

# harmony celebrate age

OCTOBER 2017 ₹ 40

The magazine for silver citizens

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TALES FROM  
THE GONDS

MAGNIFICENT  
NUBRA VALLEY

GUILT-FREE  
FESTIVE FOODS

## JOINT EFFORT

CUTTING-EDGE SOLUTIONS AND  
EMERGING TRENDS IN JOINT REPLACEMENT

### PROACTIVE

Dr Radhika Khanna  
empowers the  
differently abled

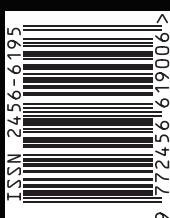
### INTERVIEW

Filmmaker  
Vinod Pande  
calls the shots

### NEW COLUMN

### CAPITAL GAINS

Financial advice  
for silvers by  
Dick Mody



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# Rain or shine

As I write this, the rains are lashing the city of Mumbai with ferocity for the second time in less than a month. While many of the city's residents—and authorities—appear a little better prepared this time round, the trauma of such events remains acute for silvers living alone.

For anyone, nature is a deadly foe when she unleashes her fury, hard to confront and almost impossible to prevail over. For silvers, the battle is even harder. Often isolated from family and community, suffering from mobility and health issues, and lacking the digital skills to keep updated on the latest weather reports as well as letting their loved ones know their location and level of danger, they are among the most vulnerable.

This is not a phenomenon unique to India. It is hurricane season in the US right now with storms like Harvey, Irma, Jose and Maria making the headlines. And every informed, post-event analysis invariably mentions the people hardest hit: the poor and the elderly.

While immediate worries for silvers during natural disasters can include lack of access to food, increased risk of dehydration, missed medications, and confusion and disorientation owing to loss of power, the long-term consequences can be surprisingly harder. In fact, a study conducted among the elderly survivors of the 2011 tsunami in Japan revealed that those who were subjected to intense trauma, especially destruction of assets and property, were more likely to experience cognitive decline, leading to dementia.



Dabboo Ratnani

It is clear that elders need comprehensive support mechanisms during natural disasters. And, sadly, it is even more evident that our country does not have them for anyone—let alone silvers. In the absence of institutional mechanisms, then, we need to be more proactive about our safety; get connected to the larger community, digitally and socially; and, as an American disaster management manual advises, 'Make Yourself Known'.

It's a crucial and timely lesson. On 1 October, the world celebrates the International Day of Older Persons. In fact, the UN's theme for this year is something that finds deep resonance with all that we say and do at Harmony: 'Stepping into the Future: Tapping the Talents, Contributions and Participation of Older Persons in Society.' However, while we continue to work towards these lofty goals, let us first take care of the basics. Stay informed, stay connected, stay safe—the rest will follow.

*Tina Ambani*

## A Harmony for Silvers Foundation Initiative

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### TALE OF A CITY

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Break away from pain and immobility  
with cutting-edge orthopaedic solutions

Cover photograph: [123RF.com](http://123RF.com)

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# column one

Osteoarthritis is not just a word—for those who live with the condition, it can spell a life sentence of acute pain. Take the case of a professionally active and socially engaged 71 year-old, the father of a dear friend. The cartilage in both his knees is worn, the bones clamped, the pain debilitating. Yet he soldiers on, able to move because of his whippet-thin frame and sheer will-power. Otherwise, he is in excellent health, a prime candidate for joint-replacement surgery. There's only one catch: he adamantly refuses it.

Therein lies the rub. Despite osteoarthritis emerging as the most common cause of silver immobility, many continue to resist surgery, fearful of the risks. However, as we discuss in our cover feature "Joint Effort", the implants and surgical methods now available in India ensure painless and precise procedures that minimise error and recovery times, and maximise quality of life.

Maximising life is a concept Vinod Pande understands. A self-confessed "prowler on the quest of the undefined", he has played myriad roles—newsreader, broadcaster, adman, filmmaker, author—in his colourful journey. Meanwhile, bringing value to the lives of others is Dr Radhika Khanna, whose non-profit trains the mentally challenged in Mumbai in diverse skills, enabling them to create an array of marketable products.

Elsewhere, we introduce 'Capital Gains', a financial-advisory column by money expert Dick Mody; take you to the breathtaking Nubra Valley; bring you riveting images of the Gonds in central India; and serve up some sin-free, scrumptious food in time for the festive season. Savour the spread!

—Arati Rajan Menon

We are a group of seven retired professionals who got together as volunteers to form The Gracious Living Foundation (GLF), an organisation in Delhi that aims at 'caring for the elderly'. GLF assists in establishing pay-and-stay, not-for-profit homes for silvers who are financially secure but vulnerable to anti-social predators and find the hassles of daily living in their sunset years difficult to manage.

Silvers complain of loneliness, boredom and apathy and feel marginalised by the family, which leads to loss of self esteem. To help them deal with these issues, GLF arranges monthly meetings where they can exchange fellowship over tea or coffee and participate in intellectually stimulating activities. GLF also brings out a bi-annual newsletter containing articles of interest and encourages silvers to write so they can spend their

time in a productive way. We also bring out an annual booklet, 'Memories are Made of This – The Extraordinary Lives of Ordinary Elders', which contains interviews of lesser-known silvers whose lives have been inspirational and rewarding. We invite your readers to contribute articles of interest for both our newsletter and booklet. Those interested can email me at [jasmeera1@gmail.com](mailto:jasmeera1@gmail.com)

**Major Jasbir Singh**  
New Delhi

## HITS OF THE MONTH

Our most-read stories in  
September 2017 on

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

1. Joy on a plate
2. A mighty heart
3. Fittest @ 55

## CONTRIBUTORS



A 25-year veteran in the Indian equity markets, **Dick Hosi Mody** is the founder of Ethical Advisers. A qualified Chartered Accountant and Company Secretary, he has gained rich investing experience in global financial centres, including Mumbai, London, New York, San Francisco and Florida, with top investment banks including JP Morgan, Morgan Stanley, Deutsche and Raymond James, largely in his capacity as Head of Sales/Executive

Director for the North America and UK regions. With Ethical Advisers, his endeavour is to bring to clients his experience and knowledge gained while personally advising some of the most respected institutional asset managers across India, the US, UK, Asia and the Middle East. In his new column 'Capital Gains', he will answer frequently asked questions and readers' queries in a bid to help silvers gain financial independence and secure their long-term goals.



Our columnist in 'At Large' this month, **B Arvind**, better known as **Shubha Vilas**, holds degrees in electronic engineering and patent law. He describes writing books as "an extension of his deep sense of responsibility towards society". In 2013, he took on the monumental task of writing a series of books on the *Ramayana*. The first four books in the series *Ramayana - The Game of Life* are bestsellers and provide insights on how to solve modern dilemmas using life lessons from the epic. His next book, *The Chronicles of Hanuman*, is an inspiring saga of the Monkey God, replete with interesting folk tales, local lore about Hanuman temples across India, and Hanuman prayers.



▶ MEDIA WATCH

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

**T**he buzz is that the backlash against the term 'anti-ageing' has begun. In its September issue, the editor-in-chief of women's magazine *Allure* announced that the term will no longer find place in the magazine. "Whether we know it or not, we're subtly reinforcing the message that ageing is a condition we need to battle—think anti-anxiety meds, anti-virus software, or anti-fungal spray," she proclaimed in her editorial. In addition, 72 year-old British actor Helen Mirren, the face of L'Oréal's Age Perfect range, has also publicly expressed her concerns over the term, saying, "This word 'anti-ageing'—we know we're getting older. You just want to look and feel as great as you can on a daily basis." Next came Ann Jenkins, CEO of American elder advocacy giant AARP, who wrote on social media that AARP will follow *Allure's* lead and drop 'anti-ageing' and "other age-related terms that that serve no other purpose than to, well... make people feel bad about ageing".

While these steps are indeed laudable, the question remains whether these moves are merely PR gimmicks. Consider this: Magazines like *Allure* will continue to feature products and articles that focus on looking 'young'. And Mirren will continue to be a brand ambassador for L'Oréal. So, as website [dailymail.co.uk](http://dailymail.co.uk) points out, an 'anti-ageing' potion could now be described as a 'youth liberator', or a wrinkle cream could now be called a 'line interceptor'. A case of old wine in a new bottle, then? You decide.







Josh Barrett / Channel 4



*I expected there to be positive changes but I was absolutely blown away by the impact the children had in such a short space of time*

# An experiment in LOVE

This could be the best thing you'll see all year. A 'televised experiment' by Britain's Channel 4, **Old People's Home For Four Year Olds** invited 10 preschoolers into a residential home in Bristol and paired them with 10 silvers. Through their shared activities—from colouring to camping, walks in the garden to indoor games and much, much conversation—the show illustrates the tremendous impact intergenerational bonding can have. While the long-term aim to document the scientific impact on the mood, memory and ability of the silvers will take time to be realised, the immediate effect is plain to see: silver frowns turned upside down, radiant faces across the board, a spring in every step!

"I expected there to be positive changes but I was absolutely blown away by the impact the children had in such a short space of time," psychotherapist Dr Melrose Stewart, who drove the experiment, tells media. "And the positives have continued after the experiment. They have built relationships so the children are still visiting and they are setting up a nursery in the old people's home." The residents couldn't be happier. "To find a child's hand in yours is one of the most moving things that can happen to you," says Zina, one of the silvers featured in the programme. Prepare to be moved—watch the two-part series at [www.channel4.com/programmes/old-peoples-home-for-4-year-olds](http://www.channel4.com/programmes/old-peoples-home-for-4-year-olds)

## DON'T SUBMIT TO SOCIETY

**Cultural conditioning**—not age—is responsible for much of the downslide associated with the silver years. That's the conclusion of 88 year-old author **Barbara Morris**, who insists that advanced age and mental and physical decline are not necessarily a cause-and-effect phenomenon in her book, **The New Put Old on Hold**. Blaming a societal mindset that dictates how elders are expected to think, dress, and

behave, she writes "It's like groupie teenage thinking and behaviour that stunts growth and development. The conventional senior lifestyle is an antiquated approach to living the older years. It facilitates decline and convinces retirees they are old and helpless, which robs them of years of youthful vitality... You can't warehouse healthy mature individuals in 'seniors only' facilities and communities and not expect rapid mental and physical decline because



the predominant decline-oriented thinking and behaviours of the group become the norm for all."

Her solution: creating awareness that we don't have to "cave in to culturally mandated decline... and forfeit youthful abilities and

a vibrant lifestyle because of reaching an arbitrary age established by the government". The book is available on Amazon India ([amazon.in](http://amazon.in)) for ₹ 622. You can also subscribe to Morris's monthly newsletter at [putoldonholdjournal.com](http://putoldonholdjournal.com)

## LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

We've told you that silvers are having sex more than ever before (see 'Sex on the Side'). We've also drawn attention to the rising incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in this demographic. Now, website Pornhub is doing its bit to help with the launch of '**Old School, a guide to safe sex after 65**'. This 15-minute video stars Nina Hartley—a nurse, sex educator and porn star (but, of course!)—who explains how to prevent and treat STDs and serves up some sex tips to relight the fire in the silver bedroom. Watch it at [www.pornhub.com/cares/old-school](http://www.pornhub.com/cares/old-school) or <https://youtu.be/AZ6p-YzGkfE>—just make sure the grandkids are asleep!



## Retail Therapy

World over, the clothing retail industry tends to be ageist and exclusionary rather than inclusive, leaving many silvers feel marginalised on the fringes. With this in mind, the National Retail Research Knowledge Exchange Centre at Nottingham Business School in the UK recently held a special symposium on '**Engaging with the Ageing**'. Here were some key takeaways, as reported by website *retail-week.com*:

- Understand the individual, not the category. Retailers must learn to see older shoppers as a varied and diverse collection of individuals, rather than a homogeneous group.
- Involve older people in retail, particularly in fashion design, to make mature shoppers feel more engaged.
- Be aware of subtle cues and turnoffs. For instance, rethink the age of staff working on makeup counters to make shoppers of all ages feel comfortable.
- Hire staff from a more diverse range of ages and pay older employees better.
- Size does matter. Whether it is women's clothing design or groceries, where older people tend to prefer smaller portions, retailers need to be more flexible and adapt to shoppers' varying needs.
- Retail can lead the way. Rather than being reactive to the ageing population, be proactive, set the tone, and change business models.



Photographs by 123RF.com

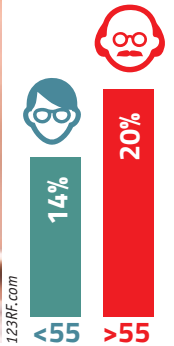
**TOP GUN!** It's been called farcical, silly and sloppy—and these are just the kind reviews! But we still can't help tell you about British comedy *Gun Shy*, because it stars the eternally yummy **Antonio Banderas**. The 57 year-old Spanish actor stars as an ageing rock star going to seed who is forced to man up and undertake a rescue mission when his supermodel wife is kidnapped on vacation. Outrageously over the top and milking his persona to the max, Banderas is the one reason to go watch this. But is it enough? Check out the trailer at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkepKxr3gmo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkepKxr3gmo) and decide.



**<3 NYPD** The Big Apple may soon get safer for silvers. Under a new programme called 'Senior Safe', the New York Police Department aims to teach elders how to protect themselves. As news agencies report, officers of NYPD are visiting senior centres across the city and handing out 'anti-crime goodie bags' including safety information and some seriously cool stuff, like bracelets that can sound an alarm in an emergency and a special pen to write checks that can't be counterfeited.

**UDUPI SCALES UP** The Udupi district hospital at Ajjarkad has set up a dedicated four-bed ICU for senior citizens at a cost of over ₹ 1 million. The move has been lauded as silvers from across the district flock to this nodal facility for treatment.

**HEALING TOUCH** On 27 August, Dr V S Natarajan Geriatric Foundation organised a free multidisciplinary medical camp—'Paediatric to Geriatric'—in collaboration with the Korattur Adhiparasakthi Mandram in Chennai. Doctors and technicians from various medical disciplines, such as geriatrics, paediatrics, cardiology, ENT, psychiatry, ophthalmology, dentistry and diabetes, conducted consultations and comprehensive checkups and tests (eye, dental, ECG and BMD) apart from diet and nutrition counselling. Prescription medicines were dispensed free of cost and consultations for alternative medicines such as Siddha, naturopathy and homeopathy were also held. Nearly 450 people, mostly from below the poverty line, benefitted from the camp.



So much for 'old-fashioned' values! According to a recent study on fidelity spanning generations, **silvers are having more extramarital sex than younger people.** In the study, conducted at the University of Utah, while 14 per cent of married Americans under the age of 55 reported indulging in extramarital sex, the rate went up to 20 per cent for those over 55. "Even as overall divorce rates have fallen in recent decades, there has been a startling surge in 'grey divorce' among the middle-aged," study leader Professor Nicholas H Wolfinger tells website *patch.com*. "Part of that story seems to be a corresponding increase in midlife adultery, which seems to be both the cause and the consequence of a failing marriage. While the declining rate of extramarital sex among younger Americans seemingly portends a future of monogamous marriage, the seeds sown by the sexual revolution continue to bear unanticipated fruit among older Americans." (Jaw drops.)

## O POSITIVE

**THE ORISSA** government is thinking silver. The state has announced that it will set up **counselling-cum-helpline centres in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack for elders.** These will be manned by skilled counsellors from an NGO, following the signing of an MoU. Further, **police stations in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack have received motorcycles and smart phones to regularly visit the homes of silvers and monitor their safety.** In tandem, the state has launched a drive to get silvers registered with their local police station and will soon launch a web-based application to make the process easier and enable them to upload details of their tenants, domestic helps and drivers online. Nice.



## THE ROBOT EFFECT

### ARE THEY EFFECTIVE

or more of a gimmick? It's a question often asked about the potential of robots in silver care. And now, we appear to have something of an answer. A new study at Griffith University in South Queensland, Australia, has attested to the **positive effect of social robots on tackling agitation in people with dementia**. The team examined how 415 silvers with dementia across 28 care facilities interacted with



Courtesy: Griffith University

robotic seal Paro, which has the ability to respond to touch, temperature and voice. They found that the robot had the ability to engage silvers to an extent, getting them to speak more, connect visually and become less agitated. Interestingly, they also found that a soft toy animal could

also be used as something of a substitute if resources were limited, although it was less effective. "Our Paro study is the largest and most rigorous of any social robot study that has ever been undertaken anywhere," lead researcher Professor Wendy Moyle tells magazine

*Australian Ageing Agenda*. "Our study has shown an effect, albeit a modest one, on agitation. This was our primary outcome and the most difficult of symptoms of dementia to reduce." The research was published in the *Journal of American Medical Directors Association*.



Yun Seong Song et al 2017

**'recycling' makes the ascent easier, reducing force on the ankle by 26% and knee by 37%**

## Step up

HERE'S SOME next-level technology, literally. Researchers from Georgia Institute of Technology and Emory University in Atlanta have developed **'high-tech stairs' that absorb your energy when you descend and release it when you ascend**. As website *sciencedaily.com* tells us, this 'recycling' makes the ascent easier, reducing force on the ankle by 26 per cent and knee by 37 per cent—a boon for silvers and the differently abled. The technology, which works with

the help of latched springs, was the brainchild of Karen Liu, an associate professor at Georgia Tech's School of Interactive Computing; she got the idea after watching her 72 year-old mother struggle to climb stairs. "Current solutions for people who need help aren't very affordable," she tells the website. "Elevators and stair lifts are often impractical to install at home. Low-cost, easily installed assistive stairs could be a way to allow people to retain their ability to use stairs and not move out of their homes." The study was published in journal *PLOS ONE*.

### FINE BALANCE

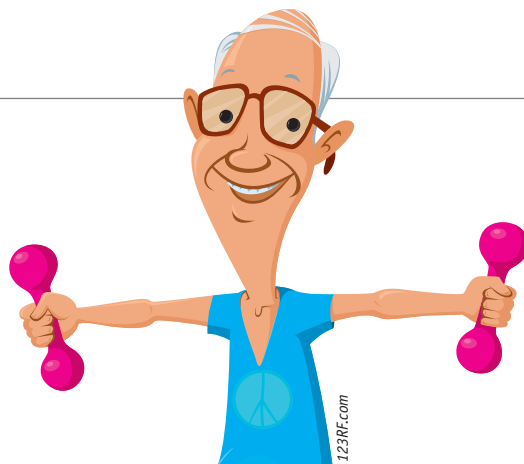
The combination of a **sensor-equipped belt and a smartphone app could improve balance and reduce falls among silvers with Parkinson's**. As

website *cnet.com* reports, this 'Smarter Balance System' being developed at the University of Houston has the ability to record the movements of patients and send feedback via vibrations to guide them through a series of balance exercises. "The smartphone application records and creates a custom motion for their body tilt based on their individual limits of stability," says researcher Alberto Fung on the university's website *uh.edu*. "The touch guidance from the vibrating actuators is almost acting as if a physical therapist is guiding them." The data is also uploaded on an online server for doctors and therapists to review. With favourable results in an initial six-week test, the team is confident of an eventual large-scale rollout.



Courtesy: University of Houston

**Get moving.** We've said it many times before. And now, new research is impelling us to say it again: exercise is akin to a 'magic pill' for good health in the silver years. According to a study conducted at Tufts University in Massachusetts, by adding just 48 minutes of walking, flexibility or balance training a week to their routine, silvers reported a marked improvement in physical functioning and a considerable reduction in disability risk. Just under one hour! Surely, your health is worth that investment?



