

# harmony celebrate age

SEPTEMBER 2017 ₹ 40

The magazine for silver citizens

## FOOTSTEPS

Flautist Mala  
Chandrasekhar's  
musical odyssey  
with Sikkil Sisters

## HEIRLOOMS

From grandparents,  
with love

## KANWAR'S PEOPLE

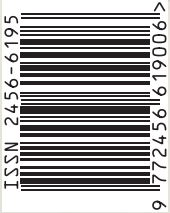
Centenarian  
Begum Hamida  
Habibullah



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# KITCHEN KING

Sanjeev Kapoor

## YOU CARE FOR YOUR GRAND CHILDREN.

## WE TAKE CARE OF YOU!

Remember the days when you left your child in a crèche and on return from work brought him or her back home? Time flies! You now take care your grand children. But during the day, your children go to work and, grand children to school or college. They are all busy in the daytime. Aren't they?

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# BRING HUMANITY BACK

Last month, in this column, I discussed the fallout of loneliness. But even I could not have predicted the horror that has shocked the country. The discovery of the decomposed body of 63 year-old Asha Sahani in her Mumbai apartment by her NRI son who had not spoken to her for well over a year; the complete unawareness of her neighbours about her plight; her total disconnect from society... every aspect of this tragedy has been discussed threadbare in the media.

While we will leave the blame game to others, it's imperative to address the systemic failure that allows matters to come to such a pass. Where are the mechanisms that ensure the regular monitoring of elders living alone? Where is the enabling environment that prompts silvers to reach out for help? How is it even possible in a community-driven society like ours that no one—family, friends, neighbours—raises an alarm bell while a woman remains locked in her apartment for weeks, months?

Words like 'loneliness', 'alienation' and 'disconnection' are too easily dismissed as psychobabble by thinking—and talking—heads; incidents like these remind us that these are real and present dangers to be taken extremely seriously. We need to urgently invest in our social infrastructure as a nation. Even more important, we need to invest in ourselves. Not everyone is fortunate enough to enjoy the geographic or emotional proximity of our children in the silver years. But as I say time and again in



Dabboo Ratnani

these pages, no matter our age, we all have within us the skills to create our own network of support and succour; the capacity to strengthen ourselves physically and mentally; the power to learn and grow; and the ability to engage ourselves with the world around us. We must use these tools to make our life count.

Another way to do this is by signing on as an organ donor. That's the spirit behind Kokilaben Hospital's Organ Donation Drive in partnership with *The Times of India*, which aims to spread awareness about organ donations and dispel the myths associated with it. For instance, all major religions support organ donation (*see page 16*) and view it as an act of love and generosity. Indeed, we are all born with the ability to change someone's life—let's use it. It's time to come together, empower ourselves, and bring humanity and hope back to centre-stage, where they belong.

*Tina Ambani*

## A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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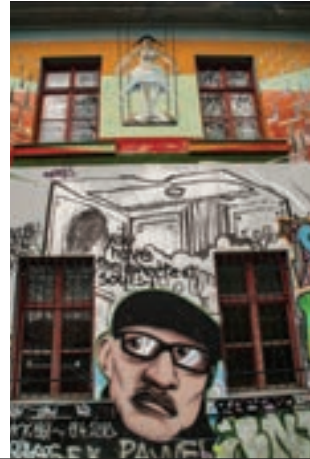
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Cover photograph: Haresh Patel

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





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# column one

When I got married over two decades ago, a kitchen neophyte, my trousseau included a cookbook or two. But they ended up gathering dust on the shelf thanks to Sanjeev Kapoor. It became something of a regular date: him, cooking yummy food with minimum effort and maximum élan on *Khana Khazana*, and me, glued to the TV, notebook in hand, writing furiously!

I clearly wasn't alone—Kapoor went on to become a phenomenon, wearing the entrepreneur's hat with the same savoir-faire as the chef's. "Cooking to me is what a canvas is to a painter," he says in our cover feature, going on to explain how "doing things differently" keeps him charged.

Indeed, energy, enthusiasm and reinvention are the differentiators between living and thriving. Another case in point is centenarian Begum Hamida Habibullah—the story of this Army wife turned educationist, social worker, politician and philanthropist is a remarkable one.

Elsewhere, we give you the lowdown on GST; introduce you to flautist Mala Chandrasekhar, who's following in the footsteps of her mother and aunt, the 'Sikkil Sisters'; walk down memory lane at Delhi's United Coffee House; and whisk you to Ljubljana, a mosaic where nature, history and art blend to dramatic effect.

Finally, to celebrate Grandparents' Day, we present 11 heart-warming accounts from grandchildren across India on what the gifts—and love—received from their grandparents mean to them. Have a story of your own? Write in and share your legacy of love.

—Arati Rajan Menon

The cover story of your August issue, "Fittest @ 55", was inspirational. I didn't know Mickey Mehta was 55 years old; he looks so young. Your story taught me that age is just a number and it is how we feel on the inside that matters. I guess, you could say, 'I got Mickeymized'. Please continue writing such wonderful stories.

**Jamshed Mann**  
Punjab

Many congratulations on your 13th anniversary. I loved your June issue and your timely 'environment' theme, a hot topic around the world. I especially liked the article "Clean Period" where a group of women are trying to make sustainable menstruation a reality. It is a unique and great concept given the increasing concerns about the chemical components that go into making industrial napkins. I am happy that you are highlighting such issues. Keep it up!

**Paras Chheda**  
Mumbai

I came across *Harmony-Celebrate Age* in the waiting room of a Mumbai hospital where I had come for my dialysis, all the way from Africa. I must say, I was intrigued enough to read through the entire magazine and I found it informative and definitive. All the best for your journey, Team Harmony!

**Ahmed Osman Adam**  
Via email

Growing up in the late '90s and early 2000s, I remember my mother longing for the music of her time while Channel V and MTV blared on television. These days, as we're bombarded with the likes of Justin Bieber and music



engineers behind elaborate consoles producing sounds that control crowds, I find myself longing for the music of my mother's time. She had a point. It was the golden age of rock. When I said this to a friend recently, she pointed out that old people always like to say that in the old days things were better off, but fail to notice that they birthed the next generation. And we, the members of Generation X, are in the process of birthing the iGeneration, or post-millennials, or Generation Z, whatever you want to call them. The cycle will go on. The music will change—it will keep fresh and current and be representative of its time. At least we can rest easy in the knowledge that the good stuff has been recorded and stored in the minds and hard drives of fans, from where it can be retrieved and introduced to generations down the line.

**Padma Gore**  
Bengaluru

## HITS OF THE MONTH

Our most-read stories in August 2017 on

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

1. The power of perseverance
2. The 'Descent'ant
3. Beauty and the best

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NEWS ● VIEWS ● PEOPLE ● RESEARCH ● TRENDS ● TIPS



ANALYSE THIS

## SLEEP & SURVIVAL

The survival instinct defines much of what we do—or don't—in our lives. And now it appears sleep is one of them. A fascinating study of the Hadza, a group of hunter-gatherers in northern Tanzania, by researchers at the University of Toronto reveals that the **natural variation in sleep patterns among the youth and silvers may be a means of assuring the survival of the community**. As the team writes in journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, it was extremely rare for there to be synchronous sleep among the Hadza; at least one person was either awake or sleeping lightly for 99.8 per cent of the sleep periods sampled. More interesting, the variation in sleep timing could be almost entirely accounted for by the mixture of ages in the group. This led them to conclude that sleep patterns could be an evolutionary mechanism of survival.

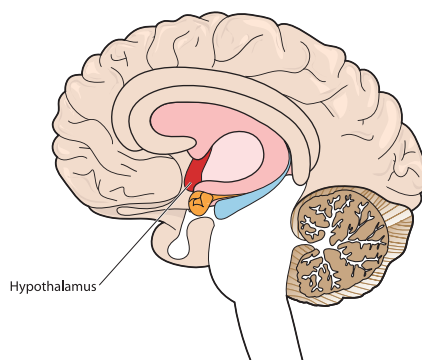


# Gut feeling

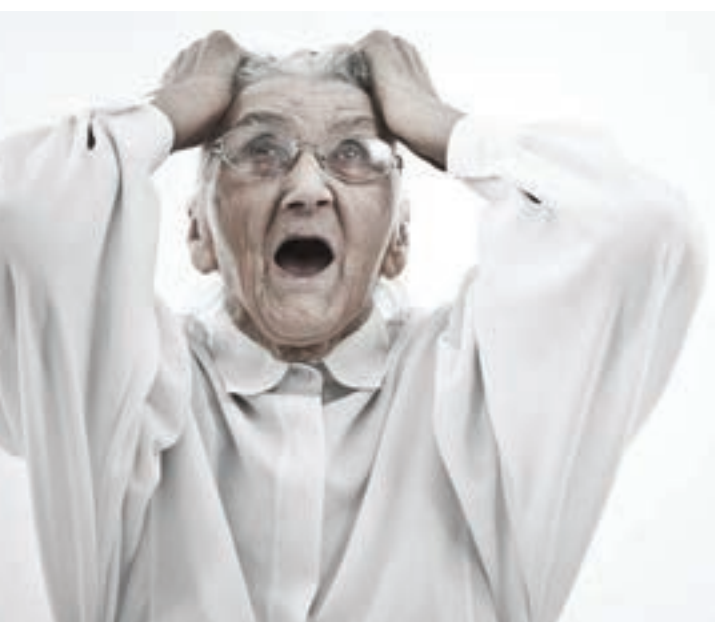
**T**he key to longevity could lie within us. Scientists from Baylor College of Medicine and the University of Texas Health Science Centre in the US suggest that **human gut bacteria could be used to fashion a successful anti-ageing pill** that can slow down tumour growth and the onset of Alzheimer's, and extend life. "The scientific community is increasingly aware that our body's interactions with the millions of microbes in our bodies, the microbiome, can influence many of our functions, such as cognitive and metabolic activities and ageing," team leader Dr Meng Wang says in a media release. "In this work, we investigated whether the genetic composition of the microbiome might also be important for longevity." In their study of the simple worm *C. Elegans* (which shares essential characteristics with human biology), the researchers found that while some individual bacterial genes had an adverse physiological effect, others contributed to better health and increased longevity. As they report in journal *Cell*, this opens up the possibility of designing preparations of bacteria or their compounds that could help slow down the ageing process.



Photographs by 123RF.com



**NO MAGIC POTIONS** Turns out the proverbial fountain of youth is not proverbial, after all. And—apologies to the brothers Grimm—credit for this discovery doesn't go to a wicked old witch with a magic potion and broom but scientists with beakers. According to a study led by Prof Dongsheng Cai from Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York, **the key to reversing ageing, or even preventing it, is stashed away in a pea-size bundle of neurons at the base of your brain called the hypothalamus.** This tiny gland not only controls your temperature, hunger, sleep, emotions and sex drive, it apparently also influences how long you live. The team says the number of neural stem cells in the hypothalamus decline or disrupt over time, which leads to accelerated ageing of the body's organs and metabolic processes. However, this disruption can be reversed by replenishing or implanting stem cells or the molecules they produce. The study was published in journal *Nature*.



## REJOICE, WORRY WARTS!

Criticised much for being fretful, anxious, fixated, a worry wart, whatever? You may just have the last laugh. A joint study by the University of Edinburgh and University College London argues that **higher levels of neuroticism may reduce the risk of death for people in fair or poor health.** According to the research, published in journal *Psychological Science* and derived from a longitudinal study of half-a-million people in the UK between the ages of 37 and 73, neuroticism makes people more vigilant about their health, thus providing a protective effect.

# SILVER SWAGGER

**THEY'RE SEXY**—and they know it! In a survey commissioned by global retail analyst Mintel, about **71 per cent of British men over 65 said they felt 'confident' about their body and face** compared to just over 50 per cent of men aged between 16 and 24, while nearly 80 per cent of all men surveyed deemed it acceptable to have a few wrinkles. "Today's older men are brimming with self-confidence," Roshida Khanom, associate director of beauty and personal care at Mintel, tells London newspaper *Daily Mail*. "Following role models such as Pierce Brosnan, Hugh Grant and Colin Firth, Britain's older men are adopting a relaxed attitude towards ageing with the majority agreeing that ageing is acceptable and that skin ageing is a natural process."



**S**ad but true—elder abuse shows no sign of diminishing. According to a new HelpAge India report titled *How India Treats its Elderly*, **nearly one in every two silvers faced abuse in public spaces across the country.** Even more surprising are the city-wise statistics. While Delhi ranked among the least abusive, with 23 per cent of silvers facing abuse, Bengaluru recorded the maximum abuse at 70 per cent, followed by 60 per cent in Hyderabad, 59 per cent in Guwahati, 52 per cent in Kolkata, 49 per cent in Chennai and 33 per cent in Mumbai.

## Village of inclusion

**T**aking a cue from the pioneering De Hogeweyk in the Netherlands, the suburb of Glenorchy in Hobart, Australia, will soon be home to **Korongee, 'a dementia village' that will recreate real-life experiences for people suffering from the illness.** As website *australianageingagenda.com.au* tells us, Korongee village, which is expected to be completed in mid-to-late 2019,

will have 15 six-bedroom homes set within a small town design featuring streets, a supermarket, cinema, café and gardens, where residents can wander freely within a safe and supported environment and participate in everyday activities. The houses will be staffed by casually dressed health professionals while residents will be matched by their backgrounds, experiences, interests and skills. The development is a partnership

between not-for-profit aged care provider Glenview, superannuation fund HESTA, social financing organisation Social Ventures Australia (SVA) and the Commonwealth Government. "It has been shown that residents at the De Hogeweyk dementia village live longer, eat better and take fewer medications and we hope to see similar transformative health benefits at Korongee," Lucy O'Flaherty, CEO of Glenview, tells the website. "The homes will be free of institutional routines with residents free to wake up and move about in their own time."

## RIDE EASY IN NAGPUR



The transport committee of Nagpur Municipal Corporation has announced that it will provide 50 per cent concession to people over 60 on city buses. Further, to increase frequency of service and enable connectivity in areas with narrow roads, the corporation will soon start plying 45 mini-buses in addition to its regular buses.

## THUMBS UP, TRIPURA



The Tripura government has announced an average 19.68 per cent pay hike for its employees and pensioners with effect from 1 April 2017. Benefits for pensioners will be effected by multiplying the basic pension or family pension by 2.25; the minimum pension has been increased from ₹ 3,120 to ₹ 7,020, while the maximum pension has been increased from the existing ₹ 38,500 to ₹ 105,720.

## Fast-tracked

The Income-Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) will give 'out-of-turn' hearings to all appeals filed by—or against—people over 80 years of age. Further, priority is expected to be given to hearings pertaining to senior citizens provided they have no income from a business or profession.



Photographs by 123RF.com

# Sum assured

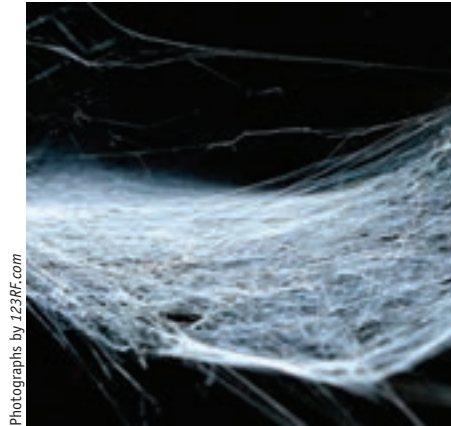
In late July, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley launched a senior citizens' pension scheme called the Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY), which promises an assured annual return of 8 per cent for 10 years. It is available till 3 May 2018 for Indian citizens over the age of 60. "Senior citizens want a no-risk, non-fluctuating investment," he told media at the launch. "They want a reasonable rate of return because not being gainfully employed at that age, they want security that a fixed income can bring them. This is a scheme announced by the prime minister that ensures a real return of 8.30 per cent; in today's world of reducing interest rates, it is a fairly respectable rate of return, particularly for senior citizens, and it is exempted from service tax or GST." Here are some highlights of the scheme:

- It is being sold by the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC).
- It provides for pension options of monthly, quarterly, half-yearly and yearly frequency, resulting in a return of around 8.3 per cent.
- If there is a shortfall between the actual return earned and the guaranteed return of 8 per cent, the Government will subsidise LIC for it.
- Premature withdrawal is possible if the money is required for the treatment of a terminal or critical illness of the policyholder or their spouse. In this case, 98 per cent of the amount invested will be refunded.
- On survival of the pensioner to the end of the policy term, the purchase price along with the final pension instalment shall be payable.
- You can avail a loan of up to 75 per cent of the purchase price after three years of the policy being in force. The interest on the loan can be paid from the pension instalments while the loan amount can be paid from the claim proceeds.
- You can have a minimum yearly purchase of ₹ 1.44 lakh and a maximum yearly purchase of ₹ 7.22 lakh, which will yield a minimum yearly pension of ₹ 12,000 and ₹ 60,000 respectively.



# Web of discovery

Creepiness aside, their webs may actually help unravel some of the mysteries of ageing. As website *hindustantimes.com* reports, scientists at Allahabad University are using **spiders as a model to see how ageing affects behaviour in organisms, including humans**. As spiders grow older, the webs they weave get progressively less geometric, more erratic and full of holes. According to the research team, led by Prof S I Rizvi, the protein content in spider web silk—a tough and elastic semi-crystalline material—decreases with age and is also affected by environmental factors as well as the diet of the spider. “The universality of degenerative changes that occur in spiders during ageing and its similarity with human ageing suggests that ageing is an evolutionary phenom-



Photographs by 123RF.com

enon,” he tells the site. “However, the effect of diet is also a contributing factor that cannot be overlooked. A clear understanding of events during ageing may help scientists devise an effective anti-ageing strategy.”

## A worm's life

A lifespan ranging from 100 to 200 years is pretty much the norm for this species, with some even surviving up to 300 years! Little wonder then, that **large tubeworms native to the Gulf of Mexico are being counted among the longest living animals in the world**. According to a new study in *The Science of Nature*, the species *Escarpia laminata* lives in cold seeps found between 1,000 m and 3,300 m deep on the ocean floor where they face very few external threats—the larger their size, the longer appears to be their lifespan. “At more than 250 years old, *Escarpia laminata* achieves a lifespan that exceeds other longevity records,” says lead author Alanna Durkin of Temple University in Philadelphia. “Given the uncertainty associated with estimating the ages of the longest individuals, there may be large *Escarpia laminata* tubeworms alive in nature that live even longer.”

## ALZHEIMER'S IN APES?

Humans may not be the only primates susceptible to Alzheimer's disease. A new American study has revealed that **aged chimpanzees can develop protein plaques and tangles in the brain, similar to those seen in early stage Alzheimer's**. However, it is still unclear whether the animals go on to develop dementia. “If we could identify the things that are similar and different in chimpanzees and humans, we can start to unlock why humans are so uniquely susceptible to this pathology,” study leader Mary Ann Raghanti, a biological anthropologist at Kent State University in Ohio, tells website *nature.com*. The study was published in journal *Neurobiology of Aging*.

