nearby called the Fundacao Oriente, an institution that restores heritage buildings and safeguards the syncretic culture of the state.

Indeed, the vintage buildings in Fontainhas—some are immaculate while others stand proud despite peeling paint—line streets with lyrical names such as Rua de Natal, Avenida Dom Joao, and Cunha Rivara. We often felt like we were in Lisbon! On the charmingly named





A heritage home  
on Divar island

From the Sao Tome neighbourhood, spaghetti-thin, sunlit alleys snake away amid traditional Portuguese style homes with overhanging trellised balconies and red-tiled roofs. The facades glow in the Mediterranean colours and give it an aura of having been plucked out of the Iberian Peninsula

Rua 31 de Janeiro stands one of the oldest bakeries in Panaji. While we waited in the bakery to buy a couple of fresh *poe*, Goan bread with a crusty exterior and a warm heart, a delightful intermingling of accents wafted around us—the lilt of Konkani and fragments of Portuguese spoken by a gracious dowager who could have stepped out of a colonial portrait! We overheard two little girls debating the existence of an all-powerful God while they shared a chicken pasty and then moved on to more childlike topics.

Fontainhas brims with such encounters and over several holidays in Goa, we have wandered its intimate streets where life is lived in the open. On an earlier visit, we had purchased a few utilitarian items from a small provision

store in the neighbourhood and struck up a conversation with the diminutive owner whose toothy grin and warmth disarmed us completely. “I have two sons and a bus,” she had confided even as we wondered about clubbing one’s tangible assets in such an unusual manner. And then we understood why. In a laidback world where the rat race is an alien concept, life is lived in the slow lane. “One drives the bus and the other collects the fare,” she said proudly. A perfect arrangement in a near-perfect world!

Some of the colonial quarter’s iconic buildings are the French-sounding La Maison Fontainhas, a spiffy home-stay that wears its colonial heart on its sleeve and the WelcomHeritage Panjim Inn, with its deep red façade and white trimmings. A 19<sup>th</sup> century heritage inn studded with





Above: A cross in front of the Convent of Santa Monica in Old Goa; downtown Fontainhas, the Latin Quarter of Panaji  
 Clockwise from below left: A cosy nook at Champakali homestay, Old Goa; altar of the Church of our Lady of Compassion on Divar island;  
 Viva Panjim eatery located in a period house in Fontainhas; a typical Goan fare that includes prawn curry, brown rice and *poe* bread





In the Chapel of Saint Sebastian is a striking crucifix with an unusual image of Jesus—his piercing eyes glower at the viewer. It once stood in the Palace of the Inquisition in Old Goa and was said to have been designed to strike terror in the hearts of non-believers brought before the fearsome Inquisitors



period furniture, it was once the favourite hangout of the flower children, and memories of those times of rebellion, peace signs and free love still seem to cling to it. Carved four poster beds, rosewood cupboards and dressers are wreathed in nostalgia for an era that will never return.

Part of the Panjim Inn group is the WelcomHeritage Panjim Pousada, across the road, which started life as the only Hindu house in a predominantly Catholic precinct. It belonged to the affluent Ghanekar family and was rebuilt in the 1930s. The Pousada includes the four heritage rooms of Panjim Peoples, Goa's first English school. In the central

courtyard, a tulsi plant occupies pride of place while artworks glow on whitewashed walls. The interiors are redolent of a prosperous Hindu colonial home with carved four-poster beds, tasteful furnishings and artworks.

It was in the pretty whitewashed Chapel of Saint Sebastian, awash in peace, that we experienced a visceral fear. There, in its dimly lit interior, is a striking crucifix with an unusual image of Jesus—his eyes are open and piercing and glower at the viewer. The crucifix once stood in the Palace of the Inquisition in Old Goa and was said to have been designed to strike terror in the hearts of non-believers brought before the fearsome Inquisitors who would later consign them to their gruesome fate.

Also in Fontainhas, one can bite into the luscious Portuguese culinary legacy in eateries like Viva Panjim, located in a period Goan house with a few tables on the narrow patio outside. The gracious Goan owner advises customers on which classic to try that afternoon—chicken done in the *xacuti* or *cafreal* style or seafood such as the kingfish vindaloo followed by the multi-layered *bebinca*.

Venite, a hippy outpost of yesteryear and now a quirky eatery with graffiti on the walls and beer bottle chandeliers, is located on the first floor of a 200 year-old building. It was one of the first inns in Panaji and today its wide-ranging menu includes the day's catch turned out in the typical Goan, Continental or Portuguese style. The restaurant, with its small wood tables and chairs and miniscule balconies, is also famed for its pork chops and other Goan classics.

However, our favourite is a linen-less eatery, close to Fontainhas, which brims with regulars—including a few inebriated ones—and good cheer. There, we once met a Goan lady of Portuguese descent with a classic profile who smoked and drank beer with an air of sheer class. We struck up a conversation with her, and soon a silver gentleman joined in and there was rollicking banter all around. He suddenly stopped to apologise for the whistling sound that emanated after each sentence that he uttered. "I have very few teeth left and I forgot my dentures at home," he said candidly. Instant friendships and instant revelations. That's the Goan way, we thought.

After a delicious meal, we often take a local bus heading to Old Goa. With courtesy so ingrained in the Goan, the



## GETTING THERE

**By air:** Dabolim airport is about 26 km from Panaji.

**By rail:** Vasco da Gama, the nearest railhead, is about 29 km away. Madgaon, another major railway station, is 38 km away.


**By road:** Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation and Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation are some of the prime operators providing bus services from nearby cities such as Mumbai, Pune and Bengaluru. Those driving from these cities can take NH 4, while those coming from Mangaluru can take NH 17.

## ACCOMMODATION

By way of accommodation, Goa has a full range to offer: from deluxe five-star hotels to budget lodges and tourist complexes run by Goa Tourism. However, Champakali, a 15-minute walk from Old Goa and a short drive from Panaji, is a heavenly option for those who want to get away from touristy Goa.

Tel: 098504 64325

For more information, visit Goa Tourism at

 [www.goatourism.gov.in](http://www.goatourism.gov.in)

## A boat on Mandovi river

Opposite page: The Portuguese quarter, Panaji

conductor whistles the bus to a stop every time he spots a silver at an unscheduled stop.

This time around, we wanted to experience hinterland Goa and stayed at Champakali, a homestay with a heart near Old Goa, which bills itself as two homes on a hill by the river. Nestling in tangled greenery and tall-as-totem-poles teak trees with a banyan as the centrepiece, Champakali felt like a continuation of the Portuguese legacy of *susegad*, a Goan-Konkani word that means laid back and relaxed. Leisurely breakfasts and teas in the gazebo; full-bellied afternoon naps in our breezy high-ceilinged room after days spent burrowing in the untold mysteries of Fontainhas, Old Goa and the dreamy island of Divar.