## Then: Plastic file folder Now: Multipurpose wall hanging

If you run out of space to store your stuff, turn to the wall! All you need is four file folders (depending on the number of pockets you want), a stapler, scrapbook paper, scissors, glue and ribbon. Start by layering the folders, leaving about six inches between the tops of each folder. Staple together the sides of the folder and then close the sides. Trim the scrapbook paper to fit each file folder and adhere with glue. It helps the longevity of the craft if you laminate it; it also keeps it looking newer. Using the scissors, slice through the laminate at the top of each folder, opening up a slit. Cut two pieces of ribbon for each folder. Glue or pin one end of each ribbon to the back of the folder and tie the other end in a bow in the front. Your wall hanging is ready. Cut two holes or more on the top, depending on how heavy the storage material will be, and hang it up.

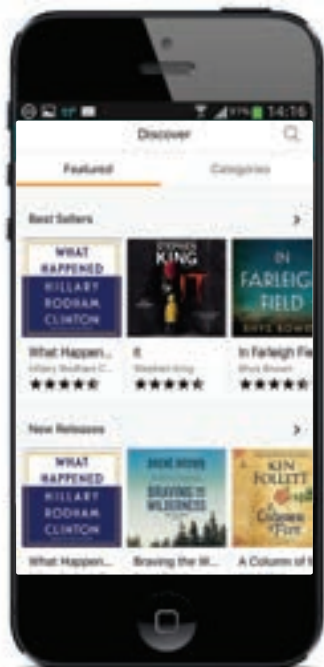


### RECYCLING FACTS

- File folders are usually made of plastic (polypropylene or PP) or paper.
- PP is fully recyclable and is also used to make bottle caps, yoghurt cups and drinking straws.
- PP produces significantly less CO2 equivalents by weight than PET, PS and PVC.

### MORE RECYCLING IDEAS...

1. FILE FOLDERS CAN OFTEN BE REUSED BY INVERTING THE FOLDER, INSIDE OUT.
2. USE OLD FILE FOLDERS TO MAKE CREATIVE GIFT TAGS. THE HIGH DENSITY OF FOLDERS IS PERFECT FOR SUCH USES.



## AUDIBLE

**Available for:** iPhone, iPad, compatible with: iOS 9.0 or later; Android

**What it does:** Audible is the world's premier listening experience. If books are your passion but your busy schedule is a hindrance, this Amazon company satisfies your hunger for stories while commuting, driving, running, or just about anywhere else.

**How it works:** The app starts with the 'Get Started' or 'Sign In' options; both take you to a sign-in page. Sign in with email or your Amazon id and password and a world of books opens up to you. At the bottom of the page are tabs that help you navigate through the app seamlessly: the 'Discover' tab lets you see the bestsellers, new releases and editors' picks. 'My Library' hosts the audio books you have saved across all devices... yes, it syncs up. The 'Channels' tab lets you scroll through various channels you can follow for regular updates and new stories. And the 'More' tab basically has your profile settings. With the world's largest selection of audio books and premium spoken-word entertainment, you are bound to satiate your thirst for the written—rather, spoken—word.

Aster DM Healthcare, Dubai, has launched the 'Aster Emergency App' in India. A non-profit initiative, the app gives the user access to life support in the golden hour—the time between the medical emergency striking and the arrival of the first certified trained help. Using a real-time interface, the app links the patient with a GPS-enabled Aster responder, ambulance services and, ultimately, the hospital. "Starting from Calicut in Kerala, the app will be rolled out to various cities across India in phases," Padma Shri Azad Moopen, founder chairman & MD, Aster DM Healthcare, tells media.

## LINCOCES

**Available for:** iPhone, iPad, compatible with OS 8.0 or later; Android

**What it does:** This is a simple way to pinpoint and send your exact location—it claims to 'get an accurate 12-digit address for every corner of India'. Launched by NextEra Solutions, this is a digital addressing system that has transformed pin codes into a grid of over 360 billion squares of 10ft x 10ft; each square has been assigned its own unique 12-digit pin.

**How it works:** After the initial display of the logo, the app opens up the primary menu with the 'Go to Map', and 'Sign in/Register' tabs. We first went straight to the map to check the functionality. The pin on the map functions seamlessly and without delay; the quality of the map is also on a par with Google. You can send and search for locations without registering; but if you register (easily with Facebook), many more options open up, like 'SOS/Help me', where you can send emergency messages to preselected contacts with your last location. You can also save a list of multiple LinCodes for frequent use; based on your privacy settings, your friends and family can view these saved locations. Registering also gives you a personalised marker and updates your contact list—if anyone on it has the app, their name is displayed. You can switch from map view to satellite view at any point and the clarity is impeccable. If your car breaks down or you are stranded in the middle of nowhere and your taxi can't find the exact location, LinCodes helps lead the right people directly to your location.





# CHEER UP!

Photographs by 123RF.com

**D**epression is an all-too-common condition but here's a 'wonder drug' that could chase away the blues. A pilot project conducted by scientists at the University of New South Wales in Australia has found that **ketamine—licensed as an anaesthetic but also used illegally as a recreational drug—works remarkably well in easing depression in silvers.** During a clinical trial, a small group of 16 chronically depressed individuals over the age of 60 were injected with low doses of ketamine over five weeks. Although the effect varied between patients, 11 participants reported they had “no significant symptoms of depression” after six months. The findings were published in the *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*. Meanwhile, scientists at Oxford University in England have been administering ketamine to patients with treatment-resistant depression with very positive results. However, researchers advise caution while arriving at conclusions about the drug as studies are still in their early stages.

According to Dr Shaunak Ajinkya, consultant psychiatrist at Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, “Ketamine has an immediate antidepressant action in major depressive disorders when used as the primary treatment as well as when used as pre-ECT anaesthesia. Of late, intravenous administration of ketamine has been found to be generally safe and well tolerated as a rapidly acting antidepressant treatment in medically stable, refractory uni-polar depression.”



## A TOMATO A DAY...

**T**his red flag signals good news! While this mouth-watering fruit is known to benefit the skin, a new study suggests that **tomatoes can cut the risk of skin cancer by as much as half**. Scientists have found that the active ingredient is the pigmenting compound or dietary carotenoids in tomatoes, which give the fruit its signature red colour. This is the conclusion of a recent study performed at Ohio State University in the US, where male mice were fed a diet consisting of 10-per-cent tomato powder every day and exposed to ultraviolet rays. After 35 weeks, the mice showed a 50-per-cent reduction in cancerous growths. The findings were published in journal *Scientific Reports*.

## Watch your mouth

Pizzas, burgers, cakes... who doesn't love those tasty treats? But watch what you eat as processed foods are a health hazard. Scientists at the University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, Tucson, in the US, analysed data from over 90,000 women and found **a link between dietary energy density (DED) and obesity-related cancers in post-menopausal women**. Fruits and vegetables are rich in nutrients and have low energy density, whereas processed foods like sugary desserts are high in energy density and low in nutrients and, therefore, put you at risk of obesity-related cancer. The findings were published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*.



For all those who wonder why this nut is listed as a superfood, chew on this. Apart from being rich in fibre, omega-3 fatty acid and alpha-linoleic acid and having the highest concentration of antioxidants, **walnuts can change the makeup of gut bacteria and thus improve health**. In an experiment on rodents at the LSU Health New Orleans School of Medicine in Louisiana in the US, two diet groups were examined

for a specific period on the basis of their walnut consumption. Over time, the researchers found that beneficial bacteria 'lactobacillus' had significantly increased in the descending colon of the walnut-eating group. This suggests that walnut acts as a probiotic and boosts the activity of beneficial bacteria, which in turn leads to improved health. The findings were published in *The Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry*.



## MATTERS OF THE HEART

**O**n the rise world over, cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death. But we can finally take heart—it's **possible to 'grow' new arteries to replace damaged ones**. Scientists at the Morgridge Institute for Research and University of Wisconsin, Madison, in the US, have discovered a technique whereby stem cells can be used to grow functional arterial endothelial cells that can exhibit specific functions of the body. The procedure was tested on mice with dying heart tissue; their bodies were able to successfully create new arteries, which improved their survival rate. The seven-year project sponsored by the National Institutes of Health is currently under experimentation. The findings were published in journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.



# Going the distance

**W**hat are the wages of war? Major General (retd) **Somnath Jha** is more qualified than most to answer that question. A year ago, he gave himself the unusual mission of cycling two minutes for each fallen comrade. And there have been so many—20,600 soldiers have died in the line of duty since Independence—that his pedalling took him through all 29 states of the country. His odyssey, which covered 11,000 km, lasted just over six months.

“The Army is not a career,” he says. “It is a way of life. It shapes you, defines you and stays with you long after your duty to the nation is done.” Jha’s ‘Veteran’s Homage’, as he calls it, began on 19 October 2016, just 18 days after his retirement from Ambala Cantonment in Haryana. He was accompanied by his wife Chitra, a self-improvement coach who was also his personal motivator and the driving force behind his social media campaign.

While he cycled, she drove their car, taking care of the logistics of the journey. As they traversed seven to 12 hours a day, Chitra’s online following helped them find places to stay at night. The nights, in fact, turned out to be the highlights of the adventure—they were hosted at assorted inspection bungalows, Army camps and police stations across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal. Their most unusual stopover, he recalls, was a petrol pump in Jharkhand!

For 183 days, Jha pedalled through jungles and over mountains, in smog, fog, winter chill, icy rain and scorching sun. Some stretches were bare and unpopulated, others were bustling. “We only had a tentative route



Courtesy: Somnath Jha

**Jha with a youngster who gave him company on the Jharkhand leg of his expedition**

and a sketchy schedule,” he recalls. “My original reckoning was that we’d take 202 days to do my journey but we completed it in 183.”

At 58 years of age, it wasn’t all easy going. “In Arunachal Pradesh, my cycle skidded on some gravel and I injured my left knee,” he says. Not wanting to jeopardise the journey, he convalesced for three days before hopping back on his trusty bicycle. As he puts it, like any battle, “Once begun, it could only conclude after the mission of 42,000 minutes in the saddle.”

Though his journey wasn’t about visiting memorials, he met the families of many unsung heroes along the way, while ex-servicemen would stand in wait along his route, having heard of his mission. Other highlights, according to him, include Chitra singing *Ae mere watan ke logon* at the Town Hall in Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh; a race with boys from the National Cadet Corps in Udaipur, Rajasthan; and authentic Punjabi samosas in Phagwara. Also in Punjab, they met another duo, a father and son aged 48 and 16, who joined them at Beas and cycled with Jha all the way to Amritsar and then to Gurdaspur the following day, as their way of saluting the armed forces. “The father-son duo was special because when they heard I would be passing by, they

bought themselves two bicycles,” recalls Jha. “They had probably never cycled more than 3-4 km before, but they cycled 135 km over the two days they were with us.”

By December, the media had begun to cover his unique campaign. There were rousing receptions, media interactions and motivating encounters with children and citizens along the way. “The love and adulation received from citizens in every nook and corner of the country was an emotionally humbling and physically uplifting experience,” he says.

In fact, Jha had wanted to pay his respects to India’s fallen heroes for a while but hadn’t known how. Inspiration struck when a video link appeared in his inbox showing how Mike Ehredt, a US Army soldier, had honoured his fallen comrades by running a mile for each of them. Jha settled on a bicycle as his medium.

His journey ended at the Amar Jawan Jyoti, New Delhi, on 19 April, this year, amid a stirring reception by the Army and well-wishers who had been following Chitra’s narrative of the journey on social media. “Paying my respects to every soldier who had sacrificed their life for independent India and its people was a huge emotional accomplishment for me.” Salute.

—Sahil Jaswal

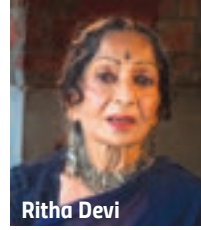




Amitabh Bachchan



Hema Malini



Ritha Devi

## BIRTHDAYS

English actor, singer and author **Julie Andrews** turns 82 on 1 October.

Actor **Amitabh Bachchan** turns 75 on 11 October.

Actor **Hema Malini** turns 69 on 16 October.

New-age guru **Deepak Chopra** turns 71 on 22 October.

Industrialist **Sunil Bharti Mittal** turns 60 on 23 October.

Former US Secretary of State and Democratic presidential candidate **Hillary Clinton** turns 70 on 26 October.

## IN PASSING

Noted Marathi poet and activist **Shirish Pai** passed away on 2 September after a brief illness. She was 88.

Senior journalist, editor and activist **Gauri Lankesh** was killed outside her home in Bengaluru on 5 September. She was 55.

Famed Odissi dancer and great-grand niece of Rabindranath Tagore **Ritha Devi** passed away on 12 September after a cerebral stroke. She was 93.

**Arjan Singh**, Marshal of the Indian Air Force and India's oldest five-star ranked Air Force officer, passed away following a cardiac arrest on 16 September. He was 98.

## MILESTONES

- Chandigarh-based sprinter **Man Kaur**, 101, has been nominated for the Laureus World Sports Award 2017 in the 'Best Sporting Moment' category for winning the 100-m sprint at the World Masters Games in Auckland. Kaur is one of six contenders—watch her special moment ('Age is just a number') and vote for her at [mylaureus.com!](https://mylaureus.com/)
- Industrialist **Ratan Tata**, 79, was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement in Public Life award by NGO Giants International in an event held on 17 September in Mumbai.

## OVERHEARD

**"Romance and intimacy are not just the domain of the young.... Well, of course, you still feel desire. Does that ever go? To the older reader, I would say: 'Don't give up.' I have a jolly nice friend now. I don't know what the word is because I don't like the word 'partner'. Partner is something to do with dancing. Partner—horrible word. Friend? No. Boyfriend? No. Chap? Will chap do?"**

**—Oscar-winning Dame Judi Dench, 82, speaking to Radio Times magazine. The British actor, who was widowed in 2001, is in a relationship with conservationist David Mills since 2010**

## HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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

### THE PRESIDENT & I

The late Dr A P J Abdul Kalam was a 'People's President' and a very special human being, someone whose stature will be difficult to match in that high office. I think what inspired me most about him was his faith in God, which helped him rise above a difficult childhood and propelled him to eventually occupy the highest office in the land. On the occasion of his birth anniversary this month, I remember his words, "You are the creator of your own destiny."

I have a flair for poetry and after Dr Kalam became President, I wrote a poem based on him and sent it to him along with a book of poems I had written earlier. I received a reply from his secretary, followed by a personal letter from Dr Kalam thanking me for sending him my poems! The poems were in Hindi and Punjabi, and he got them translated into English. He liked them, especially one titled *Life Is A Mystery*.

This was such a great honour but I had no idea that the most momentous event of my life was yet to come. The next day, I received a telephone call that shook my world. The voice said, "I am Sharma speaking from Rashtrapati Bhavan. I am secretary to President Dr A P J Abdul Kalam. This is to inform you that he is coming to Mumbai on 12 September 2005 and would like to meet you. We have already informed the police commissioner's office and you can go and get your pass."

I was speechless but managed to answer his questions and thank him. I was 80 years old then and, to date, nothing has been able to top this experience. On 12 September, my son drove me to the Santacruz airport's ceremonial lounge, where I was to meet the President. After a thorough security check, we were guided to a room where military and police officers were milling around. Being a Navy wife, I had no hesitation and I promptly introduced myself to him.



Courtesy: Banshi Singh

Meeting President Kalam was the most momentous event in Singh's life

Soon, we were guided to the hall where the President *sahib* was seated. When we were still halfway across the hall, he stood up and shook our hands. We were told we would get four to five minutes but we got more than 15 minutes to chat with him! Dr Kalam asked me about my husband and my family. I told him he was an Army doctor, who had been transferred to the Navy, and that we were originally from Lahore in Pakistan and had come to India during Partition. He was pleased that I wrote poetry and he signed my book. Then he asked my son a few questions about himself, posed with us for a few photos, and we left carrying with us warm memories of meeting the most distinguished President of India.



Later, I kept in touch with him, writing to him on special occasions. When I heard of the 'thinking hut' he had set up on the premises of Rashtrapati Bhavan, where he spent quiet moments in creative contemplation, I wrote asking if I could visit him in his hut. His secretary promptly responded, asking when I could make it to Delhi. Unfortunately, I never made the trip as I had taken ill and did not have the opportunity to meet Dr Kalam again before he retired as President.

Looking back, it doesn't really matter. I was chosen to have met this distinguished, loving and caring personality once, and will always cherish the memory.

—Bansi Singh, Mumbai

## WELFARE FIRST

Although I am now 76 years old, I have been working for the cause of silvers well before I became one myself. It is, therefore, with great pride that I say that I am president of the Senior Citizens' Society at Freedom Fighters Enclave at Neb Sarai, New Delhi.

I put down roots in Delhi in 1964, where I ran my family's typewriter business along with my brother. After I got married, I bought a house in Sheikh Sarai and settled there. Although busy with work during the 10 years I lived there, I actively worked with the Residents' Welfare Association (RWA) of our colony and was also associated with NGOs such as Healthy Ageing India and Age-Care India. Healthy Ageing India was then headed by Dr Prashun Chatterjee from AIIMS, who promoted the concept of ageing and organised senior citizens' runs. I will always remember our discussions on how to improve the lives of silvers.

In 1998, my family and I shifted to Fighters Enclave in Neb Sarai, where it all started with HelpAge India donating a physiotherapy machine to our housing society. We had 200-odd silver members and we eventually registered as an NGO, called the Senior Citizens' Society. Fortunately for us, the RWA gave us some space in

a nearby park, where we regularly meet, share and care, and live a happy and active life.

Every morning, we exercise, play badminton and take walks. Evenings are spent playing cards, carom and other games at the centre. On the last day of every month, we celebrate birthdays, for which the families of all the members are invited. To break the monotony of our daily routine, we also organise annual vacations.

Our society informally mediates and counsels members as and when required, as we did for one of our members who found himself in a sticky situation with his son. Our society members talked to his family and helped them sort out their differences peacefully.

We also invite medical and other experts to speak on topics such as health and wellbeing, women's issues, bridging the generation gap, family ties, and more. To facilitate our members' physical well-being, we run a physiotherapy and homeopathy centre at nominal charges. Next, we plan to collect donations to expand our space to accommodate more people.

Our society participates in marathons organised by the Delhi government on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15 June every year. Thanks to our long and fruitful association with HelpAge India, the latter made a video of our extensive work and uploaded it on their site. This has made us a model for other societies.

Apart from our own society, I am associated with many other NGOs that are committed to elders and am an executive member of some old-age homes too. I like to stay active and disciplined. My son runs a computer business and I visit his office at Nehru Place daily. I spend some time there and browse the Internet before I return to the Senior Citizens' Society for my work.

While helping silvers keep healthy and happy is immensely rewarding, I think our crowning achievement as a society came when youngsters in our housing colony first approached us, asking for help and advice on how to keep active and add more colour to their lives!

—Suresh Kumar Palta, New Delhi

Palta works towards improving the lives of silvers



Courtesy: S K Palta



# Adaptation, not deprivation

Celebrate this Diwali with  
sweets and savouries that are  
healthy and nutritious



Photographs by 123RF.com

**W**hat's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word 'Diwali'? We can comfortably lie and say it's the festival of lights and firecrackers but we all know it's the yummy sweets and savouries we find so hard to resist!

## **Bittersweet truths**

For many silvers, Diwali is the perfect excuse to live on a diet comprising

*mithai* and savouries—which is far from nutritionally sound. Indeed, many even prefer to skip a meal or two, just so they can gulp down these festive foods. And they can often be cajoled into eating foods that do not interest them anymore, just by adding a sweet to their meal.

So why do silvers appear to crave sweets more than others? Consider the fact that 'sweet' is the food sensation they have enjoyed the

longest in their lives—the first thing every human is exposed to as an infant is the 'sweet' taste of breast milk. In fact, we lose our taste buds as we age; from almost 10,000 to 15,000 in our prime, we are left with just 3,000 to 5,000 taste buds in the silver years. And lab tests have proved that, over time, we first lose the 'bitter' taste and then the 'salty' taste. It's the sweet taste that's the last to go. Thus inevitably, this is the taste silvers reach out to the most.