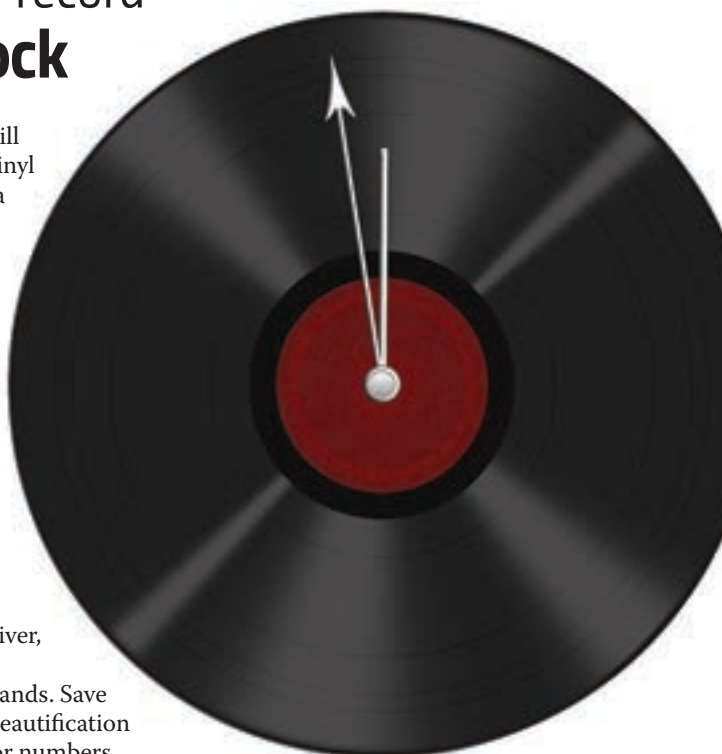




**Make the right moves.** We've told you before that tai chi can keep you flexible and balanced. And now, researchers at the University of Jaen in Spain have evidence that practising this ancient—and incredibly graceful—Chinese martial art regularly (one to three times a week) can reduce your risk of falling. According to the study, published in *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, tai chi reduces the risk of injurious falls among silvers by 50 per cent over the short term, and 28 per cent over the long term.

## Then: Vinyl record Now: Clock

**F**or this, you will require one vinyl record, glue, a screwdriver and a working clock. Start with sketching out a design on the vinyl; we preferred to keep it simple and classic. In case you want a cut-out pattern on your clock, glue two records together; one, the cut-out vinyl and the other as it is. Disassemble the clock using a screwdriver, separating the clock mechanism and the hands. Save the clock screws for beautification or as a replacement for numbers. Attach the clock mechanism to the back of your vinyl using the glue. Reattach the clock hands to the mechanism sticking out from the



centre of the vinyl. Your vinyl record clock is ready—time to hang up the masterpiece!



### RECYCLING FACTS

- Vinyl or PVC (polyvinyl chloride), also known as The Poison Plastic, is the most environmentally hazardous consumer material ever produced.
- PVC is used in a number of products, not just vinyl records. Your water pipes, house siding, computer, toys, shower curtains, hospital tubing, peanut butter jars, airplanes, pill bottles, packaging, cars, fibre-optics, etc, contain it.

### MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. **WANT A FUNKY VINYL BOWL? PREHEAT YOUR OVEN TO 185°C FOR 10 MINUTES (SET TIMER). PLACE A METAL BOWL UPSIDE DOWN ON A COOKIE SHEET AND HEAT AGAIN FOR FOUR MINUTES. PLACE YOUR VINYL CENTRED AND BALANCED ON TOP OF THE BOWL. MAKE SURE THE SIDE YOU WANT ON THE INSIDE OF THE BOWL IS FACING DOWN. AFTER A FEW MINUTES CHECK IF THE VINYL HAS STARTED TO DROOP OVER YOUR BOWL. CHECK IF IT IS FLEXIBLE ENOUGH FOR YOU TO SHAPE YOURSELF. IF NOT, PUT IT BACK A LITTLE LONGER. ONCE THE RECORD IS SHAPED AS YOU DESIRE, LET IT COOL DOWN. AND IT'S DONE!**
2. **IF YOU'RE REALLY GOOD WITH YOUR HANDS, TRY YOUR HAND AT MAKING A VINYL WINE RACK. USE A HEAT GUN, OR THE MICROWAVE METHOD EXPLAINED ABOVE, TO SHAPE FIVE VINYL RECORDS INTO A 'J' SHAPE. ROLLING THEM AROUND A WINE BOTTLE WILL HELP MAKE THE CURVE SMOOTHER. YOU CAN GET CREATIVE WITH HOW YOU GLUE THE Js TOGETHER—ALL IN A STRAIGHT LINE OR ABSTRACT. JUST MAKE SURE THE DESCENDING PART OF THE 'J' IS LEFT VACANT FOR YOUR WINE BOTTLES TO FIT IN.**



## COLORFY

**Available for:** iOS, Android

**What it does:** We told you about the goodness of colouring in our November 2016 issue—now there's an app for it. You can beautify your personal messages, take a photo and colour it in, draw and colour your own mandala, get inspired by other users' art and, of course, share your creations with the world.

**How it works:** Once the app is downloaded, it opens up to five tabs: 'Library', 'Create', 'Get Inspired', 'Get Notifications' and 'My Works'. 'Library' is the paid section of the app where sub-categories such as animal portraits, famous paintings, patterns, etc, are displayed. The next in sequence is 'Create'; this is where the fun starts for all users. Compose a message, draw into a photo or create a mandala, whatever your heart desires. When you are finished with the 'Create' section, move onto the 'Get Inspired' tab and share your work with the Colorfy community, and be alerted in the 'Get Notifications' tab when they like or comment. You can also share these creatives with friends via WhatsApp or other sharing apps. 'My Works' saves all your finished or unfinished works. Navigating through the app is seamless. And while filling the colours can be a little bothersome in tiny areas, the zoom function for enlarging the drawing comes in handy.

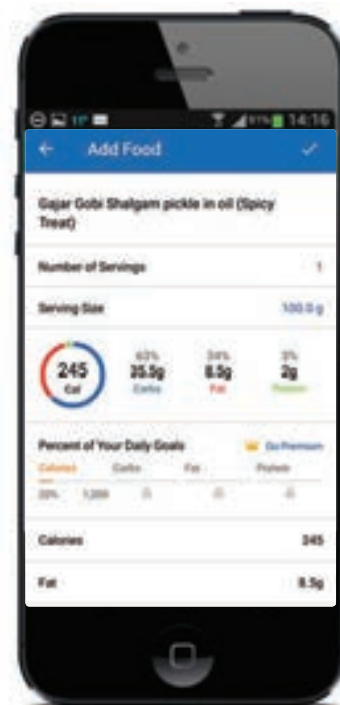
The Electronic Pain Assessment Tool (ePAT) is a mobile application that assesses and monitors pain in people who cannot communicate verbally. Developed by scientists from Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia, in partnership with nViso, a global leader in facial analytics, ePAT uses mobile camera and facial recognition technology to detect micro expressions indicative of pain. The app has met the regulatory requirements for use as a 'Class 1 medical device' in the Australian and European markets and will be available in Australia in the final quarter of 2017.

## MYFITNESSPAL

**Available for:** iOS, Android

**What it does:** This diet tracker and calorie counter tells you exactly what you are eating and how many calories it contains—a blessing for anybody trying to get in shape or lose those extra kilos. Easy to use and intuitive, this app remembers your diets and exercise regime, making the input of details much easier.

**How it works:** After installing the app, you need to sign up, either with email or Facebook. The app prompts you to add necessary information like whether to maintain, gain or lose your weight, your activity regimen, gender, height, weight, your weight goal and, last, the recommended weekly weight-loss goal. Then, the calorie counter sets up an intake limit. You can either type in the food consumed or, in case of packaged produce, scan the barcode. With every input, the app tells you the calories consumed and percentage of carbs, fats and proteins ingested, along with other useful information like cholesterol, sodium, potassium levels, etc. You can also add exercises to your 'Diary Entry', which it subtracts from the calorie counter as calories burnt. Over time, the app becomes fairly easy to use and the hassle of inputting food and exercise details is minimised as the app remembers past diets. At the end of the day, click 'Complete Diary' for a macro analysis of your day—it briefs you on any nutrient deficiency or health problems you may have depending on your food intake. The five-week weight projection is also interesting as it helps you analyse and re-evaluate your goals.





# Medical overload

**Y**our doctor may walk the talk while writing out your prescriptions but here's the thing: make sure he hasn't prescribed one too many. Research has shown that **too many medicines can slow your gait**, a sign your body is reacting adversely to the overload. In the Central Control of Mobility in Aging study conducted during 2011 and 2016 in the US on 482 people over the age of 65, 34 per cent of participants used five or more medicines and 10 per cent more than eight. All these patients were guilty of what experts call polypharmacy. As part of the study, they were assessed on physical health, mental well-being and mobility for over a year, to determine changes to their brains and central nervous system. The results showed that those in the polypharmacy group were more likely to walk slower and have had a fall within the last year than the others. The study was published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

Another study suggests that **a slow gait could be a sign of cognitive decline and an indication of dementia**. The study, conducted at the University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, zeroed in on 175 people aged between 70 and 79 with good health and normal mental functions. They were assessed over 14 years. The results showed that those who had developed a slow gait had shrinkage in the right hippocampus, the area in the brain associated with memory. The results were published in journal *Neurology*.



Photographs by 123RF.com

## ONE TIPPLE TOO MANY



There's many a slip between the glass and the lip—the **widely held belief that moderate consumption of alcohol is good for health may turn out to be a myth**. To investigate the link, scientists at the University of Oxford and University College, London, analysed data on 550 healthy men and women for 30 years. This data consisted of information about their weekly consumption of alcohol and measures of brain function and performance. The results showed that **moderate drinkers had three times the risk of tissue degeneration in the hippocampus**, the part of the brain that is important for memory. The higher the intake of alcohol, the greater the risk of hippocampal atrophy. The study was published in *The BMJ*.

In another study conducted at Kobe University Graduate School of Medicine, Japan, researchers found that **alcoholics were more susceptible to age-related illnesses like diabetes, cancer and dementia**. The research team studied a group of 255 people ranging from 41 to 85 years old from Kurihama National Hospital in Yokosuka, Japan, and found that alcoholic patients in the group exhibited shortened telomere length. Telomeres, the protein caps on the ends of chromosomes, are markers of ageing and overall health; shortened telomeres indicate ageing at a cellular level.



## HEART TO HEART

Folklore is replete with stories of half-human, half-animal creatures but here's one hybrid that's for real. **Scientists have used a rat's heart to create a miniature human heart**, a breakthrough that could enhance drug testing manifold. Using the '4-flow cannulation technique', they chemically stripped away the cells of the rodent's heart, leaving the heart lining intact, and introduced human cells into the matrix. The human cells cling to the matrix, replacing the lost rat cells, and eventually create a mini human heart. The study was conducted by a research team from Swedish pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca in Gothenburg, Sweden, and the findings were presented at the American Heart Association's Basic Cardiovascular Sciences 2017 Scientific Sessions held in Portland, Oregon, US.

## WOMEN AT RISK

At first, it may seem like a relief. But the truth is, **hitting menopause unusually early could put you at risk of Type 2 diabetes**. Researchers at the Erasmus University Medical Centre, Netherlands, analysed data collected from 3,969 post-menopausal women who were made to undergo medical examinations once every three to five years. A comparison between newly diagnosed and previously diagnosed cases of Type 2 diabetes confirmed that those who had an early onset of menopause—before the age of 40—were 3.7 times more likely to develop diabetes than the others. The culprits could be declining levels of oestrogen, weight gain and other side effects of menopause. The study was published in journal *Diabetologia*.



## MIND GAME

**Apps are all the rage today**, so why not one that prevents cognitive decline? Scientists at the University of Cambridge, UK, have designed a **brain training app called Game Show to boost episodic memory in people with mild cognitive impairment**.



Courtesy: Sahakian Lab, University of Cambridge

As part of the study, researchers divided 42 participants aged 45 and above into two groups: a cognitive training group that played the game for eight hours for four weeks, and the control group that just visited the clinic without playing the game. The results showed that those who played the game displayed a 40-per-cent improvement in memory as well as enhanced confidence and motivation. The findings were published in *The International Journal of Neuropsychopharmacology*.



## IQ FOR LIFE?

Nature seems to love brainy kids—the reward for them acing IQ tests appears to be a longer life! Researchers at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland used data from one of the longest-ever longitudinal studies, the Scottish Mental Survey of 1947, and found that **higher scores on childhood IQ tests directly correlate with a longer lifespan**. They studied a group of 33,536 men and 32,229 women born in 1936 who had taken childhood IQ tests. They compared the results with the records of death in the group over the next 68 years. The long-term study showed that those who exhibited higher childhood intelligence had a lower chance of dying before 80 years of age, and a 24-per-cent lower risk of dying from stroke; 25-per-cent lower risk of coronary artery disease; and 28-per-cent lower risk of dying from respiratory disease. The study was published in *The BMJ*.





Photographs by Haresh Patel

# An act of **FAITH**

One act of kindness can save someone's life.' This message set the tone for the 5th edition of the Organ Donation Drive by Mumbai-based Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital (KDAH) in association with *The Times of India*. As part of the initiative, the hospital hosted a seminar on 5 August, titled 'Spiritual and Scientific Views on Organ Donation,' which was attended by over 600 people, including about 250 silvers.

Organ donation is the ultimate service to mankind and, according to a recent survey, about 500,000 people in India need urgent organ transplants. Despite this dire need, myths and traditional mindsets prevent people from becoming organ donors. Thus, KDAH's campaign aims to banish misconceptions and spread awareness about the moral and ethical dimensions of organ donation. This seminar, which sought to examine whether religion permits organ donation, was a significant step in this direction. Apart from health experts, a panel of erudite philosophers, scholars and saints from different religions were present to challenge people's false perceptions of organ donation.

Rajyogini Kamlesh, director of the Santacruz branch of the Brahma Kumaris, began the discussion by addressing the charitable aspect of a human soul. "People say charity has religious implications but the biggest charity

is the charity of life," she pointed out. "After my death, if someone benefits from my organs, why not? There is hope for the one in need and if I can give someone hope, I am more alive, even in death. Some people think donation will prevent them from the path of liberation, which is not true! There's no spiritual hindrance to donation; it is permissible in Hindu religion." Taking over from her, Swami Shridurgananda, representative of the Ramakrishna Mission in Mumbai, said, "People pray to God and go to temples, but social life is impossible without selflessness. One of the most important lessons we learn is that those who are happiest are the ones who help others. It is selfless love and love for others that inspires us to such actions as organ donations."

For her part, Jain *sadhvi* Ridhimaji Maharaj, a graduate from Delhi University who attained *diksha* at the age of 12, told the audience, "Donation of any kind is the way to moksha. People do a lot for themselves but taking responsibility and understanding others' problems is the way to reach God. When it comes to donation, the Jain community says, if you have something donate it; and our body is what we have. One single life can give life to many. So let's get out of our old beliefs and move ahead."

Further, *yogacharya* Dr Surakshit Goswami laid emphasis upon keeping one's body healthy for organ donation. "The organs are given to you by God; you are merely a custo-



dian. So keep them healthy and pass them on to somebody else when your time has come.” He addressed the fear surrounding organ donation by narrating Maharishi Dadhichi’s story from the *Bhagavad-Gita*. “Dadhichi Rishi was the first donor; he donated his bones to help defeat Vrutasura. I hope this awareness campaign revolutionises that lost tradition. After death, the body gets burnt and is wasted. Isn’t it better to use it for somebody else’s happiness? Donating organs is a way of giving life to others.”

Meanwhile, Father Stephen Fernandes, a priest and professor of moral theology at St Pius College, Mumbai, assured Catholics that organ donation is a noble cause that gives hope to the hopeless. “The Church says that the body of the dead should be treated with respect,” he said. “There is a strong conviction about the resurrection of the body. Resurrection does not depend on the intactness of the body; it depends on the power in all things new. Organ donation is a genuine testimony of charity, a gift of gratitude, the path of responsibility.”

Further, Hannah Akiv Judah, representative of the Jewish community and a teacher with Hiranandani Foundation School for 17 years, explained how the term *tikkun olam*, meaning ‘repair the world’, is taught to every Jewish child. “All rabbis approve of organ donation and consider it a higher privilege. Earlier, there were doubts about how the body would be handled during donation but with technology scaling higher peaks, it is possible to keep the body alive till the transplant.” And Reshma Budhia, co-founder of Gift Your Organ Foundation, explained the process of registration and called people to take the pledge. “Righteousness protects the righteous; it engulfs the true impact of organ donation. Organ donation has a snowball effect; it saves not one life but many lives—physically, spiritually and emotionally.”

Also among the audience were donors and donees who shared their positive experiences of organ donation. Patient Rajesh Shah, who underwent a heart transplant just 15 days before the event, said “I suffered owing to my

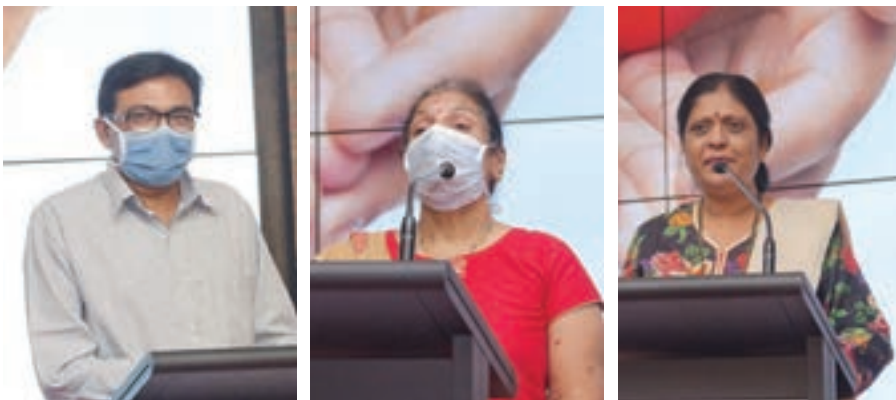
heart ailment. But the transplant gave me a new lease on life.” And Arnab Ghosh, a proud son of a donor, said, “It’s been a year since I lost my dad from a brain stroke and as per his wish, we donated his major organs. For us, he’s living through four different people even after his death.” Kidney donor Meenakshi Malode, 53, also narrated her story of donating her kidney to her sister-in-law who suffered kidney failure.

The awareness event concluded with an interactive session in which KDAH health experts Dr Nandkishore Kapadia, head, Adult Cardiac Surgery, and director, Heart and Lung Transplant Service; Dr Vinay Kumaran, consultant and head, Hepatobiliary Surgery

and Liver Transplant; and Dr Sanjay Pandey, consultant, Urology, Gender Reassignment and Renal Transplantation, addressed people’s fears and queries about organ donation.

The panel’s message to the audience to sign up, volunteer and spread the word was well-received. “Earlier, people suffered a lot because of health reasons,” said Karuna Kamath, 77. “But times have changed and more and more people are going in for organ donation. My health is good and I too want to sign up for organ donation and gift a life to someone.”

Indeed, over the past five years, KDAH’s concerted campaign has been bearing fruit, with about 120,000 people registering to date. It may be a drop in the ocean but every registration counts—and every life matters!



**Above: Patients and donors sharing their experiences**  
**Opposite page: The panel of speakers**

And Maria Khan, member of the Centre for Peace and Spirituality and a scholar of Islamic studies, reiterated that human life is considered inviolable in Islam. “The verse that ‘whoever saves human life is regarded as having saved all mankind’ is cited extensively in the *Quran* to justify, legitimise and encourage the act of organ donation. It is a unique way of honouring the sanctity of human life. It not only impacts the donee but the donor and is looked upon favourably in Islam.” Sheriar Nooreydzan, representative of the Bahai community, also said no greater service can be rendered to humanity than organ donation. “The Bahai scriptures approve and promote every activity that is legal and conducive to the physical and spiritual development of humanity and that includes organ donation. Let your heart burn with loving kindness to all. If we are human, we should be humane.”



# Stop the leak

India's first Nocturia and Enuresis Clinic was launched at KDAH on 27 July in Mumbai. Over 350 silvers associated with Harmony for Silvers Foundation participated in the inaugural-cum-awareness programme organised by the hospital's Department of Urology. Launching the clinic, Dr Sanjay Pandey, the hospital's head of Urology & Andrology, said, "Nocturia is a condition in which people suffer from excessive night-time urination and enuresis is involuntary bedwetting. Though the conditions are common across all age groups in men and women, it is under-reported and undertreated."