Not for us the pulsating beaches of Goa captured in tourist brochure clichés; where banana boats ride the waves, paragliders drift on the wind, bars throb with almost asthmatic fervour and night markets flog tired old goods. We prefer dewy mornings filled with bird calls and the sight of tousled palms as we sip morning tea on the wrap-around veranda of our villa; dreamy candle-lit dinners with the soundtrack of the breeze sighing through the palms. That's when we realise why we—and perhaps many of the flower children—fell in love with Goa. 🌸



***The first day at school***

*The first time you rode the bicycle.*

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

*The first drama you got a part in*

***The first day at college***

*The first date you went on*

***The first kiss***

*The first time you proposed*

***The first job interview***

*The first board meeting you addressed*

***The first day after retirement***

***BUTTERFLIES*** *never retire*

**The first click of the mouse.**

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

*harmony*  
**celebrate age**



Photographs by Rohit Chawla / Tasveer



## FITTING TRIBUTE

There comes a time in every artist's life to look back at the people who influenced and inspired them. In that moment of reckoning, they are further impelled to pay tribute to those people—tributes that become contemporary retakes of age-old art. Fashion photographer Rohit Chawla's series, *The Inspired Frame*, is a photographic reconstruction of paintings by three seminal artists: Raja Ravi Varma, Gustav Klimt and Frida Kahlo. "I just wanted to recreate the paintings that influenced me in my growing years and reinterpret them according to what I saw," Chawla tells us. The stunning photographs, which were on view at The Harrington Street Arts Centre in Kolkata recently, have also been included in the book *Rohit Chawla: The Inspired Frame*, published by Tasveer.





# The butterfly diaries

Natasha Rego meets India's 'Butterfly Man' Isaac Kehimkar



Natasha Rego

**H**imalayan expeditions are meant to test the limits of patience and human endurance. But Isaac Kehimkar is not in it to conquer new peaks. For this naturalist, the prize at the end of every rocky road is a bunch of dazzling winged jewels. “In 2005, when I finally spotted seven Dragontail butterflies with their spectacularly translucent wings atop a hill in Arunachal Pradesh, I trembled so much with excitement that I couldn’t hold my camera still,” reminisces the Navi Mumbai-based naturalist, who has been documenting India’s butterflies for the past 30 years.

*nature*

Kehimkar, who will retire as deputy director of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) later this year, says it takes some patience and a whole lot of crazy to chase butterflies for a living. His recent book, *Butterflies of India* (₹ 1,800; BNHS), is a testament to his passion for these colourful creatures. A field guide, the book contains photographs and information on over 1,000 species and sub-species of butterflies from

India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and a few from Afghanistan. He has trekked up the mighty Himalaya and through the damp forests of the Western Ghats in pursuit of the 1,500 species of butterflies that inhabit the subcontinent. “I have encountered at least 900, so there’s quite a long way to go,” he says with an easy smile.

In times when dreams are often synonymous with acquiring material possessions, Kehimkar is a refreshing inspiration—his pursuits always lead him to Eden. But chasing butterflies comes with many challenges, not least of which are shaking off blood-sucking leeches and microscopic ticks, whose nasty bite takes months to heal.

Kehimkar has also faced far bigger threats, like the time he stood face-to-face with a herd of elephants when he was looking for the Gladeye Bushbrown butterfly in the Parambikulam forest in Kerala. “There was nothing to do but slowly back away. Luckily for us, they mock-charged but kept a safe distance.” Following that harrowing experience, he found and pho-

## HOW TO STALK A BUTTERFLY

- **Set out in the morning:** butterflies bask in the morning sun before taking flight
- **Walk like a chameleon:** take two steps forward and one step back
- **Move like a sloth:** avoid sudden movements that can create a gush of air
- **Cast the shadow of a vampire:** don’t let your shadow fall on the butterfly
- **Use the stealth of an owl:** though they are not sensitive to noise, butterflies can sense harsh vibrations.

tographed the Gladeye Bushbrown, which even made it to the cover of his new book. In the Northeast, the dangers are of a human kind, given the political volatility of the region. “A fellow naturalist was kidnapped for 81 days,” he says. But, for him, finding the spotted Apollo butterfly, which lives high in the cold Himalayan reaches, was motivation enough.

Kehimkar’s obsession with butterflies was triggered in the early 1980s,





Photographs courtesy: Butterflies of India / Isaac Kehimkar

**Clockwise from above: The Orange Oakleaf, Green Dragontail and Common Red Apollo**

**Opposite page: Kehimkar at the BNHS Library where he spent his early years as the resident librarian**

while researching an article he wrote for *Sanctuary* magazine on the lifecycle of the Common Mormon butterfly. “The beauty in the details hooked me.” Then the librarian at BNHS, Kehimkar wrote regularly for *Sanctuary* magazine and also for the BNHS journal, *Hornbill*. He has since been on the editorial board of *Hornbill*, co-authored a book titled *Butterflies of India* (1992), and written *Common Indian Wildflowers* (2000) and *The Book of Indian Butterflies* (2008), a runaway success.

So how does a hardcore Mumbaikar grow up to be a butterfly chaser? Kehimkar was raised in the city’s backyard Deonar, which was then a far cry from the dumping ground it is today. A sprawl of paddy fields and fisheries located far from the hustle and bustle of what was then Bombay city, this natural paradise was his stomping ground. Encouraging his son’s love for nature—little Isaac maintained a small plant nursery

at home—Kehimkar’s father would buy him books on butterflies, birds and plants. When he was in Class 8, his parents bought him a little box camera, a gift that would leave a lasting impression on him.

The lad went on to graduate with a degree in political science and psychology, before he took up a sales job with Lakmé. He gave up the job as soon as he had saved enough to buy his first Minolta SLR camera. The turning point came when Kehimkar volunteered for a month-long herpetology workshop by BNHS. “It didn’t pay but it was the kind of work I had dreamt about. My mother was furious. She was worried no one would marry me,” he chuckles.

The budding naturalist landed a job as assistant librarian at BNHS in 1979. A year later, he acquired a degree in library sciences and became the resident librarian. This is where his real ‘schooling’ began. “I had

25,000 books at my disposal, and it is a place where you meet a lot of great people and watch them work.”

An encounter with India’s famous ornithologist Dr Salim Ali is indelibly etched in his memory. “One day, I asked him, ‘Sir, how do you have such beautiful handwriting?’ He said, ‘I didn’t always have handwriting like this, I worked on it!’ It’s one of the many lessons that stayed with me.”