## HEALTHY FESTIVE FOODS FOR YOU

### BAKED POTATO & PURPLE YAM

#### Ingredients

- Potatoes: 250 gm
- Purple yam (*kand*): 250 gm
- Ginger-chilli paste: 1½ tsp
- Coriander leaves: ¼ cup; chopped
- Lemon: 1
- Groundnut oil: 3 tsp
- Sesame seeds: 4 tbsp
- Rock salt to taste

*Optional: If yam is not available, use only potatoes*

#### Method

Boil the potatoes and purple yam and mash together. Add rock salt, coriander leaves and ginger-chilli paste. Then, add lemon juice and mix well. Grease a baking tray with groundnut oil and add the mixture. Sprinkle sesame seeds on top. Bake for 30 minutes till a brown crust forms on top. Serve hot.



### BAKED SAMOSA

#### Ingredients

- Potatoes: 100 gm; boiled and mashed
- Green peas: 100 gm; boiled and mashed
- Dry mango powder: 1 tsp
- Ginger-chilli paste: 2-3 tsp
- Garam masala: 1 tsp
- Coriander: ¼ cup; chopped
- Salt to taste

#### For the dough

- Whole-wheat flour: 100 gm

- Organic oil: 2 tsp
- Salt to taste

#### Method

Take the whole-wheat flour and knead soft dough; keep aside for some time. Mix the mashed vegetables with the remaining ingredients and prepare a mixture. Roll the dough to prepare small rotis and cut them into half. Fill one half with the vegetable mixture; fold the other half into a cone shape and seal it. Bake them in the oven at 350° F for 20 minutes and serve.

### Smart substitutes

That said, a diet rich in sweets and snacks can lead to a rise in sugar and blood pressure levels for silvers and exacerbate joint pains owing to inflammation. Thus, it's important to substitute the fried jalebis or gulab jamuns with non-fried dishes sweetened with natural sugars like jaggery, dry fruits and fruits. Also, using natural substitutes made from the stevia plant is healthier than using artificial substitutes.

Silvers can satisfy their sweet cravings with the options given

below. Normally, sweets are made of white flour and white sugar whereas these are prepared with milk, yoghurt or whole grains. They contain good quality fat from cow's ghee, nuts, coconut, some vegetables and whole grains.

- Jaggery sandesh
- Paayasam made with jaggery and coconut milk
- Carrot/*doodhi* halwa made with jaggery
- *Shrikhand* with stevia
- Fruit chaat
- *Mishti* dahi made with palm jaggery

- *Gud* roti
- Sweets made with dry fruits and nuts
- Kheer sweetened with stevia

### With a pinch of salt

Now, a word on the fried savouries. The salty snacks served along with sweets are often deep-fried and oily. Also, the ones bought outside not only tend to add unnecessary weight but can lead to an upset stomach and other problems. The oil they are fried in is often reused, which clogs up the arteries and increases cancer cells in the body.



### COCONUT JAGGERY MALPUA

#### Ingredients

- Whole-wheat flour: 3 cups
- Organic jaggery: 1½ cups
- Water: 7 cups
- Ghee: 6-7 tsp

#### To garnish

- Coconut: grated
- Almonds: chopped
- Cardamom powder: 1 pinch

#### Method

Soak the jaggery in 2 cups of water for an hour. When it completely dissolves, add the mixture to the wheat flour and mix it well. Then, add 4 cups of water and mix till you get the required consistency. Keep the batter aside for 2-3 hours. Heat a non-stick pan and make little *chilla* from the batter by cooking on the sides. Garnish these with coconut, almonds and cardamom powder, and serve.

### DATE & NUT BARFI

#### Ingredients

- Seedless dates: 1 cup; finely chopped
- Mixed nuts (almonds, walnuts, cashew nuts, pistachios); 1 cup; finely chopped
- Skimmed milk: 2 tbsp
- Ghee: 1 tsp

#### Method

Roast the mixed nuts in a pan till they turn brown. In a separate pan, melt the ghee and add the roasted nuts till they release an aroma. Now, blend the seedless dates and milk together until smooth. Sauté this mixture in a non-stick pan till it is well cooked and the mixture leaves the sides of the pan. Add the fried dry fruits and mix well. Pour this mixture into a greased mould and allow it to rest until cool. Cut it into squares and serve.

No doubt, salt is required for the normal functioning of the body. But many silvers tend to consume too much of it, reaching for the salt shaker at every meal. Loss of taste intensifies this habit. However, high sodium levels in the body can lead to several medical issues in silvers, including high blood pressure, which in turn can cause multiple health concerns including hypertension and heart problems.

Rather than reaching for salty, deep-fried snacks, try the following healthy options instead.

- Potato and purple yam chaat
- Baked samosa
- Aloo veggie patties
- *Patra*
- *Khandvi*
- *Makhana* and dahi chaat
- Bread *dahi vada*
- Instant semolina patties
- *Dhokla*

#### In conclusion

Remember, deep-fried salty snacks and sweets made with white sugar and white flour can deaden the brain, lower immunity, hamper

digestion and trigger pain. But that's no reason not to celebrate the festive season! Healthy eating is all about adaption, not deprivation. This Diwali, eat snacks and sweets that satisfy your appetite and pack a nutritional punch.

*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*





# The magic circle

The Pilates circle is a challenging prop that can up the ante in your practice

**T**he Pilates circle, also called the magic circle, is a new one on the block. It is engaging for that reason. It is also one of the most challenging props you can use. It uses the Pilates philosophy of isometric contractions and using muscles dynamically even when in a static posture and immediately adds value to your yoga practice.



The Pilates circle keeps both mind and body challenged. As it has an elastic effect, when you are not too strong, you can just use it as a circle. But as you get used to it, you can begin to exert some effort on it. You can use this circle for arm strengtheners, while doing arm circles, the palm tree pose (*tadasana*), seated forward bends, backbends and squats, to name a few. There are several books on its use as well as online

tutorials that you can access once you get the hang of it. Most people, especially those who practise on their own, tend to settle comfortably in a pose and switch off effort. This is counterproductive not just on the physical level but at a mental one. On the physical level, the body gets 'bored' with the pose and will not enhance the benefits—the muscles must be challenged actively for the benefits to accrue. On the mental level, once you switch off effort, the mind gets back to its loopy thinking, not even alert to the pose. Intriguingly, neuroscientists like Elizabeth Blackburn believe this habit of the mind can speed aging of the brain.

In a simple *tadasana*, you can hold the circle in your hands at shoulder level in front of you. Lightly apply pressure to it. There are attachments on which you can place your palm. Extend away from the body. This way, you will not load the joint. Similarly, you can place the circle between the thighs when doing the chair pose (*utkatasana*) and press lightly. However, this challenging prop needs strength. Initially, build up your basic pose, then add the prop to up the ante.

## YOGIC MOVES

Cobra pose (*bhujangasana*)



Lie down on your stomach. Keep the circle in front of your face, extending the arms. Grasp it firmly with both hands on top. Keep your feet apart if you are still new to this or together if you are comfortable with the basic cobra. Inhale; as you

exhale, press lightly down on the circle. Inhale and release pressure. Exhale and exert. Do this five times.

**Benefits:** This enhances all the benefits of the cobra pose. It builds stamina and tones the arms superbly.

## KREEDA YOGA

*Mukta sanketah* – dumb charades

Players can split into small group of twos or threes (depending on total number of participants). Each group mimes a scene. The group that guesses the mimed scene/word gets the points. The final tally, after all groups have taken their turn, will decide the winner.

**Benefits:** This game, popular across culture and ages (and over time), helps you think out of the box and promotes cognitive and communication skills. It also provides a form of entertaining stress called eustress, which has a positive impact on overall quality of life.

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



## HEART TO HEARTH BY PRATIBHA JAIN

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

# Bottled with love

**Kameswari Kunapuli • HYDERABAD**

**B**eautiful and gracious. And rivetingly multifaceted, as her friend Sitaji Kolluru, who introduced us, had so aptly described. That's Kameswari Kunapuli, a classical Carnatic singer and teacher from East Godavari, now residing in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad. Sitting in her outer living room, we spoke about her family, love for music, and the need to document traditional recipes. I also managed to learn a few Andhra-style recipes. However, as I was getting ready to leave, I spied the interior of her home—and knew instantly that the portrait I had painted of this woman was incomplete, that there was so much more to this enigmatic personality. Intrigued, I asked for a tour around her home, enchanted by the vintage feel and brown hues, the numerous paintings and handcrafted items, many her own creations! In fact, she remains unfazed by her 80 years and continues to try her hand at new skills, new ways of expressing her creativity. The highlight of the impromptu tour, though, was the kitchen with a row of huge pickle jars enough to feed an army; each delicacy handmade, of course. Here are some titbits of our conversation, and some of these cherished recipes....

### IN HER OWN WORDS

I was born in Vizag [Visakhapatnam], Andhra Pradesh. Later, we shifted to Rajamundhiri. My father was an advocate and belonged to a cultured background. His family was held in high esteem in his village. I remember my family was always considered well-dressed and up to date. That is my heritage.



Photographs by Anand Kumar Soma



## TOMATO PASTE

Every year, when tomatoes are in season and cheap, Kameswariji makes this sundried tomato paste. It requires no cooking, yet stays good for a year without refrigeration. She adds a ladle of this paste to sambar, *chaaru* (rasam), or even soups and side-dishes—1 tbsp of this tomato paste is the perfect substitute for one large, fresh tomato.

### Ingredients

- Tomatoes: 1 kg; washed and chopped
- Tamarind: ¼ kg; deseeded and broken into small bits
- Salt: ¼ kg
- Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

### Method

Mix tomatoes, tamarind and salt. Press them in a jar and keep overnight. The mixture will become watery. Spread this mixture in a large plate and place in the hot sun to dry. Take it back indoors in the evening and bring it back outdoors in the morning. Within 3-4 days, it will be ready. Grind this mixture into a fine paste and preserve in a dry and clean jar. Instead of the lid, cover the mouth of the jar with a cloth so air will pass through and it will not spoil.

Here's a recipe for tomato *pachchadi* (chutney) with this paste. Heat 1 tsp oil; add mustard seeds, asafoetida powder and 2 sliced onions. Add 2-4 red chillies or chilli powder and sauté for a while. Switch off the flame. Add ½ tsp roasted and powdered fenugreek seeds. Grind along with ¾ cup of the tomato paste and a fistful of coriander seeds, adding very little water. If you like thinner chutney, you can add more water. Serve as an accompaniment to idlis, dosas or steamed rice.



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### FOR THE LOVE OF MUSIC

My elder sister began to learn music when she was in high school. I was an avid listener. Seeing my interest, the teacher Sarasanarsimha Garu started teaching me music as well. I learnt until my 11th standard, after which I became busy with studies, marriage, and then parent-

hood. When we moved to Karnool, I attended a ladies gathering where someone asked me to sing. There, I sang a favourite of mine, Sri Muthuswami's *kriti*, *Meenakshi mudamdehi*. Showered with praise and compliments, this trigger led to me learning music seriously. So here I am, at 80, a teacher, and happy to sing whenever I can!

### PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

My voice is not young anymore and not good for performances, but I can teach. In the afternoon, middle-aged women come to me to learn music. It is a blessing to teach them because their reason for learning is to perform for the Lord.

## GOOSEBERRY PASTE

A good source of Vitamin C, gooseberry has many health benefits. This paste can be prepared whenever gooseberries are in season and preserved for months.

### Ingredients

- Gooseberries: 1 kg
- Salt: ¼ kg
- Lemons: 4; large
- Turmeric powder: 1 tsp

### Method

Wash the gooseberries and wipe them dry. Spread on a clean cloth and leave them for an hour so they dry completely. Pound them lightly and press them down in a jar. Allow to stay in the jar for 2-3 days until the gooseberries turn soft. Transfer to a broad vessel and press the gooseberries lightly to discard the seeds. (You can also cut the gooseberries into small pieces and discard the seeds before putting them into the jar.) Add the salt, turmeric powder and juice of the lemons. Mix well. Transfer to a clean, dry jar and preserve in a cool, dry place. Do not place an airtight lid over it. Instead, cover the mouth of the jar with a cloth so air will pass through and the paste will not spoil. **Note:** This gooseberry paste tends to blacken over time. Yet the taste stays good for a year without refrigeration. Once in a while, you can remove the top layer and discard it.

Here's a recipe for healthy *usirikaya pachchadi* (gooseberry chutney) with



this paste. Pound 2 green chillies and a fistful of coriander leaves; mix with ½ cup gooseberry paste. Add ½ tsp of roasted and powdered fenugreek seeds. Add a garnishing of mustard seeds and asafoetida powder in 1 tsp hot oil. Serve this chutney as an accompaniment to a meal; you can also mix it with steamed rice and garnish with coriander leaves.

**Health tip:** Every morning, Kameswariji takes a teaspoon of this paste with a teaspoon of honey for its health benefits. However, those

with hypertension must avoid it as it has salt. Instead, they can make a gooseberry preserve by grating the gooseberries, adding sugar and cooking them into a jam-like consistency. This can be consumed every morning.

**Leftover tip:** This gooseberry paste is ideal for scrubbing brass items and making them shine. Whenever the paste turns blackish over time, Kameswariji makes a fresh batch and uses the old paste for polishing her brass items.

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## PEACEFUL TOGETHERNESS

My husband Shri K V S Suryanarayana was an IAS officer and we often got transferred to other cities. It was a blessing in disguise because it gave me the opportunity to see different places, interact with people from

various backgrounds, and broaden my horizons. He passed away in 2008. I see strife in many marriages today because of ego clashes and different priorities but I was truly blessed in this regard. There was never any reason for strife between us. He had deep respect for me and my way of

thinking. We shared similar views and enjoyed each other's company."

## WHERE THE HEART RESIDES

I now live alone and have many interests to keep me busy, such as cooking, stitching, painting, craft



"While preparing pickles, one has to take utmost care. The ingredients should be very good and the vessels and jars clean and dry. In my younger days, I remember that the women of the house would not even touch the pickles before taking a bath"

In fact, I had nine paternal aunts who were all good cooks. As the youngest child at home, I never ventured into the kitchen until after my marriage. During my husband's first posting, I remember hosting a sudden dinner in Bhadrachalam. I managed surprisingly well. My cooking was appreciated, which encouraged me to hone my skills. Whenever I ate something interesting outside, I would ask for the recipe and try recreating it at home. Soon, I was hosting large official dinners.

### MEALTIMES

Even though I have staff at home to help, I still cook. After my morning routine of exercise and listening to devotional songs, I decide my meals for the day. Breakfast is oats and fruits. Lunch is usually an Andhra meal—the staff help to chop, while I do the main cooking. And dinner consists of a handful of nuts or fruits and milk. A complete Andhra meal—*sampoorna aahara*—has steamed rice with *pappu* (dal), *pulusu* (gravy), *koora* (side-dish), *pachchadi* and curd. I love adding melted ghee in everything. My children and grandson love my Andhra dishes.

### KITCHEN TIPS

As you can see in my kitchen, I keep all the provision containers slightly open. I believe closing *dabba* and bottles tightly will cause overheating, making the contents inside a breeding ground for worms.

### PICKLE PASSION

I have always been passionate about pickle-making. Apart from preparing famous Andhra pickles like *aavakai* and *maagai*, I prepare pickle with yellow *mirchi* from Gollaprolu (Andhra), *menthikaai* and *pulihara aavakai* with small pieces of mango along with the peel. I still make large quantities of pickles to send to my relatives. Most last for months, some even for years. I make pickles with the help of my staff; I am really lucky to have such good help that has stayed with us wherever we have been transferred. While preparing pickles, one has to take utmost care. The ingredients should be of very good quality and the vessels and storage jars must be clean and dry. In my younger days, I remember that the women of the house would not even touch the pickles before taking a bath. If preserved well, pickles last for years and the taste remains the same, even though some discolouration may happen. By the time the colour changes, the next season comes and the fresh crop is in the market.

*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*

making, gardening, and being surrounded by beauty. In fact, I never pursued any one thing seriously because of my diverse interests. I also enjoy attending concerts and visiting friends and relatives. My daughter Atchuta Saraswathi lives in Delhi and my son Satya Kunapuli is in the US. They would like me to live with them but I want to live here as long as I can manage by myself. I have promised them that I will shift into one of their homes the moment I feel I can't manage. That is our understanding. Along with their spouses and children—I have three grandchildren and one granddaughter-in-law—they all take care of me very well. When I look back, I feel blessed; from my own parents, my in-laws, my children and now my *sambandhi*, I have been surrounded by remarkable people.

### A FLAIR FOR COOKING

My mother was a great cook who could create a meal out of anything.





## CAPITAL GAINS BY DICK MODY, Founder-CEO, Ethical Advisers

### Mutual advantage: In the first of a new series, learn more about mutual funds as a long-term savings option

I feel highly privileged to be given an opportunity to address such a mature and experienced group of readers. As this is my first article in this prestigious publication, let me commence my journey with one of the best quotes I have ever heard, by American writer and broadcaster Andy Rooney: "The best classroom in the world is at the feet of an elderly person." In short, while I may claim to share my 'wisdom' with you enlightened readers, I humbly pay homage to the scores of wise folk whose teachings have shaped my thought process. I am honoured to share some of these learnings with you in the hope that you will find them of use—this month, we will answer some frequently asked questions about mutual funds.

#### Are mutual funds (MFs) relevant to silvers?

My senior clients ask me this question often—and it is perfectly valid. My answer to this is absolutely 'Yes'! MFs are relevant to persons of all ages and incomes but especially to those nearing retirement or already retired owing to the superior features of liquidity, tax-adjusted returns and the safety they offer compared to traditional savings instruments.

To put it simply, a mutual fund is a professionally managed investment vehicle that pools contributions called 'units' from a group of people and then invests the same in either shares, bonds or other securities depending on the type of scheme chosen. The rights and obligations of each unit holder are the same as the rest of the unit holders in that scheme. The biggest advantage of

investing through an MF is that it gives investors—big or small—easy access to stocks and securities, which would be quite difficult to create with a limited amount of capital. Also, remember, just like professional doctors or lawyers or engineers have to be full-time practitioners of their trade and be constantly updated in their knowledge, so does a professional fund manager or investment advisor. So, once you have chosen the right person/funds, you don't have to worry about the day-to-day management of your investments.

The biggest advantage of investing through an MF is that it gives investors—big or small—easy access to stocks and securities, which would be quite difficult to create with a limited amount of capital

For silvers, it is of paramount importance to plan your life after retirement and gain financial independence, before planning your inheritance to your family or a cause closest to your heart. In effect, MFs help us plan a dignified and enjoyable life and use our wisdom to secure the future of our loved ones.

#### Isn't an MF very risky?

MFs first started in India in 1964 under the Unit Trust of India (UTI), followed by several public-sector undertakings after 1987 and the private sector from 1993. Today, MFs manage close to ₹ 21 lakh crore of

assets. With such a large amount of public savings at stake, there is very strict oversight and regulation of MFs, not only by SEBI but RBI, the Companies Act, the stock exchange, Indian Trust Act and the Ministry of Finance. So, rest assured your money is in no danger of being usurped or misused.

#### How do I know how much risk I am taking in an MF?

Before investing, it is important to understand that there are different types of MFs. For instance, some are open-ended, which means you can buy and sell them anytime; others have a lock-in period of, say, three to five years. Most funds also charge investors for early withdrawals (called exit load) while some may incur a tax charge on you if withdrawn before a specific period as per the Income Tax Act.