While nocturia is primarily observed in the senior citizen demographic, enuresis is seen mostly in toddlers and children and sometimes in the elderly. The prevalence of nocturia increases with age—60 per cent of patients suffering from nocturia and enuresis are from the 60-70 age bracket. "While the causes could include untreated diabetes, oestrogen deficiency and uncompensated heart disease, timely diagnosis and an integrated approach are the needs of the hour to treat the condition," added Dr Pandey, sharing snippets of his successful cases. This was followed by an interactive session with the audience, which was evidently enlightening—after the event, we heard silvers saying, "I thought it was natural for our age", and "I never realised it could be a symptom for some underlying disease."

*The Nocturia and Enuresis Clinic is open on all days, except Sundays; from 11 am to 2 pm. For appointments, you can call the Department of Urology, KDAH, at (022) 3099 9999*

## "NOCTURIA AND ENURESIS ARE COMPLETELY TREATABLE"

DR SANJAY PANDEY, HEAD, UROLOGY & ANDROLOGY, KDAH, ANSWERS SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS RELATED TO NIGHT-TIME URINATION IN SILVERS

### What are nocturia and enuresis?

Both are different conditions related to night-time urination. Nocturia is the need to wake up frequently in the night for urination. If the urine output at night is greater than 20 per cent of the daily total in the young and 33 per cent in the elderly, the condition is called nocturia. Enuresis or bedwetting is a condition in which people pass urine involuntarily while in deep sleep. This is owing to failed coordination between the brain and bladder.

### What are the causes?

**Nocturia** could be physiological, resulting from excessive intake of liquids such as water, beverages or alcohol at night. The prevalence of night-time urination increases with age in men and women owing to hormonal changes and an interplay of factors between kidney function, sleep pattern and medications. Other causes include untreated diabetes, reduced bladder capacity, oestrogen deficiency, primary polydipsia (excessive thirst) and uncompensated heart disease.

**Enuresis** could be a consequence of a smaller bladder, inability to recognise a full bladder, hormonal imbalance, stress, urinary tract infection, sleep apnoea, untreated diabetes or chronic constipation.

### How do these conditions affect the elderly?

Interruption of sleep at night resulting from excessive urination leads to insomnia, daytime sleepiness, symptoms of depression, cognitive dysfunction and reduced sense of well-being and quality of life. Enuresis or unintentional bedwetting causes social embarrassment, takes a toll on confidence and affects the overall personality of the person.

### Is nocturia a marker of any other phenomenon?

Nocturia could be age-related in the elderly or part of men's diseases like benign prostate hypertrophy. Bladder stones and other lower urinary tract diseases could be picked up incidentally.

### Are the conditions treatable?

The conditions are completely treatable. Early diagnosis and continuous management hold the key to speedy recovery. The line of treatment involves an integrated approach including counselling, medicines and lifestyle changes.

**Narendra Modi****Michael Douglas**

## BIRTHDAYS

American actor and filmmaker **Michael Keaton** turns 66 on 5 September.

Prime Minister of India **Narendra Damodardas Modi** turns 67 on 17 September.

Italian actor and singer **Sophia Loren** turns 83 on 20 September.

Actor and producer **Michael Douglas** turns 73 on 25 September.

Economist and former prime minister **Manmohan Singh** turns 85 on 26 September.

## IN PASSING

Space scientist and former ISRO chief **Prof Udipi Ramachandra Rao** passed away on 24 July. He was 85.

Indian scientist, academician and Padma Vibhushan **Prof Yash Pal Singh**, known for his study of cosmic rays, died on 25 July in Noida. He was 90.

Poet and novelist **Eunice de Souza** passed away on 29 July in Mumbai. She was 76.

Freedom fighter **Vidyadhar Guruji** passed away following a heart attack on 29 July in Kalaburagi. He was 105.

Pulitzer-winning American playwright, actor and screenwriter **Sam Shepard** died on 30 July in Kentucky. He was 73.

Founder of the Rajasthan Ex-Servicemen League **Lt Col Sumer Singh**, MBE, who was decorated for his service in World War II, passed away on 10 August in Jaipur. He was 101.

Veteran humanist photographer **S Paul** passed away following an illness on 17 August in New Delhi. He was 88.

## MILESTONES

- Former union minister **Ashwani Kumar**, 65, was conferred with the 'Order of the Rising Sun' by the Japanese government in July 2017 for his contribution to fostering Japan-India ties.
- Veteran theatre actor **Giribabu** received the Jandhyala Memorial Award and senior stage artist **Saroja** received the Radha Kumari Memorial Award at the 22nd Sumadhura Kala Niketan's comedy playlets competition held on 6 August in Vijayawada.

## OVERHEARD

"Every breath opens up a new possibility. I love getting older. My dad is still alive at 95. His mind is very clear and, physically, he's a little slower but he's still moving. I aspire to that sort of longevity. Clearly I'm not as physically flexible or strong as I was when I was a kid, but I think I am mentally flexible."

—American actor  
**Richard Gere**, 68, in  
[www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)



Photographs by 123RF.com



## 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.

### LAW OF LIFE

When I look back on my life, I realise it has come full circle. I have worked in the legal field throughout my career; and if I broke new ground while working for large organisations, I am continuing to do so at the age of 70.

But, first, let me rewind. I was born into a humble family in Calcutta and had a burning desire to turn the financial status of my family around. I wanted to become a doctor but my parents could not afford medical school. One day, my father took me to meet a solicitor friend of his, who advised me to take up law instead. I enrolled as an 'article clerk' while studying law. Back then, it took three years to get a law degree and an additional five years to upgrade to 'solicitor'. I pursued both degrees simultaneously, thus reducing my education by two years.

I moved to Bombay for better career prospects and, in less than a month, I was appointed law officer with the Industrial Finance Corporation of India. I worked there for three years before I joined BNP Paribas, then called Banque Nationale de Paris, where I set up the legal department. Sixteen years later, in 1990, I retired as head of the legal and secretarial department.

Determined to continue working after retirement, I seized the opportunity of a second innings by becoming legal manager with Bombay Hospital. Being the first to establish a legal department in this hospital, I took care of medico-legal cases on behalf of the hospital as well as cases pertaining to medical negligence and kidney-related transplants.

In India, a notary merely authenticates documents but in Western countries, they are regarded as judges—they preside over complicated matters, sometimes even in conflicts between two countries. And, thus, it was a very proud moment when, as 'Notary Public of Maharashtra Government' as well as a member and former president of the International Notary of India (based in Ahmedabad), I was selected by the president of the International Notary



Courtesy: Sidheswar De

**De, seen here with wife Pratima, has made great strides as a notary**

Association of France to represent India at the Vietnamese Notary Conference at Ho Chi Minh City in 2014. It was a thrilling experience to address representatives of 25 countries on 'Land Registering Systems in India', a system the Vietnamese government wanted to adopt. After my talk, the governor of Ho Chi Minh City invited my wife and me to a special dinner at his residence!

This exposure opened new arenas of growth for me, past the age of 70. In October 2016, I represented India at the 28th World Congress of Notaries at the Paris Conference. I was also the first Indian to contribute to *Revista Internacional Del Notariado*, a European magazine that publishes views of legal experts from across the world. I am now looking forward to representing India at the International Affairs of the Indonesian Notary Association, to be held in Bali, Indonesia.

Despite all these activities, I continue to serve as senior general manager (legal) with Bombay Hospital. It's almost as if the universe has conspired to allow me to serve a medical institution, if not as a doctor then in a legal capacity. I am often reminded of Swami Vivekananda's words, "I have so many expectations and wants but it is He who knows what I need."

—Sidheswar De, Mumbai

## MAN AND MACHINE

I was commissioned in the Indian Air Force when I was barely 22 years old. While the other fighter jocks were happy counting the number of sorties they had done for the day, I would spend time with the airmen while they worked on the engines of the aircraft. For me, that was the next best thing after flying—how does the machine work? Whenever there was an aircraft crash, I would take official permission to check and salvage the components, which I knew could be recycled or reused.

I flew for 27 years before I retired in 1993, at the age of 50, and returned to settle in Hyderabad. During that time, I forayed from fighter flying to chopper flying, simply out of curiosity—I wanted to learn how a rotary wing aircraft worked and what the difference was between fighters and choppers.

It was this curiosity about ‘how things work’ that led me to experiment with converting regular petrol-car engines into engines that could run on gas—your regular LPG cylinder. My first experiment was on my own car, a Premier Padmini. I was extremely cautious and took the help and guidance of Ahmedabad-based company Auto

**Rao spends retirement tinkering with anything that needs fixing**

Gas Consultants, which was manufacturing kits for the conversion.

Switching to LPG was cheaper and cleaner, and a few friends offered me their cars for conversion. By the time I retired, I had already converted around 50 cars for friends, mostly within the IAF fraternity, without charging them any money. My reward came when they appreciated my work.

After retirement, I realised I would need to earn some money as I had a family to raise. Moreover, our son and daughter were still studying. I knew I would have to get some kind of certification and training before I could charge people for what I knew how to do so well. So I went completely professional—I attended a refresher course and set up a workshop and started taking on paying customers. I extended the roof of my home in Begumpet, Hyderabad, and that became my workshop.

Over the next 12 years, I worked on at least 800 cars. In 2006, we had to move out and I had to shut down my workshop. It was just as well, as newer models were coming with factory-fitted gas kits and the Government was clamping down on private entrepreneurs like me, who were doing the conversions.

After we moved, I tried to dispose of my workshop equipment but I found no takers. So I used it to fix wire mesh doors and lights in the house, rework the electrical lines for the inverter, make an emergency light for the kitchen from lithium batteries, and the like. I also repair electrical gadgets for friends. My latest project is learning how to weld. In my tiny workshop, I am trying to replicate a Bell’s sander in wood. It is a metal sanding machine used to remove burrs, etc, on wood and metal.

I realise that if we look around, we can find endless things to do, repair and alter to suit our own requirements. All we need is the confidence to do it ourselves. Without an education in engineering, I feel I have done well—I have filled my days with something worthwhile to do. If it is not something at home, it is something for neighbours and friends.

My wife Leena was quite shaken when I cut my finger on the circular wood cutter, which has a zigzag blade. After taking care of the wound, she kept mumbling, “How do you manage to do these things?” I was hoping that by now she would have got used to my doing “these things”, but then her anxiety is understandable. Yet, she never stops me from doing them either!

—Wg Cdr (ret'd) D N G 'Pinky' Rao, Secunderabad



Shyamola Khanna



Haresh Patel

# Armed for business

**KARAN JASWAL, 55, MUMBAI**

**T**he sheer glory and glamour of the Olive Greens motivated me, a third-generation soldier, to join the Army. Thus I enlisted, brimming with enthusiasm, in 1984.

My journey in the Services took me across the length and breadth of our country and included a life-changing tour of duty in the Kashmir Valley, fighting militancy. But apart from teaching me survival skills, the Army also gave me invaluable leadership training that held me in good stead when I took voluntary retirement in 2006 at the age of 44.

When the time came for me to bid adieu to the Army, I left with a postgraduate diploma in business administra-

tion from the Management Development Institute in Gurgaon. I was preparing myself to step into the corporate world. The truth is, with a family of four to raise, I had to earn a living.

I landed a job with one of India's biggest private banks in Mumbai, and was straightaway designated as head of operations of a key financial product. I performed well and passed through a variety of operations and risk-management departments. My superiors assigned me complex domains and I was surprised at the ease with which I could handle all my assignments. I am currently head of internal audit at one of the group companies of the same bank where I started my corporate journey.



# DESIGNER DREAMS

*Experts answer your queries and concerns on jobs after retirement*

"The age-old principles of war and peace, in management and operations, have been my cornerstones in my corporate journey. Not only have I achieved success and satisfaction, I also gain respect when people discover that I was a combat soldier"

The relationship between the business world and the military is long and rich. Ambitious executives have long studied Chinese general and military strategist Sun Tzu for tips on besting their competition. And plenty of former soldiers, such as Ross Perot and Fred Smith at FedEx, have had great success as entrepreneurs and CEOs. My successful journey, without a doubt, is attributable to the three basic maxims that have helped me make the transition from the business of war to the war in business.

**'The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in war'** (former American general and war veteran Norman Schwarzkopf): As I landed senior positions, I started to spend extra hours every morning at the office, learning. I adopted each and every member of my team as my mentor and expert and sought to learn their job; in fact, I even partly executed it to know it intimately. I realised that when they became my mentors, not only did they feel elated, they also discovered their own skills as leaders.

**'Know your job, know your men'** (American businessman and author Lee Iacocca): Knowledge of my job revealed to me the hidden skills of my team. There have been men and women in my teams from different parts of the country, of varied competencies, skills and qualifications. I got to know each one closely, their strengths and weaknesses, and all of us worked together to highlight our strengths and make up for our weaknesses.

**'Morale is the biggest battle-winning factor'** (former American general and statesman George Catlett Marshall): My team and I found success because of the application of the first two maxims. The team's morale got a tremendous boost and we performed better with each passing day.

As I complete 11 years in the organisation, I am sure that nothing but my grooming in the magnificent Army held me in good stead. The age-old, time-tested principles of war and peace, in management and operations, have been my cornerstones in my corporate journey. Not only have I achieved success and satisfaction, I also gain immense respect when people discover that I was a combat soldier. That is the charisma of our great Armed Forces.

**I am a 73 year-old writer and editor from Chandigarh. I am at an age where most people retire to writing after living an eventful life. On the other hand, I want to retire from writing and start my eventful life! I have a postgraduate diploma in fashion design. Indeed, designing has always been a passion. Even while working for magazines and publishing houses, I continued designing on paper and have over 70 books filled with my original sketches. I now picture myself running my own boutique. How I can go forward with this dream?**

To start your own boutique is a commendable idea—and what better place to start than Chandigarh, a fashion-forward city!

However, it is expensive to set up shop. The rent is outrageous and buying your own shop can make a huge dent in your savings that can be better spent in acquiring quality material for your clothes. It would be more cost-effective to set up shop in your garage or any other vacant space. There will be some necessary permissions required, such as a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the building for usage of space for commercial activities, licenses from the local municipal corporation, and a written letter to the local police station informing them, among others.

While setting up shop, start marketing your brand digitally. I am assuming you would have already tried your hand with a few tailor masters and got some garments ready. Start with Instagram and focus on marketing your style and yourself. Then, move onto Pinterest with your designs and ideas; go further to tumblr, Behance and Facebook. Word of mouth is also an efficient marketing technique but it takes a while to yield results.

The advantage is that you already have a bank of designs to draw from. As they were designed with no commercial intention but only to quench your artistic thirst, there is sure to be something pure about them that will definitely appeal to a lot of people. I wish you all the best!

**—Afshan Humayun is an SNDT University graduate who runs a fashion boutique in Santacruz, Mumbai**



IT'S NEVER 2 LATE BY JACK YORK

# Walking the talk

In her remarkable journey from Gujarat to Arizona, Bhakti Gosalia has made a mark in senior care with her magic and wisdom

I've been given a lot of leeway as I write these pieces for *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, so every once in a while I'll introduce some odd phrases and concepts from the US and we'll see how they translate. Today's phrase is a saying that may or may not be relevant in India—but it's certainly relevant with the person featured here. The catchphrase is 'Do you walk the talk?' And a person who lives that every day is Bhakti Gosalia, a remarkable woman raised in Gujarat who spreads her magic and wisdom in Arizona, the south-western part of the United States.

The phrase 'walking the talk' is actually a simple concept. People often talk about who they are, what they do, what impact they have. However, at least in the US, often times the reality of how they present themselves is in stark contrast to how they truly act. If you walk the talk, it simply means your actions match your words. Bhakti's do.

Bhakti has plenty to say about healthcare, compassionate care, making the residents she serves feel at home in her community. She works as the executive director at Grandview Terrace, a community in the Sun Health family, close to Phoenix, Arizona. She has her own sense of gravitas. She looks you in the eye when you talk to her, she listens; she is respectful of every person she interacts with. When she talks to an elder in a wheelchair, she bends over to look at them from their level. Her passion runs deep; you can see it in her eyes when she talks to you about ageing, about culture, about dementia, about motivation.

Bhakti's own journey to the US is also remarkable; she was born, raised and educated in India. Her parents are from the state of Gujarat where she was born. Soon after her birth, her parents chose to move to Mumbai to provide advanced educational opportunities for her and her siblings. She grew up in Mumbai and spent summer vacations camping in Gujarat on fields owned by her maternal grandma where she enjoyed fresh tropical fruits and vegetables!



Photographs courtesy: Bhakti Gosalia



She immigrated to the US after earning her first master's degree in social work in 1985. She moved to Arizona in 1987 to be with her family who had moved here from India a few years before. Her upbringing had a dramatic impact on her journey. "The

Indian culture is very respectful of our elders and children, as a rule, expect and plan to be actively involved with their parents as they age; so, a career in senior care is a natural fit for me," elaborates Bhakti. "My first job was in the acute care setting at a Sun Health hospital that specialised in geriatric care. This social work position afforded the opportunity to interact daily with geriatric patients and the acute care setting afforded me the opportunity to envision changes that could have a dramatic impact toward a different outcome for our patients."

Later, she earned her second master's degree in health services administration. This led to new opportunities to venture into post-acute care as the administrator at the

hospital's rehab facility. Her background in social work gave her the empathy, compassion and drive to help older adults while her administrative background gave her the skill set to navigate the constantly evolving regulatory requirements.

Bhakti has always worked from her heart and her work has earned plenty of accolades. Her community won the Environmental Design Award for their memory support suites at the 2015 LeadingAge AZ Annual Conference. That same year she was presented with the LeadingAge AZ Award of Honour. In 2016, they won the Best Practice Award from LeadingAge AZ and she was able to share these best practices in her presentation on the topic, 'Be the Difference by Building Relationships in Memory Support'. She also was recently selected as a LeadingAge academy fellow.

These accolades are well deserved of course. But in my opinion, what is remarkable about Bhakti is the sense you get when you walk into her community. That's where the 'walk the talk' comes into play. She knows the names of all the residents, all the staff; she cares about them, asks questions about their lives. If she sees a scrap of paper on the floor, she will pick it up; if she sees a door open that is not supposed to be, she will close it; if she sees a resident is distressed in the hallway, she will stop and talk to that person. I have seen this in person whenever I visit her—it's remarkable. You can't fake it.

What's more, though she now lives thousands of miles from India, the magical country stays in her heart and spirit. There are things she misses, such as her favourite dish, dosa. She misses eating authentic regional Indian cuisine in some of her favourite cities like Mumbai. She stays immersed in Indian culture in Arizona. She grows curry leaves, moringa, cilantro and mint in her backyard garden so she can enjoy these authentic flavours in her home cooking. Besides cooking, she finds other ways to stay connected to her roots. As she explains, "There is a thriving Indian culture in Arizona that revolves around our worship centres. We gather weekly for worship and community events. In many ways, it feels like India—just a little hotter! I feel I have truly been blessed to fully experience the best of both worlds!"

Bhakti has plenty to say about compassionate care, making the residents she serves feel at home in her community. Her passion runs deep; you can see it in her eyes when she talks to you about ageing

From an ageing standpoint, she draws insightful distinctions between her current life in the US and her upbringing in India. "Life in the US has afforded me the opportunity to return to school and earn my second master's degree," she shares. "Coupling my formal education with work experience, I was able to discover my passion—working with seniors." She continues, drawing out the contrasts between the countries: "Ageism is still alive and well in the US. Many say it is the last socially acceptable form of discrimination. I think in India, we still value our elderly and our culture encourages us to seek their wisdom and advice. However, the US has developed a sophisticated infrastructure of supportive services and senior housing services to provide support at each transition in care, from independent living to assisted living to skilled or memory support services; in

effect, inventing the wheel. In India, at least until recently, it was common for multiple generations to dwell together. There seems to be a shift in Indian culture to transition to single-family lifestyles. This move will displace a large number of seniors without the needed infrastructure for a senior housing model and transitional supportive care services in place. India will be playing catch up for the next couple of decades, but this may afford the opportunity to 'invent a better wheel'."