Kehimkar soon plans to launch an NGO called iNatureWatch, to run nature camps and spread the word on the importance of conserving what remains of our wildlife. “In Victorian times, it was a fad to catch and kill butterflies and collect them like stamps—in the name of science. But times have changed. Now we can appreciate, watch and garden for butterflies without even touching them. That’s the way forward,” says the ‘Butterfly Man of India.’ We had better listen!



# The storyteller

**S**tories are a powerful medium, and telling them is a subversive act," says **Erica Taraporevala**, 57, a professional storyteller. "In a world where we are taught not to trust our own shadow, my stories are about trusting the universe; they are an invitation and pathway to lead a rich inner life, which shapes the quality of our outer life." Taraporevala has eager listeners everywhere—schools, cultural festivals and social gatherings. And, her repertoire spans fairy tales, folklore, mythological stories from around the world. While earlier well-established schools in Pune such as Vidya Valley and Orchid, known for their radical approach to education, would invite her for storytelling, she recently had a session at Suyog Sunderji Wisdom School, a new and forward-looking school in the city.



Rustom Taraporevala

Taraporevala's tryst with stories started early in life. Even at the age of three, alone in her room at night, she never felt scared. "The wall against my bed was lined with a floral pattern that transformed into a host of friendly characters when the moonlight shone through the window. And I went to sleep under the care of these magical creatures," she says, adding that stories have this comforting quality of enriching reality and introducing us to deeper colours of life.

Stories also have the power to heal, bring closure, speak to our soul and show us the way, if we allow them.

Around the age of 50, when she was transitioning from a hectic life of being an environmental activist to a more inward looking one, stories led her through what could have been an unsettling time. "It is a fact," she says, "that adults need stories as much as children and sometimes even more."

She recognised the power it held and intended to share it. "Today, there is a growing awareness about the importance of storytelling for adults as well as children," she notes.

In fact, Taraporevala is one of the first in urban India to bring stories back into the lives of adults. "Indeed,

storytelling is making a comeback to urban spaces."

The actual act of telling, however, is just the tip of the iceberg. Like any other performing art, it involves regular hours of research, preparation, practice and keeping up-to-date with the latest studies in the field. Taraporevala is a member of the National Storytelling Network and HAS (Healing Stories Alliance), as well as international storytelling networks. She works out of Pune, where she lives with her husband and pets, and looks forward to visits from her grown children.

—Suchismita Pai

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**ALL THAT JAZZ** Among the experimental jazz artists at the recently held Goa International Jazz Festival was Indian jazz legend Steve Sequeira, who opened the festival. When genres are mixed and matched, deconstructed and rebuilt, the Steve Sequeira Ensemble represented the swing, rhythm and harmony of what jazz once was. "The performers were playing a very different kind of music, with rhythms we wouldn't use in our day. We like to play mainstream music interpreted in our own way," Sequeira, known for his work as the drummer in Alyque Padamsee's *Jesus Christ Superstar*, tells us. "These festivals are few and far between, so we enjoyed ourselves." Organised by Teamwork Arts, the festival marked the beginning of the Jazz India Circuit, which concludes with a revival of the Jazz Yatra in Delhi on 19 February.



Rama and Lakshmana fight off the demon Tataka for sage Vishwamitra; Rama and Lakshmana cross over to Lanka with the Vanara army; Kumbhakarana in deep slumber as everyone tries to wake him up

# An epic RE-TELLING

From the 17<sup>th</sup> century Rajput studios of King Rana Jagat Singh comes an arresting visual version of the great epic. *Ramayana*, published by Roli Books, is a grand retelling by Sumedha V Ojha, and includes prints of original paintings. Co-authored by J P Losty, former curator of Indian visual collections at the British Library in London, the book is based on the *Mewar Ramayana*, the oldest, and arguably the finest, surviving manuscript of the mythological epic. The original manuscript comprises 400 illustrated pages in several volumes scattered in museums and libraries around the world. They were “illustrated in three different styles of contemporary Mewar painting, involving the artists Sahib Din and Manohar, and an unknown master working in a mixed Mewar-Deccani style”, notes Losty. Selected pages of the book were on display at Bikaner House in New Delhi recently, coinciding with the launch of the book.





# At home in EUROPE

Expat Indians have enriched the cultures of their new homeland in different ways. A photo tribute highlights the accomplishments of silvers of Indian origin

**A**t a time when anti-immigrant sentiment is sweeping across Europe, it is heart-warming to see the European Union (EU) recognise the contribution of expatriate Indians to the diverse cultures that make up this region. The celebration of this journey across time has been encapsulated in a photographic exhibition titled *New Homelands – The Indian Diaspora in The European Union*, which was held at New Delhi's India Habitat Centre last month. "Much has been written about European travellers to India but relatively little is known about Indians in Europe," remarks Tomasz Kozlowski, ambassador of the EU to India. "The reasons for their choice are as diverse and intriguing as the paths that took them there."

At the heart of the exhibition are three Indian photojournalists—Kounteya Sinha, Paroma Mukherjee and Shome Basu—commissioned by the EU's delegation to India to document the stories of Indians living in Europe. To understand the lives of Europe's second largest population of immigrants, they travelled to 21 countries and interacted with the diaspora who had assimilated the

local cultures while retaining their 'Indian-ness.' From curry kings to blue-collar workers, clergymen and women, and teachers of local languages, they found an eclectic mix of individuals. "I found so many Indians with an undying need to be successful in Europe who made Italy or Slovenia or even Cyprus their home," recalls Sinha. "Yet when they spoke about India, their voice quivered with unmistakable longing." To this, Basu adds, "Many of them, especially the older people, lead a sort of fusion life."

As much as some felt a pang for their homeland, there were those who were very content in their adopted countries. "Mr Pravin Cherkoori, an artist in Vienna, and Mrs Krishna Dutta in Stockholm were both very comfortable with the language, surroundings and culture of the places they lived in," observes Mukherjee. "I think, for them, retaining tradition was more about not losing sight of where they came from."

Here's a selection of exhibits that tell some of these fascinating stories.