Most important, funds can be classified broadly into high risk-high return (equity funds) and moderate risk-moderate return (debt funds). There are also several hybrid and liquid funds that help save tax compared to company deposits or bank FDs. An intelligent financial advisor can help you understand these nuances and choose the funds that best suit your individual needs. In my view, this is the most important step to take before committing your hard-earned money to any financial instrument, including MFs. My personal advice to silvers is to clearly divide your savings into different asset classes, with debt-oriented mutual funds and hybrid funds comprising at least 60-70 per cent of your total portfolio.



**I am not comfortable using the Internet. While I can see my balance in the bank passbook, how do I keep track of the value of my investments in an MF?**

Just like you can see your savings account or fixed-deposit balance in your passbook or statements, you can view the total value of your holdings in a Mutual Fund Statement of Account. If you choose, you can receive a printed copy of the same every month by post. You can also see the net asset values (NAVs; *see box*) of your fund in leading newspapers. Thus, you don't have to be net-savvy to invest in MFs.

**How much money will I receive if I redeem my money today?**

Your investment value as on any particular day is the NAV per unit multiplied by the number of units you hold. The NAV is calculated after all charges as per the scheme document. So whenever you redeem your units, that is the total amount you will get back—unless, of course, there is an exit load for premature redemption. The balance is usually directly credited to your bank account so there is no need for you to beg and cajole any officer or run repeatedly to the fund house to ensure the redemption goes through.

#### **What is NAV?**

NAV or net asset value is the market value of your holding in the fund on a particular date. For instance, say you purchased 1,000 units of SBI Bluechip Fund on 1 January 2016 at ₹ 29 per unit and today the same is ₹ 37, ₹ 29 and ₹ 37 represent the NAV per unit on the respective dates. The NAVs of each scheme of each fund house can be tracked daily so you are fully aware of the value of your investments at all times.

In conclusion, I believe MFs offer a fantastic option to plan and grow your wealth over all spectrums of time.

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*Dick Mody, a 25-year veteran in the Indian equity markets, is the founder of Ethical Advisers. Write to us with your financial queries at [contact.mag@harmonyindia.org](mailto:contact.mag@harmonyindia.org) and Mody will answer them in this column. You can also reach him directly at [dhm@ethicaladvisers.in](mailto:dhm@ethicaladvisers.in)*





# Trust in HER

Dr Radhike Khanna has traded in her proverbial silver spoon to offer a life of dignity to the mentally challenged. The National Award-winner speaks to **Rachna Viridi** about her path-breaking approach

**T**he lane near Famous Studios at Mahalaxmi in Mumbai leads off a sea of chaos. As you turn into the narrow, winding road and step inside the gates of Om Creations Trust at Anand Niketan, located inside King George Memorial Compound, the sounds of Maximum City begin to recede.

Here, new sounds take over. The cottage we are about to enter resonates with infectious energy; in the veranda, a number of women dressed in red uniforms are engaged in a flurry of activity. Around one table there's a group busy making floral garlands, gift bags and pottery, while another table has others rolling out puris, and preparing confectionary.

With the festive season approaching, work has doubled and the women are clearly going the extra mile. As their gaze meets ours, they break into a welcoming smile and glance at us with curiosity. It's a mixed bunch. The women are of varying ages and social backgrounds but they work as a team. At the end of the month, there's a pay-check to look forward to.





Photographs by Hareesh Patel

**“Working for the mentally challenged is my inner calling. I always wondered why people with special needs lagged behind in spite of their tremendous potential. I guess my search drew me to them”**

born with the proverbial silver spoon but my parents taught us to also look at the have-nots and help them. I always wondered why people with special needs lagged behind in spite of their tremendous potential. I guess my search drew me to them,” says Dr Khanna, a trustee and co-founder of Om Creations Trust and Shraddha Charitable Trust, both pioneering projects in the rehabilitation and integration of mentally challenged women and men, respectively.

Om Creations trains women in diverse skills that are used to create 200-odd products such as bread, chocolates, made-to-order meals, paintings, gift bags, wallets, scarves, etc. These products are sold through sales, exhibitions, seminars and corporate orders; the women get a fixed stipend in return. Like any other employment structure, there are fixed working hours, lunch hour, paid leave, bonus and an annual performance-based increment. Unique among NGOs working with mentally challenged individuals, Om Creations provides the women a structured work environment. This model facilitates their inclusion into the mainstream and greatly impacts the way they perceive themselves.

Helping someone acquire a sense of dignity and self-respect, more so individuals with special needs, is tough, especially in a country where 7.5 per cent of people suffer mental illness and struggle to get a job. Dr Khanna has been doing this for 35 years. An affectionate, kind-hearted woman whose zest for life is obvious, Dr Khanna walks into Om Creations and all the women immediately vie for her attention. They are eager to talk to her and show her the work they’re doing. She gently

hugs them, gives them a patient ear, appreciates their work and issues instructions, if necessary, before moving on to the next table.

Radhika Kasat, in her mid 30s, used to work in a bank. She lost her memory and working skills owing to a stroke and joined Om Creations last year. In only a few months, she started showing signs of improvement and gaining inner strength and confidence.

Her colleague Varsha, 65, can barely wait her turn to speak. The smartest worker in the food department, she is happiest donning her bakery cap and gloves; the oven is her domain and she doesn’t allow anyone to come near it. “I make breadsticks, cookies, snacks, mango pickle, etc,” she says with pride. “I want to come here 365 days a year.”

“I joined in June 2005,” shares 35 year-old Nikita. “Under Radhika Madam’s guidance, I have learnt crochet, embroidery, silk painting and pottery. I travel on my own by train and bus. After returning home, I cook for my dad and work in the house.”

Nikita, Radhika and Varsha are among 70-odd women with special needs who are benefitting from Om Creations, the emotional and psychological support it offers, its training that helps them meld with the mainstream, and quite simply the joy available in abundance.

### **Beginning of a journey**

All this has been made possible because a young and talented woman with academics and a social mission on her mind passed up marriage as a life choice. “Coming from a Punjabi

Well, times are tough and who isn’t putting their nose to the grind, right? But the women at Om Creations are special, truly special. They suffer from mental disabilities, mostly Down’s syndrome, but are gainfully employed, productive citizens who hate to miss a day’s work. That says a lot for Om Creations, a non-profit that has changed the lives of its members.

Helmed by Dr Radhika Khanna, 54, Om Creations welcomes women of any age from any social strata. Some have been with the NGO since its inception. “Working for the mentally challenged is my inner calling and I chose to help them instead of hanging out with my peers. I was



background, it was a setback for my family,” Dr Khanna confesses. “My mother told me, ‘You’re so young, you can’t do this,’ and my father said, ‘Do this after you are married and have two kids’. But once they realised my unwavering focus, they relented and encouraged me.”

Blessed with an artistic bent, Dr Khanna first graduated in textile design from Mumbai’s Sir J J School of Art and joined Sophia Polytechnic for a foundation course. She also acquired a master’s degree in sociology from the University of Mumbai, followed by a double doctorate in management studies from Mumbai University and Gujarat University.

While at Sophia, her principal Krishnaswami Bhatt asked her to volunteer with the mentally challenged students at S P J Sadhana School, which operates out of the same campus. Her first student was a young adult with Down’s syndrome and autistic traits, 15 year-old Vasudha Jain, daughter of Durga Jain, the trustee-founder of S P J Sadhana School. “The doctors in the US had suggested intervention for my daughter,” shares Jain. “That is how I got in touch with Dr Khanna, who came home to help Vasudha.”

It was tough initially. “I would sit in front of her and she would scream,

shout and get aggressive,” remembers Dr Khanna. “However, as 80 per cent of mentally challenged individuals are speech-impaired, I knew art was the medium to connect.” Being an artist, her strong belief in the philosophy of ‘art meets soul’ helped Dr Khanna forge a bond with Vasudha. “One day, she observed an embroidery pattern

**“I wasn’t satisfied with providing only skills training. I aimed at making the women active members of society and giving them a fruitful future by finding employment”**

on my kurta and began replicating it on paper. I encouraged her. Six months down the line, she drew my face while I posed for her. It took me three years to forge a bond with Vasudha, with the help of art,” says the National Award-winning educator and vice-president of S P J Sadhana School.

Slowly, more parents approached Dr Khanna and she trained their wards together in a small room in the S P J Sadhana School premises. When the number rose to four, Dr Khanna and Jain decided to shift base to the latter’s home at Carmichael Road.

Together, they set up Om Creations in 1991, as a centre that adopted a holistic approach towards rehabilitating differently abled girls. “I wasn’t satisfied with providing only skills training,” says Dr Khanna. “I aimed at making the women active members of society and giving them a fruitful future by finding employment.”

Jain, trustee and co-founder-patron of Om Creations, adds, “With more students coming in, it was difficult to operate from my house and Om Creations was eventually established as a separate body in Mahalaxmi. I have seen the centre flourish. Although I lost my daughter Vasudha some years ago, I have continued my work here and wish the best for it.”

### **A dream takes wing**

From here on, the non-profit grew from strength to strength. When it moved to Mahalaxmi in 1996, it initially operated out of a small, garage-like place. “With a view to providing sustainability and a livelihood to the women, we started taking tiffins on order and supplying meals to mill workers,” recalls Dr Khanna. “But, then, the mills shut down; with nothing to do, we trained the women in preparing gourmet and art items.”

In 1999, the non-profit set up a full-fledged arts section and the



Courtesy: Om Creations

Women engaged in the kitchen and art department at Om Creations; opposite page: Dr Khanna sharing a light moment with students

women started making creative art products. “Under the arts section, we have 13 different varieties like pottery, embroidery, tailoring, glass painting, canvas painting, tie-and-dye, crochet, ceramics, etc. We were thrilled to receive our first corporate order of 5,000 bags.” In 2004, the centre employed a chef for confectionary products and bagged its first order, for 300 kg of chocolates! The kitchen now produces all kinds of snacks, sauces, cakes, pastries, puffs and other baked items that are ISO-certified but chocolates remain their forte. Today, Om Creations has three departments—Om Foods, Om Visual Arts and Crafts, and Om Flowers; products are sold in a shop in their premises or at sales and exhibitions.

### The art of teaching

All through the expansion, Dr Khanna was searching for a way to enhance the experience for the differently abled. In 2007, she acquired a PhD in special education from Knightsbridge University in the UK. After returning to India, she created the first and only polytechnic course for people with special needs, which guarantees employment.

The programme, which offers courses that range from office procedures to visual arts and crafts, was later implemented as a five-year course at S P J Sadhana School. Now the flagship of the school, it offers students in-depth training in a variety of activities that allow them to follow their passion while preparing them for the job market. Dr Khanna also conducts workshops for special educators, in India and overseas, including Israel and Africa,

while conducting special programmes to train teachers to become special educators.

At Om Creations, our change-maker is constantly sensitising the teachers and upgrading their skills in various areas of special education. The best part is that it’s working—the women enjoy coming to work every day. For instance, when a strike drove the BEST buses to a standstill some months ago, the women sat down to pray and meditate for the bus service to start again! “This place grows on you,” says Arnaz Sanjana, coordinator with the art department for over four years. “I’ve seen Dr Khanna tirelessly encouraging teachers to manage the women, to give them an opportunity to express themselves in a creative and non-verbal way. Undoubtedly, the members have become smart, capable and attentive.”

The Om Creations model fosters a regular employer-employee relationship between the centre and the women, whose progress is assessed through their production. Depending on their skill and responsibility, they earn a stipend between ₹ 4,000 and ₹ 10,000 a month. Not surprisingly, their favourite time is the end of the month, when their pay cheque is deposited into their personal bank accounts.

Purvi, 40, is an all-rounder who makes floral garlands and shops for the raw materials at Crawford Market. “I travel from CP Tank to Mahalaxmi on my own. I like getting my cheque every month,” she says with pride. The earnings help them pay for their daily expenses, so they are not com-



pletely dependent on their families. Ilawani, the daughter of domestic help, walks all on her own from Mahalaxmi railway station to the centre, every day. The money she earns goes into her kitty that is aimed at buying a house one day. Sushma, 30, is the daughter of a bus conductor. After her father passed away, she became the breadwinner of her family.

Dr Khanna explains that, for the women here, earning a livelihood is important far beyond its monetary value. At the end of each day, they return home, where they are treated with more respect and dignity because they are employed. "It greatly reduces the probability of being abused or targeted, something that generally happens with challenged people at home," she adds. "Further, the productive work they do keeps them fruitfully engaged and their brains active. We have a lot of play time and go out for movies, parties, lunches as well as vacations." Jyoti, a volunteer with Om Creations for 18 years, agrees. "Dr Khanna's efforts have given them a reason to live. They go home with a sense of self-worth. They are happy souls and don't feel the need to bottle up their emotions."

### From challenges to opportunities

Dr Khanna's journey with Om Creations has not been free of challenges. Often, people didn't see why it was important to offer these individuals a quality life; customers were wary of buying products prepared by the differently abled. There were other fundamental issues such as low awareness of the NGO, need for volunteers, lack of space and difficulty in arranging funds, which hindered the sale and growth of the business aspect of the non-profit.

Further, there are behavioural challenges while dealing with differently

abled individuals, many of whom experience mood swings. "There's a 'talk hour' held every afternoon so they can share their problems and find solutions. Usually, work is the best therapy as it gives them a sense of pride. Dr Khanna intervenes only when it is absolutely necessary," says project coordinator Archana Mehta, who joined as a volunteer in 1992.

"My biggest personal challenge was to battle perceptions and prejudices," says the indomitable Dr Khanna, who has a habit of turning every challenge into an opportunity. The programme she designed called FACE (Facing Autism through Communication

**"At the end of each day, these women return home, where they are treated with more respect and dignity. Also, it greatly reduces the probability of being abused or targeted, something that generally happens with challenged people at home"**

with the environment) helps special educators and parents engage the autistic through mediums like communication and behaviour modification techniques. "The workshops enlighten parents to treat their 'special' children as assets rather than liabilities in society."

### Spelling success

Given the research—and the heart—that has gone into creating and building Om Creations, it is little wonder that everyone at Om Creations is content. "Everything is so beautiful here; the way these individuals learn and earn, and the way they love and support each other as a team," says Ranjana Mahadevia, a trustee of the

NGO. "The centre is their lifeline, their comfort zone."

In its 26th year, Om Creations now holds exhibitions and seminars, gets bulk orders for corporate gifting throughout the year, and has an ever-increasing clientele—all this has helped it expand. "We've had a 93 per cent employment-placement rate, which means almost every member here is employed either at the centre or in the mainstream," says Dr Khanna. To take the non-profit to the next level, she is now starting a skills training centre called Om Abode, for which 12 acre of land was recently purchased in Karjat. The project will have five buildings for residential accommodation and a skills training centre; work is already underway.

"Dr Radhike Khanna has touched so many lives and made a huge difference to mentally challenged people," says Aarti Gandhi, director of The Nalanda Foundation, an NGO in Mumbai that addresses the educational requirements of children with learning difficulties, who's a colleague of Dr Khanna and well acquainted with her work. "She's doing a wonderful job of rehabilitation and doing it whole-heartedly. She has good management skills, great business acumen and a soft heart to manage the students and get them employed too. I've visited Om Creations and seen how happy the women are there. It's a win-win situation as it's a commercially viable place as well as a rehabilitation centre. Om Creations is like an entrepreneurship model for other NGOs to emulate."

Awards and accolades come thick and fast for Dr Khanna but she remains one of the most grounded people you will ever meet. "My work makes me feel so good and helps me maintain my stability," she says. "I sleep very well every night. What's more, this is my family." ✨



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# NOMAD AT HEART

I'm a wanderer, a gypsy, continually looking for moorings; a prowler on the quest of the undefined," says **Vinod Pande**, who has donned many hats in his eventful life: newsreader, broadcaster, advertising professional, filmmaker and author, among others.

Born in a village in Uttar Pradesh, where his father was a doctor at a government dispensary, Pande enjoyed a nomadic childhood. The exciting memories of "travelling as a child in a truck amid household goods to the new station and mother serving food cooked for the long travel; the sights and sounds; the hues and colours; the fields lacing the roads; the simple thrill of getting down to stretch or relieve yourselves" are still etched in his mind. In academics, he dabbled in various subjects—science, social work and law—before coming home to filmmaking. Pande established his credentials as a non-conformist filmmaker with *Ek Baar Phir*, *Yeh Nazdeekiyan*, *Ek Naya Rishta*, *Star*, *Sach* and *Sins*, among others. Undeterred by criticism that his films are too bold, Pande enjoys delving into the complexities that surround human behaviour and relationships. He has made a mark on television as well with offbeat serials such as *Air Hostess*, *Reporter* and *Mera Humsafar*.

As a writer, too, Pande has taken the road less travelled. His latest book,

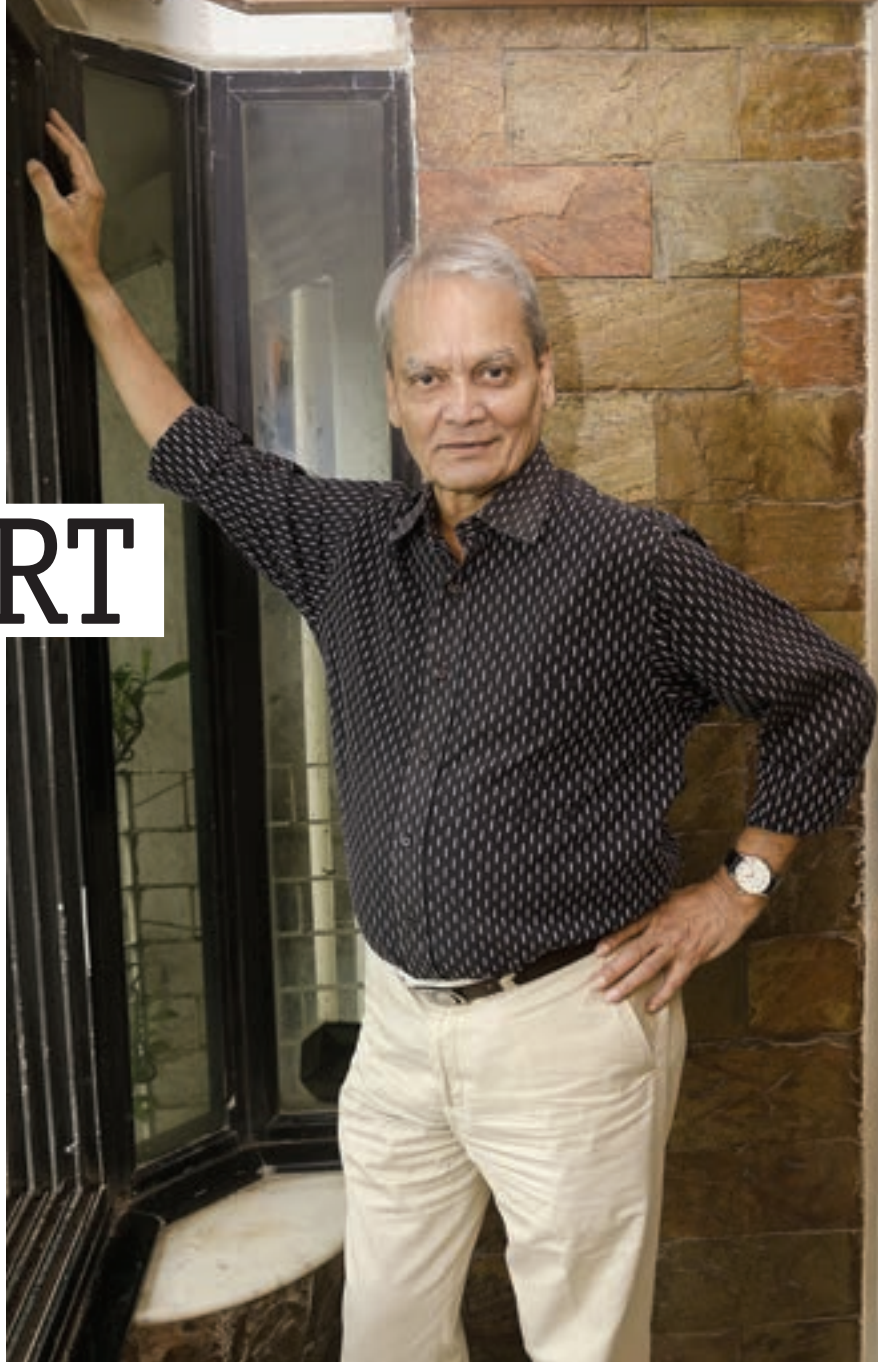
*Saanvri: The Story of a Concubine*, published by Niyogi Books, is about a woman who exploits the wanton carnality in men in a society that uses and abuses her. In an email interview with **Suparna-Saraswati Puri**, the octogenarian talks about his adventurous journey so far. Excerpts from the interview....