Through all of her sophisticated accomplishments in healthcare, Bhakti's greatest accomplishments, as she sees them, transcend culture. She is most pleased with her life as it revolves around her family, friends, and spiritual pursuits.

Thank you, Bhakti, for the work you do. You make our country here in the US a bit more compassionate, a bit more engaged, a bit more relevant. You do it with style, dignity and class. You have been able to make your mark in two different countries and cultures, never stopping to pat yourself on the back for the great work you do. So we'll do it for you in these words: Take a second, slow down just for a few minutes, and give yourself a much deserved moment of reflection. You have made a difference not just in one culture but two; and as you are humbly proud to convey, you think your best work is yet to come. A lot of people from both sides of the planet can't wait to see it happen.

*York is co-founder of It's Never 2 Late<sup>®</sup> (iN2L), an American company dedicated to helping older adults realise the full benefits of today's technology*





YOGA RX BY SHAMEEM AKTHAR

# Strap these on!

Using ankle weights with your yoga practice can increase stamina and muscle tone



Anantasana

Photographs by Haresh Patel

Sand bags can be a useful yoga accessory to increase stamina and muscle tone. Instead of these, however, we can use ankle weights. I have a few sand bags but filling them up with sand is tiresome. This modern-day substitute is easier—and you don't have to worry if you have put the right amount of sand in each bag!

Ankle weights come with Velcro fittings, so they strap on rather neatly. If you are not used to intense activity, you may want to avoid them. But if you buy a smaller weight—say half or 1 kg—these are negotiable. Later on, depending on your ability you can increase the weight. But as even a 1-kg weight on either ankle can be challenging, phase their use over several weeks.

Initially, you may want to start with simple leg raises. If you have lower back issues, you can either fold the other leg or keep a cushion at the back to protect the spine. Later on, you can use the weights in variations of the cat stretch (*marjariasana*) or tiger pose (*vyagrasana*). The

latter can be rather intense. You can up the ante by doing many of the leg variations, but these can be very intense. You can also use wrist weights (or strap your ankle weights at the wrists) for arm poses, like the seated mountain pose (*parvatasana*) and shoulder rolls (*skandachakrasana*). The latter has many variations where these work rather well.

The benefits of using these weights are many—this is low-grade strength training and, as any doctor will advise you, it is the best way to build bone stamina. You get faster toning of muscles and add to the aesthetics of the body in a very short time. It builds your core because of the overall challenge it provides. Interestingly, because of the challenge involved, it makes advanced poses like the crow (*kakasana*) and headstand (*sirsasana*) easier to negotiate by teaching the body to resist gravity. That said; you should avoid weights if you are new to exercise, have severe joint pains or are prone to easy fatigue. Otherwise, the intensity of practice through their use can be exhilarating and positively addictive.

## KREEDA YOGA

### *Urdhva hastena palayanam* (race with lifted arms)

The participants stand in a row with raised hands. When the whistle is blown, they run with their hands raised till they reach the finish line. The first to reach is the winner. Depending on the ability of the participants, it can be speed running or speed walking. Our arms offer us a sense of balance—lifting them up while moving is challenging as it confuses the body. This game cultivates speed, stamina and arm strength.

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## YOGIC MOVES

### Tiger pose (*vyagrasana*)



Wear ankle weights and go on your fours. Keep your palms under your shoulders, spine neutral. Look ahead. Fold your right leg at the knee, throwing the heel towards the head. Inhale; exhaling, draw the knee down, simultaneously lowering the head to either reach or attempt to reach the forehead to the knee. Inhale; lift the head back, while raising the folded leg back up. This is one round. Initially, do five rounds. Rest. Repeat

for the other leg. You can increase the number of each set to 10 after a few weeks.

**Benefits:** The benefits of this pose include improved immunity, better thyroid health, balanced metabolism and spinal tone. Additionally, owing to the weights, the hips and legs get very toned. As this is a physically challenging pose, mental and physical stamina is built up.

*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)*



# Magnificent millets

High in fibre, these ancient super crops are a powerhouse of nutrients

We're lucky to belong to a country that has a variety of millets and need not depend on wheat and rice as our only source of grain. Millets are one of the oldest foods known to humans and possibly the first cereal grain to be used for domestic purposes. In India, grains vary from season to season as food is classified as heat-forming or cooling. In fact, ours is probably one of the only cuisines in the world that uses so many millets in various forms, changing from region to region. In this column, we will tell you more about the different types of millets along with their benefits and nutritive value for silvers. Remember, all the grains mentioned below are gluten-free!



Photographs by 123RF.com

## Bajra (pearl millet)

A wonder grain for seniors, bajra is usually consumed when the temperature drops. Indeed, the best season to eat it is winter as it is grown at the end of the monsoon. This crop needs light rainfall and bright sunlight; it is harvested thereafter in the beginning of winter. Along with its natural sweet taste, it produces warmth in the body and keeps you satiated for a long time, thus making it an ideal choice of grain. Its high Vitamin B6 content keeps away pain in the nerves while

the magnesium content works as a muscle relaxant and the potassium keeps your blood pressure low. *Bajre ki roti*, paired with *baingan ka bharta*, is a staple food in Gujarat during the winter months. With bajra, you can also make delicious savoury porridge and *thepla* with fenugreek that can replace your rotis and be eaten at breakfast instead of bread or parathas. Bajra rotis taste delicious with ghee, white butter (if you want to indulge!) and garlic chutney.

## BAJRA PORRIDGE

### Ingredients

- Bajra seeds: 1 cup; coarsely ground
- Mixed vegetables (capsicum, tomato, beans, etc): 1 cup; chopped
- Carom seeds (*ajwain*): 1 tsp
- Asafoetida (*hing*): ¼ tsp
- Neem leaves: 4-5
- Turmeric powder: ½ tsp
- Green chilli paste: to taste
- Salt to taste
- Water to cook
- Oil: 1 tsp

### Method

Heat oil in a pan. Add *ajwain*, *hing* and neem leaves to it. Sauté till they crackle. Add the bajra seeds and roast for a few minutes. Add water, turmeric powder, green chilli paste and salt. When half-cooked, add the vegetables. Once cooked well, take it off the flame. Garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot.





### Rajgira (amaranth)

The world is going gaga over this grain, which is now being called a 21st-century super food. In India, though, *rajgira* has been synonymous with the fasting season since ancient times. Packed with healthy nutrients, this versatile food can be made into pastas, breads, porridges and chapattis. The flour is made from *rajgira* seeds that are rich in calcium, magnesium, folate, potassium, phosphorous and vitamins A, C and

E. It's a good source of protein; a *rajgira* roti is a complete meal when combined with a vegetable and buttermilk. *Rajgira* controls blood sugar and insulin levels, keeping hunger at bay and preventing the development of Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. It also helps reduce bad cholesterol and prevents osteoporosis. So silvers, don't just think of it as a food for fasting; incorporate it regularly in your diet!

### RAJGIRA KADHI

#### Ingredients

- Rajgira flour: ¼ cup
- Yoghurt: 1½ cups
- Rock salt to taste
- Ghee: 2 tsp
- Curry leaves: 4-5
- Cumin seeds (*jeera*): 1 tsp
- Ginger: 1 tsp; grated
- Green chillies: 3; sliced

#### Method

Combine the *rajgira* flour, yoghurt and rock salt in a deep bowl and whisk together. Add 2 cups of water and mix well. Keep aside. Heat ghee in a pan and add the cumin seeds. When they crackle, add ginger, curry leaves and green chillies and sauté on medium flame for a few seconds. Then, add to the flour and yoghurt mixture. Mix well and cook the mixture on medium flame for 7 minutes, while stirring continuously. Lower the flame and cook for 2-3 minutes more, while stirring occasionally. Serve hot with *sama* rice.

### Sama (barnyard millet)

Also known also as *verghu*, *vari* or *moriya* in different parts of India, *sama* has a very high fibre content and around 11 per cent protein; its nutritional value has been found to be slightly better than other small millets. It helps keep diabetes under check, controls obesity, helps heal wounds and has a tranquilising effect. The perfect substitute for rice (you can eat it every day), it keeps you satiated longer like all other millets. Make it into a one-pot meal by adding a water-based vegetable such as bottle gourd, after grating and lightly sautéing it with ghee and cumin seeds.



### SAMA RICE

#### Ingredients

- Sama rice: 1 cup
- White gourd: 250 gm
- Hot water: 2 cups
- Cumin seeds: ½ tsp
- Green chilli: 1; chopped
- Ginger paste: 1 tsp

- Fresh coconut (optional): 2 tbsp; grated
- Coriander leaves: 2 tbsp; chopped
- Cow's ghee: ½ tbsp
- Rock salt to taste

#### Method

Dry-roast the *sama* rice till it turns light brown. Heat ghee in a pan; add

cumin seeds, green chilli, ginger paste and grated coconut. Saute for a minute. Add white gourd and cook for 5 minutes. Add *sama* rice and rock salt and mix well. Add hot water and mix again. Cover with a lid and lower the flame. Cook till the water gets absorbed and the rice becomes soft. Garnish with coriander and serve.



## Jowar (sorghum)

Jowar, the second most popular crop in India, helps maintain a good heart and healthy blood sugar levels. It is easy to digest and thus very comfortable for seniors to consume. Jowar contains nearly 47 per cent of the required daily intake of iron for women and over 100 per cent of the RDA (recommended dietary allowance) for men, making it ideal for silvers. It is an ideal grain to be had during the silver years when the iron content tends to reduce. Further, each cup/serving of jowar provides

about 78 per cent of the daily intake of phosphorus for adults, which is essential to support the growth and maintenance of bones. Eating thiamine-rich foods like jowar also lowers your risk of neurodegenerative problems such as Alzheimer's disease and eye problems like cataract. Each cup/serving of jowar provides men with 38 per cent and women with 41 per cent of their recommended daily intake of thiamine. What's more, jowar *bhakri* are yummy to eat—hot or cold!

## JOWAR ROTI

### Ingredients

- Jowar flour: 100 gm
- Water: 100 ml
- Chilli paste: ½ tsp
- Coriander: ½ cup; chopped
- Salt to taste

### Method

Take water in a vessel and heat on medium flame. As it starts boiling, add the jowar flour, chilli paste and coriander leaves and leave it for 2-3 minutes. Do not stir. Take off the flame. Stir with a wooden spoon so lumps are not formed. After it is mixed well, cool for five minutes and transfer onto a flat plate. Knead well. Roll the dough into rotis and cook them on a flat griddle, using ghee if desired.

## Nachani/ragi (finger millet)

The best way to keep your bones strong is to eat this wonderful millet in any form. In addition to being an excellent source of calcium, *nachani* has multiple health benefits. The fibre content reduces cholesterol and blood sugar. Being a good source of iron, it combats anaemia. And being a good source of protein, it helps in muscle mass formation. *Nachani* porridge along with *bhakri* is a common food in Southern India and Maharashtra—it's worth including in your diet no matter which part of India you live in.

## NACHANI KHICHU

### Ingredients

- *Nachani* flour: ¾ cup
- Low-fat yoghurt: 1½ tbsp
- Cumin seeds: 1 tsp
- Ginger-chilli paste: 2 tsp
- Coriander leaves: ½ cup; chopped
- Asafoetida (*hing*): ¼ tsp
- Oil: 1 tsp
- Salt to taste
- Lemon juice to taste

### Method

Beat the yoghurt in 1½ cup water. Add ginger-chilli paste, *hing*, salt and cumin seeds. Heat this mixture on a medium flame for 3-5 minutes. As it starts boiling, add the *nachani* flour and mix well. Stir constantly to avoid lumps. Cover with a lid and cook on slow flame for 10 minutes. Add oil and mix well. Now, add lemon juice and coriander, mix well and simmer again for 2 minutes. Serve hot.



*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*





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HEART TO HEARTH BY PRATIBHA JAIN

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

## Soul sisters

Varija & Sireesha Reddy • HYDERABAD



Photographs by Anand Kumar Soma

Our mother's *pakodi kurma* is an all-time family favourite to date as is her simple milky drumstick curry," echo the Reddy sisters. Listening to them talk wistfully about their mother's cooking, it was obvious that the taste of her food continues to linger in their memory and palate. They reeled

off one authentic recipe after another with utmost ease, and effortlessly added nuggets of information about its origin and health benefits.

I met the two sisters—Varija, 68, (*right*) and Sireesha, 70—in Varijaji's beautiful and impeccably maintained residence in Santosh Nagar, Hyderabad. It was 9 am, undoubtedly a busy

time of the day, yet the house exuded serenity. The domestic staff looked efficiently trained and moved about silently, not disturbing us in any way. While the conversation between us flowed from food to meditation and children, the wafting aromas from the kitchen revealed that good food is obviously the fulcrum this home revolves around!

As we continued to converse in a smattering of Hyderabad Hindi, English and Tamil as I was not familiar with their mother tongue Telugu, it dawned upon me that women don't always need a common language to communicate. Our common love for food is a sort of mother tongue, a nurturing language in itself! Here are some snippets of the conversation.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

**Varija:** We both grew up in Nellore, a quaint town in Andhra Pradesh. Our father was an agriculturist and zamindar. We had a large house and plenty of house help; hence, as children, we hardly ever ventured into the kitchen. After my high school, I was married to Subbarami Reddy, an engineer and scientist. We moved to Hyderabad and have been living here ever since. We now live here with our son Kartik and his wife Dr Shilpa.

**Sireesha:** As my husband Raghava Reddy was in a transferable job, I have lived in several places, including the remote Roop Narayanpur [West Bengal] and Kerala. Now, we are settled in Hyderabad. Ours is a family of engineers. My husband, our son and now our grandson are all engineers. And I am the engineer in the kitchen!

## MEDITATION FOR LIFE

**S:** I am well-versed with the Art of Living, Reiki, Pranic healing and various forms of meditation. I am not ritualistic, for I firmly believe that it is all about healing your own self and your loved ones. Meditation definitely improves quality of life; it boosts physical health and ensures mental well-being. It has definitely helped bring down my high sugar levels and the swelling in my feet.

**V:** We both wake up at 4 am in the morning in our respective homes and

start our day with meditation. I enjoy praying along with meditation. We also belong to a bhajan group where we regularly sing Sai bhajans. It is this devotion we infuse into our cooking as well. Food cooked with divinity is certainly more nourishing.

## HOME AND HEARTH

**V:** As a family, we hardly ever eat out. At home, we cook with a lot of joy and love. We are also very particular about hygiene and cleanliness, so home-cooked food becomes an obvious choice as we can supervise it in our own style. Moreover, we both enjoy cooking and feeding the family!

"When children and family members eat together and enjoy meals cooked by our own hands, it increases their positive energy"

**S:** I firmly believe that when children and family members eat together and enjoy meals cooked by our own hands, it increases their positive energy. I often tell my grandson Prabhat that I will make whatever he likes, even pasta and pizza, as long as he can avoid eating out. I notice that ever since I have been making his favourite foods at home, he has become more caring and affectionate.

## UNEXPECTED GUESTS

**V:** Like most South Indian homes, we always have dosa and idli batter at home. Chutneys are also a regular feature. So we can serve idlis and dosas on short notice. It doesn't take

us time to make *upma* or pongal either. If we have two hours in hand before the guests arrive, we even manage to churn out vadas!

## SPICE IS NICE

**V:** While we grind coriander powder at home, we buy whole turmeric and chillies and send them to the grinding mill nearby. In Andhra cooking, chillies are an important ingredient, and can virtually reduce you to tears! We use Nellore chillies that are small and plump. We also like the flavourful Guntur and Warangal variety of chillies.

**S:** We are particular about the spices we use; it's these spices that impart flavour and taste to the dishes we cook. Often, we even roast the coriander seeds and grind them for certain dishes like drumstick curry. Roasting whole spices always adds a magical toasty touch to the dish. We grew up seeing our mother never compromise on the taste or health aspect of any dishes.

## FEELING BLESSED

**V:** We have lived next to each other for 28 years now. That is a real blessing. We spend quality time with each other. Food *dabba* are always being exchanged between the two homes. There is warmth, love and bonhomie between us; we are grateful for this and truly count our blessings.

**S:** Once you start meditating seriously, the quality of life changes. We are blessed to have chanced upon this secret mantra! Our entire day passes smoothly, without room for boredom. Meditation energises us and we feel even 24 hours in a day are not enough!

## NEXT PAGE:

Milky drumstick curry from the Reddy sisters's kitchen





## MILKY DRUMSTICK CURRY

A family favourite, this is a much-cherished recipe from the childhood days of the Reddy sisters. It's simple to make, light to digest and quite unusual.

### Ingredients

- Drumstick: 1 large; chopped into finger-sized bits
- Onion: 1 large; chopped fine
- Milk: ½ litre; boiled
- Turmeric powder: a pinch
- Chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Coriander powder: 1 heaped tsp
- Oil: 1 tbsp
- Coriander leaves: a fistful; chopped fine
- Salt to taste

### Method

Heat the oil in a pan and add the onions. Sauté until they turn translucent. Add the chopped drumsticks, turmeric powder and chilli powder and sauté for a minute. Add the milk and allow the drumsticks to cook for 10-12 minutes or until they turn tender. Stir occasionally to ensure that the milk does not stick to the bottom. You can add ½ cup water if needed. Then add the coriander powder and stir for about 2 minutes. Switch off the flame and add salt. The consistency of the drumstick curry should be like thick gravy. Serve hot with rotis or steamed rice.

Varijaji says that instead of using readymade coriander powder, you can roast coriander seeds and powder them just before adding to the dish. This will enhance the taste further.

*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*



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

# Experience

## A second childhood

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## MONEY MATTERS BY PRIYA DESAI

**Good and simple, is it?** Though Goods and Services Tax aims to simplify the tax system, glitches need to be ironed out

**A** penchant for wordplay is the hallmark of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches. He jokingly referred to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rolled out on 1 July in his midnight address as "a Good and Simple Tax". A few days into the new tax regime, tax experts and economists are waiting to test its goodness; traders and consumers are not finding it simple either.

The jury is still out on this. It will be some time before the entire gamut of consequences and ramifications unravels for various industries, service providers, traders and consumers. Currently, everybody, including silvers, is miffed, wondering whether it is as good and simple a tax as claimed by the Government. While many are unaware of the true implications of this landmark tax reform, those who try to understand it find it confusing and regressive. The traders and buyers of computers wonder why there should be a GST of 14 per cent on a personal computer but 28 per cent on a monitor.

Similarly, my friend who visited a chemist recently found that every strip of medicine she bought cost ₹ 4 more as the GST amounted to 18 per cent in place of 15 per cent for medicines. It seems retailers are still not clear about the slabs. Little wonder then, that my friend dubbed it an unwelcome change that would create a bigger hole in her already threadbare pocket.

### What is GST?

GST is a landmark indirect tax reform covering the entire country and its economy. We routinely consume a number of goods and services. For instance, when we enter a graded restaurant to dine, while the menu card shows the prices of various items, the final bill includes VAT and service tax. Now, you will see GST in place of these two taxes. This will happen in case of all goods and services

that are covered under the ambit of indirect taxes. GST is a composite tax that will replace all central and state taxes. As the Government says, GST is founded on the concept of 'One Nation, One Market, and One Tax'. It will be levied on the supply of goods and/or services in India except for the items that have been exempted by law. There is now the central GST (CGST), the state GST (SGST) and an integrated GST (IGST) on every interstate supply of goods and services.