**New Homelands—The Indian Diaspora in The European Union is expected to travel to Kolkata in February**

**OPPOSITE PAGE:**  
Anwar Hussain from Rajasthan (playing the sitar) went to Paris for a performance—and never returned. Together with his brothers and mother, he performs Rajasthani folk repertoire all around Europe. His mother was the first professional female singer from their community in Rajasthan, even before the family migrated to Paris



Shome Basu / Paris



**“Much has been written about European travellers to India but little is known about Indians in Europe. The reasons for their choice are as diverse and intriguing as the paths that took them there”**



Kounteya Sinha / Cyprus



Kounteya Sinha / Rome



Kounteya Sinha / Spain



Shome Basu / Lisbon



Paroma Mukherjee / Vienna

1. For three hours every night, Sardar Singh from Jammu sits by the Colosseum in Rome to sell his paintings, lit by four flashlights. "I love the way they celebrate in Italy. Without fear. Embracing openly," he says of his home for the last 26 years

2. Millionaire Raju Parwani started his career with a watch company before dabbling in other businesses. Today, he runs the ARKE BLS Centre in Madrid, which is designated by the Indian embassy to process visa applications from people of Spanish origin wanting to go to India. Parwani is way past retirement age but it is difficult to keep him out of office

3. Mohammed is an Imam at the Central Mosque of Lisbon, built by Indian businessman Abdool Magid Vakil. Hailing from Gujarat, both Mohammed and Vakil moved to Lisbon many years ago from Mozambique. Mohammed was appointed Maulavi Imam of the mosque in 1989

4. Pravin Cherkoori, owner of the famous Bauhaus-inspired INDIA textile store in Vienna, at his studio down the road by St Stephen's Square. Cherkoori moved to Vienna in the late 1950s. Now well into his 80s, he still visits India twice a year

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** A messiah for refugees and immigrants, 91 year-old Sister Antonia John has been living in Cyprus for 25 years. She takes care of women migrants from Asia, offering them food and shelter. This little orphan boy is her newest addition





# On a good wicket

Indian cinema's 'blue-eyed sahib' and cricket aficionado Tom Alter is a true gentleman who lives by his code of honour, writes **Raj Kanwar**

Even though we had known each other by reputation for many years, it was just over three years ago that I first met veteran actor Tom Alter face-to-face. It was at the Rajpur Festival; the venue was the Christian Retreat and Study Centre that had been founded by Tom's father Reverend James Payne Alter way back in the 1950s. I was just a member of the audience, and Tom the chief guest. During intermission, I went up to the dais to say hello to him. I formally introduced myself, to which he said convivially, "Of course, I know you very well, Raj." He invited me to sit on the dais. After the festival concluded, over a cup of tea we discussed various things.

I wanted to interview him for another publication, but it so happened that his calendar during the following few months was cluttered with important and not-so-important engagements. A flurry of emails was exchanged between us but like Rudyard Kipling's East and West, we the twain could not meet. That interview remained stillborn.

My next meeting with Tom came in December 2014 when he came to Dehra Dun to receive the Pride of Uttarakhand award from the Doon Citizens Council that was founded by me way back in the 1990s. It was an evening well spent with Tom and other recipients of various awards. Again, the long-awaited interview could not materialise since we both were too tired, he after a long and circuitous flight from Pune to Dehra Dun via Mumbai and Delhi and I as the principal organiser.

Today, Tom enjoys a remarkable virtuosity on the big and small screen as well as the theatre. His artistry extends to cricket and writing as well, making him versatile. In a telephonic interview from Mumbai, he speaks about his unfulfilled ambitions. Quoting a well-known Urdu poet, he says, "*Ahista chal zindagi, abhi kai karz chukana baki*

*hai. Kuchh dard mitana baki hai, kuchh farz nibhana baki hai.*" (The poet urges 'life' to slow down a bit; he still has some debts to pay, to mitigate pain and sadness, and some more enjoined duties to be performed.) Much of our conversation is in chaste Urdu, a language Tom is comfortable with, besides English and Hindustani.

Born in Landour, Mussoorie on 22 June 1950, Tom was educated at the famed Woodstock School. He spent his early years in Rajpur, then a gateway of sorts to Mussoorie, and now a flourishing township. It was there that his American Presbyterian missionary father founded the Christian Retreat and Study Centre aka the Masihi Dhyana Kendra, in 1954. His mother Barbara, a missionary too, played an equally important role in managing the study centre. The study centre continues to flourish even today though the Alter family has no association with it any longer.

During winter vacations, Tom would descend to Rajpur to spend his holidays with his parents. It was in the midst of this idyllic and spiritual environment that Tom grew up into a sprightly young boy with inbred values that are

still the hallmark of his persona. It was here that he had his baptism in cricket, which was to become a lifelong passion. His father's secretary, Jwala Prasad Mandraili, was his coach.

Even today, six decades later, Tom nostalgically recalls his days as a carefree youngster in Rajpur. "Our dwelling stood right in the midst of thick and dense forests; one could see greenery as far away as one's vision would travel. Rajpur was virtually a heaven on earth. Alas, today it has turned into a grotesque jungle of concrete." I detect a soulful tinge in his voice even at 1,350 air kilometres away from Mumbai.

"I still dream of being a Rajesh Khanna. For me, in the early 1970s, he was the only hero, romantic to the core, so real and so very Indian. He was the reason I came into films"  
—Tom Alter

From Mussoorie and Rajpur to Yale University was altogether a different world. But a young Tom took it all in his stride, soon feeling at home at the famed American university. He became a prominent member of the university cricket team, fortifying his cricketing skills. On his return to India, Tom found a job at St Thomas School in Jagadhri—now in Haryana—as a Grade 4 teacher. His cricketing ability came in handy, with Tom being given the additional task of cricket coaching.



Bhimesh Bharti

His passion soon led to Tom writing crisp columns on cricket for nearly a decade-and-a-half in mainstream newspapers and popular magazines. His book *Best in the World* (1999), co-authored with sports journalist Ayaz Memon, is the fascinating story of 10 of the greatest World Cup matches. Tom has also had the distinction of possibly being the first journalist to interview cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar on TV, when he was just 15 years old. Incidentally, Tom's son Jamie Alter has outscored his father as far as cricket writing is concerned. His book, *The History of World Cup Cricket 1975-2011*, with a foreword by Harsha Bhogle, has attained an iconic niche in cricket literature. While Jamie is currently with *The Times of India*, Tom's daughter Afshaan is married to Kevin, a red-blooded American, and lives in Boston.

How the movie bug bit a teenage Tom is a fascinating story. Sometime in 1969, as Tom watched Rajesh Khanna romance Sharmila Tagore in *Aradhana*, he was instantly infatuated with the debonair hero. "I still dream of being a Rajesh Khanna," Tom tells me. "For me, in the early 1970s, he was the only hero, romantic to the core, so real and so very Indian. He was the reason I came into films." In June 1972, he joined the prestigious FTII in Pune. Naseeruddin Shah, Shabana Azmi, Mithun Chakraborty and Benjamin Gilani were his college mates.

He entered the film industry with Chetan Anand's *Saheb Bahadur* and Ramanand Sagar's *Charas*. Thereafter, he worked with reputed directors like V Shantaram, Raj Kapoor, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Manmohan Desai,

Manoj Kumar, Satyajit Ray and others. Though he got the opportunity to act with the top stars of the day, his cherished wish to act with Rajesh Khanna remained unfulfilled. He also acted in a Hollywood film, *One Night with the King*, with Peter O'Toole as his co-star.