## Tell us about your family.

I have three siblings: one sister, who is the eldest, and two brothers. I'm the middle brother.

## What took you to London?

I migrated to London in May 1966. I used to work as a personnel officer with one of the Bajaj Group companies in Mumbai when I came to know about the Employment Voucher Scheme of the British government under which people from Commonwealth countries were being engaged for job requirements in the UK. Though I applied for a lark, to my surprise, the voucher arrived. That's how I landed in London with dreams in my eyes.



Haresh Patel



### How was London in those days?

The London of the 1960s and '70s was deeply insular. The average Britisher was pretty rabid in his relationship with non-whites from the colonies. By the mid-'70s though, the scenario changed. The vibrant Indian immigrant community of Southall caught everybody's eyes. In 1971, I made my first documentary, *London Mein Bharat*, on them.

### Tell us about your brush with advertising.

After the maiden documentary, I was more or less unemployed. Someone suggested making cinema commercials. I made commercials, initially for Asian businesses and thereafter for British Airways (BA) and other groups. My campaigns for BA, Health Education Council, Bank of Credit & Commerce International, Life Insurance Corporation of India and Omax watches were quite popular.

### How did you land a job with the British government?

I learnt there were vacancies in various government departments and knew that they were likely to recognise my postgraduate degree at least as a graduate equivalent. I was selected and ended up working in various district offices of the Inland Revenue Department for four years. The stint gave me the opportunity to enroll for a host of part-time courses in filmmaking at the City Literary Institute and the British Film Institute in London.

### You also worked with the BBC.

I used to participate in radio plays with All India Radio. When I moved to London, I contacted BBC as they had Hindi transmissions. My stint with them as a broadcaster and news-reader helped me grow as a person.



Photographs courtesy: Vinod Pande

I became responsive and responsible for not only what my eyes and ears were to see and hear in real time but what I was to perceive on the basis of informed study.

### As a filmmaker, what is paramount to you while casting?

As I come from a creative space that is not quite mainstream and escapist, my primary concern while casting has always been the character sketch. The only time I did not go on the external specifics of a character was when I cast Suresh Oberoi in *Ek Baar Phir*. I needed someone flamboyant. Suresh was nowhere near that, but the timber of his voice had me gripped.

### Your films always explore unconventional ideas. Are they a reflection of your life?

I feel whatever you do by way of creative expression sprouts from your heart. Either you have lived the experience or witnessed it closely. Either way, it should have touched you and

changed you in some fundamental way. Each time an idea has stared me in the face, it has been an unexpressed longing, probably seeking some kind of catharsis, especially in the case of bold subjects.

### Your films and books exhibit a heightened treatment of sensuality and intimacy between characters.

It's ironic that nude figures in museums or statues in a state of copulation in temples do not raise any hackles, but showing a couple in an act of intimacy in films is not appreciated. Nevertheless, I must admit that I invariably get drawn to challenging and gritty themes. Maybe my stint as a broadcaster has something to do with it. Our television serials, too, were vastly different from what was running at that time, both in concept and treatment. However, none of them had sexual content.

### Apart from filmmaking, you have dabbled in online entertainment with your web series.



On the sets of  
TV serial *Reporter*

### How active is Vinod Pande Entertainment Organisation currently?

Lean periods have been familiar spaces for me. I reinvented myself as an author primarily on that account. I accidentally learnt that my films were illegally running on YouTube. We fought and secured them to start our own channel, Vinod Pande Entertainment Organisation. We have already made a short film, *Panaah*, and are hoping to launch three web series—*Obsessions*, *Office Affairs* and *Elevator*—soon besides some non-fiction. We are also engaged with a web blog.

### What made you return to Mumbai for good?

Unwittingly, my first film *Ek Baar Phir* became my return ticket to my motherland. During its making, I had to face harassment at the hands of government authorities. What was especially painful was the argument that as the film was entirely made abroad, it had to be denied entry from contesting in National Awards and other prestigious award functions. This, despite it winning some awards and having completed a golden jubilee in Kolkata and a silver jubilee in Delhi, Mumbai, Patna, Indore and many other cities across India. I decided it was better to make films in India if my sanity had to be retained.

### How has ageing impacted your passion for making films?

Ageing is a reality, as is death. One diminishes your faculties and the other closes the door on you. Both are undesirable elements in the journey of life if it has to maintain its spunk and chutzpah. But having understood its certainty can give you a new confidence, a new energy; you can learn to be inventive, renew your imagination and develop new dimensions to your quests as a discoverer. ✨

Cinema spoils you. The sheer scale of production in terms of actors, technicians and equipment and the matrix of the narrative become awe-inspiring. You start believing there is no life beyond this and become reluctant at trying anything else. But then, how do we get over our initial derision for 140 characters of a tweet to say something? Once we take up the cudgels, it comes, and comes beautifully! When 'jump' or 'perish' become the only options, you become the real discoverer; you become adept at telling stories simply, briefly and beautifully!

### How was writing *Saanvri* different than your debut book *Don's Wife*?

Writing *Saanvri: The Story of a Concubine* was comparatively easier as it had already been written as a full-fledged film script. In the case of *Don's Wife*, it was a new journey with characters that were still emerging from behind the smokescreen at every turn. It was my first novel, hence exhausting and more fulfilling at the same time.

"Whatever you do by way of creative expression sprouts from your heart. Either you have lived the experience or witnessed it closely. It should have touched you and changed you in some fundamental way"

### What next?

My next novel, *Destiny*, is by far the most complex and challenging in terms of characters and layers of emotions; and if I dare say so, the most satisfying till now. As the protagonist is a popular minister of the Union Government who is wrestling between his ideals and personal demons in the aftermath of liberalisation, I suspect it might raise a bit of a storm.



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*With osteoarthritis emerging as the most common cause of immobility among silvers, India leads the way in orthopaedic solutions, writes **Srirekha Pillai***

# **JOINT FAMILY!**

**W**atching a sprightly Usha Bhatia doing the *shirshasana* (headstand), it is difficult to believe she has implants in both knees. Bhatia underwent bilateral knee replacement surgery—total knee replacement (TKR) in both knees in one sitting—in 2015. “I’m used to an active lifestyle,” says the 71 year-old art connoisseur from Mumbai. “Thankfully, a month after the surgery, I could resume my routine.” Today, she does yoga, household chores and sits cross-legged on the floor while doing puja. “My gait is back to normal now and I don’t have to live with excruciating pain.” Bhatia put up with severe pain for years, trying warm and cold compress alternatively for her joints and wearing a kneecap. “It was only when my gait became crooked that I realised I needed surgical help,” she adds.







150

thousand

joint

replacement

surgeries are

conducted

annually in

the world

40

million

will be left

severely

crippled by

the disease

by 2050

For many silvers like Bhatia, osteoarthritis (OA), a degenerative joint disease where cartilage—ends of the bones that cushion the joints and help support our weight when we walk, run, bend and stretch—deteriorates and disintegrates, causing pain, stiffness, swelling and numbness, is a painful reality. Yet, the majority of the afflicted population, in small towns and villages especially, resists surgery, putting up with severe pain owing to psychological blocks and financial constraints. Take, for instance, 84 year-old Gopalakrishna Panicker from Alleppey in Kerala, who is homebound for two years. Unable to walk without support, his movements are severely restricted. “Why should I go in for a surgery in the autumn of my life?” he asks. There are many like him, reluctant to go under the knife because of advancing years. They compromise on the quality of life, while striking a lifelong companionship with debilitating pain.

### UNDERSTANDING OA

OA commonly affects the joints in the knees, hands, feet and spine; the most overworked but neglected parts of our body. Initially, the symptoms, including severe pain and joint inflammation, may only manifest following rigorous activities and exercise, but may become nagging over a period of time, affecting daily activities such as walking, cooking and gardening. Take a short quiz (*‘One-minute risk test,’ see box*) to check whether you are at risk. Silvers are



Healthy knee joint

Osteoarthritic knee joint

at a higher risk of joint inflammation not just because of OA but age-related wear and tear as well. The physical disability arising from pain and loss of functional capacity owing to joint inflammation can reduce quality of life and increase the risk of further morbidity (*‘Postponing surgery can cause further complications’; page 46*). OA also takes an emotional toll on the patient and the immediate family.

In the initial stages, medicines, physiotherapy and other arthroscopic interventions may work, but in end-stage arthritis, total replacement of the joint—removing the damaged part and inserting a prosthesis or implant—is the only definitive treatment. Among such arthroscopic procedures, the most popular are TKR and total hip replacement (THR).

While OA culminating in joint replacement is usually related to ageing, it is also associated with modifiable risk factors such as obesity and lack of exercise, and non-modifiable risk factors such as genetic predisposition and bone density. Today, OA is seen as the single most common cause of immobility in older adults, with over 10 to 15 per cent of silvers displaying some degree of OA, with its prevalence higher among women.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that by 2050, people aged over 60 will account for more than 20 per cent of the world’s population. “Of that 20 per cent, a conservative estimate of 15 per cent will have symptomatic OA, and one-third of these will be severely disabled,” a study by the organisation predicts. This implies that by 2050, 130 million people will suffer from OA worldwide,

## ONE-MINUTE RISK TEST

- Is getting up from a seated position or standing for a long time a painful experience?
- Does nagging knee pain disturb your sleep?
- Do you face difficulty while carrying out routine work?
- Has the pain persisted for over three months?
- Do you feel continuous or intermittent stiffness and swelling in the joints?
- Do you avoid climbing stairs because of pain in the joints?
- Did your parent or grandparent suffer from arthritis?

If your answer is ‘yes’ to most questions, you are at risk for osteoarthritis and should go in for a bone density test.



of which 40 million will be left severely crippled by the disease.

## INDIAN DILEMMA

A study by Ace Business and Market Research Group (ABMRG) states that in India, most people above 60 suffer from some kind of bone and joint disease and have an immediate need for joint replacement surgery. “A high prevalence of arthritis primarily in north and south India and increasing prevalence of osteoporosis among post-menopausal women in urban areas who follow a sedentary lifestyle have stimulated the growth of the joint replacement market,” the report observes.

Indeed, a rapidly greying population and sedentary lifestyle are contributing to a spurt in OA cases among Indians. “Indians have a genetic predisposition for knee arthritis mainly because of our habit of squatting,” notes Sreedhar Singh, senior orthopaedic surgeon, Columbia Asia, Bengaluru. “The recent rise in prevalence of OA in Indians is primarily because of increased lifespan and a sedentary lifestyle.”

## APP-LY ‘MY BONES’

The Arthritis Foundation of India has created a mobile app, ‘My Bones’, to help you diagnose your bone health. You just need to answer 10 questions to ascertain the status of your bones. If the app diagnoses a problem, it gives you advice regarding treatment as well. Further, it gives you dos and don’ts regarding bone health.

With arthroplasty—the surgical reconstruction or replacement of a joint—gaining ground as the only option for dealing with severe OA, a white paper titled *Indian Orthopaedic Devices Market* recently published by Sathguru Management Consultants claims that the Indian orthopaedic device market is estimated to grow around 20 per cent a year till 2030.

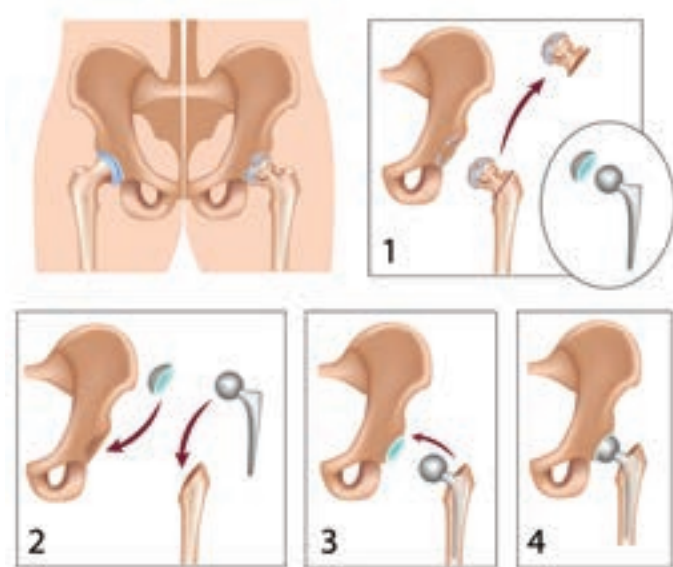
Noida-based senior orthopaedic surgeon Sushil Sharma, chairman of the Arthritis Foundation of India—an NGO that carries out organised social work in the field of osteoporosis and arthritis—points out that awareness is on the rise, especially in

**While osteoarthritis is usually related to ageing, it is also associated with modifiable risk factors such as obesity and lack of exercise, and non-modifiable risk factors such as genetic predisposition and bone density**



Hareesh Patel

## Total hip replacement



**20%**  
growth

Indian  
orthopaedic  
device  
market is  
estimated  
to grow  
around  
20 per cent  
a year till  
2030

urban areas. "Joints are becoming a priority in the cities," he says. "People don't want to stay disabled any longer." However, the gap between those needing surgeries and opting for it is widening. "According to our estimates, over 500,000 joint replacement surgeries per year are needed to address end-stage arthritis in India. But only about 150,000 surgeries are being carried out every year," he notes, pointing to a financial crunch as a major handicap in patients opting for replacement surgeries. To make surgical intervention more affordable and root out "unethical profiteering", the Government recently capped the prices for implants (***Government takes note***; page 48).

### MARKET WATCH

**75%**

of joint  
replacement  
surgeries  
in India  
comprise  
knee  
replacements

That said, with over 150,000 joint replacement surgeries conducted annually, and a 20 per cent increase each year, India is fast emerging as a leading market for joint replacement surgeries. A boom in medical tourism, with the lack of expertise in joint replacement surgeries in Africa and the Middle East, is also a contributory factor in making India a favourite destination for those seeking knee and hip arthroplasty. In the research paper *Overview of Orthopaedic Joint Replacement Market in India*, Frost & Sullivan concludes that "the market for orthopaedic implants promises to be one of the most lucrative segments in the Indian medical devices market".

The joints market is mostly split between knee and hip procedures. While globally the hip market is larger than the knee market, in India the situation is the reverse, with knee arthroscopy dominating the joint replacement market. Almost 75 per cent of joint replacement surgeries in India comprise knee replacements. Sathguru reports that for every single hip replacement in India, there are at least five knee replacement surgeries. "This is owing to hereditary and lifestyle factors, where the Indian knee sees far more wear and tear than the hip," it states. "Our knee replacement figures match Western ones," observes Vinay Joshi, orthopaedic surgeon, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai. "Fortunately for us, hip arthritis is very low in India."

The most common reason for total hip replacement continues to be a fall, especially in the silver years. Eighty year-old B B Shettigar from Udupi had to undergo emergency hip replacement following a fall from bed last June. "My parents didn't realise the severity of the fall as there was only swelling but no pain. They didn't seek medical help. The next day, my dad couldn't move an inch because of unbearable pain," recounts his daughter Shashita. "I still remember the way he was writhing in pain when he was put on a stretcher because the lower part of his body had to be assembled together as the hip joint had cracked." Now, three months after the surgery, Shettigar ambles in his garden without a walker, climbs the staircase and does simple household chores.

### CUTTING-EDGE SOLUTIONS

Today, India is seen as a leader in orthopaedic technologies, surgical solutions, quality prosthetics and equipment, and has emerged as a leading destination for knee and hip replacement procedures. Earlier, not many were willing to undergo surgery because of the risks involved—prolonged recovery period, infections, quality of implants and the risk of implant failure—preferring alternative, non-surgical treatment such as physiotherapy, exercises and yoga.

However, times are changing. Innovations in implants and surgical methods are designed to ensure painless, zero-error procedures, faster recovery—with patients going home the same day or the day after surgery—and longer life of the implant. Allaying fears that knee and hip implants need a revision surgery because of their short lifespan, Singh says, "Earlier, implants lasted only eight to 10 years, necessitating a revision procedure. With advancement in technology, we now have implants that last nearly 20 years. So, if a patient in his 60s goes in for replacement, chances are the implant might last lifelong."



Three months after a hip replacement surgery, B B Shettigar is involved in day-to-day activities such as simple gardening and other household chores

## Innovations in implants and surgical methods are designed to ensure painless, zero-error procedures, faster recovery—with patients going home the same day or the day after surgery—and longer life of the implant

Incidentally, India became the first country outside America to carry out robotic-assisted TKR recently, when a 67 year-old in Pune, who was bedridden for almost six months owing to a severely deformed knee, was operated upon in July this year.

Narendra Vaidya, managing director and chief joint replacement surgeon, Lokmanya Group of Hospitals, who conducted the surgery, says, “Robotic-assisted TKR is a state-of-the-art technology that enables surgeons to replace the knee joint to half-a-mm precision, which may not be visible to the naked eye. It’s a minimally invasive procedure that rules out cutting the bone, ligaments, etc, thus preserving the natural knee structure.” The procedure, which takes just under 30 minutes, helps the surgeon map the diseased cartilage and prepare a three-dimensional virtual replica of the knee joint on the computer screen on which the prosthesis is virtually placed and aligned before the final execu-

tion. Besides bringing in 100 per cent precision in prosthesis placement, robotic-assisted TKR enables better movement, allowing the patient to squat and sit cross-legged, as all the ligaments of the knee are preserved. “Robotic-assisted surgery works best for seniors who display co-morbidities. With the kind of accuracy it brings in, the longevity of the implant is assured,” Vaidya emphasises.

Another case in point is the revolutionary ‘zero technique’—which reduces surgical time for TKR to eight to 10 minutes—propagated by Vikram Shah, the Indore-based winner of the B C Roy International Award 2003 for his work in joint replacement surgery. It is based on the premise that the lesser time a patient spends in the operation theatre, lesser the tissue trauma and faster the recovery. In fact, under this procedure, patients are assisted to walk within four hours of surgery to ensure maximum flexion of muscles.



## “POSTPONING SURGERY CAN CAUSE FURTHER COMPLICATIONS”

An interview with **Dr Avinash Date**, consultant arthroplasty and trauma surgeon, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai



### Who is the ideal candidate for joint replacement surgery?

All replacements or arthroplasties are for pain from arthritis. Pain is partly a subjective feeling. Hence, the severity might vary from person to person. If a person with arthritis is not able to do the things he or she wants to do because of pain in the joint, replacement should be done. For instance, if a person wants to play badminton but is unable to because of pain, he is an ideal candidate for joint replacement.

### What should one keep in mind while opting for joint replacement?

People and even doctors have the misconception that you need to postpone joint replacement as much as possible. This is not true. Postponing simply means living with pain longer. This not only wastes your muscles, changes your gait and causes spine problems, but can also in due course lead to health problems such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension and depression, to name a few. The earlier the surgery, the better.

### How long does one need to stay in hospital after surgery?

Recovery time may vary from person to person depending on the patient's health. But, by and large, a hospital stay of five days after the operation is sufficient.