Silvers will continue to feel the pinch till clarity on the issue emerges. Those who depend on fixed deposits for their monthly income have already lost a quarter of their income owing to a major dip in deposit rates

In a nutshell, it is a single tax system for the entire nation, creating a common market for all goods and services. However, it is a concept yet to be fully understood and absorbed for its impact on industries and the Government as well as consumers. In the pre-GST landscape, both the Centre and the states were imposing different taxes. Each state also decided the amount of tax paid on goods; this resulted in a lack of uniformity across the country and multiplicity of taxes paid. The end result was an enormous amount of paperwork, lack of transparency, tax evasion and corruption.

With the implementation of GST, industries will have a cohesive and more efficient

market strategy for a more expansive market instead of dealing with individual states of varying sizes and their respective tax structures. Have we forgotten the times when we bought cars in a state other than that of our residence to benefit from a lower tax rate?

As taxes paid by manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers are ultimately passed on to consumers, the latter would stand to benefit as a result of GST. This is because the cascading element in the form of multi-layered taxes is removed. It is hoped that GST will remove unnecessary tax barriers, transform economic and business systems, widen the tax base and increase tax collections. In short, if it works the way it should, it will simplify the tax system.



But all this isn't going to happen overnight, and it will take some time to iron out the glitches and complications. This race poses hurdles both for users and the Government. This is evident in the extensive and continuous media coverage, high-octane debates, and FAQ advertisement series in print media and online forums.

The common man isn't adept at understanding the reform of the century and is confused about its impact on his day-to-day purchases and expenditure, and on luxury items bought occasionally. This is why the 40 per cent discount offers from Amazon, Flipkart, Paytm, etc, and promotional offers from Samsung, LG, and Videocon for electronic items attracted hoards of buyers just a few days prior to the GST rollout. An answer to the common man's anxieties is hidden in the GST tax slabs.

### GST slab rates

All goods and services will be taxed under one of the four slabs—5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 28 per cent—depending on where they are purchased. The given table provides some idea of what to expect under the new tax regime.

### GST slab rates: A select view

A National Anti-Profiteering Authority under the GST regime would ensure that the person who has registered under the GST will pass on the benefits like tax reduction or input tax credit to the consumer of goods and services.

### Impact on silvers

Silvers will continue to feel the pinch till clarity on the issue emerges. Those who depend on fixed deposits for their monthly income have already lost a quarter of their income owing to a major dip in deposit rates; a tax increase through GST implementation can affect silvers in certain areas.

Insurance is a major area affected by GST. Medical insurance as well as life insurance premiums will be adversely affected with an increase of 3 per cent in the tax. The insurance sector will administer a GST rate of 18 per cent. Premium rates keep escalating with advancing age; this new tax hike on the premium will be the last straw. Healthcare services are outside the ambit of GST and silvers can seek comfort in the fact that at least doctor fees will not increase. However, 28 per cent GST on cinema will add to their expenses on entertainment. Travel insurance costs will also rise.

Silvers living in retirement communities will find their maintenance charges and food bills going up as they will be required to pay 18 per cent GST in place of 15 per cent

| SLAB RATES | A FEW EXAMPLES OF ITEMS   |
|------------|---|
| 0%         | Daily-use consumer items such as cereals, pulses, dairy produce, fresh meat, fish, fresh vegetables, fruits, etc.   |
| 5%         | Apparel below ₹ 1,000, packaged food items, footwear below ₹ 500, cream, skimmed milk powder, branded paneer, frozen vegetables, coffee, tea, spices, kerosene, medicines, etc. Transport services (railways, air transport), small restaurants, etc. |
| 12%        | Apparel above ₹ 1,000, butter, cheese, ghee, dry fruits in packaged form, fruit juices, frozen meat products, ayurvedic medicines, namkeen, cellphones, services like non-AC restaurants, business-class air travel, etc.                             |
| 18%        | Preserved vegetables, jams, instant food mixes, mineral water and tissues. Telecom services, IT services, financial services, AC hotels that serve liquor, room tariffs between ₹ 2,500 and ₹ 7,500, restaurants inside five-star hotels, etc.        |
| 28%        | Aerated water, deodorants, shaving creams, paint, hair shampoo, dye, wallpaper, water heater, dishwasher, automobiles and services such as hotels with room tariffs above ₹ 7,500, five-star hotels, cinemas, race clubs, etc.                        |

Source: Various newspapers and media

service charge for maintenance and 5-12 per cent for catering compared to the previous 0 per cent. It is estimated that silvers will have to bear an additional payment of ₹ 600 per head. The silver lining: the new senior citizens' pension scheme launched by the Government called the Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (see "Sum Assured" in 'Orbit'; page 10) is exempt from GST.

### Live with GST

To conclude, this landmark tax reform is here to stay. There will be hiccups and amendments as GST's impact on various industries and services is complicated. It will take some time for the currents to calm down. The real impact of the new tax structure will be visible only in the medium to long-term. While the changes are projected to be positive and beneficial to the Indian economy and for the Indian consumer, its short-term impact is not evenly distributed across the sectors and sections of the population.

All considered, silvers are apprehensive about the effects of GST on their expenditure and their ability to bear additional costs. And it will be a major factor to take into consideration while planning any future course of action.

*The author is an economist based in Mumbai*



# Passion FLUTE

Flautist Mala Chandrasekhar shoulders a weighty mantle as torchbearer for her mother and her aunt, the Sikkil Sisters, writes **Chitra Ramaswamy**

**Y**ou might call her an 'accidental flautist', which is ironic considering the celebrated exponent of the Sikkil *bani* (style) she is today. But the truth is, Mala Chandrasekhar, 54, daughter and niece of the famous flautists, the Sikkil Sisters, had to be delicately enticed into learning to play the instrument.

Her mother Sikkil Neela (Venkataraman) recounts an incident from when Mala was four years old. "My sister and I, along with our mother Sitalakshmi, stopped at bamboo flute maker Ananthanarayana Iyer's after a concert. Mr Iyer gave her [Mala] a baby flute, saying she too should play the instrument like her mother and aunt. My mother felt this was providential. Perhaps this was the trigger that inspired me to initiate her on this journey. Mala still has this flute and it is one of her most cherished treasures."

On the Sikkil style of flute playing, Mala says it is one where the audience literally 'hears' the lyrics of a composition. It originated with her maternal grandfather, Azhiyur Natesa Iyer, a mridangist of repute. But Mala's mentors were her mother Neela and aunt Kunjumani, who together stormed a male bastion with their unique *thuthukara* (high vocal-oriented) style of flute rendition.

Mala speaks of her mother and her aunt, both Padma Shri awardees, with great affection and respect. She points out that the Sikkil Sisters were the first female instrumentalist duo in Carnatic music. As her now-deceased aunt was 11 years older than her mother, the latter learnt the instrument from her older sister. Ever since their debut in 1962, they performed together and were a sensation in Carnatic music for many decades, both in India and abroad.

Then, in 2010, Kunjumani passed away. And while Neela continues to perform, she restricts herself to radio perfor-

mances. Though Kunjumani's daughter Mythili is a flautist, she opted for a career as flute lecturer at Government Music College, Chennai. It was thus left to Mala to follow in the footsteps of the path-breaking musical sisters.

Looking back, Mala smiles when she recalls her indifference to playing the flute. As a youngster, she was a talented artist and loved to sketch and paint. But her mother and aunt had other plans and succeeded in changing the course of Mala's destiny. How did they do it? They skilfully and subtly coaxed and cajoled her into practising the flute and performing in public while never pressurising her to do so.

As a result, Mala, who picked up the flute as a reluctant and playful five year-old, developed a passion for it, even if only in her mid-teens. Successful concert performances, musical ensembles in which she participated during her

Photographs courtesy: Mala Chandrasekhar





college years and, finally, marriage into a musical family, struck the right chords and there was no looking back.

Based in Chennai and married to Chandrasekhar, grandson of the legendary M S Subbulakshmi, Mala is a torchbearer of the Sikkil *bani*, but she has spiced it up with her individual style. The globe-trotting flautist and recipient of many prestigious awards speaks about her life-changing epiphany in college and her musical odyssey with the Sikkil Sisters.

### IN HER OWN WORDS

**Although music was all around me, I was drawn to the fascinating world of colours as a child.** I simply loved drawing, sketching, painting, bead work, and anything that involved dabbling in colours. My parents would get me whatever art material I asked for and I would happily

allow my imagination to run wild and create something new. This passion is an integral part of me. Whenever I have time away from music, I design jewellery and paint.

**For a very long time, I would only relate to my aunt Kunjumani as my mother.** Being the last child in a joint family, I was pampered and spent my childhood in a carefree manner. I was everybody's pet and enjoyed all the adoration.

**Mythili, Kunjumani *amma's* daughter, was a committed musician who played the flute very well even as a young girl.** I would constantly tease her about her musical abilities. On one such occasion, when I was eight or nine years old, she challenged me to prove my skills on the instrument instead of commenting on her rendition. My aunt, who witnessed this incident and was also aware of my indifferent attitude towards music,



Playing with the famed Sikkil Sisters, mother Neela (centre) and aunt Kunjumani (right)

"While my mother would teach me one-on-one, my aunt would offer her inputs while discharging the household chores. I had the benefit of being guided by both of them, and all this in an informal, relaxed way"

expressed doubts about my pursuing music and following in their footsteps. Although my mother had introduced me to the flute when I was five or six, I was very playful and not really interested in it. Besides, the 'other world of art' had totally captured my interest. With this incident, she became firm in her resolve to make me a flautist.

**My mother's desire and determination did not drive her to pressurise me.** For me, mother as mother and mother as guru merged into a single entity. Though she is a disciplined person and rose to heights through perseverance, dedication and commitment, she did not force that learning on me. She would gently coax me to learn the instrument. There were no fixed practice, teaching or learning hours. These sessions happened as and when I was inclined. Sometimes, the learning would get tough and be a little too fast for my comprehension. I would sulk, get angry and finally abandon the lesson for that day.

**Amma would allow my tantrum to run its course.** If she was exasperated with my playing truant or my attitude, she didn't show it. She went about the task of grooming me in such a subtle and loving way that even before I realised it, I was fast gaining proficiency in playing

the instrument. She prepared me in such a way that I straightaway started performing at concerts; of course, with limited inputs and repertoire. Through my learning years up to the age of 15, I don't recollect a single day when, without being asked to, I would pick up the flute to learn or play. While my mother would teach me one-on-one, my aunt would offer her inputs while discharging the household chores. I had the benefit of being guided by both of them, and all this in an informal, relaxed way. As I grew up, I realised the efforts my mother had put into my learning. What I am today, I owe entirely to her.

**Amma was happy I had arrived.** I got the opportunity to give a 15-minute live performance for TV in the *Ilam Tendral* programme in 1980. Before the programme, there was an audition for which my mother and aunt had trained and prepared me with total dedication. This was very well-received. Several other stalwarts in the field congratulated my mother and aunt for grooming their next-generation flautist. One of them even told *Amma* that they could perceive her indelible style in my rendition of a particular note. She was happy. More than that, she felt motivated and it boosted her confidence that I had finally arrived and would take her style of flute-playing



forward. A window of opportunity opened up for me following this television broadcast.

**Mother was open-minded.** The real turning point in my musical journey came when I was in college, pursuing an undergraduate degree in botany from Stella Maris, Chennai. I was selected to be part of a veena-venu-violin (VVV) ensemble. Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi on the violin led the ensemble that had Jayanthi (now Jayanthi Kumaresh) on the veena. I was mesmerised by the melodic overtones and musical aspects of this venture, particularly by Viji's rendering of certain phrases and nuances on the instrument. It kindled a spirit of healthy competition in me and I felt I had to measure up to them. My mother viewed this as a blessing for me. She was happy that it brought about a change of heart and made me passionate about music as I had never been before.

**When I participated for the first time in a music competition in 1981 and won the first prize in the wind instruments category, I received the prize from M S Subbulakshmi, the queen of Carnatic music.** It was a proud moment for me. But the most cherished moment came when I was asked to accompany the famous 'Sikkil Sisters' and we played as a trio. I was 17 years old then. The performance took place at Krishna Gana Sabha, one of Chennai's premier concert halls. It was something I had never imagined.

**Being married into a musical family enhanced my learning.** Naturally, or by reflex, I imbibed and internalised the melody to which I was exposed during the VVV ensemble. I combined this with the consciously practised melody that I learnt from constantly observing MS to produce my own style. My belief is that unless we ourselves enjoy what we are singing or playing, we

Early days at home with her mother and aunt



cannot transfer the feel to the audience or listeners. This is something I learnt from MS. In addition to rhythm, I have been able to infuse greater melody in hard-core classicism on the flute. This was a slight deviation from my mother's and aunt's rendition styles. For them, rhythm and concert presentation as traditionally followed were of paramount importance.

**Mother gave me a free hand and believed in individual style.** The music of my aunt and mother was pure, chaste, heavily classical, strictly adhering to tradition. While they were groomed in their traditional style, my mother wanted me to be different, individualistic. She instilled in me the sense of creating harmony while having a distinct style that would be entirely mine.

**It has not been easy coming out of the shadows of my mother and aunt, and carving my own niche.** As our concerts in the trio format drew huge audiences, both audiences and organisers stuck to the pattern. Age-related health issues forced my aunt to stop giving public performances and when she passed away in 2010, my mother and I continued playing as a duo till 2014. She too has become frail and does not have the stamina to give a three-hour concert, though she continues with her AIR programmes. I realised that though I had matured as a musician and flautist and could hold listeners spell-bound on my own, it was a Herculean task to change the public's mindset.

**With passing years, I felt the need to be on my own because my creativity propelled me to realms my mother had not entered.** Our thought processes also varied. The urge to explore, experiment and expand my repertoire of compositions and evolve as a musician overwhelmed me. I gave *jugalbandi* concerts, playing alongside renowned clarinet player A K C Natarajan and with some vocalists. In fact, because of the strict adherence to my mother's and aunt's classicism, I turned down film offers from Ilayaraja and A R Rahman in the earlier years of my concert performance. Music is a fathomless ocean and I wanted to delve into its depths. In fact, in certain measure, I willed myself to tear away from performing duets with my mother. The transition period and process were painful, no doubt, for both of us, but I felt this was an essential way forward.

**My mother didn't just teach me rhythm and chaste classicism in rendering the flute.** *Amma* always laid emphasis on teamwork in a concert. She believed leadership involves carrying a concert through to its end, being adaptable to situations and sensitive to accompanying co-artists and audiences. She never took a concert lightly, no matter where it was being performed, whether in a temple, at a wedding, or in a prestigious hall. She imparted this sense to me as well. ✨

# CHEF'S SPECIAL

If the timeline of contemporary Indian cuisine can be divided into two zones, one would be before Sanjeev Kapoor and the other, after! With his hugely popular TV food shows, cookbooks and presentations on varied platforms, the culinary master has left an indelible mark on our home kitchens. In conversation with **SAI PRABHA KAMATH**, he shares his relentless pursuit for innovation and explains how reinvention is his recipe for success

**O**n a breezy monsoon afternoon, the prominent industrial estate area of Andheri West in Mumbai is abuzz with life, its narrow by-lanes filled with the familiar sights and sounds of street-food vendors, office-goers, movie buffs and whizzing vehicles. This neighbourhood is home to notable production houses Yash Raj Films and Balaji Telefilms, the star-makers of the entertainment industry. Not far from them is the office-cum-studio of chef-turned-entrepreneur Sanjeev Kapoor, a celebrity in his own right.

As Team Harmony enters his cabin and introductions are made, the master chef—looking dapper in a white Chinese-collar shirt and denims—

greet us with his trademark smile. Cookware sets of different shapes and sizes line his huge working desk, showing signs of his previous meeting. A mini library, sculptures and, surprisingly, musical instruments such as drums and a keyboard find pride of place in the room, displaying his wide-ranging interests. However, the master chef has his priorities right: “I want to make Indian cuisine the No. 1 on the world culinary map!” A trailblazer in the Indian food industry, Kapoor was awarded the Padma Shri earlier this year in recognition of his culinary contribution.

This phenomenal journey began when Kapoor hosted cookery show *Khana Khazana* in the early 1990s—a time when the kitchen was a female preserve. His pleasing demeanour and simple-yet-modern rendition of traditional recipes made him



Photographs courtesy: Sanjeev Kapoor





Above: At a live demo; conducting a class at International School of Cooking, Valladolid, Spain

Opposite page: with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in UAE

one of TV's most popular faces within no time and the show went on to become the longest running show of its kind in India.

The chef's rediscovery of the culinary secrets of India continued unabated with his myriad cookbooks—to date, he has authored over 200 cookbooks in seven languages, the latest being *100 Mouthwatering Recipes*. Further, his books intended for an international audience—such as *How to Cook Indian* (April 2011)—printed and published in the US and the UK, received a tremendous response. While *The Yellow Chilli Cookbook* was adjudged the 'Best International Cookbook' at the 2012 International Book Awards, another book, *aah! Chocolate*, received the 'Best in the World' award at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards 2014 in Beijing.

Over time, the chef turned entrepreneur, expanding his presence in the culinary market with a range of foods such as pickles, blended masalas, gourmet chutneys and ready-to-eat mixes under the brand name 'Sanjeev Kapoor's Khana Khazana'; in 2009, he launched Wonderchef, a range of cookware and kitchen appliances. As a restaurateur, he has 70 eateries globally (including franchisees) such as Khazana, The Yellow Chilli, Signature, Sura Vie and Hong Kong under his company SKR (Sanjeev Kapoor Restaurants), making Indian food accessible across the world.

Further, he endorses many a brand, such as Ariel, Tata i-Shakti Dals and Sleek Kitchen, and is on the board of Singapore Airlines' International Culinary

Panel, rubbing shoulders with the who's who of the culinary world. The first chef in the world to launch his own TV channel FoodFood, he divides his time between India and the rest of the world, participating in live food events and cooking demonstrations. While his portal [www.sanjeevkapoor.com](http://www.sanjeevkapoor.com) has a compendium of over 15,000 tried-and-tested recipes and food-related information, his channel on YouTube has garnered 1.4 million subscribers. He runs his own blog, [chefsanjeevkapoor.blogspot.in](http://chefsanjeevkapoor.blogspot.in), and is active on social media too. What's more, to nurture young talent, he has started the Symbiosis School of Culinary Arts in collaboration with Pune's Symbiosis University, which offers a bachelor's degree in culinary arts.

Amid all this, the 53 year-old's quest to dish out new culinary experiences and "do things differently" remains alive. For instance, he tells you how he recently gave the Punjabi samosa—meant for the export market—a twist by adding a stuffing of beetroot mixture. The result: healthy beetroot samosas! Inspired by the idea, the same day, he surprised his guests at home by blending beetroot and adding a dash of pink to *dahi bhalle*. "I love to experiment; nature and ingredients are beautiful toys to play with," he says. Indeed, reinvention comes easy to this Ambala-born Punjabi. "I have an open mind; I travel and observe a lot. I taste everything on my way and can never be bound by scripted recipes." Nor is he bound by straitjackets—upon our request, the friendly host was happy to show us his musical side when he strummed the percussion instrument in his cabin.

"Cooking to me is what a canvas is to a painter—an art form arising from the creativity deep within. Combining the best of tradition with a touch of relevance using the freshest local ingredients, backing it up with the science of creating that art... the end result of this experience simply has to be nirvana!"

#### EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW

##### What is your definition of 'cooking'?

Cooking to me is what a canvas is to a painter—an art form arising from the creativity deep within, urging me to give every dish a new hue and perspective. I love to keep my creations simple so they can be understood by maximum people. Combining the best of tradition with a touch of relevance using the freshest local ingredients, backing it up with the science of creating that art... the end result of this experience simply has to be nirvana!

##### What are your earliest memories in the kitchen?

My father used to cook non-vegetarian food as my mother was a vegetarian. My earliest memories in the kitchen are of me, just seven or eight years old, helping my dad roll out chapattis. To give them a perfect round shape, I would use a saucer after rolling out the dough in various shapes!