TV, too, provided him a large enough canvas to amply showcase his acting prowess. In *Junoon*, which ran for five years, he played the memorable role of a sadistic mobster, Keshav Kalsi. Tom has been equally, if not

more, active in theatre. Way back in 1979, along with Naseeruddin Shah and Benjamin Gilani, he launched a theatrical company, Motley Productions, which debuted at Mumbai's famed Prithvi Theatre with Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Prithvi Theatre has since then been Tom's theatrical *karmabhoomi*. He also played Sahir Ludhianvi in a bio-play based on the life of the great Urdu poet and lyricist, a performance that evoked much appreciation. One of his most memorable roles was in the theatrical presentation of William Dalrymple's *City of Djinns*, where his fellow artists were Zohra Sehgal and Manish Joshi Bismil.

Past 66, Tom is not inclined to call it a day as yet. "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep," he quotes American poet Robert Frost. Tom says he wants to produce and direct movies to be shot entirely in the twin cities of Dehra Dun and Mussoorie. "I may possibly base my first movie on my novel *Rerun at Rialto*, published in 2001, here. As I have already directed plays, directing films should be a seamless transition," he says with a degree of self-assurance.

Tom doesn't follow the herd and lives life in his own way. "I believe in doing what I like or what I fancy without caring about the world," he says. He wears his simplicity effortlessly. He is polite and courteous to a fault; I have never heard him address any one as *tu*; it is *aap* that comes naturally to him. Tom is truly a man of action. More important, he has his code of honour, and lives by that.

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*The writer is a veteran journalist based in Dehradun*



# The poet's calendar

We toast the season of new beginnings with **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's** (1807-1882) paean to the year

## JANUARY

Janus am I; oldest of potentates;  
Forward I look, and backward, and below  
I count, as god of avenues and gates,  
The years that through my portals come and go.  
I block the roads, and drift the fields with snow;  
I chase the wild-fowl from the frozen fen;  
My frosts congeal the rivers in their flow,  
My fires light up the hearths and hearts of men.

## FEBRUARY

I am lustration, and the sea is mine!  
I wash the sands and headlands with my tide;  
My brow is crowned with branches of the pine;  
Before my chariot-wheels the fishes glide.  
By me all things unclean are purified,  
By me the souls of men washed white again;  
E'en the unlovely tombs of those who died  
Without a dirge, I cleanse from every stain.

## MARCH

I Martius am! Once first, and now the third!  
To lead the Year was my appointed place;  
A mortal dispossessed me by a word,  
And set there Janus with the double face.  
Hence I make war on all the human race;  
I shake the cities with my hurricanes;  
I flood the rivers and their banks efface,  
And drown the farms and hamlets with my rains.

## APRIL

I open wide the portals of the Spring  
To welcome the procession of the flowers,  
With their gay banners, and the birds that sing  
Their song of songs from their aerial towers.  
I soften with my sunshine and my showers  
The heart of earth; with thoughts of love I glide  
Into the hearts of men; and with the Hours  
Upon the Bull with wreathed horns I ride.

## MAY

Hark! The sea-faring wild-fowl loud proclaim  
My coming, and the swarming of the bees.  
These are my heralds, and behold! my name  
Is written in blossoms on the hawthorn-trees.  
I tell the mariner when to sail the seas;  
I waft o'er all the land from far away  
The breath and bloom of the Hesperides,  
My birthplace. I am Maia. I am May.

## JUNE

Mine is the Month of Roses; yes, and mine  
The Month of Marriages! All pleasant sights  
And scents, the fragrance of the blossoming vine,  
The foliage of the valleys and the heights.  
Mine are the longest days, the loveliest nights;  
The mower's scythe makes music to my ear;  
I am the mother of all dear delights;  
I am the fairest daughter of the year.

## JULY

My emblem is the Lion, and I breathe  
The breath of Libyan deserts o'er the land;  
My sickle as a sabre I unsheathe,  
And bent before me the pale harvests stand.  
The lakes and rivers shrink at my command,  
And there is thirst and fever in the air;  
The sky is changed to brass, the earth to sand;  
I am the Emperor whose name I bear.

## AUGUST

The Emperor Octavian, called the August,  
I being his favorite, bestowed his name  
Upon me, and I hold it still in trust,  
In memory of him and of his fame.  
I am the Virgin, and my vestal flame  
Burns less intensely than the Lion's rage;  
Sheaves are my only garlands, and I claim  
The golden Harvests as my heritage.

## SEPTEMBER

I bear the Scales, where hang in equipoise  
The night and day; and when unto my lips  
I put my trumpet, with its stress and noise  
Fly the white clouds like tattered sails of ships;  
The tree-tops lash the air with sounding whips;  
Southward the clamorous sea-fowl wing their flight;  
The hedges are all red with haws and hips,  
The Hunter's Moon reigns empress of the night.

## OCTOBER

My ornaments are fruits; my garments leaves,  
Woven like cloth of gold, and crimson dyed;  
I do not boast the harvesting of sheaves,  
O'er orchards and o'er vineyards I preside.  
Though on the frigid Scorpion I ride,  
The dreamy air is full, and overflows  
With tender memories of the summer-tide,  
And mingled voices of the doves and crows.

## NOVEMBER

The Centaur, Sagittarius, am I,  
Born of Ixion's and the cloud's embrace;  
With sounding hoofs across the earth I fly,  
A steed Thessalian with a human face.  
Sharp winds the arrows are with which I chase  
The leaves, half dead already with affright;  
I shroud myself in gloom; and to the race  
Of mortals bring nor comfort nor delight.

## DECEMBER

Riding upon the Goat, with snow-white hair,  
I come, the last of all. This crown of mine  
Is of the holly; in my hand I bear  
The thyrsus, tipped with fragrant cones of pine.  
I celebrate the birth of the Divine,  
And the return of the Saturnian reign;--  
My songs are carols sung at every shrine.  
Proclaiming "Peace on earth, good will to men."

*American poet and educator, Longfellow was one of the five Fireside Poets, a group of American poets whose popularity rivalled those of British poets in both countries*



# Saluting our bravehearts

**M**anju Lodha spent her childhood in an atmosphere that reverberated with stories of Indian freedom fighters. At 18, she got married to Mangal Prabhat Lodha, son of Guman Malji Lodha, chief justice of Rajasthan High Court. Being a freedom fighter, Guman Lodha's house too resonated with patriotic fervour and spirit. Gradually, Manju Lodha got associated with the activities of the Lodha Foundation, a charitable trust that focuses on health, education and development, besides undertaking relief work during calamities.