### What does post-operative care generally entail?

This differs in hip and knee replacement. All said and done, it is an artificial joint and cannot mimic a normal joint in its behaviour. So avoiding certain movements will prolong the life of a joint.

### How soon after the surgery can one start walking or indulge in a maximum range of movements?

If a patient is able to tolerate the pain, he can start walking the same day. But it is better that the patient recovers for a couple of days and then starts standing first and gradually starts walking. To resume normal activities, it takes around six weeks.

### Does life go back to normal after surgery or are there restrictions?

Some restrictions will remain after the operation. For instance, after total hip replacement, we ask the patient to avoid flexion and adduction (the movement we make while putting a sock on), which increases the possibility of dislocation. Having said that, there are newer designs that allow you to do that. It's the same with total knee replacement as well. There are high-flex implants that allow full flexion.

### How can one rule out complications such as infections and clots after surgery?

As far as infection is concerned, prevention is better than cure. I always test all my patients for MRSA, which is a dangerous bug that could be harbouring in a patient's body. If it is present, it needs to be treated first. We also look for other infections such as urinary infection. Our theatres have high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters; we use space suits while operating; and use

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With hi-tech implants engineered to ensure better mobility, fit and shelf life, the consumer is spoilt for choice today. Brushing aside as a “myth” the perception that imported knee implants are more suited for the Western knee, Joshi says, “Imported knees have a very good track record and have done exceedingly well with our patients.” Physicians prefer to use international products because of their superior technology and proven track record, accounting for nearly 80 per cent of the market. However, one of the widely used indigenous knees is the ‘Indus knee’ developed by Pune-based orthopaedic surgeon K H Sancheti in 2007. At ₹ 32,000-35,000, it's just one-third the cost of an imported knee. Besides being cost-effective, it allows more than 130-135° of knee-bending, allowing patients to sit cross-legged on the floor.

Talking of indigenous solutions, RMS Regrow by Mumbai-based Regenerative Medical Services is a regenerative cell therapy for knee and hip problems in the early stages of arthritis and joint inflammation. “Our products Chondron and Ossron for cartilage cell therapy and bone cell therapy can be effective in restoring a normal active lifestyle in anybody from 16 to 65 years, eliminating pain completely. We heal joints using the body's own cells,” says company chief scientific officer and executive director Satyen Sanghavi. “We have had patients who have run marathons after the treatment!” Incidentally, Ossron is the world's first bone cell therapy product, while Chondron is India's first cartilage cell therapy product. As part of the treatment, cartilage defects of the joints are treated using

disposable isolation drapes. This theatre discipline reduces the possibility of infection to near zero.

### **What is the lifespan of an implant?**

The life of an implant and failure of an implant are two different things. These days, because of advances in material technology, the possibility of wear has reduced significantly. Failure of the implant is generally because of aseptic loosening, which occurs just underneath the implant because of weakening of the bone.

### **How does computer-assisted surgery score over traditional surgery?**

It has been proven that computer-assisted surgeries reduce the number of outliers as far as the alignment of the prosthesis is considered. But it doesn't have a direct correlation to the final outcome and patient satisfaction.

### **Are Indians as an ethnic group more prone to arthritis, especially of the knees?**

Incidence of knee arthritis is almost the same in Indian and Western population. But incidence of primary hip arthritis is much more in the West compared to India.

### **Why do we prefer imported implants?**

All the research and development about knee implants has been done in Western countries. That's why almost all the knee implants are imported, except a few. As far as hip replacement is concerned, Indian implants are as good as imported implants and much cheaper. So, for hips, we use imported as well as Indian implants.

## **“There are obvious advantages of bilateral replacement, especially if the deformities are significant”**

### **For a patient with deterioration in both knees, is bilateral knee replacement in a single sitting recommended rather than two sittings?**

Every surgery leads to a stress response by the body. Two surgeries will lead to a bigger stress response. The heart and other body systems should be fit enough to take the stress of two surgeries. Technically, two surgeries are possible. But for that, the

patient needs to be fit enough. Orthopaedic surgeons, with anaesthetists and cardiologists, assess the patient's fitness for bilateral knee replacement and only then recommend them for surgery. If there is any doubt postoperatively or even intra-operatively, we do only one replacement. There are obvious advantages of bilateral replacement, especially if the deformities are significant. Correction in both knees improves the walk significantly.

### **Is there an upper age limit for such surgeries?**

One needs to consider the physiological age of the patient, not the physical age. If a patient doesn't have health issues, physical age doesn't matter.

### **What are the dos and don'ts after surgery?**

It is better to take care of your replaced hips and knees. These are expensive parts. Patients need to take care of them to last long. Avoid doing silly things in enthusiasm, especially within the first year of surgery. Once the pain has gone, people tend to walk more and travel more. Walking fast makes them more prone to injuries, including fractures. It's also better to avoid sports in the first six months after surgery as patients can be prone to injuries.

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the body's own cartilage cells, which are cultured and multiplied for almost four weeks and then implanted into the damaged joint, helping new cartilage regeneration.

## **EVOLVING TRENDS**

In its analysis of robotic-assisted versus conventional surgical techniques, Frost & Sullivan's white paper *Comprehensive Care for Joint Replacement* suggests that those who undergo robotic-assisted surgeries have faster rehabilitation and better long-term outcomes. The paper pegs robotic-assisted arthroplasty as the standard of care in coming years. “Robotic surgery is a step forward in taking precise cuts after computer navigation. It has a bigger role in

the precise placement of uni-compartmental—changing half the knee—replacement,” says Avinash Date, consultant arthroplasty and trauma surgeon, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai. “Computer navigation and patient-specific instruments have further increased the efficiency of the procedure.”

There have been advances in materials as well. Previously, in hip replacements, a metal ball on plastic—ultra-high-density polyethylene—was used. But now with material advances, a ceramic ball in ceramic socket is preferred, as there is much less wear and increased longevity. Another material gaining popularity in hip and knee replacements is oxinium (oxidized zirconium), which has better surface properties and is a tougher material.



## GOVERNMENT TAKES NOTE

With the number of knee replacements in the country not reflecting the actual need, the Government recently capped the prices of orthopaedic knee implants. With this, cobalt-chromium implants used in TKR, which is preferred in 80 per cent of knee replacement surgeries, are capped at ₹ 54,720, as against the earlier market price ranging from ₹ 150,000 to ₹ 250,000.

Similarly, TKR implants made of special metals, such as titanium and oxidised zirconium, cannot have a price of more than ₹ 76,600, which is far less than the earlier rates hovering between ₹ 250,000 and ₹ 450,000.

According to the government directive, hospitals should not charge more than ₹ 56,490 for high-flexibility implants that otherwise carried an average MRP of ₹ 181,728.

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## An extensive rehabilitation programme comprising movements and exercises to help the patient adjust to the new joint and begin walking again is just as significant as the early diagnosis and treatment of the joint

### IN CONCLUSION

As the No. 1 cause of disability around the world, arthritis can seriously limit mobility, affecting routine activities such as walking, climbing, bathing and other daily tasks. However, awareness about joint replacement surgery is still very low in India. Surveys reveal that only about 10 per cent of people are aware about detection and prevention of joint-related problems such as osteoporosis. It is imperative to raise awareness about the issue among the public.

With the Government still shying away from taking an active role in creating awareness about arthritis and joints, NGOs like AFI, who have created an app specifically to keep a check on bone health (*App-ly My Bone*; page 43) have been stepping in to fill the lacunae. “Early diagnosis and treatment of arthritis can avoid joint deterioration,” says Sharma, who is a consultant with Kailash Hospital, Noida. AFI has been regularly holding free health check-up camps

across India, where bone mineral densitometry tests are done and medicines distributed. In association with resident welfare associations, they have also been organising ‘Walk with Ease’ camps in various cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Dehradun and Jalandhar to educate seniors about the need to constantly monitor their bone health.

In fact, an extensive rehabilitation programme comprising movements and exercises to help the patient adjust to the new joint and begin walking again is just as significant as the early diagnosis and treatment of the joint. It’s important to set proper expectations and avoid high-impact activities such as running and skiing. Moderate use of the implant will increase the odds that it will last longer.

The challenges aside, let’s make no bones about the good news: with advancements in treatment that ensure accurate positioning and longevity of implants and quicker recovery, it’s time to take a break from pain! ✨





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# HOW LUSH IS MY VALLEY?

Breathtakingly beautiful  
Nubra Valley, the fruit orchard  
of Ladakh, nestles in the lap of  
mystical mountains

📷 📸 Gustasp & Jeroo Irani





**T**he enchanting Chamba Camp Thiksey in Ladakh was draped in a solitude so pure that it seemed like an earthly paradise of sorts. At a distance, Thiksey Monastery cascaded down a mountain slope like a whitewashed poem in stone. If the gods were to ever descend on earth, they would perhaps choose this spot as their base.

We were reluctant to leave our charmed environs for Nubra Valley but did so on the persuasion of the oracle of Thiksey, a mystic whom we met at her home near Leh. Her face, seemingly carved and hewn by harsh winds and adversity, much like the mountainous landscape of Ladakh, was alight with deep spirituality. In a trance punctuated by much hissing, muttering and chanting, she told us our wishes would be granted if we strung a prayer flag at the highest point that we could find and said a prayer at a hilltop monastery.





Our car climbed out of Leh and the Indus Valley, traversing a lunar wasteland of brown, humped mountains. There were just a few cars on the curving asphalt road, underscoring our loneliness and insignificance amid the starkness

**Road winding down from Khardung-La pass to Leh valley**

And so, one morning, we headed for Nubra Valley, north of Leh, which unfolds dramatically and in green splendour between the Karakoram and Ladakh ranges of the Himalaya. The valley is accessed by traversing the Khardung-La, one of the highest motorable passes in the world at 18,390 ft! We resolved to put up a prayer flag in those snow-hushed heights there.

Our car climbed out of Leh and the Indus Valley, traversing a lunar wasteland of brown, humped mountains slashed with shades of deep grey, pink and purple even as the clouds above cast a shadow on their rounded scalps. There were just a few cars on the curving asphalt road, underscoring our loneliness and insignificance amid the starkness.

The landscape unfolded like a *thangka* painting—muted, multilayered but, at times, brimming with colour. Mountains that resembled seismic knots, sometimes crumbly and slashed with frozen rivers of snow, clawed at an incredibly blue sky. Part of the ancient Silk Route, the deep valleys and high mountains with their seemingly impenetrable passes were traversed for centuries by vast caravans of wool and cloth, opium, spices, coral, turquoise and gold as part of a thriving trans-Himalayan trade between Leh and Yarkand (China).

On that drive, where we would clock 350 km in all, we felt we were suspended between earth and sky and halfway to heaven—vast blue skies dotted with scudding clouds as large as earthly ocean





Clockwise from left: Tourists take a ride on double-backed Bactrian camels; a roadside tea stall at 16,000 ft; lamas blow trumpets at the Maitreya Buddha complex



## DEALING WITH HIGH ALTITUDE

Ladakh is a high-altitude desert and can pose problems such as altitude sickness. That, however, is no reason to be alarmed, provided you take the right precautions. If you intend to fly to Leh, make sure no activities are planned for the first 24 hours of your stay. Rest. Start exploring the following day but avoid anything too strenuous. After the first 48 hours, Ladakh is your playground. You will be on safer turf if you drive from Manali or Srinagar to Leh. This is because there is a gradual ascent, which allows your body to adjust to the altitude.

It is important to drink a lot of water: frequent little sips. The high-altitude desert (as any desert) can lead to dehydration. The main symptoms of altitude sickness are shortness of breath (the air is rarefied in the higher reaches), headache and a feeling of lightness in the head. If you experience any of these symptoms, stop, ease up, take a breather, rest. If it's any reassurance, the authors (now in their mid-60s) have been to Ladakh twice—once by air and the second time by land—and faced no health problems. Yes, we did not push the buck (though we admit we were tempted to in this region of spectacular landscapes) and played by the rules.

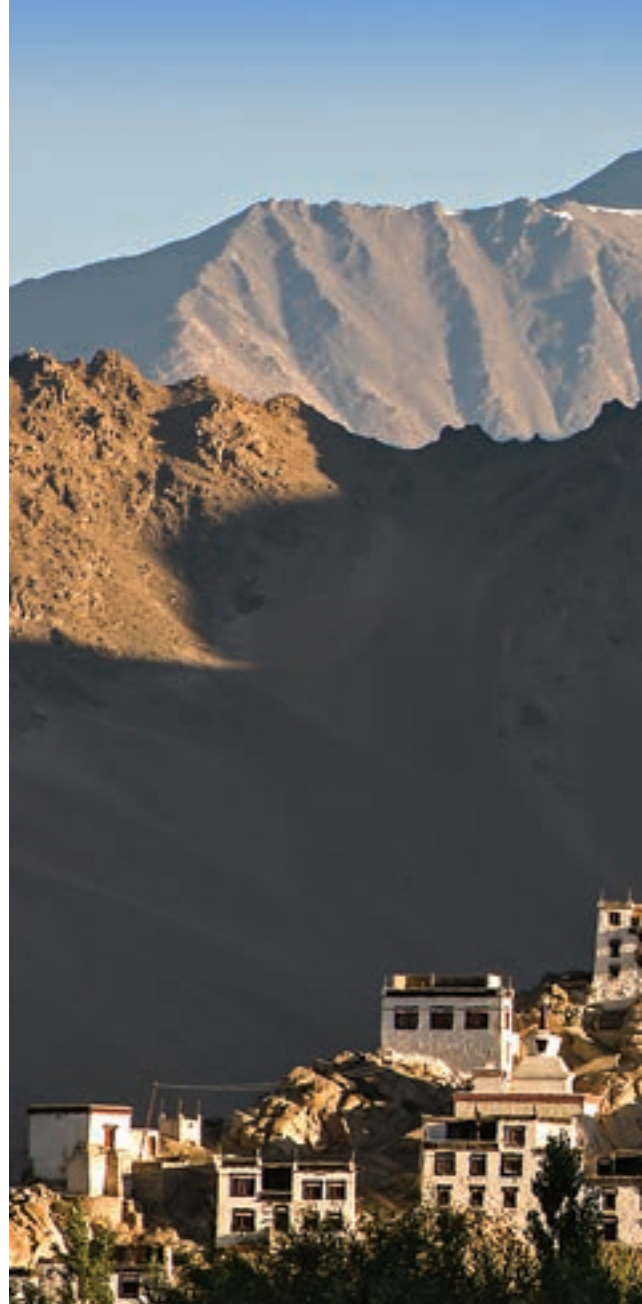
liners; the barren, desiccated landscape and a blazing sun created glowing indelible images while the sudden appearance of apricot and apple groves added dollops of colour. Ladakh is one of the last outposts where Tibetan Buddhism is still practised and its monastery-strewn landscape often made us feel we had left India behind.

We were gaining altitude, but having spent a week in Leh at 11,480 ft, we were not affected by the symptoms of high-altitude sickness such as a throbbing headache, fatigue or nausea. The air is thinner at high altitudes and if you go higher too quickly, the body cannot get enough oxygen and one tends to breathe faster. So our hosts at Chamba Camp had advised us to rest the first

day to allow our bodies to get used to the rarefied air. Age, the sex of the person, etc, do not matter as much as taking it easy the first few days and avoiding alcohol altogether.

Having taken all the precautions, the drive to Nubra (average altitude 10,000 ft) turned out to be a breeze. After driving for 40 km, we arrived at Khardung-La where a signboard stated that the pass was the 'highest motorable pass in the world'. Apparently, this fact is often contested, as Marmik La near PangongTso Lake is 200 ft higher.

Khardung-La is the ideal spot for the selfie-obsessed but we had a more important mission: planting our prayer flag in those Olympian







Thiksey Monastery

We climbed up a mound adorned with a huge forest of prayer flags waving their devotion to the wind and triumphantly planted our flag, while the wind whooshed in our ears. We stood there for what seemed like an eternity, taking in the astounding views

heights. We climbed up a mound adorned with a huge forest of prayer flags waving their devotion to the wind and triumphantly planted our flag, while the wind whooshed in our ears. We stood there for what seemed like an eternity, taking in the astounding views of the Indus Valley while the peaks of the Zaskar range un-scrolled

like a mighty accordion in the distance. The awesome Saser massif—a group of mountains—reared in the misty north like a mythical fire-breathing dragon.

Momentarily, we felt dizzy with elation and wonder. Warning signs at the pass urged travel-

What was striking was a tall statue of the Maitreya or future Buddha, said to be one of the tallest in the region. Its eyes gazed at the beautiful landscape around it as though admiring his own creation

**The looming statue of Maitreya in Diskit valley**

lers not to linger too long and report to the medical centre in case of nausea or vomiting. So we hopped back into our car and were back on the ribbon-like road that resembled a coiled anaconda disappearing into an abyss of nothingness. As our car lurched along, bikers vroomed past on their devil machines.

Near the town of Khalsar, the road forked and one arm led to the twin valleys of Nubra and Shyok rivers. The mountains parted to showcase

a lovely fertile landscape, a far cry from the stunning barren aridity of the rest of Ladakh. This valley is also the fruit bowl of the region where apples, apricots, grapes and walnuts grow and flourish, and barley and wheat fields unfurl a green welcome.

In an oasis of poplar and willow trees snuggled a garden restaurant where we unpacked our picnic lunch. Snow-streaked mountains framed the vistas and looked down at us sternly. We





could have tarried there endlessly—so beguiling were the views.

We finally arrived at Hunder village where we checked into a charming little place called Karma Inn built in traditional Ladakhi style. It was located a kilometre away from the sand dunes of Hunder where the double-humped Bactrian camels loped. After a brief rest, we drove to the other worldly expanse of the sand dunes of Hunder, edged by hunkering mountains where the camels slouched on the sands like the bankrupt potentates of a forgotten kingdom. They eyed us almost flirtatiously from behind long lashes, and most tourists rose to the bait of revelling in a slow loping ride on the sands.

Dusk fell, casting mysterious shadows on the valley floor and the un-scalable mountains seemed to create a barrier that no man could breach. Next morning, the contours of the landscape had softened and we rose to the sight of sunflowers with their faces upturned to a wan sun in the garden of Karma Inn. As we headed for Diskit, the valley had been transformed into a glistening green bowl. There, a lovely little monastery tumbled down a mountain slope in a jumble of whitewashed buildings with reddish-brown window panes. But what was more striking was a tall statue of the Maitreya or future Buddha, said to be one of the tallest in the region. Its eyes gazed at the beauteous landscape around it as though admiring his own creation.

We climbed up to the monastery via uneven steps and came upon an elderly monk who sat with eyes downcast; his red robes contrasted vividly with the stark barrenness around him. While chatting with us, he told us how, till 15 years ago, monks had to navigate a dizzying gorge to collect water from a spring. Today, water is pumped up but the monks still live simple lives steeped in prayer and meditation.

Within, the monastery was suffused with the fragrance of butter lamps and bright *thangka* paintings adorned the walls. We had a prayer said by a monk in the Gokhang or meditation area of the monastery, believed to be invested with a great deal of spirituality. The two requirements of the oracle of Thiksey had been fulfilled.

We returned to our inn to prepare to leave for Leh but heard deep-timbered voices rising in prayer to the blue sunlit sky as though to shake the heavens. A ceremony was in progress and



## FACTFILE

### GETTING THERE

**By air:** There are a number of early morning flights from Delhi to Leh.

**By road:** One can travel by road to Leh from either Srinagar (434 km) or Manali (474 km). Driving to Leh, apart from the spectacular scenery, has the added advantage of slowly acclimatising the traveller to the rarefied heights of this enchanting region.