##### You are one of the pioneers of food shows on Indian television. Tell us about the experience of cooking for the camera.

When I started, I had a tough time changing the mindset of people towards the profession. Change came gradually! My show was named *Shri-man Bawarchi* and I put my foot down asking them to rechristen it. Then, the channel producers insisted on having a female hostess standing next to me while I was cooking; again, I found it a big deterrent to my cooking and connect with the audience. After many discussions, they agreed to rename the show *Khana Khazana*, which went on to run for almost two decades. All the recipes were cooked on the set and there were no repeats. I used to cook them exactly as the audience would

want. All my shows were and are, to date, unscripted; I always speak extempore. Also, my technical knowledge in aspects such as the sound and camera helped. The final factor is luck. God has been kind, people have accepted me and I have been able to continue with the same sincerity with which I did my first show.

##### Where did you draw your inspiration?

From my family and the books written by eminent food historian K T Achaya and American author Harold McGee, who writes about the science of food and cooking.

##### What was the biggest turning point in your life?

The biggest turning point was when I opted for hotel management as a career while almost getting into architecture. I'm glad I trusted my instinct and took the food way!



## HEALTHY, SILVER-FRIENDLY RECIPES FROM SANJEEV KAPOOR'S KITCHEN

### QUICK CHICKEN PULAO

#### Ingredients

- Boneless chicken: 600 gm; cut into 1-inch pieces
- Basmati rice: 1½ cups; soaked for 1 hour
- Yogurt: ½ cup
- Ginger-garlic paste: 2 tbsp
- Salt to taste
- Ghee: 4 tbsp
- Cumin seeds: 1 tsp
- Cloves: 6-8



- Cinnamon sticks: 2; 1-inch each
- Green cardamom: 6-8
- Bay leaves: 2
- Onions: 2 medium; sliced
- Tomatoes: 3 medium; chopped
- Red chilli powder: 1 tsp
- Chicken stock: 3½ cups
- Fresh coriander sprigs for garnishing

#### Method

Marinate the chicken in yogurt, ginger-garlic paste and salt for an hour. Heat the ghee in a non-stick pan. Add the cumin seeds, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom and bay leaves and sauté for 10 seconds. Add the onions and sauté till golden brown. Add the tomatoes and sauté on high heat for 3 minutes, stirring continuously. Add the chilli powder and mix. Add the chicken along with the marinade and sauté till the chicken is half cooked. Add the chicken stock and bring the mixture to a boil. Drain the rice and add. Stir and bring to a boil again. Reduce the heat and cook till the water level reaches the rice level. Cover and cook on low heat for 20 minutes or till rice and chicken are completely cooked. Remove the lid and stir lightly to separate the rice grains. Serve hot, garnished with coriander sprigs.

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“The key to balancing nutrition and taste lies in using your intelligence and knowledge of science and cooking. It’s a misnomer that healthy food is not tasty. Each and every food, irrespective of whether it falls in the category of healthy or junk, can be and should be made tasty”

**Indeed! Could you share a few memorable moments of your career?**

Opening my first restaurant, Khazana, in 1998 in Dubai; launching my own TV channel FoodFood in 2011; cooking an exclusive Gujarati menu for Prime Minister Narendra Modi in an Arab nation; receiving the Padma Shri this year from the President of India... these are some special moments I just cannot forget! Apart from these, the list is quite exhaustive.

**The late ‘recipe queen’ Tarla Dalal was the inspiration for your cookbooks, we hear....**

It was my zeal to do different things at different times in life. Even cookbooks were a result of that.

**Are the food tastes of Indians evolving today?**

Even as we are tasting the so-called new, exotic foods from around the world, our food tastes haven’t changed much. We still consume foods with basic tastes [bitter, salty, sour, sweet]; only their form and shape are changing. We have Indianised international recipes to suit our palate; for example, masala noodles, *aloo tikki* burger, tandoori chicken pizza. The talk has been much more than real consumption.



## TENDER COCONUT AND SAGO KHEER

### Ingredients

- Chopped tender coconut: 1 cup
- Sago: ½ cup; soaked
- Palm jaggery: ¾ cup; grated
- Green cardamom powder: ½ tsp
- Coconut milk: 3 cups
- Pistachios: 10-12; finely chopped
- Almonds: 10-12; finely chopped

### Method

Heat 2 cups of water in a non-stick handi. Add the sago and cook on low heat for 10-12 minutes or until it is cooked. Add the palm jaggery and cardamom powder and stir on low heat till the jaggery dissolves completely. Add the coconut milk and mix. Cook for 2-3 minutes. Add the tender coconut, half the pistachios and almonds, and mix. Stir and cook for 5-7 minutes or till the kheer thickens.

Transfer into a serving bowl, decorate with the remaining pistachios and almonds and serve.



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**Food wisdom appears to run in cycles. What was once said to be good for you is bad today, and bad turns out to be good! For instance, there are different theories on rice, wheat, ghee, coconut, eggs, etc, these days. How does one stay ahead of the curve and make the right choices?**

According to me, one must eat everything as something may or may not suit a particular body, and this will differ from individual to individual. What one must ensure is to exercise and indulge in physical activities regularly for a balanced, stress-free life.

### **How does one balance nutrition and taste?**

The key to balancing nutrition and taste lies in using your intelligence and knowledge of science and cooking. It's a misnomer that healthy food is not tasty. Each and every food, irrespective of whether it falls in the category of healthy or junk, can be and should be made tasty. Fight calories, not taste!

**With the advent of international cuisines in the country, how can Indian cuisine hold its own ground?**

The food scene in India and, for that matter, the world is on an all-time boom. There are some exciting concepts and great food being dished out. Even regional flavours are right there in the market. It's a raging trend already. The future of Indian cuisine is shining bright like a diamond! The entire chef community, including me, is doing its best to preserve our food heritage along with making it popular across the globe. Indian cuisine was, is and will always stay in vogue.

### **What does the rest of the world think about Indian cuisine?**

Indian food is a mystery for the world; the general impression is that we make hot, spicy curries that are complex to cook. For me, Indian cuisine can be divided into two categories: homemade and restaurant-made. The world has only seen and

## QUICK BITES

**Dishes your wife makes better than you**  
Masala dosa and *undhiyo*

**All-time favourite food**  
Anything and everything Indian!

**Signature dish**

- *Shaam savera* - Spinach koftas filled with creamy cottage cheese on a bed of velvety tomato gravy
- *Lalla mussa dal* - Black lentils simmered for 36 hours on a slow fire
- *Gulab-e-Gulkand* - Gulab jamun stuffed with rose petal compote

**Comfort food**

*Rajma* chawal and *kadhi* chawal

**Wackiest meal you have ever had**  
Grilled sea dragon in Beijing

**Ingredient you cannot live without**  
Salt

**Food item you detest**  
None!

**Fusion food**  
Fun, but overrated



Haresh Patel

tasted restaurant-made food and not explored anything beyond it. However, these days, with different media showcasing real Indian homemade food, the world is opening its eyes to the authentic Indian kitchen. This is, indeed, an encouraging trend.

**The new globalised India brought in the trend of eating and drinking out like never before. However, today, the TV offers a smorgasbord of cookery shows and the virtual world has a deluge of 'snack-sized' recipe videos. Will this trend put the spark back in the home kitchen?**

It already has! Also, since the time I've been on TV, I've always demonstrated recipes that can be easily done in our home kitchens. No food can ever match that prepared with love at home.

**What's cooking next?**

We are doing research on launching new products, such as cordless grinders, and smart kitchen appliances and cookware under our Wonderchef brand. Also, we are trying out new, interesting concepts for the digital platform. In the near future, we will look at expanding the reach of the FoodFood channel into the Indian regional mar-

ket as well as increasing its presence in the international market. For other things, you've got to wait and watch!

**What are your favourite food shows on TV—Indian and international?**

I like *Mummy ka Magic* and the *Out of the World* series on FoodFood and *Chef's Table* on Netflix, besides many more on various channels.

**How has your wife Alyona supported you in your endeavours? Do you have any common interests?**

Alyona's multitasking art of managing me, home, kids, my mother, her parents, extended family, friends, office, business partners and finances is commendable. Had she not donned these hats so beautifully, I wouldn't have reached where I am today. I am extremely blessed and thankful to God for this. She's been my pillar of support, love and care all these years. Food, indeed, is our common interest!

**We guess that was the genesis of her online food show *Family Food Tales*....**

Yes, as the name suggests, she brings you a collection of recipes that are most loved by our family and friends. Also, Alyona shares her experience and personal anecdotes related to each recipe she dishes up on the show. For more, tune into *sanjeevkapoorkhazana* on YouTube every Tuesday!

**What do your daughters Rachita and Kriti do? Are they likely to follow in your footsteps?**



At home with wife Alyona (extreme left), and daughters Rachita and Kriti

Opposite page: Playing the drums in his cabin

You never know! As of now, the elder one has just finished her law degree and the younger one is an athlete, currently pursuing mathematics and statistics in the UK.

**How do you look back at your journey? Do you have any regrets?**

Whenever I look back and remember the times I started, there's a smile on my face and immense satisfaction that cannot be put in words! All my hard work, sincerity and dedication have paid off and brought me to where I stand today. Not to forget, the ones who stood by me and believed in my capabilities throughout. Also, I'm the kind who owns up to everything in life and takes each phase—good or bad—as a lesson to learn from. Hence, there is no place for regrets in my life.

**What are your other interests?**

Reading books, mainly related to ancient food wisdom, listening to music of different genres and learning anything new.

**You also run two CSR initiatives: one for woman entrepreneurs and another for autistic schoolchildren. Please tell us more.**

As I am in a position where I can reach out to society, I believe it is my responsibility to make people

aware about certain causes, of which women empowerment and autism are the closest to my heart. Through our venture Wonderchef, we have built a community of women entrepreneurs in the food world. It has enabled women across the country to create a business of their own, boosting their pride, worth and, not to forget, family income. I truly feel women should be independent, not just financially but emotionally. And during my decade-long interaction with autistic children, I've realised there is a lot of insensitivity, when what they need is a little more love and care. This is where I became committed to spreading awareness about this cause. Running a marathon is one way to create awareness. I support Forum for Autism; whenever and wherever they do something for the cause, I try to be there.

**Please share your views on ageing.**

With increasing life expectancy, the definition of old age has changed—60 is the new 40 and 70 is the new 50! As we age, we need to be independent—physically, financially and emotionally. As we are what we eat, food is a major contributor to our health. Eat healthy, stay fit and believe in the power of positivity.

**What are your plans for old age?**

It's still a long way away. I would rather concentrate on my present as of now! 🌟





# STATE OF THE ART

From serene lakes to medieval structures and unique art spaces like the spirited Metelkova district, Slovenia's capital Ljubljana packs it all



Devesh Joshi

**A**s I entered Metelkova, the world suddenly changed into what I would call an artist's playground. Streets to buildings and everything else in between was painted in red, blue and white, with some graffiti art depicting a sad yesterday, and some, a promising tomorrow. A broken bike frame, a rustic car model, a giant toe... each piece of art was telling a unique story.

The Metelkova district in Ljubljana, which depicted a sad and oppressive space back in time, has today built its image firmly on its artistic and culturally liberal credentials. An oppressive territory and a stronghold

of the army of the authoritarian Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia during the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the late 19th century, Metelkova has come a long way.

This secret transformation has given Ljubljana yet another reason to be in the spotlight, besides other tourist attractions such as the Dragon Bridge—with dragon statues in all four corners of the bridge—and the sprawling Tivoli City Park. Travel companies sell their packages highlighting Metelkova as a 'must travel' destination while savvy travellers plan a quick stroll by themselves, savouring their senses and experiencing the rich artistic community spirit in the air. Much like the art-centric







A sprawling alternative music and art centre

streets of Berlin and the colorful Sao Paulo, Metelkova integrates the voice of local residents and artists into its fabric of narratives. A walk around the walled city reveals beautiful cafés and bars, elegantly fading old colonial buildings, and a lot more about Ljubljana's centuries-old history.

The story of Metelkova's transformation, however, isn't as simple as it may seem. When Slovenia gained independence in 1991, and the army barracks in Metelkova were destroyed, many activists and local artists petitioned the government to use the site creatively, instead of turning it into a commercial property. When that didn't work

out, citizens took things into their hands and forcefully declared it an autonomous zone. Now, every year, Metelkova hosts over 1,500 events inside its occupied premises, catering to a wide spectrum of cultures and ideas. Literature evenings, theatre performances and jazz concerts showcase Ljubljana's and Slovenia's willingness to accept global ideas.

Known as Metelkova Mesto or Metelkova Artistic Space, it is one of the largest and most successful urban squats in Europe, a leading centre of underground music and art. Many people visit it daily, with some, like me, being in Ljubljana for Metelkova, and Metelkova alone.





BEYOND METELKOVA, LJUBLJANA IS ALSO A DEFINITE PARADISE FOR NATURE LOVERS, WITH LESS THAN 300,000 INHABITANTS AND MORE GREEN SPACES THAN HOUSES. FOR INSTANCE, TIVOLI PARK, DESIGNED IN 1813, IS POPULAR FOR ITS WALKING TRAILS, FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS, FOUNTAINS AND SCULPTURES

Recommended by someone I met in Croatia, Metelkova truly turned out to be how it was defined: 'The most impressive graffiti areas one can see in one's lifetime.' But owing to its autonomous nature, the 12,500-sq-m area also has a frightening feel to it, at least during the daytime. Army impressions loom large, and it is hard to believe that it's a free territory now. The streets, moreover, may look empty and paranoid. But once night settles in, it becomes the focal point of the country's alternative culture scene, as dozens of tourists pour in to find their own way of entertainment.

I reached Metelkova around noon, and was pretty excited just walking through the entrance—it's like a walled city sitting in a central Ljubljana neighbourhood. As I entered through one of the side entrances, I saw a bunch of tourists taking a walking tour, even as locals were fixing up ramps and shovelling dirt. Giving them a friendly nod, I tried to look as hip as possible as I walked past.

One of the reasons that makes Metelkova a popular destination among tourists is the selling of cannabis—mostly

hashish—on its streets. But there's much more to Metelkova than open selling of drugs and a severe disregard for law. It has clubs, bars, galleries and art studios galore. It's indeed a place where ideas run free. The many events and concerts, disability workshops and LGBT clubs show the open-mindedness of the locals.

Going beyond Metelkova, Ljubljana is also a definite paradise for nature lovers, with less than 300,000 inhabitants and more green spaces than houses. For instance, Tivoli Park, designed by French engineer Jean Blanchard in 1813, is popular for its walking trails, floral arrangements, fountains and sculptures. Among sculptures, the highlight is *Coexistence*, a work of art designed from a 300-year-old oak tree that fell in a storm.

An hour's drive from Ljubljana is Lake Bled, the only natural island in Slovenia. It's so dramatic and unreal that it reminded me of the Disney movies I grew up watching. Speaking of the unrealistic beauty, picture this: A fairytale medieval castle with a Roman style tower overlooking a serene lake, which sometimes appears green, and some-





At the Metelkova Mesto culture centre; graffiti art conveying public messages in support of LGBT rights and against concepts such as patriarchy and fascism

Opposite page:  
The Triple Bridge



## WHEN TO GO

Though it's fairly okay to travel to Ljubljana at any time of the year, you may want to avoid winters owing to the freezing temperatures. The weather is warm and sunny between March and September.

## VISA AND CURRENCY REQUIREMENT

As Slovenia is a part of the EU and shares the common currency, getting some Euros can never be a problem. If you're visiting Slovenia and other countries in Europe, it is best to carry a travel card issued by your bank. Using travel cards to deal with major currencies abroad is always convenient and hassle-free. For Indian nationals, it's mandatory to apply for the Schengen visa. The validity of the visa can be up to a period of three months.

## TIPS

If you're staying in Ljubljana for a few days, it is advised to explore Predjama castle as well. A half-day tour can be booked from Ljubljana.

times blue. Almost in the middle floats a small island, home to a church and a couple of al fresco cafés creating

an enjoyable ambience. The lake is moreover so calm and undisturbed that the only movement one can sense is the flap of a duck wing or the dip of a kayak paddle.

A quick visit thereafter to the Postojna cave, quite unlike the few caves I have walked, swam and even paddled a canoe through, took my breath away. After all, Postojna is Europe's largest cave park and a UNESCO heritage site. With its 21 km of passages, galleries and magnificent halls, it offers a unique experience of the underground world. The guided tour, which is offered in 15 different languages, takes about an hour-and-a-half to finish, with two, 20-minute train rides inside the cave and a half-an-hour walk. In 1899, the world's first underground postal office was operated in the cave. Today, Postojna is Slovenia's biggest tourist attraction that has welcomed over 37 million people so far...and still counting!

One may not need more than three days to get a good hang of Ljubljana, as the town is pretty tiny and accessible by foot. A vibrant outdoor eating and drinking culture adds to the charm of the place. Speaking of local food, I recommend the Cevapcici sausage, served with sliced onions and fresh bread, and Štruklji, a sweet-and-salty baked bread dough, filled with cottage cheese and herbs, and rolled into a roulade.

Indeed, given the green lungs in the district, it's not hard to see why Ljubljana was awarded the Green Capital of Europe title in 2016. From serene lakes to medieval structures and spirited art spaces, Ljubljana packs it all. 🌟

***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***

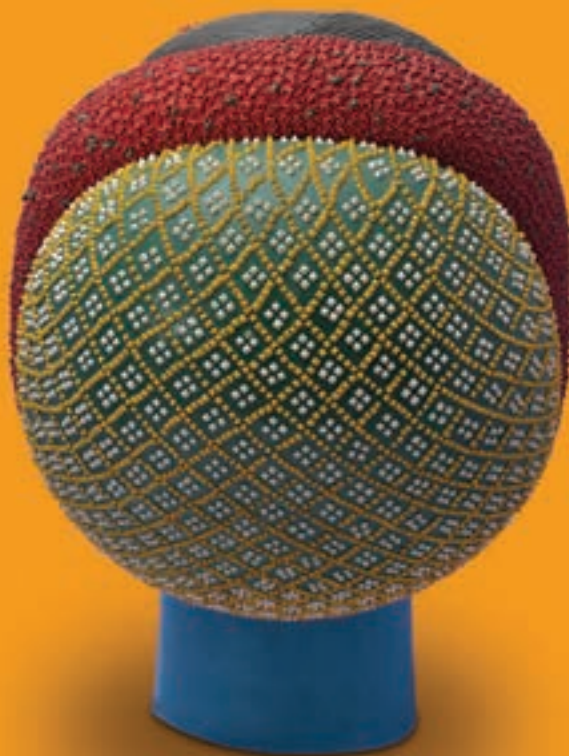
***BUTTERFLIES*** *never retire*

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## Bold, brazen, beautiful

**H**is sculptures are larger than life. The figures they depict are bold, voluptuous and stare at you with eyes bulging; yet they are everywoman. Veteran artist Ravinder Reddy's works are provocative, a lot to take in, and challenging to house given their massive size. Now, for the first time in over a decade, a retrospective of the 61 year-old's voluminous works dating back over three decades, titled *Heads and Bodies, Icons and Idols*, is on

art

display till 9 September at The Gallery, RMZ Ecoworld, Bengaluru. From the 12-ft fibreglass head 'Devi'—now on permanent display at RMZ Ecoworld—and the terracotta figurine of 'Akshatyoni', to 'Padmini', 'Muthyalu' and 'Krishnaveni II' (*in pic*), the Visakhapatnam-based artist tells *The Economic Times* that the works "give glimpses of the growth of my craft and perceptions from the days I was a young student with the pressure to create an impression, till today."





# VINTAGE RAJ

Ambica Gulati visits iconic Delhi café United Coffee House, which turns 75

**I**n the circular beating heart of Delhi, also known as Connaught Place, there's a dowager celebrating her 75th birthday. Like any do fit only for the crème de la crème of the imperial capital of the Raj, the crockery is spotless, the cutlery sparkling, the chandeliers glittering and the menu...well, it's a regal spread for a discerning palate.