In 2014, the Lodha Foundation organised an event to commemorate 51 years of *Aye mere watan ke logo*, a patriotic song saluting Indian soldiers who laid down their lives during the 1962 Sino-Indian war. The programme, held in Mumbai, was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi; Lata Mangeshkar, who sang the song; Sargam Pradeep, the daughter of legendary lyricist Kavi Pradeep, who penned the song; and over 150,000 uniformed officers. One of the most touching moments, reminisces Lodha, was when every single person present at the event recited the song as a tribute to the martyrs. That, she says, "inspired me to pen a book on our bravehearts." After intense research, she recently came up with *Param Vir - The War Diary* (Lodha Foundation; ₹ 400; 112 pages), which chronicles the journeys of our war heroes, from 1947 to the Kargil War. **Rachna Viridi** spoke to the 57-year-old writer, poet and social worker about the book, her inspiration and her social commitments. Excerpts from the interview:

**Tell us more about *Param Vir - The War Diary*.**

The Param Vir Chakra is the highest military award given to soldiers—dead or alive—for extraordinary courage during wars. From Independence till the Kargil War, only 21 soldiers have earned it, of which 14 got it posthumously. My book not only talks about wars that changed the history of India but highlights the journeys of those who have been awarded the Param Vir Chakra, Mahavir Chakra, Vir Chakra and Ashok Chakra. It captures the patriotism, bravery and sacrifice of our soldiers. I think

the book will take people into the hearts and minds of those who sacrifice their lives so we continue to live.

**Some of the stories are riveting. How did you gather the details?**

A majority of Param Vir Chakra recipients are dead. So we had to draw out the details from record books and through talks with family members and comrades-in-arms. Some of the stories were spine-chilling! It's unfortunate that most of these soldiers died young. Take, for instance, Major Shaitan Singh Bhati, who was newly married when he lost his life in the 1962 war. His body—with fingers still on the rifle's trigger—was found by a shepherd on the slopes of the hills of Rezang La in Ladakh after the snow melted in summer. Then there was Flying Officer Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon, the only member of the Indian Air Force to be honoured with the Param Vir Chakra. Stationed in Srinagar, he was defending the valley from Pakistan Air Force's jets when his fighter jet was hit and went down the mountainous terrain; his body was never found. Another tale is that of Second Lieutenant Arun Kshetrapal, who was 20 when he died during the 1971 Indo-Pak war.

**What inspired you to pen this book?**

We sleep peacefully thanks to the sacrifices made by our soldiers. We should be proud of our heroes and value the sacrifices made by them and their families for the country. This book is my humble tribute to them. As civilians, we cannot go to the border and fight the enemy but, as a nation, we must stand in solidarity with

our armed forces. In my own little way, I've been trying to raise awareness through this book. I got 20,000 copies of the book distributed free of cost in my locality. After the Uri incident, our foundation has organised several programmes to collect funds for soldiers and their families.

**Why do you think the book is a must-read for the current generation?**

Unfortunately, the present generation doesn't know much about the struggles of the Indian Army. I want youngsters to learn about our real heroes. Like *Bhagavad-Gita*, *Quran*





"I think the book will take people into the hearts and minds of those who sacrifice their lives so we continue to live. It captures the patriotism, bravery and sacrifice of our soldiers"

and other spiritual books, which are a staple in many homes, children should also be acquainted with stories of patriotism. We've introduced the book in Lodha Schools, as well as other schools. I have three grandchildren and make it a point to read out stories from the book every day.

**Tell us something about your journey as an author and social activist.**

Being a young Marwari housewife, my life initially revolved around my family and children. Once my kids finished school, I associated myself with social organisations that worked for women's empowerment and focused

on my literary pursuits. We founded the Lodha Charitable Trust and Gyan Gangotri Kavya Manch, a forum that encourages housewives to indulge in creative writing. I am also actively involved with the Rajasthani Mahila Mandal, Jeenkushal Mahila Mandal and other social groups that work in the rural sector. Thanks to a reading and public speaking course, I also developed my writing and oratorical skills. Today, I have to my credit 11 Hindi books—*Bharat Bhagya Nirmata*, *Babul*, *Paati*, *Maa* and *Yaaden*, to name a few—and *Param Vir*, my first book in English. Recently, I presented a copy of *Param Vir* to our Prime Minister; it was a dream come true. Looking back, I feel happy with the way my life has shaped up.

## 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 reminisce with each other all over again.



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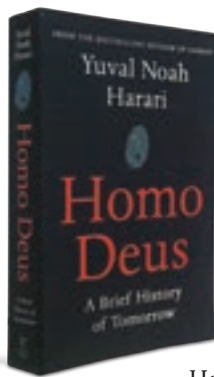


celebrate age

No other Indian epic has been told and retold as many times as *The Mahabharata*. In **THE SERPENT'S REVENGE: UNUSUAL TALES FROM THE MAHABHARATA** (Puffin; ₹ 250; 182 pages), prolific writer **Sudha Murty** reintroduces India's greatest epic through some little-known extraordinary tales, which are now mostly relegated to regional folklore. Thus, we are introduced to the tale of the king of Udupi who, instead of taking sides, ran a kitchen to feed the soldiers of both armies during the epic war at Kurukshetra, earning a blessing from Krishna that his future generations would be known for making and serving delicious meals—yes, here we have the origin of the ubiquitous Udupi restaurant!



Another regional story that has spawned many dance and puppet shows in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, but is largely unknown to a pan-Indian audience, is that of the romance between Shashirekha, daughter of Krishna's brother Balarama, and legendary warrior Abhimanyu. Though the wisdom of the epic permeates this collection, the little nuggets that accompany most stories as footnotes, connecting present-day places and rituals with happenings narrated in the epic, are the gems, a strategy designed to lure the modern reader.



At a time when reports are saying humans will be having more sex with bots than each other by 2050, **Yuval Noah Harari's HOMO DEUS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF TOMORROW** (Penguin; ₹ 799; 440 pages) is a timely reminder of the way things are headed. It's a world where wars are obsolete and

Homo Sapiens, who have upgraded to

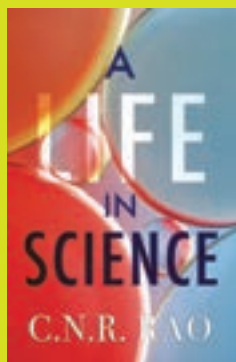
Homo Deus—by acquiring the powers of creation and destruction—are more likely to commit suicide than be killed in a conflict. It's a world where famine is a thing of the past, and the human population is more at a risk of obesity than starvation. It's an age where death is just a technical problem. The author of *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* foresees a not-too-distant world in which we face a new set of challenges. With his trademark blend of science, history, philosophy and every discipline in between, Harari explores the projects, dreams and nightmares that will shape the 21<sup>st</sup> century—from overcoming death to creating artificial life. It all sounds plausible given that the flagship enterprise of modern science is to defeat death and grant humans eternal youth. To quote Harari, "Homo Sapiens is likely to upgrade itself step by step, merging with robots and computers in the process, until our descendants will look back and realise that they are no longer the kind of animal that wrote the *Bible*, built the Great Wall of China and laughed at Charlie Chaplin's antics."