### ACCOMMODATION

Leh has mid-range accommodation but the luxe Chamba Camp Thiksey is the top of the heap. It bills itself as the “ultimate travelling camp” as it travels to other destinations after the Ladakh season ends. (It is open from early June to end-September.)

### TIPS

For Nubra (130 km from Leh), it's best to hire a taxi from Leh. Many agencies in Leh offer the share-a-cab option too. While Hunder and Diskit have charming guesthouses and home stays, Karma Inn is a very comfortable mid-segment option. The best time to visit the region is between May and October. For more information, visit J&K Tourism at [www.jktourism.org](http://www.jktourism.org) or [www.chambacampthiksey.com](http://www.chambacampthiksey.com)

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20 red-robed monks sat at low tables with bulky scriptures in their hands, chanting and humming.

We felt blessed as the prayers washed over us like showers of beneficent rain and resonated in our heads till we passed once again the heights of Khardung-La, back to the familiar comfort of Leh. ✨



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

# Experience

## A second childhood

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## The expanse

The vast, textured and sometimes abstract expanse of nature most inspires artist Surya Prakash; figures and forms rarely do. This preference was visible in a brief study of his artistic oeuvre displayed at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Bengaluru, recently. Titled *A Perceptive Eye, Surya Prakash Retrospective - 1960 onwards*, the show

contained 99 impressionist **art** paintings featuring wild landscapes of green fields and flower valleys, with abstract floating forms like drops of the cosmos hovering over reality. "For 45 years, I was stubbornly loyal to oil," Prakash tells *Deccan Herald*. "But things have gotten a lot flexible over time. With the works on display, I'd like to present a real picture of my early days and give people a better understanding of how an artist's temperament fluctuates and gets better over time."



# METALLICA

After six years, Jaideep Mehrotra has come back with a series of abstract art titled *Mercury Rising*. The 63 year-old spent most of his time away from the limelight developing a new technique of painting using metal, paint and other mixed media. It catalysed his transition from figurative to abstract, with highly reflective surfaces. "The aim was to make paintings on canvas that can engage viewers



while reflecting themselves as a part of the work. Art is a 'reflection' of its surrounding culture and I was tempted by the idea of creating a work of art that would be physically different for every person looking at it. These paintings return to us the world as visualised by our childlike selves: mutable, sparking with potential

and fluid in form," Mehrotra tells us. The series can be viewed at Mumbai's Tao Art Gallery till 22 October.

## Reel woman

Even as Alankrita Srivastava's movie *Lipstick Under My Burkha* continues to make waves, one of India's first women filmmakers and one half of the erstwhile Aruna-Vikas directing duo, Arunaraje Patil released her memoir *Freedom: My Story*. The book is a chronicle of a life spent in the male-dominated world of filmmaking, navigating the Censor Board, fending off journalists' pesky questions, and compartmentalising a failed marriage that was both professional and personal. Further, in a tone that echoes the challenges that female-oriented films still face today, the three-time National-Award winner writes of her first solo film *Rihaae* (1998), a drama that explores migration, sexual desire and women's rights in a village in Gujarat, "Everyone had scared me, saying the censors would have a field day, chopping off parts of my film, given the theme. The content was repressed sexuality of women and there were love scenes but there was nothing in the film that men and women did not normally do together"



Monica Dawar

## The art of PROTEST

Actor Maya Krishna Rao is no novice to protest theatre. So when she stepped up at the 'Not In My Name' protest at New Delhi's Jantar Mantar recently, with no props, no story, no conspicuous costume, her lone voice carried added weight with the eager crowd: "Don't you dare, not in my name; but don't you dare, in the name of Allah, Krishna, Buddha, Jehovah, Kalburgi, Pehlu Khan, Dhabolkar, Mohammad Akhlaq, Pansare...Junaaaaaid." Her 20-minute dramatised monologue, named after the peaceful protest, which was organised against the increasing communal violence in some parts of the country, was performed to thousands of protesters and conveyed a powerful sentiment. "If you are dealing with an issue on a protest stage, you must truly believe in what you are doing and be fully present, and people will hear you," the 64 year-old veteran actor told *The Indian Express*.



# PICTURE THIS

**A** tapering stroke here. A square dot there. With these symbols, calligraphy artist Poosapati Parameswar Raju's new work narrates a picture story of the annual Jagannath Rath Yatra in Puri. Curator of Raju's recent exhibition, Koeli Mukherjee, says the series highlights the form and significance of the handless triad of Lord Jagannath (*right*), his brother Balabhadra (*left*) and sister Subhadra, and delves into the cosmic collaboration

of the creator and all that is created. "I work with English poster nibs and create simplified symbols, iconography and narratives. In my practice of writing Devanagari, I fashioned my own stylised expression with which I have created a series of epic narratives," Raju tells *Harmony-Celebrate Age*. His collection of 45 works, titled *Working Together: Rituals and Traditions of Jagannath of Puri*, was on display at Ailamma Art Gallery in Hyderabad recently.



**“ ‘Tradition’ and ‘modern’ are relative terms. The definition of each term is vast and varied. What is modern today will be tradition tomorrow. What ultimately matters is how aesthetically one displays the art in the present time on the basis of knowledge from the past. Therefore the real challenge for a choreographer is to have a basic sense of *auchitya* or appropriateness in the deliberation and execution of a concept.**

**—Odissi dancer Aruna Mohanty, 57, speaking to Tehelka on how she traverses the dichotomy between the traditional and modern, while being a classical dancer today**



# Pearls of devotion



Photographs by Haresh Patel

For 57 years, this Ganesha devotee has been making an unusual offering to the Elephant God: a sago rangoli that has also won him a *Guinness* record, finds **Sahil Jaswal**

Every year, a month before Mumbai brings her favourite idol home, Mohankumar Dodecha keeps his own date with a tradition. He spends 12 hours a day, every day, arranging pearl after pearl of sago or *sabudana* on the floor in a rangoli that eventually becomes a brilliant image of the Elephant God.

The Mumbai-based artist has, without exception, been creating and publicly displaying sago rangolis of Lord Ganesha for the past 57 years, a feat that earned him a mention in *Guinness World Records* for the longest duration over which an annual rangoli is displayed. This record, set in 2010, was with an 8 ft × 7 ft rangoli of Sidhivinayak Ganapati.

*this 'n' that*

This year, for 10 days during Bhadrapad Ekadashi, from 1-10 September, thousands of visitors, including well-wishers and art lovers, flocked for darshan at the Prassan Mudra Ganesha at that the artist had created from over 40 kg of sago in 290 colours and shades. For the past three years, Dodecha has been creating his sago rangoli of Ganesha at a friends' home as his own is under redevelopment.

Dodecha, who discovered his creative flair very early, honed this skill at the L S Raheja School of Arts, after which he specialised in interior design at the J J Institute of Applied Art, both in Mumbai. But he created his first sago rangoli well before his formal education in art and design began. "When I was in Class 10, one of my

classmates told me of a Shivaji Maharaj rangoli he had seen in Dadar,” he shares. “It had been made entirely of coloured food grains. I was inspired by the idea. So, during Ganeshotsav that year, I asked my parents if I could explore a Ganesha rangoli made of grains. We lived in a one-room house and didn’t have much, and it was therefore crucial to ask my parents’ permission.”

Six days later, much to everyone’s amazement, a 4 ft × 5 ft rangoli occupied literally half the floor space of Dodecha’s one-room home. “My family and I shifted to the terrace for those six days,” he says, smiling at the recollection.

The first time Dodecha unveiled his sago rangoli to the public was in 1961. It was inaugurated by spiritual and social reformer Pandurang Shastri Athavale, popularly known as *Dadaji*. “He loved my rangoli and promised to unveil it every year. He did this for 25 years, and I considered his vow fulfilled. After that, my daughter-in-law has been inaugurating my sago Ganesha rangoli every year for the public,” reveals Dodecha, who earns a livelihood from the family’s octroi-related business.

He goes on to tell us how he discovered sago as a wonderful material for rangoli. “My first rangoli was made of different grains. The throne of Ganesha was supposed to be red and, with *dhaniya* seeds and other grains, I was unable to capture the vibrancy and flamboyance of the throne. That’s when I explored sago, which I coloured red. The colour was so vibrant and rich that it stood out majestically. Thereon, I started exploring different shades of colour on sago.” The rest, as they say, is rangoli history.

Dodecha designs are inspired by the mythological paintings of S M Pandit, who belonged to the school of realism and whose subjects ranged from events in the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas. His other muse is Indra Sharma, an exponent of the Pichhwai style of painting.

For the first 40 years, he carefully and delicately recreated the paintings of S M Pandit and Indra Sharma on the floor of his house but in the last decade or so, he has taken the help of technology. Dodecha takes photocopies of parts



## TREATING THE SAGO

Sago (*sabudana*) is a starch extracted from the spongy centre, or pith, of palm stems. It is produced commercially in the form of ‘pearls’, or small rounded starch beads, partly gelatinised by heating. When mixed with water, sago expands and starts dissipating in the liquid but Dodecha has evolved a technique to prevent that from happening. He sprinkles coloured water onto the sago and then rubs the coloured pearls in his hands. They expand to a certain extent and then shrink when dried in the sun after the colouring process. They shrink further when glue is applied.

of the paintings and pieces them together to complete the image. He then numbers different sections on the basis of the shade required, and starts filling up the sketch, one sago pearl at a time, with a tweezer!

Rangoli isn’t the only art form Dodecha enjoys. He also creates abstract Ganeshas in wood, metal, glass, thread, silver, paper, wool, beads, etc. And, although the Elephant God is his favourite subject, he has also made some pretty spectacular rangoli portraits of Mahatma Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri.

In 2010, Dodecha hosted an exhibition of his Ganesha sculptures at Mumbai’s Mulund Kalidas Natya Mandir. He also designs book covers for famous Gujarati poets such as Meghbindu, Kirit Barot and Barkatali Gulamhussain Virani. Asked to name his favourite sago rangoli, he says it was a 7 ft × 8 ft creation of Lord Ganesha, Kanva Rishi and Shakuntala based on the epic *Abhigyanam Shakuntalam* by Kalidasa. The rangoli, brought to life in over 350 shades of colour and made with 40 kg of sago, was crafted in 2009, a year before the artist celebrated a half-century of his sago rangoli.

Indeed, perseverance and patience have been the two cornerstones of Dodecha’s diligent tribute to Mumbai’s favourite deity. And, at the age of 73 now, he says, simply, “I will continue till I can.”



# Voices of the HIEA





# RTLAND

*Humans of Gondwana* brings the stirring stories of middle India's tribal population to the fore

Deep inside the jungles of middle India lie the vestiges of another time—a single fire is kept alive for days on end, cocks fight to the death, and the chutney is made of red ants.

Hundreds of tribes known collectively as the Gonds inhabit the forests of the central Gondwana region, where they revere the earth and forests they inhabit. Spread across Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, northern Telangana, western Odisha and southern Uttar Pradesh, the Gonds are a repository of ancient traditions, beliefs and practices.

For years, we have looked at them with curiosity and intrigue from afar, through their distinct art and storytelling imagery. We have read about them in the news as the battered Adivasis of India's Red Corridor, caught in the middle of an insurgency that has affected the region for decades. But over the past two years, we've got a closer glimpse at them, thanks to Chhattisgarh-based Ramesh Kasa, Shatali Shedmake, Harshit A Charles, Kaushik Madiya and Lalsu Soma Nogoti, who are behind the Facebook page titled *Humans of Gondwana*.

Through their lens, we look into the world of these indigenous people,

their fascinating rituals, and raw and rugged practices. We also get to hear from the *Humans of Gondwana*, as their messages are presented to us in the Gondi language as well as in Hindi and English.

A recent exhibition at Hyderabad's Lamakaan cultural centre, *Humans of Gondwana* showcased stirring tales of this section of India's tribal population—stories of their food, politics, music, agricultural practices and tattoos. All we can do is watch how the 21st century, virtually an intruder in the Gond homeland, now forces these tribals to adapt to the demands of 'modern-day' living.





A woman in Bedre, Chhattisgarh, shows off her customary tattoos. A person without tattoos is buried only after their body is tattooed



Members of the Madiya community perform the bison horn dance at a festival in Bejur, Maharashtra





Villagers in Juvvi, Maharashtra, go hunting for a wild boar. Every family gets an equal share of the kill, even if only a small piece

A *ghotul*, in Juvvi, Maharashtra, which is a cultural hub and peer learning institution. It also doubles up as the village council where many important decisions of the Maria community are taken. Any visitor can stay in a *ghotul* while the whole village takes care of hospitality





Villagers attend the high-energy proceedings at the famous cock market in Munjmeta, Chhattisgarh. Game cocks are brought into the pit to fight, with sharp spurs tied. Spectators bet their money and victory is achieved when one of the roosters dies



The Kondhs (a sub-tribe) of Niyamagiri in Odisha celebrate the Bichcha Mattang seed festival every April. They collect their seeds together and present it to Dharini, mother earth, to give thanks and convey that the seeds have been protected with every effort. Further, the villagers take an oath to keep the seeds safe till the next festival. The sacred seeds are then distributed among the villagers for sowing







A woman carries grain from storage to make *page*, a porridge. The year's crop is stored in huge bamboo baskets coated with cow dung, in a separate room. The grains fill half the basket, while the top is sealed with soil to protect it from infestation



A woman from the Dhunga community in Surjapur, Chhattisgarh, weaves a mat from date palm leaves. This is then cut into different sizes and with a few final touches, the mat is ready. The process takes an entire month to complete



Containers made of *sihari* leaves are used to preserve seeds such as ragi, *sarson* and chana for up to four years. Half the pot is filled with seeds, with a thick coat of ash on top, which is then sealed with more leaves





# Epic lessons

On the occasion of Diwali, **Shubha Vilas** dwells upon some takeaways from the *Ramayana*

**T**he most treasured memory of my childhood is associated with my grandmother. Every single night she would put me to sleep while narrating the *Ramayana*. The epic slowly cast a spell on me, so much so that I would keenly look forward to story time to hear what my grandmother would say about the characters and situations from the tale. I had probably heard the *Ramayana* a few hundred times, repeatedly over and over again. But every time I heard it afresh, the excitement only grew.

The initial seed sowed by my grandmother grew into a huge tree by the time I turned 30, as I delved into an intense study of the epic. I developed a desire to retell the epic in an authentic but modern way. In my six-volume series, *Ramayana: The Game of Life*, I have attempted a gripping narrative of the story, along with life lessons that can be inculcated from it. When the first book in the series became a bestseller, I silently thanked my grandmother and dedicated the second book to her. Who says the wisdom of a simple old woman cannot change the destiny of the next generation?

I would like to share six lessons I imbibed from the story that forms the backdrop of Diwali, the festival of lights. It's unfortunate that most people choose to float on the ritual of the festival rather than delve into its essence. Most of us celebrate festivals with mechanical enthusiasm rather than essence-based awareness. The question shouldn't be whether we enjoyed the festival, but whether we were uplifted by it.

Interestingly, almost every festival in the world is born to commemorate the sacrifice of some divine personality. Janmashtami celebrates the sacrifice of Vasudev and Devaki as much as it signifies the birth of Krsna. Diwali acknowledges the sacrifice of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Sita as much as it rejoices in their return to Ayodhya. Christmas commemorates the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as much as it marks his birth. Dusshera speaks of the sacrifice of Vibhishan as much as it celebrates the victory

of Rama over Ravana. Independence Day pays tribute to the martyrs as much as it observes the nation's freedom from domination by foreign powers.

The question now is, if someone's hard work and sacrifice are celebrated as a festival, what should be our role in it? Do these dates on the calendar mark freedom from work or do they actually signify opportunities to achieve freedom from selfishness? Should we dilute it by our frivolousness or uphold its sanctity by genuine appreciation and active gratitude? Being not in sync with the mood of the festival is like going to a funeral ceremony not for contemplating on the good qualities of the departed but for using it as a networking opportunity.

Celebration with contemplation uplifts and inspires us, while empowering and infusing us with the mood of respect and sacrifice. When a festival is celebrated, money is spent, but when a festival is contemplated, blessings are earned

When a festival is celebrated, it brings smiles of joy; but when a festival is contemplated, it brings tears of gratitude. Celebration with contemplation uplifts and inspires us, while empowering and infusing us with the mood of respect and sacrifice. When a festival is celebrated, money is spent, but when a festival is contemplated, blessings are earned!

Let this Diwali usher six sparklers into our lives:

## Determination

The 14 years of struggle Rama underwent reveals his determination to install the right values in the hearts of Ayodhya's citizens. Though wronged, Rama still followed the orders of his father who was then the king of Ayodhya. He wanted to show the citizens what it meant to be an ideal follower before becoming an ideal leader. Even though many tried to undo his decision, Rama was determined to show the right conduct of an ideal follower.

## Illumination

The lights in every nook and corner of Ayodhya indicated a promise by the citizens to take decisions in the light of knowledge and clarity, and not emotional darkness. The



decision to banish Rama and crown Bharata was taken not just in the darkness of the night but the dark environment created by Keikeyi under the influence of Manthara. While the whole of Ayodhya slept, that dark plot was hatched. Fourteen years later when Rama returned, the whole city was lit up to indicate that the light of knowledge would prevail henceforth.

### Winning

With his actions, Bharata showed that winning hearts is more important than winning thrones. Relationships have to be prioritised over resource-ships. He was given the throne of Ayodhya on a golden platter. But Bharata chose the tough path of trying to locate Rama and the even tougher path of trying to convince him to return to Ayodhya to take charge. Bharata prioritised his relationship with his brother over an opulent kingdom.

### Accommodation

When Rama was returning to Ayodhya, he borrowed the *Pushpak Vimana* from Vibhishan because he had to traverse a huge distance back to Ayodhya in one night. Rama invited all the he-monkeys to join him in the plane. Sensing Rama's desire, the *Pushpak Vimana* expanded to accommodate so many. When they reached the vicinity of Kishkinda, Sita expressed her desire that along with

the he-monkeys, it was only fair that the she-monkeys be allowed to come to witness the coronation ceremony in Ayodhya. Naturally, Rama agreed and the she-monkeys boarded the plane, which expanded even further to accommodate the new entrants. So far, Ravana had used the *Pushpak Vimana* only for solo pleasure rides and now Rama was accommodating so many. Every time more people entered it, the plane expanded to create more space. The ability to accommodate all kinds of people in our lives comes from the desire to accommodate.

### Letting go

Rama did not tolerate any insult to Keikeyi and made sure no one referred to the past even subtly and sarcastically. He decided to let go of the past. In fact, he gave her more attention and love than ever before. Letting go of others' lapses is the best way to herald a change.

### Indebtedness

During the coronation, Rama noticed tears in Sita's eyes. When he asked her, she said the red colour sprinkled in the air as part of the celebrations reminded her of Jatayu's blood. She reminded Rama that their success was built on the sacrifices of so many heroes. Be grateful while celebrating, knowing that your success is owing to the sacrifices of many.

*The writer is the author of Ramayana: The Game of Life*






# AN IDEAL SOCIETY

**Mahatma Gandhi** (2 October  
1869 - 30 January 1948)  
enunciated the dream of a  
casteless and classless India  
in this poem read out at one  
of his legendary evening  
prayer meetings

We are inhabitants of a country  
where there is no sorrow and no suffering,  
Where there is no illusion nor anguish,  
no delusion nor desire,  
Where flows the Ganges of love  
and the whole creation is full of joy,  
Where all minds flow in one direction,  
and where there is no occasion for sense of time,  
All have their wants satisfied;  
Here all barter is just,  
Here all are cast in the same mould,  
Here is no lack nor care,  
No selfishness in any shape or form,  
No high no low, no master no slave;  
All is light, yet no burning heat,  
That country is within you—  
It is *Swaraj*, *Swadeshi*,  
The home within you—  
Victory! Victory! Victory!  
He realises it who longs for it.