At the appointed hour, the guests start to arrive. A special place is reserved for Dr Ashok Kaushik, a 67 year-old doctor, who first sat at the table when he was but a schoolboy. Next, 75 year-old Amritlal Batra, a chartered accountant who has been regularly eating here for 47 years. Then, Javed Ahmed, a travel agent who has flagged this as a special stop on his itinerary for visitors to the city. The guest list is endless

*nostalgia*

but that's only to be expected for a Delhi icon such as United Coffee House, which turns 75 this year.

Connaught Place has changed plenty since those heady days when United Coffee House threw open its doors to the capital's elite. Once a showpiece of Lutyen's Delhi, CP, as it is now called, has become a bustling commercial hub and marketplace. But there's always time for a slice of nostalgia, and United Coffee House is more than happy to oblige.

Walking into this eatery is like stepping into a time machine. The domes and chandeliers, soft lighting, part-recessed seating and ornate but elegant décor transport you back to a time when army generals told tales of the war, and assistants to viceroys reminisced about





Photographs courtesy: United Coffee House

the weather back in England, all over generous servings of Chicken Maryland, Chicken a la Kiev, Stuffed Tomato and Coq au Vin. Indeed, time has stood still in this coffee house. Gaze up at the grand Venetian chandelier, the centrepiece of its décor, at the beige painted walls and linoleum flooring and you can almost hear its VIP patrons chatting over a delicious, hot meal.

With the passage of time, the coffee house became a meeting place for generations who have enjoyed their conversations over a cup of coffee. Its platters here have been eaten by political leaders, bureaucrats, celebrities, matchmakers, couples on dates and anyone else who has time to spare.

Our host for the evening is Akash Kalra, managing director and third-generation owner of United Coffee House. He says that among the famous personalities who have dined here are artists M F Husain and Satish Gujral; political leaders such as Sanjay Gandhi and Dr Rajendra Prasad;

Bollywood personalities such as Raj Kapoor, Rishi Kapoor and Madhur Bhandarkar; singer Ghulam Ali; and sports personality Milkha Singh.

Kalra takes us back to the 1930s, when his grandfather, a liquor merchant called Lala Hans Raj Kalra, opened the capital's first restaurant, Esplanade, in Chandni Chowk, which was frequented mainly by British soldiers who loved their grog. "During World War II, my grandfather had obtained a 24-hour liquor licence as soldiers were stationed in that area," says Kalra, who took over the family business from his father in 1991. But even as shot glasses zipped across the Esplanade's counter, Connaught Place was becoming the main drag in Delhi. It evolved into a high street whose shops, aimed at wealthy Europeans, began to sell equestrian goods, cameras and pianos and offered bespoke tailoring. United Coffee House became the perfect stop for the well-heeled eager to kick up their heels and enjoy some chitter-chatter over a cuppa.

In the 1940s, Quit India and other political movements were also shaping up, and there was a need for a place where intellectuals could exchange ideas, the snobbish elite could engage in social conversations, and political figures could discuss affairs that would change the course of India's history. "That was my grandfather's idea when he opened United Coffee House in 1942," reveals Kalra.

This chapter in India's history is clearly etched on the menu of what was arguably Delhi's first-ever café. "This was the only place that offered global cuisine," remarks Kalra. "My grandfather sourced cooks from the Calcutta Cricket and Football Club and places in Bombay as these were popular with the British. These cooks knew what would appeal to the patrons."

The European palate has always been the mainstay of the coffee house, clearly reflected in the 'Early Inceptions' section. Here, classics such as sandwiches, grills, burgers, cheese balls, hot dogs and other finger food hold sway. "Breakfast was a crowd-puller though dinner wasn't."

An Indian section soon evolved and included Northwest Frontier dishes such as kebabs, curries, butter chicken and the all-time favourite Lahori Meat, explains Kalra. In time, Mughlai, Punjabi and Kayastha dishes too found a place on this hallowed menu. Many of these—*Kheema* Samosa, *Nargis ke Kofte* and the Bengal-inspired Tomato Fish—became the eatery's signature dishes. "As time went by, a multi-cuisine menu was developed, and it offered dishes like American Chopsuey and Fuyong, which were available only overseas or in Chinatown, Kolkata," recalls Kalra.

With snacks, savouries and coffee, the restaurant took off big time and the senior Kalra personally managed the establishment. "Hospitality runs in our family," says Akash Kalra. "Apart from Esplanade and United Coffee House, our family also owned Hotel Rajdoot in Nizamuddin and another restaurant called Ramble in Palika Bazaar, which was shut down when its lease ran out."

Some might call it sacrilege, others smart business sense, but to compete with other eateries in Connaught Place, United Coffee House has been forced to add Asian, Mexican and QSR recipes to its menu. If there's



"My grandfather sourced cooks from Calcutta Cricket and Football Club and places in Bombay as these were popular with the British. These cooks knew what would appeal to the patrons"

any consolation, this careful mixing and matching of dishes over the past seven decades has created a treasure trove of over 600 recipes, shares Kalra.

Our conversation is interrupted by a waiter approaching our table, carrying a glass coffee jug and what appears to be a beaker and a burner. A magic trick, perhaps? That's not far from the truth, for watching a vacuum-brewed Cona coffee maker in action is sheer wizardry. Pure vintage stuff!

On the famed Cona coffee, Kalra reveals, "It comes from the plantations of Coorg and some places in Tamil Nadu. There's blended, robust Arabica, Cona and filter. We made our own blend with robust Arabica and

South Indian filter coffee, and ended up with our famous Cona coffee, which is a huge hit even today. People come here for this experience and have been for generations."

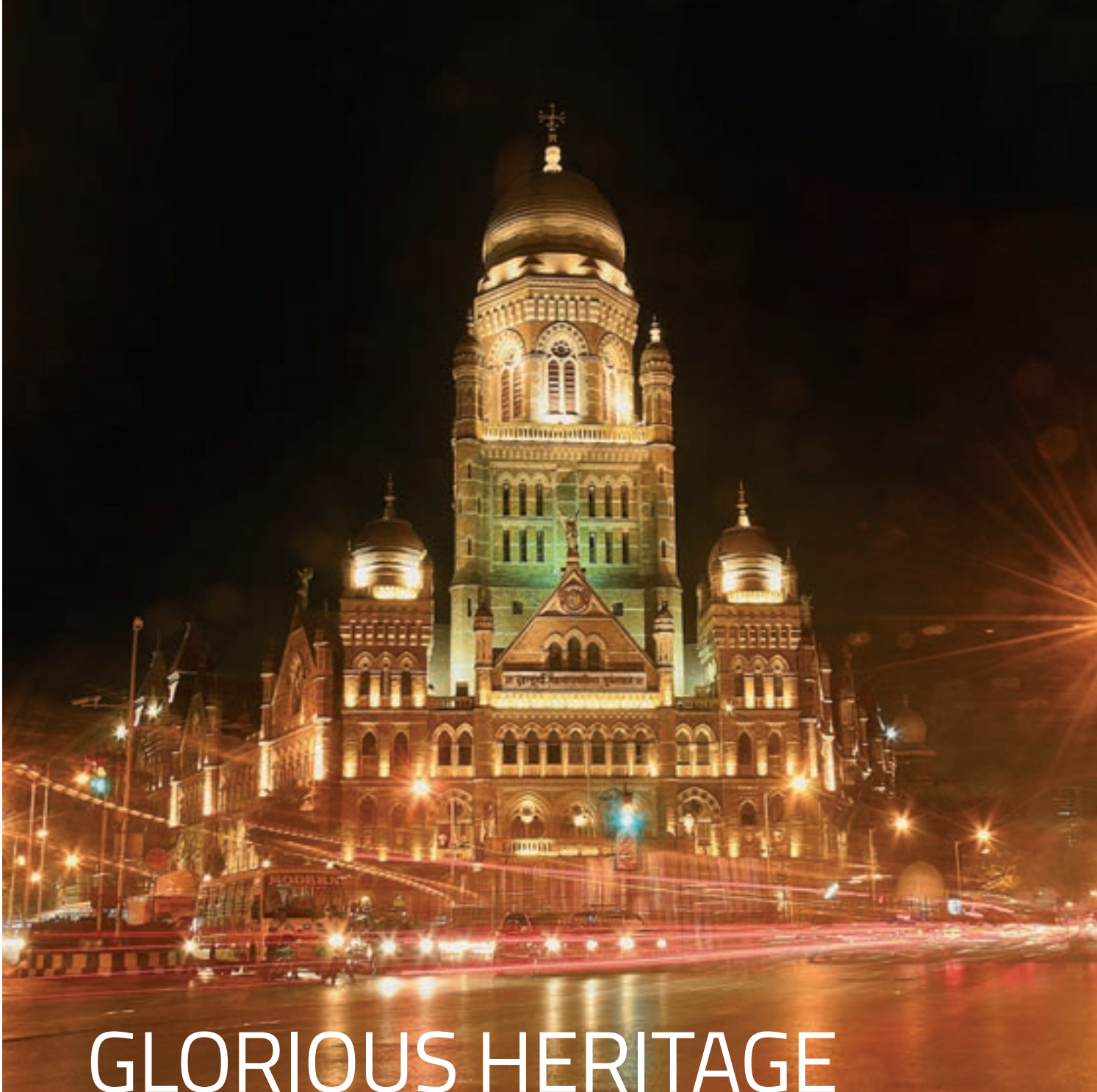
That's no empty boast. Dr Ashok Kaushik, 67, who has seen the coffee house evolve from a simple café to a plush restaurant, still finds the food and service excellent. The 67 year-old doctor shuts his clinic in Shakti Nagar at 3 pm and heads straight here to spend two hours with his friends. Tea, biscuits and friendly chatter are just what the doctor ordered! "My uncle brought me here for a treat when I stood first in my class, in school," says Kaushik. "I began coming here with friends when I was in college and then with my family." A table is always reserved for this coterie at the coffee house.

Ashok Chopra, 67, too, has been eating here for the past 50 years, since he was in college. "I always bring my family here on special occasions," he says. "The only change I see is the coffee-house ambience giving way to a fine-dining restaurant. The hospitality here keeps bringing me back."

As for Javed Ahmed, he's been bringing tour groups here to experience a taste of the Raj for the past 12 years. "It's among the few good places to take foreigners to enjoy Indian hospitality at its best and take that experience back to their countries," he avers.

Evidently, the coffee house's success is testament to its owners' business acumen and generous hospitality. Will there be another outlet? Not in the near future, says Kalra. "Can you replicate a bottle of vintage wine?"





# GLORIOUS HERITAGE

Haresh Patel

**A**t the triangular intersection of D N Road and Mahapalika Marg in South Mumbai, a black stone statue of Pherozeshah Mehta, architect of the Bombay Municipal Act, 1872, stands guard over the headquarters of the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), Asia's richest municipal corporation, which turned 125 years old on 31 July. The 17th-century Gothic building, whose domed tower rises to 255 ft, was designed by F W Stevens, also the architect of the glorious Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) just next door. It took nine years and

over ₹ 1 million to build, and stayed true to its Victorian-Gothic form. Perched on the central gable, which bears the MCGM's coat of arms, is an allegorical winged angel with an inscription in Latin stating, *Urbs Prima in Indis*, referring to then Bombay as the 'First City in India'. In honour of the 125th year, the Shiv Sena, the political party that runs the municipal body, released the building's Unique Identification Number (UID), a special logo to commemorate the anniversary, and announced the illumination of the building by coloured lights at night till 15 August, when the country celebrates her 71st Independence Day.

LEGACY OF

TO

WE





**A** sentimentalist may like to quote author Alex Haley when he said grandparents sprinkle stardust over the lives of little children.

A satirist may prefer the words of humorist Sam Levenson who insisted the reason grandchildren and grandparents get along so well is that they have a common enemy! And a realist may point to recent research establishing that a high level of grandparental involvement increases the well-being of children, while boosting the life expectancy and brain health of the grandparents themselves.

However, as Indians, we probably don't need studies, witticisms or fanciful words to tell us this—we know it instinctively, an understanding that is not just wired in

our DNA but reinforced through our rich cultural and familial traditions. While traditionally grandparents have been repositories of wisdom and care, confidants, companions and problem-solvers, today we also see somewhat of a role reversal, with many grandchildren turning teachers and tech gurus to their elders, helping them navigate an increasingly digital world.

It is indeed a special bond. And this month, on the occasion of Grandparents' Day on 10 September, we honour this bond by sharing some special stories from grandchildren across the country on the bequests received from their beloved grandparents—tangible objects that give rise to a host of intangible emotions, a skein of memory that binds us to our roots, a true legacy of love.

*Contributed by Natasha Rego, Sahil Jaswal, Rachna Viridi,  
Rajashree Balaram, Shyamola Khanna & Dr Tapati Baruah Kashyap*



# Crafted with devotion

My Nani Kamla received these *jhumka* and *maang-tikka* from her husband as a symbol of love and devotion. My Nana Vijay Mull, a prominent jewellery designer of Gujarat in the 1960s, wanted to create something special for his doting wife. He wished to show her an image of herself from his own eyes—it was the only way he felt he could demonstrate his love for her. He let his mind immerse itself in her thoughts, he imbibed all her idiosyncrasies and when he felt her essence, he let his hands work the magic of creating these exquisite pieces.

After my Nani passed away in 2010, Nana came to my room one day, the jewellery set in hand. He told me how much he missed her and how much I reminded him of her—he had thus decided to bequeath the ornaments to me.

Every time I wore them, it would be a tribute to their devotion for one another and their legacy of love. Indeed, I wore this shared blessing with pride the day I got married—to the love of my life.

—Niharica Sand, 28, Singapore





Priyanka Rego

## True love points North

**M**y granny Christa Manjrekar is a fiercely independent and determined person—she developed this three-acre farm in Srirangapatna, near Mysuru, and stayed here for 25 years after my grandfather passed away.

I found this compass, and other such antique goodies, while clearing out Granny's desk at the farm around four years ago. She said she got it in high school—in Hamlin, Germany, where she grew up—and later used it while trekking with her kids. I also remember her using the compass to align the positions of her plants when, as a young man of six, I would visit the farm with my sister for the summer holidays. I asked her if I could keep the compass and have had it ever since. I like that it has a crack in the glass and an old, used look. I still sometimes use it to determine true North while working around the farm, which I take care of for her. She is now 83 and plans to hand over the farm to me when I can demonstrate complete self-sufficiency. I have to admit, though, it's harder than she ever made it out to be!

—Anant Singh, 27, Srirangapatna







## When time stands still

**M**y late grandfather Bhimsen Sharma, or *Dadu* as I would fondly call him, was a man of few words; he was very principled and always led by example. Of the billion things I learnt from him, the most important was the value of time. He was very punctual and always the first to reach anywhere—work or even a family occasion. And whether he was going out or just relaxing at home, he always wore his rectangular wristwatch with a black dial and leather strap.

Four years ago, *Dadu* passed away, leaving a deep void. I missed the sense of security he gave me and was filled with regret that I couldn't tell him how much I adored him. That same year, I appeared for my Class 10 board exams wearing his watch—I passed with flying colours. I consider the watch his blessing; when I look at it, I see his kind, smiling face and it comforts me. Indeed, *Dadu* was my silent guardian, a watchful protector, my Dark Knight. I hold on to his watch and imagine him still protecting me.

—Anurag Sharma, 19, Mumbai



# Wrapped in love

**M**y *Dadi* Meenakshi Banerji was a short and tubby woman with great gumption who raised 10 citizens of the world. And she loved her saris—the daily cottons were in a cupboard while her silks were housed in a walk-in closet next to her pooja room. Even today, the smell of sandalwood, *dhoop* and *agarbatti* take me back to that room in my grandparents' home in Meerut where, as a kid, I would watch my mother and her sisters haggle over the saris. Whenever I would admire one of her saris, she would promise to give it to me on my wedding day. Alas, *Dadi* didn't live to see that day; she died when I was 10.

Years later, I would jump into my mother's trunk brimming with silk inheritance and covet the treasure! I had to have this particular piece of gorgeousness when I heard my great grandfather Dr Monmotho Nath Mukherji, physician to the royal family of Narsingharh near Gwalior, wore this hand-woven tissue fabric as a *safa* (traditional headgear) for *Dadi's* wedding.

All these years later, I still miss her presence. However, it is great to know that I can wrap myself—literally—in her love!  
—*Meghna Khanna Hoskote, 37, Bengaluru*



Ida Hewett

# Threads of memory

A storehouse of wisdom, folk stories, riddles and traditional songs, my *Aita* Mariam Begum was the centre of attraction for over two dozen grandchildren of my generation. Every year during the summer vacation, we would go to our ancestral home in Golaghat, about 350 km east of Guwahati, and stay with her. Visiting her during Eid was even more exciting, as she would prepare varieties of sweets.



An expert weaver, *Aita* would spend hours on her loom, weaving new motifs for *mekhela-chador-riha* sets with her nimble fingers. (The *mekhela-chador* is the traditional two-piece Assamese dress; the *riha* is a long, narrow piece of cloth worn around the upper body below the chador during ceremonies and rituals.) As children, touching those exquisite *paat* silks were special moments and we would try wrapping her chadors and *riha* around us.

One Eid, when I was in Class IX, she opened one of her steel trunks and gave me a *riha* she had woven in 1930. "This is for you," she said. "Wear it when you grow up." She chose me as I was the eldest of her three granddaughters. *Aita* left us in 1985 at the age of 78 but her wonderful gift remains, preserved with utmost care. And when I wear it—on very special occasions—the memories come flooding back.

—**Nikumoni Hussain, 48, Guwahati**



Dr Tapati Baruah Kashyap





Uday Singh Katoch

## Silver lining

**M**y *Nana* R S Chowdhary was a proud and righteous man. A farmer by pedigree, he rose to the rank of sarpanch of the tiny village of Muradpur in Pathankot tehsil in Gurdaspur district. And despite threats from many people in the community, he provided safe passage to people crossing over during Partition, putting humanity above the politics of division. Needless to say, we revered him.

One fine day in the 1950s while his house was being remodelled, *Nana* stumbled upon a pot of silver and gold coins in the foundations of the property. In fact, his grandfather had told him about this buried treasure but owing to his untimely demise, the location had remained a mystery. *Nana* was ecstatic at the discovery. Sadly, just as soon as it was found, it was lost again—some workers made off with the bounty. Fortunately, *Nana* had taken five silver coins from the pot before it was stolen. Although distraught, he was happy he had saved at least these coins, his grandfather's gift to him from beyond the grave. So, he passed them onto us, his grandchildren, to commemorate his relationship with his own grandfather—and perhaps begin a new tradition.

—Uday Singh Katoch, 34, Chandigarh







## Sharing her 'mettle'

To me, this bell metal *vaarpu*, which weighs about 80 kg and is at least 120 years old, is an enduring reminder of my paternal grandmother Aleyamma Abraham. I remember the balmy afternoons in our ancestral home in Thiruvella in southern Kerala, when she would lean over this utensil, stirring an assortment of herbs into boiling coconut oil and making unguents, potions and concoctions. Dressed in her starched *chatteyum mundu* (blouse and sarong), she always appeared to be every inch the traditional Malayali Christian woman. No one would have imagined she was a science graduate who could speak impeccable English!

As a child, I followed her like a shadow. When we went to church every Sunday, I was the one chosen to carry her lacy veil. Once while unfolding it, it brushed against a thorny bush and ended up with a ghastly tear. When, in my anguish, I told our family attendant to chop off the bush, she hauled me onto her lap and said, "You will find many thorny shrubs in life. Leave them alone; just keep your distance." In her simple words, she taught me to stay away from negative people instead of spending my energy fighting them.