## Also on stands



**Lahore in the Time Of The Raj**  
**Ian Talbot & Tahir Kamran**  
Penguin Random House;  
₹ 599; 288 pages

The book offers insight into the past of a glorious city, whose memories still linger on both sides of the border.



**A Life in Science**  
**C N R Rao**  
Penguin Random House;  
₹ 499; 216 pages


This is a roadmap to Rao's journey as a scientist and a look at how science can be a game-changer.



**Choices: Inside the Making of India's Foreign Policy**  
**Shivshankar Menon**  
Penguin Random House; ₹ 599; 224 pages

An insider's account of the decision-making process of India's foreign policy, this book examines crucial choices that have had a great impact on present-day India.



A photograph of an elderly man with a grey beard and a young girl with dark hair, both smiling and playing in a pond. The man is in the water, and the girl is sitting on a wooden dock, reaching out towards him. The water is dark blue, and the dock is made of wooden planks.

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# A NEW DAWN

Fresh beginnings call for positivity and open-mindedness, says **Kellie Giorgio Camelford**

New beginnings often are exciting, yet terrifying—no one knows what the future holds. Unlimited possibilities lie behind the door to your new beginning: successes and failures, ups and downs, and even some smiles and frowns.

The past is sometimes easier to reflect upon because it is finite, it is done and it cannot offer new surprises in your life. In comparison, the present and future seem mystical and uncontrollable.

Since you do not know what's behind the next door or written in the next chapter of your life, it is important to utilise transitional life tools at these times in your life. These tools give us the strength and courage to aid us in adjusting to a new chapter in our lives. A toolkit for your attitude may be what it takes to make a smooth transition.

**Be positive.** Sometimes you may have to 'fake it till you make it' with a positive attitude in a transitional time. A new chapter can be terrifying, which brings in negative self-talk. It is common to have doubts and hesitation; however, you cannot let these thoughts win the battle and defeat you. You may want to think of a positive slogan to get you through the tough transition. For instance, 'I've got this!' may provide you with an additional boost of confidence and encouragement.

**Be open.** In a transitional time, it is important to be open to new people and new experiences. To adjust to

a new job, new partner, etc. it takes an open mind. You cannot compare your past to your future. For instance, if you are in a new relationship, you cannot compare your new partner to your past, idealised partner, because if you do this you are setting yourself up for failure. Your present and future offer you the opportunity to see things in a new light or try things out in a different way.

**Be realistic.** You may have lofty goals for your future, which is great as long as they are also realistic. When you enter a new chapter, it is important to have measurable and realistic stepping stones to get you to your future goals. By setting realistic and measurable goals, you are more likely to achieve them.

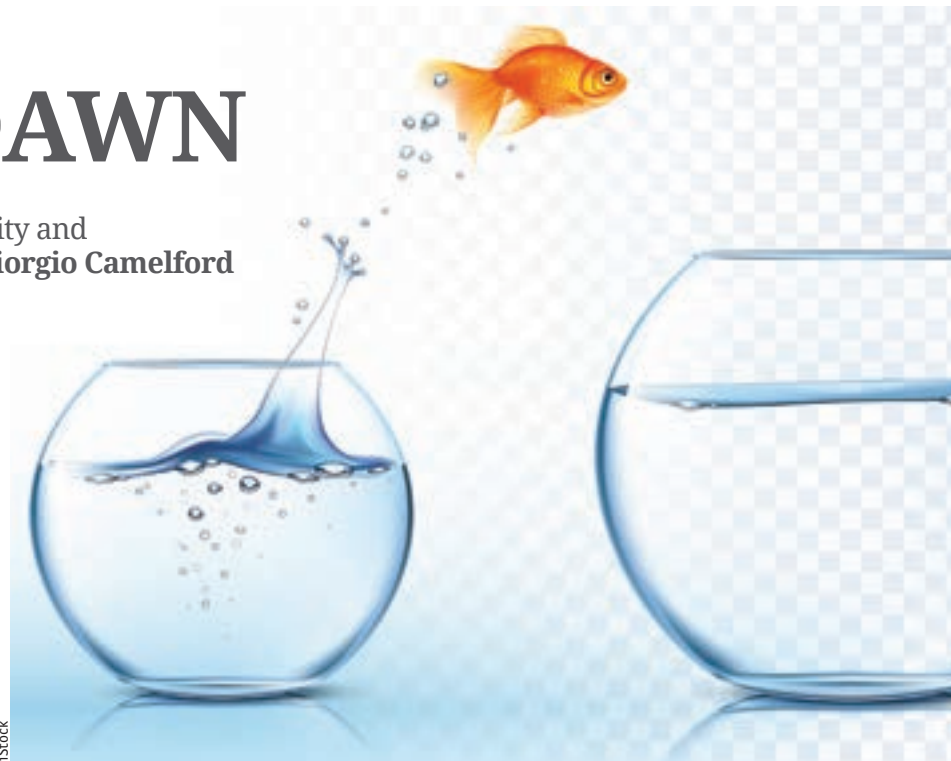
**Be persistent.** Sometimes it just takes time (which can be tough if you're impatient). New beginnings are a test of willpower, patience and character. You need to give yourself

the freedom to fall, stand up, brush off and try again. It is only through these mistakes that you can learn how to do things differently and more effectively. Persistence pays off because it creates dedication and sweat equity. At transitional times, think about the Pareto Principle, or the 80-20 rule, where 80 per cent of the results come from 20 percent of the effort. Through awareness and persistence, you can tackle the challenges of a new beginning.

**Seek support.** Everyone needs support from loved ones when transitioning into a new chapter. Sometimes you may shy away from support because you feel like a failure; however, this is often the time you need support the most from your friends and family. So, don't hesitate. Just seek it!

Through utilising these attitude tools, you will be more mindful and aware of your own personal transition.

istock



*Camelford is a licensed professional counsellor-supervisor and works with a wide range of emotional, behavioural and relationship issues*



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# Triumph of the TRAMP

He changed not just the vocabulary of cinema, but its imagery and sociology. No wonder, Sir Charles Spencer 'Charlie' Chaplin, who brought laughter to millions around the world, is regarded one of the most iconic filmmakers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His swan song, *A Countess from Hong Kong*, starring Marlon Brando and Sophia Loren, and written and directed by him, was wrapped up in January 1967. Chaplin made a cameo—his final screen presence—in this, his only film in colour. Nevertheless, it's his moustachioed, cane-twirling screen persona, the Tramp—with his trademark baggy pants, tight coat, oversized shoes and derby hat—that has gone down in popular psyche as a statement of destitute everyman; an image Chaplin is still identified with. The auteur's fame during his heyday was unprecedented, matched only by The Beatles, decades later.