---

*Extracted from Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase, published in 1956*

A photograph of an elderly man with grey hair and a beard, wearing a dark shirt, sitting in a pond. He is smiling and gesturing with his hands towards a young girl sitting on a wooden dock. The girl has dark hair and is wearing a white dress, looking up at the man with a joyful expression. The water is dark blue, and the dock is made of wooden planks.

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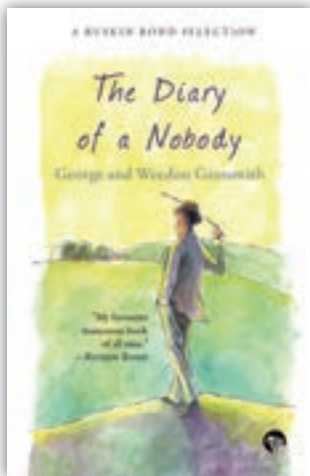
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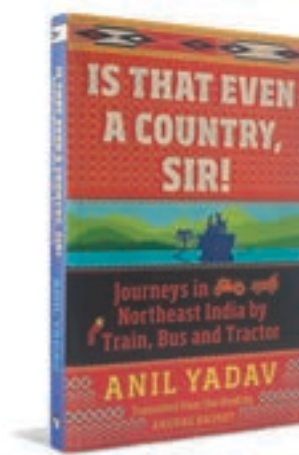
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Humour is uplifting. **THE DIARY OF A NOBODY** (Speaking Tiger; ₹ 250; 184 pages), written and illustrated by Victorian-era brothers **George and Weedon Grossmith**, is a comic masterpiece that has never been out of print since 1892, when it was first published. Serialised initially in famed satire magazine *Punch*, it details the gloriously uninteresting doings of a lower-middle-class bank clerk Charles Pooter, his wife Carrie and their son Lupin. The enthused chronicling of absurd situations and routine affairs reminds the modern-day reader of our own obsessive engagement with social media. The journal also acquaints the reader with obsolete expressions such as 'don't care a button' and 'tee-to-tums with bread', among others. Pooter's ridiculously pompous, accident-prone antics provide a thoroughly enjoyable read. Little wonder then, that Ruskin Bond considers it his "favourite humorous book of all time".

Northeast India has suffered an identity crisis since long. Translated by **Anurag Basnet**, **IS THAT EVEN A COUNTRY, SIR! JOURNEYS IN NORTHEAST INDIA BY TRAIN, BUS AND TRACTOR** (Speaking Tiger; ₹ 350; 256 pages) is an eye-opening narrative on the state of affairs in the region, penned in Hindi by journalist **Anil Yadav**. Unemployed and unprepared for the journey that awaits them, Yadav and his friend embark on an epic adventure that meanders through Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Manipur. Witnessing mayhem en route, these vagabonds



living "hand to mouth" get acquainted with the politics, myths, ecological wonders and ethnic plurality of these states through myriad interactions with leaders, scribes, boatmen, rickshaw-pullers, artists and sculptors. The book rips open the not-so-pleasant side of the region with its gritty ground-zero reportage. Through a labyrinth of stories, the writer manages to unravel many unknown facts about the diverse landscape and its people. His bold, stark and unapologetic tenor strikes a chord with the reader.

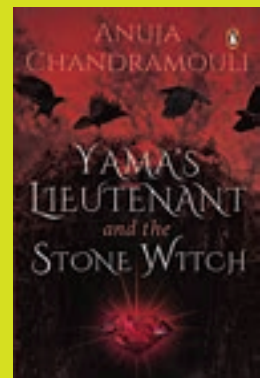
## Also on stands



**My Hanuman Chalisa**  
**Devdutt Pattanaik**  
Rupa; ₹ 295; 167 pages  
Acclaimed mythologist Pattanaik demystifies the *Chalisa*, composed over 400 years ago by Tulsidas in Awadhi, for the contemporary reader.



**The Empress**  
**Kalyani Shankar**  
Bloomsbury; ₹ 399; 135 pages  
This biography of *puratchi thalaivi* Jayalalithaa captures the life and times of a leader with a larger-than-life image.



**Yama's Lieutenant and the Stone Witch**  
**Anuja Chandramouli**  
Penguin; ₹ 299; 320 pages  
Fast-paced and witty, this is a dark tale of terror and death.



# Portrait of a dancer

Classical arts are a part of my DNA,” says bureaucrat-turned-author **Sujata Prasad**, whose recent book *Sonal Mansingh: A Life Like No Other* (Penguin; ₹ 599; 220 pages) explores the life and times of the celebrated dancer. Substantiated with significant research encompassing classical mythology, colonial studies, dance history, philosophy and classical literature, the book portrays Mansingh’s illustrious career and personal journey with authenticity. The highlight, though, is the voice of the artist. Mansingh’s candour, as evident in one of her responses, is refreshing: “Just some pre-pubescent crushes when I was aching to grow, and some innocent kissing and canoodling as a teenager. But yes, I think I was a little in love with my German professor, in college. I now suspect that one of the reasons I decided to study German was his good looks and dashing style.”

A student of history at Delhi University’s St Stephen’s College, Prasad equipped herself with a degree in sociology from Jawaharlal Nehru University before embarking on a career in the Indian Civil Services. However, her interest in the classical arts, in which she had formal training, did not wane. “Our home was resonant with a cacophony of colours and shapes that stirred my aesthetic emotions,” says the 59 year-old.

As a biographer whose subject deals in extremes, Prasad has been successful in sifting trivia from worthwhile information. Prasad also works with the marginalised through

different platforms and has been instrumental in creating sale hubs for folk artisans and weavers from Bihar, a cause close to her heart. She has co-authored a book on health security, a novella for children titled *Bruno, My Brother*, and edited a journal

## authorspeak



Tripurani Sharan

on public policy besides publishing research papers on different aspects of gender, public health, economic development and the performing arts. In an interview to **Suparna-Saraswati Puri**, the Delhi-based author talks about her book, which attempts to understand the artist behind the persona and document the contemporary history of Indian classical arts.

## EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW

### How did you arrive at the title?

This book is a no-holds-barred account of an extraordinary life. Truly, a life like no other. I did not decide the title; the title manifested itself after we walked down 10 or 20 years of her memories and worked as a metaphor at different levels.

### In an interview you spoke of “Sonal’s art being driven by her mind.” Can you elaborate?

Yes, she has an intellectual approach that is not very commonly seen. She has always questioned the notion that performing arts leaves one a little apolitical, a little disengaged. Her choreographies use the leitmotif in historical, classical texts to explore contemporary meanings. This is done very creatively, without undermining traditional dance aesthetics. She has added the *naatya katha* to her oeuvre, using its unique narrative to engage with social, environmental and gender issues. Her narratives are not set in stone. Every *katha* seems to undergo a medical makeover, unshackling itself from its past rendition. She engages, provokes, and plays mind games, never letting the audience off the hook.

### Did you face any difficulties while working on the book?

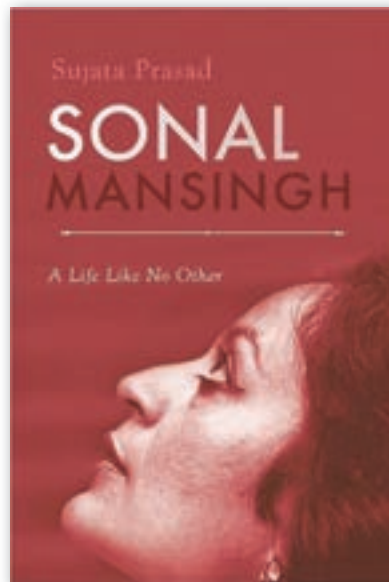
I faced several challenges. I was working full time, travelling for brow-furrowing board and other meetings, struggling with my social and personal commitments and several disparate looming deadlines.

I was also trying to weather the storm that enveloped me when my parents-in-law and father died in quick succession during this period.

**In retrospect, what is the most satisfying aspect of doing the book?**

While doing the book I met my subject for several conversations and abstract ruminations. Getting into the interior of a thought or an idea gave me a real high. And then there were moments of epiphany when I escaped from my own tumultuous life into hers. Through all of this, calibrating the emotional arc of her story was one of my biggest challenges and remains the most satisfying aspect of doing the book. She was a dream interviewee—charming, irreverent, outspoken and cocky.

**How do you multitask as a bureaucrat, householder, art enthusiast and author?**



I enjoy juggling different commitments and setting myself new and somewhat audacious goals! I have a very supportive partner who is also a bureaucrat, author, musician and filmmaker. We have absolutely no time for trivia!

**How do you spend your free time?**

I don't get much free time, but when I do I love hanging out with my dogs. I also enjoy coffee-crawling with friends and dabbling in music, dance, theatre and cinema.

**Are you planning another book in the near future?**

Oh yes, I can see the kernel of an extraordinary idea taking root but it would be a bit premature to talk about it. I am also annotating and, in parts, co-authoring a biography of Jayaprakash Narayan written by my father. This was his last work and, given his long association with Jayaprakash Narayan, his most precious. I am trying to handle the text delicately, reconnecting with my father in ways more than one. I am stupefied by his intellectual energy, and the piercing acuity with which he has written it.

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The first time you held hands.  
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# The essence of Gandhi

The Father of the Nation was a man of many disparate parts, writes **G Ramachandran**

**G**andhi was a many-sided personality. The outward simplicity of his life and his single-minded devotion to non-violence cloaked innumerable deep currents of ideas, disciplines, loyalties and aspirations. He was at once saint and revolutionary, politician and social reformer, economist and man of religion, educationist and *satyagrahi*; devotee alike of faith and reason, Hindu and inter-religious, nationalist and internationalist, man of action and dreamer of dreams. He was a very great reconciler of opposites and he was that without strain or artificiality.

He loved greatly and accepted unreservedly that truth can reside in opposites. No one has yet attempted a complete analysis of his complex and magnificent personality. We have all come too much under the spell of the astonishing integration and unity of the man within himself. It was Rabindranath Tagore who once wrote that those disciplines are the most complex which finally lead to the utter simplicity of a great song. One has only to look at those who learn music to see the daily grind of hard discipline through which they must pass before they bring out a soulful song. Gandhi's life was one long and ceaseless saga of endeavour in which he added, bit by bit and piece by piece, to his stature culminating in the advancing fullness of his personality.

There was nothing mystic or miraculous about his development and growth, from a common man into the unsurpassed *mahatma* of our history. It is open to each one of us to see how he advanced, step by step, gathering innumerable fragments of truth one by one and piecing them together in the crucible of his life, ready to look at facts, understand their significance, face any consequence in the pursuit of a cause, suffer any penalty for a mistake, recover lost ground again, but always advancing, open-

minded and without fear and dedicated selflessly to reach and hold the truth of a matter at any cost.

He was not born a *mahatma*. He grew into one. He was a common man who pulled himself up to most uncommon heights. He was no God, but became a god-man. Gandhi knew this about himself and that was why he called his biography, *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*—

experimentation was one of the deepest passions of his life. He experimented with food, health and cure, clothes and dress, politics and economics, education and reform, organisation and revolution, ethics and spirituality, with almost everything that his life knew as part of life. With relentless logic and courage he broke new ground in every direction and yet had the depth and width of mind to separate defeat from success, the false from the true, the unreal from the real and to integrate all his aims and achievements into the unity of his personality.

But when we look into the splendid mosaic of his thoughts and deeds there is one thing that stands out as unique and puts him in the forefront of the evolu-

tion of man in our time. This was the unique discovery he made in a unique laboratory. The laboratory was South Africa and the discovery was *satyagraha*....

Gandhi was the discoverer of a new dimension in nonviolence and he opened a new chapter in history. No longer need the world be divided between the strong who must dominate and the weak who must surrender or perish. That was true only so long as might alone could settle the right. After Gandhi, there is a new vista which has opened up before man. If only the weak could know, there would never again be subjection and slavery anywhere in the world.



123RF.com

*A soldier of the Gandhian cause, Ramachandran (1904-1995) was a social reformer, teacher and author. He established Gandhigram Rural Institute in Tamil Nadu in 1956*

***The first day at school***

*The first time you rode the bicycle.*

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

*The first drama you got a part in*

***The first day at college***

*The first date you went on*

***The first kiss***

*The first time you proposed*

***The first job interview***

*The first board meeting you addressed*

***The first day after retirement***

***BUTTERFLIES*** *never retire*

**The first click of the mouse.**

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Courtesy: M S Swaminathan

India was battling severe food shortage and droughts in the 1960s, when a young scientist called M S Swaminathan was inspired by the work of American agronomist Norman Borlaug on Mexican dwarf wheat. Swaminathan led the research and development of new high-yielding varieties of wheat, rice, millet, maize and corn at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute. A small field at Pusa in Delhi was seeded; the results were dramatic. Buoyed by it, agricultural scientists, with the support of the Government, helped sow the seeds of the Green Revolution in India, replacing native seeds and animal manure with hybrid seeds and chemical fertilisers from 1967 to 1978.

Punjab became the first state to go under trial, with new varieties of wheat such as Lerma Rojo and Sonora 64 being tested. The harvest yielded almost thrice the amount of wheat than was expected. Along with hybrid seeds, the use of farm technology, fertilisers and pesticides

brought about a quantum leap in food-grain production. India went from 12.3 million tonne of wheat in 1965 to 20 million tonne in 1970. Over the next four years, India quadrupled the production of rice and wheat, emerging as the bread basket of the subcontinent. Besides transforming India from a food-deficient country to one of the world's leading agricultural nations, the Green Revolution also created jobs not only for agricultural workers but industrial workers through the creation of hydroelectric power stations and other lateral factories.

To mark the golden jubilee of the momentous event that transformed India's agricultural profile, Swaminathan recently published a compilation of his research papers, *50 Years of Green Revolution*. Earlier this year, in an exclusive interview with *Harmony-Celebrate Age*, he noted, "We have a great responsibility to ensure we do not damage the ecosystem any further." With Indian agriculture facing new challenges, it's time to rethink our eco goals.

## THIS MONTH, THAT YEAR: OCTOBER 1967

- On 7 October, actor Elizabeth Taylor had a close shave with death when the brakes of her trailer failed.
- On 9 October, Argentine revolutionary leader Che Guevara was executed in Bolivia.
- On 9 October, a cyclone struck Orissa, killing 531 people and leaving almost 1 million homeless.
- On 12 October, the highly acclaimed *The Naked Ape: A Zoologist's Study of the Human Animal* by Desmond Morris was published.

# NYPPIES: Not yet past it!

*The Economist* recently asked a question that piqued our interest: “What do you call someone who is over 65 but not yet elderly?” While they went on to analyse the necessity to brand this new youthful old age group, we couldn’t stop laughing at some of the letters they received from readers in response to that question! Take your pick:

**OWLS:** Older, Working Less, Still Earning; but that also means Older, Wiser, still Learning

—Father Emmanuel Kahn, England

**INDY:** I’m Not Dead Yet

—Bradford Hawkins, USA

**GREEN OLD AGE:** Charles Dickens described the young elderly as being in their “green old age”

—Meta Roseneil, England

**WOOPIES & JOLLIES:** Well Off Older People & Jolly Old Ladies with lots of Loot

—Ivar Hauff, Norway

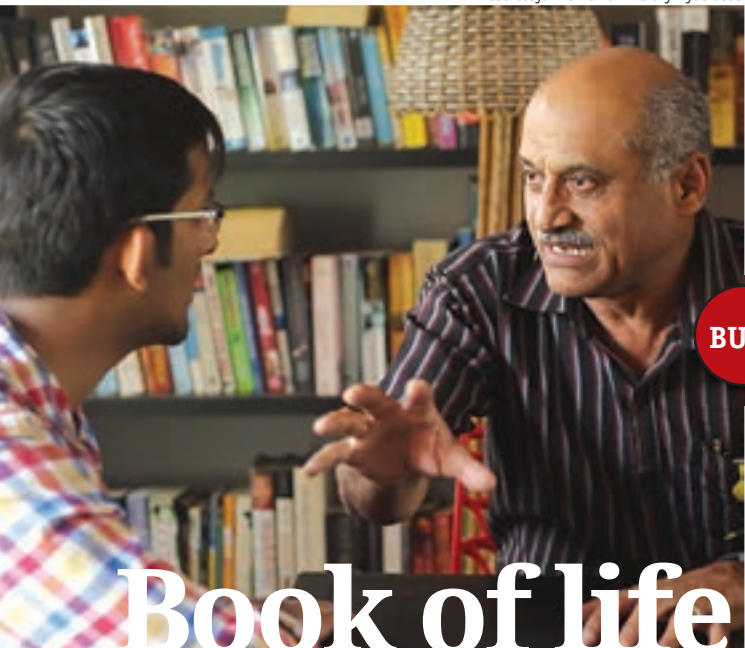
**JAGGERNAUT:** To rock like the septuagenarian members of the Rolling Stones

—David Ogilvie, USA

**HOPSKI:** Healthy Old People Spending Kids’ Inheritance

—Lars Henriksson, Sweden

Courtesy: The Human Library Hyderabad



**BUZZ**

# Book of life

Libraries are a repository of information. Humans, too, are a repository—of memories, experiences and stories—with the added advantage of being interactive. So, what if you could ‘read’ a human, or ‘living book’ as the folks at The Human Library like to call them? Conceptualised in Denmark in 2000, The Human Library in India has found base in eight cities—Indore, Hyderabad, Delhi, Pune, Chennai, Surat, Chandigarh and Bengaluru—with the aim “to build a positive framework for conversations that can challenge stereotypes and prejudices through dialogue”, as their Facebook page tells us. The idea revolves around people who have been victimised, experienced violence and overcome obstacles to make them who they are. “Readers” can attend a meeting and “borrow” a living book by listening to their story for 30 minutes, and even ask questions. People of all ages are welcome to become books or readers. Be warned, the sessions tend to get deeply personal owing to the nature of the content, and double up as a casual therapy session. So if you have an ear to lend or story to tell, head to The Human Library pages on Facebook and sign yourself up to the next meeting in your city.



## “Education alone can root out poverty”

Mahesh Desai, 56, educates slum children in Ahmedabad



Madhavi Jhurmarwala

**S**preading cheer on a rain-soaked morning, 30-odd students are participating animatedly in discussions with teachers while taking down notes in a room tucked amid deserted shanties in Adarshnagar, a sprawling slum in Ahmedabad. This is not just a classroom, mind you, but an entire school. Welcome to Helpline Education Home, which trains children to sit for their Class 10 board exams when they turn 17. Jostling for space along with teachers and students in the room are big iron cupboards, a TV set, piles of books and files, water containers and utensils in which food for students is cooked. Run by 56 year-old **Mahesh Desai**, who owns a jeans manufacturing business in Ahmedabad, Helpline Education Home began as a morning school in 2000. “Initially, I lured children and parents with old clothes collected from nearby societies,” he shares. However, once the gifts stopped, children

dropped out. “Getting the kids to enroll is a Herculean task as they earn over ₹ 250 to ₹ 300 a day if they beg in upscale areas,” points out Desai, who has so far taken over a thousand children under his wings. The school’s faculty comprises five teachers. “I have been with this school since five years,” says principal Gayatri Joshi. “I suppose it’s going to be a lifelong association.” Some children trained here have done exceptionally well like Chintan Vijaybhai Patni, who is currently pursuing higher studies at a leading Ahmedabad college. “Chintan wants to become a judge and we are all working hard to make his dream come true,” says Desai. Hailing from Talegaon in Maharashtra, Desai believes Ahmedabad, where he lives with his wife, is his *karmabhoomi*. “We have been able to ignite the minds of these children and convince them to continue with us,” he says. “Now my dream is to set up a *gurukul*.”

—Nayem Quadri



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- Serum Copper
- Magnesium
- Phosphorous
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