Aleyamma Abraham died in 2002, at the age of 90. Her *vaarpu* was handed over to me by my father a decade ago. Just like her, it is solid in substance and subtle in its shine. As long as I have this, I know my grandmother and her luminous wisdom continue to walk by my side.

—Abraham Marett, 49, Bengaluru



# Pocketful of love

**M**y grandfather Madan Lal Datta, the eighth of 10 siblings, was born and raised in an Arya Samaji family in Sargodha, the City of Eagles (now in Pakistan). The first of his siblings to go out of the confines of his house to study mechanical engineering, he wore many hats through his rich life: RSS worker, freedom fighter, and deputy director of the Ordnance Factory Board of the Government of India before he retired.

Curiously, he also practised homeopathy. Completely self-taught, he explored the realm of natural medicine through books and journals. And when he went out to purchase the ingredients for the same, he always wore a black Nehru jacket. I have vivid memories of him returning home, his pockets full of white sugar balls that I would yearn to get my hands on!

My grandfather passed away early this year—I wear the jacket now. And putting my hands in the front pockets unfailingly evokes a rush of memory, the anticipation of his return, with his pockets full of sugar.

**—Bhaavak Khullar, 28, New Delhi**



Yukti Khullar



## The family jewel

**M**y paternal grandmother Ratni Bai Chordia is an amazing woman with the ability to make everyone feel special. Among her 28 grandkids, I'd like to believe I'm one of *Amma's* favourite granddaughters! Despite being traditional, she has adapted herself to changing times; she is strong and independent, goes to restaurants and movies, and loves to cook for us. In fact, every time I visit her, she prepares my favourite dish *kath chawal* [a tempered soup-like dish served with steamed rice and tur dal] for me.

One of the most striking things about *Amma* is her attire; she is always dressed in the traditional Rajasthani *ghaghra odhna*, with lots of jewellery. As a child, I would be mesmerised by all the colours and bling—and not much has changed! *Amma* is 94 now but her love for jewellery remains intact; she adorns her fingers with rings and her feet with anklets, something I love wearing too.

When I got married in 2012, she gifted me a beautiful handcrafted gold necklace—it was given to her by her father-in-law and has been in the family for generations. I wear the necklace ardently. It is my favourite piece of jewellery not just because of its beauty but the legacy it embodies. Indeed, *Amma* shines on in her own life, and through all those whose lives she has touched.

—Manasvi Chordia, 30, Chennai





Priyanka Rego

## Katy and me

**M**y grandmother 'Katy', officially known as Catherine Abreo, and I shared a room growing up. So I picked up a lot of my skills, such as stitching, from her. The dress in the photo is one I fashioned out of Katy's sari.

The intricate handmade, pearl-and-glass bead purse I am carrying was a wedding gift from her husband when she was 18. She kept it intact in the box it came in. It ended up in a drawer we shared and I purposely packed it along when I was leaving home many years ago. I like the nostalgia that emanates when you open the purse. Inside, there is a

perfumed handkerchief that smells of yesteryears, a double-sided mirror, and a religious relic.

Katy died last year, but the memories—mostly food-related—live on. For instance, come December, she would take it upon herself to make large batches of Mangalorean *kuswar* (Christmas goodies) and distribute them among family, neighbours and friends. But what I miss most was how she enjoyed my cooking, and food in general. She lived to eat and feed others. That's another thing I got from her!

—Priyanka Rego, 30, Mysuru





## The whole kit

**M**y grandfather Ruplal Bhatti was an Army captain who fought in World War II. He spent his retirement at our village in Jammu, where I would visit him during my vacations. He was a kind and jovial person, full of stories. And he never looked unkempt! A disciplinarian when it came to his hygiene and upkeep, his hair was always cropped, his moustache trimmed and he shaved daily. Even in his last days, he refused to meet anyone until he had shaved. Not to say that he was vain—this was his way of showing his appreciation and preparedness to meet his guests.

His shaving kit was stored in an old Army-issue metal box from the '60s. It contained a shaving brush, shaving cream, a razor, blades, a *surma* stick and a pair of scissors. After his death in 2002, I found the shaving kit while clearing out his cupboard and decided to keep it. It was his most personal item and, now, my family treasure. I have preserved it and everything in it just as they were after his last shave.

—Vikram Bhatti, 41, Mumbai



Natasha Rego

# 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.

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# A life less ordinary

Centenarian Begum Hamida Habibullah continues to take an active interest in trusts and educational institutions set up by her family in Lucknow, writes **Raj Kanwar**

**W**hen Begum Hamida Habibullah celebrated her 100th birthday a few months ago, she became the toast of Lucknow, the city that has been her *karmabhoomi* for a major part of her eventful life. Today, she is among the few centenarian women in the country who are physically as active and mentally as alert as they were in their prime.

I was a rookie journalist in Dehra Dun when I first met Begum Habibullah in 1953. Her husband Major General Enaith Habibullah then headed the Joint Services Wing (JSW) at the Indian Military Academy. It thereafter moved to Khadakwasla, Pune, was christened the National Defence Academy, and has since been serving as the primary training institute for officers of all the three defence services.

Elegantly dressed in a sari, Begum Habibullah, then in her late 30s, epitomised a rare elegance and ethereal beauty that left a deep impression on my young mind. Even though that meeting took place 64 years ago, I still recollect it. She asked a few personal questions and was somewhat surprised that I was then a stringer for three mainstream national dailies. We chatted and sipped coffee. She was courteous enough to escort me to the door of her drawing room. That was our first meeting and, alas, the last!

All the faded memories of that day came rushing back when I read about her 100th birthday celebrations. One of the most remarkable women of her generation, Begum Habibullah still retains her zest for life and a penchant for helping the needy. Today, at 100, she looks as charming and graceful as she was in her prime. A friend's daughter, who was at the celebrations, speaks admiringly of "her zeal and enthusiasm that is at once infectious and compelling. She walks with a straight and elegant gait and hardly anyone could imagine that she had turned a centenarian."

One of the most remarkable women of her generation, Begum Habibullah still retains her zest for life and a penchant for helping the needy. Today, at 100, she looks as charming and graceful as she was in her prime

Begum Habibullah is an amalgam of two of the most refined cultures of the country: Hyderabad and Lucknow. Her father Nawab Nazir Yar Jung was the chief justice of the Hyderabad High Court. The only daughter among four siblings, she excelled in studies and topped the Senior Cambridge examination at Osmania University. Her visit to London as a teenager had greatly influenced her views on life; she took a fancy to English society and way of life and wanted to pursue higher studies at Cambridge University, but that was not to be. Her mother had settled her marriage in the Habibullah family: the Taluqedars of Saidanpur of Bara Banki district in Uttar Pradesh. She had no option but to return to India and yield to her mother's cajoling. She married in 1938 at the age of 22. Her husband was a dashing young man of 28 at the time.

Somewhat unusual for a newlywed, she went to London for a two-year teachers' training course soon afterwards. However, it was just as well, as that training helped her later to promote the cause of women's education. "My mother-in-law was passionate about girls' education and supported me in completing my studies. She prepared me to carry forward her great work in the field of education and uplift of women," she had once told an interviewer.

In no time, Hamida became her mother-in-law's right-hand woman. Together, they founded Talimgah-e-Niswan, a school for girls from the minority communities. Today, it has over 3,500 students, largely from lower-income minority families. She was also made president of Avadh Girls' Degree College, Lucknow's first English-medium degree college for girls. Further, she managed several community-centric activities as the head of family-run educational institutions. Yet, Begum Habibullah invariably managed to find time to travel, socialise and look after her responsibilities as a wife and mother.



As an Army wife, she was of great assistance to her husband who had been commissioned as early as 1930, a period when the Indian Army was predominantly officered by the British. Having been educated in London, she held more than her own in the company of British wives. She was equally popular with the wives of Indian officers in the post-1947 era; she was involved with army wives' associations and helped promote numerous welfare activities. She also played a significant role as hostess to a galaxy of world leaders who visited the Khadakwasla academy where her husband was the commandant. Among the visiting leaders were Nikita Khrushchev and Nikolai Bulganin of the USSR, Queen Soraya and the Shah of Iran, China's Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, and Lady and Lord Mountbatten. Another important leader was Shah Saud of Saudi Arabia, on whose personal invitation both Gen Habibullah and the Begum performed Haj.

Her life took a new turn when she joined politics after her husband's retirement in 1965. In no time, she achieved prominence in her new avatar, thanks to her family's close ties with the Nehrus. She was an MLA, minister of state and member of the Rajya Sabha for six years, and turned out to be a popular politician.

Her husband's death in 1990 again changed the course of her life. Without his anchoring role, she felt at a loss. She even shifted to Delhi to be with her daughter but continued to regularly visit Lucknow, where she resumed her interest in the various institutions founded by her and her mother-in-law. For the past many years, she has been mostly living in Lucknow at her family's sprawling Habibullah Estate. It is here that her granddaughter-in-law Jyotsna Habibullah has proved to be of immense help; she has assumed a prominent role in overseeing the numerous trusts and educational institutions run by the family.

One of Begum Habibullah's ardent admirers is Zarine Viccajee, who has been associated with Avadh Girls'



Degree College for nearly four decades. "The Begum has donned myriad hats with equal felicity—she has been an efficient homemaker, proud wife of a decorated general, social worker, politician and educationist," says Viccajee. "She has achieved so much that it is virtually impossible to encapsulate 100 years of achievement in a brief narrative. What she has achieved in various fields speaks of her amazing talent and *joie de vivre*." Meanwhile, Begum Habibullah's son Wajahat, a distinguished civil servant, has this to say about his mother: "She has been less of a mother and more of a role model for me. From as long as I can remember, and certainly from our days in the Army, she has remained committed to social work."

For his part, grandson Amar reminisces, "My grandmother was my guardian in Delhi as my parents were in Kashmir. She used to give me pocket money regularly, and was very proud that I, too, rode like my grandfather and played polo. She used to attend the matches to cheer for me!" Meanwhile, granddaughter-in-law Jyotsna, who is also her successor in the numerous educational and charitable institutions in Lucknow, is inspired by her "positivity" and "zest for life". "She quotes poems from Shakespeare as well as classic Urdu poets and has interesting anecdotes relating to events of the last century," she remarks.

On a personal note, I, an octogenarian, am also greatly inspired by her indefatigable energy and enthusiasm, and hope to follow in her noble footsteps.

---

*The writer is a veteran journalist based in Dehradun*





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# HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS

**Emily Dickinson** (1830-1886)  
uses the metaphor of a bird  
to imply that hope can be  
found within us


'Hope' is the thing with feathers—  
That perches in the soul—  
And sings the tune without the words—  
And never stops—at all—

And sweetest—in the Gale—is heard—  
And sore must be the storm—  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm—

I've heard it in the chilliest land—  
And on the strangest Sea—  
Yet, never, in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb—of Me.

---

*Heavily influenced by the metaphysical poets of the 17th century, Dickinson experimented with form and poetic expression, freeing it from conventional restraints*

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

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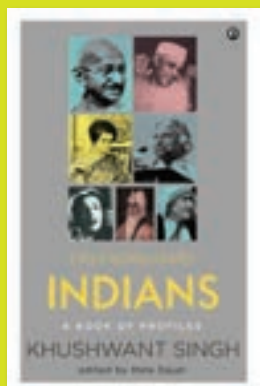
**THE NOTHING** (Penguin Random House; ₹ 599; 288 pages) opens with this rather stark but arresting line: “One night, when I am old, sick, right out of semen, and don’t need things to get any worse, I hear the noises again. I am sure they are making love in Zenab’s bedroom, which is next to mine.” This pretty much sets the tone for what is to follow in **Hanif Kureishi’s** high-strung drama of lust, deceit and revenge. Barely mobile and sexually spent, octogenarian Waldo is the main protagonist of this novella steeped in dark humour. Once a venerated filmmaker, Waldo is debilitated by age and illness. He is obsessed with what his younger wife—22 years his junior—is up to. The setting of the story, largely limited to Waldo’s apartment, adds to the cramped and stifled tone of the narrative. The use of staccato sentences helps to convey the feel of a taut screenplay. In the end, what emerges is the ugly, selfish, vulgar side of human psyche.

Even as governments have changed and metamorphosed, the bureaucracy of the country, embodied in the Indian Administrative Services and the state administrative services, has been left with the task of ensuring stability and continuance of good governance and propriety. To a large extent, this arrangement has worked. Compiled and edited by **C K Mathew**, senior fellow at the Public Affairs Centre (PAC), **IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR: REFLECTIONS OF CHIEF SECRETARIES** (Public Affairs Centre; ₹ 500; 545 pages) presents the personal



reflections and reminiscences of 17 retired state chief secretaries, with each of them highlighting crucial events and crisis situations during their tenure. In this exciting collection of essays, we see a fascinating variety of experiences, good and bad, which have helped shape not just their individual personalities but the destinies of the states they administered. The volume represents the distillation of their practical experiences and reflective wisdom, and provides an interesting peep into the working of the bureaucracy. It is also the first book of its kind in the field of governance literature.

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Passionate, violent, humorous and profound, each story in this collection is representative of the finest of Urdu literary tradition.



**Left, Right and Centre**  
**Nidhi Razdan**  
Penguin; ₹ 599; 288 pages  
Candid and humorous, this anthology brings together diverse political views to further our understanding of India.



# What's that dream?

Make life meaningful by pursuing your true calling in life, writes **Ilchi Lee**

Each of us is a great life and a great soul. When the one holy thought to do something widely beneficial to the world comes out, we need to have the eyes to perceive it, the courage to accept and choose it, and the will to put it into action. In the process of cherishing that one thought and pouring all our devotion into it, we can create true change in the lives of ourselves and humanity.

Human beings appear briefly in time and space and then disappear. From the perspective of the universe, one human living and dying and one fly living and dying are incidents of more or less the same gravity. The universe will not be sadder for you because you died instead of a fly.

Does that mean that human life is futile? No; that's not true. On a certain day, we receive this life as a gift. As we receive that gift, we also receive with it as a gift infinite freedom of choice to make it completely our own. We can live as we choose, and we can even set out the meaning of that life for ourselves.

Life is not meaningless. However, if you don't listen to the voice of your True Self and discover a dream into which you can pour all your passion, all you can do is keep living with a feeling of futility in the midst of a mindlessly hectic lifestyle. You've probably asked yourself this question at the end of the day. Did I live well today? At that time, with what standard do you answer? If you don't have a dream, if you don't have a value that lends meaning to your life, then you will not be able to answer this question even when you have completed your life and gone to your eternal resting place. Did I live my life well?

Dreams are reality that have not yet become true. However, in the hearts of some people, they have already come true. People for whom it's already achieved in their heart and who can see that as they boldly throw themselves into it, those are people who have true courage. Life isn't about

sticking to predetermined conventions. It's not like life exists somewhere in the form of a manufactured good and you're supposed to discover it. Life is about following the voice of your true self and 'inventing' it as something all your own.

Right now, you are planting a single tree. Right now, you are sowing a single seed. And you are beginning to knit something with one strand of yarn. The first step or two are nothing, but imagine that you continue that work for 10 years. One tree becomes a forest, one seed becomes a field, and that single thread becomes a beautiful cloth. Believe in the life inside you, believe in the great and holy mind within you, and push forward with the dream you have chosen until you make it.

When everyone resonates with the holiness and greatness within, we can overcome personal limitations and create mature change for the future of the earth. Not just one or two great individuals, but the birth of a great humanity—this is the only hope of the earth.

Until now, humanity has pursued material success as a primary value. I believe that humanity must now pursue completion of the soul as a central value. The definition of success is relative, requiring arbitrary judgments comparing one person to another, but completion is absolute, based on a standard derived from

your own native conscience. Success as society usually defines it is achieved by acquiring wealth and fame, but completion is achieved by knowing the purpose of your life and living a life that's loyal to that calling. Success is a dog-eat-dog race, but completion is an event where each person prepares their own victory trophy. Completion requires continuous self-reflection and self-motivation for personal improvement. While success in human society requires competition with other people, spiritual completion is instead about helping others....



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*Founder of ChangeYourEnergy.com, Lee is an innovative leader in human brain potential development, and has developed many mind-body training techniques including Dahn Yoga and brain education. He blogs at [www.ilchi.com](http://www.ilchi.com)*

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# Any time money!



Today, we can't imagine banking without the ubiquitous automated teller machine or ATM, which has made it easy to withdraw money 24x7. Surprisingly, 50 years ago, when the first cash machine was introduced at the Enfield branch of Barclays Bank in northern London on 27 June 1967, customers had serious misgivings about the 'robot cashier'. Two days after the Enfield ATM was put into operation, a Swedish device called Bankomat was inaugurated. A fortnight later, another ATM was launched in London by Westminster Bank. Together, these events set in motion the culture of self-service banking.

The story goes that John Shepherd-Barron, a British engineer, came up with the idea of a cash vending machine one Saturday afternoon after he missed his bank's open hours. "It struck me that there must be a way I could get my own money, anywhere in the world or in the UK," he

said in an interview. "I hit upon the idea of a chocolate-bar dispenser, but replacing chocolate with cash." Shepherd-Barron approached Barclays—and transformed the way banking was conducted.

The early machines were clunky, insecure, and could only dispense a fixed amount of cash when activated by a paper token or bespoke plastic card issued to customers at retail branches. After use, these tokens were collected by the branch staff, while plastic cards were sent back to customers by post. However, the science behind these machines has made rapid strides with ATMs now using 'tap-and-go' payment technology. Certain ATMs in Japan even use biometric recognition of the iris, fingerprint and voice to authenticate identity. That said, it's evident that despite a surge in digital banking and card payments, paper currency will continue to be a staple of financial transactions, ensuring that ATMs remain the backbone of retail banking.

## THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: SEPTEMBER 1967

- On 3 September, traffic in Sweden switched lane from driving on the left side of the road to the right.
- On 11 September, skirmishes broke out between China and India at Nathu La pass in Sikkim. Over the next four days, 65 Indian soldiers were killed while China suffered over 400 casualties.
- On 18 September, *Love is a Many Splendored Thing* debuted on US television, becoming the first soap opera to deal with interracial relationships.
- On 22 September, *Helga On the Origins of Human Life*, with its unprecedented approach to human sexuality, premiered at the Universum Film Theatre in Frankfurt.



## “The satisfaction in saving people from certain destruction is immense”

M C Pankaja, 83, Bengaluru, counsels those in distress



J Ramaswamy

**T**he modest premises on Bull Temple Road in Bengaluru reverberates with calls of Pankajakka as clients, trainee counsellors, interns and colleagues seek her out. With her open, mirthful laughter, that is matched by inexhaustible energy, diminutive octogenarian **M C Pankaja** is the dynamo that powers Prasanna Counselling Centre, co-founded in 1980 with the late Ajith Kumar. A teacher for 31 years, Pankaja was a suicide prevention volunteer for 15 years at Victoria Hospital, when Kumar approached her with the proposal to set up a counselling centre, a novel concept in the city then. “The experience I gained by tackling problems within my family urged me to help people facing mental and emotional problems,” says Pankaja, who lost her parents within months of each other when she was just 12, and assumed responsibility

for her family of 12 siblings, although she was the second last among them. Today, with a team of about 50 doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists and trained counsellors, Pankaja provides free counselling to those facing suicidal, marital, behavioural, alcoholic and other problems. To date, she has helped over 13,000 clients and trained over 2,000 counsellors. “She instils a quiet confidence in her clients,” says Sitalakshmi, who was cancer-stricken three years ago and has trained as a counsellor under Pankaja. “Pankajakka’s counselling helped me cope with the disease. Like her, I want to help others.” A spinal degeneration that left her hunched has neither deterred the 83 year-old, nor dimmed her passion. Come rain or shine, ever-smiling, she is at the centre, on the lookout for those who need her help.

—Chitra Ramaswamy

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