Chaplin successfully turned the angst of the hungry, the deprived, and the unemployed into comedy. Though introduced as a bumbling vagabond in slapstick comedies, the Tramp soon evolved into a symbol of the underdog. He often clashed with the police and other authority figures to make a point about the most pressing social issues of the day. With the release of *Modern Times* in 1936, which shows an oppressed factory



A still from *Modern Times*

Dinodia Photo Library

worker being literally swallowed by assembly-line machinery, the Tramp had truly transformed into a proletarian. In fact, such was this endearing character's popularity that one of the legends of the time involves Chaplin losing a Tramp lookalike contest!

Though he is largely seen as the poster boy of silent movies, Chaplin's profound statement against Nazis in 1940, *The Great Dictator*, boasts of one of the greatest political speeches of all time in cinema: "Don't give yourselves to these unnatural men,

machine men, with machine minds and machine hearts.... You have the love of humanity in your hearts.... Soldiers! Don't fight for slavery, fight for liberty." On being perceived as a social commentator, Chaplin said, "I'm an individualist; I am an internationalist; a peace-monger, and I use my status as a driving force against inequality." Rightly, he was listed in TIME magazine's '100 most important people of the 20<sup>th</sup> century', for "more or less inventing global recognisability and helping turn an industry into an art".

## THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: JANUARY 1967

- On 7 January, *The Forsyte Saga*, a popular British television series adapted from the series of novels by John Galsworthy, was telecast for the first time.
- On 14 January, Louis Leakey announced the discovery of pre-human fossils dating back millions of years in Kenya—he named them *Kenyapithecus africanus*.
- On 15 January, the first-ever inter-league championship of American football—the 'Super Bowl'—was held.
- On 16 January, a referendum was held in Goa, Daman and Diu to determine whether the former Portuguese colonies would want to remain a single political entity or go their separate ways.

# Log in to the future

Have an old laptop the kids have left behind but don't know how to use it? If you live in Bengaluru, help is at hand with Nightingales Jobs 60+, an initiative of Nightingales Medical Trust (NMT). Located at three centres in the city—K R Market, R T Nagar and Kasturinagar—the programme is intended to teach silvers the basics of operating computers and

**BUZZ**

smartphones and soft skills to enable them to pursue a second career after retirement. Training is offered from 10 am to 3 pm, Monday to Saturday, for a fee of just ₹ 1,000 per month. For more details, contact project manager Komal Singh at (0) 9731447634 or project coordinator Geetha at (080) 42423535, or log on to [www.nightingaleseldercare.com](http://www.nightingaleseldercare.com)

## Sneakerhead

n. A person who collects, trades, or is passionate about running shoes.

**Example:** Not surprisingly, sneaker culture is far from inclusive of women who get down with the hype and love their kicks. Yet female **sneakerheads**—women who seriously love and collect sneakers—are a large and passionate base.

—Justin Block, "Why aren't companies more worried about female sneakerheads?", The Huffington Post, 14 July 2015

“The other day a man asked me what I thought was the best time of life. “Why,” I answered without a thought, “now.”

—American journalist, historian and author David Grayson (1870-1946)

## Finishability

n. The characteristics or qualities that enable something to be read, watched, or listened to completely.

**Example:** Finally, there is **finishability**. Emails are concise, overcoming the readers' sense of being overwhelmed by limiting the length and the number of items made available. Contrast that with the 'infinite scroll' of endless content on many websites and social media platforms that can never be fully read and leave readers frustrated.

—Kaspars Grinvalds, "Email isn't dead—and it's helping to keep newspapers alive", The Conversation, 10 November 2016

## FLAKE RATE

n. The percentage of people who have volunteered to help a campaign but do not show up.

**Example:** Jon Carson: The technical term we like to use in the political world is we had a negative **flake rate**. Usually you have a bunch of volunteers scheduled to come and a certain percentage of them flake off. Well we had a negative flake rate. People were showing up and they were bringing extra friends with them.

—Ruairí Arrieta-Kenna, "Oh man, I guess we've won this thing", Politico, 7 November 2016

## Noseworm

n. An odour a person continues to smell even in the absence of the original odorant.

**Example:** Walking away after a morning episode comparing almond, walnut, peach, apricot, cherry and prune, I find that the whole room smells like prune. I step outside with Finnegan; a wind wrests the screen door from my grip. His nose rises to attention at the passing air. I smell...prune. I have been afflicted with a prune **noseworm**.

—Alexandra Horowitz, Being a Dog, Simon and Schuster, 4 October 2016

## “This is a temple that draws me to it, every minute of my waking life”

P D Ravindra, 77, runs a science museum for children in Bengaluru



Chitra Ramaswamy

Walking into the two-storey Amma Saraswati Loka in an industrial area in Banshankari, Bengaluru, is like entering an attic strewn with a medley of objects. Weaving his way amid tools, tyres, wooden planks and gadgets, **P D Ravindra**, a former chief of maintenance at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), shows off his creations with childlike gusto. This workshop-cum-museum, named after his mother, houses novelties from waste and is popular with schoolchildren. The 3 Rs—Reduce, Recycle, Reuse—that form the foundation of environmental stewardship, are the 77 year-old's watchwords. “When I embarked on this venture, I did not visualise it as a museum,” he says. Public response motivated him to establish his workspace as a museum for children. Deftly integrating science, history, geography, astronomy, mythology and environment in his creations, he drives home concepts in a fun way. An old fridge converted into a food warmer, a portable traffic kit, a cycle that works as a battery charger, an exercise bike that doubles as a wet grinder, a ‘granny’s wheel’ (in pic) that helps old people draw water from the well with consider-

able ease, a wave pendulum, a star-gazing umbrella, a dancing fountain, among other gadgets, are some of the attractions. “I want children to learn hands on,” says Ravindra, whose innate creativity surfaced during his 20-year stint at HAL, where he observed expensive aircraft and helicopter parts being discarded during overhaul. An award from the company for creating over 70 products from waste was the turning point in his life. After quitting his job in 1981, when he was barely 42, Ravindra operated from the footpath with all his sketches and drawings in a briefcase. Later, he used the money he earned from a project assigned to him by HAL to buy the site where the museum stands today. Entry to the museum is free. “We curb children’s imagination and creativity,” he says. “I want them to utilise this space to understand, innovate, and make whatever mess they want in that process.” Sriramya, whose seven year-old son Ishaan is exploring the museum with some of his friends, enthuses, “Ravindra sir explains scientific concepts to children as if he’s narrating a story.” Learning here, evidently, is child’s play!

—Chitra Ramaswamy



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